



FLASHPOINT



ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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WINTER 2024
www.rafanddfsa.co.uk

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Front cover picture: Mk8 at Manston

Welcome to the winter edition of your Flashpoint. The reunion weekend has been and gone and what a fantastic weekend it was. I and my other half really enjoyed ourselves and are already looking forward to the next one. If you haven't been to one, I highly recommend that you do try and come along. Its great to see other members and old friends and of course make new friends.

I have yet again got to go on my hands and knees and beg you the membership for articles for the spring edition. Steve and I are rapidly running out of content to the point that we are genuinely worried that there may not be a spring edition without using content that has been used years ago. I believe that as many others do that flashpoint is the heart of the association and without it who knows what the future of the association would hold.

The job of editor is not an easy one and I seriously could not do it if it were not for the assistance and encouragement of my assistant editors and dear friends Silverfox and Dave Kirk. It takes a lot of time and a great deal of pressure to meet deadlines for the printers, especially at this time of year when xmas is almost upon us.

Every single member of the association has many stories of their time in the job and if each one of us wrote at least one article we would have plenty of content to keep us going so please folks get writing. Even though I am the editor I still love receiving my copy of flashpoint and read it from cover to cover even after reading all the articles and the printer's proof before giving the ok for print to go ahead.

You will notice that the front cover is our Chairmans very own MK8 and that Andy Gaskell has done an article on it. I wanted

to start a debate on the MK8 as everybody seems to hate it with a passion. I for one believe that when it got to (eventually) an incident it did its job remarkably well. I can still smell that Standard Protein Foam and hear the remarkable hum of that air blower. Yes, it looked ugly and was very slow, but it was what we had and did have a long service career. I am lucky in the fact that I used it on a few occasions in anger. Perhaps there is a story there from me in the future.

I would like to wish all members and non-members a safe and Happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year. I will be spending mine with family this year which I am looking forward to. Take care of each other

Best wishes

Reggie , Silverfox and Dave

Minutes of the AGM on 4th November 2023 Royal Air Force & Defence Fire Service Association A G M

The Meeting was Opened By the Chairman Steve At 10.00 with 26 Members plus 2 associates

All Were Asked to Stand for a few moments Silence to remember Passed Members who have passed on since the last AGM. As the list was long the names were not read.

This was followed by the exaltation by Mike Clapton Secretary.

Apologies From the Floor for G Smith, D Edwards, D Kirk, J Smith, S Bridges, G Lovie.

Minutes of the last AGM were read out by Mike for those that Couldn't Remember them.

Reg Metcalfe proposed they be Accepted as a true Record seconded by Dave ? & AIF

Matters Arising & Correspondence Nil

Chairmans Report Steve read out his usual lengthy Report (see Flashpoint) It was decided from Steves Report that we have a Reunion in 2024 and a AGM in 2025. All were in favour of this.

Vice Chairmans Report Don started by Reading a statement Re future Areas for Reunions (See Flashpoint)

All were in favour of the Suggestions put Forward, at this stage Sarah was asked to join the Meeting the organiser of this Function. She explained the cost of Hotels in the North & South.

Treasurers Report Trevor gave a lengthy report stating that there was £33,220.73 in the Accounts he ended by saying that he was transferring the Savings Account to Holts Military Bank which will give us a 4.2% interest against 1.5% from Barclays therefore Monies for any donation to the Museum would come from out of this account according to members wishes at future AGM.s

Secretary's Report Mike said it was a short report, He thanked Steve for the zoom meetings, 8 in all this year, a few changes of which you will hear in other reports.

Thanks to Don for his help in getting this Reunion on together with Sarah, Don and myself it's been a hard slog but we got there in the end.

Lastly my fellow Committee members Thank You for your valued input at Meetings Once again Gents Thank You all.

Membership Brian reported 377 paid up members on his Books Museum Steve said he still waiting on some Court decisions, not much more can be added at the moment.

Flashpoint Reg Thanked Steve H for his help, he ended by asking for stuff for the next edition which could be December.

London Cenotaph Parade Paul said they had been Allocated 30 tickets & 26 were going.

Steve & Don re elected in there currant posts

Sir Roger is carrying on as our Patron

Mike proposed that Pat Hayes be co-opted on to the Committee as an assistant to Trevor AIF.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 11.45

*Mike Clapton 704
General Secretary*

2023 CHAIRMANS ADDRESS RAF & DFS ASSOCIATION

Having been in post for two years now I think it's safe to say that both the Committee and I have found our battle rhythm. That's not a term that I use lightly because quite literally we are all fighting to take this association forward to ensure that it has a future. Sadly, since last year, an unprecedented number of members have passed away whilst others are struggling with various ailments that prevent them from getting any benefit from belonging to the association. The number of new members is not keeping up with those leaving us.

The current political and economic situation that the world is facing ensures that we are facing a multitude of problems that will affect membership of the association and as such we must find better ways of doing business and promoting the benefits of belonging to a group like ours. I'm so grateful to you all for attending this reunion/AGM as it proves that there is still an appetite for this sort of event but sadly however the numbers are down on last year. Numbers attending in the past were significantly higher. Nowadays people are happy to organise their own events/get together by advertising on social media. No pomp and ceremony, just a few beers and the chance to put the world to rights. That's not significantly different to what we're trying to do with this event, but our constitution currently dictates that we should have an AGM. The formality of this event i.e., the AGM, may be the thing that is putting people off? We have changed the wording of our advertisements by calling it a Reunion with less emphasis on the AGM, but that doesn't seem to have changed peoples' perceptions. People have many reasons for not attending. These could include the cost of the event, value for money, failing health, lack of public transport or the distance that some people must travel to attend. Our Vice Chairman has tried to get a response from people to find out why they do not attend but sadly very few replies were received. He has a suggestion to put to you as do I regarding the future of the AGM that we will put to you at the end of our addresses for you to think about and hopefully vote on so that the committee can make the necessary arrangements for small changes to occur.

The committee has continued to meet monthly via zoom. The only exceptions being Sickness or holidays which prevented this from happening. Using Zoom isn't the same as a face-to-face

meeting, but it does cut down on our individual expenses and the time that we have to spend on association business. It also cuts down on the risk of travelling on the public highway! Very few, if any committee members claim expenses but that is down to personal choice rather than economic sense. Most of the committee are retired and given the price of fuel these days there is no way we should expect people to travel every month for a meeting. The Museum of RAF firefighting provides the Zoom facility for the association to use at no cost which clearly is another benefit that people may not be aware of. We have tried various initiatives to increase the membership, the most noticeable was the increased circulation of the Flashpoint magazine to other fire stations with a Defence connection. This achieved limited success, but the cost involved counteracts the results. We then put out the idea of an electronic version of the magazine and were amazed at how popular this idea has turned out to be! The number of members taking up this offer will have a significant impact on our overall costs, all of which have, as expected, gone up! Thanks to the work of Dave Kirk, our social media presence has improved and hopefully this will attract more members. There are those, me included, who still like to receive a physical copy of the magazine through the post.

We do have to face the fact our problems are not unique. Many other military and civilian associations, clubs and organisations are facing similar problems. Many of these, sadly, have had to fold.

If we are to prevent this happening to our association, we must have more engagement from our members. I know the editor of the Flashpoint magazine will be appealing for stories so that he can fill the next issue. That appeal is repeated on a very regular basis. Many of you will have photographs and stories to tell which old and new firefighters will enjoy reading. It just takes a little bit of effort to type them out and send to the editor. If you have a picture to go with it, so much the better! We must all help Reg to fill the magazine each month as for many, Flashpoint is one of the only tangible benefits of belonging to the association.

We also need more people to consider joining the committee. Trevor Hayes has informed the Committee that he wishes to retire in the not-too-distant future and

as such we are looking to fill the post of treasurer.

The same is true of our patron Sir Roger Austin who also wishes to stand down once a suitable successor can be found. Clearly his position is one where we shall have to reach out to a suitable candidate to see if they are willing to take up the mantle.

All members of the committee remain positive about the future and as such are willing to continue serving in their current positions. I am very grateful to the Committee for their support, and I have no doubt 2024 will present us with new challenges for us to face. I must also say thanks to Kim and other members of my family who support me in all my activities. Without them, I couldn't do what I do. This year has been very tough on me and sadly things did get on top of me for a while. I'm happy to report that I think I'm slowly on the road to recovery and I also remain positive about the future.

Please remember the support that you've had from your families and friends in the past. Without it, we couldn't face many of the challenges that life throws at us. The same is true of the association. Without your continued support, we couldn't do what we do, so please get behind us and think about what small part you can play in ensuring that this association continues for years to come.

