



FLASHPOINT



ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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FRONT COVER

Sketch of TACR 1 which I found at a car boot sale, the guy selling it said "I used to fix them" My reply was "I used to break them" which caused a laugh. Sand bags were duly stacked up and stories swapped. Best thing was it was only a couple of quid. Bargain!! (Ed)



From the Editor

Although it is a little late in the year, I take this opportunity to wish you a good year in health and happiness and a win on the lottery!! But as long as the lottery of life is giving you rewards that is what counts.

As you can see by the mug shot I am still here producing this edition and I would like to thank everybody for the support and emails and the contributions for the winter edition and this edition. There has been no enquires from the general membership as regards taking over the editorship which is a little disappointing considering the amount of members we have, and although I have hung on for another edition this will be my last. Surely there must be someone out there to take on the challenge if no one does then you will get what you deserve. No Flashpoint magazine and possibly, a crumbling association. As a Yorkshire lad I will tell it how it is and make no apologies for what I say.

So apart from a vacancy for editor of Flashpoint there is still a vacancy for membership secretary, so please think

about this and consider supporting the association in taking one of these roles.

So to this Flashpoint, from articles in the winter edition, the saga of the foam layers continues with more images from Que Eaton and his dad Tony also more information about fire competitions has to come to light.

Also in the winter edition 2015 Roger Stevens wrote a story entitled 'RAF Gan Hastings Aircraft Crash; A Fireman's View' in that story he mentions Bill Grudie who was the first survivor that he helped. Well, Bill my boss when I worked at Rampton Hospital tells that story from his prospective in this edition, quite a tale. Also our "Treasured Treasurer" tells a story about his first posting and Norma Lilburn concludes her tale of RAF life from her prospective.

Although you know the sad news that the museum at Scampton has had to close, we are still meeting on a Saturday and carrying on working on vehicles and repacking the stores. Also visits to shows and Steve

Shirley's talks to clubs and associations are still on going to raise the profile and most importantly, FUNDS.

The full story of that tragic event and the future of the museum are explained in an article from Steve Shirley. Also because of the closure of the museum the restoration of the Mk6 which was reported on page 19 (winter edition) is not going ahead at the moment.

Once again thanks to you all who have supported me (and George) over the years and thanks for the positive messages you have sent, although it has been a challenge at times I have enjoyed it and I hope you enjoy this spring Flashpoint.

Steve Harrison



NEW MEMBERS

A Warm Welcome to New Members who have joined the Association in the last few months.

Hopefully they have a few stories to tell of their experiences and it would be great to see them in print on the pages of Flashpoint. Bill Grudie has obliged and you can see his story in this edition.

We have two re-joining members 481 PHIL SOUTHERN and 620 FREDERICK GEORGE HORNER.

The new members are:

- 1086 FREDRICK MORRIS
- 1100 KEVIN BERETON
- 1087 JOHN SIMPSON
- 1101 DAVID FORD
- 1088 JAMES CAIRNS
- 1102 ALAN DAWES
- 1089 ALAN CUMMINS
- 1103 IAN SPINDLOW
- 1090 CHRISTOPHER ROGERS
- 1104 ALAN CURTIS
- 1091 GEOFF ALLEN
- 1105 GRANT MACLEAY
- 1092 STEPHEN LEWIS
- 1106 STEPHEN PARKINSON
- 1093 DEREK WILLIAM EDGINGTON

- 1107 WILLIAM GRUNDIE
- 1094 BRUCE DAVID BAGLEY
- 1108 DEREK WILLIAM LEAVIS
- 1095 MALCOLM JOHN HAWTREY
- 1109 DARREN ALLPORT
- 1096 DOUGLAS HAY
- 1110 JOSEPH THOMAS WHITE
- 1097 ROGER WOOLASTON
- 1112 PAUL ADRIAN HARRIES
- 1098 CHRISTOPHER SHELDRIK
- 1113 DAVID EDWARD DUNSTER
- 1099 DAVID GRANT
- 1114 PHIL CRAWLEY
- 1115 F.B. (BARRY) NOLAN

If you are reading this magazine as a non member please consider joining the association, read below about how you can join: as two

To join the Association please print the application form and history forms on the website and return to the address shown. The annual membership fee is £16.00 due on the 1st September each year. If you join mid-year there will be a corresponding reduction for the second year. Alternatively please contact the Membership Secretary :)

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There are two types of membership Full and Associate

Full Members:

Personnel, who have served, are serving or have been attached to the Fire Services of the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy Aircraft Handler Trade, or any of the MOD Fire Services for a period of not less than three months, shall be eligible for full membership of the Association.

Associate Members:

Personnel who have served or are serving on Civilian Airfields or Airports licensed under the Civil Aviation Authority, or any other body having the same or similar authority, for a period of not less than three months.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I would like to update you all as to how I am doing. I sustained a head injury some 3 years ago after falling down a flight of stairs at home. I completed 23 in the RAF Fire Service without so much as a scratch. Upon leaving the Fire Service my wife and I purchased a small guesthouse in Blackpool which we still own.

When I sustained my head injury I spent weeks in hospital and was released after 6 1/2 weeks. I have been on the mend for 3 years now and welcomed many firemen to our small guesthouse. It is so nice when friends from my Service days visit. I so miss the camaraderie that you all showed towards each other. I am still recovering from my nasty fall; I have lost my balance and hence cannot walk without a frame. My talking is slurred; I have trouble with my speech, am deaf in one ear and have no sense of smell. I don't think I would pass the medical to join up now.

One thing that hasn't deserted me is my sense of humour, which I have needed these past few years. I must thank everyone for the collection that you had at a reunion a couple of years ago. I am so happy to have been in the Fire Service, I class you all as friends and if I can be so forward, I would say to you all. Enjoy the camaraderie; we are a band of true brothers and sisters.

Keith Whigham (860)

Dave Kirk received an email from Andreas asking if any of our members good help with his project, if you can please email or ring Dave or myself.

Dear Sirs,

I'm building scale models of fire engines as a hobby. Right now, I'm trying to build the entire fire service of Cologne airport in Germany since the first post-war civilian traffic in the year 1952. That will include the fire trucks of the Royal Air Force from 1952 to 1957.

I've come across a photo of three RAF crash trucks (water bowser, SLF25A and dry powder truck); all built by German contractors on Mercedes chassis.

There was also a domestic fire truck, one of six built by Metz on a Mercedes chassis for the RAF.

Since there are no colour photos of the RAF trucks while still in service in the 50s I couldn't find any information whether the trucks were painted red, blue or green.

Maybe there is someone within your team who can give me an answer to that question?

Yours sincerely,

Andreas Kowald

We all know that the world is a smaller place than it used to be in the days before the advent of fast camel mail services, and now the internet. My first overseas posting, to RAF Eastleigh, was for two and a half years during which there was little or no communication with home, no phone calls, no e-mail, just that fast camel known as the post office. I have been pleasantly reminded this week of associations long forgotten by, first, a phone call from the UK from Association member Trevor Hayes inquiring on behalf of another ex-RAF Fireman one Chris Haughton who was trying to establish contact with yet another fireman friend from his Liverpool and training days, Phil Crawley. As luck would have it, I had recruited Phil from the UK and knew of his whereabouts, and rang Trevor to tell him what I knew, information he then passed on to Chris Haughton. I then rang Chris to tell him Phil would be in touch, and it turned out that he[Chris] and I were at RAF Tengah in 1966, on the same crew, he RAF me RNZAF at the time. That phone call went on for almost an hour as we recalled incidents and accidents, and more importantly, people! Made my day. I then met up, this morning, with Phil Crawley and spent an hour or so telling lies, as you do. I tell you, it's a small world some days!

Cheers,

Colin Hall

Steve
I wonder if you and the rest of the association could help me? I'm currently serving at RAF Akrotiri as the TG8 Fire Section training manager and have become involved with the refurbishment of the Units heritage centre. We are looking for photos and stories from individuals who have served at Akrotiri since its formation. If possible could you place an article in the Flashpoint asking for such items? If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Kind Regards

Chris Dooley

Flight Sergeant

RAF Fire & Rescue Service

Membership Number 1019

Hi Steve

Got my copy of Flashpoint today and as usual a good old read. The article on the refurbishment of the Mk6 was of particular note to me. It stated that it was in service at St Athans up to 1976. This means that I would have been the last person to drive her on an active crash line. I was the 6 driver at Saints up until she was replaced in mid 1976 by the Mk9 which I collected from Hilton. The last day of her service FS Bob Burns the I/C fire gave me permission to take her down to the Pickettston site and give her one good last thrash on the rough course. The very next day she went off on a low loader and if memory serves she went off to the MU at Winterbourne. Stirred a deal of nostalgia I must admit as that was also the last time I drove a Mk6. I left in September 1976 for Bruggen which already had the Mk9s in service.

Thought this might be of some interest

Regards

Archie Carter

TREVORS POSTING WITH THE MYTHOLOGICAL GOD THOR

My journey to and through the RAF started when I left home at 18 years of age, early on the 11th March 1959, believing I was volunteering for the RAF Air Sea Rescue. Well, at least, that's what the recruitment Sgt said! I stepped on to a train at Middlesbrough, part of a group of about 20, and the adventure began. We were off, happy and full of excitement. I had never been south of Co Durham.

The train had many further stops picking up further volunteers and conscripts and filling the carriages before reaching RAF Cardington late in the Day. On disembarking there must have been some 300 to 400 would be's.

We were each taken to our billets, issued with bedding and our irons, given a meal then and we all went to bed thinking this RAF was not so bad.

