



# FLASHPOINT

ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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# Who To Contact - Officers and Committee

Patron
Air Marshal Sir Roger Austin KCB AFC RAF (Ret'd)
President
Ron Brown
Member 294
38 Sedgebrook, Liden, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3 6EY.
Tel: 07833 631963
Email: <a href="mailto:brown026@virginmedia.com">brown026@virginmedia.com</a>
Vice – President
Steve Harrison
58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ
Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568
Email <a href="mailto:silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com">silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com</a>
Chairman
Steve Shirley MBE Grad I Fire E
16 Rutland Way, Scampton, Lincoln LN1 2UJ
Tel 07912 658402
Email <a href="mailto:steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk">steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk</a>
Vice- Chairman
Donald Pape
7 Keys Brow, High Harrington,M Workington, Cumbria, CA14 5RR
Tel: 01946 834319 Mobile: 07954 177486
Email <a href="mailto:donaldpape252@yahoo.com">donaldpape252@yahoo.com</a>
General Secretary
Mike Clapton
Member 704
4 Fairfax Road, Cirencester, Gloucester, GL7 1NF.
Tel: 07379 459369
Email: <a href="mailto:fire.bucket@btinternet.com">fire.bucket@btinternet.com</a>
Assistant General Secretary
Val Moss
2 Nursery Road, Watermoor, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1NU
Mobile: 07966373399Home 01285640745
Email <a href="mailto:moss01285@gmail.com">moss01285@gmail.com</a>
Treasurer
Trevor Hayes
2 Gypsy lane, Hunton Bridge, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8PR.
Tel: 01923 331975
Email: <a href="mailto:hayes.trevor425@gmail.com">hayes.trevor425@gmail.com</a>
Membership Secretary
Brian Jones
4 Bluebell Close, Pakefield, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 7EH
Tel: 01502 567524 / 07772247295
Email: <a href="mailto:813jones@talktalk.net">813jones@talktalk.net</a>
Flashpoint Editor
Reg Metcalfe
10 Greystoke Close, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 9EF
Home 01768630339 Mobile. 07548873159
Email: <a href="mailto:advisorp@btinternet.com">advisorp@btinternet.com</a>
Assistant Flashpoint Editor
Steve Harrison
58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ
Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568
Email <a href="mailto:silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com">silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com</a>
Remembrance Parade Co-ordinator
Paul Murray
Sweet Apple Cottage, 5 Upper Weald, Calverton, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK 19 6EL
Tel: 01908 261254 / 07866 940689
Email: <a href="mailto:pmurr7753@gmail.com">pmurr7753@gmail.com</a>

Web Master
Dave Kirk
1 Fyling Road, North Yorkshire, YO21 3NA
Tel: 01947 604613 / 07948 808689
Email: <a href="mailto:webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk">webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk</a>
AREA CO-ORDINATORS
Lincolnshire
Dave Grant
7 Cliff Road, Spridlington, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, LN8 2DW
Tel: 07952 977582
Email <a href="mailto:davegrant117@gmail.com">davegrant117@gmail.com</a>
Cornwall, Devon & Somerset
Terry Mortimore
32 Newbridge, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3LX
Tel:
Email: <a href="mailto:terry_mortimore@yahoo.com">terry_mortimore@yahoo.com</a>
North West & Wales
Reg Metcalfe
10 Greystoke Close, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 9EF
Tel 07548873159
Email <a href="mailto:advisorp@btinternet.com">advisorp@btinternet.com</a>
North
Robert Atkinson Member 108
4 Fairway, Stella Park, Blaydon, Tyne and Wear, NE21 4LL
Tel: 0191 4148176
Norfolk
Paul Wincote
Mobile: 07896583473
Email: <a href="mailto:paul.wincote.2@gmail.com">paul.wincote.2@gmail.com</a>
RAF
Steve Shirley MBE Grad I Fire E
16 Rutland Way, Scampton, Lincoln, LN1 2UJ
Tel: 07912 658402
Email: <a href="mailto:steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk">steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk</a>
South
John Hurl
34 Copt Elm Close, Charlton King, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL53 8AE.
Tel: 01242 522503
London
Vacant
Scotland
Alec Robertson
12 Kinclavin Crescent, Murthly, Perth, PH1 4EU.
Tel: 01738 710487
Cambridge & Suffolk
Vacant
Northern Ireland
Bob Ewing
17 Newtown Crescent , Donaghadee Road, Newtownards, County Down, Northern Ireland, BT23 7GP
Tel 0771161916
Email <a href="mailto:robertewing241@yahoo.com">robertewing241@yahoo.com</a>
Essex
Vacant

# EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring 24 edition of flashpoint. I am going to keep this editorial short and sweet to leave more space for the content of this issue. It only seems like yesterday that I was putting together the last flashpoint. Feels like a full-time job somehow. A big thank you to all those who have contributed to this edition. Without your content there would of course be no magazine. Keep those articles coming in please.