Thank You.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

The latest reunion and AGM of the association took place on the weekend of 3rd and 4th of November a great weekend was had by all members who attended, we had a very good entertainer at the Gala dinner on Saturday evening unfortunately only 33 members attended which was a little disappointing as we have a membership of almost 400 it would be great if more people attended particularly the younger members as you are the future of the association next year we will probably be holding it in the Lincoln to Leeds area details will be found in the Flashpoint I look forward to seeing you all at the next reunion

*Ron Brown
Association President*

ACCOUNTS

ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Annual Accounts for year ending 31st August 2023

INCOME		
2022		2023
6,564.00	Full Membership Fees	6,836.50
799.50	Donations from subs	681.50
3,160.82	Shop	140.00
211.00	Raffles	341.00
1.72	Interest from Savings	108.78
£10,737.04	Total Association Income	£8,107.78

EXPENDITURE		
2022		2023
Nil	Return of subs	20.00
90.51	General Postage	121.99
97.34	Stationary	384.34
544.47	Ass Expenses	1,428.30
211.00	Donations Museum	5,341.00
1,358.16	Shop	Nil
6,750.56	Flashpoint & postage	7,040.10
535.21	IT & Tech	665.86
£9,587.25	Total Association Expenditure	£15,001.59

BALANCE SHEET		
2022		2023
Nil	Fixed Assets	Nil
£13,837.86	Current Account	£6,965.22
Nil	Un Cleared Credits	Nil
£17,459.63	Savings Account	17,568.41
£31,297.49		£24,533.63
Nil	Uncleared Debits	Nil
183.21	Postage in hand	1,731.50
£31,480.70	Total Association funds	£26,265.13
1,149.79	+/- Gain / (loss)	(£5,215.57)

EARLIER BALANCES

2023 £26,265	2022 £31,480	2021 £30,330	2020 £28,380	2019 £25,936
2018 £24,691	2017 £26,973	2016 £23,685	2015 £20,104.	2014 £20,081.
2013 £17,907	2012 £15,719.	2011 £13,067.	2010 £12,764.	2009 £14,416.
2018 £5,000 gift to Museum of RAF Fire fighting				
2023 £5,000 gift to Museum of RAF Fire fighting				

2023 PROFIT OR LOSS		
2022	+ /- Gain or (loss in brackets)	2023
10,737.04	Income	8,107.78
9,587.25	Expenditure	15,001.59
£1,149.79	Gain / (loss)	(£6,893.81)

Trevor Hayes member No 419 Treasurer

Auditors Note

I hereby certify, as an independent examiner, after inspection, that these accounts are in accordance with the books of account and the vouchers produced by the treasurer of the Royal Air Force & Defence Fire Services Association.

In my opinion the forgoing balance sheet is properly drawn up and exhibits a true and fair view of the state of the Royal Air Force & Defence Fire Services Association affairs as shown by their books.

Examiner's Signature Name: Paul Murray
Sweet Apple Cottage 5 Upper Weald Calverton Milton Keynes MK19 6EL
Membership number 643 Date 20th October 2023

RAF & DFSA Supporting the Museum financially

AGM 4th November 2023

It has been an aim of the RAF&DFSA to support the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting as long as I can remember. I have been Treasurer since 2011.

As Treasurer, to overcome the need for the RAF&DFSA to fund the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting with large donations like in 2022, I have made the following arrangements with the full agreement of our committee and attendees at the 2023 AGM:-

My intention/ aim is to conserve RAF&DFSA's financial capital in long term savings.

The interest gained each year can be shared between RAF&DFSA and the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting in whatever % the members of the RAF&DFSA agree to at any AGM.

By this method, while our financial capital stays safe in house, the RAF&DFSA is still able to support the Museum and it will have no meaningful detrimental effect on our Association.

To achieve this I am transferring all our savings from Barclays Bank, which was only giving 1.5% interest, to Holts Military Bank, part of the Royal Bank of Scotland. Currently this account is giving 4.25% interest.

I hope to have £20,000 in Holts Bank by 12th November 2023.

£20K at 4.25% will give £850 annual interest (equivalent to 42 members' subscriptions) by November 2024 and can be appropriated according to members' wishes, agreed to at any future AGM. Therefore the future of the Association's savings is totally in the hands of the membership from now on.

Trevor Hayes

Treasurer

Remembrance Day

This year Remembrance was on Sunday the 12th November. I was quite excited this year as we had been given 36 tickets as our allocation . Took long enough after asking each time I requested tickets

We actually had 31 names coming this year, but alas only 20 turned up... Everyone has to give that commitment in July to attend the November March. This is the reason we have to have a core group that turn up no matter what, year after year... Thanks to you all for making the day what it is ...

The past couple of years RBL have changed its way of getting us on the parade ground. What a palaver the previous 2 years had been , however this year they had learned from their errors and I have to say it worked as easy as it always had.

The day started for me at 5am ready to get to Milton Keynes Station to catch the 06.39 train to London. The comradeship of the day started on that train station. The banter between the Army and the RAF was enough to put a smile on your face...

On arrival at Euston first things first, Bacon roll and a coffee , very important. What still amazes me is the kindness that's shown to us every year as we make that journey . Last year I had my Breakfast paid for me by a young man going North, this year the young lady serving me happily informed me that she had given me her staff discount....

Afterwards it was off to find a Poppy Cab, gladly shown where I might obtain one by a lovely young lady , next stop Horseguards Parade.

It's something else joining that Parade with 10,000 other Veterans, all happy to again be sharing that day with their fellow comrades. Former service men and women share that unique bond , that's felt throughout the day .

I think the worst part of the day is all the hanging about, feet and muscles getting cold... but what a sight to see 20 Fireman marching down the Mall all in step... Brought tears to my eyes

Once the March is over its off to wet the whistle with a few drinks or more . My personal tip for the day, don't drink on an empty stomach lol...

If you would like an opportunity to join us then contact me by email, I can't guarantee anything but I'll let you know what's required and off we go for another year.

ONCE AGAIN IT IS TIME TO SAY A FAREWELL TO OUR LOST COMRADES



*Fire-fighter's who serve and have served the crown.
Have sat in hostile foreign places,
With tired, lined, black sooty faces,
Often wet with tears or sweat,
Reeling from the violent forces they have met.
With flame and smoke, they are greeted,
With courage and determination,
it has been defeated.
No guns required for the 'Shout',
Just hose and water for the rout.*

Gordon (Spike) Hatcher passed 23rd July.
Mick McTigue passed 30th July.
Bob Holohan, member 995, passed 2nd August.
William Pratt, member 783, September 2022
Tony Mitchell, member 837, passed 6th June 2023
Len Giblin Passed 26th August 2023
Tom Carney passed 26th August 2023
Terence Matson, member 401 passed 9th February 2023
Frederick Greenwood, member 757 passed August 2023
Jack Evans, member 605 passed 4th October 2023
Peter Rhind. member 999 passed 14th January 2023
Gordon Brown, member 389 passed 10th October 2023
David McBain, Member No 627 died on 20 November

Museum Update 2023

To say that 2023 has been a difficult year for the museum would be the understatement of the century. As many of you will know we have been working with Scampton Holdings and West Lindsey District Council in order to achieve a permanent home for the Museum of RAF firefighting at the former RAF base of Scampton in Lincolnshire. The base was officially closed as an RAF station on the 1st of April and at the same time it was announced that the preferred bidder for the acquisition of the base was Scampton Holdings in partnership with WLDC. Scampton Holdings have produced a £300 million business plan that will ensure Scampton remains an operational airfield. The historical buildings will be preserved and improved. They will create an immersive heritage experience celebrating Scampton's rich history. They will develop a high-tech commercial aerospace ecosystem and an incredible immersive museum experience telling the rich history of the site and an aviation and world class visitor centre for the famous Red Arrows. The Museum of RAF Firefighting has been part of these plans for several years now, so we were ecstatic when the news was announced. Sadly, that euphoria only lasted for 12 hours as the next day the Government announced that they wanted to house up to 2000 migrants on the base for the next two years. This can be a complete shock to all those involved in the successful bid and as such the whole redevelopment plan has had to be put on hold. All parties involved mounted a campaign to fight this proposal

but, in the meantime, the Home Office has pushed on with its plan. WLDC has taken the Government to the High Court and a Judicial Review took place this week. The Judge has reserved judgment, and we expect it to be at least two weeks before we hear the outcome.

This has meant that we have had to put our own plans on hold. Luckily, we still had the use of offices at our former site at Scunthorpe whilst the vehicles were dispersed at Sandtoft, Pilham and RAF Digby. We sadly lost our under-cover storage at Sandtoft so most of the vehicles are stored outside with tarpaulins over them. We had to rent 3 x 45-foot-long articulated trailers for the storage of artifacts. Despite this massive setback, we have continued to meet every week to develop the Museum and maintain the collection. We have had a small increase in volunteers which is positive. We have been able to support the Armed Forces Day in Scunthorpe with vehicles and a mobile display unit as well as the Lincolnshire County Show, the Lincolnshire Steam and Vintage Vehicle Rally, RAF Digby Families Day and the Wings and wheels event at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln. We also attended a memorial unveiling at the former site of RAF Newton. Attendance at these events has ensured that the museum name is still out in the public domain.

We have continued to be an active member of the Fire Heritage Network UK and Aviation Heritage Lincolnshire Network.

New exhibits continue to be donated but we have had to put the addition of any new vehicles on hold simply because of a lack of storage. Sadly, the uncertainty on the future led to us losing the chance of obtaining an MFV2 for the collection. It ended up being donated to Ukraine. I'm sure it will come in useful over there but sadly the excuse given by the RAF in sending it over there was that it was better value for defence. There are currently no MFVs preserved in this Country and realistically the only chance we will have to get one in the future will be by private donation of a retired example or the purchase of one from a commercial company. So much for preserving our past.

Everyone at the Museum is still positive that we will have some sort of future at the Scampton site but all we can do is watch and wait for now.

We are very grateful to the association for their donation last year to help with storage costs. The three trailers cost us £800 a month and that's at a discounted rate. Luckily, we don't pay ground rent for where they're parked but without them, the collection would be in danger of being lost. Commercial rent for a building would be much more expensive and without a regular income, we simply wouldn't survive much longer. The standing order supporter scheme also brings in a small regular income as does the occasional one-off donation so we must say a massive thank you to everyone who continues to support our aim of preserving your history for future generations to enjoy.

