



FLASHPOINT

ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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SPRING 2025
www.rafanddfsa.co.uk

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Essex

Vacant

Welcome to the spring edition of flashpoint. The committee has been busy behind the scenes getting ready for this year's Reunion weekend. Last year's reunion was fantastic, the best one I have attended so far. Anyway, I hope you book up for this year's event.

We are on the look out for a new membership secretary so if anybody is willing to give it a go please contact any member of the committee who will be only too pleased to fill you in on what is required.

I have been busy at the Solway Aviation Museum recently carrying out building and Aircraft restoration work during the annual shut down period. Sadly, Storm Eowyn caused some pretty serious damage to our Blackburn Beverly. The wind lifted some wing sections which blew into the main fuselage and cockpit sections causing significant damage but nothing that we can't repair. Whilst on the subject of the Beverly, I was talking to Brum Yates who told me the following story about his time at Honington in the 60's as a young sprog concerning Beverly's, Hastings and Paras which I found most interesting. Both because I am working on the worlds only surviving Beverly and the fact that I was stationed at Honington 82-85. This is his little ditty:

The most notorious memory of Blackburn Beverly's was at Honington 1961-62. It was a rotten cold and windy day (just before the hot locks came up to the crash bays) 12 Hastings and 8 Beverly's landed and were dispersed all around the airfield. There was lots of toing and throwing in Land Rovers with tea urns etc. After a couple of hours ATC told us that due to the wind the paratroopers onboard could not be dropped on Stanford PTA at Thetford and the aircraft would be returning to RAF Abingdon.

Well 4 Hastings lined up on the runway then on the taxiway it was Beverly, Hastings and so on in a long line. They then started rolling, what a sight 20 aircraft all moving together. Remember I was only a kid and only been in the RAF for a couple of months so was having a multiple you know what.

As the last aircraft got airborne, we were stood down. After about 10 minutes Air Traffic buzzed down and told us the formation was doing a fly by, so we all trooped out. What a sight. 20 aircraft flying over the aerodrome towards Thetford. As the last one flew over us Paras were dropping from the first aircraft it was

Arnhem all over again.

Only saw the odd Beverly after that in El Adem, a few in Germany and a few passing through Cyprus in 1972.

Cheers for your input Brum. I felt like I was there typing that out. Incidentally our Deputy Chairman. Don Pape flew in a Beverly whilst stationed at RAF Odiham and our assistant editor, Steve Harrison, worked at Hawker Sidley Brough formerly Blackburn and General Aircraft Company, the factory where the Beverly's were constructed along with the Buccaneer. Little did he know that he was to fly in a Beverly in 1967 when he was posted to Masirah. He flew from Khomakser (Aden) on what was then known as RSM, because it flew via Ryan, Salalah and Masirah. It was also known as Yimkin Airways. Also, the Navy Fleet was about because of the withdrawal of Aden. Navy Buccaneers started doing touch and goes at Masirah which obviously made Steve smile.

Anyway, enough of my waffle about Aircraft and Aircraft museums. Now let's talk about Flashpoint itself. It seems that I am always begging for content on our Facebook page or on other social media platforms. Well, I'm here begging again. Both Steve Harrison (Deputy Editor) and I, every time we put an edition together, we seem to be banging our heads against brick walls as to getting enough content to get a magazine put together. We have around 372 members that read the magazine and those serving now, get to see the magazine in all the RAF/USAF Stations. We all have a story to tell so why not put pen to paper or finger to keyboard and get your stories

down to me or Steve Harrison for inclusion in future editions. Its your magazine and it is only as good as the content we have to work with. I would hate to see blank pages. It would be amazing to get some stories off the new generation of RAF Firefighters to see what it is like to be a serving Firefighter in the present day. A far cry from what most of us remember I bet. No more washing spilled fuel onto the grass etc etc

Just a little input from Don Pape our Vice Chairman about the reunion:

Dear members, I am writing to you to remind you of the forthcoming meet up/reunion. Which is to be held at the Mercure Georgian House Hotel, Bolton. The dates are as previously published Friday 11th to Sunday 13th of April 2025. There will be a raffle, so could attending members please bring a raffle prize.

The numbers of members that have so far booked is still lower than last year's reunion. However, any members who haven't yet booked can still book online through SF Events whose details can be found on the Association web site.

My very best regards to you all in 2025 and I look forward to (hopefully) seeing many of you in April.

*Don Pape (DP1)
Member 140 Vice Chairman RAF & DFSA*

I hope you enjoy this edition. Stay safe and look after each other. Cheers for now.

Reg Metcalfe - Editor

NEW MEMBER

Welcome to Phillip Mercer member 1207

Thank you for joining. Over the last year we have lost a lot of comrades and friends, and this has depleted our ranks somewhat.

As always Phillip we say to new members, if would like you to contribute to the Flashpoint magazine please do so, it is your magazine and it's your stories that make it, your contributions would be most welcome.

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. The emails are important also because of the PDF copies of Flashpoint which are sent out. Thank you.

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



Chairmans Address

A very warm welcome to the 1st edition of the Flashpoint magazine for 2025. I hope that you all had a good Christmas and that your New Year has got off to a good start.

As I look back on 2024, we can be proud of our achievements as an Association. We saw the unveiling of our memorial at the National Arboretum which was the culmination of many years of hard work. Through fund raising to design, construction, and installation we now have a permanent memorial for those firefighters who are sadly no longer with us. I'm sure that those who attended on the day felt a tremendous sense of pride

in what had been accomplished.

That evening many of us assembled for a get together in a local hostelry where sandbags were pulled up, lamps were swung, alcohol was drunk, and food was eaten in a true celebration of a fantastic day. This really was what a reunion should be about. Old friends getting together and celebrating what we were and what we are now.

In November, some of our members took part in the remembrance parade in London. Everyone looked incredibly smart as they marched past the cenotaph to the applause of the public. The BBC gave us a specific mention and a great

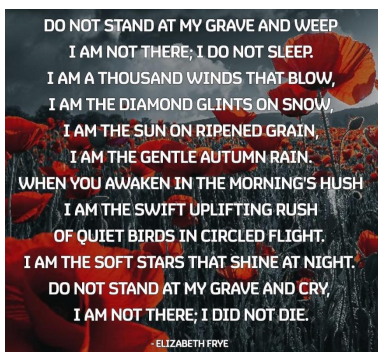
deal of coverage which did a lot to raise the profile of the association.

Let's hope that this year we continue, as a collective, to raise the profile of all firefighters who support the Ministry of Defence, in keeping our service personnel, families, equipment and dwellings safe from fire.

The committee and I look forward to serving you all in the aims of your Association and we look forward to seeing some of you at this year's reunion. Further details of how to attend are included in this magazine and on the website.

All the best - Steve

Obituaries



It's time to say goodbye to our friends and comrades, the list seems long since the last edition of Flashpoint. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of our departed brothers.

As always included are both members and non-members

Member 539 **William Walters** June 2024

Alan Cannon September 2024

Malcolm Petch September 2024

Member 225 **Mick Golding** September 2024

Bryn Tookey October 2024

Member 255 **Ken Green** October 2024

Member 65 **Terence Wright** October 2024

Member 1095 **Malcolm Hawtrey**

Member 336 **John Beard** October 2024

Brian Woolridge October 2024

Bryn Tookey October 2024

Mick (Mac) McDonnell November 2024

Ron Pearson November 2024

Member 932 **Victor Golding** November 2024

Micheal (Mick) Cordon November 2024

Member 475 **Peter (Dutchy) Holland** December 2024

Ian (Jebbs) Jebbett December 2024

Steve Lines December 2024

Ian Jebbett December 2024

Tony Mags January 2025

Member 1035 **Kevin (Smiler) Meeson** January 2025

"Overlord"

'D' Day, Tuesday June 6th 1944
approximately 06:00 hrs.

An early morning light
projects a scene in black and white.

Ten thousand hearts are beating.
An ebbing tide retreating.

The sudden crunch of craft on shore,
their ramps descend like an open jaw.