This year is going to be a busy one for the association members and non-members alike with the upcoming dedication of the RAF Fire Service Memorial Wall at the National Memorial Arboretum on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June. Obviously, I’m sure that this is going to be a well-attended event with folk travelling from all over the country. It is going to be fantastic to have a dedicated

memorial where we can go to remember fellow firefighters who are sadly no longer with us. This dedication also coincides with our AGM weekend which you should all have received info on already, in the post. Get yourselves booked up and prepare for a fantastic weekend. Don Pape and Mike Clapton have worked tirelessly to secure hotel accommodation for this weekend and that has been no easy task for them as most hotels are booked up for weddings or are block booked by the Government. Thank you both on behalf of the committee and Association for all your hard work in sorting the accommodation and everything else that is needed for the reunion weekend at such short notice.

Thankyou to all those that signed up to the PDF version of flashpoint. The response has been fantastic and has saved greatly

on postage as you can well imagine. If any other members would like the flashpoint via PDF, please contact our webmaster who’s contact details can be found on page 2 of this magazine.

Thanks as always to Steve Harrison and Dave Kirk for being my wingmen and for all they’re support and encouragement. I simply couldn’t do it without you two.

Well, that’s all from me so take care all and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the reunion weekend in June, its going to be a special one.

*Best wishes  
Reggie Metcalfe  
Editor*

## The Silverfox Ramblings (A personel point of view)

### A Lookback at 2023

Personally I am pleased to see the back of 2023 which for my family was a difficult year, but we are still here and grateful for that. Although a little late in the year to wish you a happy new year, I hope what remains brings you good health and happiness.

It was a sad to see many of our firefighting friends depart for that great fire section in the sky, we lost forty plus. So a heartfelt thanks for their service and friendship and I send condolences to their families. Six of those I served with, and they played a big part in my service life and it was sad to see their passing.

Although our membership has sunk below the four hundred mark I still think that the Association still fulfills its aim “To further the comradeship and camaraderie experienced during members service careers and to enable members to contact long lost friends and colleagues” With the advent of social media it is a lot easier to contact people and I use this myself but I still believe in the solid foundation of the association but technology has helped the association with using Zoom the committee has a virtual meeting every month which keeps us better connected and enables us to solve some issues quickly.

Dave Kirk deserves a big thanks for keeping our page going on Facebook and upkeeping our website. As always I really enjoyed the reunion weekend and catching up with friends and the usual sandbag moments. Although the attendance was small it did not stop us from having a good time.

A big thank you to all those who contributed to the Flashpoint please keep those articles coming. It’s not an easy job and can get stressful at times and as an ex editor on and off for about ten years or so I can only say well done to our present editor Reg for continuing to do the job. Don’t forget this is your magazine for your stories, so any new members that have a tale to tell please send them in. What was pleasing to see were the sons and daughters sending in their experiences, my own son Lloyd did this a few years ago and it’s interesting to it see it from their perspective.

2023 was a tale of woe for the museum and lets hope this year brings some good news. Steve Shirley has been ‘through the mill’ this year but despite this with the support of his family and the volunteers he still remains positive.

An event which I am looking forward to this year is the completion of the memorial dedication ceremony. This will surely become a focal point for family and friends.



One last thing, I am giving up my role as Lincolnshire co-ordinator but this has been filled by Dave Grant, so this will be the second new co-ordinator as our friend in Northern Ireland Bob Ewing has taken up the mantle after the passing of Kenneth Green.

It’s always nice to get phone calls from members,so if your fancy a chat about anything please give me a bell even if you don’t know me, if you are feeling down, my contact details are on page 2.

To all members I wish you well. Per Ardua Ad Astra.

*Steve Harrison  
Vice President*



## What about ya (a Belfast greeting)

Hi, everyone, my name is Bob Ewing and I just recently taken up the role of the N.I. Coordinator for our Association after the passing of our late Friend and Colleague Ken Green who held this position for several years.

So, a little about and me, I served from 1967-1983 as A RAF Fireman attaining the rank of Cpl, I attended RAF Swinderby for my square bashing followed by the college of knowledge RAF Catterick, then on completion of my course (16/67) I was posted to RAF College of Warfare Manby Near Louth Lincs but was on the Fire section at Satellite station RAF Strubby 67-68. From there I got posted to RAF Luqa Malta served there from 68-71, Malta was the best posting and unfortunately were I attended my first Fatal Crash involving a Canberra. This turned out to be a busy base and plenty of incidents that we attended during our time.

My next posting was to RAF Cottesmore 71.-74 of which I did 3 tours 1 as a Service Brat 65-67, It was here again I

was unfortunate to attend another fatal incident. Later posted out to Cyprus RAF Akrotiri I was MediVac out in Sept 75 with a Neck fracture. To my 3rd & 4th vertebrae, Then I was posted to St Mawgan this is where my Twin Daughters were born 48 yrs. ago Jeez. Then off back to Cottesmore for the forming of TTTE Cottesmore (TRI National Tornado

Training Establishment) With RAF, Italian Airforce, and German Luftwaffe Personnel. My son was born in 79 at RAF Nocton Hall I was into Tenpin Bowling at Cottesmore and a RAF FA Referee, so quite active. Then out of the Blue I was posted to RAF Wyton until 1983 this time our daughter came along; I was then demobbed despite trying to extend my service.

