



# FLASHPOINT

ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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SPRING 2021

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# Who To Contact - Officers and Committee

## Patron

Air Marshal Sir Roger Austin KCB AFC RAF (Ret'd)

## President

Ron Brown Member 294

38 Sedgebrook, Liden, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3 6EY.

Tel: 01793 496307

Email: [brown026@virginmedia.com](mailto:brown026@virginmedia.com)

## Vice – President

Steve Harrison

58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ

Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568

Email [silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com](mailto:silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com)

## Chairman

Vacant

## Vice- Chairman

Howard Harper Member 682

11 Lester Drive, Haddingham,  
Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 3BW

Tel: 01353 968061

## General Secretary

Mike Clapton Member 704

4 Fairfax Road, Cirencester, Gloucester, GL7 1NF.

Tel: 01285 655314

Email: [fire.bucket@btinternet.com](mailto:fire.bucket@btinternet.com)

## Treasurer

Trevor Hayes

2 Gypsy lane, Hunton Bridge, Kings Langley,  
Hertfordshire, WD4 8PR.

Tel: 01923 331975

Email: [hayes.trevor425@gmail.com](mailto:hayes.trevor425@gmail.com)

## Membership Secretary

Brian Jones

4 Bluebell Close, Pakefield, Lowestoft,  
Suffolk, NR33 7EH

Tel: 01502 567524 / 07772247295

Email: [813jones@talktalk.net](mailto:813jones@talktalk.net)

## Flashpoint Editor

Reg Metcalfe

18 Pategill Court, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 8LN

Tel: 07368 890687

Email: [advisorp@btinternet.com](mailto:advisorp@btinternet.com)

## Assistant Flashpoint Editor

Steve Harrison

58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ

Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568

Email [silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com](mailto:silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com)

## Remembrance Parade Co-ordinator

Paul Murray

Sweet Apple Cottage, 5 Upper Weald, Calverton,  
Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK 19 6EL

Tel: 01908 261254 / 07866 940689

Email: [pmurr7753@gmail.com](mailto:pmurr7753@gmail.com)

## Web Master

Dave Kirk

1 Fyling Road, North Yorkshire, YO21 3NA

Tel: 01947 604613

Email: [webmaster@rafanddfs.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@rafanddfs.co.uk)

## AREA CO-ORDINATORS

The Co-Ordinators Committee Member

Vacant

### Lincolnshire

Steve Harrison

58 Gospel Gate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ

Tel: 01507 355740

Email: [silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com](mailto:silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com)

### Cornwall, Devon & Somerset

Terry Mortimore

32 Newbridge, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3LX

Tel:

Email: [terry\\_mortimore@yahoo.com](mailto:terry_mortimore@yahoo.com)

### North West & Wales

Vacant

### North

Robert Atkinson Member 108

4 Fairway, Stella Park, Blaydon, Tyne and Wear, NE21 4LL

Tel: 0191 4148176

### Norfolk

Vacant

### RAF

Steve Shirley MBE Grad I Fire E

16 Rutland Way, Scampton, Lincoln, LN1 2UJ

Tel: 07912 658402

Email: [steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk](mailto:steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk)

### South

John Hurl

34 Copt Elm Close, Charlton King, Cheltenham,  
Gloucestershire, GL53 8AE.

Tel: 01242 522503

### London

Vacant

### Scotland

Alec Robertson

12 Kinclavin Crescent, Murthly, Perth, PH1 4EU.

Tel: 01738 710487

### Cambridge & Suffolk

Vacant

### Northern Ireland

Kenneth Green

2 Brooklands Drive, Whitehead, Carrickfergus, Antrim,  
Northern Ireland.

Tel: 01960 372595

### Essex

Vacant

## Lockdown Artist

Ava aged 9 who is the daughter of Kev Brereton and likes to come to the museum and help decided to do this artwork with Playdough. Well done Ava.

# THE SILVERFOX" RAMBLINGS

So here we are in spring 2021 and we are still must deal with the fallout which Covid 19 has brought us. Still, spring; "The Season of New Beginnings" and let's hope by the time you are reading this magazine there is a glimmer of hope and some sort of normal life will return to us.

Thanks again to those who contacted me reference the last Flashpoint and thanks to those have sent some articles to me, if it does not appear in this edition it will in the next. On to which I am pleased to announce that Reg Metcalfe will be taking over again as Flashpoint editor with me as his assistant. So together we can continue with bringing your stories to print. Although Reg is taking the lead, I will be there to support him. So, you can send your submissions to either one of us and we will co-ordinate everything. I hope you really keep coming up with your tales and support Reg, as that was part of the reason why he resigned before. I have been blessed with content since I took over so keep it coming for Reg please. As I have said before, it is your magazine,

it is you that makes it, the editors' job is to gather it together and the final work is down to Focus 4 Print in York, who always produces a good product.

Again, we have lost some more of our fellow fire-fighters and because of the current situation it is sad that funerals cannot be attended to pay our respects. A tribute to two of our fire-fighter's was able to be made as the museum attended with a vehicle and you can read about that in the museum update.

So, I hope you enjoy this edition, it was great to get another story from a fireman's wife perspective and a story from an ex-Army Fire Service veteran, there is also a ghost story and much more. The museum update is sad news indeed, but the volunteers are still trying hard to remain positive. We have had several Zoom meetings and been together, although virtually has brought us some strength. Although the museum is closed it still needs your support because we still must pay insurance and although our storage is free now it is coming up to a time when

we must start paying. If you are able then please join the standing order support scheme, even if it is £5 a month it will help us to preserve your history. Thanks to you all that already contributes.



Finally, let us hope that the re-union in November still will go ahead and we can meet up again and although I am standing down as editor, I am still aware of my responsibilities as Vice President and will do the best I can to keep this Association going forward in orders to survive. Although most of the calls I get are about the Flashpoint some have been just for a chat and we always manage to pull up a few sandbags and have a laugh. Again thanks for your continual support and I wish you and your families well and stay safe.

## RAF Firefighters tackle blaze in the Middle East

10 Nov 2020

Royal Air Force Firefighters based at a Coalition Airbase in the Middle East have successfully dealt with a blaze that broke out in one of the buildings at the base.

The fire caused by a faulty air-conditioning unit was quickly brought under control by the RAF Firefighter team of four and their prompt actions meant the situation, which had the potential to escalate quickly remained a minor incident. As a result there were no casualties and no impact on Coalition Operations.

The RAF Firefighters are deployed on a four month rotation and provide fire fighting cover at the coalition base. One of the Firefighters has only recently graduated from the Defence Fire Training and Development Centre and this was their first operational deployment.

"I was excited to use the knowledge I had learnt throughout my training, I carried out search procedures to identify the fire room and carried out offensive firefighting tactics to extinguish the fire. The result was the fire was contained to a single room, preventing further damage to the

building."

When the RAF Firefighters first arrived on the scene they were met with high levels of smoke throughout the building and had to don their breathing apparatus before carrying out a search of the building to find the fire and ensure nobody was trapped.

The team provide fire cover for a range of different military aircraft and buildings at the coalition airbase. They have been regularly involved in practice exercises with the host nation to test their joint procedures.



Another of the RAF Firefighters said: "It was brilliant to be able to react and produce a successful response from an emergency service within a coalition environment. This highlights the effectiveness and adaptability of the RAF Fire and Rescue Service."

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Steve

Just been looking through a couple of back issues of Flashpoint and one in particular (autumn 2018) were a Brian Edward Jones (791) wrote about a Vulcan crash at RAF Cottesmore

30th January 1968, I remember the crash quite well as I was the first on the crash site with the 5A, and producing foam from two hoses, on the end of the hoses were two firemen who had not long come from Catterick, I in my hurry to get the fire out had parked over some pyrotechnics which were going off under the vehicle, The ACRT was on its way to the village of Exton looking for the Co pilot and as Mr, Jones says the pilot was court in some high voltage cables having ejected late unfortunately four crew members were killed and as for the two new recruits you could say it was a baptism of fire for them and something that they or I will ever forget

*Clive Bunting (membership No, 1143)*

## HELLO TO NEW MEMBERS



It's another way in keeping in contact with old friends and hopefully you can share your experiences with us all through the Flashpoint magazine.

A warm welcome to:

- 1148 Robert Jones
- 1149 Julian Derrick
- 1150 Martin Carnell
- 1151 Steve Robinson
- 1152 David Lewis
- 1153 David Beecroft
- 1154 James Camaron-Clark

## CAN YOU HELP?

When I was perusing the RAFA magazine AIRMAIL Jan/March edition I was surprised to see in the notice section from two ex RAF Firefighters. The notices were as follows.

Does anyone know of Slim Betts, or any others, who served at RAF Benson in the Fire and Cash Rescue Section under Flight Sgt Proctor? Then at RAF Ta Kali Malta, again, under Flt Sgt Proctor and Flight Lieutenant Peter King. Peter and I played for the rarely beaten Ta Kali Hawks rugby union team. I also played at RAF Benson, Transport Command and Malta Command teams. If you can put anyone in touch with me I would be most grateful. SAC John (Jock) Smith 4245475 email: [smithmelbourne@icloud.com](mailto:smithmelbourne@icloud.com).

The second was from SAC Archie (Paddy) Hartin and he was looking for ex servicemen who would have been stationed in Iraq, Catterick, Locking or Ballykelly between 1957 and 1962.

Eddie (Jock) Monroe, Dia Reece, Brian (Chunky) Willis, Geordie Railton, Reg Woodward, Paddy Keenan, Charlie Bolton, Jock Bell, Gerry Frith and Alex Southgate. Call 01159050162 or email: [kellyhartin@hotmail.com](mailto:kellyhartin@hotmail.com).

I have contacted Eddie Monroe for Archie but if you can help in any way it would be appreciate

## Obituaries



Yet more of our fire- fighting comrades who we have shared our lives with have passed on.

*“We will remember them, for as long as we live they will live on as well”*

Those lost to us are listed below and this includes both association members and non members. Our thoughts and prayers are with their loved one. Rest in Peace.

- Owen Hughes 347
- Leonard Arthur Perren 1066
- Nigel Smith 264
- Mike Stainer 300
- Simon Worsfold
- Nick Nichol
- Jerry Field
- Ray Hunt
- Ray Fearnley
- Paul Hughes
- Dave Thomas (CAA)
- Jess Jessop 133

# OUR PETER

Way back in 1967 we were 2 young men, Richard (Dick) Parker 17 and Robert (Bob) Feather 18 who met for the first time at Royal Air Force Catterick School of RAF Fire fighting.



After completing the trade training course both were posted to RAF Marham in Norfolk. On arrival at the camp we were eventually allocated our barrack block which overlooked the Parade Square.

After a short settling in period both in the block and at the Fire Section and being on shift pattern we soon realised getting up in the mornings was an issue as neither of us had an alarm clock. So, we decided to go buy one from the NAAFI shop. Being rather young and not having much money we couldn't buy a clock each so we went halves. For the life of us we can't remember how much it cost.

The clock has 2 bells and seriously makes a noise when the alarm goes off and when the alarm went off in the billet, I don't

think anyone, overslept!!