Orders shouted, neither loud nor clear,
each man holds back his personal fear.

Boots slam down on virgin sand,
brave men run forward - just as planned.

A planned attack to free a nation,
would soon be met with deprivation.

They stormed that bloody beach of hell,
some took two steps - then fell.

A mothers son lay dying.
A daughters brave dad - crying.

Comrades fighting side by side.
No class distinction, just personal pride.

The crackling hidden guns,
mowing down a countries sons.

Smoke filled the air of this foreign land,
as weapons fell from blood soaked hand.

A prayer is heard, a pleading cord.
"Let this soon be - "Over Lord"

By Chris Haughton for

'Writing for pleasure ' May 2024

MUSEUM OF RAF FIREFIGHTING UPDATE

I had hoped to bring you the news that the deal to secure a permanent home for the Museum on the site of the former air base at RAF Scampton had been done, but sadly this is still not the case. A deal has been done between the Government and a consortium consisting of West Lindsey District Council and Scampton Holdings to transfer the site to their control and as with everything in Government the wheels turn slowly when you don't want them to. This is, of course all outside of our control so we must just continue to be patient and hope that everything works out in the end.

Sadly, whilst we have been waiting, another two of our volunteers have passed away. Alf Godson and Mick Golding have now answered their final call and everybody in the Museum feels their loss deeply.

We have continued working away on various projects, perhaps not always in the full view of the public, but rest assured the Volunteers are always very busy! In this edition you will see a separate story of how I obtained yet another vehicle for my collection. This brings the number of vehicles in our care up to 61 and we estimate that we have now over 25,000 exhibits. All of this continues to be in storage at several sites throughout Lincolnshire.

We have teamed up with the Broadcast Engineering Museum who are located at the former Warrant Officers and Sgts Mess building, RAF Hemswell. They supply us with offices and storage space to store and maintain our archive collection of photographs, documents, books, cine film, Video tape, CDs, transparencies, and posters. They have the capability to transfer things onto electronic media of various types so that is something that we are pushing on with. In return we are carrying out a lot of refurbishment work on their building which is very worthwhile. There is something about working in a WW2 RAF building that is a bit special!

The vehicle fleet has been maintained which is no easy task as most of them are out in the open, sheeted down to protect them from the elements. We have two new volunteers who bring a wealth of expertise to the party. Ex REME, Falklands veteran and Angloco employee, Laurie is currently helping with the Mk6, 9 and Bedford Queens Flight Vehicle, while serving Army Major, Ewan is carrying out deep servicing of the TACR1 and ACRT. Regular RAF



Sgt Carl has also come on board and will turn his hand to anything. None of these guys are or have been firefighters!

We have recently been donated a canvas aircraft hangar which will hopefully help to protect a couple of vehicles from the elements. This had to be dismantled in situ and then recovered to Lincolnshire. This involved a return journey of over 300 miles and a 1 hr day. Whilst on site, a Mk10b was noted in the bushes. It had been used for spares but still had many parts on it that we could use. Following negotiations with the owner this complete vehicle has also been donated to the museum. We believe it is too far gone for a full restoration, but the possibility exists that it will continue to supply much needed spares to the rest of the Martens in our fleet whilst perhaps providing the opportunity to build some sort of user-friendly vehicle that children could play in once the museum he's back up and running. One of the hardest parts to find is a wheel stud. Luckily this new mark 10 still had a full set and indeed tyres that had thousands of miles left on the tread. Recovery of the vehicle will have to wait until sometime in the future but as we needed a replacement wheel stud our roadworthy Mk 10. Gary and his

partner Kinga returned the following week, and during some pretty extreme weather managed to strip down the wheel assembly and recover several wheel studs. Their devotion to the Museum can hopefully be seen in the photographs.

Memorabilia continues to arrive in the museum on a weekly basis. Sadly, much of this is from the families of former firefighters who are no longer with us. I recently attended the funeral of my old friend and first crew chief Flight Sergeant Tony Maggs. His widow along with the rest of his family have donated his old white domestic helmet to the collection. This helmet was originally presented to him when he left RAF Henlow and sat on top of his coffin for his final journey. In due course there is a great deal more memorabilia to come in the form of photographs, newspaper cuttings, fire service sporting trophies and other items which are also being donated to the museum.

Finally, we are creating a database of every fire vehicle ever used by military/MOD fire services. This database lists every registration number together with other vehicle details. It also tries to get at least one photograph to go with the record. It is a very comprehensive archive document. If any of you have photographs of vehicles, especially where you can read the number plate could you please send us copies or originals so that we can add to the database. You can send them direct to me, my details are on the front cover.

Our website is now back up and running and we do provide updates on facebook if you want to stay updated. Details of how you can provide financial support are also posted on the website and please don't forget, we always need volunteers.



FIRE SECTION NEWS

*Below is an extract from the RAF Benson magazine Argos 1988 which was post posted by Gavin Selwood on Facebook, the page is entitled "Life on The Other Side" on this page was **Fire Section News** it mentions several folk include our Editor Reg Metcalfe.*

Well, Warrant Officer Fred Woods has gone and its welcome to Flight Sargeant Dave Fitch from South Wales. There appears to be a lot of gossip from the boys in green, so further ado here goes.

Corporal Ian Quarless is well pleased with his posting back to Bishops Court, he'll do anything for more money. With Flight Lieutenant Paul Davies retiring the job of Fire Officer falls to Flying Officer Neil Alcock, a university man.

Recently posted in was LAC Ewan MacArthur from Catterick, he's from Glasgow and the boys did mention that he went to Supply Squadron for a long stand, well better than being called "Pundit man 3".

Perhaps some of you on that side are wondering why the firemen are looking thinner, no it's not because their vests are bigger it's because they are not getting

their normal "intake" of food due to rationing. I can't wait till the mess catches fire, the lads will be too weak to react to the call, so come on caterers let the "firees" have more grub, it's not long till November the 5th.

The fire trucks have now got large white numbers on them, this is to help the Firees identify which engine to get into when there is an emergency. All that remains to do is teach them to count up to three. This could be difficult, but the new Fire Officer has got his fair share of brains.

Congratulations are in order to Tim 'Big Boy' Sawyer on his marriage to Mrs Sawyer, I don't really know why Dave Austin was looking for an old windsock to produce at his wedding reception, sounds like a con or something. Congrats also to Reg Metcalfe and John Brookin on their pending promotions, who said they don't believe in fairies. Final congrats go to Kieth Simmons alias 'Simmo' of Blue Watch for passing his course to becoming a Leading Fireman in charge of the Chalgrove crew. Back to love and I hear that Ian Caskie is getting married in October to a Miss Helen Dick, now where have I heard that before?

Apparently by all accounts I'm told by a mole in the section that Chris Hudson is into soap operas, well who would have believed it, all that soap is not good for you.

September should see the imminent arrival of Sgt Rick Smith from somewhere south of Pecos, still he hasn't missed much of a summer, has he?

Young Bobby Barnes was a bit miffed with me because all the time he has been here he's never had a mention in the Argos magazine, mind you looking at him he looks like something you would buy out of the Argos Catalogue.

SAC Dave Woodward is not the SATCO's favourite fireman at the moment as young 'Woody' had the boss run out in the last cricket match in 'Superteams 88' Who where they playing? You guessed it The Queens Flight.

Well, there is a lot more scandal I could tell you about the 'boys in green' but I am too young to die. On a final serious note although it's been a pleasure knowing these guys, their sense of humour is unique, and their professionalism is unquestionable.