I settled down in Wales for a short time where Jacquelyn my lovely Wife now 43yrs, our 5th child a daughter came into the world. Jacquelyn attended the Blackadder's Baldricks school of cunning plans as she wanted me to return home to Northern Ireland. It was here that I Joined

the Shorts / The George Best Belfast City Airport as a Fireman and went through all the basic training again at IFTC Teeside.

I attended this training Establishment over several years for various courses and attaining the rank of watch Commander/Manager. I completed 22 years' service. Ending a Fire service career in 2008 after injuries to my Knees, where upon I started my own business as a Taxi Depot owner, which I kept going this for 10 yrs. and decided due to Covid outbreak that was long enough. Now both Jacquelyn and I spend our time on grandparent duties' but during our time 97 onwards we became foster careers of 27 years.

Well Folks that's me so God willing I hope to meet some of you at our Association meeting next time around.



## NEW LINCOLNSHIRE AREA CO-ORDINATOR



Hello.

My name is David (Dave) Grant and I have just taken over the role of Lincolnshire Co-ordinator from Steve Harrison. I joined the RAF in April 1980 as a RAF Fireman.

Following recruit training at Swinderby, I went to Catterick for trade training.

On passing out from Catterick, I was posted to RAF Kinloss. I attended a BAW course and driving course whilst here. I was also detached to RAF Akrotiri.

I was then posted to RAF Saxa Vord.

I was then posted to RAF Scampton. During this posting I went on detachment to RAF Mount Pleasant in the sunny!! Falkland Islands.

On my return to Scampton, I was posted to RAF Cranwell for my final posting. I left the RAF in April 1992.

I'm currently a Volunteer and Trustee at the Museum of RAF Firefighting

If you want to contact me my details are on page 2

## TURNOUT TO "ROMANIA"

Post collapse of the WARSAW PACK countries, some communist block countries were in a pretty sorry state. Romania was one in particular because not only had the deposed leader Ceaucescu ruled with an iron fist but had also drained the country of most of its wealth.

Many of you will recall the news and pictures of the painful and dire situation the Romanian People were living through, and so, as we so often do in this country, we stepped up to the mark and offered what help we could through various charities and events. This is where my small part in this begins.

Before I go on, I feel that the first 2 paragraphs above are really important to the rest of the story. They in part explain why I drove a Fire Service vehicle to Botosani (pronounced Botoshani) in Eastern Romania.

...And so my story begins...

After completing a sponsored walk raising money for the Romanian aid appeal, I was given the name of a contact in the Lothian and Borders Fire Service. He was a Fire Officer by the name of Bob Bertram, an A.D.O. I got in touch with him and we arranged a meeting in Galashiels where I was to present him with a cheque. Bob had organised a presentation ceremony where all the volunteers of the Lothian and Borders Romania Appeal group would be present. After the presentation, I met and chatted with everyone. Whilst Bob and I were chatting, the subject of the next trip to Romania was discussed. Bob asked me if I held a HGV licence and when I said I yes he asked me if I was willing to drive a Fire vehicle to Romania. I was taken by surprise by his request but the prospect appealed to me, so I said that I would need to clear it with work first but if that was ok then I was in.

At that time, I was employed by both Sellafield Nuclear site facility with the Fire and Rescue service as a Sub officer and Cumbria Fire and Rescue service as a retained Firefighter. After a couple of weeks of discussions I was cleared to proceed. Sellafield allowed me 14 days absence without loss of pay or leave. I was also allowed to be off the 'run' for 14 days from Cumbria Fire Service which was also good PR.

We were due to start our Adventure on 19th October 1997 so I made my way up to Galashiels the day before. That afternoon I was introduced to the vehicle. It was a

Foam Salvage Unit that was to be donated to the regional Fire H.Q. in Botosani. The vehicle was 'dated' but Bob assured me that it was a runner and had been given a clean bill of health.

The itinerary for our journey was as follows:

Day 1 – 19/10/97 - Leave Galashiels at 0900 to Hull Ferry port – sail 1830.

Day 2 – 20/10/97 – Arrive Rotterdam 0800. Drive to Frankfurt.

Day 3 – Frankfurt to Plattling (Bavaria).

Day 4 – Plattling to Tatabanya (Hungary).

Day 5 – Tatabanya to Kluge (Romania).

Day 6 – Kluge to Botosani (pronounced Botoshani).

Day 7 – Hand over the vehicle to Botosani Fire Brigade. Visit and hand over aid to the Orphanage.

Day 8 – 12 – Travel back to the UK stopping only at Plattling for shave, shower and to stock up with a few 'crates' of local beers.

That was the plan! If only things had been so straight forward.

There were 2 vehicles in our convoy. Bob was in his own car towing a huge trailer full of aid. Myself and the mechanic Rob, in the Fire vehicle also carrying aid items.

