



FLASHPOINT



ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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ARTHUR MILLER

WINTER 2020

www.rafanddfsa.co.uk

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

Vice – President

Steve Harrison

58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ

Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568

Email 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

Treasurer

Trevor Hayes

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

Tel: 01923 331975

Email: hayes.trevor425@gmail.com

Membership Secretary

Brian Jones

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

Tel: 01502 567524 / 07772247295

Email: 813jones@talktalk.net

Flashpoint Editor

Steve Harrison

58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ

Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568

Email 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

Front page

A colourised version of a unique image captures the moment when a Venom aircraft crashed into a married quarter at RAF Tengah. This from Ron Browns story that appears in this issue.

Thanks to Dave Kirk for the colour work.

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

Cornwall, Devon & Somerset

Terry Mortimore

32 Newbridge, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3LX

Tel:

Email: 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

RAF

Steve Shirley MBE Grad I Fire E

16 Rutland Way, Scampton, Lincoln, LN1 2UJ

Tel: 07912 658402

Email: steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk

South

John Hurl

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

Tel: 01242 522503

London

“Jess” Jessup

44 Quentin Road, Lewisham, London, SE13 5DF.

Tel: 0208 2187499

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

Vacancy

“THE SILVERFOX” RAMBLINGS



So here I am writing my final bit on the eve of when I have to send of the last few articles to the printers. To say that it has been stressful is an understatement, normally it's not

too bad but I didn't anticipate having to help move the museum again, bruising my ribs and catching some awful intestinal bug which completely wrecked me. In order to get the magazine away in time it wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for Dave Kirk who really helped me out with some articles, so for that Dave a massive Thanks', you are a diamond, also thanks to the lovely Pat Hayes as well.

As the age of our members increase it no surprise that we have lost some more of our friends from the Association that we shared our lives with and Neil Slade our former chairman among them. There are tributes to some of them in the magazine and a special plea from Jan, Neil's wife for raising money in order to name a guide dog after him. Apart from his activities with our Association he was also passionate about his work for the Guide Dogs Association, so please help if you can. See the article on how you can do this, thank you.

From the last edition It was pleasing that the article about the El Adem Radio Service cause a flurry of activity and it is pleasing that the Flashpoint is still playing a part in bringing old comrades together and proves it can still work along social media which many of our members don't indulge in. (see letters) I also had a couple of phone calls reference the Masirah books and where you could get them.

I have to first, thank you all for your contributions I have been blessed with more than enough material, some of it has been lengthy so in order to try and balance things out I have had to put some aside for the spring edition. So your article may not appear in this edition but will in the next. You will see all the news about the museum having to move again, a massive blow to us all but with only five weeks to move out of that facility it has been the most difficult move so far in its history. Ron Browns early career is also featured and there is an amazing story of Sergeant Bill Davies who joined in 1939 and served during the war years.

So I hope you enjoy your Flashpoint and let's hope that 2021 brings us some relief from the dreadful situation that we all find ourselves in and I can only wish you the all the best and have the best Christmas you can have.

FLASHPOINT EDITOR APPEAL

I have carried out the duties of the editor on several occasions since 2011 and although I have said in the past that I have stepped up because with the demise of Flashpoint would also see the demise of the RAF & DFS Association and I stand by that. But it is time for me to stand down for several reasons. I still have several projects of my own to carry out and projects for the museum which are not progressing and to my disappointment my energy and concentration levels are not what they were. Also my good lady Liz and I have grandchildren in N. Ireland which because of the Covid situation we have not seen for a year and if 2021 bring that opportunity then there will be several visits. I am not a highly educated man and I am self taught on the computer and I cannot believe that with 400 hundred plus members that there is no one with better skills than I willing to come forward and carry on this work. So I have bared my soul here and leave it you to consider what I have said. If you wish to talk to me about taking on this role please ring me.

The Difficulty of a Mark 6 Recovery for the Museum, the Full Story in the Next Flashpoint



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Steve,

My mate Stan Readman had been trying for years to find another mate from El-Adem for about twenty five years; George "Chopper" Probert. About twelve years ago Stan contacted the records office at Innsworth and they said the only G. Probert was a Medic and not a Fireman, so that's when we gave up trying to find him.



But about two months ago I had a call from Scotland, it was "Chopper" he said a mate of his saw my article in the last Flashpoint about trying to find him. He contacted Steve the editor who gave him my phone number.

After along chat it all began to be clear about the Medic part, when "Chopper" went back to England it was the time when the Fire Service was amalgamated with the RAF Regiment and at that time the Station where he was posted to had a Regiment Sergeant in charge with no fire training at all. So that's when he decided to re-mustered to be a Medic. The picture is of "Chopper in the Fire Section bar called "Get Some in Bar"

Fred Bickham 523

(RAF El-Adem 1958-60)

What a great re-union story after all these years Fred and it's pleasing to know it was through your story in Flashpoint that did it, Brilliant (Ed)

Dear Steve

Just thought members would like to see the response from Thea Ellicott as regards the copy of the last Flashpoint I sent

Brian Jones

Hello from Australia,

Thank you Brian for the sending of Flashpoint received today, that didn't take too long this time maybe we got a lucky flight as some mail just takes weeks to come! Good to see Colin's name in there although it would have been a better one in a different situation eh? But that is how it is and I have to cope with it, we had been married just one month short of 60 years and that is what he was hanging on to but his body thought differently as that just couldn't take any more. He did 37 and half years in the Force and enjoyed the life very much in fact we both did great way of meeting people from all over the world wherever he got posted to. I now have finally got notification of my Forces pension starting to be payed, honestly they take their time eh I mean he passed away in April and the first payment is starting this month. It took a lot of phone calls to the UK before finally got sorted GEEE they take their time!!! But we are doing ok Brian thank you for asking certain days are harder than others but I have met up with some nice people in this retirement village I live in who are in the same. I shall keep the Flashpoint with all the other things I have received since his passing as I thought that was a nice thing to do.

Many thanks Brian for sending it.

Thea Ellicott

Hi Steve

It seem like a coincidence, but I was having a clear up of my images on my Facebook profile and up popped this of my trade training course at Catterick during early summer of 1970 and the late Davie Air was the Cpl instructor (mentioned in Tom McCrorie's letter) I was only at Catterick for three weeks for familiarisation of RAF fire trucks and procedures as a direct entrant to SAC rank and Davie took into account my firefighting knowledge (qualified to Leading Fireman) and condensed as much relevant info into the short time i was on the course. We never crossed paths again, but I will always remember him as an excellent instructor and JNCO. (I am standing on the far right)



Andy Gaskell 328

From Paul Murray (Facebook Page)

Unfortunately our Chairman Neil Slade was buried Tuesday 3rd November; the next day would have been so poignant as I would have travelled to London for the first time without him..... He was only 73 but you wouldn't have guessed it. Although I understand the reasons we aren't marching but I do feel sad. I'm a sentimental guy, I've been told I'm sensitive, maybe I am, I would have been proud to March alongside you all. Our bond will never be broken that much I have learnt over the years. But I will say this I don't want our association to just be a November gathering, I want our Association to grow. Our annual meetings are important and I'd like to see more of you attending, if we don't then we will only exist over time as an association that marches at the cenotaph and I wouldn't like that at all.

So let's make an effort for everyone pass the word around, get more firefighters to join, and let's see you all at the Annual get together, allow me to welcome you with open arm. I Joined in 1977.... Let's make the next Annual meeting a meeting to be proud of. We have over 400 members blimey if we could get 25% to come to the annual Meeting what a meeting that would be. Yes I'm passionate..... I met more good guys than bad guys.... May you all stay safe?

Paul Murray

From Mike Stainers wife, on receiving a sympathy card from the committee.

To Mr B Jones and all the committee members

I and Mike's children loved the words of sympathy from you all. He always wanted to be in control now he's got the job.

Hi Steve,

My name is Gary Mole member (1055) I have been an Association member for some time but this is my first letter as to my shame I am not too computer clever. The reason for this letter and I hope it makes the next issue is that on Tuesday 17th November 2020, it will be 40 years since XV256 Nimrod Mr1 of 206 Squadron crashed into woodlands at RAF KINLOSS Morayshire Scotland.

The crash happened on Monday 17th November 1980 just before crew changeover I had just returned from leave down in my home town of Hebburn, Tyne and Wear I was a 17 year old LAC only just posted in a few weeks before, and working at a Fire Section this big was a whole new ball game to me. I Had never been this far north up in Scotland but Morayshire is such a fantastic place and I went on to marry a local lass my wife Sheila now been married 37 years having moved about returned to this area in 1997.