NOW THEN SPRY, IT'S NOT AS BAD AS YOU THINK

Article reproduced from the "PELICAN"

The magazine of RAF Scampton, Final Edition Winter 1994

However bad the aircraft accident rate has been this year, or even the last few years, Wing Commander Spry can take heart from the fact that it could never be as bad as 1952. In that year 505 RAF aircraft were written off. In alphabetical order these comprised

18 Ansons	1 Athena	22 Austers
1 Baliol	1 Beaufighter	9 Brigands
1 Buckmaster	6 Canberras	15 Chipmunks
1 Dakota	1 Dragonfly	1 Halifax
37 Harvards	3 Hastings	10 Hornets
6 Lancasters	6 Lincolns	1 Martinet
150 Meteors	32 mosquitos	21 Oxfords
9 Prentices	5 Proctors	1 Sabre
2 Shackletons	7 Spitfires	1 Sunderland
1 Sycamore	5 tempests	20 tiger moths
11 Vallettas	82 vampires	2 Varsities
1 Venom	1 Washington	15 Wellingtons

Casualties in these accidents totalled 315 killed plus six more killed on the ground. The high casualty figures from accidents to fighters prompted inquiries from the then Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. From them he had calculated that a fighter pilot's chances of being killed over an eighteen-month period

were one in sixteen and wanted to know what was being done about it. He was assured by the service minister that the figures were not abnormal and there was no cause for alarm. This was true, presumably, in Ministerial circles. The actual breakdown for the three fighter types was

Meteor 94 killed in 150 write offs
Vampire 40 killed in 82 accidents
Hornet 7 killed in 10 accidents

Central Flying School had 10 accidents during the year. In January a Harvard hit trees and crashed near Stow-on-the-Wold during low flying training. In May a vampire stalled on the approach to Little Rissington and crashed. In June, at Little Rissington, a meteor undershot the landing, swung and hit the caravan. In July 2 Harvards collided during instrument flying. All four crew members were killed. In August, a meteor crashed just South of Rissington when its engine cut out. Also in August, a Prentice was abandoned after a formation collision. In October, a Meteor stalled and crashed during a night landing and a Vampire crashed following a brake failure. In December, the propeller of a Spitfire hit the ground on take-off, and the aircraft overturned. Finally, on New Year's Eve, a Meteor spun into the ground out of the cloud, killing the crew member. Things could never be that bad. Happy New Year, Wing Commander Spry

The Red Plaque Fire Service Memorial

Back in 2021 our motorcycle club was invited to a BBQ by another motorcycle club at a site in Rettendon, Whitehouse Farm. Whilst there we got speaking to the owner Fran Theobald and she was speaking passionately about having memorial on her grounds for the fire service. We spoke for a while and then didn't really think much about it. Roll on 2 years and we heard that Fran was in the process of erecting a building to create the memorial she had spoken about, we arranged a meeting with her to discuss this. We decided to help her with it, well ideas were discussed and we came up with the idea to erect a wall to place plaques of all firefighters from the UK who had served, this evolved into including the control staff as we believed they are just as important.

Things snowballed and we decided to have a statue too and if possible purchase a fire engine. Obviously this would all need funding so we set about applying for grants from various sources, one of these being the FBU.

We set an opening date of May 4th 2024, national firefighters day. Summer was coming to an end and we had no funding and time was short and then we had the news that the FBU had awarded us £20,000 so it was full steam ahead.

I managed to get a great deal of the building materials donated by local companies and the services of a brickie who built all our walls for free. We were hampered by the weather as it rained for weeks. The statue was commissioned and made by a local sculptor, he used one of our members and my grandson as models for the firefighter with child.

Well with all the problems we encountered we got the job done and had an official opening with the Mayor opening the



memorial that was attended by lots of dignitaries and public in excess of 250.

We currently have approximately 2500 plaques on the wall and we hold regular plaque placing ceremonies where families place the plaque of their relative. They have been very successful and have given a lot of comfort to the family.

We are just about to start the next project at the memorial and that is building coverings for our appliance and our ladder of ascension, this we hope will be funded by The Worshipful Company of Firefighters(fingers crossed)

We are trying to get the word out all over the UK so families and friends can have somewhere to remember their loved ones, we have a Facebook page of the same name with updates and members from all over the country. We realise it will take time to get the memorial up to the same standing as the Arboretum. Our memorial is we

believe unique in the fact that it honours all firefighters as well as control staff.

It is set in 22 acres of farmland along with memorials of all of our armed forces and other civilian services, its peaceful and tranquil and provides a tranquil setting for all.

As an ongoing project we are always looking for ways to raise money for the projects. We are just a motorcycle club of ex and serving fire service employees so we visit fire station open days with collection pots raising what we can, we are trying to get a CIC to help with the fund raising.

The memorial consists of the memorial wall, small museum, fire appliance, statue and gardens.

If anyone can help us with ideas and ways to raise funds then please email us with details info@fireservicememorial.org



New Vehicle - Update from Spring 2024

In the spring edition of Flashpoint (page 19) I covered a story from the old RAF Fire Service magazine "Treble Two" about a new vehicle which was fitted out by HCB Angus for domestic firefighting and that was the Renault/Dodge G13.

I was asking if anyone had any knowledge if any of these vehicles had survived? Only five were produced three went to the Army and two to Defence Fire Service's.

Well, a surprise was in store for me. Shortly after I had submitted the article to Reg our esteemed editor, I attended the AGM for the Museum and during the proceedings Steve Shirley stated that a unique vehicle had come up for sale. It was the Renault Dodge which was at Donnington. The Museum was in no position to purchase this unique vehicle which would stand well in the collection. However later on in the year Steve decided to broker a private deal with the owner.

Below is the story from the Museum team which went to recover the vehicle.

Steve Harrison



We woke this morning to the excitement of the day ahead, Road trip!! Steve, Tug and Pip met up with Gary and Gareth to lead the way with the intention of recovering Steve's newest personal acquisition from a location not too far from Wittering. Our previous visit was purely for viewing and for Steve to make his decision being a private purchase. How Steve has achieved this is his personal arrangement which may be disclosed as he wishes. Correspondence between the previous owner and ourselves ensured that the vehicle be cold when we got there so we could perform a thorough road worthiness check and test drive

prior to purchase. Cab was tilted, all systems checked, and it started on the button once the cab was back in place. A brief road test ensued and all systems functioning as they should, an odd minor electrical niggles the only hang up in the lighting system. Deal was done and on time we set off back in convoy with Tom, the previous owner as escort and to join us for a well earned drink just up the road.

As with all museum road trips

the adventure started on route home, as Steve negotiated the A1, a loss of power was noted and the truck slowed to a stop, Luckily on a slip road. Recovery was initiated and a few hours wait was had until a tow truck arrived. Refreshments were collected and delivered to the roadside, which were much needed.