This is how it all panned out:

Day 1 – I quickly got the feel of the vehicle after a few miles, we were making good time heading down the A68 to A696 driving through the Otterburn ranges leading us onto the A1. At the A1 roundabout close to Newcastle airport Rob unfortunately misread the sign for the A1 and said to take the first left – we ended up in a car park for the Airport. We got some very interesting looks, we, on the other hand, were trying to make ourselves 'invisible' which was not easy in a fire vehicle. We managed to get back onto the A1 heading south for Hull and the Ferry Terminal. We actually made the Ferry in good time and Bob gave some words of 'encouragement' to Rob. After a wee while we were being loaded onto the ferry which brought back memories of me being posted to Germany (RAF Bruggen) and trips back to the UK on leave. We were now bound for Rotterdam on the overnight crossing with no cabin to lay our weary heads (violins allowed at this point)

Day 2 – Port area in Rotterdam. At this time it had been 19 years since I had driven

on the Continent (apart from holidaying, which did not count as 'serious' driving). We now headed out onto the open road and I said to myself "right Don lad, close your eyes and think of England". Then I thought 'nope better not', apart from it being dangerous to drive with your eyes closed, they all drive on the wrong side of the road. They all do it. It's mad!!

We are now heading for Arnhem and I must say that the Dutch drivers were very considerate towards us when they recognised the vehicle as being "Brandtweer", Passed through Arnhem and drove to the Dutch/German border. Shocked my socks off that did! No stopping, just drove straight through (bit different to when I last went through it). Then it was down to Koln (Cologne), past Bonn and things are really going well for me driving, can't believe it! It's late afternoon now about 17.00 and we are now entering the outskirts of Frankfurt which is our overnight stop. We were to be guests of the city Feuerwehr. The trouble is they build Fire Stations in the middle of cities, so just let me say that we had 'fun times' getting there with Bob in his wee car and massive trailer and me in a right hand drive fire vehicle. I must say that the other drivers on the road were really friendly with so many of them waving at me (at least I think that's what they were doing!).

Having arrived at Frankfurt Feuerwehr HQ, the main station within the city, it was a real eye opener. I went go into too much detail but it was very impressive from the accommodation to the vehicles. Mustn't forget the Helipads at the rear of the building. We were given the full tour then fed and watered. It is plainly obvious that wherever you are in the world, all Fire Service personnel stick together.

Day 3 – This was to be a relatively short drive to Plattling. After threading our way through the city again, more friendly waves from the other drivers. 'Nice that' I thought. My co-pilot Rob wasn't too sure about that! We got onto the main Autobahn heading south passing Wurzburg and Nuremburg. When we had just passed Regensburg, Bob radioed (no mobile phones then) to point out, that that monument to the left of us gentlemen, you couldn't miss it, it's Valhalla and it's big!

We arrived at the town of Plattling just after lunchtime and made our way to the Fire Station which was to be our overnight stay. Plattling Feuerwehr is a volunteer fire service equivalent to our retained.



Once again, most of the Officers and Firefighters had turned out to meet us and their hospitality was second to none. Again Fire Service brotherhood. They had organised for the local newspapers to interview us and take our photos. I took the opportunity later on with a couple or three of the officers and men to sample a couple of the local beers and very nice they were too.

Day 4 – This was the leg that would see us drive right through Austria and the Hungarian border to our next stop in the city of Tatabanya. We just had the wee problem of driving through Vienna. It’s a rather large place on the River Danube, you may have heard of it!! Again ‘fun times’ through the city traffic. Once through we drove on towards the Hungarian border and the journey was quite uneventful.

However, things were about to change! Since arriving on the Continent, there had been no border checks, however, there was here. The border point had dozens of trucks of all shapes and sizes lined up. We were small fry. There was the paper chase from one Border Official to another and then finally I made it to the Customs shed. This was not a pretty sight. If you can imagine what the inmates of a Russian Gulag would look like well that what presented itself to me. I knew that I was out of my depth, queue after queue and each one several yards long. As I stood there trying to weigh up the options I felt a hand on my shoulder. When I looked round the ‘hand’ belonged to one of the other truck drivers and he was a big lad! He gestured for me to go with him having that ‘persona’ that you don’t say ‘no’ to. He simply pushed his way to the front of one of the queues and presented me to the Border Official yet again shuffling paper. I took it everyone knew the ‘big lad’ because no one complained about us pushing to the front. Final check done and the ‘big lad’ explained in broken English that he had seen us driving down the Autobahn and guessed what we were about and thought that if he could help he would do. He did, he was a grand lad the ‘big lad’. We travelled through the border to Tatabanya to be guests of yet another Fire Service at the main Fire Station in the city. Once again we were shown great hospitality, in fact that evening we were given a drink (I think it might have been some kind of Home Brew because it was pure Rocket fuel).

Day 5 – After another photo session with

our hosts and we had said our ‘cheerios’ we set off for Budapest and the main route out east to Romania. We were to meet up with our Interpreter Silviu at the Romanian border. It was a straight forward journey through Hungary as the roads were extra wide and the landscape mostly flat and you could see for miles. On the approach to the border it became clear that this was going to take some time because of the lines of trucks and the paperwork. Fortunately we were waved around the trucks up to the front and I thought ‘the big lad’s here’. It turned out that our Guide and Interpreter Silviu had ‘sorted’ it all out, it wasn’t until we crossed the border that I found out that Silviu was a retired Stassi Officer.