Okay back to the above I was to start on days with Sgt Dave Air who sadly is no longer with us and stayed great friends for many years. On the morning in question I was walking to work across the pans when I heard and saw XV256 taking off as normal just as it got wheels up there was a huge Bang and as I kept looking, huge amount of flames were coming out of the engines the next thing the crash alarm was sounding and I started sprinting towards the Fire Section. C crew had been on night shift lead by big Sergeant Tom McCrorie who would also become a very good friend of mine. Just as I came around the corner of Fire Section all are the Fire Appliances came speeding out, Crash 1 which was a TACR 2 Crash 2 Mk9 and Crash 3 Mk9 also (domestic tender) headed out into the darkness of early morning. I was left alone in the section and the phones were ringing none stop I gave what info I could and the Medical Section called to say where they should send the Crash Ambulances to, I told them into the woodland area beside our fire training area at November 7

After what felt like a life time Dave Air turned up asking what had happened, I told him, he told me to get out of uniform and into crash kit, then over the tannoy system a call was put out for all off duty fireman to report in and every man to a tee did. My job given to me was to jump into the back of a 4 Tonner driven by fireman SAC Lee Ashby I named my first son

from his first name, I hope he is still alive to read this, and go to the Foam store and load up with as many drums as we could I can tell you I had arms like the Hulk when we finished I cannot remember how many we threw in but was just enough room to close the tailgate and for me to get in back another Sac fireman was with us and to my shame I cannot remember his name he was blond a cockney and supported Spurs please forgive me. On reaching the crash site Lee did some fantastic off road driving and got us to within spitting distance of Crash 2. All of C crews crash crew drivers did an amazing work to get so close to the plane, the crash site was beyond belief, broken out fire around us, aircraft debris was everywhere the smell of burning fuel filled your nose and back of throat. All the big trees had been cut down like stairs from high to low I have to say the 20 crew that walked away owing their lives to the flying skills of Flt Lieutenant NOEL ANOTHONY Royal Australian Air Force (posthumous Air Force Cross) and Flying Officer STEPHEN BELCHER (posthumous Queen's Commendation for Valuable Services in the Air) 206 Squadron It was Noel's last Sortie before returning to Australia having been seconded to 206 it cost them both their lives, true Heroes will never be forgotten as they kept XV256 away from built up areas.

Crash 3 got the closest, driven by Sac Steven Stokes he knocked down trees like a ten pin bowl to get the best approach and to get foam down as quick as possible and all of C crew did that on this day with fast action and strong leadership from its Senior NCO as well as Junior NCO's By this time myself and Lee grabbed as many Air Force personnel and made them into a human chain to pass the foam drums to all the tenders to be pumped into by hand to fill up foam tanks as quickly as we could all ranks were used even RAF Kinloss Senior Officers chipped in, its what you do at a flying base all muck in no airs and graces. I was totally knackered from this foam loading I was told to go on a branch to help dampen down hot spots in the fuselage that lay around and to watch out for any sonar buoys or weapons that might be lying about, when I came across the two dead pilots. I had never seen a dead body before and before I knew it I had thrown up a good Scottish breakfast I felt embarrassed as I had not seen any of the other Fireman doing this and out of nowhere came CPL Dave Jones, I knew him from Fire Training

School RAF Catterick. He had been posted up to Kinloss about a month before me , he asked how I felt I said “I don’t really know” I also said “This is not like being on the fire practice area at Catterick this is for real it’s what you trained us to do” It was at my first crash in my first year in Royal Air Force some people went through their service and never attended one, He took me up to the medics at the crash ambulances and asked two lovely female medics to check me over I was passed fit to carry on and God knows where they got it from a cup of white sweet tea to drink. I never thanked Dave Jones for looking out for me that day, so if your alive and reading this Thanks a MILLION Dave. As the day wore on we got things under control we put so much water and foam into Crash2 with the soft wet ground it sunk to its axels and we could not get it out the MT Section had to come for it, and our TACR 2 was out of action smashed front wheel axel only Crash 3 could we get out and its steering was shuddering when driven. Brotherhood is mentioned a lot in the military but it is true in the fire service we all have each other’s backs even though I was newly in and possible the youngest fireman there I did what I was trained to as did every fireman that turned out that day. We held up the traditions of the Royal Air Force Fire Service like so many of our Brothers before us right back to the Second World

War on every war front and peace time. I have to mention some people who helped me in my time at KINLOSS they are Tom McCrorie, Eddie Bell, Steven Stokes, Lee Ashby, Trevor McPeak, Paddy Dunn, Dave Kirk, Geoff Moore, Malcolm Bullock, Ted Bunt, Dave Air, Grant McLane, Steven Hales, Robbie Howell, Bob Evans, Dave Grant, John Cord, Gary Humphreys, Dave Stewart, Jack Ashworth, Mel Wardlaw and many more, some of those names are no longer with us sadly. On returning to the Fire Section at about 1800hrs the crash line was down to a CAT3 made up of a long wheel base land rover with a 60ltr foam trolley extinguisher in the back of it tied down Crash 3 Mk9 and two Mk7’s. We had a brilliant Warrant Officer in charge of us all Jim Brogan and his trusted side kick, the cheese eating TOBY his pet collie that never left his side. No other sections ever messed with us when he was in charge he ran us hard but he knew when to give praise also he was a fantastic character he took me aside when we got back told me I was to join C crew on the next shift as they would be a place down due to someone going off crew to attend BA Wearers course at RAF Catterick

So Stephen this is how I wish to remember the 40th ANNIVERSARY of such a tragedy I know others will think in other ways I am no longer that 17 year old

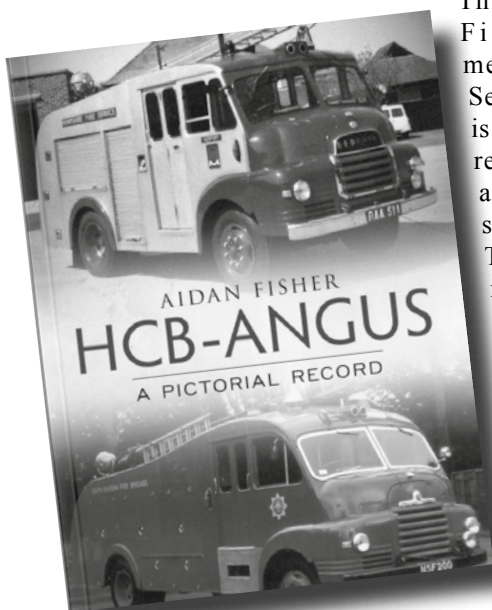
airman but a 57 year old civilian I miss being a fireman every single day and would go back to it in a heartbeat. I am now a bus driver of 21 years with Stagecoach at the Elgin depot here in Morayshire. If anyone should remember me, oh and before I forget Hi to “Pocky” he knows who he is, also to George Lindsey, Theo, and Neil Fraser. If anyone wants to get in touch MY E-MAIL ADDRESS IS garymole1963@sky.com.

Steve thanks for your time over this letter I hope it can make the next issue if not then some time in near future. You do I great job getting this FLASHPOINT magazine out, keep up the good work for us you are appreciated and all the other members who keep the Association running. To every member out there do not, and I repeat, do not let this association die out do whatever you can do to help, if not funds then with letters and pictures because if we let it go there’s no turning back. To all of you have a safe 2020 here’s to a better 2021 and may your GOD watch over you and your families A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

*Yours Sincerely
Gary Mole*

*Member 1055 Retd Senior Aircraftsman
9/11/2020.*

YET MORE BOOKS

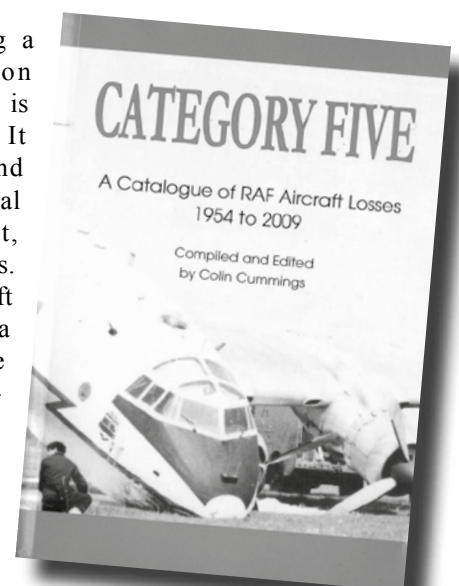


This book by Aidan Fisher who is a member of the Fire Service Preservation is a good quick look reference book with a lot of images and short descriptions. The pictorial record is in chronological order and all types are shown. ISBN No 978-1-4456-1682-7.

Aidan Fisher also produced Fire Engine Builders, but it is out of print at the moment. The ISBN is 978-1-4456-0535-7 so if you find

one, good luck. Maybe try our local Library.

If you like doing a bit of research on aircraft crashes this is the book for you. It is in date order and includes Date, Serial No, Aircraft, Unit, Place and Casualties. It also has an Aircraft by type index and a casualty index. The ISBN for this is 978-0-9526619-7-9



OBITUARIES AND TRIBUTES

Once again we have lost more members who have been our friends and comrades throughout our service and remained so.

*“When you awaken in the mornings hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circled flight,
I am the soft stars that shine at night.”*

Those who have passed recently are

Neil Slade 934, Mike Stainer 300, Ben Zaccardelli 857,

Rat Wood 118, Pat Orffod 624 and Brian Lindoe 649

Brian “Geordie” Lindoe

From Tam McCrorie:

Having only spoken to him the night before, I received a call from his wife Shirley to say that Brian had collapsed and died suddenly the following morning without warning.