Over a period of time the clock became famous in the room because Dick and I never referred to it as a clock. It was always PETER. Peter is the name on the clock which was made in Germany, (I've since found out Peter clocks are classed as

Vintage).

When guys from our room asked to borrow the alarm clock, we always refused them. They would keep asking and getting no joy. Eventually they twigged it and came and asked to borrow 'Peter' then we would let them borrow it. 'Peter' stayed with us, until Dick decided to leave myself and 'Peter' to get married. I carried on using 'Peter' at Marham till eventually I was posted to RAF Sharjah at the end of 1970. Guess what! 'Peter' came with me, no way was I leaving it behind. After Sharjah, it came with me to RAF Catterick where I was on Permanent staff. Sometime later I was demobbed and 'Peter' came home with me.

It is still with me now even after 53 years



and is still working perfectly although a little TLC wouldn't go amiss.

As this picture shows Dick and I are still friends to this day and see each other regularly and after all this time we still reminisce about 'Peter' the clock. Even at the beginning it gave us so much fun and entertainment and to this day still amuses us.

*Bob Feather*

## Dutchy's Sporting Moments

Pete "Dutchy" Holland spent some time at RAF Yeadon which is now Leeds and Bradford Airport and indulged in both football and cricket.



He recalls that the football team he played in there were only two English lads and the rest were Scottish carrying out their National Service and many playing for Scottish teams and that the team did well in league and competitions.

Dutchy is one the top row on the left on the far right is Warrant Officer Sharkey, a perfect gentleman.

The image of the RAF Yeadon's cricket team was taken at Pudsey with Dutchy back row second left.



*The badge was worn on the football shirt*

# The best deployment I ever had



*Divulje Barracks, Croatia from a Chinook*

I joined the RAF Fire Service in 1987 and in the 23 years that I served, I was deployed out of area (OOA) 7 times. One of the most stand out tours I did was in 2000 when I was deployed to Divulje Barracks in Croatia. The barracks were near a beautiful town call Trogir, and was a multinational heliport base. The detachment was part of the NATO stabilisation force (SFOR) with many countries having their own little piece of the base. There was a wide selection of helicopters operating from different countries: Chinooks, Lynx, Hue's, MH53 (Jolly green giants), hips, gazelles, Blackhawks to name a few. When I received my draft notice, I did not have a clue where it was. All I knew was what the media had reported on in the region and the previous war in the early nineties. In the late nineties it had kicked off again due to Kosovo and Serbia went to war, as Kosovo sought independence. Both conflicts were terrible wars that raged in the region. The pictures and accounts of ethnic cleansing, war atrocities, and human suffering showed the very worst of human nature.

Before I was deployed I had to attend pre-deployment training at the RAF Regiment depot in Honington. As per normal within the RAF it was a week's course condensed into 2. Most of the time it was listening to Regiment type chaps, recalling experiences that they had in Tesco's one week and akin it to a war scenario. They would then add their own take on heroic efforts leaving no wriggle room to challenge because they were as good as any 'Special forces'. To be fair to our once brethren they weren't all complete Pomme de Terre OTAN (NATO

potatoes), but there was always the John Rambo who has been no further afield than the main gate.

Anyway the course took its toll on my attention span and believable scenarios, I actually thought well what would I do if my helicopter went down in a minefield, after being hit by a missile due to us straying off course in snow wind and rain wearing just my flip flops, Hawaiian shirt and Bermuda shorts, with just a mars bar and a packet of weatherproof matches???? No worries I have my tent peg and several pieces of metal with a small piece of mine tape attached which would guarantee my safety!

Right, course over so I got ready to deploy. Ensured I had weatherproof matches and a tent peg in my fire kit and flew over to Split airport from Lynham. My perception of the place was nothing like how it actually was. As I stepped off the C130 it was 40 degrees, sunny and had the look of a holiday destination you see on the TV. The actual barracks were an old Warsaw pack flying boat base. It was on the banks of the Adriatic Sea, with palm trees and dusty grassless verges. The buildings were not in the best of conditions but as with any deployment you made it your own little piece of home.

When I got there, we were housed in an old barrack block, hot, humid and no privacy. Thankfully we soon took occupancy of a coromec complex 'The ponderosa' (modular ISO containers converted to toilets, bunks etc.) which was sited behind the Army Air corps disposal. (We will come onto those chaps later!)

Work wise we were housed in the old air traffic control tower next to a large ramp where the flying boats used to taxi in. We shared the building with the RAF Police as well as the coromec complex we had inherited. It was 2 crews of four with a corporal and 3 SAC's. When I got there the SNCO in charge was Jack 'Sunbed' Ashworth, but he was soon to be replaced by Ian 'Soppy' Sopp. I was the Cpl crew commander and spent the majority of my tour with 3 great characters, Jason Fletcher, Neil Bulbeck and Ray 'Paddy' O'Hare. Opposite me on the other crew was one of the best I ever worked with and still good friend today Steve 'Top Man' Wiles. He was replaced mid tour with another great character who I first met when I got posted to North Luffenham, Paul 'Chadders' Chadwick. Online we had one of the Queens Flight Scania's Helicopter Support vehicles and a Mk10. The Scania was still blue from its Queen's flight days but both were liveried up with SFOR on all sides. The Scania was obviously crash 1 because it was the coolest and best fun to drive. We also used it to tow the baggage carts to the helicopters because the section also doubled up as a departures lounge for the passengers going in country. It was very busy in that respect as we managed all the aspects of loading baggage, briefing passengers, transport to the aircraft and loading unloading. We would get the days planned moves in the morning from ops and go from there. Sometimes we would be looking after 15-20 flights in a shift. All day work though, no night flying passenger wise. Kit wise the blue fluffy crash kit had



*The 'Ponderosa' living complex*



*Divulje Barracks RAF Fire Section*

just come in so this was way too hot to wear all the time. Whilst on standby our dress was black T shirt, cut off tailored combat trousers with green socks and a pair of silver shadows! Prior to going, I had the heads up about this but being a useless pecker in sewing got my mum to take up a pair of combats. Remember my first shift adorning what I thought was a decent look then the lads came out with the combats cut of just above the knee. Mine however looked like hot pants so great first impression. They pissed themselves laughing! Soon got down to the squippers to adjust the other pairs I had bought out with me. Until the Mk2 were ready, I still had to go around camp though when at work, dressed in hot pants looking as though I had just filmed an episode of 'Fame'

Shift wise was pretty routine and I soon learned the ins and outs of the deployment. One of the duties I took over was the running of the bar on camp, how we got that I will never know but what a secondary duty!!!!

During the tour, we used to get a lot of stick from a certain Army Air Corps SSM. To be honest I think he hated the ground we walked on because I do not think he liked how we dressed. One morning this SSM stopped Sopyy and inquired why he was dressed like that, who gave him permission etc.etc. Sopyy quick as a flash replied 'Well if you join the RAF Fire Service you can wear this too!' RAF 1 AAC 0.

In the mornings we regularly had the CO come to the section and sit and have a brew with us, a Wing Commander, cannot

remember his surname but first name was Steve. Well one morning he came and sat down, and had a brew when he asked me whose vehicle was parked in front of the servicing hangar. Now although we were a heliport base, we used to get light aircraft come in and use the tarmac in front of this hangar to the dispersal as a make shift runway so we had to keep it clear. I said I think it belongs to the AAC. 'Can you please go and ask them to move it'. 'No problems Sir' and off I went. Got to this SSM's office, politely knocked on the door and conversation as follow:

SSM - What the F\*\*K do you want?

Me - Good morning Sir, is that your vehicle outside

SSM - So f\*\*ckin what if it is

Me - Could you move it please Sir, as it is on the aircraft manoeuvring area

SSM - I will move it when I am f\*\*ckin ready

So back to the section I go, bit of a smile but job done. Gets back and sat back down. After a couple of minutes:

Stn Cdr - Did you ask them to move it?

Me - Yes Sir

Stn Cdr - What did they say?

Me - Erm well I spoke to the SSM said he would move it. He was a bit rude to be honest

Stn Cdr - What did he exactly say?

Me - Well he said that he would move it when he is f\*\*ckin ready.

CO - Go and tell him exactly this 'From the Station Commander to move it f\*\*ckin now'

So, off I go with a lot of excitement and feeling very empowered. Back into the SSM's office where I knock again on the door

SSM - What the F\*\*k do you want now, I have f\*\*kin told you I will move it when I am f\*\*ckin ready

Me - Excuse me Sir but from the Station Commander 'Move it f\*\*ckin now'

His face dropped, no more words came out and I left with a spring in my step. Think the vehicle had disappeared before I even sat down to take a satisfying long slurp of my tea! RAF 2 AAC 0

There were lots of other incidents but by the end of my tour the RAF had spanked the AAC.

Off duty time was spent sunbathing at the Ponderosa, at the beach jet skiing or going off in the welfare mini bus visiting places around the area. One stand out place (pic next instalment) was called KRKA where you travelled to a fresh water waterfall via paddle boat along a valley. Unbelievably beautiful place. We went as a watch one off duty day and one of the best days I can remember during my service. As we used to get the flight details for moves we could book another good perk, a flight on a cab to go on a jolly or a CD run. At places like Banja Luka there were stalls outside the camp selling copied CD's. Big business as there were thousands on offer all at cheap prices. They were good quality too to be fair. If you bought 10 you would get one free so whoever went on the CD run, got the free ones for going. Still got those I came back with years ago, and they work!! It was a good perk actually because on an off-duty day you could virtually go anywhere in country. I personally went to Banja Luka, Sipovo, Tuzla, Gornji Vakuf and Sarajevo to name a few. Used to get a bit of ramp riding in on the chinook. At a NATO base in Tuzla, the Americans had set it out like a wild western town, bloody impressive place!

Well that is all for now, too much to put in for 1 instalment! Next instalment will contain Bar-B-Que with my Mother, The birdman of Divulje Barracks and 'What's going on?'

*Kev Brereton*



*'Cabs' Ready for another day*

# GHOSTLY GOINGS ON AT RAF MARHAM

Do I believe in ghosts I once was asked, "No I don't" I replied. But after a night shift in the RAF Fire Service I had to reassess my thoughts on ghosts.

Whilst sleeping in the locker room come dormitory, at the fire section of RAF Marham circa 1968, ghostly happenings did occur.

I was on domestic duty with Cpl George Lamont and five very lucky lads of the fire picket. Our so, called, dormitory was situated next to the ablutions, (toilets for those educated people). During this particular night's duty, I was in bed with George, albeit not literally as he was on the bottom bunk and myself up top, as I remember it. Well into a deep sleep, I heard the sound of squeaking, at first, me in my drowsy state, thought we had a room full of mice. But mice don't speak or do they?

The squeaking sound I heard seemed to be of someone wearing plimsolls walking across the dormitory floor. That is what we wore in those days not trainers. As with most of the fire section floors, where polished, it was highly polished. Anyway, as the sound seemed to be getting near me, I tried look to and see what it was that had disturbed me. Bearing in mind that the room was the blackest of places at night, it was difficult to see anything. Still I did look and I thought I saw someone standing at the end of the corridor.