There was a light hearted moment when we crossed the border into Romania when Bob said that we should take a wee spell off and rest. He asked Rob and myself to walk back through the border Post’s and change some US dollars into Romanian Leah (Lay) but “whatever you do, don’t forget your passports”. So having checked and double checked that my passport was in my pocket, Rob and I set off on our 50 yard journey back to Hungary where the currency exchange office was located. Having changed the money and taken the wads of Lay in bundles in bags, I got my passport at the ready while Rob held the bags and then I was going to do the same so he could retrieve his passport. Rob went to his pocket, I could see the blood drain from his face. “I must have left it in the vehicle”. “Good Heavens!” I replied (or words to that effect). We were stuck between the 2 borders. If only they had asked for our passports before we initially crossed back into Hungary but they hadn’t. As we approached the border I just flashed my passport hoping that would suffice but ‘no’ they had to see Rob’s. I tried to explain what had happened but before long a few of the Border guards (Romanian Army) started gathering around us with weapons at the ready. Bob and Silviu were a distance away from us in a car park but Silviu noticed what was happening between the border posts and came back over the border. He had a few words with the officer in charge, went back to our vehicle and returned with Rob’s passport, an end to a very awkward situation. Needless to say, Bob had some more words of ‘encouragement’ for Rob as he had done at the Hull Ferry Port.

Eventually we were allowed to proceed onto Oradea where we were escorted through the city by the captain of the

Fire Brigade. The city itself looked like typical communist built buildings you would see in any spy film. Concrete, grey, cold and damp looking. Through Oradea we went and now, driving at night, down dimly lit roads, if you were lucky, the road surfaces were in a very poor state if there was a road surface at all! Rob, my co-pilot and mechanic continuously reminded me to be careful and not break the springs of the vehicle but thanks to the way the vehicle had been prepared for the journey we were surviving. About an hour away from Kluge in the open country (if we could have seen it in the dark) our vehicle began to falter and eventually the engine stopped. Oh great!! Anyway we had a ‘Chinese Parliament’. Rob worked out that it was an air block in the fuel line because the vehicle had been bouncing around so much, the diesel was frothing up and producing air blocks. Rob said that it would be an ongoing problem. Anyway, we eventually arrived in Kluge at about 2 in the morning with no further problems. There was no Fire service accommodation this time as Silviu had booked a hotel for us to stay in. Readers, remember that Romania at this time was flat on its back as a result of the Ceaucescu’s communist regime so you can imagine the state of everything. Cold damp bedding, cold room, cold shower, in fact everything was ‘cold’. Silviu let us into a little secret that this particular hotel had been used as accommodation by the Stassi, but for whom we did not find out. At least it was somewhere for us to get our heads down. A few hours later we were up and about again. Having taken a ‘cold’ shower, we went down for breakfast. The dining room was literally the size of a hangar. It was huge. As I recall, there were just eight people in the room for breakfast, us four and over in the far corner of the ‘hanger’ another table of four. Breakfast was cold sliced salami type sausage, couple of boiled eggs, coffee and a glass of ‘Sveka’ which is a vodka type drink (it certainly warms you up, on the inside at least!).

Breakfast over, we sorted ourselves out for the last leg of the journey to Botoshani, I feel that I should add here that while we at breakfast Silviu told us that we would be travelling through the area known as Transylvania, which perked me up!! When I stepped outside the hotel which had been cold, well it had been tropical compared to the outside. I thought that I was going to have to start burning oily rags under the fuel lines to defrost them (an old army

trick). I got into the vehicle praying that it would fire up and after a bit of a struggle it started with a cough and splutter (praying works!). After everything was defrosted and a check around the vehicle, we got underway. No sooner had we started off when we were surrounded by dozens of children ‘begging’ for just about anything we could give them. Silviu had already warned us about this happening and the drill about what to do in this situation. Silviu and Bob had managed to get away from the crowds but because our vehicle was a lot slower we struggled to get away, as drilled we got as much change out of our pockets as we could and threw it away from the vehicle then got some speed up “but tried not to flatten any children” but we didn’t want them to be hanging onto the vehicle. Anyway, this worked and I floored it but when I looked into the wing mirrors there was this pitiful sight of these children fighting for the bits and pieces of loose change. This is what this terrible Ceaucescu Regime had done to Romania but little did we know that there was worse to come!

About midday Silviu radioed (no mobile phones still) to say that we would be stopping at a roadside ‘Restaurant’ just up ahead. We pulled in, stretched our legs and entered the ‘restaurant’. It looked like something out of the Wild West, very rustic but also very quaint in its own way, I remember the very worn plastic table cloths. Silviu translated the menu, Rob was not too impressed with one of the dishes on offer – Calf brain omelette- but I thought, ‘when in Rome’ and immediately ordered the smoked sausage!