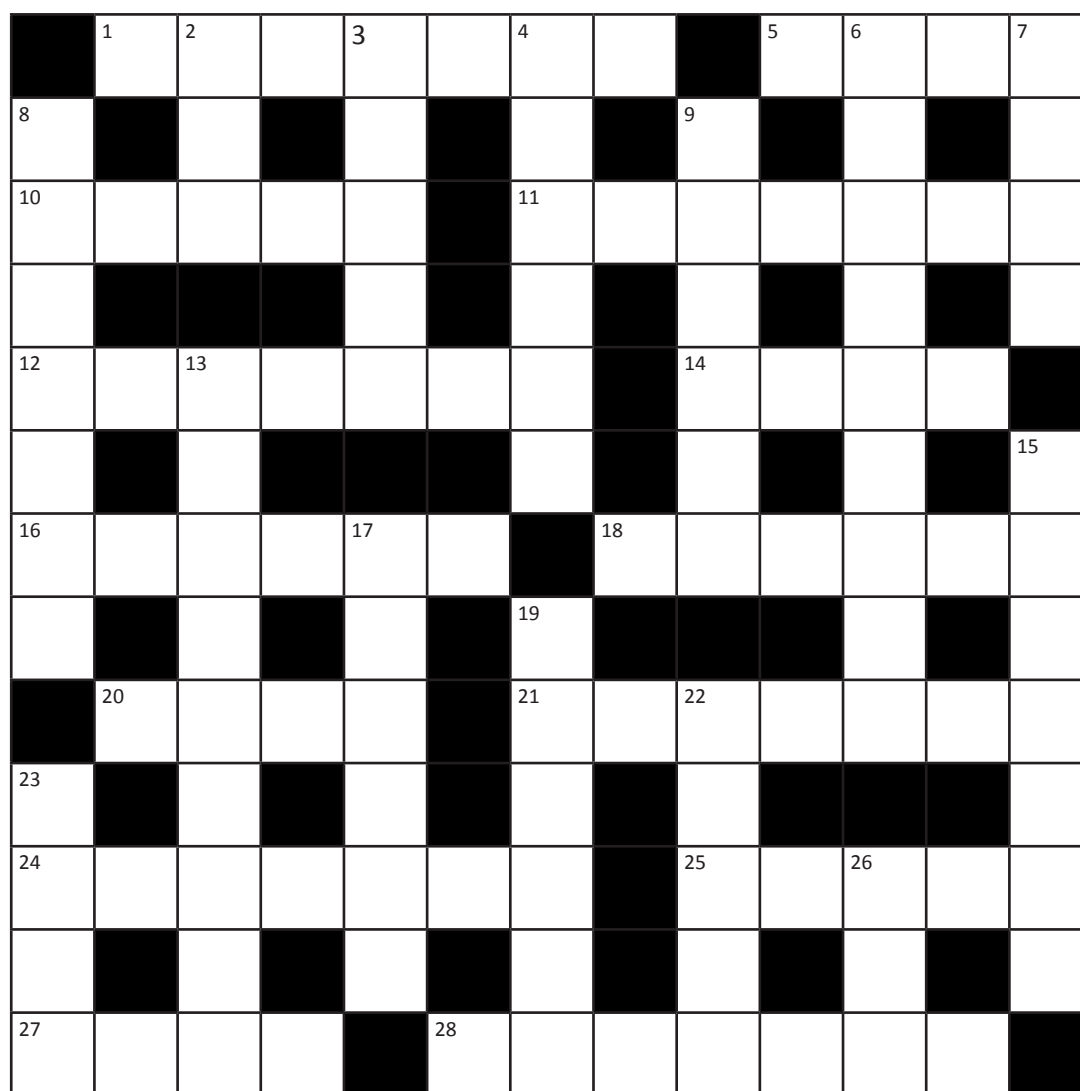
The vehicle could not be repaired at the roadside, so a suspended tow was needed and the vehicle was recovered to RAF Digby. Steve, Tug and Pip still had to return to Scampton and off they went. Gareth and Gary gave it a quick wash before returning home themselves. A massive thanks to Matt at CMG recovery for getting us home, they hope to help us again when we move to our new home, another good contact made.

Once the truck was in place at RAF Digby, repairs and minor restoration began. A very good T-Cut and polish had it looking good, the nonstandard stickers were removed and a return to the original started. We are lucky to have the support of the Station Commander at Digby to store some vehicles so the least we could do was to display our newest addition at the Station Families Day together with some others that are currently stored there.

Gareth and Gary continue to work on minor restoration tasks. These include making the cab watertight, repainting the cab back to its original eau-de-nil finish and fixing the problem that caused us to stop on the A1, an air leak in the fuel injection system!







Across

1. Buzzer round broken rods leads to ailment of night shift worker? (7)
- 5 & 9. Salty rating of Aircraft Handler perhaps. (4,6)
10. Odd Dreager eg, goes to dance. (5)
11. Guinness perhaps in British jugs. (7)
12. Mr Laurel goes to Southern Capital. (7)
14. Unusual team buddy. (4)
16. Fish-eater uses map to locate quarry? (6)
18. United ununited? (6)
20. Bum found in NAAFI bars eventually. (4)
21. Steps down due to dodgy singers. (7)
24. Nigel initially talks of crackpots. (7)
25. Split head possesses a willowy quality. (5)
27. Adapt shoe to produce means for moving water. (4)
23. His weight found in Thanet. (7)

Down

2. Tree found in Chelmsford. (3)
3. Diminutive Sergeant Major with everything. (5)
4. Two body parts combined to make this cut. (6)
- 6 & 13. A firefighter's favourite backpack? (9,9)
7. The direction every airman swarms to at first. (4)
8. PPP manufacturer from famous sea port. (7)
9. *See 5 Acc*
13. *See 6*
17. The Spanish lead first lady north to team. (7)
19. Alpha following peak to French run. (5)
22. Unwell in ship found under windows. (5)
23. Measure found in pinched features. (4)
26. A pair we hear also. (3)

"THAT'S JUST COINCIDENCE" - OR WAS IT?

This little story begins in the summer of 1947, In fact it was 15th August 1947 to be exact - the date I was born. Of course little did I know at the time that my mother had already given birth to siblings before me and therefore, I was by no means unique. However, certain events in later life made me ponder whether some 'roads' may already be laid out for us.

My very early years

In August of 1947, Liverpool, like the majority of Great Britain, was going through one of the warmest summers ever to be recorded. Needless to say that life would have been very uncomfortable and exhausting for most households. Things like electric fans for example, although having become popular since the 1920s, didn't exist in our house, nor indeed many other houses of that period.

As well as it being a hot and sticky time of the year, and, like a lot of the major Cities in Great Britain, the Liverpool of 1947 was still recovering from the traumatic events of both the First and the Second World Wars. Times and conditions were indeed exceptionally hard for all families everywhere,

My mother Charlotte, (nee Burns)

She was born in 1908 the fourth child of 8 and thus, as a child, had already suffered through the turmoil of one World War.

In 1928 at the tender age of 20, she married my father John Haughton.

Prior to my father going off to fight in the Second World War they had lost their first born in 1930 aged just 1 year old. Their second was born in 1930, third in 1931, fourth born and died in 1933 aged 2 months, fifth born 1935, sixth born 1936.

With a gap of only 21 years since the end of the First World War and the start of the Second World War, she would be saying farewell to her husband who, like thousands of others, would be 'called up'. Now she was about to endure probably the most horrific period in her lifetime.

Having, as in most cases, been the family matriarch during those horrific periods of the Second World War, mothers in particular would have found it extremely hard to survive the conditions and

restrictions imposed upon them whilst their menfolk were away.

That was the situation my mother, Charlotte, would find herself in.

Along with motherhood, she was now having to deal with the issues the Second World War had brought with it. There were such things as the loss of friends and loved ones, terrible living conditions, shortage of food supplies, medical and other facilities. Not to mention the heartbreak of having to see her children taken from her during 'the evacuation period'.

All this of course must have had a profound effect on all aspects of her life and general health as a whole.

The physical and mental health of all men, women and children who survived the war must have been difficult within communities everywhere.

When my father eventually returned from the war their seventh child was born - and died, in 1945.

Her name was Eileen and although her death had a profound effect on my mother and the rest of my siblings, and (whether by choice or not I will never know) my mother found herself pregnant yet again.

The winter of 46/47 is recorded as one of the worst on record, which is when I must have been conceived (think about it!) and duly born during that very hot summer of August 1947.

So, with this in mind, I feel sure my mother Charlotte, whilst carrying me around for 9 months, must have been anticipating the forthcoming birth of her latest baby with a great deal of worry and concern bearing in mind her previous losses.

Combined with the very hot summer of 1947 and heavy load she was carrying, it is hardly surprising that she would be swift in her reply to comments such as "lovely weather we're having today Mrs Haughton"

My mother was of average height, but she was a very slim lady and so I can't begin to imagine the toil her body must have endured over those years prior to the news she was now pregnant again and only two years since losing my sibling, Eileen, in 1945.

Me

My birth, at home in the parlour of our house, was not without its complications.

I was born a "Blue Baby" (insufficient oxygen in the blood) thus requiring a long stay in hospital and a recommendation by the Doctors that I would benefit from a cleaner air and environment than Liverpool had to offer, away from the horrible sooty pollution which coated the buildings of Liverpool,

And so this is where the coincidences really kicked in.

My eldest sister, Sheila, who in 1949, aged 19, married Dougie Speirs, a Chef in the RAF. During the early 'fifties' they were to be stationed at

RAF Honington in Suffolk, Their first child Jennifer was born in 1950.

As mentioned earlier, the doctors in Liverpool recommended that I would benefit from a cleaner air environment to assist in the recovery of my condition by enriching my blood and hopefully my well being.