As I looked towards the end of the small corridor, which was virtually next to the ablutions door, I could just about make out a whitish outline. Thinking it was a member of the fire picket, I asked the individual what he was doing to which the reply came "only going to the toilet". With that, it disappeared through the doorway, along with the squeak to the ablutions. It was only what a seemed a short time when I could hear the squeaking moving again and eventually it stopped. After thinking, I must ask in the morning who that was, I again fell asleep.

The next morning, I told George about it, he was not impressed with the story, "dreaming" he said. "I don't think so" I replied. My next step was to seek out the 'lucky five'. Determined as I was to find out who or what that made the noise.

One by one, I spoke to them, asking who had been walking about during the night in their plimsolls and then telling them my story about the noises I had heard. Each one of them indicated it was not them.

After, pressurising each of the persons, and with an answer to which I was not, totally happy with. This then left me with a mystery. Was I 'dreaming' or did any of the fire picket just not remember their trip during the night. I could not take it in, that nobody could remember getting up during the night.



After much thought and discussions with many other RAF Firemen at Marham I finally came to the conclusion George was right, I was 'dreaming' -or was I!

It had been rumoured for many years that the fire section at Marham was haunted. There were many unexplained happenings, and still today! I cannot bring myself to believe it was a 'ghostly going on'. But, there again, it could have been a friendly ghost that was looking over the fire section at R.A.F. Marham.

*Bob Feather*

*(Bob, having spent some four plus years at Marham I can definitely confirm that there was some sort of "Atmosphere" about the place at night. Bas Bennett (RIP) was always spooked. Also the fact that W.O. Charlie Framingham's ashes were interred at the fish pond didn't help (Ed)*

## Book Recommendations

Here are a couple of books which you may consider. Both are from ex RAF Fire- Fighters, the first is from Gordon Frederick Coggon. Although it is a story of his life, many of the chapters tell his adventures in the RAF Fire Service of 22 years and among them the poignant story of the atomic bomb trials on Christmas Island which affected his life. Printed by Amazon in soft back, the ISBN is 9798574845400 and all the profits go

to LABRATS International who has helped many veterans throughout the world by uniting them in their cause for justice against some governments, who still after seventy years have not given nuclear veterans any recognition.

This second book is by ex Warrant Officer Neal Moss who many of you may know. I have been friends with Neal since 1976 when our paths crossed at RAF Laarbruch in Germany and we have remained friends ever since. Since his retirement he has concentrated on publishing his poems in one volume after many years been published in periodicals and magazines. Yorkshire born Neal lives with his wife Iris in Devon; these poems reflect the gentleness and harshness of the natural world. This is also published by Amazon ISBN 9798682577279. Although there are no fire fighting poems in the book, however there is one from the Falklands:

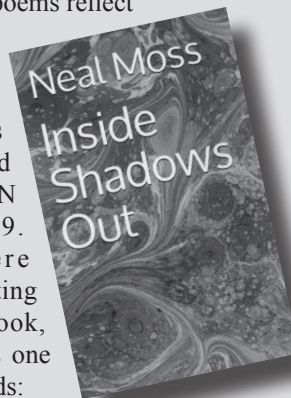
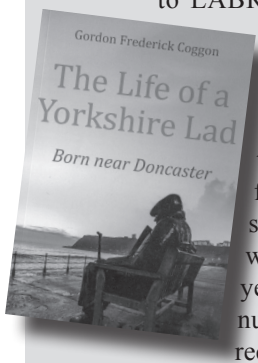
Bleakest Terrain  
A frozen landscape  
Ice clear skies

The oceans wind  
Cutting sharp through all  
and eyes cry

Hard frozen ice  
Lies thick on ponds  
and southern seas,

Whilst everything  
is obscured by snow  
swirling around

A bitter land  
Desolate harsh cold  
numbed so cold





It has been quite a while since I wrote a web site report, and with the ever-growing popularity of Facebook it may look like it has been in decline in recent years. However, I would like to assure the membership that improvements, updates and additions have been going on behind the scenes despite the many difficulties that are thrown at us by the IT giants that ultimately control what goes on the World Wide Web. Furthermore, unlike Facebook, the web site provides a relatively permanent platform on which we can record our history and memories for generations to come, and with that in mind I would like to use this article to remind everyone who is out there on the site and invite readers to contribute to its content.

If you go to [www.rafanddfsa.co.uk](http://www.rafanddfsa.co.uk) you will find the Home Page, from which you can navigate to 17 other top level pages all using the same navigation buttons. While most are self explanatory, I would like to highlight some of the content in the hope that others will share their interest and help me develop the site further.

Examples are:

## • **Articles of Interest**

This is a page where anyone can share a subject that may be of interest to others of our ilk. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have something you'd like posted.

## • **Biographies**

This is a page where you can share accounts of your service life. It doesn't have to be your full life story and short humorous anecdotes are particularly welcome.

## • **Flashpoint**

As well as contact details there are 36 back issues you can read in pdf format. Contents of the pdfs come up in Google searches and often lead to queries from internet users.

## • **History**

I have compiled a brief history dating from the early origins of our trade up until the 21st century. I'm always looking for more input so please send anything you think needs to be added, in particular, the changes that have taken place since Fire Study 2005.



## • **Incidents**

This is a page where you can read about a selection of jobs our members have been on and written about. Again, anything of interest would be gratefully accepted preferable with photographs.

## • **Memories**

This page provides links to seven sub-pages each of which contain lots of galleries of photographs from units all over the world. At the moment we have well over 4000 images from about 250 locations available to browse. Some places also have snippets of information added, and links to informative sites relating to their history. Unfortunately some these sites may have changed addresses or become defunct over the years, so there will be a few broken hyperlinks cropping up. If you have any pics you would like to share please send best quality scans to [webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk).

## • **Museum**

This Page has information and photographs of vehicles and items contained in the museum collection. We work closely with the museum volunteers and sincerely hope that they find a permanent home before too long so that we can update with good news and visit when it is safe to do so.

## • **Obituaries**

It is a sad reality that we are an aging community and all too often I am called upon to post death notices. At the time of writing the number of entries is around 230. If you need to notify us of the passing of a comrade please include as much information as possible so that a

fitting tribute can be posted. Such things as funeral arrangements, service history and a photograph are useful.

## • **Reunions**

Details of up and coming reunions and general meetings are posted on the Reunions Page. There are also some archive memories of previous get-togethers.

## • **Shop**

Unfortunately we do not have a dedicated shop member at the moment, but there is a catalogue of merchandise that may be available so please get in touch with the treasurer if you are interested in making a purchase. More importantly, if you would be prepared to take over the running of the shop please get in touch.

## • **Vehicles**

The vehicles pages provide information and galleries of vehicles used in our profession dating back from 1940s up until present day, and there are round about 1000 images of appliances on the pages within this section. If anyone has any more they would like to share please get in touch. I would particularly like more information and photographs of the new generation of vehicles recently introduced.

I do get some input through Facebook but a lot of images are just photos snapped with a mobile phone camera and shared that way, often distorted and of low quality. If you do have any good photographs that you would like to share, could you please make high quality scans and send them to [webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk).

Because of the amount of files uploaded to the site it takes up a lot of web space which means the cost of hosting and domain registration is close to £300 a year. While that eats into our association funds I'm guessing it would relate to small change in a big company's marketing budget so if anyone knows of a fire related company that may be interested in sponsoring our site please get in touch.

Any help and /or feedback would be gratefully received so please get in touch.

*Dave*

# A Fireman's Wives' Story

Back in 2016/17 I was pleased to receive a story from Norma Liburn's wife of Tom about her experiences. So I was delighted when I received another story from Elizabeth Walker, wife of George.

I had to laugh at her opening paragraph. I also served at Manby where I met my lovely wife and she had been given the same warning about getting mixed up with RAF lads. (ED)

I served for four years at R.A.F Manby, in the Safety Equipment Section, and there I met my future husband. Although we had been well warned about the risks of getting involved with any of the Fire Section, as they were rude, crude and out of control. However, I decided to take the risk. By June 1960 I was, in fact a fireman's wife. We started our married life living in a little flat in Mablethorpe with the mess manager and his wife as our neighbours. They were great company and told us many tales.

The flat below was a summer holiday flat and was let out to anyone that wanted to stay. All was well until three couples arrived from Jamaica. On their final night they had a wild time, the men in pyjama bottoms and the woman in theirs. They decided to swap, dancing around, and jumping in and out of the open windows. I thought of try to wake my husband in all honesty. The next morning when I told him what had happened, he barely believed me! As he left work the neighbours had risen early in order to speak with him. All I heard was "Did you see what went on downstairs?" IT seemed that everyone was aware of the wild time had!

Our next posting was to Malta, which was delayed as for our first son to come into the world. Like all males he doesn't like to be rushed. After landing we stayed in a hotel for a while and eventually found a house in Mosta. We found everyone genial and generally very friendly; I do have a memory of one occasion the landlady, ever thoughtful, realised that George was on duty and brought around some dinner for me. I was very surprised to find a dish full of fish heads!! Has anyone every tried to get rid of a dish of fish heads when the neighbours habitually go through the buns to find food for the animals – not an easy task, I can tell you. We moved three times on that tour.

Number two son arrived, of course he had to pick the night of the festive patron! The



George with others at RAF Binbrook

fireworks over there are big and certainly very loud. The Brits thought that World War three had started. Overall it was a great tour. We then received our posting back to the UK following friends to RAF Chivenor. The friends found us a flat, and we paid a month's rent, so all of our boxes were sent there. We then got a call to say that no RAF Firemen are stationed there – they are civvies. The husband goes off and the next that thing I hear is that he is at Pembroke Docks trying desperately to find our boxes. Once again we were on the move, this time to Wales.

We were put in a house with our two Sons and George came home at weekends when he had them off. Actually they were few and far between as he was the only fireman on camp. Finally the good news that we had been waiting for arrived. We finally had a quarter to move into and George spent most evenings at home.



Aden foam strip practice

Number three son arrived in the world and meanwhile George was posted to Binbrook, not the best timing, to say the least. I was thankful for the fact that I had a great friend who looked after my two sons while I had our third. After six hours I went home, I found George standing there! We packed up our houses and the kids and left for Binbrook the next day. Everything was going swimmingly; George had got the case and the two boys on the train. Off we went only to realise that the new baby had been left on the seat at the platform. All ended well and we were soon reunited, not to worry.

We lived in our new home which this time was a caravan. We unpacked what was needed and left the rest in boxes, which was just as well as we got a quarter very quickly. We settled in for the long stay with the eldest boy enjoying school. George then came home with the news that we are to be posted to Marham. Here we go again! We got a house straight away and settled in only to find that George had been posted to Aden for a year on his own.

Meanwhile, we were going into record quarters at Coningsby. I now think that as we left quarters in such a clean condition that they must have allocated us a dirty quarter so that we brought it up to a high standard for them. Our quarter at Coningsby was really very bad. For a year I could not move any furniture around as whoever had decorated it had painted around the furniture – of course with a different colour! The year went in and we were once again on the move to Cottesmore.

