



FLASHPOINT

ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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SPRING 2026
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BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION

The formation of the *Royal Air Force & Defence Fire Services Association* took place at Shoreham Airport in East Sussex, on the 13th of May 1995, when ex-service personnel got together to remedy the fact, that wasn't an organisation relation to the trade of firefighter when most other trade one.

Since 1995 many changes have taken place. Although at first a lot of contact with members of the Association was through the Flashpoint magazine, which is published 3 times a year we now have had to embrace modern day communications using the website, Facebook and now the Flashpoint can be sent electronically to members who require it by that means. The Committee now meets monthly using Zoom courtesy of the Museum of RAF Firefighting which the Association also supports. To see the membership criteria please visit the website.

HOW TO JOIN

Visit the Royal Air Force & Defence Fire Services Association website www.raanddfsa.co.uk and download the application form and print it off and send the completed form with all your details and history to

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Welcome to this edition of flashpoint. Please accept my apologies for the big gap between issues. The last two were edited on my phone which was no easy task. I just couldn't do it on my new phone but now I have a laptop so here we are.

Thankfully I have had plenty of content for this issue but again I put a plea out for more content for the next issue. We have over 350 members and everyone has a story so please get on your computers and get those stories over to me. If you don't have access to a computer, put pen to paper and I will type it out for you.

On a personal side I have been busy fishing, not very successfully which I'm

putting it down to the cold weather but at least it gets my out with nature and out of the house. I have still got my 1/48 Mk9 master and am hoping when finances allow, I will be putting it into production in kit form only. I won't be doing them as made-up models due to health conditions. I will also be re-releasing the 1/48 MFV but again only in kit form sorry to say. I have been getting a few enquiries about my 120mm figure and 200mm bust but I am sorry to say the moulds are now beyond use and would if I got enough interest remould them and produce those as kits also for the purchaser to build and paint. I have also been asked if I could do them in cold cast bronze which is something I'm giving

some thought to.

Well, that's enough of my ramblings. I would just like to give my thanks as always to my wingman Steve Harrison and our webmaster Dave Kirk whose support is always greatly appreciated and without whose help and understanding I could not produce this magazine.

I would like to wish the membership a Happy and Healthy New Year. Take care everyone and enjoy this issue.

All the best.

Reg Metcalfe - Flashpoint Editor

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Welcome to this 2026 edition of Flashpoint, I hope that the New Year is treating you well!

I'd like to begin by welcoming Sam Kendall to the Committee as Vice Chairman elect. Sam answered the call for a volunteer with an impressive CV and as such was co-opted onto the Committee pending his official election at our next AGM.

We are still looking for a new treasurer and a secretary as Trevor and Mike have announced their intention to retire from office this year. If any of you out there would like to volunteer please put your names forward as soon as possible. This is your chance to help shape the future of our Association so please give it some consideration.

Some members of the Committee now have new email addresses so please use these for all future correspondence. Letter writing seems to be a thing of the past so all of us would be very happy to receive an email from you, I know Reg would love to receive more articles for Flashpoint, sent in this way.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to arrange an AGM that will keep everybody happy. Costs are spiralling, hotel spaces limited, travel, difficult for many of us. That said, we are trying to get something sorted for the first half of the year. More details will be sent out as and when we have a plan.

We have recently recruited two serving members of the RAF Fire and Rescue Service to the Association, and we hope that they will provide some feedback from the younger generation on how we can make the Association more attractive to them.

I had hoped for some positive news on a new home for the Museum before Flashpoint went to press, but sadly, the stars haven't aligned in time, so I'll have to keep you in suspense a bit longer.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles and please remember if you have a story to tell, please share it. You don't have to be Shakespeare or Wordsworth, just tell it as it is and we'll do the rest.

I wish you all the very best for the coming year and thank you all, for your continued support.

Kindest regards,

Steve

Steve Shirley MBE, Chairman/Founder, Museum of RAF Firefighting

Remembrance

The annual Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Whitehall was held on Sunday 10th November 2024 in the presence of His Majesty King Charles, and other senior members of the Royal Family.

Once again members of the RAF and Defence fire Services Association were honoured and privileged to attend this event. Expertly administered by Paul Murray those involved formed up from 0830 on Horse Guards Parade for what is a long day on the feet. Assembled in our area and meeting and greeting friends old and new we were eventually, with 10am rapidly approaching, gently formed into six ranks to march onto Whitehall. The patience of the Royal British Legion guides in performing this, an operation akin to herding cats, has to be admired.

At 11am with the sound of Big Ben striking and a blast from a gun of the Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery we and the rest of the

nation observed the two minutes silence for those gone before who had given all for their country. Personal memories flowed, of former colleagues, good friends and close relations lost in conflict, through illness or terrorist attack. This years silence was made all the more poignant for me having only found out earlier this year that I had a great uncle who was killed during the First World War. John Thompson, a thirty year old cabinet maker from Nottingham fell on the 17th October 1917 aged thirty at the battle of Passchendaele. His body was recovered and he lies in the New Irish Farm cemetery just outside Ypres. He left behind a wife, Lottie, and a son also called John.

With the two minutes silence the religious service and the wreath laying complete we prepared to 'March Off' and past the Cenotaph this year ably by lead Phil Mercer. We were also fortunate this year to

be caught on the TV coverage of the event, and we looked pretty good to. Having marched past we continued on, with the assembled crowd clapping and cheering all those participating, to return to Horse Guards where a Royal Salute was taken by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, Prince William.

Having returned to our starting point and dismissed we slowly drifted away to find comfort in a few beers, to spend more time with those that had marched and some of their families in our favoured local hostelry. As the afternoon passed we slowly dispersed, heading home or to hotels to rest weary legs after standing for hours, yet all of us resolute in our intent to meet up again next year to again remember.

Pete Thompson

APPEAL TO ALL MEMBERS - REF RAF HEMSWELL



We are trying to get some information about people of events concerning the station for our pop-up museum in a room which the Broadcasting Casting Museum let us have.

So far, we have an image of *This presentation was for the winners of the Bomber Command Fire Fighting Trophy (Non-Flying Stations) 1961. RAF Hemswell won the Trophy 3 Years*

running. 1961-3. The completion was between the 4 Thor Missile Stations, RAF Feltwell, RAF Driffield, RAF North Luffenham & RAF Hemswell.

We have also discovered that the Yorkshire and England legendary fast bowler Fred Trueman carried out his National Service at Hemswell. Also, we have a Christmas menu from the airmen's mess in 1966 when Hemswell for a couple of years was a

sub site for No7 school of Recruit Training RAF Swinderby.

Where you there when it housed the Thor Missiles? Do you have any significant images or stories from that time? If so, it would be good if you can help.

Steve Harrison

My contact details are on page 2.



OBITUARIES

E FLAMMIS ATQUE RUINIS SALUS

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

*I did not know them long
But I knew them.
Enough to call them friend
Remember their smile and laugh.
We were young then, firefighters proud
Ready to give our all, to save life.
I wish we had kept in touch
But that was not to be.
Now I read about their passing
I know that they have gone
I am saddened by their death.
Yet within my mind
That I knew them while I still live,
then so shall they.
In my thoughts and memories
Gone but not forgotten
Goodbye my friend*

Dave Arnold member 215 2025 July

Colin Aldous member 905 2025 July

Demetrious Cooper September 2025

Paul Hulme October 2025

John Sutton, member 1067 October 2025

John McCarthy October 2025

Shaun Boland November 2025

I joined the RAF Fire and Rescue Service in 2008 as a young firefighter at RAF Brize Norton. Like many, I arrived focused on learning the job, but it quickly became clear that the Service would shape far more than just my professional skills. The early years taught me the importance of teamwork, trust, and calm decision-making in high-pressure situations.



In 2010, I deployed to Afghanistan. It was a demanding experience that brought the realities of service into sharp focus and reinforced the responsibility carried by those providing support on operations. It remains one of the most formative periods of my career.

After returning to the UK, postings to TAC AT FIRE and two tours of the Falkland Islands in 2012 and 2015 broadened my experience and deepened my respect for the adaptability and quiet professionalism of RAF firefighters, often working far from home and with little recognition.

My final posting was RAF Northolt, where I found particular satisfaction in supporting and guiding newer firefighters. It was also there that I met my wife, and that life began to pull me in a new direction. After nearly ten years of service, I made the difficult decision to leave the RAF.

Looking back now, my time in the RAF Fire and Rescue Service shaped who I am. It instilled discipline, resilience, and a deep respect for the people and traditions of the Service values that continue to guide me.

After leaving the RAF, I retrained as a teacher, qualifying in 2022 after studying History with Secondary Education (QTS) at the University of Wolverhampton. I now teach History at Wednesfield Academy. In 2023, I established the school's RAF Combined Cadet Force unit and currently serves as a Pilot Officer (RAFAC) as Contingent Commander. Working with cadets has been a way of staying connected to service life while helping young people develop confidence, discipline, and a sense of purpose.

That same year, I began a Master's degree specialising in the Second World War. My dissertation focuses on the development of the RAF Fire Service during the conflict. This research feels deeply personal to me; it is a way of honouring the Service, recording its contribution, and ensuring that its story is not lost. My intention is to continue this work into a PhD.

What I Can Bring to the Association

I hope to contribute a combination of lived experience, education, and historical research. Above all, I want to help preserve the heritage of the RAF Fire and Rescue Service, support engagement with younger generations, and assist in sharing our story more widely using both traditional and digital approaches so that the Service, and the people behind it, continue to be remembered and valued.

Sam Kendall - Co-Opted Vice Chair

From Firefighter to Historian

A Journey Through Service, Scholarship, and Rediscovery

By Sam Kendall

After nearly a decade serving in the Royal Air Force Fire and Rescue Service, I have come to appreciate the profound and lasting impact those years have had on my life—not only in terms of personal growth, discipline, and camaraderie, but also in shaping the academic path I find myself on today. My name is Sam Kendall, and what began as a career in military firefighting evolved into an exploration of history that continues to this day, both in the classroom and in the archives.

This is the story of how a reawakened curiosity, sparked amidst the heat and dust of Afghanistan, led me from front-line service to scholarly research and how our very own RAF Fire and Rescue Service has a deeper, richer wartime heritage than many might realise.

I served for nine years in the RAF Fire and Rescue Service, a period that shaped me not only professionally but personally. From the moment I began training, I was struck by the intensity of the role. It was not just about fighting fires; it was about being ready for anything from aviation incidents and structural fires to support during overseas operations in active theatres. The unique blend of technical expertise, operational readiness, and unbreakable team spirit defines the trade to this day.

Throughout those years, the ethos of service and resilience was ingrained in me. The lessons I learned about teamwork under pressure, adaptability, and the importance of rigorous training have continued to resonate far beyond the boundaries of the airfield or operational theatre.

It was in 2010, during a deployment to Afghanistan, that my interest in history was unexpectedly reignited. During our initial briefing in theatre, a phrase struck me like a bolt of lightning: “We’ve never conquered Afghanistan.” The stark admission, delivered in a matter-of-fact tone, was a historical truth layered with centuries of imperial misadventures, from Alexander the Great to the British Empire, and more recently, the Soviet and NATO campaigns.