A WORD FROM DON PAPE - VICE CHAIRMAN

Letter of Thank you to all of the membership and especially to all who attended this year's annual reunion Get Together and AGM.

May I just start first of all by saying a huge thank you to Sarah Fletcher our events Organiser and for the want of a better word "organizing" the venue and the actual Weekend, I will add to that also my thanks to Mike (Mr Secretary) Clapton for Working alongside both Sarah and myself to ensure the event took place.

And so, having patted ourselves on the back I'm going to extend my own personal thank you to all our Members, their wives and partners who attended and I do sincerely hope they enjoyed the weekend overall.

We had a change in the entertainment this year a vocalist, his name is Max Hutton, I've got to admit I was a bit worried when I heard the name initially as when I was in a uniform of a different colour once upon a time I had a Colour Sergeant called Max Hutton who also had a "helluva voice". So moving on, on the Saturday evening there was the usual evening meal followed by a raffle and auction, it had been decided that monies raised by the raffle would pay for the entertainer and any shortfall could be subsidised by the association, the raffle raised two hundred and eighty one pounds, therefore we only had seventy pounds to find. Having talked to most everyone who attended I certainly got the impression they all had a good time and enjoyed the evening, I know I did and I'm sure there is photographic

evidence out there (unfortunately) to prove it, I'm sure you know what it's like when you've had a few "sherberts", anyway enough said except to say Thank you once again to all who attended and making it a cracking weekend. I will just add, if there is anyone who may have ideas as to how we can further improve the weekend get togethers and make them even better please do contact me or Mike or indeed any committee member, pass your idea on, we want to know, and that plea goes out to all of you especially the younger serving people within our trade, just let us know what you would want "within reason" remember I was a Firefighter too you know wink wink.

*Don Pape Vice Chairman
Memb No 140*

PROTO DRY POWDER

In a Flashpoint issue July 2000 Mike Clutterbuck member 472 submitted an article about the PYRENENE BIRO. It was while he was on a course at RAF Manston in April 1965 when the Air Force Department Fire Service were testing this vehicle. He managed to take some photographs and obtained some of the technical details which are listed below.

The Pyrene Biro crash truck was constructed on a Thornycroft 6x6 chassis (cab reminiscent of a Mk7) which was fitted with a Rolls Royce 8 in line cylinder petrol engine.

The dry powder installation comprised of a container of 3 tons capacity, 10x20lb CO2 cylinders and associated pipework and control valves.

Discharge of the dry powder was obtained through two monitors (mounted on riser pipes) and two reservoirs, and two handlines located one on each side of the vehicle aft of the cab, the expelling medium being CO2.

The system was pneumatically operated by compressed air which was supplied



by an auxiliary compressor driven by the engine. This compressor pressurised two reservoirs, one which supplied the vehicle braking system and the other the dry powder equipment.

With compressed air available the operation of any one of the control levers to the open position allowed compressed

air to enter the pipe work and operate through individual rams on the control valves of the CO2 cylinders at the rear of the vehicle. The effective operation pressure was 150lb per sq. inch.

Andy Gaskell (328) Replied to this article in the following Flashpoint, he goes on to say that "I may be able to shed some light



on what happened to the prototype dry powder. In 1971 I was detached to RAF St. Athan on an HGV Class 2 driving course. I believe I trained and passed my test on this truck. The monitors, pipework, and CO2 equipment had been removed with only the “Kettle” remaining and I understand this had been filled with dry sand to give the rear axles extra grip, which was much needed on the steep inclines around Barry Island!! I can only assume that being relegated to driver training the dry powder truck never made the grade as an effective crash fire-fighting vehicle”.

No other references could be found in other Flashpoints, so I think the story ends there. I was never a great fan of dry powder, although it did its job as a knock down agent it was a bit unstable. Members of a certain age will remember carrying out a blow back on the ACRT what a nightmare that was and I’ve seen many go a bit wrong



and I have been one of those victims. 3 tons is a lot of dry powder and the way it compacts I think this truck would have been a servicing nightmare and from a firefighting point of view would it have worked when you got to an incident?

Remember the age-old trade exam question? “What is the mean particle size of dry powder” who cared when your backside was burning.

Steve Harrison.

CIVVY FIRE SERVICE YEARS PART 2

I hope I didn’t bore anyone in Part 1 about the Junior fireman’s training structure as it was in the late 1960’s and sadly it was abandoned after just a few years due to high costs, but I did promise to mention a few amusing incidents while I was under training, so here they are!

While under training at Washington Hall I recall being summoned to the Commandant’s office, not knowing the reason why for this rare occurrence, be it good or bad! While standing to attention at the front of his desk, he was at pains to inform me that I had caused grave upset to the catering staff at the technical college where we attended for part of the week. Evidentially, I was overheard making so called harsh remarks about the viscosity of the custard saying that it could be “sucked through a straw” which reduced the member of staff who had made it to tears! I didn’t deny this, but in mitigation stated that my mother who was also a school cook (employed by the same education authority) had informed me that this couldn’t have been made to the official recipe as laid down by LCC central kitchens, and after several moments of complete silence, the Commandant brusquely told me I was dismissed and to be more diplomatic in future! What did I

learn from this? Well, runny custard is not something I relish, even to this day!

Even though pay while under training was frugal, a few of us did manage a weekly foray into nearby Chorley for a bit of underage drinking at the Joiners Arms which regularly hosted local pop groups and having heard that student nurses from the local hospital frequented this hostelry. So after a bit of scouting, located a similar sized group of attractive “Florence Nightingales” Needless to say we all got on like a “house on fire” (excuse the pun!), and after a few nights of the usual kissing and cuddling, finally got an invite back to the nurse’s accommodation for a coffee which would have included a demonstration of how well they had learned the male anatomy! However, it all came to nothing as we had not prepared to meet the “Sister from Hell” who guarded her charges in a similar way to the bristled SNCO’s in charge of WRAF blocks! We were clocked well before entering and told in no uncertain terms to leg it, otherwise plod would be called and we couldn’t risk being collared smelling of booze, so a hasty retreat was quickly undertaken, but fun while it lasted!

Later on in my training during detachment to brigade HQ, I was placed in the

fire prevention department under the experienced eye of a Divisional Officer (DO) who was a really pleasant boss to work under, always imparting knowledge and answering my questions on what could be a complex subject! One morning he told me to grab the file containing plans for a Victorian cotton mill in nearby Blackburn, as the premises was due a re-inspection having had recent major alterations to an upper floor. So off we went in a staff car, armed with measuring tapes, together with paperwork and after a short journey, made ourselves known at the mill office. The manager was busy but had arranged for an assistant to accompany us to the 2nd floor which was to be inspected, but he was called away to answer an urgent phone call in the supervisors office, asking if we didn’t mind carrying on without him. The mill had ceased the weaving of cloth and this floor had been converted to the making up of women’s garments, containing rows of industrial sewing machines operated solely by women, not as noisy as weaving looms but the buzz could plainly be heard within. Before entering, the DO (with a smirk) forewarned me that these machinists could be “full on” and extremely rude, always on the lookout for a bit of fun to alleviate the boredom of constantly sewing up knickers and

other undergarments! Nothing could have prepared me as a young lad of 17 for what ensued as we strode through the doors and the “buzzing” ceased as the word spread amongst the grinning machinists, that two uniformed males had entered their domain!

Then the heckling began with “he’s a nice young lad, fancy leaving him here for a bit?” and “I bet he has a big hose!”

Well, the laughing and crude remarks came thick and fast and the DO said we should make an orderly retreat to the supervisors office and decide on a revised plan of action.

Totally gobsmacked and with my face glowing like a red traffic light, I blindly followed him out of what could be described as my “baptism of fire”! The DO thought it was hilarious and one of the hazards of the job where large groups of over-sexed females gathered (how do male strippers cope?)

We did complete the inspection, but after the machinists had gone for their lunch break!

I have saved this incident until last as it involved the observations of the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and being interfered with by a female control room assistant, probably the nearest I came to being sacked!

My detachment to HQ was almost complete but had to spend a few days in the control room learning radio procedure and how incoming emergency calls were dealt

with. The duty female radio operator (fire woman) usually sat in a small radio booth within the control room, but for training purposes a larger booth (for 2) was situated just outside with identical radio console and a small hatchway to allow passing of verbal and written messages. Although the booth had sound proofing and was part glazed, it was open at the top (possibly for ventilation) and was situated within the large entrance hall (HQ had been an Edwardian mansion) that contained a large open stairway with open landing, which was to play a major part it what came next!

Normally a middle aged experienced fire woman (radio operator) would carry out training, but for some reason or other was allocated an attractive young lass in her twenties, who had the reputation of being a bit of a “tease” (this actually happened!). So we settled into the training booth, side by side and I was given instruction in handling the duplex VHF radio system which broadcasted to mobiles in the Lancashire area. Training was proceeding well until during a long quiet spell in radio traffic, this cheeky lass decided it was time for a bit of fun, livening things up by poking her pencil in the sensitive parts of my anatomy, giggling at my shocked reaction! Well, I had to uphold Red squad’s honour and retaliated by walking my fingers up the length of her skirt from knee to upper thigh, discovering she was wearing stockings and suspenders, but our fun came to an abrupt end when an urgent radio call came in, needing our attention!