Geordie was a very good friend whom I had known for 45 years. We first met at Wildenrath in 1975 and we had been in regular contact ever since. Brian will be sadly missed by his wife, Shirley, his daughters Angela and Caroline, as well as his son Kevin. Having enlisted in 1961, Geordie served 22 years in the RAF Fire Service serving overseas at Wildenrath, Masirah, Gibraltar and Akrotiri among others. Most will remember him from Catterick where he did two stints as an instructor and other support staff.

Ray Wood

From George Walker:

I first met Ray when we were posted to Cyprus 1975/78. I found Ray a very dependable person both on and off duty. One of my sons was given a budgerigar so we decided to build an aviary with the full crew willing to help. Ray came up with helpful suggestions and we had the aviary finished within two days. Ray and I next met up as Fire Officers in hospitals down south. We met once a month and enjoyed the banter of news of the old days. We then joined The Fire Association and met up with friends we had not seen since the RAF days. We got to know Ray and Linda as a fun couple always ready to enjoy their weekend and always did. So I end this with great sadness knowing Ray's fire duties have ended. RIP old friend

Ben Zaccardelli

From Neri Zaccardelli, Bennie's youngest daughter:

I just wanted you to know that my amazingly funny and ever generous, wise cracking father passed away on Wednesday 28th October. He lived for these gatherings and I know he loved seeing everyone of you. I know his random bursts into song and incredible humour will be missed so much. He went peacefully in his sleep at the grand age of 85 and 10 months. His wife Pauline used to go with to these events and always loved seeing dad at his best. We are incredibly proud of him and we know how proud he was to have served.

From Pauline, Bennie's wife:

Ben was born in Bradford 7 December 1934. As a young lad he used to go walking across the moors with his pals, camping out overnight, much to the consternation of his poor Mother.

He did 3 years National Service in the Royal Signals where he served as a wireless operator. Postings included Hong Kong and treks through jungles in Malaya. Ben joined the RAF in July 1959 as a Fireman/driver, and after training at Sutton-on-Hull his first posting was RAF Valley, in Anglesey, where he was accompanied by his first wife Norma and his children Kim and Martin.

In 1963 Ben was posted to RAF Wildenrath, Germany and during his time there completed the Nijmegen marches. Other postings included Butterworth, Minden Coningsby, Church Fenton and Masirah. While serving in the Middle East he learnt the self-defence art of Tae Kwondo and excelled at it.



In 1978 Ben retired from regular service, and joined the Multinational Forces. On the move again he was posted to Egypt then Saudi Arabia as a driver/instructor where he taught teams of Filipinos to drive various Fire vehicles. In his spare time he opened a bar where his Colleagues and friends could relax with a drink and a sing-song. Ben had a lovely tenor voice and knew so many songs. During this time his youngest daughter was born back in England and later Ben retired from Military Service having completed 27 years. During the next few years there were a variety of jobs, before Ben took up the post of Night-Porter at the Haycock Hotel in Peterborough where he worked with his friends, Brian Groom and Cyril Greetham. He later moved to the Crown Hotel in Stamford before retiring at 70 years old, when his health told him it was time to stop.

Ben got in touch with his third wife, Pauline, on the Internet in 2004 and they met in 2005. It was a complete love match and they married in 2006, and enjoyed 15 wonderful years together with his Step-daughter Nicola and her husband Colin, who loved him as a Father.

Friends and neighbours alike liked Ben and he will be sorely missed.

E-FLAMMIS-ATQUE-RUINIS-SALUS

Life after the RAF Fire Service

Just to give you brief summary of my service background, I arrived at RAF Swinderby Oct 23 1972 and went to RAF Catterick December 1972. On completion of my training I was posted to RAF St Athan I had requested anywhere except St Athan but as I was from Wales I suppose they thought let's surprise him. From St Athan I went to CSDE RAF Swanton Morley ATC Summer Camp. Back to Saints then posted out to Episkopi Cyprus during the Makarios uprising where we went under Regiment Escort to Nicosia to recover Crash Trucks driven onto the runway during the troubles and deliver them to Army Workshops at Dheklia we had UN blue berries but we're still under gun fire from both sides of the runway. It was then back to Saints then posted out to Akrotiri Crash line then to Fire Prevention, working with Ken Stango (RIP) back to the UK Leave await instructions, I Forgot to mention also whilst at Akrotiri we were called to the main entrance to support the SBA Police and snowdrops as some Turks/Cypriots had Attacked a UN Convoy bringing supplies to the base this was still during the Makarios troubles we used a DP1 I think it was as a water cannon but had to take cover under the rear pump locker which lifted upwards as they were stoning us as well some six weeks later I was posted to RAF Swanton Morley working with Cpl Paul Fleet and Sgt Shaun Ansbro for those who remember them. PVR Posting in 1980 to Civvy Street CAA Norwich Airport After several years I left the Airport went to a large Chemical Factory doing Fire and Security, and finally 11 years with the NHS Ambulance Service in Norfolk.

I volunteered as a Red Cross volunteer for the following due to my past RAF and CAA

Fire Service Experience and the knowledge we trained for and gained. The experience I gained from the RAF Fire Service and discipline gave me a lead start and also because another member of our Association Sid Bridges Ex RAF Fire Service and a member of the Association was an influence on me and had been a Red Cross Volunteer a long while. We were also Fire Safety and Security Officers at a large Chemical Factory.

We were both involved in the inauguration of the Red Cross Scheme We also visited RAF Marham as you will probably be aware a lot of local RAF Stations around the country also get involved as First Responders so it all comes hand in hand

I have also included some photos of when we visited RAF Coltishall some of you may recognize your selves. it was many years ago when we paid a visit to them So they could see what we had to offer and they could also call upon us if needed through the Local Fire and Rescue Control Room as a complimentary Service.

THE British Red Cross Fire and Emergency Support Service (formally the FVSS Fire Victim Support Service) volunteers provide vital crisis support to people who are forced to leave their homes.

Known as The Fire and Emergency Support Service (FESS), trained volunteers are on-call 365 days a year, seven nights a week (7pm to 7am weeknights).



When called on, we attend incidents in a Purpose built vehicle like a Motor Home which on my patch Norwich was originally donated by funds that was raised by the Masons Masonic Lodge and kept on the Fire Station in Norwich in full readiness with the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service the vehicle is now changed to a newer Ford Model K.

The vehicle is equipped with clean clothes, refreshments, a telephone, baby food, nappies, pet food and a camera to record the scene for insurance claims.

Volunteers are on hand to provide emotional support and advice to victims including issuing them with a "What Now" Booklet, which contains helpful information and relevant organisations that may be able to assist in the aftermath of an incident.

The booklet also gives practical advice on cleaning up after a fire or flood.

About the volunteers

Volunteers meet regularly they receive all necessary training to perform the required tasks, including working in tandem



I Wish I Was 21 Again

with the Fire and Rescue Services at the scene of an incident, first aid training, child protection and support training and disability awareness training.

Volunteers also learn about overcoming barriers to communication.

The service, in order to consistently and continually assist people in crisis, welcomes Volunteers

Volunteers are required to be on-call, ready to help individuals or families with advice, support and the use of items provided in the Fire and Emergency Support Vehicle.

The role includes:

- Being called out in the middle of the night, at weekends and on public holidays
- Provide crucial emotional support to families who are distressed
- Provide a warm, safe and private environment
- Help people find temporary accommodation
- Signpost people to the organizations and agencies who are able to help

Volunteers must:

- Be of a caring disposition and be keen to help others
- Enjoy meeting people from a wide variety of backgrounds
- Understand the needs of people who are distressed
- Be reasonably fit and healthy
- Be prepared to undertake essential training
- Must have access to own transport
- Be prepared to work within the seven fundamental principles of the Red Cross - humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

Dave Edwards; member 419

Thanks for this insight into your other life Dave, a great job and well done to all the volunteers. Where would we be without them? I personally am always interested in people's lives after the RAF so once again thank you. (Ed)

As usual Derek Howling and I were on Crash 1, the crew was in the rest room lounging around doing nothing. The only thing to move on nights at El Adem with grass (commonly known as RAF Marham) was the ACRT and DP2.

It was the 17th November 1970 the film on TV was 633 Squadron. Outside it was raining so hard that the DP crew on wash downs were "chuffed to NAAFI breaks", at least they will not have to go out on such a night.

Ding, the sound of one bell, Derek and I looked at each other and simultaneously we both said "KNACKERS" After taking a quick sip Derek put down his coffee and we both moved through the swing doors to the crash bays beyond. As I drove to the hockey stick I looked at Derek and said "I didn't want to see that film anyway."