That moment prompted a flurry of questions

in my mind. Why has Afghanistan been so difficult to control historically? What had the British Empire attempted in the region? What parallels could be drawn between the 19th-century campaigns and our modern presence?

These questions lingered long after my return home. Though I remained proud of my service, I began to realise that my passion was shifting toward unravelling the past and understanding the deeper narratives that inform present-day conflicts and cultures.

Stepping into Academia

A few years after leaving the RAF, I decided to pursue that curiosity in a more structured way. I enrolled in a BA (Hons) History with Secondary Education degree at the University of Wolverhampton, a path that allowed me not only to delve into historical research but also to prepare for a career in teaching.

My undergraduate dissertation naturally focused on Afghanistan, but rather than the 21st century, I turned to the 19th. I explored the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars, examining the motivations, tactics, and lasting consequences of British military interventions in the region. Through this work, I was able to contextualise my own experiences within a longer, often tragic history of foreign involvement in Afghanistan.

Studying while transitioning to civilian life was not without challenges, but the discipline instilled in me by military service served me well. Research became another form of problem-solving, a mission requiring focus, precision, and a willingness to dig deeper than the surface.

Today, I am proud to serve in a different kind of uniform. I work within education as a History Teacher at Wednesfield Academy, a role that allows me to share my passion for the subject with the next generation. Seeing young people engage with the past whether it is the causes of the Second World War or the personal stories of those who lived through it is one of the most rewarding parts of my role.

In addition to teaching, I am also the Contingent Commander of our Combined Cadet Force (CCF), currently holding the rank of Pilot Officer. This position allows me to blend both worlds military and educational by mentoring students through challenging, character-building

activities rooted in service, responsibility, and leadership.

Much like my time in the RAF Fire and Rescue Service, CCF work involves fostering confidence, teamwork, and initiative among cadets’ skills that I know from experience will benefit them in all walks of life.

Rediscovering RAF Fire Service History

Over the last 18 months, I have undertaken an MA in History, specialising in the Second World War with a focus on conflict, societies, and the Holocaust. My current dissertation, a 15,000-word research project, brings my two worlds—military service and historical inquiry—into direct conversation.

The focus of my research is the development of the RAF Fire and Rescue Service during the Second World War. With invaluable support from individuals like Steve Shirley MBE and Steve Harrison, I have been able to access materials both in our own RAF Fire Museum archives and at the National Archives in Kew.

What I have uncovered so far has been nothing short of revelatory.

Many are unaware that the RAF Fire Service, as we understand it today, began to take its current form during the war years. Before that, fire duties were often second roles taken on by service members from other trades. It was not until the establishment of formal training institutions across the world in 1943 that the trade gained real structure, identity, and strategic purpose.

This institutionalisation marked a turning point. The basic protocols, technical standards, and operational principles established in that era laid the groundwork for the modern RAF Fire and Rescue Service. The war necessitated the service to professionalise, adapt, and innovate under pressure, resulting in developments that continue to influence current practices in the field.

A significant observation from my research is the recurrent omission of the RAF Fire and Rescue Service in official war histories. Despite playing critical roles in airbase safety, crash response, and maintaining operational readiness, the service was frequently viewed as ancillary necessary, but not front-line.

This perception belies the reality. Training establishments such as the one formed in 1943 were not just administrative necessities; they were transformative hubs of professional development. Personnel underwent training under demanding conditions, acquired proficiency in utilizing advanced equipment, and were required to respond promptly in critical situations.

By shedding light on this overlooked narrative, my aim is not just academic. It is about restoring recognition to the thousands who served in this vital capacity and about situating the RAF Fire and Rescue Service within the broader story of the war effort. We were, and remain, an essential part of the RAF's operational backbone.

As I look toward the completion of my MA and consider future research possibilities, I find myself more committed than ever to telling these stories. There remains a wealth of individual narratives, archival treasures, and organisational milestones that warrant thorough documentation and dissemination.

I also hope to inspire others within our trade to engage with their own history. Whether it is through academic research, community projects, or simply sharing personal stories, there is immense value in preserving and honouring our shared legacy.

In Gratitude and Memory

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to those who have supported my academic journey, particularly Steve Shirley MBE

and Steve Harrison, whose expertise and encouragement opened the doors to so much valuable material.

The RAF Fire and Rescue Service has given me more than a career. It has provided me with a sense of purpose, a community, and a commitment to preserving our history for future generations. From the fireground to the archive, the journey progresses, and I am privileged to contribute to it.

About the Author

Sam Kendall, a History Teacher and CCF Contingent Commander at Wednesfield Academy, is a former RAF Fire and Rescue Service member. He is completing an MA in History focusing on WWII, with a dissertation on the RAF Fire and Rescue Service's formation and legacy during the war.

Taff's Todger

This is a true story. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent. If you are faint hearted, please do not read on!

I arrived at Fairford as an LAC in April 1970 and was shown my bedspace in an old nissan hut. I was left to unpack, and noticed a fireman in the opposite bed, lying on his side with one eye open. I went over for a chat, but he didn't answer me when I spoke to him, (later I found out that he always slept with one eye open). Just then the door burst open, and a big Jock fireman kicked the bed opposite resulting in expletives being exchanged, and all hell let loose as firemen let off steam. In the next bed to me was a Taff fireman, who explained the hierarchy of the room, and said that he would wake me up in the morning for my first shift. Little did I know just *how* he would wake me and the whole room up.

What a nightmare my first night was. Big Jock's snores dragging in the curtains, which was matched by Stan in the bed opposite. I was woken after only a few hours' sleep and was startled to see Taff whacking his enormous todger on my bedside locker. Evidently this was his normal routine to wake the crew up!

After a few months of piss ups I realised that Taff had a way with the ladies, & one of his liaisons gave me a sleepless night. I was fast asleep, when Taff woke me up in obvious pain. He wanted to show me his todger. After seeing blood appearing in the groin area of his trousers, he told me what had happened. After my laughing subsided, I reluctantly agreed to go to sick quarters with him, as he was afraid that his todger might 'stand to attention' if a female nurse was on duty. Luckily, we were met by a male nurse, who heard the story of Taff's intended knee trembler. Apparently, when the lady saw what was coming her way, she took evasive action resulting in his todger ramming up a pebble dashed wall. The nurse was hysterical with laughter whilst removing the grit with tweezers and applying iodine.

I can still hear Taff's screams now! Taff's wakeup call was on hold for some time but was replaced by someone with an alarm clock in a biscuit tin. This woke the whole room, and I remember Big Jock holding the fireman by the throat asking him to pick a window!

Happy Days, how I miss them! Stan, just had to photobomb me!!



PUTTING ON THE BLUE

It was the summer of “63” that I walked out of the gates of Ashton-on-Mersey, Secondary Modern School for boys on Cecil Avenue to start my life in the real world. I was going to be a trainee manager for ‘Mac Fisheries,’ probably one of the biggest fish mongers in the country. I had arrived at the job by finding out what I was not good at. Schools in those days trained pupils for jobs in the local area, ours was Trafford Park and Broadheath, both areas needing skilled workers in engineering. My first technical drawing lesson told me that I would not become a draughtsman. Metal work and woodwork also told me I would not earn a living in these areas. I had found that I could talk to people, so shop work was where I was pointed; in particular, food shops as everyone had to eat!

I started work in Altrincham on £4.10 shillings per week, I enjoyed the job and learning how to bone and fillet fish, how to hold a knife and not injure yourself. The shop also had a small vegetable counter, so I was taught about green grocery. What nobody warned me about was the teasing and groping from the female staff (all mothers), it was not just the girls who got fondled! They would wait until I was carrying a big box then would squeeze past me and catch parts of my body, making me blush and leaving them in fits of laughter. After a few months I was given a pay rise to £4.15 shillings, but I was worse off as I had gone up a tax bracket, I asked if I could not have the pay rise but was told that the next pay rise would be better. The powers that be decided that a spell at the Wilmslow shop would be good for me. This was the area flag ship shop, with a lot of very rich people in the town and surrounding area. Price’s bread shop had a Rolls Royce van with a chauffeur in uniform driving the bread van and a man with a big basket to take the orders to the house door. The shop was bigger and busier than Altrincham shop but the draw back was to get to get to Altrincham was two buses and about one hour but Wilmslow was a bus from the village to Sale Station, train to Oxford Road, train to Picadilly, train to Wilmslow then about a mile walk to work. I would and leave home at 6.30 and get to work 09.30 and leave at 16.45 and get home 19.00. They did pay the difference in travel costs, but they were long days, and on my half day I left when everybody else did at 13.00 and got back just before tea. This only lasted a

few months, and I was back in Altrincham; however, after a few more months I then transferred to Chorlton-Cum-Hardy, again three buses and a lot of walking. By now I was getting fed up with always smelling of fish and being “Billy No Mates” on the bus or train so I started looking for a less smelly job. Started work at Whitwams licensed grocers at their Well Green store. This was three bus trips, but the shop did not open until 09.00, so it was not too bad, but the half mile walk from the bus stop to the shop in the rain was not nice. The advantage of working for Whitwams was they were wine importers and had their own vineyards in France. All shop staff who wanted were given membership to the “Northern Wine Tasting Association” who had monthly wine tasting at Hollings College, known as “The Toast Rack,” in Manchester. The “Toast Rack” was so called because it looked like one and was the trades college for Manchester. I went one day a week to learn to be grocer and get a City and Guilds Certificate.

About six of us would go in the works van and sample wine from different importers. The bottles were labelled “A”, “B”, “C” etc; you had a talk on the vineyard the wines came from, and you then sampled the wine making notes on colour, nose, legs (the way a wine runs down a glass after being spun) and preference. These were then collated and handed in, we would then get in the van and head to a pub in Withenshaw which had good acts on during the week. One night it was Bob Monkhouse who had to stop his act because people were laughing too much, and drinks were not being drunk.

This was all to change as developers had bought a row of very old houses in Ashton Village and knocked them down to build a supermarket, bank, chippy, and gents outfitters. This was a dream come true if I could get a job in the supermarket, I would have no travelling expenses and one fifteen-minute walk to work. I applied for a counter job and got a Provisions Managers position with an overview of the fruit and vegetable area. The shop also had an off license built into it. The work was good and easy as I spent more time in the back of the shop boning bacon etc than serving. One of the perks I did enjoy was my Manager, Alan Kennedy, did not live local and in winter or cold days he would give me his car keys and tell me to take the car for a run to warm it up. The car was a Ford V4 Corsair, and it was awesome. I

would drive very carefully and slowly past the shop until I was on Carrington Lane then slowly speed up until I go past Manor Avenue then floor it, turn around in the layby, and bring a nice warm car back for my boss. Wednesday was half day closing and my mate Anthony who worked in his father’s green grocery shop opposite us, meant that we could to Manchester which broke the week up. Our opening hours on a Friday change from 18.00 to 19.00 which did not go down too well, but if you did not like it you could leave.