In the days after giving the oath of allegiance, all things changed. We were shouted at and marched in groups to the so-called barber's shop, then on to stores for kitting out. First a kit bag which was very quickly filled. I could not believe how much, and the weight of so much kit, with beret and cap shoved on my head, boots and shoes round my neck, a full kit bag across my arms, we all staggered to our billets. We then went on our first pay parade the regulars like me received £5. Not a bad pay for that time. I believe the national servicemen got £1.15shillings. All our civilian clothes were packed and handed in to be sent home. For the rest of the day and evening we were told to bull our boots and all our brass. As I recall we were at Cardington for about 3 days.

Then, back on a train to RAF Bridgenorth, that was where life really changed.

Needless to say I did not get my desired trade. The only other rescue service on offer was the aircraft crash rescue and fire service, which sounded good, so after 8 weeks basic training at RAF Bridgenorth and week's leave, I was off to RAF Sutton –on –Hull on the 27th May for a further 8 weeks trade training.

On the completion of that training on the 26th July, and not having a driving licence, my first posting was to RAF Feltwell.

Feltwell is in Norfolk just north west of Brandon and Thetford and USAF station Lakenheath to the east.

There was not an aircraft in sight. However my excitement and imagination leaped



tenfold when I learned that RAF Feltwell was a US Air force base and had 5 squadrons of the USAF Thor intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBM).

At RAF Feltwell fire service, the OC was a tall Irish Flt/Sgt, whose name I don't recall, but we did have two corporals, Cpl Portius and Cpl Mehan and a number of SAC's and LAC's including me. I remember there was a LAC Dave Berry from London.

The fire section was part of the same building as the Guardroom at the main gate.

We had a Bedford domestic and at each of our 5 missile launch sites there was a DP1A, (same as a DP1 but it had a 1 inch monitor). I noticed there was a DP1A at the RAF fire service museum at RAF Scampton last summer.

Feltwell was basically a domestic posting with all the mundane jobs to be done. Servicing extinguishers, painting hydrants

and kerbs and testing the Minerva fire alarm system, but we did also have a number of chimney fires.

A fire crew from Feltwell did attend a Venom or Vampire crash in a field close to a wood near Southery, some 3-4 miles north-west of Feltwell. All we found was a hole in the ground and lots of bits of aircraft hanging on the trees close by. It looked like Christmas! There was nothing for us to do and we left some 2 hrs later when RAF police and other personnel arrived. I believe the pilot had ejected many miles away.

After some months, a higher level to my security pass came though and it allowed me access into hanger 4 where all the guidance systems were located and servicing took place for Feltwell's Thor missiles. I was allowed free access anywhere in the hanger, servicing extinguishers and checking for any possible sources of fire. That was a cushy, warm job in the winter

months of 1959 and 1960. In 1962 this higher level of security pass got me into the nuclear bomb storage facility at RAF Marham, but that's another story.

RAF Feltwell (77Sqn) had four similar sites in its wing, all about 20 miles apart. They were RAF North Pickenham (220 Sqn) also in Norfolk, RAF Shepherd's Grove (82 Sqn) and RAF Tuddenham (107 Sqn) in Suffolk and RAF Mepal (113 Sqn) in Cambridgeshire. Five launch sites in all, with a total of 15 missiles.

There were 3 other such stations like RAF Feltwell in England, RAF Driffield (98 Sqn), RAF Hemswell (97) and RAF North Luffenham (144Sqn).

Each of these stations had 4 satellite stations, the same as RAF Feltwell. They covered the east coast from Yorkshire in the north to Suffolk in East Anglia in the south, making 20 launch sites in all.

Each of these launch sites was a different squadron, and each squadron was equipped with 3 Thor IRBM missiles, making 60 Thor IRBM missiles in all, along with 108 bomber aircraft, making up the UK's thermonuclear deterrent force in 1959.

Britain became an independent thermonuclear power in February 1958 with the delivery to RAF Wittering of the first high-yield fission weapon, code named Violet Club. It was very much an experimental stop-gap weapon and alarmingly was inherently unstable.

The RAF bomber Command and USA Strategic Air Command had agreed a fully integrated targeting policy for these missiles and aircraft.

The USA had similar arrangements in Italy and Turkey but their missiles were called Jupiter. All these missiles covered western USSR as it was known then, from Finland in the north to the black Sea and Georgia in the south and all could reach Moscow.

The Thor -from the Norse "Hammer throwing God of war", was 65ft in length with a diameter of 8ft, weight 100,000lbs (fuelled). Fuel was RP1 (kerosene) and Liquid Oxygen (LOX) and had 150,000lbs of thrust from one main engine with

a range 1500 miles, and a re-entry speed was Mark 2 (1500 mph). The war head had a 1.44 megaton yield with an accuracy of just 2 miles.

Each week, I believe it was a Wednesday, one of our 15 Missiles in the RAF Feltwell's wing was raised to launch position for training and servicing, and a fire crew of four from Feltwell was always in attendance.

Normally the missile lay stored on its side inside a hanger. This hanger slid along on wheels. During exercises and practice launches, the hanger was moved back and the missile was slowly raised to the vertical and the countdown would begin. First the missile was fuelled, filled with RP1, and then very slowly and carefully the LOX tank was filled.

They took the countdown to the point of launch. The target systems checked and countdown held at Phase Three - minutes from firing. When all was satisfactory, the practice launch stood down, the missile was de-fuelled and slowly lowered again to its normal horizontal storage position and the moveable hanger was rolled back to cover the missile. This normally took the whole working day but there was no guarantee. Sometimes it was late in the evening before we arrived back at RAF Feltwell.

During these practice launches the fire crew, consisting of a corporal and SAC

driver and 1 or 2 LACs as branch men, the DP1a parked one hose length away from the base of the missile and the branch man (yours truly) stood, hose reel in hand, under this 62ft missile standing vertical on its launch pad, with overalls, sea boot socks, wellingtons and a steel helmet for protection. In winter we even had a sleeveless leather jacket!! Totally oblivious to the dangerous position I and the rest of the crew were in, the fire crew were the only personnel to be seen. Not for us was the luxury of the bomb-proof concrete bunkers that all other 50-60 personnel were sheltering in.

At that time, I had never seen a film of what happens when things go wrong with missiles on their launch pads.

There was liquid oxygen overflow pipe at the base of the missile and there was a constant dribble of lox onto the concrete below. My job was to wash this overflowing Liquid Oxygen into a concrete pit just a few feet away. I watched as it danced, bubbled and evaporated away, floating on top of the water in the pit.

I remember thinking at the time that I really had cracked it and had finally arrived, as only a year ago I was working for the NCB, 2,000ft down a coal mine at Horden colliery Co Durham.

I left and joined the RAF because I thought mining was dark, dirty and extremely dangerous!!



During a QRA it would take a minimum of 30 minutes to prepare the Thor for launch. The missile could not be placed on QRA unless all safety measures were relaxed. Once the safety device was extracted from the missile it immediately became live, but I do not recall this ever happening. However during the Cuban crisis in October 1962, the entire Thor force was put on heightened alert, erected, fuelled, and the countdown was held at Phase Three for the duration of the crisis. The World came pretty close to oblivion at that time.

*Trevor Hayes 419
Treasurer*

Links with Kingston upon Hull – Father and Son

Back in May 2007 I wrote an article including a poem for Flashpoint. It all concerned the exploits of my fire fighting Dad in Hull and my childhood memories of that time playing on the bombsites of that war ravaged city.

One story which I mentioned was when my dad was cycling over a railway bridge on Southcoates Lane. This was in the middle of an air-raid I believe and on hearing the bomber and subsequently the bomb falling, he threw himself off the bike and took what cover he could and the bridge collapsed behind him.

Last year looking at books (again) on a market stall I came across a book "Hull at War" and on looking through it I spotted the two images of that very bridge I was amazed at seeing them, I don't suppose my Dad ever did? Yet I think that image of the day never left his head for a lot of years!



*Two views of the Southcoates Lane railway bridge, destroyed by a bomb in July 1943
(Central Library Collection)*

From The Archives (Flashpoint No4 1966)

Crash crews we were and wore kits of blue,
Helmets and boots and crash axes too.
R.A.F. firemen, British and best,
Remember the long Johns and the string vest?

What about the crash maps and the R.T.
The MkVI and D.Ps and the A.C.R.T.
The glim lamps and goosenecks all in a line,
The signal square at air traffic, ah! Such a long time

Remember the S.A.P.P.H.O. and ripper gun too?
The D.A.T.C.O. and the S.A.T.C.O. the crash crew and
you?

Yes the time has gone by and it's all in the past,
our friendship as firefighters I know will last.

We all got together after so many years,
Talked of old times perhaps shed a few tears.
Talked about prangs and fire fighting days.
We all left the job and went our ways.

But time has returned for us with the help of a few men,
For their dedication they got us together again.
So thanks to you lads we meet once more,
You have opened the crash bays and the front door.

Roger Smith

RAF Wyton Canberra Crash

**Norfolk Road, Oxmoor Estate, Huntingdon
At approx. 12 - 12:15 on 3rd May 1977
Sadly, there were 5 fatalities – 3 Children
and 2 Aircrew**

The 3rd of May this year- 2017, will mark the 40th anniversary of this sad incident. As such the Huntingdon Town Council will be holding a Memorial Service in Norfolk Road. There will also be an unveiling of a Memorial Plaque/Bench in Norfolk Road itself.

Basic details:

Date: 3rd May 2017

Time: 12:00 (exact time to be confirmed)

I have been in touch with the Huntingdon Town Council and anyone who would like to attend are welcome to do so.

Please let me know if you wish to attend by way of E-mail or telephone and I will co-ordinate with the Council accordingly.