By late afternoon my radio training was concluded and on leaving the control room was told to report to my boss (a StnO who arranged our training program). His desk was on the 1st floor in a shared open office with other officers who dealt with various tasks in running the Brigade. His stern expression was noticeable as I stood to attention in front of his desk and he proceeded to inform me that he had just received a ticking off by the CFO about lax discipline amongst the Junior firemen, as I had been observed “letting my fingers do the walking” by the CFO and another brass hat from the landing above the training booth! Although I stated that it was consensual and a bit of harmless fun during a period of inactivity, I was instructed to be totally focused on training and not let the likes of my lewd behaviour happen again or there would be serious repercussions! On being dismissed, I noticed how quiet the office had become with several other officers coughing and closely examining their paperwork, so seemingly my escapades had been well broadcasted by the HQ “jungle drums”!

This concludes my time as a Junior fireman and a basic recruit training course awaited me after turning eighteen and if you are wondering why after what had gone before, it was the Home Office who did not officially recognise the two years of intense Junior fireman’s training, insisting that we had to comply with the rules of the Fire service Acts 1947!

CHANGES TO GET-TOGETHERS

A number of years ago a proposal was put forward and carried by the members present that future reunions would be held concentrating on the Midlands area, it was felt at the time that this would be convenient for both members in the south of the country and also members in the north of the country, which did seem logical at the time, I myself having voted for it.

However as we are all aware, that was a different time, and certain things have changed in this country, things that are making it more and more difficult to find venues to hold our “Get Togethers”. The main reason being that the Home Office has been block booking hotels in order to house asylum seekers which then has a knock on effect to other hotels who then raise their charges, basically because they have a captive market.

Therefore I’m putting forward a proposal that we Expand our area of search for future venues. Mike and I have thought and talked long and hard about this with both of us arriving at the same conclusion, We have to put it to the members to vote to Expand the search area.

Our proposal is that, taking the search area South and Using

Oxford as a central point with a line spreading across the country East to West that would take in Chelmsford in the East to Stroud in the West

Then taking the search area North and using Leeds as a central point that then would take a line across the country with Hull in the East and Blackpool to the West.

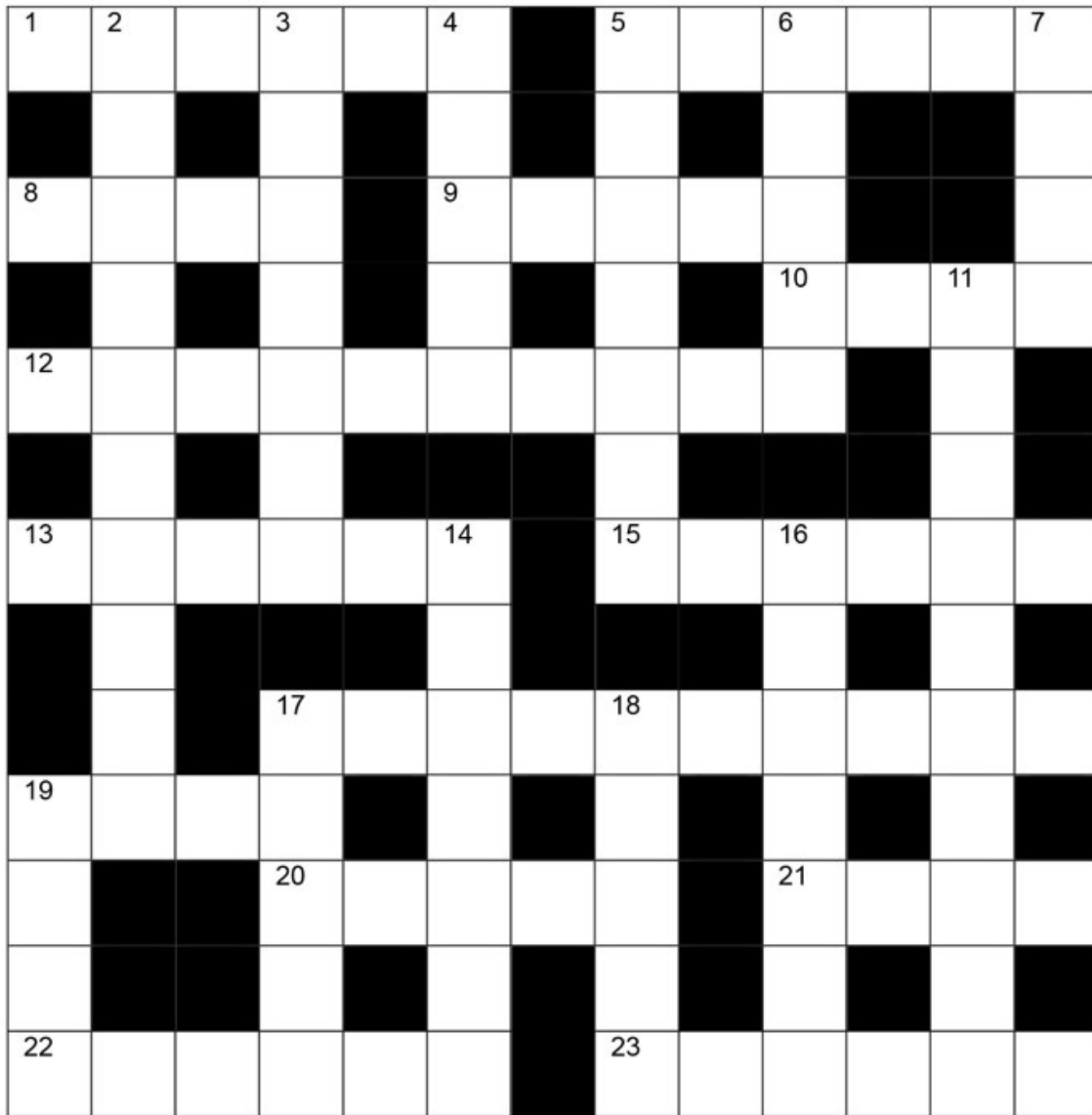
Remembering of course we are not eliminating the Midlands merely expanding on it.

We should also remember that there are other areas of the country we are not taking into account, ie, the south west of England, the far north of England and of course Scotland, I haven’t mentioned Wales simply because by drawing the lines I previously mentioned then that will take in 99% of Wales.

I’m going to ask Sarah Fletcher to just step in here and explain in a bit better detail as to why myself and Mike came to the decision the we must put this proposal forward.

Don Pape

CROSSWORD



Across

1. Protest about this thing. (6)
5. Baby firemen? (6)
8. Vessels back to a halt. (4)
9. You might croon audibly while employing. (5)
10. Repeatedly weed as Santa might say. (2,2)
12. Periodical reaching critical temperature. (10)
13. Are you more certain to be a money lender? (6)
15. Southern whip from end of hose. (6)
17. Can four voices be forceful? (10)
19. Record boss provides rescue equipment *Abbr* (4)
20. Find somewhere to sit in Monarch Airways flight. (5)
21. Uninvitingly goes right into Manston initially. (4)
22. Fifty-five in quaint surrounds come up with an alternative number. (6)

Down

2. Horrible pish tablet leads to this vessel. (10)
3. Past sitter may be one of these? (7)
4. Ex president has junction in front of arse. (5)
5. Ghostly shorts. (7)
6. Correct to starboard. (5)
7. Like most fighter pilots close to ground we hear. (4)
11. *19ac's* speciality. (10)
14. Gibraltarian Gunner? (7)
16. On duty and correctly stood. (7)
17. Loud, very old, and in LA perhaps. (5)
18. Badly fried and discharged. (5)
19. Emergency, fire, or rear perhaps (4)

MEMOIRS OF AN AERODROME FIREMAN-EPISODE FOUR

During aug 1965 I travelled from Stradishall via Heathrow to Singapore with 2 stops en-route finally arriving at RAF Changi. After a couple of days in Changi we flew the approximately thousand miles to RAF Labuan. On arriving at Labuan, there were 2 firemen, we found that there was no room in the fire section hut so we were put into transit to wait for available spaces. One week later my colleague was returned to the UK on family compassionate grounds so I ended up as the sole occupant of the transit hut most of the time.

At that time Labuan was operating a variety of transport aircraft plus sabres, javelins, hunters and helicopters so the airfield was very busy during the day. At night things were quiet unless there was an emergency and along with other station staff, the fire section staff found themselves on guard duty at night. After approximately 2 months the section flt sgt asked for a volunteer to go on a detachment to Brunei. As there were no takers I said that I would go if no one else was interested I duly found myself at the movements section with my kit waiting for a helicopter trip to Brunei. During my relatively short stay at Labuan I managed to see a fair bit of the island including Victoria town, the Japanese war cemetery, surrender point and the Commonwealth war cemetery where one lad found his uncles grave and took some photos to send back to the family. Additionally on off-duty days we visited coalmine beach which was difficult to reach even by a 3 ton truck and other easier to reach beaches.

After a short but very noisy trip we arrived at Brunei international airport which was an old Japanese airfield built during WW2. The military facility was a couple of old wooden huts adjoined to a PSP dispersal which allowed access to and from the single runway. Most of the traffic was military but once a week we had a civil airliner arrive from the Philipines. The RAF detachment was attached to 51st Gurkha Infantry Brigade and consisted of 3 ATC staff (a flying officer, master pilot and ATC assistant), 2 firemen, 2 suppliers and one aircraft tradesman. We were billeted at the end of the airstrip in a modern wooden hutted complex which had been built to be a hospital but had not been opened due to the Brunei revolt some 3 years earlier, the entire site was used by the military and guarded by the resident Gurkha regiment. On arrival we



My home during my two stays at RAF Labuan (Transit billet):

were warned that if we were challenged by the guard force it was prudent to stop immediately.