I had for some years always found the local fire stations and visited them on open days. We did not get a pay rise for working the extra hours as we were management. One warm summer’s afternoon, I walked up to Sale Fire Station and asked about becoming a fireman. The Sub Officer measured my height (six foot and a half), then my chest (36”) and then said I could not join as my chest had to be 38” and to come back when it was. I went straight to my doctors and sat in the waiting room (as you did not in those days) and saw the doctor and told him my problem. He informed me a new drug had just come out called steroids and with exercise I should build up my chest. At work I carried 112lb barrels of butter about, 56lb bags of potatoes, sides of beef, pig carcasses, barrels of wine and when five tons of sugar were delivered it was unloaded by hand. Each bag containing 14 x 2lb bags of sugar which was stacked into a 20-leg stack of sugar, all the stock came in loose and was unloaded by hand and not in cages like modern shops. After a few weeks of press ups etc, I went back to the doctors, and he measured my chest. I had in fact lost some weight by doing the exercises so stopped doing them anymore. One lunch time as I was reading my copy of Weekend, a weekly magazine, and saw an advert for RAF Firemen. So, Wednesday afternoon I went into Manchester C.I.O. to see about joining. I was surprised to find nobody about and after a few minutes of me saying “hello?” a sergeant appeared and asked me what I wanted. I informed him I had seen an advert in the Weekend magazine asking for people to join the RAF Fire Service. He then asked my age, I had just turned twenty-one, and why I wanted to be an RAF fireman. I told him I was too skinny as I only had a 36” chest and I had to have 38” to join the Cheshire Fire Brigade, he told me that didn’t apply in the RAF, you just had to be fit. He then

gave me a question paper and asked me to fill it in to see if I was suitable to be a fireman; having filled in the paper, he then took it away to check the answer. When he came back, he informed me that I would be better suited to Air Traffic Control. I was then informed that at the moment the Fire Service was full and try later but ATC was open. I left informing him I would be back. Every Wednesday I would go to the Manchester C.I.O. to see if there were any fire service jobs. I had also worked out why there did not seem to be anybody there and then somebody would appear. There was a narrow alley between the C.I.O. and a pub. The back door of the C.I.O. and the pub back door of the back bar were opposite each other, literally a step across from bar to C.I.O. so I started going to the pub and drinking with them until September when the Sargeant took me into the C.I.O., picked up the phone and informed somebody that I was not going to give up and I was therefore going to be an RAF fireman. Doing my ATA station on 23 September 1968 and being given the Queen's pound, I was told to report to number seven school of recruit training RAF Swinderby and given a rail warrant from Manchester to Newark. I handed in my notice and prepared myself, had a haircut, got a small suitcase to put my things in, and said goodbye to my friends and family.

The three other lads who had joined up on the same day met up with me at Piccadilly Station where we all boarded the train for Newark. This train was one I would use many times in the next couple of years as it was the one I used to get to West Raynham, something I was not aware of at the time.

We arrived at North Gate Station in Newark and went out of the station to see a few more new recruits waiting for transport to Swinderby. Some of the lads spotted "The Bowling Green" pub opposite and went for a drink while they waited for transport to arrive. The coach arrived and very nice Corporal got off and asked us to get on the bus, he then strolled across the pub and got the drinkers out and onto the bus. We arrived in time for tea and went into the airman's mess. I cannot say it was the best food I had ever eaten but it would have to do. We were then all assembled, and names called out and told where to stand, this was the start of joining your flight.

I was put in FLT16, it was a big intake and

there were three flights of us. The other two flights went into the barrack blocks, we went into the wooden huts opposite the sergeant's mess, we were two to a room, these huts were wartime accommodation. The station's permanent staff were in another part of the huttet complex with their own N.A.A.F.I./bar and mess.

We then had a haircut and paid the barber two shillings and six pence which was money for old rope as most of us had already had a haircut. One of the lads from Scotland was an ex-prison officer and was almost shaved to stop prisoners "from grabbing your hair to hurt you" he told us. He still had to pay.

We then went to get some of our kit; pyjamas, vests, underpants, socks, shirts and three collars, boiler suits, shoes and boots, caps, or berets (depending on your trade) tie and pullover. This was a first for me, the tie was worn outside of the pullover. We were told at the C.I.O. to purchase some collar studs, front and back. The front stud made a hard patch of skin near the Adam's apple. The battle dress and best blue were issued at the tailor's shop and was supposed to be a measured fit. I was lucky mine did fit properly when I got it. We wore the boiler suits until the battle dress was made, and a plastic disk was then given to everyone to put behind your cap badge. Flight 16 was pale blue. Because I was older than most of the flight I became a senior man with the white flash on the battle dress shoulder tabs. Our service number had to be written on every bit of kit, I think this was get you to remember it, as no number, no pay on Thursday. I had one pair of shoes and two pairs of RAF regiment issue boots; other trades got two pairs of shoes and one pair of boots. One of the flights only received two pairs of shoes as boots were not going to be issued except to regiment personnel. These needed to be all nice and glossy. The non-RAF regiment boots once they had been broken in were sent to the cobblers for studs to be fitted. This changed the way you marched as you could hear the beat as the boots went down, mine being rubber soles were like shoes. The webbing and brass were a problem for some of the lads as they had never had to clean things at home. I had taken a tin of Silvo Metal Polish with a spoon of jeweller's rouge in it, this made the brass like silver and looked good. A tip my father had given me, Kiwi black boot polish was much better than the Naafi stuff, and I had been in the cubs and scouts, I knew how

to clean shoes.

Over half our flight was from Scotland and Tyneside which was a bit of a language barrier to start with. My dad had been in a Geordie Regiment, 4th (Durham) Survey Regiment Royal Artillery, and I had grown up listening to a programme on the Home Service with Geordie singers and comedians which came in very handy. The nice friendly corporal who met us at Newark was our Flight Corporal. He was very much like Sargeant Wilson out of Dads Army. I never heard him swear or shout in peoples faces, but it worked as we won the drill trophy.

The tune that always seemed to be on when we went into the N.A.A.F.I./bar was the theme to a 'First Full of Dollars.' The days passed with drill, range shooting, RAF law, PE, medicals, injections, sports afternoons, and church parades. When I was at school cross country was not a thing I enjoyed, being about 40 out of 43; but at Swinderby I was normally in the first ten of our flight. Either I was fitter or my fellow flight members were not very fit. And they were younger so that did not seem right.

We were lucky being in the wooden huts because our "Domestic Evening" were not as harsh as the lads in the blocks, having bedding and kit thrown out of the windows. Our substandard accommodation meant if each two-man room was tidy with well-made beds, the floor was shiny and no dust, we were good. The downside was the water in the showers was extremely cold and it if was raining you were a long way from the N.A.A.F.I. and the mess.

The lad I shared with was married and came from Liverpool; we got on very well which is good in a small room. He had a car and the first Saturday afternoon we could go off camp, he asked me if I wanted to go into Newark with him. Off we went in best blues and great coats, we parked up and walked around and found a fish and chip shop "Bentleys" and had the first decent food in weeks then we walked around the market and the town and went into the Castle & Falcoln for a drink (the pub is still open, the chippy closed in 2024). On our way back to the car I put my hands in my pockets as it was freezing, and my gloves were in my mac pockets. Out of nowhere came a shout of "Airman, get your hands out of your pockets" and one of the other flight drill pigs appeared in front of me and let rip about me being scruffy and a disgrace to the uniform. I just

wanted to die. He then stormed off leaving us standing in the marketplace red faced with people staring at us. We made a hasty retreat to the car and back to camp.

My first taste of RAF justice came when I was escort to one of the Geordie lads who was accused of swearing at one of the NAAFI lady bar staff. AT that time you queued to be served and if you knew some one in the queue you gave them your money, and they got you a drink when they got theirs. This lad had done this, and the bar lady had seen it and told him to queue, and he said fair enough. She had reported him, in her words, saying "F*** off." The officer asked the lad to say "F*** off" and said that does not seem like "fair enough" and gave him three days jinkers. I was about to open my mouth to say but you have not asked him to say "fair enough" when the look from our Corporal made me stay silent.

The passing out parade was in the hanger as the weather was awful, we had been escorting the two flights passing out the week before. The passing out flights marching through the escort flights on their way off the parade. This could not be done in the hanger, so it was just the three flights. I was a tight parade with three flights, but we did it. Then off to the NAAFI for a drink with our families then pick up kit and home for a few days and then onto Catterick. Passing out parades were on a Wednesday, I think with new arrivals on a Thursday (but do not quote me). I had to report to RAF Catterick on Wednesday 13 November 1968.

The train to Catterick was from what used to be 'Exchange and Victoria Station' in Manchester which was two stations joined together by a mile long platform. The station was near Manchester Cathedral; the train went to Darlington then a train to Catterick Bridge and a phone call to the Guard room for a pickup. Catterick in winter was not a very welcoming place and I was back in old wooden huts again that were not very warm and overrun with mice and food or biscuits left out at night were either gone or well nibbled by morning. The toilets and showers were freezing; hot water was not always available. The floors were always wet due to burst pipes. Shoes were necessary to avoid we feet, also the power for lights was not always working in the toilet block. We were very pleased when we got moved into a block near to SHQ, warm dry and well-lit

bliss. It took ages to get the numbers up for a course to start. We were getting up brushing the hanger and polishing anything shiny. I remember W.O. Ron Shearne walking across the hanger towards me with his hands behind his back. He stopped in front of me and asked, did I know why there was brass on the trailer pump? I replied that it was, so things did not rust. "No," he said, producing metal polish and two clothes. "It's so that fireman who have nothing to do can have something to do." He gave me the contents of his hands and strode back across the hanger. That was my job sorted for the rest of the day.

BR16 started with nine of us from all walks of life and ages. Our instructors were Corporal Davey Ayes and Corporal Andy Self; looking back there wasn't much health and safety in the training, especially the C.T.C extinguishers (put water near the liquid and you had sulphuric acid, being in the smoke when putting out the fire and you had Phosgene gas – a killer) and so you would recognise the smell, we put out fires with CTC in the fire pits then walked into there to smell the smoke with an instructor to make sure you did not smell too much smoke and give everyone a lot of paperwork. At the end of the day, after we left school, we got into a routine as a group. We would go for tea then back to block, change into civies, bit of a rest then draw keys for the hanger and back to classroom to copy up notes and run through what we had learned that day. When everyone was satisfied that we thought we had got it, back to block to drop off books then NAAFI for a few beers and for me, a pie. We then went back for sleep and up between 06:30 and 07:00 for breakfast and march over to the fire school, and another day of learning. Dry drills in the hanger were good but drills in the wet area in