Derek or Cpl Howling LSM to give him his full title lit up a cigarette and said "What do they want to fly in this weather for? Do they think it's an airfield or something" He was a funny man who liked his beer and game of cards in the Rose and Crown in Marham village. He has jet black hair and was good looking, which was strange because he had a really big nose. That W.O. Charlie Framingham would say "Put a horse between your legs and you could plough a field. Derek would say "Look at that taxi with the doors open". Charlie's ears would put Prince Charles to shame. We were good mates and a good team

The Air Traffic Control could barely be heard over the Rts speaker as Derek said "In position tower" with the rain coming down so hard that it sounded like hailstones hitting a tin roof.

After a few Victors had landed we arrived back at the section only to find that Derek's coffee had gone stone cold and the film was well into the plot. "What happened" I asked only to be told to keep quiet and put the kettle on. As I settled in my chair the hero's plane was about to crash. The 633 squadron Mosquito slid to a halt, as it did so some bright spark said "This is where the crash alarm should sound", at that moment Fred Shaw shouted "Abort take off" the crash alarm sounded and all hell broke loose in the rest room.

All we heard as Derek and I reached the watch room was "06 abort take off" We were the first to go, the rain was horizontal and I could hardly see anything.

"Crash 1 tower, Crash one tower" that was all I could hear I looked towards Derek who had put his helmet on and to my astonishment he was trying to speak to the tower through it. Neither Derek or the tower could hear each other so I grabbed the handset from Derek "Go ahead tower" I said looking at Derek in disgust but half laughing to myself at the sight of Derek's nose sticking out of his helmet and the thought of him trying to speak to the tower and read a map at the same time. Was this a practice or the real thing? The answer was soon to come the tower called "This is not a drill" followed by a map reference. All this was happening at the speed of light. The crash combine was somewhere behind us, all we had was the thought of a Victor tanker fully fuelled and in a hole at the end of the runway.

The rain was so heavy we could hardly see, and then we saw the aircraft, its landing lights were on full and all four engines were thundering away. The aircraft was up to its belly in mud with its undercarriage still intact. As I positioned on to the nose of the aircraft I shouted to Derek "Switch on the area light and I will get the aircraft ladder". While the combine was positioning I ran round the back of the ACRT and started to undo the ladder strap while Derek opened the turret so he could turn on the area light. As some of you may know, for the uninitiated the hatch on an ACRT when open lay across one end of the ladder which I was about to pivot up from the rear of the vehicle. Very wet and in haste I levered up the ladder, it was stuck I screamed at Derek to close the hatch, as Derek went up into the hatch my strength and adrenaline rush was getting the better of me. I managed to flip the lid over just as Derek was putting his head through the hatch it was a good job he had his helmet on. The poor man didn't stand a chance I found him in the foot well stuck like the last sardine in a can. I pulled him out and said "You get the hose run out and I'll get the ladder.

The aircraft ladders are very light and as I lifted one end I felt something was wrong, in a split second Derek had grabbed the other end of the ladder and decided to run to the other side of the vehicle to me. It was now looking more like a version of the Keystone Cops. We hit the ACRT and were both catapulted backwards into the mud. In the noise of the engines Derek had thought I said that I would run the hose out!!!!

Quick as a flash we were both on our feet and back in control. All this was happening at breakneck speed with the rest of the crew still deploying. We arrived at the aircraft the ladder was hooked on. Derek ascends the ladder then he shouts "Open the door" I was about to slip my knife into the door handle when, as if by magic it opened on its own. I knew they were opening the door from the inside so I shouted "Stop Derek they are opening the....." too late as Derek went up to the door it hit him on the helmet and he fell backwards into the mud. "I hope nobody is watching this" I thought

I lifted the jaded Cpl to his feet and up the ladder we both went, as Derek reached the opening he was handed a tray carrying the aircrew buffet for the now delayed flight

Derek must have thought "Do I rescue the crew or have a cup of tea." in the cockpit I asked "Is everyone ok" there were a few replies of yes thanks and the like. "I'll get the pins" I shouted (ejector seat) "Don't worry they are all in" said one of the aircrew. I looked toward the pilot, his head hung down, I thought he was unconscious so I reached out and touched his shoulder, he jumped back which startled me and I fell back hitting Derek squarely in the chest again sending him flying on his backside. The pilot was ok his head was

down because he was writing on his knee note pad. Both the pilot and engineer asked if we could check the undercarriage while they closed down the engines. That was a great request because it meant we had to leave the aircraft. The crash crew was all deployed and Sgt Terry Tait had it all under control within a short time.

The aircraft was being dug out and the crash crew was sent for supper leaving Derek and I on standby at the aircraft, the recovery of the Victor would go on well into the night. After what seemed hours the crew returned. Derek and I were wet through and extremely cold. Sgt Tait said "Take the domestic DP2 to supper and leave Crash 1 in position."

The DP2 felt really warm, it was still raining but our spirits were up Derek warmed his hands on the engine cowling and said "I hope they have rabbit stew on the go." After filling our plates with Derek's favorite rabbit stew chips, black pudding, sausages, bacon and basically everything that was going. As we picked up our knife and fork the phone rang, Derek answered it "***** off" and slammed down the phone. "Who was that" I asked "A chimney fire at 02:30 in the morning they must be *****g joking" Derek said. No they were not joking the tannoy was

giving out the address in Officers Married Quarters.

Not to bore you all ex budding firefighters, we put out the chimney fire had our supper and returned to the crash site only to be told by the OC engineering had sent round a bottle of brandy to keep the men warm. The only bottle we got our hands on was the empty one. "Never mind Dick" said one of the crew "It is the early hours of 18th November and you are 21 years old today" With that the whole crew sang Happy Birthday "Don't worry" said Derek "We got something out of it" and handed me the aircrew buffet from the crashed Victor.

I will never forget my 21st Birthday.

Dick Parker Member No 268

Thanks Dick for an honest and funny account of that incident and it just goes to show that not everything goes according to plan. A bit like the time, again at Marham when we went to a B52 with a burst tyre and I managed to nearly put my helmet on with the visor at the back of my head. Of course the crew could never let me forget it. It was nice to see Terry Tait (RIP) mentioned who was my crew chief at Laarbruch and Warrant at Waddington. Ed.

ISLE OF WIGHT TOURS

It is with great sadness that I have to inform you that the Isle of Wight Tour Company has gone into liquidation, yet another victim of the virus. All customers are financially protected by Bonded Coach Holidays (BCH) and by Shirley Winn the company Director selling of her assets to cover other costs.

This company was voted best tour company for the last two years by the Public Best Tour Group awards. 30,000 customs can't be wrong. Shirley and her devoted staff are known to us all for old fashioned values and the personal touch.

When I was chairman some 20 years ago Shirley came to my house where we had a committee meeting to decide whether to use IOW Tours. We all agreed to give it a try. After the meeting we all went to a nearby fish and chip emporium for a meal. We had a whip round for a tip and we each gave a pound, not Shirley she threw in a 20 pound note. £28.00 for a tip not bad!!!!!!



I think most would agree that we have had some fabulous deals, not least those great weekends at Bracklesham Bay and many others. It is hard to measure the pressure taken off the committee in organisation for these events!!

I am sure you will all be with me when we wish Shirley every success for the future. Knowing her, as we do, she will

come bouncing back as large as life.

Good luck Shirley and please keep in touch.

John Goupillot on behalf of the RAF&DFS Association

I watched the TV interview with Shirley and one of the drivers it was heartbreaking to watch (Ed)

A Brief History and Tribute to Neil Slade

RAF & DFS Association Chairman 2012 to 2020

Neil sadly passed away on 21st October and had been poorly for some time and had to stand down as Chairman earlier this year. His funeral service was at Pontefract but due to Covid restrictions only 14 could attend. And as Ron Brown our President expressed that it was a tragedy that we could not attend as an Association to honour his service, as Neil had travelled far and wide to carry the Association Standard at members funeral services. Neil carried out his duties as Chairman with dilligence and passion along with the support of his wife Jan and we mourn that loss. Our heartfelt sympathies to Jan for her loss and our best wishes in building her life again.

Neil joined the RAF in 1966 and became a fire-fighter, when asked by the recruitment W.O. if I had any experience "Yes" I said, "I have a Boy Scout Fire Fighter Badge and signed on the dotted line." His first posting was RAF Wyton which was followed by a nonstop tour of the Gulf which ended at Bahrain at RAF Hamala 3ACC/ADC. At one time, during this tour of the Gulf he was playing football and the barracks were bombed, so all they possessed was the football kit that they were wearing. He also became a referee and was a keen cross country runner. His next posting was to RAF Marham only lasted about a month as he was selected for The Queens Flight and spent 4/5 years there. His last posting in 1975 before demob was RAF West Drayton.

He received 2 commendations during his service- the first on 28th May 1969 by the Commander British Forces Gulf, and secondly on 29th March 1971 by the RAF Air Support Command. The second was because; he was off duty when a light aircraft crash landed on the runway. He was passing the airfield with another fireman and they both rushed to pull the pilot and passenger from the plane. One survived but the other sadly died from his injuries. See a montage of images from Neil's journey in the centre pages.