Working days were 7 days per week dawn to dusk and after dark as required although in my time there we had very few night operations and never needed to use the gooseneck runway lighting, the runway had mains lighting but I never saw it used. The 2 firemen were attached to the airport fire service and one of us always had to be there during military operating hours. The detachment had one landrover which was basically controlled and used by the firemen who looked after it and as result ended up running all over the place doing tasks although all det staff had access to it if they could drive.. On the far side of

the airfield there was a local Kampong (a malay village comprising mostly of houses on stilts) which was a nuisance to us because as we regularly had to refill the goosenecks up with unused AVTUR due to condensation and theft. Sometimes we had a laugh especially when the local airport firemen told us that yet another house had gone up in flames due to careless use of small liquid fuel pressure cookers probably fuelled by the AVTUR stolen from the goosenecks.

In Brunei as there was no directly available RAF services we were issued paybooks and had to draw a minimum \$50 per fortnight paid from the Army paymasters office, it was hard to spend \$50 in 2 weeks as there was little to buy apart from paper



SHQ RAF Labuan with Japanese WWII artillery piece recovered from the jungle:



Heading for the beach 1965

stamps and envelopes plus the maximum beer you could get per day was 2 cans which were opened before you got them. The det was given crates of free cigarettes but I can only remember one person smoking in my time plus it was forbidden to give them to the locals because of the potential impact on the local economy so lying in our billet were unopened boxes of cigarettes going to waste.

When I arrived at Brunei airport the fire section was in a ramshackle building which definitely had seen better days but the airport authority were in the process of building a new modern facility which opened a couple of months after I arrived. I was not familiar with any of the vehicles and although was not required to drive or to operate them I took the time to learn and become familiar with all of them. There was only one fire crew who were all Malays with most of them able to speak good or passable English so we had

no communication difficulties. Most of the fire crew with other airport staff had helped to repel the rebels when they attacked the airport during the 1962 revolt, a battle which prevented the loss of the airport and its facilities.

Daily life in Brunei revolved around providing support to the airport fire service checking the runway, filling goosenecks, fixing loose PSP, transporting stores and RAF visitors between the airfield, the domestic accommodation and Brunei town so life was not bad or too



Fire section RAF Labuan 1965:



Away day Limbang River transport 1966:

hectic. The worst part of the tour was the fact that we lived on compo rations all the time I was there, no chips and most of the eggs we received were bad plus no brown or tomato sauce. If you wanted a sweet you opened a can and stood it in hot water whilst you ate your compo stew, when I arrived I weighed 13 stone and when I left I was 11 stone so living on compo was a wonderful way to diet.

On days when we knew that there was no flying expected we sometimes went to a beach at a place called Muara for a swim. By far the best relaxation was when our boss arranged an away day, I think we had 3 in my time but by far the best was a trip up the Limbang river in a small military boat.

On the morning off the away day trip we drew weapons, ammunition and rations then launched our boat into the river at the end of the runway. After the launch we made our way downstream passing Brunei town and Kampong Ayer (the water village on stilts in the harbour) then through the mangrove swamps into the



Coalmine beach 1965:

Limbang river proper. As we travelled up the river we passed small settlements on the river bank plus we stopped to watch the teak loggers manually rolling huge trees into the river and forming big log rafts which we were told would float downriver to the sawmill. Mid morning we arrived at the town of Limbang and after mooring the boat went to the Limbang Memorial to pay our respects to the memory of the 5 Royal Marines and 4 Police Officers killed in the battle of Limbang during Dec 1962. The RN sailed ships right up to the town jetty and the Royal Marines assaulted the 200 to 300 rebels holding the town from the jetty and routed them and released a number of European and local hostages who were being held under threat of death.

After the visit we continued on up the river and stopped at a Dyak village on the river bank, the locals made us welcome and we shared our rations with them, the kids were especially happy with Compo sweets. We were invited into the longhouse by the elders who showed us letters and postcards they had received going back to the previous century. When the time came to leave the village gathered on the riverbank to wave us off, once we left it was the long journey back downstream, through the harbour and back to the airfield. I enjoyed all our away days but the best one was the river Limbang trip.

At work life continued normally with the comings and goings of fixed and rotary wing aircraft and I saw medevacs of wounded soldiers plus prisoners being brought in and transported off, probably to the prison camp which was not too far from the airfield. In the early part of 1966 I had an accident when I went out the back of the section and moved an iron bar which resulted in a severely burnt hand. It turned out that some of the firemen had been heating metal and shaping spears to



Injured hand after picking up a local firemans very hot homemade spear 1965:

help defend their Kampong from thieves and I had picked up a very hot iron bar. I had to visit the Army medical bay where I was treated by a Sgt RAMC, we had no doctor on the base and if the Sgt could not treat the problem you got sent to Labuan. He treated my injury and bandaged it up and said if it gets worse i will send you to Labuan luckily for me my hand healed up in a couple of weeks and all was well.

During my time there we had 2 incidents, one minor and the other major, The minor one involved a Javelin which had an in-flight problem and landed safely, after repair there was concern that it might have difficulty in taking off because of runway length but come departure time it lifted off and disappeared with no trouble at all. The second incident was a serious one in that we lost an aircraft, one morning just as we had started work ATC called to say that a Brunei Malay Regiment helicopter had crashed in the jungle several miles away near a village. We were told to go out and see if we could find it so the 2 firemen plus one other took the landrover and headed off along the road in the general direction

of the crash site, as we followed the road we could see a valleta aircraft circling over the jungle. When we reached a point near where we saw the valleta we parked our vehicle and headed into the jungle, as soon as we entered the jungle we lost sight of the circling aircraft and could only head in the general direction of the aircraft sound. After about an hour of aimless searching we, more by luck, stumbled over the remains of the helicopter. As the aircraft fell into the jungle it had impaled itself on a large tree and had exploded then the blazing remains had slid down the tree leaving a glowing mass of debris still smoldering around the tree base. We carried out an intensive search of the area surrounding the aircraft residue but could no find signs of the pilot, the valleta was still circling and we could hear but not see other aircraft in the vicinity. Rather reluctantly, as we could do no more, we returned to the airfield to discover that the pilot had jumped out of the helicopter as it hit the tree canopy and fallen through the branches to the jungle floor. He was badly injured and had staggered through the jungle into a clearing where he was seen by the circling aircraft who called in another helicopter to pick him up. After he had recovered he came to thank us for our efforts in trying to find and rescue him, the truth is that we had done little except find the burnt out remains of the aircraft. Bear in mind that we had no radios or other means to communicate with ground or airborne staff, once we left the airfield and after entering the jungle you were on your own.



RAF detachment away day on the Limbang River 1966:



RAF detachment away day on the Limbang River visiting a Dyak village 1966:

As we progressed into September 1966 it

became apparent that Confrontation was coming to an end and we were warned that as soon as hostilities finished our det in Brunei would be withdrawn. When it ended we were immediately withdrawn back to Labuan and I once again found myself living in the transit billet. As I was tourex I did not rejoin the fire section but, within a couple of days was sent to Singapore, to wait for a flight to the UK. Before leaving Labuan I was told that my next posting was to be RAF ST Mawgan in Cornwall. On arrival in Singapore our aircraft was parked on an out of the way dispersal and we were all searched for weapons etc. I spent about a week in

Singapore before flying back to the UK via Ceylon. At Ghangi the real eye opener was when you went into the mess to eat, real tables and chairs, food to die for and unlimited cool drinks, I could not stop eating for a couple of days.



Detachment transport 1966:



Practice crash 1966:



Aftermath of practice crash 1966:



Detachment transport 1966



Unfortunate python skin 1966



Aftermath of practice crash 1966:



Old fire section 1965:



Morning parade in the old fire section 1965:



New fire section 1966:

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

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BOOK REVIEW - EJECT! EJECT!

During my career in the RAF & DFS I have worked with ejection seats on and off for 42 years, covering a wide range of aircraft. I can still remember the complicated release procedures we had to learn for the very basic models that were fitted to the Canberras we had at West Raynham; and recall shaking my head when witnessing the “rescues” they did from the same aircraft at Manston on refresher courses 35 years later. With that in mind, I found myself drawn to this book, and after seeing it advertised, reserved it at my local library.

Despite having read a couple of his previous works, I should point out that I’m not a great fan of John Nichol, but that is probably more related to his apparent self-proclaimed position as the BBC’s leading expert in aerial warfare rather than his writing prowess. In any case you can’t fault his methods in getting to plug his books on National TV and radio.

The story starts back in the 1940s and I did enjoy the earlier chapters which set out the need for escape systems in military aircraft, and the different scenarios they would have to be effective in. The descriptions of those early incidents were both enlightening and relevant, and led the reader nicely into the early development phase in which we learn about the formation of the Martin-Baker Aircraft Company, and more importantly, Sir James Martin’s pioneering work on ejection seats. The stories of the human guinea pigs who volunteered to test Martin’s seats made for very good reading.

As we move into the 50s and 60s there was no mistaking the aircrew bias in Nichol’s accounts, especially when describing the US Korea & Vietnam years. We read about these All-American college graduates volunteering to fight for their country and save the world before having to eject over enemy territory. The accounts of beatings from villagers and subsequent torture are quite toe-curling, but when he says, “What sort of person could carry out such atrocities?” I just had to think “What sort of person flies half way round the world to drop napalm on defenceless children?”, but maybe that’s just me being cynical.