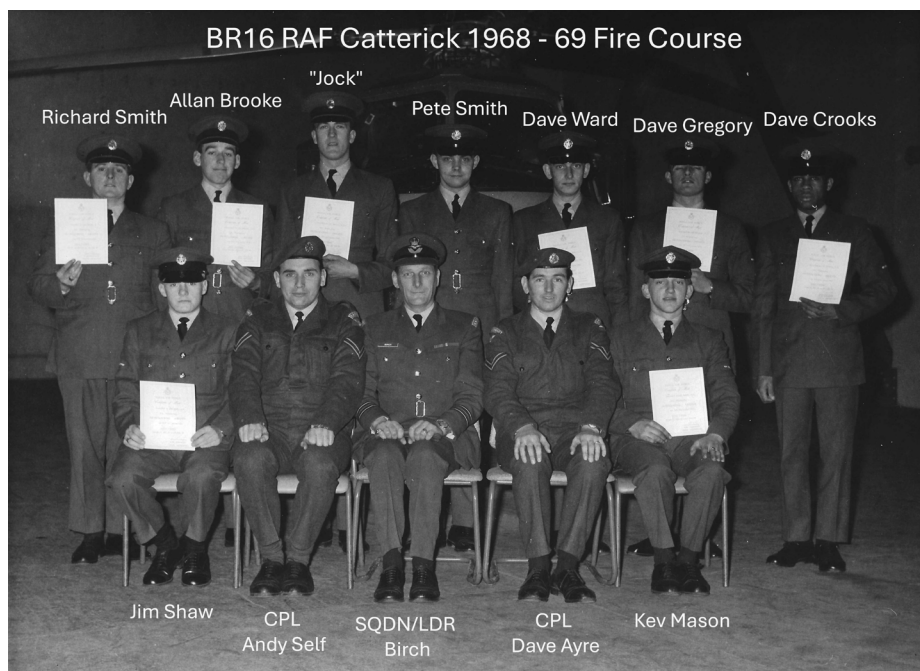


BR16 RAF Catterick
1968-69 Fire Course

Me (Allan Brooke)
Receiving
Distinguished Pass
Certificate
from
SQDN/LDR Birch

November-January were not much fun as you just got very wet, cold, and learned how to walk on ice. The turning point on the course was when we moved from hose running to aircraft fires and started to learn all about D.P.1, D.P.2, MK5A, MK6, MK7 and Bedford Domestics. All of which I was able to drive during my time in the RAF except the MK6 which is a story for another day.

The practice crashes on a Friday afternoon were brilliant. The AI used to come to a standstill every week to watch the show. During one very cold spell one of the hanger staff had taken a MK 6 down to the wet area only to find a sheet of ice and the six just slid down the length of the wet area and into the River Swale, then using the hatch to climb out of the MK6, they came back to the hanger and legend has it told that the sergeant in the cage was told the MK6 had water in the engine and would not start. When he asked why water was in the engine, he was informed that it was in the River Swale. He was not a 'Happy Chappy', and it is said he used some rude Anglo-Saxon words. The upshot was that the army towed the MK6 out by dragging it across to the other bank where it stood to drain the water out of the body etc. It was then started and driven back to the school and M.T.S.S. checked it over and it was



soon back in the hanger.

Wednesday afternoon we were left to our own devices, as to sports afternoon as there was only nine of us, so we used to go on the assault course for our exercise in PT kit and at our pace which was not flat out. One Wednesday it had been raining and everything was wet and slippery when we got to the suspended logs over the pit, very slowly we walked across the logs, except Jock who slipped and fell with a leg either side of the log, his legs locked under the log, and he spun under the log with his legs locked on top. Then we heard him fall into the pit, he came out in one large step one hand down the front of his shorts, the other waving over his head and he set off for the block; We could not keep up with him. When we arrived, he was running between a hot shower and a cold shower with dark rings starting to show around his eyes. After a while and after we had all stopped laughing, all except 'Jock,' we suggested it might be a good idea to go to the sick quarters. He declined and went and laid down, surprisingly he did not feel too bad in the morning and got through the next couple of days okay. Moral of the story, down walk on wet logs in RAF issue plimsoles.

Being HQ, Regiment RAF Catterick was a bit keen on discipline; when in uniform you marched and if there were two or more of you, one was in charge of the others i.e. for saluting officers etc. One day, three of us were marching back to the block from the mess after lunch (I was in charge) when an officer walked towards

as I saluted and, said, "Afternoon Sir" and got no response. How rude I thought, a window in S.H.Q opened and the S.W.O shouted, "that officer stop," "those airmen halt," which we did wondering what was going to happen next. The S.W.O (cannot remember his name) walked briskly past us saying "stay where you are gentleman" and walked up to the officer. We could hear him pointing out that the salute was for her Majesties commission and not for him, he then marched the officer back to where we were stood and made him salute and apologise to us and then and sent him on his way. He then apologised again for the officer's behaviour and send us on our way. The guy had incredible eyesight. Stepping out of our block one very cold misty morning and adjusting my beret and before I could tap the brass buckle on my webbing belt to lock it properly a voice from out of the mist from the direction of SHQ shouted, "Airman, fasten your belt". I could not even see him!

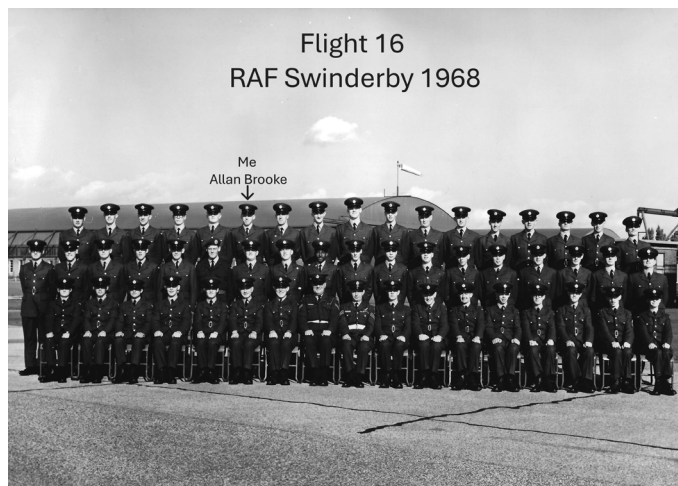
I decided to hitch it home one weekend and got to Manchester by early evening and home for some home cooking. My father drove me back to Blyth on the A1 on Sunday afternoon and the long slog back started. It was not too bad while the light held but as it

got darker an airman in his best blue and great coat starts to be invisible. I had set off on the A1 at 14:00 and got to camp at 22:00, cold and fed up. Talking about it in the fire school on the Monday, I was informed a coach left the Guardroom for Manchester every Friday evening and returned Sunday evening. This coach I used every weekend until I left Catterick. The coach was targeted later by the IRA on its way back to RAF Catterick and its destination Catterick Garrison. Thinking back the security at Manchester was non-existent. The coach was parked on a bomb site car park near Picadilly Bus Station with the boot open and you just chucked your bag in and stood around talking and went off for a pint. I think it left Manchester about 21:00 calling at Sheffield and Leeds if I remember correctly. I was very lucky.

The going back every evening to go over our work paid off as eight of us managed a distinguished pass which really pleased "Uncle Ron."

When the postings came in, I had been posted to RAF West Raynham, we all looked at the map in the hanger to find out where the stations were. Mine was near to Marham which I knew of as my dad's eldest brother lived in Wisbech and we would pass Marham sometimes on the way to the coast when we stopped with them. I only ever met up with one course member after leaving Catterick and that was Richard (Dick) Smith who by then was a Sargeant at Withering. I was in the Nottinghamshire Fire Service by then and was at a Sargeant's Mess Autumn ball with a friend of mine who was a Sargeant Storeman at Withering, a friend from Raynham Days.

I was now about to start being a real fireman and had no idea what kind of Station West Raynham was.



A lookback at the year 2025

The Silverfox Ramblings (A personal point of view)

Well, another challenging year health wise for my good lady and I but we are still soldiering on and looking after each other with support from family and friends. Thanks for the phone calls and messages.

I understand many of you have had a more difficult time with the loss of loved ones and health problems. Many more of our members and non-members have crossed the 'Rainbow Bridge' so a heartfelt thanks for their service and friendship and I send my sincere condolences to their families. Many that have passed I had the pleasure to work with and it's sad to see them gone, some, a lot of them younger than myself, so I am grateful for every day.

It would be a difficult Christmas for those who have lost loved ones or who have been away because of service commitments. So, let's hope 2026 give you some peace and good health and maybe a win on the lottery would be good!

On a brighter note, it is pleasing to see we have attracted two young serving members in their early twenties into the Association, Ebony Harbon and Allan Fraser, Ebony is our first female firefighter to join us. Allan emailed me and expressed his interest in our history and explained he had read George Edwards book 'Out of The Blue' and was looking for others to read. So, I have helped with a loan of some more when he returns from the Falklands, and I have exchanged a few emails with him, which has been a pleasure.

As you are all aware, the committee has a virtual committee meeting every month which as Vice President I am entitled to attend those meetings as does Ron our President. At the October meeting, the findings of the survey were discussed and the summary of the survey both which was compiled by a non-committee member.

I am not going to go into the ins and out of everything about the issues raised, but there were comments from one individual in particular which I found deeply disturbing.

These comments were aimed directly at our chairman Steve Shirley and the Museum and critical of the present committee. He said, "He feels that the balance is being tipped towards the museum and that the association is losing its identity and



purpose" Another quote "There should be absolutely no children, even at adult age, unless they have served, to attend and members only to sit in at the AGM."

He goes on to say that he "Had concerns about the make-up of the committee and says it must not be used or influenced by external interests where new committee members could vote to divert funds to other organisations"

Another couple of comments by others were, "Monies for the museum should be raised separately and not given from the accounts" The makeup of the committee seemed to be museum focused" Members should vote on any monies given to the museum and not at committee meetings, therefore this should be included at the AGM for members to vote."

So let me clarify a few points.

As regards the makeup of the committee: On the committee there are seven members, two members who are at the museum, Steve Shirley and Dave Grant, I also am a volunteer at the museum but as Vice President I am not part of the committee.

As regards money given to the museum from the funds. When I was Flashpoint Editor, I asked at the AGM for a loan to help with removal cost and it was suggested from the floor that it should be made into a donation. This was duly voted for and carried.

On the second occasion when money

was asked for by the museum, Steve was Chairman and with me as a volunteer, we both left the meeting while the vote was taken. The only other money has been from raffles when fifty percent, or sometimes all was given to the museum.

As regards children, Steve Shirley has brought his family with him to the reunions, his grandson Liam, who is always respectful and has helped with the selling of the raffle tickets and assisted in the draw. His daughter Amanda maintains our book of remembrance, and she was there with her partner who is a full member. Our families have supported us throughout our careers and so what is wrong with sharing our joy in seeing old friends who we shared our lives with. I would like to think that if I had to give up driving that one my sons would take me to a re-union and would be welcome.

One last thing as regards the museum. In the one of the three aims of the association it says, "Through financial support to the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting Charity (No 1172939). To preserve and generally support historic RAF fire service equipment and memorabilia"

In conclusion of this matter, I will say these comments nearly resulted in Steve Shirley standing down and Dave Grant, I would also have left the association. I have in my time with association seen too much politics and I want none of it. If you, the membership are not happy

MARKING TIME by Harry Foxley

with the committee then put your name forward for one of the positions vacant. Nobody has in the recent past has been in a rush to fill those vacant positions and Dave Grant, who has some health issues only came forward to fill the role of Membership Secretary because Steve Shirley and I could support him. Also, because of age and health reasons Trevor Hayes now wants to stand down, despite support from his wife Pat. Mike Clapton our secretary wants to stand down for the same reasons. So now is your chance to become part of the committee and help the association move forward. The present committee strive hard to keep the association going, the difficult thing is hotels for the re-union and the rising costs and trying to find a balance to satisfy all pockets of the members.