E-mail... scousehaughton1@gmail.com or

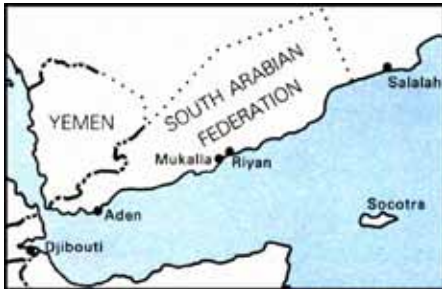
Tel... 01487479369

I will publish more specific details, when I have them, closer to the time.

Thank you. Chris Haughton

ROYAL AIR FORCE RIYAN

In May 1967 I flew up country from RAF Khomaksar to RAF Masirah after an extended stay in that 'luxury' five star accommodation the Red Sea Hotel at Steamer Point. I distinctly remember that journey made in a lumbering old Beverley, I had sunburned shoulders and was sat in those netted para seats (typical 'green young airman'). We landed at RAF Riyan then at Salalah and then I started to have an idea of what I was in for.



Since that time in the desert and our subsequent withdrawal from that part of the world I have never heard Riyan mentioned in conversation or met anyone who was posted there. Recently I was given some aviation books by a friend I found a RAF Khomaksar magazine.

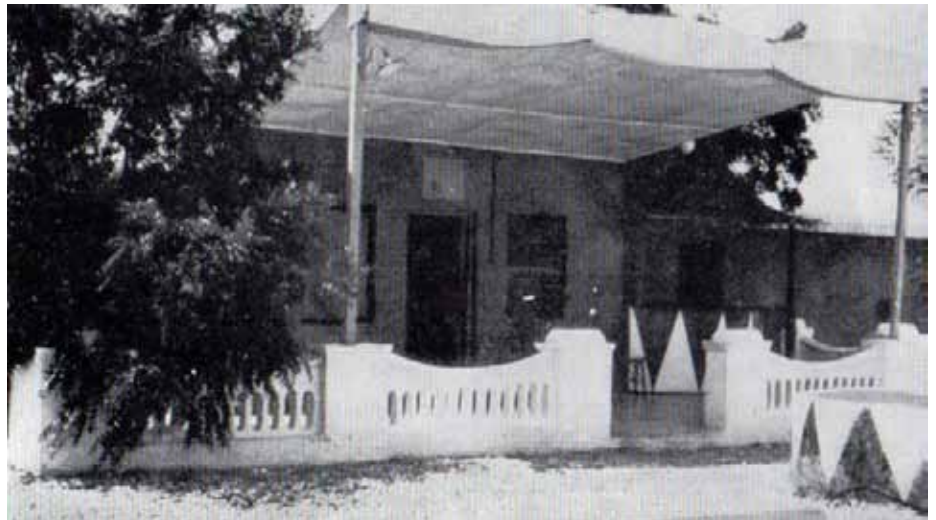
And in there was an article which I have reproduced and don't forget that this is an official version of the place, you guys that have been there could come up with a different version! No doubt like the rest of us always did in places like this, and that was to make the best of what you were faced with. I had great fun and thoroughly enjoyed my two tours in Masirah.

I thought this might be interesting for the members who never ventured in that part of the world and bring back some memories to those who did.



The Front Cover of the Station Magazine.

RIYAN: SMALL ARABIAN ROUTE STATION



ROYAL AIR FORCE Riyan is the smallest of the Arabian route stations. It is situated some 273 miles along the coast from Aden and is in the Qu'aiti State which is part of the Eastern Aden Protectorate. The local ruler is the Sultan Quaiti, who lives in the nearby city of Mukalla.

The Station itself is a collection of white, flat topped buildings and a sandy airstrip in the centre of a shallow shrub covered desert, surrounded on three sides by high mountains. The station was built in 1945 and most of the buildings or those erected in that year. They are, however in good condition and are airy and cool. Numbers in barrack rooms vary between 8 and 12 and S.N.C.O.'s have individual rooms. There are three messes and an airmen's club run by the N.A.A.F.I.

The climate at Riyan is relatively good and generally more pleasant than it is in Aden. Cool sea breezes prevent excessive humidity and keep temperatures down. Brilliant sunshine is enjoyed between 8 and 12 hours every day. During the hot season, from May to September, the wind blows from the south-west. This wind is sometimes quite strong and produces afternoon sand storms. During the cool season, the weather is quite pleasant and the nights are cool enough for personnel to need blankets on their beds and for sweaters to be worn out of doors.

As a route station, Riyan is primarily concerned with the re-fuelling of RAF aircraft that operate along the South Arabian route. But much of the traffic handled by the airfield is civilian. Aden Airways aircraft fly in and out almost every day, maintaining the civilian airline link between Eastern Aden Protectorate,

particularly the Wadi Hadhramout region. Because of the volume of civilian schedule traffic, Riyan in fact is a very busy airfield for its size.

Riyan is run by a staff of only two officers and about thirty airmen of varying trades. Because the unit is so small, every man has an important part to play in the life of the station. Each man, even to the lowliest aircraftsman, holds down a key post and generally has much more responsibility than would be exercised on a larger unit.

The local people are a mixture of Bedouins, Somalis, Malays and Arabs. They are friendly and honest. A number of them are employed on the station.

In the life of such a small unit recreational activities play a tremendously important part. At the end of each month a committee of airmen meet to plan activities for the ensuing month. These may vary from snooker tournaments to Station dinner nights which are held at suitable interval.

Cricket and Football are played in the various seasons. Football matches are frequently arranged against local Arab teams and between teams on the Station. Occasionally teams are flown from Aden to play against Riyan, and these occasions are looked forward to with great enthusiasm.

There is a wonderful beach only one mile from the Station and visits are made every afternoon and on Sunday mornings. Also on Sundays, parties go out to Ghail Ba-Wazir about 14 miles away, where there is a delightful natural fresh pool. In the cool season parties also go on Sundays for spear fishing and skin diving around the rocks near Mukalla.

Kart meetings are held as often as possible. The Station club has four good go-karts. Unfortunately the spares replacement situation is always rather slow and when spares become scarce the club occasionally has to go into "retirement", until more parts can be obtained for the machines.

There is a club operated by the N.A.A.F.I. with a wide range of goods on sale. The club has facilities for darts, table tennis, and billiards.

A wide range of hobbies is pursued; in particular photography is very popular. The Station has its own darkroom with facilities for developing and printing.

There is an open air cinema, with a wide screen and cinema-scope projectors. Three films are put on each week and the films are, in the main, recent issues.

If any of the members where indeed posted to Riyan and have any photographs, it would be interesting to hear their story. Ed



My First Day at (Fire) School (Tony LA aged 47.5)

My first day at Manston, I was late, I don't mean ten minutes, oh no, I went for it big style, I mean 14 or so hours big style. The country had been gripped by huge snowfall; I was at Manston, December 1990. The RAC, the Cops and the AA were all saying don't travel, so I rang the guardroom at RAF FSCTE Manston. The GD / RAFFP who answered told me if my orders said I was to be here, and then here I should be!!!! If I was late a bloke would meet me at the FSCTE School and give me my accommodation keys and tell me where to go.

So I set off in my Mini, from the Midlands. It took me Over 20 hours to cover a journey that would normally take 4.5 hours. Snow deep enough to get lost in didn't stop me, running out of fags halfway didn't stop me, running out of petrol 25 miles away did! Off I walked and fetched petrol, the face of the garage attendant was a picture, he couldn't quite believe I had walked a couple of miles in the snow to fetch petrol.

Car refuelled off I set again. After digging my way out of yet another snowdrift I stopped at a callbox, I couldn't afford a mobile, ringing Manston I explained that it would still take me hours to get there; the Corporal patiently explained that I should hurry up!

Several hours later I rolled up at RAF FSCTE Manston. The time now was

about 23:00hrs. I entered and introduced myself, without looking up the RAFFP Corporal said "YOU'RE LATE". He then told me that a bloke was waiting for me at the FSCTE, with keys and details of my block. Without explaining where the FSCTE was he left the guardroom and went back to the TV.

I set off, driving round the camp until eventually stumbling across the FSCTE main building. One light was burning inside. I knocked and walked in. Inside I was greeted, warmly, by an older chap, a little overweight, balding with broken veins across his nose and cheeks, wearing tracksuit bottoms and a sports T-shirt, aha the caretaker with my keys.

Falling back into my normal semi-brummie friendly twang...."AYUP MATE, YOU GOT SOME KEYS FOR ME?"

He answered he had and directed me to the block and pointed out the 222 club, which I came to know so well and is the forerunner to some very dodgy escapades.

I chatted with the old boy for about twenty minutes, telling him how shit the weather was and how crap the RAF bosses were, not letting me wait till after the snow, how they had just left me to it, in the snow and if that was a sign of how crap the RAF Fire bosses were then they

must be tossers. He laughed and said he was off home.

I went to my block, got settled and did the normal RAF F'man thing, hit the cans.

Next morning, the snow cleared, we all paraded on the drill square. There I was in my shiny, clean kit, shiny shoes (which I still have, 25+ years later). A voice boomed out and brought us to attention. The RAF Senior Fire ranks walked out and stood in front, closely followed by the Defence Fire Service senior ranks.

Up and down the senior ranks walked, inspecting us, I looked straight ahead, not looking at anybody in particular. Staring straight ahead, I saw coming into my vision the black peak and cap badge of the DFS. Then the voice of the FSCTE most senior DFS Officer said "AH, WE MEET AGAIN.....MATE" Yep, it was the 'caretaker' who, the day previously had been at work since 08:00 and instead of going home had waited for an half-wit LAC to turn up after prattling about in the snow all day.

I have to say, after that, the trouble I got in at RAF FSCTE Manston...got infinitely worse...