Neil went on to work for British Airways and was there for 37 years. He began as a fireman and then transferred to passenger services. He worked for 18 months on passenger security on Concord. He also developed the system for the Hajj



pilgrimage to Jeddah. They had to be so careful because if any traveller didn't have the correct paperwork, the airline was fined a huge sum. Neil was known as Mr Hajj.

He was also the person who could be relied upon to detect fake passports and visas. Jan had a phone call from one of Neil's managers who said that Neil was the font of all knowledge and many staff sought him out for his advice.

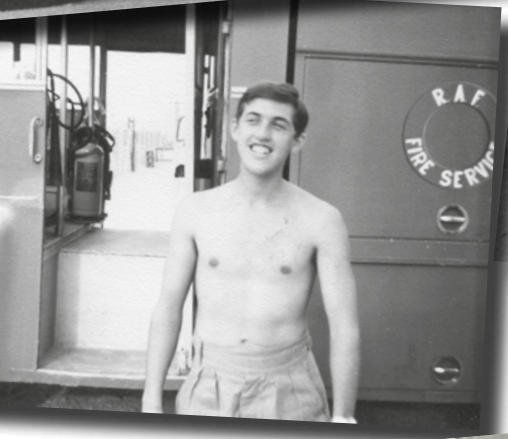
After Neil retired, he worked as a volunteer for Guide Dogs for the Blind for 6 years in a variety of roles including boarder for 2 trainee dogs, driver, collection box co-ordinator, fund raiser and My Guider. In his role as My Guider (human guide dog), he met Mark twice a week and took him around various towns to get him used to going out until he was eventually given a guide dog.

Jan has set up a tribute page in memory of Neil for contribution to Guide Dogs because he was so passionate about it. To make a donation go to www.guidedogs.org/donate-now click on, In Memory and then click next-your donation. For donating in memory of-choose tribute fund from the drop down menu, The Fund Number is 36532355 with the name Neil Slade

Donations so far total over a £1,000 and Jan will keep the fund open for a while and she fully intends to add to the final amount so that she can name a guide dog in his memory.

That would be a wonderful thing so please help if you can.





Sergeant William Davies (Another Unsung Hero)

BILL DAVIES VOLUNTEERED FOR THE RAF in 1939 and trained as a Ground Defence Gunner. In November of that year he was sent to France as part of 73 Squadron who were tasked with defending the Advanced Air Striking Force airfields supporting the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). When the BEF was encircled at Dunkirk, 73 Squadron fell back further south to the Atlantic coast before returning to RAF Church Fenton to recuperate and re-equip. On the 17th June 1940 the squadron ground crew boarded SS Lancastria along with thousands of other servicemen and civilians evacuating France as part of Operation Ariel. Shortly after departure, while still in the Bay of Biscay the ship was attacked by a wave of Junkers 88 bombers and was hit by three or four bombs during the raid. A number of survivors reported that one bomb had gone down the ship's single funnel, which is most likely given the speed with which the ship sank – about 15–20 minutes. With the ship badly damaged and grossly overloaded, the results of the attack were horrendous. More than 3,000 servicemen, women and children perished on the Lancastria, but Bill Davies was among the 2,500 lucky survivors who were rescued by the Royal Navy. Although kept quiet at the time because of concerns about morale, the sinking of SS Lancastria remains to this day Britain's worst maritime disaster.

Following victory in the Battle of Britain 73 Squadron was again deployed overseas, this time to fight in the North Africa Campaign, and Bill along with the rest of the ground crew found themselves sailing to the Middle East on the SS Camaronia, a sister ship to the Lancastria. Later in the trip they were transferred to the cruiser HMS Manchester, and while on board were involved in a sea battle with the Italian Navy. During the fighting, the RAF contingent was kept busy laying ammunition for the ship's guns. The



RMS Lancastria 17 June 1940



voyage eventually ended in Egypt where the airmen of 73 Squadron were reunited with their aircrew and Hurricane fighters at Heliopolis, near Cairo. As Rommel's Africa Corps established their presence to the west, the Squadron was kept active and later took part in the siege of Tobruk. During the vicious fighting there Bill was badly wounded and sent back to Alexandria where he spent some time in hospital. Still suffering from his wounds, he was medically downgraded and ended up having to remuster to ACH/GD; or in other words, a SWO's dogsbody. However, for Bill this was a change that he was never to regret. Within weeks he was sent to the Fire Training School in Amman, and on completion of the basic fire course he was sent back to England where he was posted to RAF Manston in Kent.

As the bomber offensive increased in its intensity, the number aircraft returning with battle damage increased in direct proportion to the number of operations flown, and these events had a great bearing on the provision of extra airfield crash crews. Out of necessity many returning aircraft would have to land at the nearest airfield they came to, which were the ones sited on the English Channel and North Sea coast. Situated as it was on the Isle of Thanet, Manston was the natural choice for many crippled aircraft returning from the South.

In 1942, as the result of crashed aircraft littering the entire airfield making flying impossible, the Station Commander, Wing Commander Tom Gleave, made strong representations to the Air Ministry via Air Vice-Marshal Leigh-Mallory (AOC of Fighter Command) for increased facilities to deal with the problem. The extra facilities he asked for were a lengthened

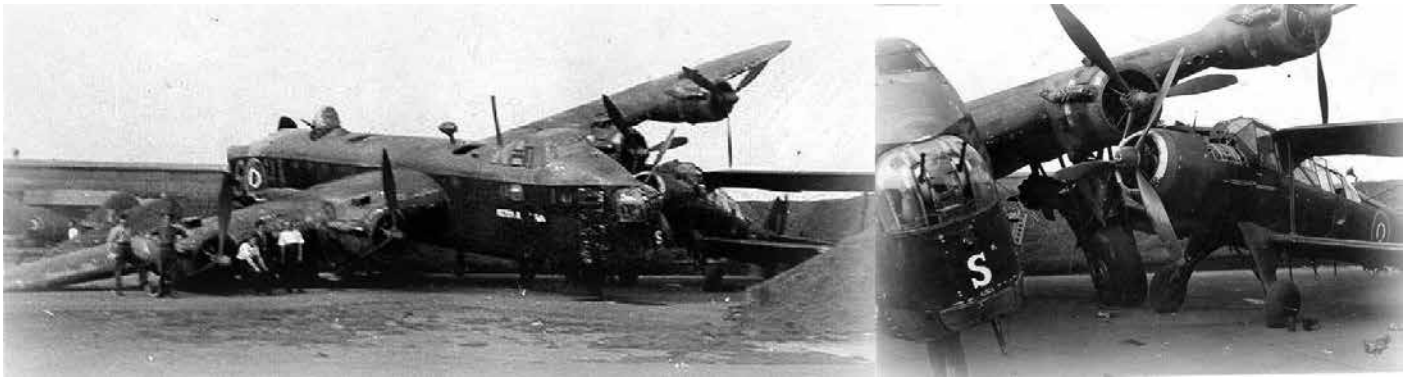
and widened runway, increase in fire crews, ambulance and medical staff, and heavy recovery gear, but his pleas fell on deaf ears. Consequently the problem just got worse and on the 28th August 1943 a series of events occurred which illustrated the COs worst fears perfectly:

- Four squadrons of Spitfires diverted to Manston and parked haphazardly around the airfield. At midnight a Wellington crashed at the end of the runway effectively blocking it.
- Within an hour three more Wellingtons and three Stirlings hedged-hopped over the first Wellington and landed safely.
- At 0400hours a Stirling attempted to land on the runway and crashed into the Spitfires of 317 Squadron, sweeping on to demolish a Fairy Albacore.
- Sometime later another Stirling attempting to land crashed into an empty hut careered into a Bellman hangar wrecking both. Later another Wellington landed safely and was followed by another Stirling.



In summary, in the space of little more than eight hours Manston had received 55 emergency diversions causing total bedlam on the airfield! Wing Commander Gleave had photographs taken of the wreckage and mayhem inflicted upon his Station, and sent them post-haste to the Air Ministry. Confronted with this evidence the Air Ministry was at last forced to act, and so hastily decided to create three properly equipped Emergency Landing Grounds (ELGs), which soon acquired the nickname of 'Lame Duck Airfields'. The stations earmarked for this purpose were Manston in Kent, Woodbridge in Suffolk, and Carnaby in East Yorkshire and as a result Wing Commander Gleave received everything he had previously asked for as well as a 60 bed hospital.

Soon in the thick of it Corporal Bill Davies was involved in many of the aircraft crashes and fires that gave Manston the nom de guerre of "Pranger's Paradise" and he later recalled that often the times on crash duty were almost as hairy as his time in the Middle East. As an ELG Manston



was setup with the newly developed Fire Investigation Dispersal Operation (FIDO), which was designed to help aircraft returning from operations to land safely during periods of widespread fog, and poor visibility. FIDO consisted of huge tanks of petrol being sited on the airfield which in turn fed the highly flammable fuel into smaller supply tanks from where it was pumped into perforated pipelines sunk in channels along each side of the main runway. Lancaster landing in FIDO When required the petrol would be ignited and the resulting walls of fire helped to disperse the fog and illuminate the runway so it could be seen from miles away. Naturally, the responsibility of operating FIDO fell to the Fire Section, and the system proved to be a real boon for returning bomber crews searching for a runway to land on.