One of our newest members of the association, Sam Kendall has volunteered to fill the Vice Chairmans post, so he has been co-opted onto the committee pending the next AGM. He is not a museum volunteer. Although he has helped with our history research having just completed his degree and his dissertation is the history of the RAF Fire Service in WW2.

So, this is the end of my ramblings, maybe the last one if this debacle continues. I can say with confidence and not arrogance that I was known in my RAF days and in my job within the NHS as an honest and trustworthy individual. I hope that my ramblings explain the situation and you the members take my word that there are no underhanded goings on. Hopefully I will see some of you at the next re-union/AGM

Steve Harrison

*RAF & Defence Fire Services Vice
President*

If you wish to contact me on anything I have said please do so, my details as ever are on page two of the Flashpoint.

Having read it on holiday back in September I would like to recommend this book.

Part of my duties as Association webmaster is to manage our Facebook Page and Group, and earlier this year whilst logged into Fb I came across a post by Harry Foxley, a name I remembered from RAF days. I've no idea how it was flagged up to me, but as I started to read, I quickly became hooked on Harry's jottings about everyday life, topical issues, and stories from his past. In contrast to the usual right-wing rants all so common on Fb, Harry's posts were all well balanced, well researched, and for the most part, totally in keeping with my own outlook on life in general.

Our paths crossed in 1987 at RAF Honington where I was a newly promoted SNCO trying to get to grips with the role of Fire Prevention Officer, while Harry was Squadron Warrant Officer on 20 Sqn, a Rapier Unit tasked with protecting the USAF operating bases nearby. I can't say that I got to know him well; I remember Harry giving me a tour of his hangar, and there were two or three nights in the Mess when we were the only members at the bar. What we discussed I cannot recall, the only thing I do remember from those days is that his style of communication was a million miles away from the elegant prose he uses to compose his online blog these days.

My next posting after Honington was to Command Regiment Training Team at Rheindahlen, where I found myself working alongside a group of Rock-apes, and there it became apparent that Harry was something of a legend within the Regiment. I recall exaggerated stories about all leave being spent working in gold mines, and overstated connections to the Australian SAS being bandied about.

"Marking Time" tells the true story of all that, and much more in Harry's own words, from his upbringing in Crew, through his time in Australia, and latterly life in the RAF.



Although over 600 pages long, the book has been written in short chapters interspersed with humorous illustrations, making it easy to get through. From adventures serving in the Australian Army to hitch-hiking right across the continent, there is always something new around the corner – or over the page depending on how you look at it. Then later on the more familiar world of life in the RAF.

I accept that the link to our fire trade is somewhat tenuous, and admit I have been swayed by personal circumstance in that I've visited Western Australia several times, as well as having a bit of a passion for the early days of the British occupation; James Cook, Arthur Phillip and Matthew Flinders being some of my heroes. That said, I'm confident that this book will appeal to the vast majority of our readers.

Enjoy.

I Was Never a Medal Whore

I was never a medal whore, after a 26-year career, reaching the rank of Warrant Officer, I left with just five medals. I never volunteered “Out of Area” tours, but I never dodged them either. I did my fair share — five stints in the Falklands, two tours in Afghanistan, plus a scattering of overseas detachments to USA, Mexico, and even South Africa (remind me to tell you the “green T-shirt” story sometime). But one detachment that really sticks with me is Exercise Saif Sareea 2, Oman, 2001.

Exercise Saif Sareea 2 was the second and largest Saif Sareea exercise which was held between 15 August and 26 November 2001. It was the largest single deployment of the British Armed Forces since the Gulf War in 1991 and trialled the newly formed Joint Rapid Reaction Force. Over 22,500 personnel, 6,500 vehicles, 21 naval vessels, 49 fixed-wing aircraft and 44 helicopters were deployed; compared with the previous largest force of around 5,000 personnel. In addition, over 11,000 Omani forces took part. Our job, as 2 Group Fire was to provide fire cover on a couple of remote Air Strips in the desert, some of the team were heading to a large main operating base in the North of Oman, but I was going to a place, later nicknamed RAF Phoenix, this air strip was in the middle of the desert, a long drive from civilisation. I genuinely believe we deserved a medal for what we experienced out there.

In early August 2001, Sgt Dave Tudge, one of the best leaders and all-round blokes I ever worked with, had a job on. He needed a volunteer. Now, I know I said I rarely volunteered for things, but there was something in his voice. I said yes.

I was then briefed that Dave and I would be accompanying the Fire Trucks on their voyage from Marchwood, Southampton, to Port Salalah in Oman, 2 weeks on a flat-bottomed boat, the Sea Centurion. RFA Sea Centurion was a fast sealift ship chartered to Britain’s Royal Fleet Auxiliary between 1998 and 2002.

Dave and I met at Marchwood and went to the NAAFI to watch the football. I remember the night well, it was 1st September 2001, England were playing Germany in a World Cup 2002 qualifier, we won 5 – 1 with a hat-trick from a young Micheal Owen. Furthermore, this was the night I vowed to smoke my last ever cigarette, I literally smoked 3 on the bounce, coughed a lot and never smoked again (Though I did smoke a cigar on the

8th June 2023 after watching my beloved West Ham United become Champions of Europe after beating Fiorentina in the final of the UEFA Conference League).

We went aboard the Sea Centurion and were shown to our rooms by the old female ‘cabin boy’, we were to share a small bunk with single beds. Dave T jokingly said, I don’t think these rooms are befitting an Air Commodore and his SNCO aide (Implying that he was the 1 star Commissioned Officer lol). The cabin boy scurried away, and we thought nothing of it. A couple of hours later, the cabin boy returned and showed Dave to a huge double room with ensuite facilities, I was shown next door to a similar sized, en-suite room. “I think these 2 weeks will be ok” I said to Dave, as we laughed at his ingenuity. We chilled in the rooms for a bit, before exploring the ship. We basically shared the boat with about 12 crewmembers, Dave and I were the only non-crew aboard the ship. My only job on the boat was to go to where the vehicles were stored and check the torque on the chains that held the vehicles in place, to ensure they had not worked loose.

The first week or so was spent chilling out, sunbathing, watching BFBS videos, and eating, the food was really good on the boat, the job of checking the shackles took me 20 mins every day, that is all I had to do for 2 weeks, easy life. This detachment was going to be great! That was until the ship Tannoy sprung to life, could Sgt Tudge and SAC Marsh report to the Captains Office. We looked at each other and wondered what that could be about, we hadn’t seen much of the Captain, but he seemed like a decent bloke.

We reported to his office and he shut the door behind us, he then gave us both barrels, a really good telling off, he explained that he had called up Marchwood after we embarked and screamed at the port OiC for not informing him that he had a 1 star Officer on board his ship, he proceeded to report this oversight to the higher ranking maritime officers to ensure that the appropriate formal discipline procedures could be followed. He was then content that the matter had been dealt with, until a few days later he received a call from Port explaining that the only passengers on the ship were a couple of RAF Firemen, Sgt Dave Tudge and SAC Simon Marsh, he was livid and let me and Dave know. Though as the senior rank, I felt that it was right for me to let Dave take most of

the telling off.

The remainder of the trip passed fairly easily, it was a great experience, sailing through the Bay of Biscay, the Gibraltar Strait, along the Mediterranean and then to Egypt to enter the Suez Canal. We did a lot of drinking with the RFA lads and enjoyed the voyage. Going down the Suez canal was amazing, the boat becomes the hive of entertainment, this is because local traders are allowed to set up their stalls on the ship as we transit the canal. Just as we left the Canal and reached the coast of Yemen, we were all summoned to the main deck and all huddled around a small TV set and watched in horror as aircraft hit the Twin Towers, it was truly shocking. It was 11th September 2001, the impact caused both towers to collapse within hours, killing nearly 3,000 people and injuring thousands more. We were watching it live on the TV, at that point we had no idea who was responsible, as a knee jerk reaction, the Captain requested that Dave and I get changed into our desert camouflage uniform and collect our weapons from the Armoury. So there we were, in the Gulf of Aden, 2 RAF Firefighters in Desert Combats, carrying our SA80 weapons, complete with a magazine containing 0 (Zero) rounds, we weren’t trusted with live ammunition. “I need you patrol the ship and deter any Pirates and/or potential terrorists”, said the RFA Captain.

“Just Make a Noise Like a Machine Gun”

I stood on the port side, Dave was starboard (We knew the naval lingo by then), I asked Dave what we should do if we were attacked, I thought it would be a good idea to seek guidance from an experienced SNCO. “Just make a noise like a machine gun!! Failing that, fix bayonets!!” Said Dave. I was not convinced, though am happy to report that we were not attacked and were able to stand down after a few hours of patrolling. Looking back, maybe we were not attacked, because any terrorist or pirate were deterred by our presence? (I remember Dave having a particularly scary war face).

We arrived at a bustling Port Salalah, 2 weeks after setting sail from Marchwood in Southampton. I was detailed with the job of driving off the MFV’s and RIV’s from the lower decks and parking them up in a holding facility. The weather was nice and warm, lots of flies though. Dave and I were ordered to guard the Regiment



vehicles, we were deemed the responsible people, having accompanied them on the trip. Dave and I spent that first night in Oman, squashed in a single man tent, we were given a Mozzy net that had large holes in that allowed Mozzy's to enter and vacate as they wished, after taking a bite from us, though I think they preferred the taste of Dave. That first night was a long night, we were both very tired, and short tempered I think we threatened to knock each other out a few times that night.

We awoke the next morning, with the news that we could stand down from our guard duty and head off in a convoy to meet the rest of the Fire crews at Camp South. After a trip of a couple of hours in a land rover, we arrived at Camp South. It was a huge tent city, holding facility, used



to ensure all those had been properly 'arrived' and registered before onward movement to the final location. We met up with the other RAF Firemen on the det with us. Ian Gibson, Shaun Grady, Alex Wiggin, Darren Brough, Adam Sivell, Simon Smith and Neil Prickett. This was the first time I had met most of them, my first meeting with Simon Smith

was so funny (I was later to understand that every time I meet him would be so funny, he really is a top bloke). We had just been briefed about how dirty the base was, and how it was important wash your hands etc. I had been introduced to everyone, except Smithy at that point, then I saw him asleep on the bed, he had fallen asleep whilst eating a custard cream biscuit, and his lips were covered in flies, each time he breathed out they would fly away, then land again as he breathed in.

This place was unbelievable, I remember the queues for the toilets, mainly the ones that had been signposted as 'S & D' only. Everyone at this base appeared to be suffering with dysentery, I later read that this base suffered hugely with dysentery, at levels not seen since World War 2, I was so glad to get out of there.

In typical RAF style, we had not been arranged any onward travel to our destination, though Dave had negotiated us a lift on a huge Army convoy. I sat in a large 4-ton army truck for about 4 – 6 hours before the entire convoy came to a halt in the middle of nowhere. The OiC of the convoy pointed out 3 red dots in the distance, the 3 dots were 2 MFV and an RIV, this was going to be our home for the next 3 months. We walked the final mile with our kit to the vehicles, upon arrival, there were 3 fire trucks and an ISO container. Nothing had been set up, no toilets, no mess, no tents set up, nothing.