We were living in South Witham in a brand-new quarter with black polished tiles from the kitchen to the front door and grey carpets throughout the house. It was lovely. The only problem was that it was in the middle of a building site with mud up to the eyebrows. The garden was a rubble heap; complete with weeds the size of trees. With a lot of hard work, George got the garden up to a great standard with flower beds and even a greenhouse in the corner.

Guess what? We were on the move again, this time to Oxfordshire. Brampton was a lovely little place and we really enjoyed living there. Our three boys were doing well, enjoying school, and making friends. Before we knew, though, we were off to Germany. George left me to hand over the quarter and while he headed off for Germany. Well, I was waiting for the furniture lorry to arrive to take our stuff into storage before the family officer, arrived to complete the march out. I then got a message to say the furniture lorry taking all of our belongings into storage was not going to arrive. I'm pleased to say another fireman was living was our neighbour and was not on shift, thank goodness, so he helped make the arrangements for another company to pick up the goods. Firemen are great in emergencies, that's for sure!

Knowing that the tour was set for three years gave a feeling of stability and we arranged Schools, and I found a job. A great tour was had by all although our eldest son returned to England to attend boarding school. He settled very quickly but Mum did not, and I was very pleased to have him home for the holidays.

Later we lived in a holiday chalet in the middle of Holland. All was well until

winter set in. We woke one morning to find the top blanket on the bed was frozen and all the windows iced up too. Gosh, I remember how cold it was. Christmas arrived and as designated driver I drove to the NAFFI along with four other female companions to do some festive shopping. All went well until we tried to cross over the border at WEMB. My car keys were taken from me and I was taken to a back room for what seemed an eternity.

All I could think about was Georges face when the guards told him that I was going to be locked up for the festive season. In the end I was released. My four companions were not too chuffed while I had been felling nervous at least I had been in a warm guard room – they had been sat for hours in the cold car!

Towards the end of the tour we realised that we needed to sell our Opel car. An Army Sargent expressed an interest but wasn't keen to purchase from RAF folks it seemed. He made a terrible excuse that it had the wrong shaped lights. I had my revenge. Coming back from Holland and into the camp, who should be standing there but the self-same Sargent, standing there in the pouring rain next to his car which had clearly broken down. I stopped, wound down the window and said "You should have bought a car with round headlights – they are far more reliable I find", and drove off. Revenge really is sweet, and soaking wet sometimes, too.

Our next posting was to Scotland and we realised that we were looking forward to coming home. We moved, settle and I had found a lovely little job. One evening, not really that long after moving, George came home to announce that we were moving! Here we go again I thought, but at least

the posting was to RAF Kinloss, and we didn't have far to go. It was a great posting and our social life was filled with lots of great friends. George had been promoted and we really enjoyed the social scene at the Sergeants mess, it was second to none.

We lived at Forres, and our neighbour was really into his animals! One morning we walked out of the house to find that she has two horses in her postage stamped of a grassy garden! She had bought them in a moment of sheer enthusiasm, only later realising that she had nowhere to keep them. Needless to say, they had to find an alternative home, much to our relief. Our next posting was all too familiar – we were off to sunnier climes and the warmth of the Mediterranean: Cyprus.

Moving was less than smooth. First, we were all going together, and then the next thing George was going alone. Finally, a knock at the door on a Friday to say that we are to march out on the Monday! It was a mad rush, but we got there! The paperwork arrived with tickets to London: George had a sleeper and the boys and I a seat. I soon put that straight! We arrived in Cyprus only to be met by the Flight Sargent who said, "Don't unpack as you won't be staying"! All the quarters were empty and the powers that be had given us atwo-bedroomed quarter! When I asked where the eldest of our boys would be sleeping, I was told "The balcony!" Needless to say, that changed pretty quickly I can tell you. Life was just as good in Cyprus as it had been the first time but like all good things, it had to come to an end. It had been three years but we eventually came back to the UK and to RAF Wittering, where we bought our first home.

Not long after we settled, we received an invitation to attend a Birthday party from an old friend in Germany. We leapt at the chance to meet old companions and to see Germany again, and while we were there decided to buy our own country cabin. We had six very happy years out there sharing fun and laughter with our dear friends Dennis, Mick, Neil, Maurice, and John and, of course, their wives. Would I do it all again? Of course, in the blink of an eye and wouldn't change a thing either.

I'm writing this during lockdown, so I wish you all good health and happiness. Keep safe!

*Elizabeth Walker*



*RAF Akrotiri Fire Section line up*

# RAAF BUTTERWORTH



I first learned that I was posted to Butterworth while I was stationed at Ballykelly in Northern Ireland in 1965. The journey from there involved travelling by boat and train to London, then flying on a British Eagle Airways Britannia to Singapore. The flight was twenty three hours, staging through Bahrain and Gan; and we ran out of beer twice, not good. There then followed a five day wait in Singapore before catching a flight in a Bristol Freighter of the RNZAF, commonly known as Kiwi Airways, up country.

The airfield at Butterworth was originally laid out in 1939 on a care and maintenance basis, and RAF Butterworth was officially opened in 1941 ahead of the increasing threat of invasion by the Imperial Japanese forces. In December 1941 Sqn Ldr Scarf of 62 Squadron won the first VC of the Far East Campaign following an heroic sortie against Japanese forces in Thailand. I would urge anyone interested in such history to look it up on the internet. However, when the invasion came the station was still hopelessly ill-prepared and was subsequently captured by the Japanese who then occupied the facility up until the end of hostilities in September 1945. Following the surrender, the RAF resumed control of the airfield and Japanese POWs were used to repair the damage and improve the runways in preparation for resuming air operations in May 1946. Under the post-war restructuring RAF Butterworth became part of Far East Air Force (FEAF).

During the Malay emergency which lasted

from 1948 to 1960, units from the RAF, RAAF and RNZAF used Butterworth as a main operating base to attack communist guerrillas in the jungle. It was also used as a forward operating base by other squadrons based in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo. The Australian government played a big part in developing the base during the 1950s in order to bring it into line with the jet age, and at the end of the conflict it ceased to be an RAF Station and became known as RAAF Station Butterworth and later just RAAF Butterworth.

When I arrived in 1965 it was still a very busy airfield, serving as a main operating base for British and Commonwealth units patrolling the Malay peninsular and Malacca Straits during the Indonesian Confrontation, as well as being a staging post for all sorts of aircraft transiting between the Middle East and Australia, New Zealand and other FEAF assets. The Australians were flying Sabre, Mirage, Dakota and Canberra as well as the regular Hercules going from Australia to Vietnam and return. RAF aircraft included 60 Squadron Javelins, Varsitys, Vallettas, Twin Pioneers and a large amount of visiting aircraft which included Royal Navy Carrier-borne varieties and even Vulcan bombers on occasion. American service personnel also flew in regularly from Vietnam on Pan-Am DC6s. This was for R&R breaks on Penang Island, which were usually 4 to 5 days in duration.

Despite the fact that it was no longer an RAF Station, 50% of the servicemen on the airfield were still RAF or "RAF Element" as we were known at the time. On the Fire Section we only had two RAAF servicemen, Sgt Lofty Sweapman, and Cpl Ron Fuedaloff, who was a Yorkshire Aussie. On the RAF side we were led by WO Tam Patterson from Ceres in Fife who was a brilliant boss, well liked by all

under his command. There was also a Fire Station on the Bloodhound Missile Site commanded by FS John Arthur, who was also very well liked and later became the first President of the RAF&DFSA.

Hardly a day went past without some sort of aircraft incident. On one memorable occasion an RAF Twin Pioneer with two a RAF crew and two Army dispatchers, took off to supply air drops to the army in jungle forts. On reaching about 600 feet it stalled before crashing heavily into the paddy fields to the north of the runway threshold. Ginge Scurrrell was the crew commander that day, along with Cpl's John (Pompey) Kingston and Bob Webster; I was driving the Mark 5A with John Kingston. Luckily the Twin Pioneer did not catch fire, but had landed heavily in the paddy 200 to 300 yards into the fields. We stopped at the edge of the paddy fields and John said that I should stay with the wagon and relay all radio contact between the tower and the rest of the crash crew at the scene meanwhile he would help with the rescue of the aircrew. Before proceeding John asked me how deep were the paddy fields, to which I replied that the workers are only up to their knees in water. What John and I did not know, was that the ditch that ran all the way round the fields for draining and flooding the fields was very deep. A couple of hundred yards from where we were there was a narrow bridge into the paddy fields, but John decided to take the short cut over the ditch and as he stepped into it he disappeared completely under the water! A few seconds later he emerged muttering a few choice words regarding me sitting nice and dry as I watched. John never did let me forget his swim in that ditch.

On another day, when the Australian Sgt Lofty Sweapman was in charge of the crew, we were watching two American



*Twin Pioneer in the Paddy Field*



*I Tam driving a Mk5A*



*HMS Eagle Buccaneer having made wheels-up landing*

Sky Hawks coming into land. The first landed and deployed a drogue shoot. I remember asking Sgt Sweapman if they always deploy a drogue shoot to land, and he informed me yes they do to land. The second aircraft landed but no shoot deployed and I thought to myself 'what a load of waffle', but then watched the Sky Hawk travel down most of the runway, before both the starboard and the port wheels bust within a few seconds of each other, and then the Sky Hawk ended up in the Barrier at the end of the runway. Barrier engagements were quite frequent at Butterworth.

On the 17th July 1666 a Buccaneer that had been launched from HMS Eagle, steaming through the Malacca Straits suffered port engine surging which resulted in total hydraulic failure, so was unable to lower his undercarriage. We did not have foam layers at Butterworth, but while the aircraft burnt off fuel we did the best we could with the vehicles we had and in the end Sub Lieutenant Fred Secker executed a perfect belly landing. I remember afterward the aircraft was taken by road to the docks and shipped back to UK by boat. I also learned later that that particular aircraft had a tendency to keep RAF fire crews busy having had to make an emergency landing at Khormaksar after suffering a bird strike off Aden. However, after the Fleet Air Arm cuts in the early 70s it was transferred to the RAF Buccaneer Ground Servicing School at Honington and eventually burnt on the Fire Section burning area.

The Crash Bays at Butterworth were very primitive – just a corrugated roof supported on eight metal poles. We had no running water, but we did have a putting green and a Sappa Ragga court. Sappa Ragga was a Malaysian game, a bit like a cross between volleyball and football, only you use your

feet and head to get the ball over the net. The ball was made of woven cane and the Malays played in their bare feet while we played with our crash boots on.

The Fire Section also covered Penang Airport where we provided a two man crew operating an ACRT Dry Powder truck, Monday to Friday nights. This was primarily to cover for diversions when the Javelins were night flying, but wasn't pleasant as we used to get eaten alive by mosquitoes on such shifts.

I thought life at Butterworth was great. All of the fire section personnel lived in hirings at Chee Seng on Penang Island; Hillside and Vale of Temple being the main areas. You would have to pay a fortune to holiday in that area today. Buses were laid on to take us from the estates to Georgetown, the capital of Penang, then we got the ferry across to the mainland where a fleet of buses were on hand to take RAF and RAAF personal to the air base at RAAF Butterworth.