Thanks Tony that was a classic Editor

NORMA LILBURN Memories of a RAF Fire-Fighter's Wife

Part Two

After being home for 10 months we managed to get a married quarter at RAF Hemswell just up the road from RAF Scampton, the outside of the house still had camouflage painted on it! Whilst we were there I had to go RAF Nocton Hall Hospital for a minor operation. It was supposed to be operation one day and out the next. Not I, the Squadron Leader severed an artery and I nearly died. When Tom came to visit me I had the curtains around my bed and the nurses were supposed to stop him when he arrived, they missed him and he came behind the curtains. He was not the kind of man who used to bring me flowers at any time but on this occasion he had brought me some daffodils, he took one look at me with blue lips and bed on a tilt and put the flowers on my chest! I thought God, this is it! It took me a month to recover properly. I did hear later that the Squadron Leader had been moved to Germany. I said to Tom, any time I have to go to hospital there I shall get the first flight home. Low and behold we were posted to RAF Laarbruch in 1965! During our time there the World Cup Football was held between England and Germany and no one was allowed off camp that day. What a result!

We only stayed there for a year then we were posted to RAF Gutersloh. We managed to be allocated a brand new flat at Blankenhagen in a small estate of service personnel. We packed everything up once again and hit the Autobahn. The first job I had to do before bathing the kids was to scrape all the plaster from the bottom of the bath. The kitchen was out of this world as I had never seen a FITTED KITCHEN in this country. Also while we were in those flats, being on the top floor I was supposed to be the culprit for putting all sorts of rubbish down the toilet as it was flushing back into the downstairs toilets. After a lot of ho ha the German plumbers found that the basement drainage still had the cellophane wrappers round them and the builders had missed them. Problem solved, Norma free from blame.

It was great in Germany we visited some wonderful places and have great memories of our time there. We visited the Mona and Sorpe Dams, in fact all of them, went to Hameln and saw a re-enactment of the Pied Piper.



I remember we also visited Detmold where there is a statue of Hermandankmal, a war chief of the Germanic Tribes of the Roman era which is placed on top of a large monument. You can go up the steps and walk around the top where you can see the bullet holes in his skirt which the rear gunners did on their way home from bombing raids! We also had a great holiday in the Mosel Valley. I loved Germany it was so clean you would even see the residents sweeping the footpaths outside. Not here! They belong to the Council!!

My Parents came over for a visit. Tom and his mate set off at 2.00am in the morning to meet their Ferry at The Hook of Holland. There needed to be two drivers as it was 600 miles round trip. They picked my Parents up from The Hook of Holland and set off again. This took them driving around 15 hours bringing them to Blankenhagen. They had a great holiday and my Father was thrilled to walk across the Mona Dam. The two turrets they show on pictures are now gift shops. On their way back from taking my Parents back to The Hook of Holland (now Euro port) two weeks later and nearing home they were just leaving the Autobahn when they nearly crashed as a car shot in front of them, but they did arrive home safely. They could not believe that they had done all that driving and nearly crashed on the doorstep.

Whilst at Gutersloh, Tom used to build remote control planes and not far from our flat there was a large field from which we would use to fly the planes. This particular day we went down there for a "Launch" which Tom would do and I would use the remote control, Tom set off running and I am ready with the remote, when all of a

sudden he disappeared into a ditch which he didn't know was there. We had to go back home for him to get changed and to help us stop laughing hysterically as it was getting quite painful!!!

I have previously told you about our introduction of the Vulcan at Khomaksar, well we were introduced to another aircraft at an air display at Gutersloh, the Buccaneer. It touched down on the runway and then just shot up into the sky leaving a hole in the clouds. Strangely enough the Buccaneer was made by Hawker Siddeley at Brough which is just up the road from where we now live.

Unfortunately the day lead to another family medical emergency. I had taken the children to the air display we had some sandwiches and drinks of orange from the NAFFI. Nicky our son was the only one that drunk the orange and the next day we nearly lost him with gastroenteritis. I must say the Medical Officer (MO) was terrific; I left Tom looking after the kids and I had set off in the car to the camp to get the MO when I saw him coming out of the camp driving his Mini, he followed me straight home () and by the time we got back Nicky was delirious. Thank god that nothing stopped him from getting there as he saved his our son's life.

Our flats where on the top floor and on the Glide Path to the airfield, in fact when the school children where coming from England during the holidays we could see them all looking out of the windows. Gutersloh was a Master Diversion Airfield and one time when Tom was on duty a F104 Starfighter known as a "Flying Coffin" and "The Widow Maker" because of its poor safety record was circling overhead. When it continued to do so and I became a little scared and I brought the children in from the playing field outside. The last time it came over I felt sure it was going to hit us. It never came around again so I gathered it landed ok. When Tom came in the next day from duty I mentioned it to him and apparently the Starfighter was having problems getting his undercarriage down and was so short of fuel he wouldn't have been able to go round again. The fact that he could have crashed into our block of flats was quite scary.

There are a couple of car and shopping stories I recall; one day I asked my children Julie and Nicky to go to the local shop to buy a bread loaf as I was busy, when they returned I got hold of the loaf and said "oh

this is stale” and for some unknown reason I threw it at the wall, and as it hit the wall some plaster fell off. I brushed the loaf down and there was no damage to it and took it back to the store. The manager of the store whom I knew well at this time said” oh you English you like your bread too soft” and changed it for me.

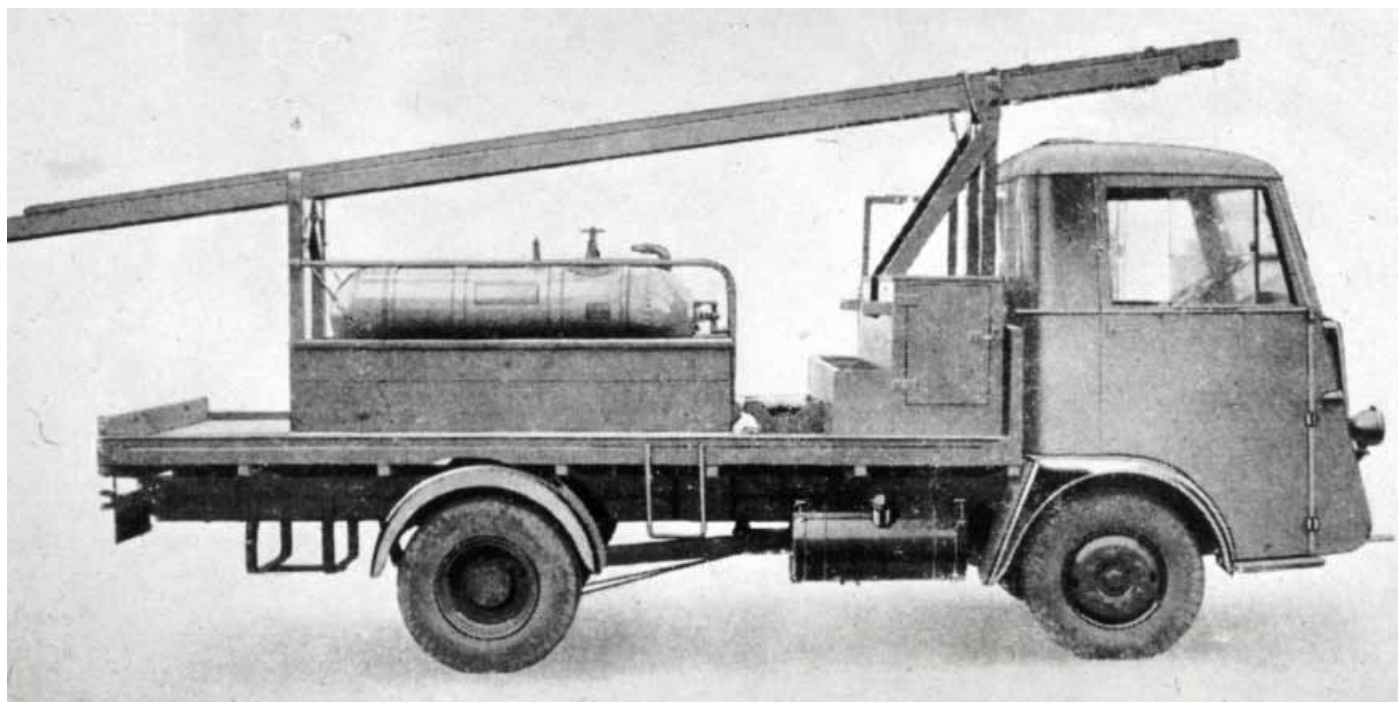
My friend and I used to go to a Canadian Base in Soest. We used go and get two weeks of shopping. When we got there we would go into the cafe and have one of their mammoth breakfasts before entering

the supermarket. When we came out of the supermarket we would have enough food to put in the back of our estate car packed up to the roof and it would have only cost us about £5. We used to love that trip, those were the days!

We came back from Germany in September 1969 and Tom was demobbed. We settled in my home town which is Hessle near Hull. Tom didn't wish to join the civil fire service. He said he had done 12 years without an ulcer and I returned to my job as a legal secretary and Tom worked for

East Yorkshire Motor Services for 30 odd years. For my punishment of going to Aden was I came back with a Kidney disease, i.e., I make Kidney Stones. I had my first one removed and it was the size of a golf ball, the second was large and the third one they had to take the left Kidney with it in 1986, since when I have had excellent health – but for the years passing.

Thanks Norma for your story from a wives point of view



A Short Version of My Time in RAF 1953 -56

LAC D. G. Wood. RAF, No 4131192.