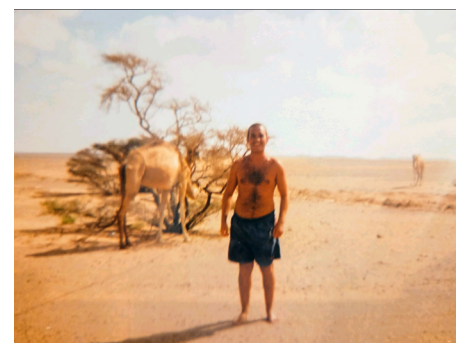
We spent the next 3 or 4 hours, into the night setting up the tents and looking to see what food we had. We were going to be ok, we had found loads of boxes of military

ration packs, the problem was, they were all the same menu B – Corned Beef Hash. It was going to be a long 3 months.

We set the tents up and had the place looking decent, we had even packed a generator which was connected to a PlayStation and some disco lights and a glitter ball (Priorities). We had also packed a fridge in our ISO container, so got that set up too, though we initially had nothing to go in it. After the first day, we were joined by a local water tanker driver, who was responsible for wetting the desert landing strip. We were also joined by a couple of ATC and 2 army medics (Blokes, unfortunately).

The days passed fairly slowly; the mine field that was the toilet was starting to see us digging up previous parcels. There was something quite liberating, leaning on a shovel, squatting in the desert to take a shit and burying it in the Omani desert. After a couple of weeks, we were joined by a couple of Royal Engineers who sorted us out a deep trench latrine, but not before we got them to flatten out an area to play volleyball.

I think we were impressing ourselves with how nice we had made it, we had made a large shower tied to the top of the ISO container, we had made gym equipment through filling bottles with sand and tying them to tent poles. We had a Wing Commander join us, he was a New Zealander, who managed to get some of his C130 buddies to fly us in some beer. It was great, being literally in the middle of nowhere and having a fridge full of beer. We even started to get visits from Royal Marines wanting to buy beer from us. Having the Royal Engineers with us bought another advantage, they had their own Land Rover, which allowed us to visit the local town to buy some sauces and spices to add to the Menu B, corned beef hash. I remember one day they came back with HP Brown Sauce, after tasting corned beef hash, every day for 6 weeks, I could





have necked the whole bottle. One day, they had gone to a fish market and bought back a frozen shark. The plan was to light a fire and eat the shark for dinner, the Engineer left the shark on the front wheel of the RIV to thaw, ready for Barbequing. Unfortunately, that day, we had a state 3 on a C130 and I drove the RIV to the aircraft, running over and squashing the shark under my wheels. How many people can say they ran over a shark in the middle of the desert!!

One day a week, Dave let us have a 'proper shower' using the porta flex chemical shower on the RIV – It gave a high-pressure wash, making sure all of the ground in sand had been removed from every crevice. Another day, I remember queuing up behind the screen awaiting my turn, when I heard "Help me", I will never forget the site of Smithy on his back, the shower had collapsed and was spraying

water everywhere, he was on his back, naked as the day he was born, white as anything, he never seemed to tan, no matter how much he lay in the sun. Another story from Smithy, was that on one occasion, we were all listening to music on the PlayStation, chatting and putting the world to rights. Smithy announced that he had 'sharted'. He made his way to the toilets, in just a pair of pants. (Because it was so hot, and that we were in the middle of nowhere, we all walked around in just our pants). Anyway, having got to the toilet, he disposed of his dirty pants and cleaned himself up a bit. Then he realised he was now naked, white as the Dover cliffs, he walked, with confidence back from the toilet to our base. Now, it is important to note, that we rarely saw anyone, apart from maybe 1 or 2 aircraft per week, aside from that no one. Though as he left the toilet, naked, a huge army convoy of Land

Rovers and lorries came out from no where and drove right past him. He didn't know what to do, so just bought himself smartly to attention as they drove past honking their horns – I often think about what they must've been thinking when they saw him walking in the middle of desert naked.

Most of our days were spent chilling out, we literally had nothing to do, aside from covering aircraft moves twice a week. Ian Gibson and I used to go running every day, for those who know me, this is where my love of running came from. I arrived on this detachment, as an 18 stone smoker, I left after 3 months, weighing 15 stone, fit, non-smoker, it was a truly life changing detachment for me. Further to this, we all used to wear lemon juice in our hair, so we were all blonde with dark brown skin (Except Smithy).

To pass the time, we used to catch some of the desert creatures, we even had a trophy board with a Camel Spider, a huge dung beetle and a scorpion. I remember waking up one morning and noted that the camel spider had gone. It turned out that one of the ATC lads had eaten it, for a bet.

We ended up on that detachment for 3 and half months, constantly being told that it would be extended, we had little or no support and were pretty much self-sufficient. It was one of the toughest detachments that I ever did, in my story I have reminisced the good times, there were plenty of tough times. We had no internet, the only phone was a sat phone that we could use once every 2 weeks, we didn't even have regular mail runs. We were completely isolated but came together as a team to support each other and made friends, and stories for life. I recently bumped into Darren Brough at





Andy Gibsons leaving function, I hadn't seen Darren since we left the desert. As soon as I saw him, we started to chat like we'd seen each other yesterday. Getting through these tough times, is something we were all pretty good at, I mean RAF Fire in general.

Lasting Bonds

I now work as a Director at a large multinational engineering consultancy, and I frequently cross paths with old colleagues from the RAF Fire Service. What stands out is not just how well everyone is doing — many are thriving — but why is that?

Some have launched their own successful companies, some work in Insurance. Others have risen to Director-level and above in major organisations. A few are in senior management roles, one became Lord Mayor of Manchester, some remain

operational firefighters, and one even went on to win SAS: Who Dares Wins. There's a pattern here — one that isn't accidental.

When you leave the RAF Fire Service, you leave with more than a uniform, rank and medals. You carry with you an ingrained sense of teamwork, shared hardship, and brotherhood. You understand the value of having each other's backs — whether at home, in the office, or in life.

It's this blend of competence, gravitas, and genuine care for those around us that sets ex-RAF firefighters apart. When one of us walks into a room, it shows — from the youngest team member to the CEO, people notice. We carry ourselves as role models, not out of ego, but out of experience. We were forged in a system that demands leadership, integrity, and resilience — and those qualities never leave us.

That's why I'm sometimes disappointed when I see posts on social media from individuals who reflect negatively on their time in the RAF Fire Service, saying they didn't experience many fires or incidents. Being a firefighter in the RAF was always about more than the calls we attended — it was about the bonds we formed, the camaraderie, the lessons we learned, and the pride of belonging to something greater than ourselves. It was — and still is — being part of a club that many wish they had the privilege to join.

Per Ardua ad Astra / E Flammis Atque Ruinis Salus.

Simon Marsh, Warrant Officer (Ret'd)



James 'Jimmy/Jim' Croll Obituary - 1939-2025



Enjoying a drink (dad on left)

Our dear dad died unexpectedly and suddenly at home on 21 November 2025, aged 86 years. He was a devoted husband to his wife and our mum Ann (nee Parker). Father to Stuart, Alistair, and Kirsty. Grandfather to Isla and Gideon.

Jim was a friend as well as golf and bowling buddy to many, as well as an avid gardener. He loved to share the fruits of his harvest with family, friends, and neighbours. As those who knew him will know, Jim enjoyed all kinds of sports, and was a supporter of the Scottish national football team, Aberdeen FC (The Dons) and Newcastle United FC. But his top sport was golf. He always thought he'd have had a chance at going professional but life, as it does, intervened and had a different path for him.

After a deferred entry (so he could continue horticulture in Ballater) through national service, Jim joined the RAF in 1961, serving out of Watten, Hexham, Wallingford, Ely, and Changi (Singapore). He also spoke of his time serving out of Masirah (Oman) immediately after his marriage to Ann in 1966. While we sadly don't know all of the sequence of his service we do know he always intended to serve as a fire fighter and served in the Defence Fire Service, including as part of Queens Flight. Jim had achieved the rank of Corporal when he left the service in 1973. He initially continued his career as a civilian firefighter but changed career when we children were young.

Dad's tales were a lacework of his duty, how his golf helped him forge friendships and make him known within the service

(he had the best golf score in an RAF competition in 1963), but most of all they revolved around the people he was with. Be it befriending locals overseas, those he served with, and those he trained with.

The Flashpoint magazine was always important to him, a way to remain connected to a part of his life that was so influential. He would show his grandchildren the magazine and it would often prompt him to tell a storey of his time in the service in the

RAF and as part of the Changi Association. These were treasured memories for him and for us helped us to know him better.

We would like to thank the RAF Association and their 'Connection for Life' team and volunteers who have been in contact with Jim since 2020. Also our thanks are to the Royal British Legion in Coldstream, which is such a strong part of the community in Coldstream where Jim and Ann retired to. The Legion was very supportive of Jim during his time in Coldstream and have been a great support to his family since his death.

A celebration of Jim's life will be held at 13:00, Thursday December 11, at Borders Crematorium, Melrose. He will be returned to his beloved Ballater, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

Thank you, his family, and his friends.

By his daughter Kirsty



RAF Fire Service (dad kneeling on the left)



Masirah crew mates circa 1967 (This picture taken in 2012 - dad on the far left)

CHANCE MEETINGS

The volunteers at the Museum of RAF Firefighting generally meet up on a Saturday at our temporary accommodation at RAF Hemswell thanks to The Broadcasting Engineering Museum which has been set up in the old sergeant's mess and holds the world's largest collections of vintage TV and film equipment. The Trustees have allowed us some rooms which we decorated and in return we have also help with moving some of their equipment, also helped with fire safety and health & safety.

But on a Thursday, we meet up for welfare chat at the Faun Café at RAF Hemswell. This venue was suggested to us by one of our volunteers Laurie Atkins. All the staff have made us very welcome indeed and lay the tables out so we can always sit together. It was at one those get togethers when we heard a woman behind us saying to her husband, I'm sure my dad used to drive one of those (pointing to one of the Ron Henderson's prints of RAF Fire Service Trucks) With that face's lifted and heads turned in disbelief. It turned out that she was the daughter of lapsed RAF & DFS Association member Terry ?????? It was explained that we meet every Thursday, and they would be welcome to join us one Thursday if Terry would like to attend.

So low and behold Terry turned up the next Thursday, so the chats started, and Terry was a real happy man, and it was good to hear his tales of daring do! Hopefully, Terry is going to rejoin and will be reading this article.



Faun Café at RAF Hemswell

The Faun Café is an excellent place to eat, with fresh food cooked to order and the service and quality is excellent, it also has an antiques place adjoining the café. You can find them on Facebook, and it is also a Bikers favourite and appears on the UK Biker Cafes website.

As regards The Broadcasting Engineering

Museum it is not open to the public on a daily basis, as yet, but it has scheduled open days. If you go on their website BECG – The Broadcast Engineering Conservation Group it will tell you when events are scheduled.



As a gesture of goodwill Steve Sirley presented Terry with two of the Ron Henderson prints as mentioned above.