Anyway, having refuelled body and soul and vehicle, we were underway for the next leg. Between Kluge and Botoshani we only broke down twice, same fault as the first time but we had cracked it – so it was stop, handbrake, tilt cab, bleed diesel from fuel line, reverse procedure and back on the road. After driving for a few more hours Bob radiod us saying we’re pulling in for a rest and a stretch (etc.), whilst we were parked up, suddenly out of the forest half a dozen people appeared from nowhere, Silviu chatted to them, he told us that they are gypsies, he also told us to be careful what we said and not to say anything about the purpose of the journey, while Silviu was explaining all this to us the half dozen people had just become three times that many, Silviu said to us he thought it would be probably a good idea to make our way casually back to the

vehicles offer them packets of cigarettes that we had brought along as “sweeteners” (bribes) for the border guards, after my arm had been grabbed a few times and I’d been stood in front of a couple of times I also thought it was a good idea to “Foxtrot Oscar”, I also think that the fact that both myself and Bob being in uniform threw them a wee bit. We eventually arrived in Botosani, journey’s end for the Fire vehicle. It was to be presented to the Romanian Fire Service for their station in Botoshani which was to be the next day. That evening and the next couple of days we were to be accommodated in various local peoples homes within the town. Each town looked just the same as the last, with concrete apartment blocks and more concrete apartment blocks. In contrast to the bleak surroundings, the Romanian people were warm and welcoming. They had almost nothing and yet they fed and accommodated us, treating us like long lost family. The next day was the official hand over day of the Fire vehicle which went quite well. Best bib and tucker for Bob and myself and Rob with his kilt and bagpipes which were quite an “ear” opener for the Romanian officers.

We were now going to do the most important part of the trip – the delivery of aid to a local orphanage near Botoshani. This was day 7 of the journey, this day 25/10/97 is a day that will stay with me for the rest of my days. Anyone who has ever taken part in any similar aid trips will understand what I have just said but if you haven’t please speak to someone who has.

Botosani pronounced Botoshani, is situated in the eastern area of Romania, as far east as you can travel in Romania. It lies just a few miles short of the Ukraine/ Moldavian border. It was late October and the weather was changing rapidly with the air temperature really beginning to bite.

We had transferred some of the aid items out of the Fire Vehicle into what little space was left in Bob’s trailer with the Fire Officers in Botoshani saying they would deliver the rest of the aid to the Orphanage later.

On arrival at the Orphanage it was freezing. Silviu said that in one direction there was Moldova and the other direction was Ukraine which at the time they were still part of Russia, which explained why we had been asked not to wear our British uniforms by the Romanian Army Officers in Botoshani whilst at the Orphanage.

The Orphanage itself was a real culture shock, it was what might be termed as ‘well worn’. These places got no assistance from the previous regime, officially, they did not exist. All of the children had mental or physical disabilities or in the new speak ‘were less able bodied’. Two of the wards contained children with Aids. All the wards had 2 or 3 children sleeping in one bed. The nurses were not qualified, they were simply ladies from the village who volunteered to come and take care of these children. In my eyes, these ladies were true heroes. We went from ward to ward and the ‘nurses’ explained to the children who we were and why we were there. A young girl came up and took hold of my hand. She took me to another room where there was a body of a small boy who seemed to have passed away a few days before. This sight really upset me but I was told later that this was not an unusual occurrence. This place had a ‘Director’ who was not acting with the best interests of the children we were informed and that he had made himself scarce during our visit. Visit to the orphanage over it was back to Botoshani, the journey was very quiet and subdued.

All too soon it was time for us to leave Botoshani and we prepared ourselves for the return journey to the UK. Silviu was to remain in Botoshani and we were sadly to loose our translator and minder.

Bob, Rob and myself in the car with the trailer in tow would now reverse the route back to the UK making only 2 stops, Plattling in Bavaria and Rotterdam on the ferry. That was the plan anyway but the actual journey turned out quite differently. We had planned to drive west from the North Eastern plain of Romania over and through the Carpathian mountains and Transylvania. However the weather had changed dramatically and it was beginning to snow. As we approached the mountains it was snowing heavily and the weather was playing a major part in our progress across Romania. Hoping that this weather was only localised, we pressed on but we were wrong to do so. Our situation got worse with the car and trailer using more of the road than was actually safe to do so. We stopped and had a ‘Chinese Parliament’ and decided that we needed to turn round and head south where hopefully the conditions would be better. However, we needed to turn the car and trailer around in this weather which was another adventure. If it had not been for the help of a vehicle full of Romanian Army Personnel who had been following us for miles, we



would have been in the ‘you know what’! As soon as we explained who we were, they were out of their vehicle, got the car turned round and they literally picked the trailer up and turned it round – ‘There you go lads. Job’s a good ‘n’.

We were now heading south but still in the Carpathian mountain range and the weather was no better and with no let up, our situation was not great. Many miles further on, we stopped at a garage to refuel and ask if there was a better route to take. In very broken English (which was much better than our Romanian!) the owner explained that there was a way through a mountain pass but this would mean going north again but on a different road (he assured us that the road would be good and remain clear). The ‘Chinese Parliament’ sat again and we decided to go for it. By this time the snow was giving it big licks but like the wee man said, the road remained clear. We were stopping wherever we could to keep the tank full and at one stop we looked at the hills and they were big hills which was a real worry but the road stayed clear. We pressed on with hardly a word being said (too busy praying!). We passed through a small village and got some very odd looks but then a little further after ascending quite a few hundred metres, we rounded a bend in the road which, by the way, was narrower than a double width carriageway and there in front of us was a tunnel which had been dug out of the solid rock. Looking at it I didn’t think that it was wide enough for the car and trailer. Bob and Rob got out of the car and measured the width of the tunnel and it was wide enough but only just, I guess that was why the villagers had given us those strange looks!