After being Kitted out at Cardington as AC2, (Three Days), I moved on to West Kirby for Square Bashing, (Eight Weeks,) and then on to Sutton On Hull for my Firefighting Course, (Six Weeks), Then on to RAF Benson as a fully-fledged AC1 Fireman. After a few weeks, I go back to Cardington for Driving instruction course, (three weeks), I passed out with flying colours and so Back to Benson as a qualified driver, I was assigned by (Flight Sgt Proctor) to a crash crew of which there were three, one on night duty, one on Standby and domestic duties, one on the Drome as Crash Crew. Our Vehicles were as follows, 1945 Monitor, Co2 Gas Truck, Water Bowser, Mk V Foam Tender, Land Rover Crash Rescue, plus a Karrier Bantam Domestic Tender.

Next after some weeks off I go to Brize

Norton to train on American Ejector seats, the best week of all my service Life. (The Yanks live in a different world. not enough space to record the accommodation and the food we received there).

After a few months, off I went yet again to Sutton on Hull for my Advanced Firefighting course (Three Weeks) I passed out with a good grade, Now as LAC I felt that I was well qualified to do my job, and I settled down at last to my RAF duties as a fireman, Three days on the Drome .Three days on Standby and domestic duties, three day on night duty, then a 72 hr pass, where I got on my trusted 1932 600cc Sloper BSA hand change, and headed for Southampton, it was great to see my parents once more.

I attended several Aircraft incidents during the next two years and many trips to

Southampton and back. I was very glad at times for the training that I had received, but all in all it was a great three years that I went through, and many more stories I could tell. I am now almost 82 years old with many happy RAF memories.

Dave Wood.



MUSEUM OF RAF FIREFIGHTING

I'm sure all of you were shocked to read the brief flyer enclosed in the last edition of "FLASHPOINT" stating that the Museum at Scampton had been closed down suddenly.

I'm very grateful to Trevor Hayes for inserting that into every copy of the magazine as it really helped the membership and the wider fire service community to hear the sad news that nobody saw coming.

On Friday the 19th November I received an e-mail from the acting OC Base Support Wing stating that the Station Commander wished to see me the following Monday afternoon at 14.00hrs, was I available? Of course I cleared my diary and then spent the rest of the weekend worrying about why she wanted to see me. At first I thought that she was merely making sure that both I and the rest of my family were coping with life in general following the sudden death of our eldest daughter on the 9th September. But then I thought that surely she would approach me less formally for such a delicate issue? My thoughts then turned towards the Museum! The worst case scenario did cross my mind, but everyone around me told me not to be so silly it couldn't possibly be bad news about the Museum, it was doing so well and attracting so many good comments from all of our visitors. The Monday afternoon duly arrived and I presented myself in her office at 13.50. Her PA looked at me a little nervously, but again I didn't think that anything was wrong. It was only when I entered her office and saw both her and OC BSW waiting for me did I start to sense that something was wrong. Looking at me straight in the eye, she announced that there was no easy way of telling me this so she was just going to come straight out with it! "Due to the fact that the Air Show team needed offices to run the 2017 Air show and the fact that all spare buildings at Scampton were so dilapidated, she had no alternative not to renew our encroachment, and that she was therefore closing the Museum with immediate effect". The cost to renovate any building at Scampton was put at £100,000 and as our building was the only spare structure fit for purpose she had no option but to close us down! We're certain, that this wasn't an easy decision, but none the less, it was a very bitter pill for me to swallow. I was then given the next piece of startling news; we had to be out of the building by the 3rd Jan 2017 at the latest! There was some good news!

We would be allowed to keep the separate vehicle hangar for now but as it didn't fully comply with modern Health & Safety standards we wouldn't be allowed to open it to the general public. I left the office at 14.15, my world in tatters!



Whats happened to the library?

I'm sure that I don't have to tell you that these things happen in the military. We all live by the rules, we all know the risks, and at the end of the day the needs of the Service come first. Scampton is hosting an Air show in 2017, it's the CO's remit to assist the team to deliver that Air show, and so that's why the encroachment couldn't be renewed. Without offices, the show simply couldn't go ahead.

I have always been very grateful to various Station Commanders both at Manston and Scampton for giving me and my team the chance to develop the Museum so there is no criticism from any of us levelled against any of them or indeed the MOD as a whole. We all have our jobs to do and with ever increasing costs within defence, there simply didn't appear to be any other option.

It took about 24hrs for the reality to sink in but I set about how we would manage this latest situation. The first thing was to tell as many people as possible what had happened. We had, of course, got loads of visits booked for the remainder of 2016 and 2017 so these people had to be contacted first. Our web page was updated as were all of our social networking sites. In 24hrs, we received over 10,000 hits as the news started to spread. I was interviewed by several newspapers and local radio stations including BBC Radio Lincolnshire. The over-riding message that I wanted to put out there was that we were down but not out! Steve Harrison came up with the idea of "PROJECT PHOENIX".

The name given to all of our upcoming activities aimed at surviving this this and re-opening the Museum sometime in the future. Carl Bell, our Web Master, even managed to enlist the help of a local artist who very kindly designed a motif that we could use on our publicity material. This message is crucial, we didn't want people to think that this was the end! We also didn't want to be critical of the CO or the MOD as a whole, it is very important that we don't lose their support.

Once we'd dealt with the initial aftermath, we set about the enormous task of packing up the Museum. I must say a massive thank you to all of my family and my volunteers who got stuck in to this massive task without complaining. In true service fashion, they simply got on with it. More than 20,000 objects were wrapped up and boxed along with all of the cabinets, display boards, manikins etc. These items were then transported into secure storage away from RAF Scampton. All of the services that we had fitted were removed, as they belonged to the Museum not the RAF. This included a full CCTV system and the latest up to date LED Emergency Lighting systems which ironically had only been fitted the week before the announcement of our closure came along. Can you imagine how frustrating that was for our team of electricians!

We also had to move 7 vehicles from No2 hangar up to our storage hangar. This was certainly a challenge as the fleet number 47 at the time of closure. Talk about a tight squeeze!

I'm still not sure how we did it, but the whole building was cleared ready for hand-over by the 23rd December. A fantastic effort from all concerned! I cannot thank my team enough especially, as I was not in a good way myself both emotionally and physically. My wife Kim deserves special praise as she worked tirelessly throughout as well as looking after me!

After the Christmas and New Year break, we set about sorting out our options. I began my last tour of duty at RAF Waddington which also brought about a new set of challenges, but I must say it's nice to be back on an active fire section surrounded by over 80 fellow firefighters. I can see this will be a nice way to finish my time in service.

The team are now focussing our attention on several key areas, the first being the

search for a new home. I think the time has come to accept that we cannot rely on the MOD giving us a building in the future and with that in mind we have turned our attention to other options namely outside the wire. Thanks in no small part to our reputation (No 10 tourist attraction in Lincoln), there has been a significant interest from local councils to find us a new home in their area.



Kim packing boxes

We want the Museum to stay in “Bomber County” which is steeped in RAF history. It still supports the RAF in many ways and I don’t think we’ll find another County that has so many ex-RAF Firefighters amongst its population! I certainly don’t want to split up my volunteers who have stuck with me through thick and thin and who remain as committed as me in making a success of the Museum. Negotiations are well advanced and I think we’ve found our new home. I’m not going to say anymore, but I remain very positive indeed. In order for us to qualify for various grants and incentives, we are in the process of becoming a registered charity. This should also see the future of the collection safe guarded even further. The costs involved for operations outside of the wire are massive, especially if you consider the size of the building required to house the collection under one roof. This in itself will mean a great deal of change in the way that we operate, the most obvious one being the need to charge



The new crew room!!

an admission fee. We need to attract even more visitors but hopefully this will be easier if we are open to the general public?

The next key area is to make sure that the Museum remains in the public eye. I continue to make presentations around the County telling the history of The RAF Fire & Rescue Services and the Museum itself. We are already booked into various events this year and as such the vehicle collection will be out and about where possible. A considerable amount of effort is being put into our restoration projects and we hope to have a few finished this year.

We recently attended some filming at the Lincolnshire Showground where a piece was being shot for the BBC programme “Bargain Hunt”. I was interviewed by the flamboyant host, Charlie Ross. We spoke

for a short while about the WOT1 and its role within the RAF Fire Service. Charlie was fascinated and he was even given the chance to take the WOT1 for a little spin around the car park!

We have also taken delivery of two more exciting exhibits. They are in the form of IBEX vehicles from Gibraltar. They are the only two 4x4 versions ever built and both of them served their entire careers with the Defence Fire Service on the Island. They are in very good condition and should make fairly simple restorations. Sadly one of them was stripped of a few parts before it left the Island so we’ll need to buy some replacement engine parts to get it up and running.



The decision has been made to put the Mk6 restoration project on hold for the time being. It's not a good idea to split up the collection before a move to a new home. We want to keep everything close at hand so that it's easier when the time comes to re-locate as a whole.

In closing, I'd like to thank everyone for their continued support. I've received hundreds of phone calls and e-mails over the past few months. Some of you have also made cash donations for which we are eternally grateful. Without visitors of course, we have no income. We have to survive with what we have left over in the bank account. We now have to find storage fees as well as cover for our existing out-goings so every penny is essential for our continued existence let alone the move to a new location!

Please stay up to date with our web site, and I hope to have good news when the next edition of the magazine is published.

*All the best Steve
WO Steve Shirley MBE, GIFireE.*



IBEX

Proficiency Shield



On page 22 of the winter edition I place an article about the Flying Training Command Proficiency Shield and the story of RAF Strubby winning it in 1967.



To my surprise our member Ray Hill posted the certificate on Facebook of RAF Oakington who won it in 1961. They and were also runners up in 1972 when it was won by RAF Cranwell.



I also found in the Museum of RAF Firefighting archives a picture of RAF St Eval from 1950 which would be a Coastal Command competition.



Found in the depths of the vehicle hanger at the museum a rare target that was used in the drill competitions in the early days.