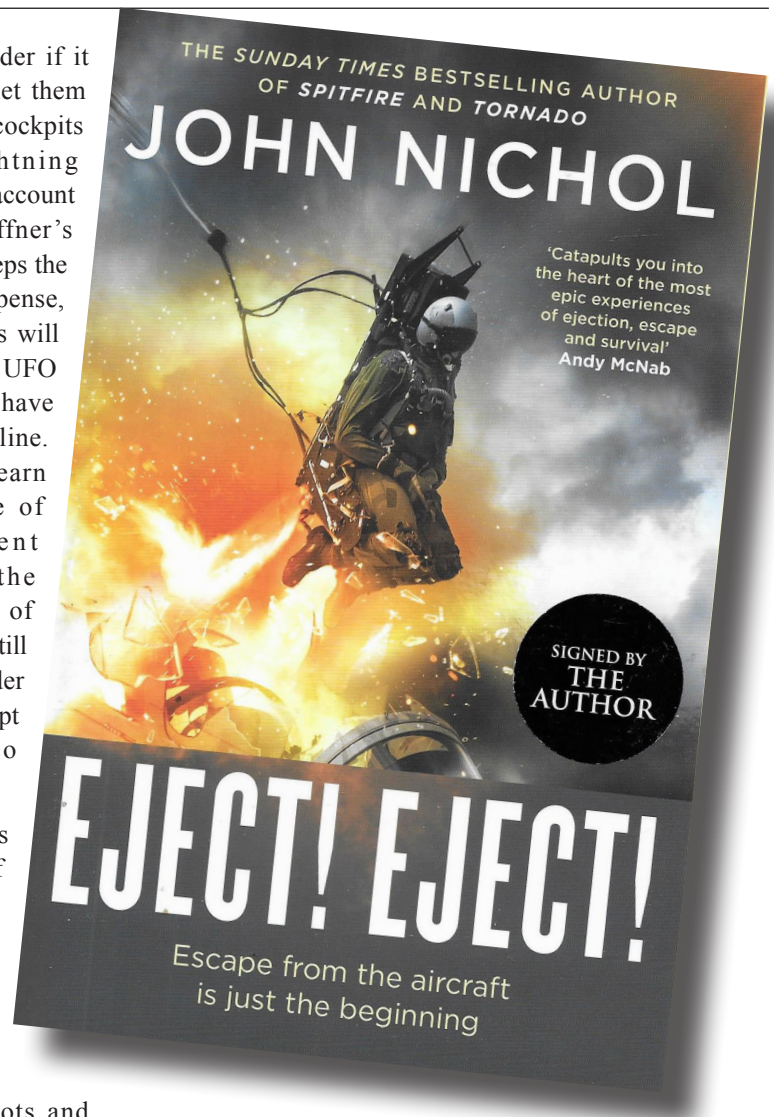
When the same USAF pilots come to the UK on an exchange scheme, we can’t

help but wonder if it was wise to let them loose in the cockpits of our Lightning jets, but the account of Bill Schaffner’s final flight keeps the reader in suspense, as many of us will have read the UFO theories that have appeared on line. We finally learn the outcome of the Accident Report in the final chapter of the book, but still have to wonder why it was kept secret for so long.

In his coverage of the Falklands conflict the author concentrates mostly on Argentine Skyhawk pilots and their trials and tribulations with dodgy seats. The main Brit character is a young navy gunner and there is very little mention of the Harrier pilots forced to eject, other than statistics. In particular, I was very surprised not to find Bob Iveson’s story included in this section.

Following the first gulf war recollections, there are some graphic accounts of RAF peacetime accidents. Two that stand out are a mid-air collision over Northumberland and a particularly harrowing description of bird strike over the Yorkshire Wolds in which a Harrier pilot and a UAS Cadet passenger were badly injured in the crash.

Looking back on it, I guess John Nichol will have been restricted by the research material and living survivors available to put this volume together, and while it would be easy to criticise his choice of incidents, I do think it is well worth a read. One thing I would like to have seen included however, is a bit about the Folland Seat, as the Gnat was the RAF’s main fast jet trainer for so



many years.

The whole book is nicely developed in chronological style, as well as using several other links being created by aviators being involved in multiple incidents. The concluding chapter fills in the final pieces of the puzzle nicely.

I picked up the following two sentences from a Google search on 24th November 2023. They are from Martin-Baker:

There are over 17,000 Martin-Baker ejection seats in service today in 54 different aircraft types across 84 countries and these numbers are ever growing. We’ve saved more than 7,670 aircrew lives worldwide and that *number* keeps on climbing too.

EJECT EJECT published by Simon & Schuster is available from Amazon for £14 or free to borrow from your local library.

Dave Kirk
Mem No 414

FRAILTIES OF LIFE

People like ourselves, who have had the experience of witnessing the best and worst of human behaviour, and under the most trying conditions will understand what I mean.

I had to terminate my long service engagement in the Royal Air Force due to a tragic personal situation. I was discharged under QR 609 “unable to fulfill service obligations due to circumstances beyond his control”

This meant one day I was a Corporal in the RAF Fire Service and the next I was a Mr in civilian life.

I had returned to my hometown Penzance in Cornwall to live and slowly pulled myself around and became established. It was during this period I encountered my first understanding of the frailties of life.

Like everyone socializing was a requirement and in a pub I bumped into some old teenage friends, we of course had gone our separate ways years ago. The greeting I received was “bloody hell mate fancy meeting you where have you been the last 15 Years”.

I said Oh kicking around a bit have been in the RAFF “raff what’s that?” RAF Royal Air Force. “Ah, Royal Air Force is that still going?” This in 1971, those who served we will remember them. Organisations like ours need to keep the memories going.

After a while I was able to join the County Ambulance Service and after my training period and gaining my qualifications I was based at Falmouth.

On one particular shift when I signed on at 07.00 we more or less went out right away. We did a couple of medical emergencies and were then dispatched to the docks where a docker had been crushed and trapped by falling equipment. On arrival he had just been released by his work mates, who were of course tradesmen, and all the cutting and heavy lifting equipment was at hand.

The patient had possible life threatening injuries: definitely life changing. By lateral femur fractures and fractured pelvic girdle. Type of injuries expected due to the mechanics of injury.

After stabilising the patient and transporting

to hospital time had passed and hunger was setting in. Control who very considerably told us to return to station for meal break. Never got there! Radio burst into life instructing proceed as an emergency to Victoria on the A30. Serious RTA. Must be bad we thought as over 30 miles away. Got to within 2 miles of the incident only to be stood down and told to remain in the location to give cover as all the local A&E ambulances had been involved in the RTA. Hunger pangs were setting in and a major issue!

Control directed us to Newquay Ambulance Station to give cover and take our 20 minute meal break.

I had never been to that station before. There were only PTS staff available. These are the drivers of outpatients, the A&E staff were of course caught up with the RTA.

WE got ourselves a couple of seats, and couldn’t help overhearing one of the PTS lads relaying a story about an F104 Star Fighter of the German Air Force which crashed at RAF Gutersloh. He was relayed an absolutely correct and detailed account of what had occurred

” The aircraft was at 1800 feet overhead with a jet nozzle stuck open, it elected to land at Gutersloh. A small but very busy airfield with only one runway. The aircraft came in at the wrong end, straight through the raised arrester barrier, taking off his stores and undercarriage and shooting across the airfield like a bullet. We managed to get the pilot out he was a big fellow”

At this stage I put my little oar in. I asked the story teller were you in the RAF? And he replied yes with great enthusiasm, I was a firefighter.

Oh said I, I was one of those, and actually I was the corporal on crash 1 at the incident you are describing and I knew personally all my crewmates.

Deathly silence followed and a very red face. I just left it there.

Frailties of life! If you are going to shoot a line ensure those listening don’t know what you are talking about.

We are all probably creatures of habit,

same thing every week. Work, pub, sports etc. None of us can really take exception to this.

Before my retirement I used to live about half a mile from my station. On day shift weather permitting I walked instead of taking the car, always met the same people, same routine and one fellow who crossed my path on those days enroute to his place of work always greeted me with good morning or a small comment such as hear we go again. We didn’t know each other but he knew I was in the ambulance service by my uniform. His dress told me was a factory worker of some kind.

On one particular day we exchanged the usual pleasantries. I did my shift, finished at 1700 and was due a quick return for overtime shift at midnight.

Got to the station 23.55. First call to an unresponsive adult collapse. It was the fellow I met every day. Used all resuscitation and invasive techniques but was unable to achieve a retrieval. Looked after the distressed family, called doctor, certified and left the scene and continued with shift. A few more jobs including another unexpected termination of life.

Finished work at 0800 and went home. Before bed read the local paper where in the obituary column was the fellows name which simply stated he had died suddenly at home, details to follow.

Such are the frailties of life!

When that grim reaper calls he comes at any time and without invitation.

Take care folks, Sue and I hope to see you all at our next reunion. Frailties of life permitting.

Roger Stevens 559

MY MANCAVE MEMORY OBJECTS

So, you can see in the image five objects that maybe wouldn't bring excitement or curiosity to anyone, but to me they invoke a great deal of memories.