On the island there was a large Australian Hostel in a complex where all the necessary amenities were; such as Medical Centre,

Sports facilities etc, and of course the BAR, where drinks and meals were served. There was a sports night every Tuesday and Dances every now and then too, so It was a place we spent a lot of time at.

Anyone who was there then would not recognize the place now though. On a holiday with my wife I returned to Penang in October 2001 and to retrace old footsteps after 33 years away. Alas, it had all changed drastically, and Georgetown was almost unrecognisable. We stayed at the Shangri La Golden Sands hotel at Batu Feringhi beach, where in the sixties I would go fishing with John Kingston and Bob Webster. In those days we had the beach all to ourselves with only a grotty old wooden hotel to be found, but today it is very much tourist orientated with hotels and Restaurants everywhere, and a night market every night selling 100% genuine fake watches and T Shirts etc.

The Botanical Gardens, or as we referred to it in the sixties, the Monkey Park, was still much the same and still as nice. Also, Penang Hill was much the same with the funicular railway taking you to the top. The highest hill is Western Hill which is 2722 feet. The RAF & RAAF had a radar station at Western hill where one fireman was stationed; he had to travel there by funicular train or helicopter. The top of the hill had not changed much at all in the 33 years we were away, and from there you could make out Butterworth which is now a Royal Malaysian Air Force Base and the ferries going back and forth from Georgetown, though there is now a bridge to the mainland.

Pulau Penang - Pearl of the Orient.

*Tom Mc Corrie*



*Aerial shot of Butterworth with ATC Tower and Crash Bay centre and Penang in the background*

# A (Hopefully) Rare Event?



## RAF Geilenkirchen 25th June 1966.

It was the early hours of the morning when the bells went down! I'm straight out of bed and get my gear on. The fog of sleep soon vanishes and I start to get my thoughts in order. I'm soon out of my room and together with the rest of the crew head to the vehicles.

It doesn't take long to realise that somethings a wee bit amiss! Is that the smell of smoke? If it is then half the station must be on fire as we've not even got into the vehicle bays yet? Down the short corridor and through the double doors into the bays and then Wham! The smoke hit us! The bells are still ringing and then the Station Fire Alarm sounds through Tannoy. "Fire, Fire, Fire. There is a fire in the Fire Section"! "Fire, Fire, Fire. There is a fire in the Fire Section"!

Long story background! I loved the ATC (1430 (Formby) Squadron and intended to join the RAF when I was old enough but what as? I was attracted to a number of trades but couldn't decide until on a Summer Camp at RAF Swinderby (when it was a flying base) we visited the Fire Section. Talking to the guys it seemed that a lot of what they did was nothing! OK, one said, you polished a bit of this and a bit of that. You checked and painted extinguishers now and again and went and did a few drills and a bit of continuation training but essentially you stood by for something to happen. I was sold and in January 1965 I signed up.

I then head back to Swinderby which by then was Recruit Training and after the Square Bashing off to the Regiment Depot at Catterick. We were of course at that time part of the Regiment but essentially being

FRIDAY 24th JUNE 1966		
10.01	Fog opened,	
17.30	German crew change over,	
18.00	English crew change over, crew state as follows:-	
	<u>CRASH CREW</u>	<u>RELIEF CREW</u>
	SGT DART	SGT STANGOE
	SAC CAWLEY	SAC CURRIE
		<u>DOMESTIC CREW</u>
		FLT SGT RADFORD VC
		SAC PRICE,
		SAC PALMER
		SAC HARDY
		SAC BRANT DJF
	LEAVE - SAC BENNETT, SAC BRUTON, OFF-DUTY, SGT STAMP, SAC THORN AND CROSSLAND.	

so (apart from the flashes) meant nothing to us and I enjoyed the training. In fact I really enjoyed it.

That done and dusted I was posted to RAF Finningley. Wow! What a blast! Vulcan Operational Conversion Unit. The might and the power and the mass of those aircraft! The 'whine' so sweet! It was a joy see them take off and even more so to see them land and to pick up the 'chutes. Brake checks on landing were common as too hot brakes and numerous wheel brake fires. I loved it.

(A couple of years ago I was back in the UK and went to see the Vulcan at Robin Hood Airport. Wow! To stand under it and just even stroke the tyres! The memories!)

I went down to RAF St Athan early in '66 for driving training then straight on back up to Catterick for the 4x4 aspect.

Arrived back at Finningley to be told not to "unpack your bags" as you're on your way to Germany! The God's had smiled on me by giving me the posting I wanted and by the latter part of April I was at Geilenkirchen.

Geilenkirchen was the most southern of the 'clutch' stations right on the Dutch/German border. Based there were 3 Squadron Canberra's and No 92 Squadron Lightnings. The Canberra's carried US Nuclear Bombs and there were always two aircraft ready on two minutes notice

to retaliate if the Russians decided to have a go. The QRA Site as one would expect was very secure with the USAF Police ultra cautious! It was quite nerve wracking to go through their security system to check the extinguishers and even more so when in the aircraft bay and the guards accompanying you stood there with hands resting on their pistols!

Us single guys slept on the station rather than barracks. Station strength was 20 to 30 with half being made up of civilian German firemen. The Fire Section Building was set back from the airfield and consequently during flying operations the Crash Crew went out onto the airfield and took up a position halfway along the single runway. The Crash Crew was made up of a Sergeant an Airman and five Germans. The "Crash Bay" was nothing more than a large solidly covered truck and the only contact with the tower was via the vehicle R/T's which had to be monitored at all times by either the Sgt or airman. Consequently the reality was that the Germans made use of the truck and the Sgt and airman sat in either the ACRT or the foam vehicle. As can imagined it got very boring as about the only thing you could do was read or talk to each other. (A slight digression here! One of the Sgt's was Hal Stamp and could he tell stories! I "kid you not" that even during hot days sat in the vehicle with sweat dripping off you if he was telling a story set in winter

23-00	Fire Regiment returns to section
23-59	Nothing further to report. Log closed
SATURDAY 25th JUNE 1966	
00-01	Log opened.
00-03-04	Fire discovered by Sgt Price in Fire Section storeroom. PBX informed by Sgt Hart at 03:02 hours.
03-04	Station orderly office arrived at section with station Police vehicle.

27.

SATURDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1966 (Cont)

03:10	Fire under control by use of foam and water jets.
03:20	Fire extinguished. Watch being kept by Sgt Hart

you'd reach for your jacket as you'd start to feel cold! He was great!

The major vehicles were quite 'different' from the Mk6, 5A DP 1 and 2 that I was familiar with in that they were old diesel powered Mercedes and Magirus. They were as 'slow as' and you needed a degree in engineering to operate the pump. We left that to the Germans who drove and operated them. Manning of the vehicles was the Sgt and one of the Germans on the ACRT, the Airman with a German driver on the Major Foam Vehicle, a second vehicle with a single German driver and two Germans on a 3 Tonne Dry Powder Truck.

Anyway, back to the early hours of 25th June. The bells are still sounding and the Tannoy still blaring! The vehicle bays are full of smoke and as the vehicles are driven out it's soon easy to see that the fire is in the "Storeroom". It's a 6 vehicle bay with the storeroom and hose room on the right hand side of the bays as you come out of the sleeping accommodation.

The door to the "Storeroom" had been burnt through and flames are now licking the ceiling of the bays. Smoke is thick and is being fed by the air entering from the shattered outside windows. "It's a good un"!

In no time foam from a 10X is brought into play and the fire though fierce is soon brought under control and then quickly extinguished. My first domestic fire is done and all but dusted!

So, the postscript!

The "Storeroom" was in reality a storeroom, a paint locker, a workshop, a hobbies room. It was also used as a kitchen mainly by the German firemen and had a stove and fridge therein so nigh on everything was in there.

"Staff" Price who discovered the fire liked a beer or two! He'd arrived back on station in the early hours and fancied a brew and perhaps something to eat and headed

that way. As the story goes he then shot (staggered?) back to the Sgt's room and started to tell him there was a fire. "Price! You're pissed! Go to bed!" "No Sarge, the station's on fire!" "Price, Bed, Now or I'll have you in the Guardhouse!" "No Sarge honest, the place is on fire!" Eventually Bill (?) Dart got up to check and the rest is history!

We developed broad shoulders and a philosophical attitude taking all the stick from around station over this. What was hard to take though was the fact that the Fire Officer (Regiment) then instructed that the Duty Fireman remain awake all night and make hourly walk round checks of the station! This went on for a couple of months until wisdom prevailed.

Geilenkirchen closed January 1968. I came across the Occurrence Book when packing the last few bits and pieces in the station and couldn't resist removing these pages of history!

Finally (for those few of you who are perhaps still reading) my time to date in a nutshell! From Geilenkirchen I went to

Gutersloh until the end of '68. Then to Gaydon, Changi, Northolt and discharged in March '74. Within a fortnight of discharge I was in NZ and soon working at Christchurch Airport. But the call was too great and into the RNZAF I went and did 18 years with them before finishing the last 20 years of my working life at Wellington Airport. During all my service I went to numerous brake fires, engine fires, cockpit smoke, barrier engagements, wheels up, car crashes, car fires, bird strikes, chimney fires, kitchen fires, bush fires, cardiac arrests etc, etc and sad to say a fatal Skyhawk crash!

However, "Fire, Fire, Fire! There is a Fire in the Fire Section" was the best (or worse?) domestic fire I attended.

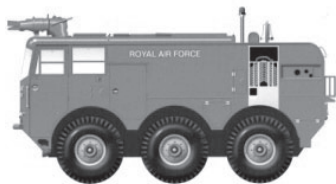
Phil Cawley

*Thanks Phil for a really interesting and amusing story, maybe not many fires in fire sections but a few close calls. I can remember a few times that I have had to radio ATC and asked if they could turn the cooker off while out on a State 2. But on entry on the last page of the occurrence book in the article creased me up. "08.35 SAC Crossland finished in the toilets," there was no mention in the previous page when he went in. (My sense of humour, sorry) ED*

MONDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1966.

08:00	F/Sgt Rufford and domestic crew arrive at section	CRASH CREW	DOMESTIC CREW
		SAT STAMP	SAC CROSSLAND O/K
		SAC Cawley	SAC PRICE
		+ 5 GERMANS	SAC HARDY
08:05	German firemen booking out trailers		SAC
	Crossland cleaning toilets		
08:10	Crash alarm test. "S"		
08:30	Flight Commander arrives on section.		
08:35	SAC Crossland finished in toilets		
08:40	Flight Commander leaves section.		
10:00	NAAFI break.		
10:15	NAAFI break over.		
11:00	SAC Crossland to lunch.		
12:00	SAC Crossland returns to section. Domestic crew to lunch		
12:55	Domestic crew report for duty		
13:35	SAC Crossland instructing fire pigquet.		
3:40	SAC Crossland finished instructing fire pigquet.		
13:45	Station Board of Enquiry arrives at section.		
13:48	Flight Commander arrives at section.		
14:20	Command fire officer arrives at section.		
15:00	Station Board of Enquiry leave section. Domestic crew clearing out the workshops		

# A Mark 6 Recovery (An Easy Job!!!!)



A team from the Museum of RAF Firefighting recently travelled to West Sussex to recover a Mk6c Alvis Salamander previously owned by ex RAF fire-fighter Dave Jenkins. Sadly, Dave passed away earlier this year and his widow Sandra contacted Trevor Hayes and Roger Brooks who then got in touch with us and told us that Sandra was prepared to offer the vehicle to us as a donation.