It's a Small World

Back in August 2022 I received an email from a German Firefighter based in the City of Hamburg requesting a visit to the Museum of RAF Firefighting which was, at that time, based at RAF Scampton. During his visit, Dr Holger de Vries gave me, amongst other things, a photograph album containing black and white photographs, some of which were taken at RAF Sydenham. The album had been given to Holger by his partner who worked for a legal company in Hamburg. Her company was tasked with carrying out a house clearance for someone who had sadly passed away leaving no relatives. As items were being thrown into the skip, she spotted the photo album. She thought Holger would like to see it as there was an obvious fire service connection. Holger was interested in it of course, but thought the natural place for it to go would be the Museum.

I immediately recognised some of the people in the album, which appeared to have belonged to a Fireman by the name of Des Mullen. Des was obviously a member of the Belfast City Fire Brigade before joining the AFDFS. We believe Des passed away in 1977, but we do not know how this album found its way to Germany. The people I recognised were Trevor Price and Dave Hannah.

Fast forward to February 2025 when I received a very random email I think through Facebook requesting info on a Fireman R J Elliot believed to have been in the Army Fire Service. This email came from a chap called Mick Rippley asking if I could help his friend Keith Morris who was in turn, helping his friend Jim Brown to track down the history of a medal which had recently come into his possession. Quite literally, on the same day I got the email I was actually looking through the photograph album that Holger had given me and the name Robin Elliot leapt out at me! Could this be the same guy?

I contacted Jim for more info. Jim told me that he was a medal collector and that he had bought the medal from a chap in New Zealand! The medal in question was the Military General Service medal with a Northern Ireland clasp. Engraved around the edge was the name L/Fm Robin Elliot. Jim had tried to get more info from the



Government Records Office who had no record of a medal being awarded to Robin. He then spoke to the Army Fire Service Golf Society (Tom Waldrop) who couldn't help him. He also tried the Manchester Fire Service Museum in Rochdale but again they couldn't help.

I explained to Jim that I had a picture of Robin at RAF Sydenham, now Belfast City Airport, in AFDFS uniform and that I was convinced that they were one and the same. I offered to do more research for Jim and reached out to Trevor Price who was also in the album. Trevor had been a Station Officer at Sydenham, and he remembered Robin straight away. So, I asked, did AFDFS Firemen receive the GSM for Northern Ireland? Yes said Trevor!

Apparently, a Sub Officer at the time, put in a request, through the Army I guess, for firefighters at Sydenham to receive the medal. I'm unsure what dangers they were exposed to apart from the obvious, but Trevor remembers IRA snipers taking pot shots at people and vehicles on the camp.

Trevor knew nothing about the request until he was invited to a medal presentation where he was formally handed his and told to give the others out when he got back to the Fire Station. Robin Elliot was amongst the recipients.

By a bit of luck, fate or divine intervention, the mystery had been solved via Hamburg, New Zealand, Lincolnshire, Manchester where Jim lives and Northern Ireland. Not forgetting Wales where Trevor now lives.

Sadly, Robin was killed in a car crash whilst attending a course at Andover.

In another instance of it being a small world, Jim served as a prison officer during the 1990 Strangeways prison riots and was part of the fire team manning a Green Goddess. To deflect some of the bad publicity away from the civilian fire brigade they marked up their Goddess with the words ARMY on the side in big white letters made of masking tape. Jim had several photographs of him and his crew during the riots and some Green Goddess manuals in his possession which he has now passed onto me.

It was really good to read the latest Flashpoint and articles, great to see old mates put pen to paper so to speak, Mick Lee, we were on same FT2, interesting re who are the elite article, and who were they, weren't we all, as a specialist trade and Emergency Service our Communities were safer places both on the Airfields and Domestic sites we served. I remember believing we were the superstars at Manston for the weeks we were grilled by Andy Barnes and Brent Inglis on our FT2, I can remember some of the other names of the lads on the course, Kev Best, Nellie Morrell, Sid Yapp, Mick Caffery, Ian Cameron, Sandy Clarke, apologies for the other members of our Superstars team whose names for the life of me I cannot remember, too much stuff clogging my addled brain perhaps. We had a great esprit de core, and I remember it being a great course, Mick Caffery even taught me how to juggle! It is said that some very clever professionals suffer imposter syndrome, I don't recall any of our trade suffering that, properly confident for sure and not afraid to challenge others appropriately when required, professional and bloody good at our jobs, though perhaps on occasion whilst pondering whether the local authorities / Airports grass is greener, or was it something to do with the pound in our pockets! I am extremely proud to have worked in all, but my heart knows which Flag and badge I am most proud of and not afraid to declare it, its people, comradeship, the Stations served and the memories and stories that mean so much along with the constant learning and honing our craft in order to save lives, Per Ardua ad Astra.

Also fab article and info from Simon Marsh we also worked together for a short while, his article is very relevant and only until recently have we gone to clean cab policies within Humberside Fire and Rescue Service and recognised too that carcinogens on our PPE has had a massive impact on the risk of Firefighters contracting cancers! I will certainly be providing my GP with the letter Simon kindly provided.

Having spent similar lengths of time in both the RAF and Local Authority FRS, the bottom line is we are all in the job

for one thing and that is serving our communities and I am in no doubt we are all immensely proud to have served ours, I thought I'd best put an article together as I had promised another old mate Steve (the chair) Shirley, (I have shared a lift with him on several occasions whilst at the very start of our careers on basic Firefighting courses at RAF Catterick in what I remember to be an old Ford Anglia or popular?) Steve will correct me, was it also light blue? Steve would drop me off at Doncaster on his way south for the weekend and pick me up on the way back.

I have also filled in the questionnaire and sent it back to another old mate, Steve Bowden, apologies Steve if you cannot decipher my crap writing on the form concerned, put it down to me being a left hander, but then so was Churchill and what an orator he was!

On this note, I for one give the reunions my full vote and perhaps as a challenge to us all, let's attempt to cajole or even press gang one or more of our old mates to come along, I have even suggested that some may wish to present to the audience, I've volunteered the chair to say a line or two about classic vehicles, if Derek from Bangers and Cash can do it, Simon Marsh can do his Bernard Breslau impersonation and I will stand and recite some of my poems, a flair that's come to me with my spare hours now I've gone into some form of retirement! My primary reasons for attending reunions, is without doubt comradeship, a band of brothers whatever you call it, you don't know you've had until you've lost it, I met up with another old mate Rich Morris recently, we were at Akrotiri together, Micks story was spot on and definitely a brilliant place to work rest and play. Call me getting old / lets say older and perhaps a tad sentimental, but isn't getting together also about sharing memories with those you love, we have after all and Simons article also reflects this shared both sadness and elation in our working lives but also our lives have been enriched by a shared vocation and purpose, it is this what makes having regular reunions worth fighting for.

Having already had an article printed in Flashpoint on my retirement from the RAF and joining Doncaster Sheffield Airport or

Robin Hood Airport as was also known, and on discussion with Steve S at the last reunion I thought I might share some input since last article.

I left the Airport in early 2009 to continue my Fire and Rescue Career with Humberside Fire and Rescue Service, I was already and on call Firefighter at my local station of Epworth, a one pump water tender initially and then in 2015, we also crewed an Emergency First Response (EFR) Car. An opportunity came up to transfer to a Risk Reduction role whole time based at Scunthorpe Fire Station, I applied and secured the position, initially as a Crew Manager then Watch Manager working with firefighters on NVQ (Emergency Fire Service Operations within the Community) All that Hard work driven by Traff paid off at Brize Norton (A1 Assessors Award), I also secured my V1 Verifiers whilst at Doncaster Airport which goes to show life long learning actually does provide opportunities no matter what age.

My role remained operational augmenting Watches on shortfalls and which assisted in maintaining competency and as such in addition to my on call role, I attended incidents on a regular basis on the Scunthorpe engines.

In 2012, the then CFO of HFRS tasked my good friend and boss Area Manager Nick Granger to look at how we as a service could generate income in order that we could continue to fund our community safety initiatives, doing a lot of work with industries around North Lincolnshire to drive down fires etc, we had established a very good working relationship with the management team at the Steelworks at Scunthorpe then owned by TATA steel, their Emergency Services Contract was due for renewal and I was asked whether HFRS would consider bidding for the contract. Whilst a public body couldn't, it was an opportunity too good to miss in regard to income generation so on discussion with Nick, some very long days we put together a bid and set up our Community Interest Company (HFR Solutions CIC) and to cut a long story short we secured the contract against some stiff international opposition, they know who they are!

HFR Solutions CIC sits completely separate from the Fire and Rescue Service, it was established by serving Fire Officers and continues to have its training centre and head office at HFRS Headquarters in Hessle near Hull, as a non profit making organisation, all funds over and above running costs go back into our communities, initiatives such as the provision of AED's, training and probably our largest acquisition a 60ft X 12ft wide beam canal boat which I am proud to be one of the drivers for its purchase, this is moored in a Marina near Doncaster and takes groups from all walks of life free of charge down the local waterways to both educate and provide a safe space to unwind. It is crewed by volunteers (mainly retired Fire Officers) who give up their time and its out on the water 5 to 6 day a week.

For more info on our CIC See website: HFR Solutions.co.uk

We have continued to secure contract renewals and under different ownership to present day at the Steelworks site, sadly our model has changed to reflect not the sites Risk Profile but the purse holders pocket, this has reduced the number of personnel per watch, their work load has increased and incidents remain regular and are predominantly medical in nature, however, we have attended a number of very large fires and serious incidents over the years where rapid and appropriate intervention has prevented escalation of the incident and ensured the business has had continuity. From very early on in the contract it has been recognised the essential part the community plays in the saving of life and initiatives such as Heartstart where we have taught the British Steel community CPR and the use of an Automated External Defibrillator in order that lives are saved and or bought time until the arrival of our teams and the Ambulance Service.

On arrival of our EFR car in 2015 at Epworth, I crewed it regularly, predominantly because this meant I didn't have to respond to Station on Fire calls but respond in the EFR calls to medical incidents on blues and twos ranging from Heart attacks, trauma, Cardiac arrests, diabetic emergencies etc. I was mobilised





by the Ambulance Service and on clearing the incident would provide HFRS control with a stop message, detailing actions, outcomes along with equipment used and timings.

I retired from my whole time role in 2022 having been the longest serving Station Manager for HFRS to be seconded to its Community Interest Company, a total of 10 years, I continue to work for the CIC as a trauma care instructor and remained on call and as a firefighter and an EFR responder until June this year and having completed 21.5 years on call retired, from HFRS.

I am now a Community First Responder with East Midlands Ambulance Service and attend the same type of incidents I did as an EFR with HFRS, however, it is in my own vehicle and at normal road speed not Blues and Twos which can and does add it is own stressors particularly when mobilised to life threatening scenarios such as cardiac arrests. Like the British Steel community, it is without doubt that lives are saved by those that live and work in the communities around the UK, and with more community AED's and training in simple skills like Heartstart more lives are saved. Communities are slowly being provided with Automated External Defibrillators and with a couple of hours training can utilise simple skills to save lives and buy the casualty time until the arrival of the Ambulance Service or Responders from other Emergency Services and or volunteer groups, in countries like Sweden, Denmark and Norway these simple skills are delivered to school children from primary school age through to further education and it is also mandatory within the workplace, common sense really, the more people with these skills the greater chance of survival for those in a life threatening crisis!