So we were through what turned out to be the last big test of our journey back to the UK! We were at the top of the mountain pass and the road ahead was still clear. We drove towards Kluge and then Oradea and the descent to the open plains leaving the snow and mountains behind us. Crossing the flat open countryside seemed to go on forever but we eventually were heading towards the Romanian/Hungarian border. Bob checked our time and after all that had happened with the weather and the detours, we were only 2 hours behind schedule which surprised all three of us. We passed through the border with no problems this time, we had committed ourselves to driving non stop to Plattling (except for the Austrian/German border which we actually drove straight through

with no checks needed).

Arriving at Plattling Fire Station again we had a welcoming committee. The Station consisted of 11 vehicle bays from TTLs to trailer pumps and semi rigid boats on trailers. They even had a junior Fire Squad who when old enough would go straight onto the ‘run’ to replace anyone retiring or leaving. So it was barbecue and beer in the evening and a good old ‘Lamp Swinging’ session (oh yes the Bavarians do it too!).

Next day, the three of us paid a visit to the local supermarket and stocked the trailer up with more Weiss beer than you could shake a stick at! We were off again and once we got onto the Autobahn, the driving was no effort. What did puzzle me was where were all the cones and the road works and the queues etc. etc. we have in the UK? Hardly a thing! Just seemed weird not having anything to complain about whilst driving on a ‘motorway’. There you are, I’m complaining about not being able to complain!!

By the time we were reaching Frankfurt the light was fading. We weren’t stopping there but we drove over it on a massive Autobahn flyover which actually took us right next to the airport. Looking at the mixture of city lights, airport lighting and aircraft landing lights made for a spectacular sight.

Driving north still and staying on the Autobahn during the night, we passed by Bohn, Colne and I even saw signs for Monchengladbach! (been there many times when stationed at Bruggen). We then came across the signs for Venlo which meant that the Dutch border was not far away. The actual moment we knew we had crossed the border was the ‘welcome’ sign and the road signs were different. After a wee while we decided to take an hours break so we pulled in at a service area for a bit of a freshen up, a bite to eat and some very good real DUTCH coffee, ‘happy days’ (a reminder of my RAF days). It seemed that the break we were having, coincided with half of the Dutch police force. There must have been twenty or thirty of them looking firstly at us and then at the car and trailer. We just pointed at Bob, which he thanked us for in Gaelic I believe!

We went on our way again firstly to Arnhem and then up the coast to Rotterdam which we reached in the early hours of the morning. Bob calculated and we were just 45 minutes behind our schedule. Our ferry

back to England was not due to sail until 1800 hours we had a day to kill. We had a nap in the car first as best we could. A few hours later we freshened up in the toilet facilities and then we found a cracking little bar and restaurant close to the port.

By 1800 we were on the ferry and UK bound. Bob, Rob and I had a couple of nightcaps and then it was time to get some proper sleep in our cabins (real beds!).

So here we were at six in the morning, showered, fed and watered and ready to disembark back onto British soil and roads. Before we knew it we were out of the port and back on the road passing under Humber Bridge heading toward the A1 and travelling north. My Turnout to Botosani in Romania had taken us on a return journey of 5,152 Kilometres or in old money 3078 miles. The strange thing was that I got to thinking (dangerous that thinking business). All that had happened and all that we had been through seemed like a lifetime ago even though it had only been in the last two weeks. The driving, the wonderful people we encountered both Fire Service and civilians, the difficulties with the snow conditions, the vehicle breaking down, but most of all, the children, either running for the few coins thrown out of the window of the cab or the plight of the orphans living in those retched conditions imposed on them by a communist regime that believed that if you cannot contribute to the State, then you are worthless. I hope that in my own small way I did help to contribute something to ease their situation.

So, as I did so when I wrote this ‘wee’ account of my ‘Turnout’ to Romania, I would like to dedicate this to ADO Bob Bertram of what was the Lothian & Borders Fire Service for allowing me the privilege of taking part in that epic turnout, not forgetting Rob – our mechanic, kilt wearer and bagpipe player extraordinaire and of course Silviu our interpreter and ‘minder’ without who’s help Rob and I would still probably be in Romania.

Before I close I would like to thank the Editors of our Flashpoint Magazine for allowing me to re submit this lengthy article and you the reader for sticking with it to the bitter end with my account of ‘one helluva turnout’.

Don Pape  
Member 140

## HARRIER FORCE MEMORIES



In 1974 I was stationed at Brize Norton, and despite having recently completed a three year tour at Bruggen found myself Germany-bound again, this time to Wildenrath. On arrival there, I was told that I would be joining the Harrier Force, providing fire cover for 3, 4 & 20 Sqn Jump Jets. Our merry bunch of men was led by FS Jimmy (Pinkie) Fulton, or as the lads called him, Jump jet Jim. Jim was a brilliant FS. The rest consisted of five Cpls; Terry Dynam, Taff Roderick, Mickie Traynor, Ron Jones and myself, Tom McCrorie. The SACs were Bill (the coat) Creaser, Phil (the pill) Southern, Eddie Longman and George Fryer (the terrible

twins), and Steve Parry. For deployments we were supplemented with firemen from the other “Clutch” stations, so that we would have a total of 19 personnel with three on duty at each of the six dispersed sites.