HASTINGS CRASH ON THE EQUATOR By Bill Grundie

You may well remember in the 2015 winter edition of Flashpoint an article by Roger Stevens member 559 entitled 'RAF Gan Hastings Aircraft Crash; A Fireman's View' in that story he mentions Bill Grundie who was the first survivor that he helped ashore who was a fireman he served with at RAF Ballykelly.

Well here is Bills story of that eventful flight.

In life there are some things you wish to remember and others you would like to forget. The incident that I am writing about is of the latter.

It all began on the morning of Tuesday 1st March 1960 which was a short time after I had been posted from RAF Ballykelly in Northern Ireland. I was born and raised in Belfast and when I was informed that my next posting was to a far off place called Ceylon, I was delighted. My posting was to RAF Staging Post Katunayke and I was to travel by the troopship Dunera. On board the ship for a few weeks was not very exciting or comfortable but I was kept busy on board as an assistant projectionist. The chief projectionist was very under the influence most of the time and I was often left to get the show on the road.

Upon arrival at Katunayke I was quickly greeted by my fellow firemen. Most of them were either demob happy or about to return to the UK as the station was closing down a short time later.

Whilst I was there RAF Gan was a detachment from Katunayke so I decided one day that I would try and get a jolly

(free flight) to Gan. I had some leave left and was able to book a flight for Tuesday 1st March 1960 11.00 hours on a Hastings arriving from RAF Changi in Singapore. When I arrived at the apron I was informed that Hastings TG579 had technical problems and would be delayed for several hours. The aircraft was declared ready for take off around 17.00 hours. I boarded the Hastings and was informed there would be 14 passengers plus crew, total of 20 persons on board. I took up my rear facing seat next to a window at the rear of the aircraft. My belongings consisted of change of clothing and a nice new camera which I had planned to take a lot of photos to show my fire section mates back at Katunayke. Most of the passengers were going back to the UK tour x. I learnt a short time later that the Britannia which they were on made an emergency landing with undercarriage problems at Karachi. That is what I would call real bad luck. However that is another story.

It was daylight when we left Ceylon and the weather was fine. Distance to Gan was about 600 miles so not too far to go. About one hour after take off the weather changed and there was a lot of turbulence, this was to get worse as we were approaching Gan. I remember looking out the window as we were about to land when suddenly the Hastings revved up and banked left for another attempt. I could just about see the runway lights through the very heavy storm. The aircraft was obviously attempting another landing in the tropical storm conditions when I felt a number of thuds and jolts in my rear facing seat. This

went on for a few minutes and I quickly became aware that all was not well at the pump. Suddenly all went quiet except for some creaking. No tannoy messages but soon a loud voice from the Quartermaster telling us to evacuate the aircraft. There was a large crate to the right of my seat and this appeared to have moved near the main escape door from which there was an inrush of water, so it was off with the seat belts and everyman for himself by jumping out the door and into the Indian Ocean. The sea was covered in oil and fuel and I could see dinghies. I had to push a fellow passenger out the door as he froze and said he could not swim. I assisted him to one of the dinghies and we managed to climb onboard. When onboard the dinghies I could see that 2 of the port engines were missing. I was informed some time later that 3 engines and the undercarriage had been torn off on impact with the sea. Oh how lucky we all were that horrible night. Some of the dinghies were still tied to the Hastings wing. As the aircraft was slowly sinking it was of concern that we could be dragged down with the aircraft. Searching around the dinghies someone found a knife and cut us loose. We made our way with the on board oars, sometimes going round in circles as everyone was paddling the same way. Someone shouted that their dinghies were taking on water. This prompted a stage left response by some on board. Our shoes were thrown overboard as a precaution. An attempt was made to pull all the dinghies together when we heard a cry for help. I hesitated for a moment just thinking about sharks and barracuda which were sighted later. My Station CO from Katunayke Wing Commander Atherton dove in and assisted one of the crew members until the rescue by marine craft. The marine craft did an excellent job under such stormy conditions and in total darkness. We were all bouncing up and down on the waves and now and again we could see the lights from Gan. I was told that the Hastings crashed about 4 miles off Gan and just short of the equator. There was a lot of singing and banter on board the dinghies even praying. Eventually we sighted a Shackleton flying overhead and dropping flares. Long live the Shackleton and their crew. This was a great morale booster and it then became clear that we were all going to be ok.

The marine craft found us and came alongside each dinghy where we climbed up the rope ladder with difficulty in the



Fire Section at RAF Katunayke

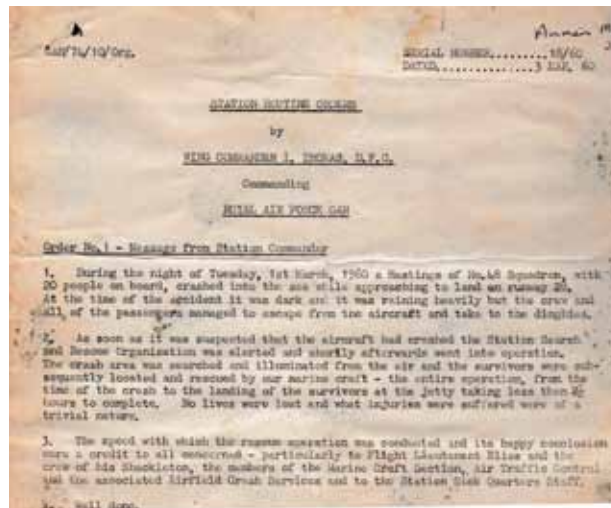
choppy sea. The storm was still raging throughout the rescue. It felt great to get on board and even better when at the jetty I was assisted ashore by a fellow fireman Roger Stevens. What a surprise. I was very proud of Roger and his crew to see them all lined up on the jetty to greet us survivors. A day or so later we met up with other Firemen for a big piss up in the NAFFI. Roger your 10 bob was well spent and as I had lost all my Rupees in the crash I needed it to buy the crew a drink. 10 bob went a long way in those days. I promise to pay you back with a few drinks when we next meet.

After one night in sick quarters for observation I began to think about my return to Ceylon. I had a few cuts to my face through being hit with something onboard the Hastings but just trivial. When I enquired about my return to Katunayke I was informed that it would be in 2 days time and my aircraft was another Hastings. I can honestly say that I was not pleased. When I turned up for the flight I was met by my CO Wing Commander Atherton and he said that if he could get me on board a ship he would rather than returning in a Hastings. He returned to Ceylon in a Shackleton lucky man. I can tell you that for me it was a white knuckle ride all the way back.



An Ariel view of Gan

Everyone on board survived and there were just a few minor injuries. Upon landing at Katunayke I was met by the on duty Crash Crew and it really felt wonderful to be back to the nearest thing to home. The crew members were not aware of all the crash details and thought that I had met my lot. There were plenty of celebrations in the NAFFI that night. I was a young 24 year old Corporal Fireman then but now almost 80 and a long time retired. You know people ask you how you feel after such a traumatic incident and I can only give you my view and that is that I felt invulnerable and that it could



never happen to me again. Don't believe it now so many years later of course. One thing for sure I vowed to never again go on a jolly.

After a final few months at Katunayke I was posted to RAF Ekla which was a signals unit. I had to close the fire section down then return to Katunayke to finish closing procedures there before being finally posted to RAF Tengah in Singapore.

After a few months I was posted back to UK and RAF Andover, RAF Barnham, RAF Aldergrove (where I met the love of my life and got married), RAF Honington, RAF Ballykelly (again) RAF Hal Far, RAF Hereford, RAF Machrihanish, then back to RAF Changi Singapore (VC 10 instead of Hastings) RAF Upavon (promoted to Sergeant) RAF Coningsby and finally RAF Waddington until demob in 1977.

Before demob I took a residential pre release course at Plymouth University for Health and Safety qualifications to the Institute of Industrial Safety Officers and the NEBSS Certificate. These qualifications enabled me to get my first civilian job to a new post at Rampton High Security Hospital as Fire Prevention/Health and Safety Manager. This post I held for the next 23 years and until my retirement in 2002. Rampton Hospital was under the Home Office at the time and all the procedures and terminology was very familiar to me being an ex RAF Fireman. During my time there I had the privilege of recruiting and working with other ex RAF Firemen such as Flight Sergeant Griff Jones, Sergeant Bob Sleigh (untimely death through illness) Sergeant John (Dusty) Miller and Flight Sergeant Steve (Silver Fox) Harrison who was a pleasure to work with and who could always be relied on to do the right thing

when required. As you can see I was somewhat biased when recruiting my staff. It is the quality that counts and also with what you are familiar with. I was a member of the National Association of Hospital Fire Officers (NAHFO) for 23 years and Trent branch Chairman for 6 years. Never forgot my fire-fighter roots.

Hope all you readers will not be too bored with this story and if not you can read further details of the crash in a lot more detail via Google on "SPLASHDOWN ON THE EQUATOR" by John Cooper who was one of the survivors.

Bill Grundie Dip OHSM, MIOSH, Reg SP, MIFPO (ret)

Member 1107



Crash One at RAF Tengah

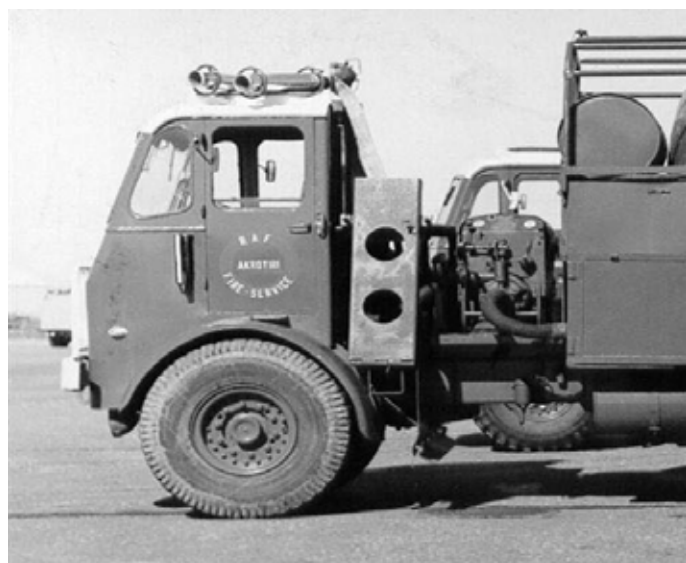
Thanks for a great unusual tale Bill it's not often that a fire fighter is on the other end of a crash. I think the interest on that ten shilling needs sorting out between you and Roger though.