The Union Flag was "liberated" from a flagpole near to RAF Oakington. The story goes something like this. After a good night out in Cambridge a few of us had to get back to Oakington, and as the custom practise for a lot of airmen at the base was, we "borrowed" some bicycles (Cambridge was awash with them back in 1969) and when we approached the turn of for the camp, we saw a series of flag posts on a new housing development. Someone said let's have the flags, so to cut a long story short the flags of several nations were acquired.

It was a regular sight of a Police van retrieving the abandoned bikes from near the camp and returning them to Cambridge. I think today we would be arrested, back then these things were done without any malice or gain it was just a good laugh.

The Bag & flyswat was from my second tour of RAF Masirah in 1972 this brought back thought of going on a bondu bash, the bag all the essentials, bottle of juice, fags, and sun oil, maybe some fruit. So, over the runway and on to "Surf Beach" looking for shells, watching Barracuda breach the water or watching Dolphins also helping baby turtles get to the sea safely if it was the season. Going towards "Millionaires Beach" and on to the Boat Club for a few beers. After that if the Masirah State Railway was running we would jump on that back to camp, if not we walked it and occasionally, we might get a lift.

The Gloves & Scrim are reminders of my detachment to RAF Stanley back in 1984 which I really enjoyed thanks to some great guys down there. The gloves have my name and three stripes on. The reason for that is if any gloves were left unattended,



they would be taken and nailed to the "Pissdet" door. For those that do not know the "Pissdet" it was our urinal which was a small wood hut, and the urinal was an upturned foam compound drum with the bottom cut away a pipe was then attached to it which drained away to a ditch. (the joys of service life!!!)

Although the objects are reminders of those tours and fun times they also have reminders of the people I served with

and recently thinking of those who are no longer with us. Tom Carney who I served with at Oakington and Masirah and Marham, WO Charlie Yeates who was my Flt Sgt at Strubby and WO at Masirah, Jack Ashurst Masirah also Mal Ray and Ben Doulson who I was with at Masirah and Wyton and George Edwards who was the opposite crew chief at Stanley. Happy memories.

Steve(Silverfox) Harrison

A WARM WELCOME TO NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS



Its pleasing to see new members joining and re- joining we would like to see you at future reunions and please contribute to the Flashpoint as this is your magazine. Thank you.

1193 Colin Stone

ATTENTION TO ALL PRESENT MEMBERS

Brian Jones the Membership Secretary has asked if you could forward to him any change in contact details i.e., Change of address, phone numbers and email. This will ensure the prompt distribution of Flashpoint and maintain his records. Thank you.

The membership is now below the 400 mark, so, please encourage any friends to join or rejoin.

New Norfolk Area Co-ordinator

We are pleased to welcome Paul Wincote as our new Norfolk Co-ordinator, a role that has been vacant for some time, thanks for stepping forward. Paul's introduction is below.

So, what is the Co-ordinators role? Originally before the arrival of social media it was what it said on the tin. To maybe organise get togethers, visits to RAF Stations, museums, and connect people. Station visits was simple back in the day, firstly there was plenty of stations to pick from and all you did was ring "Fred" and say there are 10 people wanting a visit, no problems with security and passes. but now I'm afraid, it's a different story (not many stations left). A lot of us now use social media to find old buddies and keep in touch. It's also used to organise a get together and a few beers, its quick and simple. That is one of the reasons why the Association struggles to attract new members. But there is still a need for the role. Many of our older members don't use social media and struggle with transportation through ill health and the Co-ordinators can still be a point of contact and maybe organise car share to local mini reunions or the AGM and annual association reunion. The committee at the moment are trying to sort out a few details of the Data Protection policy, when this is done, contact details for members in your area will be available as long as that member has agreed to this in the application process when they joined. There are still areas that have vacancies, London, Cambridge & Suffolk, and Essex. So, if you fancy to take on one of these roles and live in one of these areas, please come forward, you would be most welcome.

Paul Wincote Norfolk Co-Ordinator

Hi, I am Paul Wincote and just taken up the position of the Norfolk area co-ordinator. A little about myself, born in 1959 in Nuneaton Warwickshire. On 9 August 1977 I joined the RAF as a firefighter at the age of 17, attending recruit training at RAF Swinderby Lincolnshire before trade training at RAF Catterick. Whilst on my Basic training course it was

suspended for the National Fireman's Strike whereby all staff and trainees assisted in the training of military personnel on basic firefighting methods so that they could go out and protect the community during the strikes. On final completion of training, I was sent as an LAC to my first base, RAF Wittering, arriving on Christmas Eve during the continued fireman's strike. Working with the Harrier VSTOL squadron and the OCU it was always filled with mishaps. Attending my first aircraft crash on the runway when it all went wrong for one Harrier pilot. Visiting deployments included an American National Guard contingent of ten A7 Corsairs and a deployment of Vulcans from Waddington. As for me, my first deployment was the sunny Orkney Islands and a trip to Fleet Hampshire.

My first overseas tour took me to RAF Bruggen in Germany in 1980, with 4 squadrons of Jaguars, just arriving after the mid-air collision of 2 Jaguars. Bruggen introduced me to the RHAG which became a familiar piece of equipment in the 3 years I was there. My second incident was a Jaguar nose wheel collapse.

RAF Cottesmore came after my overseas tour working with the Tri-National Tornado Training Establishment (TTTE) a Tornado Conversion Unit. Working with 3 different nationalities, for a brief period the Saudi's also trained on the Tornado it was a busy station to work on. Events there included 2 episodes of wheels up landings by German and Italian pilots. Being a training unit again the RHAG was a regular feature in day-to-day work as training pilots had to take the arrestor wire regularly.

Promoted to Corporal in 1986, saw



a move to RAF Cranwell the Officer training college. Working with the Jet Provost, baby pilots and the University Air Squadron Bulldog. It was always going to be eventful, with aircraft leaving the runway, landing in a field, a flying club aircraft trying to plough the ground with its propeller at the end of the runway due to a slightly premature landing and a Tiger Moth putting itself into the top of some trees on take-off from the grass strip north of the main runway.

My first big deployment was a trip to the Falklands and MPA. A busy station with Phantoms made time pass by with numerous RHAG engagements and burst tyres. Time off was spent with regular Falkland Island bimbles, battlefield tours and flights with the Hercules Maritime Patrols, Air to Air Refuelling and helicopter flights around the Islands in the Chinook and BRISTOW Sikorsky S61's and the Sea Kings Rescue Squadron. By the time I left Cranwell they had upgraded their Aircraft to Tucanos' and the Grob Tutor T1.

My second overseas tour was again Germany in 1989, this time RAF Laarbruch and 4 squadron of Tornado's. Whilst there a film crew came to film an instructional film called Don't Lose Your RHAG,

which I was part of the crew. I'm sure you've all seen it. This period of time I saw deployment of Tornado's go to Saudi Arabia for the Gulf War and the return of the Tornado squadrons to the UK. Being replaced with the Harrier and Chinooks with the closure of Gutersloh. Within weeks of the Harriers arrival there was an aircraft excursion off the end of the runway onto the grass with its nose wheel well bedded into the soft sandy ground. On a separate incident one dumped all its fuel on the grass at the far side of the runway giving the German Authorities and the base a major environmental headache. Whilst at RAF Laarbruch I did my final deployment to Dhahran Saudi Arabia on Op Driver, with the 6 Tornado's deployed from Laarbruch. From a work perspective, incidents were very few and the main events were assisting the Americans with their standbys and trying to keep the Saudi firefighter away from their aircraft as they weren't to be trusted near aircraft. This became a bit of a race down the runway to get to the aircraft first. R&R was spent in Bahrain Diplomat Hotel, dessert trips around the area and to Riyadh where there was a detachment of personnel.

Finishing my overseas tour in 1993, I went to RAF Benson in Oxfordshire. Working with Andover, Chipmunk, bulldog of the University Air Squadrons, Wessex, Puma, Merlin H101 helicopters and BAe146 Queens Flight Aircraft. Benson was my final RAF Station finishing my almost 23-year career on 22 October 1999.

Life after the RAF was still fire orientated with a new career as a civil servant working for the Defence Evaluation & Research Agency (DERA) and the Empire Test Pilots School as a firefighter at Boscombe Down. This was an amazing job working with very different aircraft that function in ways you wouldn't believe for the average military aircraft. One of the main developments whilst I was there was the evaluation of the Eurofighter and a Harrier equipped with fly by wire. Unfortunately, DERA's supporting operations were taken over by QinetiQ Defence and Security Agency. An American contractor ending the civil service positions on the fire department there. Wanting to remain a civil servant and part of the DFRS, I moved

in 2001 to RAF Welford a munitions dump near Newbury Berkshire, used for storage of weapons and munitions for RAF Fairford & Lakenheath. Whilst there I was promoted from Firefighter to Crew Manager and later to Watch Manager which meant a move to RAF Lakenheath home to F15 and HH60 Pave Hawk Rescue helicopters. Working within Training, later moving into Fire Safety and being involved in infrastructure projects including the build up to the arrival of the F35.

On departure of the Station Manager, I also fulfilled the role of managing

the administrative requirements of the remaining DFRS firefighters. Retiring at the end of May 2020 at the beginning of the Covid outbreak, completing 43 years of dedicated service to Aircraft Fire & Rescue throughout the world. If you wish to contact me, Paul Wincote (mem No507) please email on Paul.Wincote.2@gmail.com I'm willing to organise local events, so all ideas welcome to socialise, arrange visits or just to contribute to the Association.