Dave had purchased the vehicle from an MOD disposal site back in 1986. He recovered it to his home where he basically built a shed up around it. Here it sat with Dave tinkering with it for the next 34 years! During this time we don't think it moved under its own power although there is evidence that Dave had the engine running as he'd fitted a bypass radiator system, presumably because there was a fault with the vehicles own system?

Given the long distances involved, Roger kindly visited Sandra and carried out a recce of the site and the vehicle. Dave had collected quite a bit of extra kit and Sandra was keen for us to take this as well.

They say the camera never lies, but a lesson for us all is that perhaps it does quite tell the whole truth! What we failed to realise from the pictures was that the only real access to the property was nearly half a mile away from the shed where the vehicle was stored and also that several trees had grown up since the vehicle first arrived. Also, the hard standing ended from the shed end after 100ft and we'd have to go cross country to get to the gate where



we could meet our low-loader.

It all sounded so simple. Leave Lincolnshire, drive to West Sussex, meet low-loader, recover vehicle then drive home! Little did we know the challenges we were about to face! With the added complication of COVID, we travelled in separate bubbles. My daughter Amanda and I left Scampton at 04.00 and travelled to Alconbury where we rendezvoused with Simon Wilson who had travelled across from Tamworth. We then travelled to West Sussex. Gareth Jordan travelled from Heathrow to West Sussex with his son Gary and Gary's girlfriend Kinga. Our low-loader travelled from Pilham in Lincolnshire to West Sussex direct via

Brighton as he had another job to do on route (See TQF Article in winter 2020 Flashpoint.) Pip Martin travelled down from Dartford in Kent with a multitude of tools and also met us there.

Despite the logistics involved, we all arrived within 20mins of each other! Once on site, the enormity of the task hit us. The tyres were flat, the engine was in pieces and the shed roof was basically being held up by the Mk6!

We also saw that access was almost impossible as the property was bordered by a single track unsupported lane barely wide enough to get a car down let alone position a low-loader for a Mk6 recovery. Our original plan was to use the low-



*Some of the recovery team*





loader tractor unit to pull the Mk6 out of the shed but there was no way this was going to happen. Luckily, since Dave's passing, Sandra has been assisted by some of old friends and luckily for us, Tim and Malcolm were on hand to help us out throughout the day. Malcolm had access to a mini excavator which was kept on site so we decided to use that to pull the Mk6 from the shed. Trees had to be pruned, over hanging electrical cables had to be disconnected and taken clear. The tyres were pumped up using a compressor from Dave's nearby workshop. Chains were connected and then the moment of truth, would it move? It moved instantly, no brakes seized on which was amazing. Next problem, we had to support the roof whilst we pulled the vehicle clear. Luckily with some tie down strops and substantial bits of wood, the roof was supported and the vehicle pulled clear. She looked lovely as she saw the first proper light of day for years!

With no running engine there was no power steering so it took the efforts of Gary and Kinga to steer it manually whilst the rest of us acted as banksmen and overcame the various obstacles that stood in our way. It was exhausting work for all of us both mentally and physically as we inched our way across country for half a mile! Luckily, in true military tradition we had a brew kit with us and it was Amanda's job to keep us well hydrated and free from stress throughout the day.

That said, the real challenge came when we



needed to position the low-loader in that single track ready to accept its precious cargo. Using the Museum's van, complete with orange flashing lights, I went to the other access point at the bottom of the lane to block it off, whilst the presence of a low-loader and the crew in high visibility clothing at the entrance hopefully got the point across that no one could use this road for at least an hour. On the whole, most people were very understanding, but we did get the odd couple who needed convincing that we just couldn't stop what we were doing so that they could use the track as a short cut. Diplomatic skills

were definitely tested! Andrew Thorpe, our preferred haulier was, as always, very skilled in positioning the low-loader in a very tight space indeed, not helped by the fact that the lane was situated on a blind bend off a very busy dual carriageway. The job was dangerous, no doubt, but with good judgement and strict control measures in place we managed to get the vehicle through the gate and onto the low-loader with the aid, once again, of the mini excavator.

Once secured, we set off back for Scampton. The low-loader had to do an over-night stop due to driving hours but the rest of us arrived back at our various starting points later that evening. Amanda and I had done a round trip of 500 miles and endured an 18hr day! A good night's sleep was followed by an early start and a trip over to Scunthorpe to unload the new acquisition. Safely inside, we marvelled at the condition of this new display item, which was, very complete indeed.

We are so grateful to Sandra for donating this vehicle to the Museum, and she can take some comfort in knowing, that once restored, this vehicle will take pride of place and that the memory of her husband Dave, together with his passion for this vehicle, will live on for years to come.

May he rest in peace.

A massive thank you to all those involved in the recovery of this iconic piece of RAF Fire Service history.

*Steve Shirley*



# Museum of RAF Firefighting

Whilst sitting here putting the finishing touches to my “Flashpoint” update, the email that I’d been dreading has just popped up in my inbox! The news that we were expecting has finally been confirmed, the agreement to rent the showroom at Alford has fallen through. The company involved had been having difficulties during the COVID pandemic and as such had decided to sell off the site. Renting was not an option that they wished to pursue. Unfortunately for us, a buyer has been found and they have their own plans that don’t include us, so sadly, we will once again be moving. This is a massive blow to us all, but we have been dealing with rumours for the last few weeks that this was on the cards. With no new home to go to and a tight deadline to vacate the site (21<sup>st</sup> April) our thoughts have turned to storage rather than starting another museum project straight away. Saving the collection has always been the priority, and I must admit, Alford was actually causing us more problems than solutions. The vehicles are currently stored at five different locations due to the fact that the Alford building didn’t have the necessary door access and roof height to accommodate many of the larger vehicles. We have six vehicles under cover at another site and fourteen under cover at Alford. The rest of the vehicle collection is sadly stored outside under covers! We had hoped to open at Alford during the Easter holiday, COVID permitted, but of course this will now not happen. Luckily, in some ways, we hadn’t actually started the job of unpacking the artefacts so the actual physics of another move might be quite simple. It will be manpower intensive of course and we will need yet another convoy of low-loaders and curtain side trucks to move everything. We do have a storage site in mind and if we are successful in reaching

a deal with the owner, we should be able to get all of the collection back under cover. This will enable us to keep everything safe and dry whilst we re-group and think what to do next. Once again, we are down but not out.

Without wishing to sound like a broken record, the simple fact is that survival is linked firmly to finance. The vast sums of money required to rent property large enough to house the museum are beyond us unless we can get open to the public in order to generate an income. The continued revenue that comes from the standing order supporter scheme is more important than ever. I must say a massive thank you to all of you who have already signed up. Without you, we wouldn’t have survived this last year. That said, I’m still amazed at how many people haven’t heard of the scheme despite us putting in “Flashpoint” every chance we get and also on the front page of our website. People pay what they can. All of this money is vital to our day to day operation, as well as our future. Please think about joining the scheme so that in years to come we’ll be able to show our loved ones what we used to do for a living!

Thanks also to those of you who have made one off donations, your contribution cannot be underestimated!

If any of you have contacts in the haulage business or indeed know someone with a forklift truck that they could loan us, please get in touch. Both are essential for the move and we want to try and keep costs to a minimum. We have always had fantastic support from industry but we can’t keep asking the same people for help over and over again.



imagine, over lockdown, we haven’t been able to do a great deal of hands on work. We have been restricted to essential security checks at the various sites but that’s about it. That said, research requests from around the world have been coming in thick and fast and that has certainly kept us busy. We even had contact with a group in Buenos Aires who are restoring a Sun Thorneycroft Crash tender identical to ours. We thought we had the only one, but we’ve now discovered three. The other one is in Australia!

Another interesting enquiry centres on fire cover at Thor Missile sites. My contact is clearly an expert on the subject with contacts far and wide including NASA! He was desperate to fill in the only gap in his knowledge, namely what vehicles were provided for fire cover? The DP1a was conceived and adapted to do such a task and luckily there are several illustrations in the AP that we have in the library. These have been scanned and sent to him. He is over the moon to say the least. I do have one photograph in the archive that I hope to copy for him in the future. Do any of you out there have any more photographs and stories to share about this clearly overlooked chapter of our history? We need them, and I’m sure that you won’t mind if I share them with him?

Thanks to Zander Wardlaw, son of ex RAF Firefighter Mel Wardlaw, we have now held two veterans get-togethers on line, via zoom. The second one attracted 18 people and lasted nearly two hours. We had RAF Firefighters who had trained at Sutton or Catterick boys, but sadly no youngsters! These are a monthly thing, normally on a Wednesday at 19:00hrs. There is no



As you might

# Kranji Memories

agenda, it is not a meeting, just a social event. Clearly the effect on everyone's mental health was clear to see as the stories started to come out. We publish the invite on the RAF uncensored Facebook page and the museum's Facebook page. If you are interested in joining in and don't use Facebook, just send us an email address and we'll send you a link. It really is the way forward and a great way to reconnect with friends far and wide. You can do it in the comfort of your own living room, with no travelling at zero cost with a cup of tea or pint of beer in hand. Special shout out to Tug Wilson and Zander for setting this up.

Another activity that we have been involved with is the very sad duty of providing escorts for our departed colleagues, as they make their final journey to that great fire station in the sky. We were honoured to be able to provide a Mk10 for ex RAF Firefighter Ray Fearnley, the ACRT for museum volunteer and ex Heathrow Airport Station Officer Dave Thomas and finally a Mk9 for ex RAF Firefighter Simon Worsfold. Whilst these duties take an emotional toll on those that attend, we do feel that if we can do we should. Obviously, we tend to stay local and in most cases, families ask for donations to go to the museum to help cover fuel costs.

The current vehicle fleet is being retired and sold off, but we are still hopeful of getting an MFV & RIV donated to the museum. The CO at RAF Digby, where I am currently working, has given me permission to store them there whilst we work out our next move. I have suggested that the RAF drive them from Coningsby or Waddington to Digby as their final MOD journey. We'll wait and see what happens with that one.

Please check our web site for the latest news, but remember we will keep some details low key as we don't want to advertise the location of our storage facilities for fear of break in and theft. Lastly, thanks for your continued support and hopefully we'll see some of you for real later this year.

*All the best  
Steve Shirley MBE  
Chairman/Founder  
Museum of RAF Firefighting*

*I received an email from John Philipson who had served in the Army Fire Service explaining that Pete (Dutchy) Holland had lent him a Flashpoint and went on to say that there wasn't a magazine like ours to tell his story so would I be interested in publishing his story. So here is his story. (Ed)*

Hi, I read Ron Brown's account of the two prangs at RAF Tengah with great interest, I remember them well. At the time I was stationed at 443 B A D Kranji the ammo dump just over the hill from Tengah, you may have heard of it?