Sheila and Dougie had no hesitation in offering to take me to live with them for a while at RAF Honington. So it was decided, with my mothers and doctors consent of course, that I, at the grand old aged about 2 ½ ish should now go and live at RAF Honington. At the time that I joined them, Sheila and Dougie already had a very young baby daughter (Jennifer), but this did not deter them from undertaking the incredible task of helping out with the situation involving my mother and Sheila's baby brother.

The clean Suffolk air sounded ideal.

All this transition would not only benefit me of course but be beneficial to my mother in relieving her of the arduous task of raising me in my early years and at an age when she herself was in need of a lot of rest and recuperation

RAF Honington

You will recall, my now 'Brother-in-Law' Dougie was a Chef by trade and as such had many "friends" within certain other trades on the Station. "Always keep in with the cooks" they would say. the benefits would be numerous. Still true today ay lads?

(I now realise that, and in my opinion, Cooks were the only trade in the Forces that would be 'trade tested 3 times a day')

In particular Dougie was great personal friends with some members of the RAFs Airfield Fire Service, as it was known then. So much so, that the Firemen would often pop round to our house on social visits both on and off duty.

Although very young at the time, I can still remember the fire truck parked outside our old post-war prefab and the lads stopping by for a cuppa.

I would often get rides on the truck and sit in them listening to stories of their exploits while they in turn would be supping cups of my sister Sheila's tea,

Despite our little pre-fab being a fair bit away from the main camp and a bit out in the sticks, I remember it being comfortable, warm and always lively.

It is now becoming apparent that my "short stay" living with my sister and her family was turning in to a little bit more than just a "short stay".

I started infants school in a little picturesque village called Ashfield, which was, as far as I remember, quite a distance from our little isolated prefab that sat out in the countryside. No school bus, but instead a local taxi would pick up, and return myself and a couple of other servicemen's kids for school.

The school itself was as picturesque as the village. There were only two classrooms. and the playground included iconic apparatus such as the 'witches hat' a swing cum roundabout kind of thing, together with the maypole type swing on a chain, which when you run round pole with it and hanging on for dear life was to us youngsters akin to all the fun of the fair. Queues to get on these playground attractions were inevitable.

Soon we were on the move. Not a posting, but moving from the pre-fab onto the larger married quarters complex attached to the main camp. The married Quarter was of the old type. (In fact I visited the very house in 2023 and the area is pretty much the same as it was back in the fifties.) I wanted to take some photos so knocked on the door to ask permission of the present occupier. He turned out to be a "Rockape". That aside, he invited me in to look around.

I'm too much of a sentimentalist to refuse. Other than a more modern kitchen and other utilities, it was very much as I remembered it.

It was here in this very house in 1954 that my sister Sheila gave birth to her second daughter, Margaret. I can remember myself and Jennifer sitting on the stairs waiting and then hearing the wails and cries from the main bedroom,

(with the odd swear word thrown in for good measure). Then the unmistakable sound of baby Margaret screaming into life.

So here the situation had developed such that I was now a very young Uncle to two nieces whilst still at Junior school ! In fact, Jenny, Margaret and I grew up like we were brother and sisters. And that remains the fact to this day.

Soon, I was to attend the bigger juniors school situated in Honington Village itself. This to me was a far cry from Ashfield. There were more children attending from the base, so I was now picked up by school bus to and from Honington village.

Due to the fact there were now 3 kids in the family our final 'move', whilst still at RAF Honington, was to a three bedroom quarter further up the road. These had just been built and were known to us and others as "The New Quarters".

Again, I visited them also last year.

I can't remember the exact date, but soon Dougie was to be demobbed from the RAF and so we all returned to Liverpool around 1956.

Housing was in short supply and so we all moved in with me Mam and Dad. --- -- ironically back to the very house I was born in.

Schooling was to be a temporary affair whilst staying at my mothers, but thankfully our education was not disturbed too much as both myself and Jennifer went to our local school which was literally on the other side of the street.

Dougie soon got a job as a bus conductor and so now, thankfully,

gainfully employed. Now the time could be devoted to seeking a permanent home within the civilian way of life again, together with a more permanent schooling

for us kids.

Before long, Sheila and my brother-in-law Dougie were allocated a council house on the then outskirts of Liverpool in a district called Childwall.

I was now coming up to 10 years old and for some reason, there never appeared to be any doubt whether I was to move with them, I can't ever recall any objections from my Mam and Dad. I think it must have just been just "assumed", because believe it or not I also had no doubts at the time, and never have I addressed or even questioned the decision. To be honest, as far as I'm concerned I was obviously a little too young at the time to take in the reality of the situation,

And so it was to be. "I Went with the flow" as they say nowadays

Due to the rehousing and massive redevelopment of Liverpool City Centre we were now 'out in the countryside' of Liverpool witnessing the up and coming arrival of : 'The New Housing Estate' era

We moved, and as one of the first families to do so, we found everything was very new, a bit dusty, basic and with no shopping centre as such. Groceries and the like were sought via the delivery van' or the one static converted old bus located close by which stocked your daily basics such as 'bread, tea, sugar, milk and margarine.

I must admit, it was quite an adventure for me and my 'nieces' experiencing the development of 'Our Estate' and the arrival of all the new families with their brood of kids, - soon to become 'friends. Plenty of play areas among the building sites. I'm sure there's yet another kids adventure story or two in there somewhere

I started at our local Comprehensive School about 1957/58

The school building, which was within sight of our newly built council house, looked enormous in comparison to what I had been used to. No 'witches hat' or 'maypole' in the playground here I thought.

It was walking distance to this big really "posh" looking building at the top of the field. Yes ! A Field !!!, here we were back in the countryside.

Great !! I thought. ' No Taxi, or bone

shaker bus either to take me to school. It even had it's own swimming pool.

Skipping quickly past my early teenage years, (in case I might incriminate myself) I left school in 1962 at the age of 15

As with most kids of that age, I was confronted with a couple of decisions to make regarding my future. Remembering of course, in my particular case I was still with my sisters 'family' which meant more than one decision to make.

Do you remember your careers teacher or advisor asking you

"what do you want do when you leave school ?" To them, it was a very serious question. But not to a young 14 cum 15 year old . After all what does a 15 year old know about the outside world and it's real prospects or opportunities?

One subject I liked and excelled in at school was Rural Science. It must have been the time spent in Suffolk and the countryside. A friend of Sheila's who had a farm in North Wales offered to take me on as an apprentice and put me through Agricultural College complete with a small wage plus food and accommodation thrown in. Couldn't make my mind up. Didn't go. Why? I've often wondered about that myself.

(Might of had that tweed suit and a posh Range Rover now)

At the same time, we as a "family" discussed whether I would I like to spend some time with my mother and father before venturing out to the wide, wide world. We all agreed yes !

So, off I went to live with me Mam and Dad.

I started in a little job in a factory called Paton Calverts that made metal trays and cake tins. This didn't last more than a year after the foreman caught me smoking in the storeroom. Sacked !!

While waiting to still make some sort of decision on which of the roadways to go down, I took a job working for a fruit and veg firm collecting from the Liverpool docks and large Markets to deliver to warehouses and shops all over the City and beyond.

I loved that job, as it was outside in the fresh air, and for a young teenager, full of

fun and laughter.

However, I was still itching as to which of those roads I wanted to take.

Then one day, it happened. As I was walking through the centre of Liverpool one Saturday afternoon .(before 3 o'clock kick off I might add), I thought to myself, Eureka !!!! I know what I want to do, 'Join up.' After all, I had experienced the Service life as a younger child so doesn't that give me some sort of 'qualification'. So here I was, qualified for something at last (Ha Ha).

Before I knew it I was sitting inside the RAF Careers Office in London Road, Liverpool. A long chat later and I once again had another decision to make at the age of 17, because next door was the Army and Navy Careers Office.

So was it to be the Army, Navy or the Royal Air Force ??

Time to consult with my brother-in-law Dougie. After all, he was the one who "brought me up".