A boon for the aircrew maybe; but a headache for the Fire Service, as the arrangement of petrol tanks and pipelines created a massive fire risk. In the summer of 1944 the main petrol tank at Manston developed an uncontrollable leak which allowed the highly flammable fuel to percolate into the grass area of the runway turning the whole area into a potential bomb. Members of the Fire Section were asked to volunteer to pump out the tanks, and Bill Davies was one among the crew who took the job on. Working in the petrol fumes, the task was fraught with danger, but somehow they managed to manoeuvre a trailer pump, spark plugs exhaust pipe

and all, into close proximity of the tank, and deploy a length of suction hose into the petrol. Whilst other fire crews stood by with foam branches at the ready, the decanting was then carried and completed without a hitch. The operation took but a few minutes, but for Bill and the others it seemed like hours, and as a consequence, a very dangerous situation had been averted by Fire Fighters. There was no official recognition of the bravery that day as there was a war to be fought. As the war progressed, the number of returning bombers to Manston increased, and there was one incident that Bill was involved in that led to him being recommended for a bravery award. It was when a number of aircraft of the Eighth Air Force were taking their chances landing at Manston and this is how Bill recalled the sequence of events: *'Thunderbolts and Mustangs were landing all around the grassed area of the airfield with bombers setting down on the runway. All was going reasonably well until a badly shot up B17 Fortress with one engine on fire, overshot the runway and crashed into a group of other Fortresses. Petrol began pouring out of a ruptured fuel line in the aircraft, I managed to stuff an asbestos blanket into the burning engine and cover it with foam. I discovered later that my clothing was saturated with petrol'.*

For this action Bill was recommended for a Bronze Star by the American commander but once again, as often was the case, another brave deed went unrewarded.

Until the end of the war Bill Davies endured exhausting nights of crash duty, during which returning aircraft would keep the crews very busy, and was on alert for hours on end during days when sleep was almost impossible, due to the never ending bustle of an active wartime flying station. In October 1945 the wounds and injuries he had received from almost six years of continuous action caught up with him and Bill was taken into Uxbridge Hospital where he spent eleven months recuperating.

In the late summer of 1946 Sergeant Bill Davies Gunner and Fire Fighter was discharged from the RAF with a 30% disability pension.

'The three and a half years I spent as a Fire Fighter with the RAF were the most rewarding of my service and I do not regret one moment of it' was his philosophical comment.

E FLAMMIS AQTUE RUINIS SALUS

Postscript:- Ironically, Bill was not awarded the Bronze Star but the Station Commander; Tom Gleave did receive one, among his other honours. He was shot down on 31st August 1940 and was badly burned. He then became one of McIndoe's patients ("The Guinea Pig Club") before taking on the role as Station Commander at RAF Manston. (ED)



Lancaster landing in FIDO



Firefighter igniting FIDO

RON BROWN

President of the RAF&DFSA, Member No 294 Ron Brown joined the Association in March 1997 and has been an active member ever since then, having performed a number of roles including Secretary, webmaster and Vice President. As many will have seen on Facebook, he often finds himself the butt of the odd joke when fellow firemen refer to the “old days”, so it’s only fair that we should set the record straight, and read our President’s own account of his early RAF Service. Here is Ron’s story:

I joined the RAF on November 7th 1955 at age 17½. National service was still going strong in those days and as I didn’t fancy the Army or Navy, I volunteered early to get the service of my choice. My first port of call was RAF Cardington for kitting out and swearing in. I was there for about a week during which I packed all my civvies up in a brown paper parcel and sent them home. At the end of the week my fellow recruits and I boarded the cattle train from the station far side of airfield which got shunted into sidings every so often to let passenger trains to go through. We were bound for RAF West Kirby.

Eventually we arrived at Meols railway station on the Wirral where we were met by what appeared to be the Gestapo! It turned out to be our DI staff, and I can honestly say I have never been shouted or sworn at like that before or since. As I recall, I joined Roosevelt Squadron at West Kirby but cannot remember any names of DIs or members of the squadron I was billeted with. We had a leave at Christmas so I managed to get a week at home before returning to finish training. I think

enough has been said by other contributors to Flashpoint about the conditions and treatment of recruits at square bashing in the 1950s.

The course finished mid-January 1956, so after the passing out parade we all went home for leave again, before catching the train to Hull from which I was bussed to RAF Sutton-on-Hull for my initial Fire Training. I was on Course 247 with John “Rocky” Rich as lead instructor. I think his fellow instructor was Cpl Tomlinson, and one thing I do remember about Sutton was that it was very cold to be playing about with water. Unfortunately I wasn’t into photography back then so have no photo’s to share. After passing the course in April 1956 I went straight to RAF Weeton for driver training, where I started on Land Rovers at the old Inskip airfield. After mastering that I progressed through Austen One Tonners and took my final test on the Austin Gas Truck. Before leaving Weeton we had a few days familiarity training on the Mk5, which at the time was the most modern fire tender in the RAF.

All I needed now was a posting, and when my name came up I was told “Singapore”. This was hardly a surprise as at the time my elder brother was stationed at Seletar and in those days an elder brother could claim his sibling to be posted with him; happy days. So after another trip home on embarkation leave, it was off to RAF Insworth to be kitted out for the tropics and given my jabs; then a train to Liverpool where I was to board the troopship HMT Empire Clyde. Troopships were run by the Army and every one had to work their passage



Toward the end of June we set sail into the Irish Sea, through St Georges Channel and then out into the Bay of Biscay, which funnily enough wasn’t too rough. Having rounded the Iberian peninsular we sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar in into the Mediterranean and our first port of call which was Malta. Unfortunately I was working in the Galley at the time so was unable to get ashore during the twelve hours we were there. Then it was on to Port Said at the other end of the Med where only passengers stationed in Egypt were allowed to disembark. The next day we set off into the Suez Canal, and just in time too, as we were the last troopship to do so before Nasser closed it – the one after us was turned back and had to go back out of the Med and all the way round the Cape of Good Hope! Our next port was at Steamer Point, Aden, where at last I managed to get my feet on dry land for a few hours. Sailing east into the Indian Ocean, it soon got rough and I’ve never seen more people hanging over the rail. We dropped more passengers off at Colombo in Ceylon, a couple of which had been on the same training course as me, and then it was on to Singapore, my final destination.

I arrived at Singapore on 12th August where we were given our postings, which for me was RAF Tengah. I was pleased to be going there rather than Seletar, as Tengah was a main operating base for fighters and bombers in the Far East whereas Seletar was mostly maintenance.

On arrival in Singapore there was mail waiting for us and I had two letters from my then girlfriend. The first professed her undying love for me, and went on to say she would wait for me forever. The second, which had been posted just one week later,



Troop Ship Empire Clyde



Crash Crew: L/R Keith Mealing, Sarkinan, John Fitzpatrick, Lou, Ken Madra & Ron Brown

was a “Dear John” telling me she only gone out with me to make her boyfriend jealous! In the end she did me a favour, as I met my wife at Tengah and at the time of writing we are still some together sixty years later.

Situated just north of the equator, the crash bays at Tengah were little more than nine pillars supporting a roof stuck out on the old Japanese airstrip. Equipment-wise, we had a Rescue Land Rover, a Mk5, a 45 Monitor, a Gas Truck, a Bedford Water Bowser, and two trailer pumps. In charge of us were Flt Sgt Ernie Stranix assisted by his deputy Gerry Greaney, and the total strength was 34 men, 12 of whom were National Servicemen and only 6 were above the age of 21.

At that time Tengah was a busy airfield operating four squadrons; we had:

- 60 Sqn flying Venom FB1s
- 81 PR Sqn flying Meteor 7s & 8s
- 14 Sqn RNZAF flying Venom FB1s
- 1B Sqn RAAF flying Lincolns

It was proper front line flying too, as the Lincolns would be routinely loaded with up to 12000lb of bombs and the Venoms were armed with either rockets, or 500lb bombs under their wings. As it happened, I didn’t have long to wait for my first incident as on my first day on crash crew we had a nose wheel collapse on Venom. Although only minor it gave me an idea of what this job was all about working on an operational air base.

The first serious incident I was involved

with resulted in the death of my mate Alan Ledson. Alan was out on the airfield laying glim lamps in the ATC land rover with the duty electrician, Peter Arundel, when their vehicle was struck by a 60 Sqn Venom which was taking off for a night sortie. The wingtip of the aircraft hit the bottom of the windscreen killing both occupants instantly. Alan and Peter were buried in Kranji Military Cemetery; photographs of the funeral can be seen on the RAF&DFSA website.