When the Japanese occupied Singapore it was a prisoner of war camp. We were the place you guys came to for the bombs that, for (as we thought at the time were Lancaster bombers) turned out to be Lincoln Bombers; you could hear them at night doing their bombing runs up the ULU in Johore Bahru. The 22ND Regiment SAS would follow up next day giving ChinPeng and his cohorts something to think about.

It was an interesting posting stuck up in the jungle surrounded by high security fencing with the Royal Veterinary Corps with guard dogs providing the security. We were billeted in the original AttapBashas and the showers were a tin shed with no roof and the showers themselves were just open ended pipe and the only hot water was when the sun heated the water in the pipes.

We did a 24hr shift system, alternate days on call, on my days off I was the mail dispatch rider all around the Island, down to GHQ Tanglin, pick up the mail and of too Serangoon Garden Estate then back around to Nee Soon Garrison then flirt with the timber trucks on the Bukit Timah dual carriage way. They would run side by side heading into Singapore and to get past one had to judge it right when they were not looking and dive up in between them hoping they would not close up and trap you as meat in the sandwich, that was one of their favourite tricks.

The scariest things were the riots, we had to stand by for the civilian fire service whilst they doused the

mobs and covered any fires that the mob started.

One of my longest days as I remember was doing our annual route march, 22 miles was the required distance if I remember correctly. We marched down the Bukit Timah road to Bukit Timah village then right towards Tengah village, it just happened to be on the day when the Kranji war memorial was officially opened. This is on the opposite side of the dual carriage way, access was via the road to Nee Soo. It was attended by a lot of dignitaries all travelling in separate convoys, so it was a matter of march to attention eyes left, eyes front, march at ease and so on for some considerable time.

Ron talks about Bukit Timah, it was our favourite place to eat enroute back to camp, sit on the benches in the tents and have a Nasi Goreng or for a change have it wrapped in a banana leaf to take away.

Favourite place to eat was Arab Street in town but you had to keep an eye out for the redcaps as like any popular place of ill repute it was OUT OF BOUNDS. Damn good curried chicken though.

Favourite time!! Monsoon season it was the only time to get a good night's sleep as it was a whole lot cooler.

My mates and I clubbed together and bought a car, a Hillman California, it allowed us to get around, Changi beach being our favourite. That was 3 years of my life and I would not have missed it even though it was active service. I eventually received my PINGAT JASA medal from the then Air Vice Marshal, 53 years after my demob Terimakasih.

*23249164 Pte John Philipson 37 A F B  
Kranji.*



# Dave Allen's Journey

Dave Allen's Journey from Norfolk to Scampton via Butterworth and Saxa Vord

I left school in 1961 as a fifteen year old and started work as a junior in an Accounts firm (the school leaving advisor suggested it as he said I was 'good at maths').

After a couple of years I decided I needed something else in my life so joined the AFS in my home city of Norwich. There was one 'Green Goddess' based at the main station in Bethel Street along with the main pumps and response vehicles of the Brigade. Drill nights were (if my memory serves me well) a Tuesday evening and Friday evenings, going on into a night duty if there were enough members to man the pump and depending on the duty Watch Commander. Some would 'lend' us a driver if there wasn't one of the AFS drivers available, we would then go out on all shouts that occurred during the night.

We also had our own 'exercises' involving a full convoy of SWB Landrover, five pumps, a control unit, 'manned by three AFS female members, a bikini unit – three rubber inflatable boats and twelve light weight pumps on a Bedford with a crane unit, abridging unit – six inch alloy pipes to make a two span bridge about 12 foot high, a hose layer and two motor cycle escorts!! One was a trip to Hull – took over five hours (at 30mph). Before the A47 duel carriageway, the Kings Lynn bypass and the 'new' road to Sutton Bridge.

The exercise consisted of pumping from pumps situated on the rafts in the dock to a pump on shore, water relay through two more pumps at about 400 yards apart into a rubber dam, then pumped over a two span bridge unit and on to another pump and two branches. About three hours work; the longest time was spent on erecting the bridge unit. The pipes weren't that heavy on their own but once joined together it became slightly unwieldy. Then attaching the lines to hold it firm before it got filled with water, making sure they were correct and tight and not liable to slip.

Making up was fun – all that wet six inch hose to collect and roll up so it was an all-day exercise followed by the trip back home.

So no surprise that I eventually joined the RAF as a Fireman, going off to Swinderby in March 1965 for basic training, then on to Catterick in May for Trade Training. There was only one other lad from my basic course that went with me to Catterick,

Dave Hawkins, in those days you could get anywhere by 'thumbing' and we did. London at weekends, Middlesbrough in the evenings – if we got back to Scotch Corner by midnight there was an HGV driver that would pick us up and drop us off by the camp on his way south. Dave's family lived in Reading and we even went there one weekend. Oh the joys of being young and care free.

In July I got my first posting to RAF Coltishall (I wonder now why I chose a 'home' posting). The Crash section was a Nissan hut next to the tower, (one end the changing room, the other the crew room). Less than a hundred yards the other side was the main pan full of Lightning's, which did engine runs and tests at high output (before the general use of ear defenders, and now I wonder where the hearing loss started). The Crash Line was an ACRT, Mk5, and Mk5A, DP1 (which also provided domestic cover). My crew position was on the back of the ACRT (hanging on for dear life as it was driven over the rough grass to call outs). My Sgt was Jock Perrie (an ex Rock) and the Cpl's were Paddy Burke and Geordie Parker – I was with Geordie for ages before I could understand him as his accent was so strong.

The following April I was sent to St Athans



for a driving course, (I think I had to sit my SAC trade test while down there as well) first vehicle the good old three toner for three weeks I think, the first week spent on a disused part of the airfield learning the basics, gear changing up and down the box – double-clutch going down – I can still do it and have when driving the DP1 of the Fire Museum. Then out onto the public roads and Barry Island in the holiday season. Then half way through a lesson this chap climbs in, instead of my Instructor and off we go for a 'normal drive round' then back to the café where the instructor was still drinking his coffee, the chap climbs out turns round and said "Oh by the way you've passed" I hadn't realised it had been a test. Then on to Land rovers for a couple more weeks, pass, then a night drive to the motorway in a 'Standard saloon' (Am I showing my

age now?)

It was then a week at Catterick for deployment exercises, then back to Coltishall as a Fireman driver and promotion to SAC.

Less than twenty months from joining up I am PWR'd for Borneo, I left in November 1966 getting as far as Changi transit camp where it was changed to RAAF Butterworth – great I thought twelve months in Australia. Four days later I'm on a Bristol Freighter heading up country to RAAF Butterworth. Arrived at General Office to be told "Oh you are for 1125MCU, transport will be along in a while".

In the back of a three toner with loads of stores and rations, a ferry crossing (where the heck am I going?) Eventually arriving at the camp RAF Glugor, to find it's a Marine Craft Unit, only one SAC fireman. My accommodation was a four man room, there were only nine living in (including the WO Coxswain). I arrived on a Friday afternoon.

I can't remember much about the first weekend... I was taken into Georgetown by some of the other lads, I do remember being carried over someone's shoulder from one bar to another being dumped against a wall until they decided to move on to the next one. It did get better and I was able to take to beer and drinks which were cheaper on camp than in town.

I don't think I achieved much during the next eleven months as being one of only two HGV drivers (and the only one living in) it was usually muggins who got tasked with the emergency call outs when the high speed TTL was wanted at short notice. Basically I was 'Jack of all Trades Master of None' as I also stood in for the Cpl storeman when he was on leave, a deckhand when they were short, a driver – most of the time, and as a fireman one day a week to test the trailer pump.

I bought my first car while on the Island of Penang, an old Hillman Minx, very economical - on petrol it was good but it took two gallon of water per hour... Someone told me that mustard powder was good for leaking radiator's – there was more mustard powder in that radiator than in the mess store (But it smelt good).

At end of the twelve months I was posted back to UK to RAF Marham with the Victor Tankers. This time the Crash Line included Mk6's so I was relegated



*1654 Served at RAF Glugor until 1967*

to driving the DP's on wash downs and domestic cover or occasionally the ACRT, marshalling Victors at night can be something else especially off the hockey stick round mounds of snow that the 'Blacktop Teams' had left behind.

I had bought myself another car on my return to UK (another Hillman Minx – bench front seat, column change – great for girlfriends.....) February 29th- I'm slobbering in the block on my 'pit' when some of the other 'singlies' came in wanting a lift to a dance over at RAF Swanton Morley. So over we go. Don't know if it was the worst day of my life or the best, as I met a WRAF who six months later was to become my wife and now 52 years later we are still together, so probably the best (or so she tells me).

We moved into married quarters, which was great in those days as all you needed was your own clothes as everything else was supplied, bed linen, towels, and crockery, everything you needed to set up a home. Our first daughter arrived nine months later. We had only been in the quarter less than two weeks when early one morning we were woken up by the sound of two tone horns making their way through married quarters, "What's that noise?" asked Maureen, I laid back and started to laugh, "What?" she asked.

"I've got to go to work" I replied "How long for?"

"No idea – see you when I see you" off I go for the next three days – TACEVAL – Oh joy.

The shift pattern was a bit 'naff', week of days, week of nights including domestic cover, so weekend duties started at five on Friday evening until five Monday afternoon.

Chimney fires were the big thing at that time, so one weekend I'm on duty with another non driver, my wife decided she would go for a walk and see me and have a cup of tea down at the Fire Section, only to find me on a roof with a hose reel nozzle down a chimney, so back home. Try again later – got to the section – no one home, walking

back home she found me up on another roof. Three times that weekend she tried to get to see me and each time we were out on a call somewhere on the married quarters, - she never bothered to try again when I was on weekend duty.

One unusual incident happened; an American single jet aircraft (I think a Super Sabre) was doing a flyby when it 'flamed out'. It was coming from over the old FIDO tank end of the runway, (forget which end that is) anyway it 'missed the runway' didn't make the peri track that went past the crash bays, touched down on the road leading to Crash Gate One (the one that leads out to the Officers married quarters)– went through the gate before stopping, - no fuel no fire, can't remember what happened to the pilot but he was obviously OK. I do remember that within 24 hours the Yanks had been in – lifted the aircraft onto a low-loader and away as if nothing had happened....

I had only signed up for five years and couldn't see myself staying in the RAF long term so I was demobbed and got a job as 'Fire and Security' at Reckett and Coleman's factory complex in Norwich, it came with a tithed house so that helped. Unfortunately it was more security than fire and after 18 months it got too much with a bad shift and on call pattern, I realised that life in the RAF hadn't been too bad after all. So I re-enlisted in September 1971 and spent two weeks back at Swinderby for re-kitting and up-dating arms drill!!! To the SLR. I'd already been to Catterick for a day to re-sit the SAC trade test, so I re-joined as an SAC.