"Don't do the Army" he said with a raised eyebrow, "you will have to salute too many times" "join the RAF it's cushier". Some help that was !!!

I told me Mam and Dad what I was intending to do,

"I'm joining up" I said "that way I have no more difficult decisions to make as to who I am going to live with". I got everyone's blessing.

So off I trotted back to the Royal Air Force Careers Office, Failed the application to be a 'Fighter Pilot' (joke) so signed up to the next best thing as an RAF Fireman in the RAF Fire & Rescue Service. Proudly took 'The Oath' to serve my Queen. That was 22nd January 1965

It was in that same Careers Office that I first met another Scouser who failed as a Fighter Pilot and about to join as a fireman. That guy was Phil Cawley. We signed up together, travelled to Swinderby together, square-bashing together then of course Catterick together until our postings. Phil now living in New Zealand remains a close friend to this day.

Now this is the moment to remind you of previous facts like; the RAF Firemen I met as a child at Honington in the early fifties

and the irony of getting the sack from my first job for smoking in a high fire risk area of the factory.

I think we all have various adventures and stories to tell during square-bashing and trade training, but my destiny was about to be mapped out on leaving Catterick.

I was posted to RAF Cranwell. Like most of us in those days it involved a lot of lugging kit and uniform about the country at times. However, I was certainly not prepared for what awaited me at Cranwell.

I reported in at the Guardroom, and pointed in the direction of SHQ,

After showing my paperwork at the desk I was to be told that they have no notification of my pending arrival. However, told to carry on up to the Fire Section and report in and they would sort the paperwork out.. This I did.

The Warrant Officer I/C Fire Section greeted me with the question " who the f**k are you"? "I'm not expecting anyone" "Never mind," he said and handed me to some Corporal to get me settled in at Transit until all was sorted,

The next morning there I was walking around with blue arrival card in hand at a camp who wasn't expecting me.

Anyway, I was soon allocated to a crew and would find myself on the Crash Line at RAF Barkston Heath covering Jet Provosts. At last I felt "useful".

It was a few weeks later when I was called up from the crash line to go and report to the Warrant Officer. Having knowingly done nothing wrong - as far as I knew, I did so. The Warrant greeted me with the news that the RAF Police had been looking for me as I was reported as AWOL from RAF Faldingworth. He agreed that the paperwork I had produced had been correct and I was in no way to blame. However, I was to pack everything and make my way to Faldingworth. "where is Faldingworth Sir" I asked the Warrant " I don't f**ckin know was his reply.

It turned out that the RAF Police had located me via my eldest brother whom I had as my next of kin.

So, rail warrant in hand, off I trots to find RAF Faldingworth.

The train to Lincoln arrived late at night

and I was picked up in the standard J2 MT vehicle and transported through the very black countryside towards my new unit. I do vaguely remember seeing a sign indicating RAF Scampton and noticed how lit up it seemed in the darkness of the night. It was at this point I asked the driver where Faldingworth was. He pointed to a glimmer of light way off in the distance across nothing but blackness. It looked like a wartime prisoner of war camp. "Bloody hell, is that it" I said.

After checking in at the guardroom I was assisted to the Fire Section – next door. The Section was a "live-in" Fire Section. I can only say at this point that RAF Faldingworth was a great little posting. Basically a Domestic Unit,

1x Bedford Domestic, live in at the Section, and a very 'highly polished' establishment. An MU and Bomb Dump/ weapons Unit. One of my first Corporals was a certain George Sillence.

Thinking this was going to be me settled for a while and having now passed my education and trade tests to SAC I made myself very comfortable. However, I was soon on PWR for my first overseas posting. It came sooner than I thought, - RAF Labuan, Borneo.

1966 was again to be a bit 'life changing'. I left the UK for RAF Labuan which was in the jungle surrounds of Borneo, a one year posting in those days.

This was to be my first time on an airplane. Flew from Luton on a British Eagles Britannia. On route we staged through Ceylon (Colombo) and then Singapore where I was offloaded at RAF Changi and told I wasn't continuing my trip on to Labuan, but instead staying in Singapore. Being very unfamiliar with the Stations in Singapore I asked the guy on the desk where I was going to.

Yes, !! you guess it, the guy didn't know, but I should report to SHQ in the morning. "In the meantime check in at Transit".

Those who know the shame of wearing your stiff long Khaki shorts for the first time revealing those pure white 'moonie' legs will know how I felt approaching SHQ that morning. I was told yet again that I wasn't down for anywhere yet as Labuan had only just began closing down. Next day came the news that RAF Tengah was

too be my new home, a 2 ½ year posting.

Oh dear, how sad, but never mind. Hee Hee. Sounds better than the jungle.

Here I was, a young single 19 year old on what was promising to be the experience and adventure of a lifetime. (and getting paid for it)

At this point I will skip all the adventures and episodes of RAF Tengah together with the exploits of life in Singapore, - which along with Gan, I rate as the best posting of my career in the RAF.

I wish only to continue this tale with the emphasis more on the subject of 'Coincidences'.

Whilst out there in Singapore, I met up with a girl who was later to become my wife. She was the daughter of a serving RAF Policeman also stationed at RAF Tengah,

After we had been going out for a while I wrote and told my sister Sheila about her and the fact that her family were, and still are, in the RAF and like us, had once been stationed at RAF Honington in Suffolk during the fifties..

When I told her their surname and trade she couldn't believe it. Turns out Sheila and my other sister Maureen said they knew of them. Surely not I thought, after all, I'm over 6,500 miles away and a long way from the days of RAF Honington in the fifties. Or so I thought

Of course we double checked everything. My sister Maureen said she still has a 21st birthday card sent to her signed by them in 1956. (she showed me the card on my return to UK)

It also turned out that my future wife's elder sister and I were in the same school in Honington village back in the day.

So, how many coincidences and crossroads have we covered?

- Going to live with my sister at RAF Honington started my roadways.
- Playing on the RAF Fire Vehicle at Honington as a child in the early fifties.
- On leaving school, A Choice, Farm or no Farm - NO FARM !
- Getting the sack at my first job for smoking in the warehouse (Fire Risk)

- Army or R.A.F – Chose R.A.F
- Joined as an RAF Fireman
- Errors thus re-directions in first home and overseas postings.
- Off- loaded at Singapore and to stay there instead of on to Borneo.
- Singapore (6 ½ thousand miles away) and met my future wife
- My sisters knew her parents from RAF Honington early fifties
- The proven signed 21st birthday card in 1956 to my sister Maureen.
- Going to Honington Village School in the mid fifties and at the same time as my future sister-in-law

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When we make decisions, when we choose which direction to take, is it fate or merely coincidences when things turn out as they do?.

My own final thought,

Due to a mother going through such an ordeal of two world wars, domestic hardships, losing 3 children, and probably unable to cope fully with another child late in life, is it no wonder that my Mother was happy for my sister to raise me as she did. After all this, was that same child destined to take the road he did and thus connect the circle?

Footnote:

As the last one born, and the only survivor, of my mothers eight children, I have began the long process of studying 'Family History'. What a drug that has turned out to be. The more you find out, the more you want to know.

Only then do you realise there are so many more questions you wish you had asked when those with the answers were still alive.

Chris Haughton - Member 770

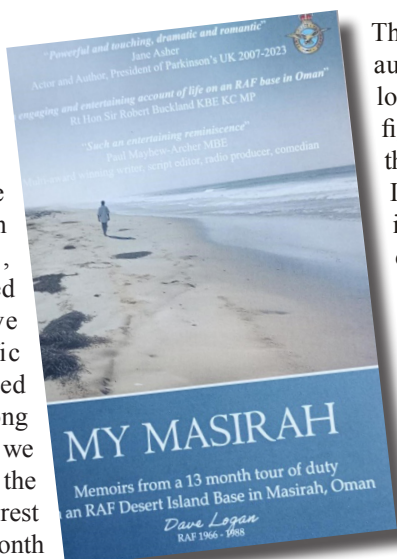
Book Recommendations From "The Silverfox"

I came across a book which may raise some interest among you. It is "My Masirah" an account of Dave Logans 13-month tour of Masirah, Oman which started in July 1968. Dave was an Air Traffic controller and shared accommodation along with us Firemen, and we do get a mention in the book. It was an interest to me as I did a 13-month tour of Masirah 67/68

and a 9-month tour in 72/73. I left in June 1968, so I never got to meet Dave.