There were minor incidents almost every shift but the most serious in my time was on the 8th July 1957. That day Fg Off John Lincoln’s 60 Sqn Venom stalled shortly after take off before crashing into an airman’s married quarter. Lincoln, two service wives and a 14 month old baby were killed in the crash and a local servant badly injured. We couldn’t attempt any sort of rescue as we had no protective kit suitable for the task. All I ever had in



Venom Crash - Moment of impact

Singapore was a cotton jungle green-jacket and trousers, canvas jungle boots, a leather jerkin, a WW1 tin helmet with canvas screen, and a pair of asbestos gauntlets. Another casualty of the incident was a civilian fire tender that ran into the back of a lorry loaded with coconuts on the way to the fire and subsequently rolled into a monsoon ditch injuring two of the crew onboard.

Other events that occurred while I was at Tengah were:

- On 15th October 1957 I witnessed one of the smoothest landings I ever saw when a 60 Sqn Venom made a belly landing due to his undercarriage failing to lower.
- In late 1957 45 Sqn reformed with the Canberra B2s and deployed to Tengah on December 13th of that year. However, two of their aircraft, WJ983 and WH882 collided in cloud over Pontian, Malaya, just west of Singapore, and crashed killing all three crew of WH882, and the Navigator in WJ983. All four airmen were buried in Kranji military cemetery.
- In 58 I scrounged a flight in a Lincoln with the Aussies. We took off with 6,000 lb of bombs and dropped them somewhere in the jungles in up-country Malaya. Almost all the aircrew were NCO rank.
- On the 18th November another 45 Sqn Canberra, WH853, had a double flame out and made a forced landing in Kranji Creek about a mile off the North end of the runway. The pilot and navigator were both killed, though a third member of the crew survived with just minor injuries. It took us nearly half an hour to find it as we hadn’t done any local topography runs up until then; we certainly did after that.



Crew in action at the Crash Site

In 1957 Tengah also won the Far East Air Force Light and Heavy Trailer Pump competitions. The Heavy Pump Team was Gerry West RNZAF, Nick Nickson, Ralph Johnson and another chap I can't remember the name of. The Light Pump Team was Ken Maddra, myself, Keith Meiling and a chap called Lou.

The social life at Tengah was fantastic. Often a day would start in the swimming pool followed by the NAAFI; then we'd either go on to the Tengah Bar or the Halfway House in Bukit Timah, before going into town for the night. Alternatively, we would only go as far as the City Lights in Bukit Panjang then go to Pops Makan Stall for a chicken curry. I also spent quite a bit of time at Seletar with my brother, and had some great nights with him and

his mates. We spent his 21st birthday at the Sky Palace where they literally drank me under the table; I fell out of my chair and ended up flat out under the table! They did look after me though, and I woke up in someone's bed, alone I might add. We spent a lot of time down Bugis Street in those days despite it being out of bounds. You were likely to get 14 days jankers if caught down there, and there were several raids during my visits, but luckily we were well in with the barmen, who showed us how to get clear. After I met my wife-to-be in November 57 my night life with the boys dropped off quite a lot, as I preferred to take her out rather than just go drinking, but I still went out with the lads several times a month.

In early November 1958 FS Stranix was posted home to be replaced by FS Ron Shearn, a true gentleman. I only served under him for two months as I was posted home in late January 1959, and I think I felt worse leaving Singapore than I did leaving home. Late January 1959 I boarded the ship HMT Nevassa for my voyage home, this time via Colombo, Steamer Point and Port of Suez. I had hoped to go round the Cape, but unfortunately the Suez Canal had been reopened by then so we stopped in the Great Bitter Lake to let an East bound convoy go through, then carried on to Port Said via the Suez Canal. From there it was straight to Gibraltar where we had to remain on board as the sea was too rough for the crew to let us ashore. We finally arrived at Southampton in late February 1959, and I went home on disembarkation leave before going to my next posting, which was to be RAF Bovingdon near Hemel Hempstead.

After my leave I reported to the fire section at Bovingdon where the boss was WO Dan Dare (of anti Regiment fame). At Bovingdon we shared the airfield with the USAF, so had a mixed crash crew with an RAF Cpl in charge. The USAF squadrons were flying DC3s and the RAF Fighter Command Communication Squadron was flying Ansons. I was only there eight months before being demobbed on Nov 7th 1959 after four fantastic years. I was out for just two years three months when I re-enlisted and served for another 18 1/2 years, but that's another story.



Overturned Civilian Fire Tender



FEAF Pump Presentation

TQF SCANIA REBORN

Several months ago I was approached by the Managing Director of Brighton City Airport, Rob Cooke, with an idea that some might consider rather ambitious.

Rob had seen that the Museum tries, where possible, to maintain its vehicles in roadworthy, operational and if possible fully kitted condition. His idea was to lease our Queens Flight Scania and put it back into service at the Airport. Brighton City Airport used to be known as Shoreham Airport which I'm sure you'll all know was the scene of a major air crash back in 2015 which resulted in the loss of 11 lives. Since that dark day, the Airport has slowly started to develop back into a very successful commercial operation but in order to continue with that development it has become necessary to raise the airfield crash category to except larger airframes and increased passenger numbers. With money tight, Rob came up with the idea of leasing the Scania from the Museum in return for a regular donation that we could use to develop the collection further. Given our current situation, it was a no-brainer!

We knew that the vehicle was in good condition, but if it was to go back into operational service that wouldn't be good enough so we set about getting the professionals in. Before they arrived, we knew that the pneumatic pipe work on the bumper monitor needed attention. Given that Carmichael was no longer in existence, we dropped the monitor into a local company, Fluidair which was just around the corner from our current location at Billet Lane. They were a bit surprised at first when I slapped the entire demountable system on the counter and asked them if they could fix it! After I explained how it worked and what needed looking at it couldn't have been easier. All the parts required were stock items bar one which had been upgraded to a new type of connection. This was easily sourced and within a week the whole system was back with us ready for testing. Kev Brereton is the only member of our team who has used this vehicle operationally so he took the lead with the testing regime ably assisted by Simon Wilson. The vehicle performed well so we didn't expect any issues when the professionals arrived. Knowing their track record with military fire vehicles, we contacted Angloco and asked them to pay us a visit for a full inspection and test of the vehicle. Given the circumstances, they were very keen to support the Museum with its endeavours and offered us a fantastic rate for their services. Using an experienced engineer who was at

least familiar with a vehicle and its systems that were nearly 30 years old he arrived at Scunthorpe and duly set to work. Six hours later and with just a few minor adjustments made and a couple of washers replaced, he confirmed the vehicle serviceable.

He actually commented that the vehicle was in better condition than newer examples on the run at other airports and that quite a few parts were actually identical to those used on the current MOD RIV.

Next it was on to the vehicle itself. The Museum has always had a good relationship with the local Scania dealer who had previously donated an exhaust mid pipe to replace one that had acquired a massive hole! They jumped at the chance to work on something different. Remember, it was only the vehicle that they were working on so that should have been quite straight forward! Thanks to Museum Volunteer, Colin Tasker, who used his awesome contacts list to get us the best possible price for four replacement heavy duty batteries, we'd already swapped them over. The team from Scania arrived with trade plates and after a quick drive around the yard they set off back to the depot. Over the next few weeks they encountered a multitude of problems as the 29 year old vehicle was put through a full MOT and service. Parts had to be located from quite literally all around the globe. Some parts proved very elusive indeed and the project did slip a little behind schedule. Never the less, all that hard work paid off and the vehicle was delivered back to the Museum fully compliant with modern road safety standards.

Given that nobody at Brighton City Airport had used the vehicle before, it was agreed that Kev would run a training course at Scunthorpe for one fire-fighter from Brighton. This training would be filmed and the resultant video could be used in situ for cascade training. I had heard that a former RAF Firefighter, Charlie Charles was now working at Brighton and she was my ideal choice. Charlie and I had worked together a couple of times at Coningsby and Waddington. Charlie's claim to fame is that during her first day on shift the BBMF Lancaster Bomber returned to base with a raging engine fire. Charlie was on the RIV



at the time and ended up on a side line fighting the engine fire and protecting the airframe. I believe she is the only female fire-fighter ever to tackle an engine fire on a Lancaster. An accolade, which will probably stay with her for life, hopefully. Not a bad thing to put on your CV!

With Kev teaching and Colin filming, the day proved very successful indeed.

All that was left to do was to deliver it by low-loader to Brighton. Luckily, we had a Mk6 to pick up 25 miles away from Brighton so it was decided to kill two birds with one stone. The Scania was delivered and the Mk6 collected all on the same day.

The Scania is now on the run. She is lovingly looked after by the team at Brighton. Polished every week and with new markings, it's hard to believe that this vehicle has come out of retirement and is now back on operational standby. It is hoped that the vehicle will be re-registered for road use and gain a new civilian registration which will allow us to keep it on the road when its tour of duty is over. The vehicle is earning its keep providing valuable income to the Museum whilst at the same time providing a fantastic example of up cycling and providing a cost effective solution to the airports future expansion plans. Not bad for a vehicle that celebrates its 30th Birthday next year.