AERODROME FIREMAN-EPISODE FIVE

Following leave I reported to the Fire Section at RAF St Mawgan during Sep 1965 and was to remain there until my time as an aerodrome fireman finished. St Mawgan operated the 3 versions of Shackleton aircraft and had a large fire section, I joined a crew led by Sgt Harry Gordon and quickly settled into the excellent working routine which gave us 3 clear days off at the end of each shift cycle. During my time there I don't think I ever met all the firemen in the section as most of the single lads lived out and the only time you saw them was on shift change and that was usually for a maximum of 30 mins.

During my time there the shift I was on had 2 incidents the first one involved some smoke bombs falling off an aircraft on the dispersal and the second involved an aircraft where a wheel fell off in flight, after burning off a lot of fuel the aircraft landed safely using its other wheels and the strut minus the wheel. Other routine activities involved being stationed near aircraft with special loads where you had to have copious supplies of water immediately available in case of a fuel leak, also one night we had to stand-by near a U2 until the pilot was lifted out of the aircraft.

When I was there the fire section had to provide a quick reaction guard force for use on the airfield in emergencies and we held the necessary weapons in

a locked cabinet in the section control room. The call-out was exercised many times usually around or after midnight. Weapons were issued and we had to deploy to specific points on the airfield then wait for further instructions.

During my time on the section I made my one and only visit to the Fire School at Catterick where I had to instruct a ladder drill and afterwards give a lecture which I did on Martin Baker ejection seats, following a question session at the end I was asked to go the school as an instructor which I said I would consider. On my return to the section I spoke with WO Jim Crabtree and told him I did not want to become an instructor or go to Catterick, he said leave it to me and that was the last I heard of it. At the end of 1969 my time as an aerodrome fireman came to an end and I departed to seek new challenges.

I enjoyed my time as an aerodrome fireman and now some 50 years on from the end of my 12 years service I remember the many happy times I had plus the fact that entering the service took a young lad and gave him an interesting job and also allowed him to visit places that at age 17 he could only dream of.

Tales of a Fireman's Daughter

The Bogey Green Tin Can on Wheels

I'd just reached seven years old when I stopped telling people I was a fireman's daughter. They would cock their heads, squint at me, and issue the usual phrase. "Why does the Air Force need firemen?"

There are only so many times I could answer that question and by seven, I'd decided I'd done it enough. So, as the teacher gazed down at me on that cold winter morning, I just smiled and shrugged. Why waste one more minute of my life explaining that what went up always came down? And when it came down with a bang, my dad would have a rip-roaring time putting out the ensuing fire with copious amounts of white foam.

Such was the joy of attending a predominantly army school.

"You must have made a mistake," said the teacher with extreme charity. She patted me on the head and left me to my delusions.

Haig Primary School operated on the Mansergh Barracks in Gütersloh, drawing from service communities in the wider area. In 1975, RAF children mingled with army families in class, but rarely beyond. We were a one car family, and our mother didn't drive. Classmates wouldn't travel to our high-rise flat in Harsewinkel, and we couldn't get very far on foot.

And then there was the school bus. Known as 'The Bogey Green Tin Can on Wheels', it appeared at Harsewinkel at an ungodly hour. In our early days, the flats weren't quite finished. Very few families rode on the bus. As blocks were completed, more children occupied the flats and caught the bus to and from school. By 1978 when we left, it had become quite a squash. The bus navigated a circuitous route, picking and dropping off at the secondary school and other service settlements along its winding way.

I suspect we were handy training fodder for the gate guard at the entrance to the barracks. They always checked the underside of the bus with mirrors, but often came on board. Sometimes armed, sometimes not. If a child proved quick, they could snag a lucky stroke of the dog, which sniffed and snuffled its way along the seats. Pets were not permitted in the flats.

Those of us living off camp visited the



Our high-rise flat in Harsewinkel

NAAFI rarely. It was something of an occasion shrouded in excitement and the promise of familiar tins and packets from home. So, the dog was also a source of great concern. One whiff of an open Monster Munch packet and it would be carnage. Only the NAAFI sold them, marketed jovially as The Prime Monster. We genuinely believed they were subject to rationing. I now know they weren't, but they were the holy grail to us. Rumour had it, the dog once licked a monster in a hidden packet. And liked it. A whole bag allegedly disappeared into its eager snout. So, our antagonism was unrelated to fear or incendiaries. We were a battle-ready force of fifty and prepared to die for our snacks. I wonder if we featured in the gate guard's manual.

Then there was the monumental time The Bogey Green Tin Can on Wheels broke down. With a pop and a thud, something major hit the underneath. Those peering through the rear window reported all kinds of terrible apocalyptic sightings.

"A fighter plane shot us down."

"No, it's aliens!"

Perhaps more worryingly, "Hey, that's our car. Where's my dad going with Mrs Next-door?"

But the sad bendy pipe which rolled forlornly to the verge, still attached to its fitted accoutrements, was the exhaust pipe, baffle and rather a lot of the undercarriage.

As the driver heaved the bus to the side of

the road, it leaned horribly over a ditch. Our trusty, long-suffering escort led us outside into the pouring rain to wait on the verge. And promptly regretted it.

Two boys went exploring in the nearby field and one fell into a cow-pat. Three slid into the muddy ditch. And a fight broke out over a coveted packet of cheese and onion Monster Munch. All before 8am.

When the replacement bus arrived, it creaked and backfired more than the first. We tumbled into school very late. Someone started a rumour we'd been kidnapped by the Russians. And as our traumatised group drip dried over our books, and refused to discuss it, the tale slipped quietly into legend.

K T Bowes

Bedford/Pyrene Mk.8 Fire Truck

I have been asked by our Editor to give a review of the Mk8 and before I proceed, I would like to state that this is entirely my own opinion and some members may disagree with my comments, but I have simply drawn from my experience of operating various fire trucks and being a commercial vehicle technician!

My first experiences with the Mk8 was at Bruggen in 1972 when it supplemented the Mk7 (then the Mk9) as a primary 2, due to having smaller capacity for foam and water. First impressions were not favourable as the Bedford RL chassis/cab just didn't seem right, but lets move onto the foam making capabilities as this was a game changer compared to the current crash fire trucks in service during the 70's!

Pyrene had taken the foam making system design used on the Mk7 and coupled a Jaguar 6 cyl petrol engine direct to the pump/blower with the foam making controls moved from the dash to the monitor man's position by the roof hatch, allowing foam production on the move! I'm sure that most of you will agree that this could save vital time on arrival at the incident and the driver could take a sideline if required, so this change was a big plus point! A pity that the foam /water carrying capacity was less than the Mk.7 but this was probably down to the lower gross vehicle weight of the mass produced Bedford RL rendering it to a Primary2 category.

This brings me to the contentious negative

issues as to why this truck should never have been built or to be more accurate why a brilliant foam making system was plonked onto what was basically a troop/equipment carrier for the military! Rumours had abounded that the MOD had a few extra RL chassis/cabs on the books and that a smart arsed bean counter had this brainwave to find the perfect use for them! (can anybody come up with a better reason?)

So commencing in the drivers seat, the controls were basically Bedford in style, but disappointingly nothing had been done to the 6cyl petrol engine (133 BHP) which could be stuttering and sluggish until reaching working temperature, unlike the Bedford TK Angus domestic which had a reworked cylinder head and twin carbs (max 65-70mph). Strangely the RL had less power than the "piggybacking" Jaguar engine (195 BHP), probably its poor performance negated the advantage of speedy foam production!

Moving onto the truck's handling capabilities (on hardstanding, or in the rough), the short length body and high mounted Jaguar engine raised the centre of gravity making it roll and sway while cornering or on uneven ground. Perfectly fine at normal speeds but it was a real handful for the unsuspecting driver when attending an incident at speed. I holed a rear alloy body panel while driving it in the hollow rough terrain down the western end of the runway (at Bruggen) with a tree branch stub as the vehicle

rolled excessively while climbing out! I suppose it could be mooted that the RL chassis cab was the ideal choice for the "Green Goddesses" as used by the Axillary Fire service (and by the military during firemen's strikes!), but they were built for a much different purpose and with a longer body and lower centre of gravity!

The Mk.8 also seemed to be also prone to getting bogged down and I think this was maybe down to the high gross vehicle weight, supported by the four narrow width tyres, again another headache for the driver to contend with when leaving the hardstanding behind.

I never heard if a Mk8 had ever been overturned in service, as they were operational at various RAF airfields home and overseas from 1972-92, but if any member has details of such an incident I would like to hear from them.

Summing up, I consider the Mk8 to be about the worst designed RAF Fire truck (although Pyrene did a brilliant job in the foam making department!) I have operated in the 1970's and hope that it was the last, unless the membership can come up with something better!

*Andy Gaskell (328)
Aug 2023*

I wrote in Flashpoint (July 2001) about the Mk8 and the "Bruggen tree branch stub incident" and Dave Kirk may have archived this edition on our website for anyone wishing to access it!



GOOD SHOW!

Two very expensive items of aircraft equipment had been packed ready for return to the repair contractor, but the box had not been addressed. The result was that the box was swept up with other unserviceable wooden packing cases for waste disposal. Fortunately, two firemen inspected the timber being prepared for their next fire practice and discovered the missing items and effected their return to Stores. Their diligence prevented a probable loss to public funds in the region of £2,000. Definitely a "Good Show" from Corporal P. D. Bluck and SAC R. W. J. Armstrong, shown in our photograph.



ALL CHANGE!