A local residents life was saved by her husband doing CPR, the use of the following story is by the kind permission of Sandra, it has been told hundreds of times as it captures the chain of survival and what a difference its use makes in the survivability of someone who suffers a life threatening situation such as a cardiac arrest.

The picture gallery shows Sandra top left and her Grand children Benji and Lily who visited Epworth Fire Station post her cardiac arrest and once she had fully recovered.

I am in the bottom right photo watching Benji attempting fly swatting with an improvised fire beater!



Sandra's Chain of Survival

The Chain of Survival when somebody is in cardiac arrest and the speed it can be implemented is vital to maximise the casualties survivability, and as follows:

Early Access: When a Cardiac Arrest occurs, the sooner the casualty is discovered the greater chance they have of surviving, for every minute no one takes action, their chance of surviving decreases by up to 20%

Early CPR: It is vital that the Emergency call is initiated on 999 and someone commences Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

Early Defibrillation: The quicker the use of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) can be brought into use, the greater the chance the casualty has a shockable sinus rhythm (Ventricular Fibrillation or Ventricular Tachycardia), early intervention and use may increase the casualties chance of survival by up to 85%.

Early Definitive Care: In initiating the early call to the Emergency Services will ensure responders have a greater chance of getting to the scene quickly, once on scene and having stabilized the casualty, they can transport them to definitive care / hospital to maximise ongoing care in order to provide the casualty with the best chance possible of not only surviving but making a full recovery.

Sandra's Story:

Sandra was 66 and in good health with no cardiac history, on a Saturday morning at approximately 11:37, Sandra suffered a Cardiac Arrest, the event occurred in her own home, which is situated in a rural village within Northern Lincolnshire in the Isle of Axholme. Sandra was found quickly by her husband David after Lily 2 and a half years old at the time shouted 'Come Quick Grandad, Grandma's fallen and not talking, David quickly realised Sandra was not breathing and called 999 and was then assisted by the Ambulance controller instructions to commence CPR. Sandra's chain of survival commenced by David's Early Access and call to the Ambulance Service (East Midlands, EMAS).

Sandra's heart had stopped functioning and was no longer pumping oxygenated blood

around her body and vital organs, it is vital that the casualty receives immediate assistance, every minute counts with chances of surviving reducing by up to 20% each minute CPR is not implemented.

With instructions provided from the EMAS controller and dispatcher, Early CPR commenced with David, he had no previous training but with instructions and encouragement from the controller, David was giving Sandra a greater chance of surviving, with no CPR, her outlook would be very poor.

Six years ago EMAS and Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) collaborated with HFRS providing personnel and dedicated response cars with EMAS providing equipment and consumables along with specific additional training in order to respond within their allocated areas, vehicles were given EFR call signs such as EFR 06, 07, 08 and 09. On receipt of the 999 call from David, EMAS mobilised the nearest EFR asset which was EFR 07, whilst based at Epworth Fire Station, responders mobilise from their home address, the call was initiated via the Community First Responder desk, the controller and dispatcher on duty and had dispatched EFR 07 to regular incidents over the years, and informed the responder of Sandra's cardiac arrest providing address details. The village and road were known to the responder on EFR 07 and who immediately responded in the Emergency First Response car which carries lifesaving equipment including an AED.

The road to the village where Sandra lives is a B road and not in the best condition it could be, however all EFR responders are trained and which involves the attendance of dedicated driving courses with regular refresher courses which allows them to drive on Blue Lights, driving to arrive quickly and safely, due to the road conditions, EFR 07 was able to proceed with best speed for the conditions, even so, from time of call to arrival took approximately 6 minutes and with confirmation from the dispatcher of exact location as the responder cars are able to be tracked via satellite and the navigation system on the portable radio carried by EFR.

Homeowners can help responders from all Emergency Services by having clear House numbers or Names on their boundary walls or gates and which can be seen in both daylight and in the hours of darkness. Where possible, it also helps if a family member can be at the roadside to provide direction, initial information and to escort the responder straight to the scene of need.

On arrival and entering Sandra and David's house, the responder found David and their two Grandchildren (Benji and Lily) in their front room with David doing CPR whilst still receiving instructions from the controller / dispatcher from EMAS, on receipt of information from David. Whilst getting the AED ready, further details were provided by David and then due to Benji and Lily being very young and the potential emotional impact, it was suggested David take them into the Garden and near the front gate to escort ambulance crews on their arrival as they had also been dispatched.

On the initial assessment by the responder, Sandra was clearly in cardiac arrest, he attached the AED pads of the AED being aware of the instructions but as trained attached them in advance of the automated information, once pads were in place the AED informed "Do not to touch the patient, analysing rhythm" at this point, the responder used his radio and informed the dispatcher, of a Kilo Red, this means a witnessed arrest (by Lily) and where resources allow they will be dispatched to maximise the potential of a successful outcome. On completion of analysing Sandra's heart and sinus rhythms The AED informed "Shock Advised, charging, once the AED is charged the shock button flashes, as soon as it flashed red on quick confirmation no one is touching the casualty the responder pressed the button, the shock was instant with a continue care instruction immediately after (Early Defibrillation), continuing CPR and provided Oxygen, the AED continued its cycle of analysing and shock advised on 3 further occasions with approximately 2 minutes between each cycle of CPR and Shock.

On the fourth shock Sandra achieved a Return of Spontaneous Circulation, her heart had commenced beating on its own

and she was also breathing, on turning Sandra on her side and clearing her airway by postural drainage, the responder heard a familiar voice of a paramedic from EMAS, in fact two paramedics has responded in an EMAS fast response car and were known to the responder, providing a quick brief and with Sandra continuing to maintain circulation, the EMAS team commenced stabilising Sandra with electronic suction to further improve her patent airway along with canulating her for the administering of drugs to assist her further prior to arrival to hospital. Since the inception of the EFR scheme, EMAS and HFRS have built up an excellent working relationship particularly at an operational level where the collaborative response of EFR and ambulance crews work jointly together to save lives daily.

Shortly afterwards a road ambulance crew arrived and an Air Ambulance not much longer afterwards, with further actions by all on scene, Sandra was taken in the road ambulance on a very short journey to the field where the Air Ambulance had landed, she was transferred to the helicopter and air lifted to the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield (Definitive Care) where further intervention post sedation saw Sandra discharged from Hospital two weeks after her Cardiac Arrest.

The efforts of all involved from Lily raising the alarm and David's early finding and access to Sandra, his 999 call and commencement of CPR, to the definitive care Sandra received in hospital and with all the additional assistance from the EMAS controller dispatchers saw Sandra's chain of survival maximised and with a wonderful outcome, not only being a Cardiac Arrest survivor, Sandra has also made a full recovery.

Many Lives are saved each year where casualties are in a similar situation to Sandra due to initiatives such as Heart Start and Call Push Rescue along with AED's being installed throughout communities, without doubt Sandra survived due to the extraordinary efforts carried out by ordinary people, David's initial actions of raising the alarm and carrying out CPR along with the efforts of all involved prior to being released from hospital resulted

in an outstanding result, it is hoped that by telling Sandra's story of the events on that Saturday morning, more people within our communities both identify where their nearest AED's are and participate local training events which provide the simple skills that really do save lives.

As a member of the community, you can make a difference, we are ordinary people able to do extraordinary things using simple skills:

Residents within communities can make all the difference: By attending a Heartstart course members of our communities like Sandra are alive today along with and due to the partnerships forged with East Midlands and Yorkshire Ambulance Services and Humberside Fire and Rescue Service. Benji and Lily will grow up able to spend time with their Grandma because
of ordinary

people carrying out life saving courses such as Heartstart and the EFR scheme, its as simple as that.

It is without doubt that that Sandra is alive today because of her Granddaughter Lily and her Husband David, it is also without question that as serving or retired Fire Service personnel we all have the ability to assist in the saving of life within our communities should the need arise and I urge all to revisit old skills or search out Heartstart courses to refresh these life saving attributes, if you can get a group of interested parties together from within your communities, I will might even be persuaded to deliver a Heart Start course for you, the venue could be your village hall, the course is free of charge, however, the obligatory tea and biscuits must be provided.

The poem at the beginning where the obituaries is in latest flashpoint is excellent and as already disclosed, I now wake up in the early hours with one in my head which I have to write down at the time as it is forgotten by the time I wake again to get up, hence I always have a note pad and pen by the bed. See one I wrote earlier:

The Firefighter

Qualities such as Gallantry, Strength and Dexterity alone just won't do!

*The attributes of Firefighters, who serve our communities and you
True Heart, Perseverance, Empathy, Explicitness and so much more
These are what are essential, and must form part of our core*

*Our objective is clear, to protect life, that may about to be lost
To ensure saveable life is saved, with no consideration of our own cost
Although the benefit to do our task, must surely outweigh the threat
In order that life is saved and therefore our objective is met*

*To meet Fire, Storm or an immediate threat to life, all which is our foe
As a firefighter, we must apply our qualities and be fearless as we go
To meet all of our tenets from our firefighters heart that's with in
Still be Knights of St John, a Hospitaller and above all be a Paladin*

John.E.H Armson

RAF Leeming 1959

In the summer edition of the RAFA magazine Airmail I came across this letter from the author named DOUG RENOUF.

Doug is not a member of the Association, and he didn't say if he was a firefighter or not and I wondered if any members knew him or remembered the incident.

It just reminded me of many incidents that have appeared in Flashpoint and bar drinking stories of AOC's and CO's opening lockers on trucks at practise fires and getting cover in foam. Always good for the troop's morale.

Steve Harrison.

At RAF Leeming in 1959 a very smart RAF Regiment Flight Lieutenant arrived on station to take charge of ground defence and fire service. He was an officious type; and had more than a few run-ins with others on the station. One afternoon, while wearing a smart baratheon uniform which was new on that day, the Flight Lieutenant was inspecting the crash crew. An aircraft had just landed when there was a loud bang. The ventral tanks shot off and an engine fire ensued. To show he was a good firefighter, the Flight Lieutenant grabbed a hose and climbed onto the wing. He spied a panel and opened it, thinking it gave access to the engine he called for foam and took aim, unfortunately for him he had picked the panel designed to hold the self-destruct explosives in times of war. The empty void into which the foam rushed was 18 inches deep like a can. The foam hit the bottom filled it up and came shooting back out completely covering the Andy smart new uniform.

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME



Welcome to
1212 Brian Robinson
1213 George Lindsay
1214 Allan Fraser,
1215 Ebony Harbron



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, we say to new members, if you 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

Dave Grant 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.

HOW TO JOIN

VISIT THE ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION WEBSITE AND DOWNLOAD THE APPLICATION FORM, PRINT IT OFF AND SEND THE COMPLETED FORM TO
DAVE GRANT MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

7 CLIFF ROAD,
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LINCOLNSHIRE LN8 2DW
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Tel 07952 977582

ARMOURY FIRE AT GUT





**MESSING ABOUT WITH AI
SOME OLD RAF FIRE TRUCKS
IN LEGO MODE**