Many thanks to

Fluidair, Angloco, Scania Trucks Scunthorpe, Rob Cooke, Charlie Charles, Kev Brereton and all those involved at the Museum for making this happen. Thanks also to Carmichael, Scania and TQF for building and maintaining such a brilliant vehicle. Also we must mention the firefighters at Cosford, its last operational base.

Steve Shirley

MUSEUM UPDATE

We always knew it might happen, but no-one expected things to happen as quickly as they did!

For the past 18 months, the Museum has been “stored” in Scunthorpe. During this time we had five open days which saw a large number of you come together with old friends to look at our past and marvel at what we used to do and how we used to do it.

The understanding that we had with our landlords, North Lincolnshire Council, was that they would try and find us a new home whilst advertising the building for a commercial rent of £230,000 a year. They promised they wouldn't kick us out until that happened!

Sadly, during October, that's exactly what happened. I received a phone call from the Council asking me to show a potential tenant around the building at 09.30. This I duly did and they left at 10.00. Nothing much was said, so we continued with our Museum duties once they'd left. At 17.30 that night, I received a call from the Council stating that the visit was successful and that the new tenant wanted the building as soon as possible. We were given 5 weeks' notice to quit the building but also the news that we would have to clear out half of the 85,000 foot warehouse within a week!!!!!!!!!!!!

Thanks to the amazing efforts of the team, we achieved this in just one day. Unbelievable.

We are well practiced in the art of moving but I have to say that this latest task saw the spirits of the team tested to the limits. You can only kick a man so many times when he's down and this is now the 5th time we've had to move. The pressure placed upon us by the new tenant was constant. For every inch of space we gave up, they moved something into it. That said, we mustn't be too harsh. They felt really bad



Convoy

about having to turf us out. In fact, they didn't know until the morning of the fateful visit that the collection was housed within their new building! They immediately gave us £2500 towards the cost of moving and have allowed us to retain some office space and room in their yard for the next year free of charge.

We put out appeals on BBC Local Radio and luckily someone responded. Thurlly Motors of Alford offered us the use of their old showroom and warehouse as a potential new home. Richard Walsh and his business partner Gail Smith were keen to see the old site get a new lease of life as they'd recently consolidated their business and moved their operations to the nearby town of Louth. Although the existing buildings are a fraction of the size that we need to house the whole collection, the site does have 3 acres of land with it so there is plenty of scope to develop a larger Museum in the future. Most generously, they have offered us the site rent free for six months whilst we set up the new Museum in the hope of reopening and accepting visitors by Easter next year. After that time, we will have to

start paying rent. We can't pay rent without paying visitors coming through our doors so let's hope COVID controls are relaxed a bit by that time next year. Sadly, over half the vehicles have had to be stored off site and exposed to the elements due to the lack of affordable under cover storage space available to us. They are protected by tarpaulins but that is hardly ideal.

Loads of people volunteered their services to help with the move. Most useful of course, were the many transport companies that offered to move vehicles with their low loaders. Every one of them provided their services free of charge. We cannot thank them enough. Please show your support for their efforts by reading the news page on the Museum web site and leaving your comments. I know that they'd be greatly appreciated.

Over a five week period we worked seven days a week, 14 hours a day and covered hundreds of miles moving most of the collection from Scunthorpe to Alford. We're still not finished but we have broken the back of it.



Here we go again



Ready to move



The frontage of the showroom at Alford

The future is uncertain, but we really do feel that we have the chance to make this work. The road where the Museum is now based is a very popular tourist route to the East Coast. If the number of people who've pulled up to have a look so far is anything to go by, we're in a good location. The nearby town of Alford has a lot to offer and local businesses are already throwing their weight behind the idea of a new tourist attraction in the area by offering help and support. We are, of course, still in Lincolnshire. A County often referred to as "Bomber County". The old bases of Manby, Strubby, Coningsby, East Kirkby and Woodall Spar surround us.

We will need your continued support now and when we reopen. Some of you have joined our **Standing Order Supporter**

scheme and are making regular donations and for that we thank you. Equally, we have been deeply moved by several of sizeable donations from individual members. Jim Smith, Steve Bowden and Brian Jones, Thank You so much.

The whole team are confident in the future. We are now dealing with private individuals rather than a local authority so that makes life a lot more transparent. They want to see their first showroom put to good use, and we can certainly do that. There is the chance to buy the site, but we can only do that with grant funding. We can't get grant funding without having a three year lease. That's our first goal and the solicitors are working on that now. If we buy the site we can develop the site and hopefully, in the future, we will finally

have a permanent home for the Museum of RAF Firefighting.

Finally, I would also like to add, that on the day we received our notice to quit from the Council, I also received an email from Defence Fire Rescue, stating that with the support of the Chief Officer, moves were now underway to try and obtain an MFV and RIV for the collection. Now you see why we never give up, there is always hope for the future no matter how hard the battle to get there! A massive Thank You as ever to my fantastic team of volunteers who have given their all to once again pack and move 52 vehicles and 20,000 exhibits to their new home or storage facility.

Steve Shirley



Early days at Alford showing some of the smaller vehicles which we can get in the front showroom

Arthur Miller

In August 1949 the RAF Fire Service were given the opportunity to take part in what might be termed today as an act of international co-operation' which was readily accepted. In France, forest fires were raging and threatening to destroy the vineyards of Bordeaux, at a time when the French wine industry recuperating from the ravages of war. The Mayor Bordeaux made a desperate appeal to the British Consulate for help in fighting the fires. After a spate of diplomatic activity, the Air Ministry despatched a signal to the Commanding Officer of RAF Sutton Hull for him to organise a fire fighting unit to be sent to Bordeaux. Staff at the School was asked to volunteer for this assignment and needless to say there was no shortage. At 11.00 hours on the 23rd August the Station Commander issued the order for trained fire personnel to be made ready for fire duties in Bordeaux. Within next to no time 25 airmen, one junior instructor's course of eight men, four senior instructors and one officer were prepared and ready for the task. At 12.00 the party left for RAF Leconfield and boarded an Avro York. After a technical delay the aircraft took off and landed at 17.00 hours at the French Air Force base, Merignac. At 18.30 hours they were welcomed by the British Consul, and then to their great surprise were accommodated in a hotel of

modest elegance. On the 24th of August the whole party was given a tour of the fire area around L'Alluette and later in the day were detailed to travel to La Brede to relieve French army firemen who had been working in the area for some time. After three exhausting days and nights fighting dense fires using French equipment, Colonel Murelle of the French Army Fire Service ordered a stand down. On the 29th of August the party boarded the York and landed back at Leconfield at 1910 hours.

This was to be only occasion that this sort of international fire cooperation took place and the RAF Fire Service proved equal to the task.

Arthur Miller played his part in this.

Arthur joined the RAF in 1944 and trained as Radar/Wireless Mechanic at Bradford.

The following year he switched trades and went to Sutton-on-Hull to become a Fireman. Arthur discovered he had a natural flare for firemanship, and from then on spent most of his career at the School as an instructor.

He quickly rose through the ranks achieving the rank of Sergeant in less than 4 years.

A keen and talented footballer, Arthur captained the Fire School team.

It was on Arthur's 21st birthday in 1948 when he was involved in a demonstration in Queens Gardens, Hull that he met his wife to be. They were married for 67 years up until his death five years ago.

During his time at Sutton Arthur was involved in trials for nylon protective clothing.

In August 1949 severe forest fires spread across the Bordeaux region of France claiming over 100 lives, and assistance was sought from the UK. Along with Flt Lt Sydney Wilson, Sgt Arthur Miller led a group of 30 volunteers from Sutton-on-Hull in response to the request. They were bussed to RAF Leconfield where they boarded a York transport aircraft to Bordeaux.

Arthur was demobbed in 1954 after which he returned to his native Tyneside roots and worked on the South Shields fish docks for a while before moving back to Hull where he got a job in a bakery. He later became a silk screen printer and retired as manager of the Grief printing company when he reached 65.

Although the story is short, you can see by the following images that Arthur had a short but eventful service life and certainly did some interesting stuff.





QUEEN'S GARDENS, RAF V
FIRE FIGHTERS V



Fire fighters in nylon



Corporal Arthur Miller, of South Shields (left), using a carbon dioxide jet on a blazing 'plane at the R.A.F. School of Fire Fighting at Sutton-on-Hull yesterday. He is wearing a nylon suit, still in the experimental stage, and is covered in foam. Above is the foam covered 'plane used for the demonstration. (A "Yorkshire Post" picture.)

Blaze put out in four minutes

The Lord Mayor of Hull (Councillor H. J. Barney) yesterday paid an official visit to the school and inspected the personnel.

He was welcomed by Squadron Leader J. K. Milne, Commanding Officer of the Station, who was accompanied by Flight Lieut. F. N. Barrington, officer in charge of the guard of honour, and Pilot Officer D. Ramsbottom.

For the demonstration an old twin-engined Oxford 'plane was allowed to burn fiercely and then the two crews of fire-fighters were brought into action, one with a foam tender and the other using carbon dioxide. The fire was out in less than four minutes.