Dave was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2003 and all profits from the sale of this book will go to support Parkinson's UK research.

The ISBN No is 9798861920483



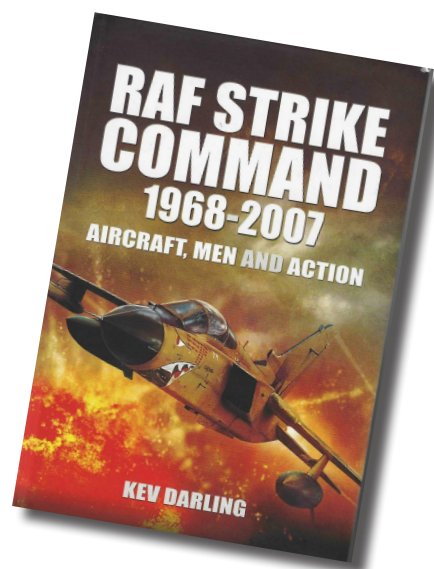
The second book by a prolific author Kev Darling is worth looking at. It full of facts and figures, and anyone serving in that period will find fascinating. I am slowly working through it but is a book which you can dip in and out of.

This book looks at the operations that took place during Strike Commands existence, the aircraft they flew and the men who flew them. It is a tribute to the fast-dwindling strike power of the Royal Air Force.

In 1968 a decision was made to combine the RAF Commands that had become famous in World War Two. Thus Fighter, Bomber, Coastal, Air Support and Signals Commands were combined into the single Strike Command. This amalgamation was to see service throughout the remaining years of the Cold War and action in the Falklands and the

Middle East in Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm and Granby.

The ISBN No is 184884898-6 although it was £25 new it can be found on book sites for an average of £5/6.



RAF Fairford (1970) My first domestic shout

As a keen 20 year old LAC, I jumped at the chance to attend my first domestic "lock out". As it was Flt Lt Mulkins house (Rock Boss), the old Sgt jumped on the wagon as well.

Now, the first thing you must understand, about the Sgt who I shall call "Paddy Mac" is that he had an affliction. When speaking, every other word was "pucking" followed by "eejit", and his left arm would move across his chest at the same time. (When on tea, the idea was to get his cup into his left hand, whilst ranting so that he scalded his fingers). Anyway, I digress.

We were met by an embarrassed Mrs Murkin (lovely lady), and I was sent up the ladder to open the metal framed windows. I thought I was doing well until I heard the following bellowed out from below. "Take your pucking dirty boots off! The floors been polished, and don't tread on the MFO boxes underneath the window!" Not to make a scene, with great difficulty, I obliged, and stood on the windowsill looking at how I might clear the obstacles. Without too much thought, I leapt across, my arse hitting the last box. My white seaboot socks skimmed the polished floor and I ended up with a clatter under the bed grazing my thick head. The noise and expletives from me were heard below including nosey neighbours! After working my way out from under the bed, I went downstairs and opened the front door to be greeted by a worried Mrs Murkin and an irate Sgt.

Needless to say, I never lived it down, and for the rest of the shift (and on numerous occasions after) I was a "pucking eejit"

Mick Penfold



EJECTION SEAT DEVELOPMENT FIRSTS



DATE	NAME	EVENT
Early 1941	Busch	Possible live test of HE 280 ejection seat prototype
13th Jan 1942	Schenk	1st emergency ejection in the world from an HE280
11th April 1944	Herter Perbix	1st combat ejections in the world, from an HE219
24th July 1946	Lynch	1st live test ejection in England, from a Meteor 3 (EE 416) at Chalgrove
27th July 1946	Lt Jarkenstedt (R Swedish AF)	1st emergency in Sweden, from a J21A
1st Nov 1946	Lt Furtek USN	1st US live test ejection (Martin Baker seat) from a Douglas A 26
28th Feb 1948	Lt Cartier (French AF)	1st French live test ejection (Martin Baker seat) from a Meteor 3 at Chalgrove
11 Sept 1948	Lynch	1st live test ejection in N Ireland from a Meteor 3
30th May 1949	Lancaster	1st emergency ejection in the UK, from a Armstrong Whitworth 52 (Flying Wing) *
20th Mar 1952	Lt Mc Dermott RN	1st RN emergency ejection from an Supermarine Attacker
20th Aug 1952	Fg Off Guthrie	1st RAF combat ejection (Korea) from a Meteor 8
20th Jan 1952	Sgt Richmond	1st emergency ejection in the UK, from a Meteor 8 (died of injuries)
3rd Aug 1955	Fg Off Molland	1st RAF supersonic emergency ejection, from a Hunter 5
3rd Sept 1955	Sqn Ldr Fifield	1st live ground level test ejection in the world, from a Meteor 7 at 90kts
28th Aug 1957	Fg Off Hughes	1st live ground level test ejection in the USA, from a Cougar at Patuxent River
1st Apr 1961	Hay	1st live zero/zero test ejection in the World-seat on ground –no aircraft

* The Armstrong Whitworth A.W.52 was a British flying wing aircraft design of the late 1940s for research into a proposed flying wing jet airliner.

Three aircraft, the A.W.52G glider and two jet-powered research aircraft, were built for the programme.

Top speed: 805 km/h

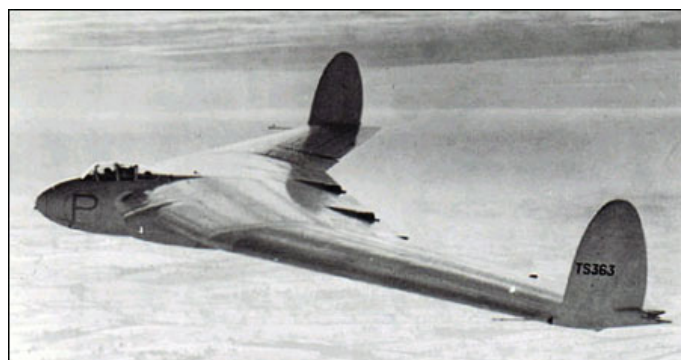
Wingspan: 27 m Length: 11 m

Engine type: Rolls-Royce Nene

First flight: November 13, 1947

Manufacturers: Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft.

Retired: 1954



Royal Flights into West Raynham and Strike HQ

During the early 1970's when West Raynham became operational again we would receive the occasional Queen's flight Andover with members of the Royal family on board en-route to Sandringham. Previously nearby Marham was utilised, but West Raynham was the nearest airfield with a shorter journey by road to the Royal Residence, so was chosen once again to receive these prestigious air movements.

Before continuing I won't be dwelling on the operational "ins and outs" of the Queens flight, as I'm sure there are certain members who can offer more information (and anecdotes!) having served with this elite branch of the RAF during their service.

When notice was received from ATC that a Royal flight was on finals, a set procedure would be followed with all trucks on the crash line manned up at readiness with full crash kit donned. Then a few minutes before the Royal flight landed all the engines would be started, but then something bizarre would occur with the order given to close the bay doors with all vehicles parked inside! The bays soon became choked with exhaust fumes, possibly containing high levels of carbon monoxide, the only remedy to partly avoid inhaling was to close all cab doors and windows. This hazardous practice was maintained with no exceptions until the Andover had landed, taxied to the ASP and shut down. On asking our crew Sgt. why this had to happen, he simply stated that the "powers that be" did not want the sight of the crash line on standby upsetting any of the Royals that were aboard. Disregarding the fact that this would considerably delay the crash line getting mobile in an emergency (when vital minutes matter) and not forgetting of course, the subsequent risk of gassing the crash crew in the process!