I arrived at RAF Brize Norton in October presenting myself to WO Bartlett who's

first words were "who are you and where have you come from?" "I'm a re-enlistment sir" I said, "What am I supposed to do with you?" was his comment. The domestic section in those days was on the main road though the camp near the Guard room, Alec Noble was the Cpl i/c domestic crew so he was tasked in taking me across the airfield to the Crash Bays.

My family joined me before too long. We had had a second daughter by now, and shifts were good, two days, two nights, four days off – life was sweet. I was sent back to St Athans to do a Mk 6 driving course for two weeks, back to Brize until a trip to Catterick for the deployment course – trouble was I was only away a week but by the time I got back to Brize all the 6's had gone and Mk7's stood in their place, a waste of three weeks training. But that's the RAF.

It was during this time period that Flt/Sgts were made crew chiefs of Cat 6 airfields, it's where I first met Steve Davie and Derek Maisey.

My next trip to Catterick was October 1973 on the FT1 course where I met up with Steve Harrison and George Edwards. I was promoted acting Cpl in June 1974. Two weeks later a detachment to RAF Sydenham in Belfast followed, living on HMS Maidstone was something else. Four cooked meals a day, under Naval conditions, four man crews, to cover mainly an aircraft maintenance unit with very little if any actual flying taking place, and occasional days out in Bangor.

April 1975 saw me on the move again, this time to RAF Gutersloh, with WO Jack Morell in charge, again a Cat 6 airfield with Lightning's, but this time I had to learn about working with RHAG.

Steve Davie and Derek Maisey were there already.

The crew I joined was led by Flt/Sgt Tom Dolman and had a Cpl overload!! six of us, Bill Bailey, Fred Gillespie, Dave Vanstone, Jack Killacky, Paul Magee and me, two SAC's Dave Roach, and one other and five local civvies.

The Lightning's often took the RHAG, which made recovery 'interesting' as the hook was spring loaded and once activated had to be manually re-fixed, I remember being told that we should wait for a ground crew team to come out – hitch up a tow bar – push back – disengage the hook – secure it and tow away. That was too long for



*Saxa Vord Crew*

ATC so Firemen took charge.... Crew take up rewind positions, rewind slowly, get aircraft moving backwards – stop RAHG – aircraft goes back further – brakes on – hook clear – manually re-fix hook with strop – taxi away – complete RHAG rewind – reposition rubber grommets – job done, back to the section for tea and coffee.

I can't remember many incidents happening while I was at Gutersloh, there was a Lightning T bird that crashed off the airfield, both crew bailing out safely, an American helicopter with 15 on board (about ten miles from the airfield) hitting the ground from about 1000ft, killing all on board, Jack Killacky and I went out to the site in one of our own choppers, the local German fire service had already dealt with the fire, all that was left was a pile of debris about three feet high.

After about eighteen months the Lightning's were replaced by the Harrier force, so I did two or three field deployments with them with a TACT (but no trailer pump) AFFF in the compound tank instead.

One of the extra jobs done by the fire crew was driving the Sicards for snow clearing, it was a different job riding up the runway clearing a nice clear path – turning round at the end and realising that the third vehicle (driven by one of the civvies) had had their brush and jet turned the wrong way and had covered the clear path that the two in front had just swept.

The trip home to UK was solo as my family had flown back two days earlier, leaving in nice warm weather with summer clothes – to be met at Luton airport by my parents in a snow storm and no heating in the car. Most of our stuff had been collected in the 'deep sea boxes' about six if I remember correctly, the car was still so loaded I had

taken the spare wheel out of the boot tied it on top of the stuff on the roof rack, there was just about room for me to drive and put our budgie in its cage in the passenger foot well. It's a long drive from Gutersloh to Zeebrugge alone.

I was headed for RAF Waddington, we had selected Lincolnshire as a destination because (at the time) house prices were lower than other areas and there were plenty of RAF stations to select for future postings...How would that work out now?

I did almost four years at Waddington – met some characters – Eddie Snowball being one... Garth Furmage was my Sgt, always organising something or other – the annual five-a-side football tournament between all the surrounding RAF Fire Sections usually played at RAF Cranwell, being the main one.

Fortunately the Vulcan was a fairly safe type of aircraft and didn't cause many problems, except when the pilot decided to use the brake chute (just to see if it was still attached I think - because they certainly didn't need to use it) and the chute recovery team weren't about.

From Waddo I was sent to RAF Honington, that was the only time I managed to make some money while in the RAF, I applied to live out as the shift pattern was 24 on 24 off, it was granted. I collected £17 a day travel expenses and spent £10 a day on fuel. I spent nine months doing that and then applied to go to Saxa Vord. The only way I could see of getting back to Lincolnshire.

I actually enjoyed my time in the Shetlands, the shift wasn't onerous, two people on each crew. Two days two nights four days off. Jim O'Hara was the boss, two vehicles – a Firefly at the top and an Angus on the

domestic site to cover the rest of the Island with the off duty fireman. Eddie Snowball joined us – fun games ensued, what a character he was, there was never a dull moment with Eddie about. A new barrack block was built with everyone having separate rooms, all mod cons, including cable TV – one room had a connection for a VHS tape player -Eddie's room of course.....Friday night was film night (and you wouldn't have seen them at the local Odeon). Even the inmates of the Sgts Mess would turn up so as long as they brought the beers. I managed to hire the old church manse behind the camp for two weeks and was joined by my family for a holiday (using unused travel warrants) working my normal shifts, then I went home with them for two weeks. The girls absolutely loved their time in Unst as they could run around and not disturb anyone, and when we went out together they would run and walk all day without complaint.

I had left my car behind at home when I was posted but on my last leave I returned with my car (as I had accumulated so much I wouldn't have been able to carry it on a plane and train). I left Saxa at lunch time and travelled down to Lerwick, got the Clare overnight ferry to Aberdeen, then the long drive home getting home just in time for tea

I arrived for my last posting at RAF Scampton, with just the Red Arrows as the resident flying unit, there were some Hunters used for training some ground trades in aircraft marshalling. About two months later Central Flying School arrived with Bulldogs and Jet Provost, so we became quite busy as far as flying was concerned. It didn't take CFS long to discover that with the Reds taking up five half hour slots of local air space for their display practice, they couldn't do all their own missions, so a Relief Landing Ground was found at Sturgate an old world war airfield, it had a runway, An old building used as ATC, but bugger all else. So every day (Monday to Friday)



*MPA 'Domestic Section'*



*MPA Domestic Vehicle*

seven personnel made their way to the back of beyond, three firemen in a TACR2 (or sometimes a Mk8) an MT driver and Medic in a Crash ambulance and two ATC controllers. Fortunately it was just the Bulldogs that used the runway. Catering was provided and collected by the fire crew from the mess, some rear concoctions were delivered at lunch time.....

I met up with Sgt Mick Golding and SAC Dave Grant followed me from Saxa both of whom are with me at the museum, along with Tim Alderman whom I had known from my time at Scampton.

Trouble with the Reds was that they kept interrupting the volley ball games, as when they were up - we had to man the vehicles. Five times a day – it isn't on is it?

There were a few incidents while I was there, two aircraft decided that they wanted to land in Welton village about three miles from camp, I was riding Crash 2 (a MK9) as branch man and went to one that had landed in a back garden, most of the fuselage leaning up against the house, the nose of the aircraft was about five foot from an upstairs window to a bathroom, I was told later that the gentleman of the house was in the bath at the time – he certainly wasn't still there when we arrived.

I'm stood on part of the wing spraying foam around to cover the spilt fuel and looked up to see a figure through the house window, I shouted to the crew chief "There's some stupid ..... in the house". He replied "it's OK - it's the Flt/Sgt doing a check" how the heck he got there so quick I'll never know. Dave Grant was on Crash One and found one of the pilots in a field about a hundred yards away. Both crews had been able to bail out safely. I remember an argument between the Sgt Crew Chief (whose name I can't remember) and the Consultant in charge of A&E from Lincoln Hospital on how to transport the aircrew (with possible spinal injuries) by road ambulance over bumpy roads (the Consultant) or by helicopter that stood in a field 100 yards away) – the Sgt won...

There was one incident where there was a fatality but I wasn't on shift that day, two more crashes happened, one was in a field on the approach to the other side of the A15, and one lost power on take-off and already wheels up went off the runway to the side.

I did the usual tour of the Falkland Islands, just as Mount Pleasant was opening and Stanley was closing. I spent most of my time on the domestic site (not in a new purpose built domestic section) but with the vehicle parked between storage containers with a plastic sheet as the door, had to make sure we had it plugged into the trickle charge point to keep the vehicle warm (as it was a cold –cold winter).

Met up with Steve Davie again – this time he was a WO, Kev Cook was there as a Sgt, I think MPA was the only place people would volunteer for 'Blacktop' duty especially if they were due out the following day. I found being in the Falklands similar to being in the Shetlands as they are nearly at the same latitude north and south.

My final year in the Air Force for some reason I decided to go on a fitness regime taking up running, I signed up for the Lincoln Half Marathon. Raising money for 'Child Line' I used to go to work early (about six o'clock) run round the taxiway – have a shower – ready for work at half seven. I did three half marathons, two ten milers and several 10k's that year, It has taken me nearly 18 years but have joined a running club and enter road races again.

I left the Air Force on Christmas Day 1988 and started my new career as a Student Nurse, doing my training at Scunthorpe on January 6th 1989. I eventually got a full time job at Lincoln County Hospital, finishing as a Nurse Specialist looking after people with Inflammatory Bowel

Disease, (Crohns disease and Ulcerated Colitis).

Since retiring I have joined some of my old colleagues working at the Museum of Fire Fighting so I suppose I have gone full circle finishing up where I started.

As I sit here contemplating my life spent in the RAF what did I learn and gain from the experience? I met lots of different characters, some have been memorable some have been absolute b.....d's. Fortunately in my 22 years they were few and far between. In all I enjoyed my time, the banter between the crews at work, the camaraderie between crew mates, being able to rely on your crew mates to do their job when 'the bells go down'. Even exercises weren't too onerous as we did the same duties wearing full NBC kit as we did the rest of the time. Not even 'Gate Guard' – although I believe that changed after I was demobbed.

During my 22 years I seen places I would never have seen as a civilian, done things that most civilians wouldn't have been able to do and been paid for doing it which can't be bad can it. That's probably the reason I joined the RAF Fire Museum because I missed the banter and verbal exchanges between the other members - plus 'story time' when sandbags are brought out with mugs of tea/coffee in hand – let us begin-----

Hope to see more of you at the museum when we get a chance to reopen or if you have the time join us as a volunteer – your Trade Group 22 or 8 (or whatever it is now) needs YOU – history in the making.

*Dave Allen*



*MPA Crash Bays – March 1986*



This is a bike I painted in memory of Dennis. He was always talking about the bikes that you all used to race across the camps and airfields.

The tin cans hanging from the handlebars, Dennis used to talk about collecting “Street Food” in them while in Singapore.

The front basket has Geraniums in it called “Fire Queen” and the rear Spitalfields box (we loved Spitalfields market) has also tomatoes and strawberry plants.

Pauline McCann