Thanks also for your kind words as regards working at Rampton, it was a place with many challenges, but we always came up with solutions and I found it easy to settle in because of the systems which were very familiar. Also going to the NAHFO meetings was like having a mini RAF Fire Service re-union as there were many ex RAF Firemen that took on the Hospital Fire Officer role. The mention of Bob Sleigh brought back fond memories of him from Masirah as one of the Sergeants there when I was a young SAC, a great character and joker just what you need on an unaccompanied tour.

ED

FOAM LAYERS- The Continuing Story

In the spring edition of Flashpoint Dutchy Holland wrote a piece about the development of foam layers in RAF Akrotiri lead by Warrant Officer Hammond. This was followed by some more information supplied by Alan Dawes who was also present at that time. Also only a couple of weeks after, some photographs appeared on Facebook posted by Que Eaton, son of Tony of the Hippos in question which have I have reproduced below.



This has been followed by a letter from our good friend in New Zealand, Colin Hall giving RNZAF take on foam layers it reads as follows.

Dear Steve,

I haven't received the latest edition of Flashpoint as yet, but have read it online and was particularly interested in the initial introduction of foam-laying equipment

As you are aware, my fire service career extended across two Royal Air Forces over a period of twenty-five years from 1957-1982, the last 15 of which I was commissioned in the RNZAF as the Staff Officer RNZAF Fire service in the ranks from P/o to Squadron Leader, a unique career in many ways.

In the mid-seventies, as a [then] Fl Lt I was asked in passing by no less a person than CAS himself what interest the RNZAF should have in Foam Laying Equipment such as the RAF had at that time. When asked such a question I had learned, there no such thing as "casual interest" and that I had just been told to "look into it". I did just that, of course, and made extensive enquiries having first pointed out, as you do, that with standard crash-line vehicles laying a foam path was virtually impossible, which was why the RAF invested in specialist equipment in the first place.

My enquiries took me to the USAF, and the RAAF, and finally, to the USN and for anyone who knows anything about the Navy they are nothing but thorough in looking at a problem from every angle before introduction into service.

It turned out that that the US Navy had made a very detailed study of foam laying of runways for wheels-up landings, and had produced a very detailed report, a copy of which I obtained through the very helpful office of the US Military Attaché in the US Embassy in Wellington, himself a Navy pilot.

Without going into great detail, the conclusions of the report were, quite simply, that there was no evidence supporting the theory that landing into a foam strip made any difference whatsoever, other than psychological benefit to pilots who might feel some reassurance. To which my USN Pilot friend added, "That would be air force pilots of course"!!!

So it was never introduced and it really became a bit of a millstone for the RAF which eventually discarded the idea and dispensed with the equipment.

Thanks to you guys for all the contributions. Ed



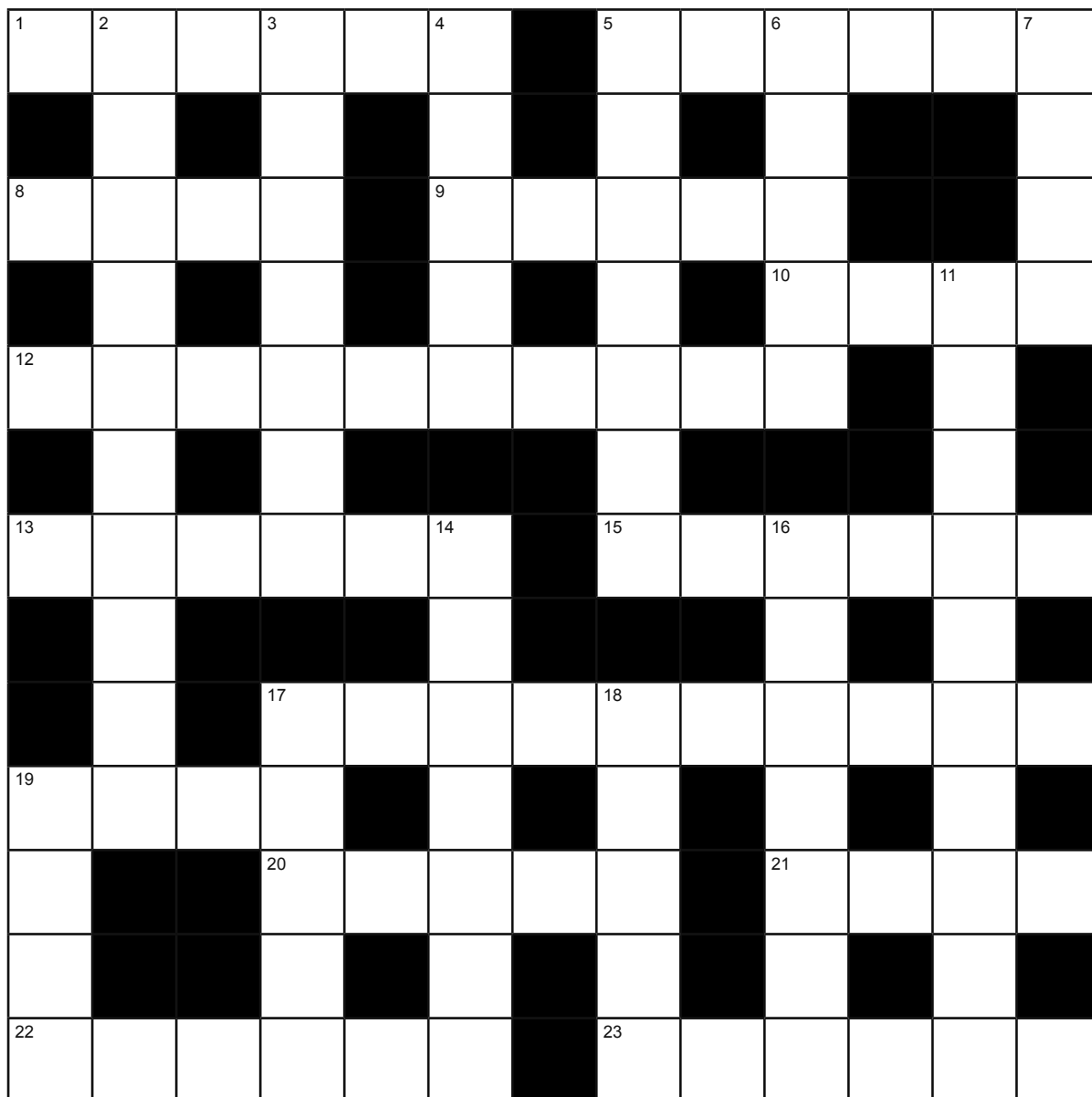
EJECTION SEAT DEVELOPMENT FIRSTS



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



* The Armstrong Whitworth A.W.52 was a British flying wing aircraft design of the late 1940s for research into a proposed flying wing jet airliner. Three aircraft, the A.W.52G glider and two jet-powered research aircraft, were built for the programme. Top speed: 805 km/h Wingspan: 27 m Length: 11 m retired: 1954 Engine type: Rolls-Royce Nene First flight: November 13, 1947 Manufacturers: Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft.



Across

1. 23 Ac done at start of shift. (6,)
5. Greek poet, good at 19 and 3 on airfields. (6)
8. Nips round in a whirl. (4)
9. Initially North American Air Force inspires fireman's favourite acronym. (5)
10. No short operations will sound like a mistake has made. (4)
12. Strange erotic corn put right. (10)
13. Loll has everything in cry of amazement. (6)
15. This chap sounds like a hot spring. (6)
17. Cad panting erratically while imitating Fred Astaire. (10)
19. Orb I arrange to use for 20, 21 & 23. (4)
- 20, 21 & 23 Space between timepiece and commitment to rostered task. (5, 4, 6)
21. See 20
22. Messy Brides (6)
23. See 20