I recall we didn't discuss in depth what would happen in a serious situation but if it required a hasty extraction from the aircraft then the ACRT crew would go for the most senior Royal on board, followed by others, then aircrew last, but I never discovered where about in the pecking order, the Royal Corgis were placed!

While I was at Strike Command HQ (High

Wycombe) in the late 1970's a different set of procedures were used to accommodate the Queen's flight Wessex helicopters and Gazelles from the VIP flight at Northolt as there was only a helicopter landing pad and a Bedford TK mini domestic available on site.

At the rear/side of the fire section was a large playing field and at one end, the helicopter pad with markings with access for a staff car, opposite this was a small roadway that accessed a number of utility buildings. As this was the nearest point to the pad without going off road when a helicopter flight was imminent the domestic was brought round and positioned here after the duty crew had donned crash kit, which usually consisted of a Cpl and two SAC's. Two lengths of hose were then ran out with a 5X foam making branch pipe and 5gal drum of foam compound placed alongside in readiness. Having no ATC on site or a radio in the fire truck meant that any communications from the pilot had to be relayed by phone to the fire section office by Com Cen in the bunker.

Usually no marshalling was required, as the aircrews were fully conversant with the approved approach (wind sock situated at edge of field), so it was case of standing by the domestic until the helicopter landed and shut down. If a movement was expected after dusk we had a battery powered portable landing "T" and glide slope indicator that could be set up quite quickly on the field when needed. Careful sighting of the GSI was essential as there was a row of tall trees along the top end of the field and any errors in getting the cross hairs well above them could have had catastrophic results!

The late Duke of Edinburgh occasionally flew in at the controls of a QF Wessex when he was attending meetings in nearby Chequers and although he had reputation for being brusque, he always acknowledged us by a friendly wave before entering his staff car!

We also had regular visits to the section by a Flt. Lt. Pilot from the VIP flight (Gazelle) at Northolt while he awaited to return with his passengers. He wasn't far from retirement and much preferred our

rest room than having to be transported to the Officers Mess in the domestic site. With a mug of coffee he would relate tales of his flying experiences when younger, especially those tours undertaken overseas, and I must say that his visits were always looked forward to by us as he was a real gent. The old saying comes to mind when I think about him;

"There are no old bold pilots, just old pilots!"

Finally I should mention a certain middle aged WRAF officer from HQ who had an annoying habit of turning up at the fire section just prior to helicopter movements. She had nothing to do with them but had some excuse that required speaking to our Sgt. i/c. in his office. Just routine you may think, but she made a point of not coming in by usual entrance, using instead the door directly into our changing/locker room. This while we were in the process of donning crash kit and apologising profusely, she would stride through "wild eyed" to see our boss with some query about FAFA training for the Waafs in her charge. Sadly she was a "plain Jane" who maybe had a fetish about string underwear and heard that RAF firemen had large branch pipes, who knows? Needless to say a quiet word by our boss put paid to any further incursions by this officer, much to our amusement !

Andy Gaskell 328

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

	B	E	D	S	O	R	E		A	B	L	E
B		L		M		I		S		R		A
R	U	M	B	A		B	R	E	W	E	R	S
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ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

This year brings us to the 80th Anniversary of Operation "Overlord" and this incident below happened at this very time. Once again showing a display of courage by an airman on fire fighting duties in this turbulent period of our history.



1158832 Corporal Charles Douglas Lovell

Operation "OVERLORD", The invasion of France in June 1944, brought about intense air activity, around all of England's south coast airfields. Softening-up operations were mounted against German targets in France from an early stage by both the RAF and USAAF. One of the stations used by the Americans was that of Christchurch in Hampshire. The 405th Fighter Group, 84th Fighter Wing USAAF operating P-47D Thunderbolt aircraft, arrived at Christchurch, known to the Americans as USAAF Station 416 in April 1944. It was not an airfield the Americans liked to operate from with the heavy P-47 Thunderbolt, and the short runway caused a number of accidents.

On June 29, 1944, three USAAF Thunderbolts crashed on take-off from Christchurch. In the first at 0700hrs, an aircraft of the 509th Fighter Squadron collided with the roof of a bungalow after failing to gain sufficient height. Despite extensive damage to the building its occupants escaped with slight injuries and the pilot scrambled clear. At 1345hrs the same pilot crashed another Thunderbolt, hitting two more bungalows adjacent to the previous one. When one of the aircraft's bombs exploded another P-47, which was caught in the blast, crashed, and caught fire. Although the pilot in the latter aircraft escaped with minor injuries, the pilot of the first aircraft was killed instantly together

with three civilians. Eight minutes after the crash the second bomb on board of the Thunderbolt exploded, killing several USAAF groundcrew and the four-man crew of the fire tender, provided by the Royal Navy, and an RAF Sergeant. In all 14 people were killed and 23 seriously injured.

Corporal Lovell was the NCO in charge of the fire tender at nearby RAF Holmesley South, which was requested to assist in this accident. The Stations Operations Record Book states:

Loud explosion heard S.W. direction. Information gained from Christchurch

that 2 Thunderbolt aircraft had crashed on airfield loaded with bombs. Station fire tender sent to scene of accident and offer made to Christchurch to accept landing of their aircraft. Report later received that our Fire Crew and Fire Officer worked like heroes on a burning machine that still had bombs on board. Fire successfully put out. RAF Christchurch requested Station Commander to thank each member of the crew and Fire Officer for the very fine show they put up.



For his action in this incident Corporal Lovell was awarded the British Empire Medal. His citation, was published in the London Gazette on 27 April 1945 and reads:

1158832 Corporal Charles Douglas LOVELL, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

In June 1944, 3 American Thunderbolt aircraft crashed at a Royal Air Force Station. Each aircraft carried bombs, some of which exploded and killed numerous RAF personnel, including the entire station fire crew. In view of the serious situation the crash tender was called from



American airman manning British Fire Trucks.

an adjacent station. On arrival, the crew of this tender set to work on an aircraft which had been burning for some time and contained a fused H.E. bomb which was in imminent danger of exploding. Corporal Lovell, with no thought of his personal safety and without aid, manned the nozzle of a hose from the foam tender until the foam was exhausted. He then helped to re-service the tender; returned to the seat of the crash, and remained with the hose very near to the unexploded bomb, until he had extinguished the fire. Corporal Lovell set a fine example of devotion to duty in dangerous circumstances.

Charles Douglas Lovell was born at Trowbridge on 19 February 1918 and enlisted in the RAF on 26 June 1940, as an Aircraftman/General Duties. His first posting was to Marham where he served until March 1941, when he posted to South Africa. Then an Aircraftman 1st Class he served with No 16 Service Flying Training School and then Nos 71 and 73 Air Schools. Promoted Leading Aircraftman in July 1941, and temporary Corporal in April 1942. Lovell returned to the United Kingdom in May 1943.

Corporal Lovell served at Homesly South until September 1944, when he moved to Ibsley. The following month he was posted to Andrew Field, in Essex, until May 1945. He then stayed with No 104 Personnel Dispatch Centre until he was released from the Service on 20 June 1946.

This is extracted from a book called "IN



Aerial photograph of Christchurch airfield, looking south. The runway runs diagonally across the image, 12 December 1946. Photograph taken by No. 82 Squadron, sortie number RAF/CPE/UK/1893. English Heritage (RAF Photography).

ADVERSITY" Exploits of Gallantry and Awards to the RAF Regiment and its Associated Forces 1921-1995. Compiled by Squadron Leader Nicholas G. Tucker, RAF

Steve Harrison

Appendix to the story of Corporal Lovell BEM.

The incident which Corporal Lovell attended brought up a few questions when it stated that the four-man crew of the fire tender which was provided by the Royal Navy were killed in the incident. The query is, were the fire crew RAF, or Royal Navy personnel? Looking at the Patriot files on line which lists Royal Navy personnel losses, which has losses by date does not mention any losses on land. But the other option is obviously American. We have seen many an image of American firefighters manning British fire trucks in WW2. However, I have tried researching further but cannot seem to get much further about the Americans that were killed. However, a friend of the museum may find some more information at a later date