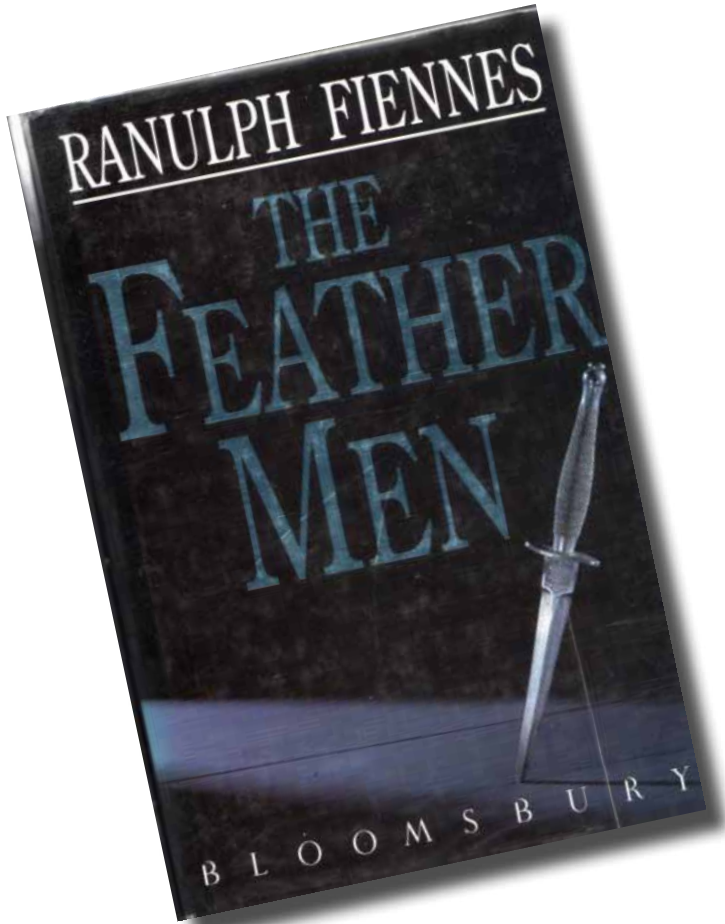
Down

2. Water Horse Station I found in brain. (10)
3. Type of power that goes before 17 Dn and 21 & 23 Ac (7)
4. Offspring in charge of hedgehog? (5)
5. Between 19 Dn and 23 Ac it's what you use 5 ac for. (7)
6. Disease found in Capri onshore. (5)
7. Types of 19Dn that give a hoot. (4)
11. Type of 19Dn cavity provides Fireman's mailbox. (10)
14. It is paw strangely that leads to large deer. (7)
16. A part of one hundred in odd expert. (7)
17. Preceded by 3 or 20 it's lofty structure. (5)
18. Aircraftsman he'd hurt. (5)
19. Prison time for flyer? (4)

Recommended Books

In previous Flashpoints I have recommended books for those interested in the Dhofar War. This rather controversial book is another one I have enjoyed. Recently I watch the film and enjoyed that.

Give it a go, an intriguing story.



The Feather Men is a 1991 novel by the British adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes (reissued as Killer Elite, echoing the title of its 2011 film adaptation). The book was initially published on 17 October 1991 by Bloomsbury Publishing.

The book tells the story of four British Army soldiers, including two members of the Special Air Service, who are assassinated by a hit squad known as “The Clinic”. The murders are carried out over a 17-year period, on the orders of a Dubai sheikh whose three sons were killed by British forces in Oman during a battle with Communist guerrillas.

Fiennes claimed that he himself was targeted by the group, but was saved by a group of vigilantes calling themselves the “Feather Men”



If you are a fan of the Vulcan this is a really detailed book of its history, from its development to its farewell. It contains diagrams, pictures and technical data.

I got this on a market stall for £2.50 which I thought was a fair price!

Found at a car boot



One of our members, Archie Sullivan and my old desert buddy from Masirah 67/68 time sent me this clipping. Archie says "It was from a recruiting drive held at Scampton in 1967 and featured a fireman (me). I had hair then, unlike today"



OBITUARIES

From Dorothy Hansford – wife of James Hansford Member No. 674

William John Wright Member No 141 Passed away suddenly on 13th February 2017.

John will be sadly missed but remembered always by his many friends and colleagues from happier times when serving at RAF Aldergrove in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Marlene, family and friends.

May he Rest in Peace.

The Group from Aldergrove

A rarely seen image of a Mk 6 under going trials



“Above and Beyond the Call of Duty”

Gallantry Awards made to WWII R.A.F. Fire Fighters

The deeds of aircrew of WWII are well documented, but the exploits and courage of the ordinary airmen are not so well known. Displayed here are some examples of awards that were given to airmen in recognition of their extraordinary feats of courage while carrying out fire-fighting on crashed aircraft which involved the rescue of many aircrew members.

358920 Acting Sergeant Sidney Boys, Royal Air Force.

AWARDED THE GEORGE MEDAL

This airman is in charge of the station fire tender. During a night in September, 1940, he was ordered to proceed to an aircraft which had crashed in flames. Although the aircraft was known to be loaded with bombs, and enemy aircraft were overhead, this airman drove his fire tender up to the crash and manned the hose himself and succeeded in extinguishing the fire. The crew had descended by parachute. In October, 1940, he again proceeded to the scene of a crash, and although he did not know if the aircraft was loaded with bombs, he manned the hose himself and succeeded in extricating one member of the crew alive; the other two were killed. In November, 1940, he drove his fire tender through thick fog to the scene of another crash, and knowing that there were bombs in the wreckage (one having already exploded), he once more manned the hose himself and put out the fire. By his prompt and courageous action on this occasion he saved the lives of two of the crew. He has displayed a complete disregard for his personal safety and by his courageous actions has saved the lives of three people and set a magnificent example to the men under his control.

Sergeant Sidney Boys was presented with his medal by His Majesty the King at Buckingham Palace on 17 June 1941.

(London Gazette – 8 April 1941)



506993 Sergeant John William EMMETT.

AWARDED THE BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL

In the early hours of a day in September, 1941, this airman saw an aircraft having difficulty in landing at an aerodrome. Anticipating a crash he took charge of the fire tender, although not officially on duty, and arrived at the scene of the accident within three minutes. The aircraft, which had been broken in two by the impact, was burning furiously and two members of the crew could be seen alive in the flames below the fuselage. Sergeant Emmett, protected only by asbestos gloves, dashed into the burning wreckage and extricated one of the crew. Before he could return for the second man, the petrol tank split and the fierce heat of the blazing petrol then prevented any near approach. Sergeant Emmett tried repeatedly to extricate the other living member of the crew by means of a grab hook but without success. In spite of a violent explosion, Sergeant Emmett continued to direct the work of his fire party until the fire was completely extinguished and the remaining bodies were recovered. Unfortunately the rescued airman has since died of his injuries. Sergeant Emmett on this occasion displayed great devotion to duty and courage and disregard for his own safety. He has been in charge of the station fire fighting personnel for the past 9 months and has shown considerable fortitude and presence of mind at many flying accidents on and near the station.

Sergeant Emmett was presented with his medal by His Majesty the King at Buckingham Palace on 21 July 1942.

(London Gazette – 6 January 1942)

615408 Leading Aircraftman Harold Benjamin Venn.

AWARDED THE BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL

One day in March, 1942, Leading Aircraftman Venn, as a member of a fire tender party, assisted in extinguishing a fire in an aircraft, which had been caused by an enemy raider and he was instrumental in saving a considerable part of the aircraft. On 3 occasions, on one day in March, 1942, the aerodrome was attacked and heavily bombed. Fires were caused in petrol bowsers and aircraft, and, while the raids were in process, Leading Aircraftman Venn, with complete disregard of danger, again assisted in extinguishing the fires. The courage and devotion to duty displayed by this airman have been outstanding.

He received his British Empire Medal from His Majesty the King on 8 May 1945

(London Gazette – 8 June 1942)

1003857 Leading Aircraftman William Tames Hitchcock, Royal Air Force.

AWARDED THE BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL

In May, 1942, a Wellington aircraft crashed in flames on a landing ground and the occupants were killed. Leading Aircraftman Hitchcock displayed outstanding courage in removing most of the bodies from the blazing wreckage. Again, in August, 1942, a Kittyhawk aircraft crashed in flames on the same landing ground. Leading Aircraftman Hitchcock rushed from the fire tender with a hose, disappeared into the flames and shortly reappeared carrying the body of the pilot. With the assistance of another member of the crew, he managed to get the body clear of the burning wreckage. Leading Aircraftman Hitchcock has displayed the greatest courage and devotion to duty.

Leading Aircraftman was presented with his medal by His Majesty the King at Buckingham Palace on 23 October 1945

(London Gazette – 29 December 1942)



This was taken in Gibraltar 1962/64 time and submitted by Jim Smith who says it shows "A" Crew and the winners of the Coastal Command Fire Competition, he cannot remember all the names, can you fit in the blanks?

*Left to Right back row -1st ? 2nd Eddie Wicks 3rd Pete Turton 4th ? 5th Jack ? 6th Jim Smith 7th Pete Brady
Front seated 1st? 2nd Mick Mills? Tan 4th ?*

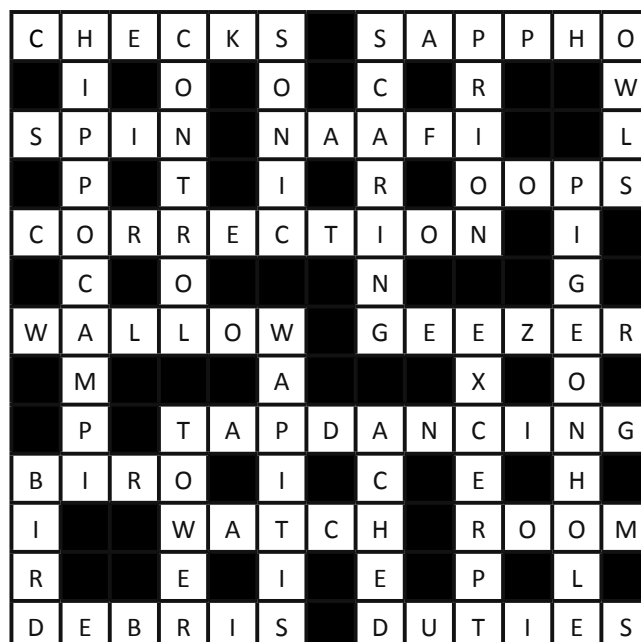




Image of a cigarette card showing a Streamlined Crossley and rescue crew

(Image courtesy of Museum of RAF Fire Fighting)

There may be some debate about the colour red but in an article of Flight magazine it states

“The prototype of this most effective vehicle with its RED, semi streamlined bodywork was the object of general admiration at the last RAF display.”



A rare colour image of 'Weeton Type' foam tender

(Image courtesy of Que Eaton)