Shortly after arriving at Wildenrath, I was told that I was off to Decimomannu with 3 Sqn on a three week detachment. We were flown there on a Britannia and the bouncy landing in Sardinia was the worst I have ever experienced. Despite it being December, the weather was great, and I got on very well with the linies off the Squadron. At the end of the detachment, I returned to Wildenrath on a Belfast, and



Our VW run-around





**3 Sqn Exchange G91 Husum Fliegplats 1975  
Baltic Cruise**

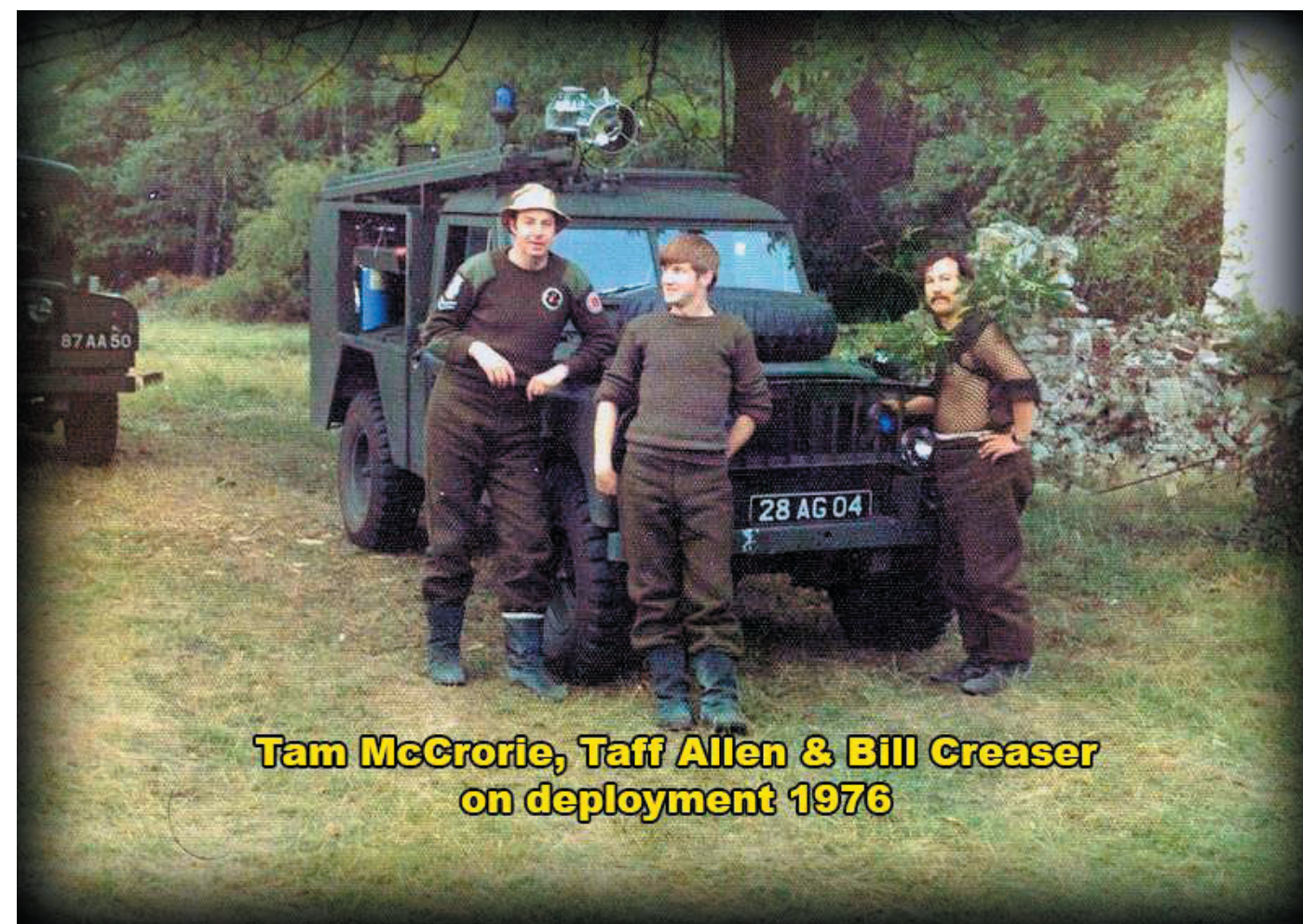
the day after that my wife and daughter arrived from UK. One of the guys on Harrier force took over a flat in Hiensberg

for me while I was away, so we were all together for Christmas.  
My first deployment in the field with the

Harriers came in April 1975 with 3 Sqn at B Site. We were equipped with the Fire Tender pictured here, a TFWT. The Harrier



**3 Sqn Exchange G91 Husum Fliegplats 1975  
Gate Guard**



**Tam McCrorie, Taff Allen & Bill Creaser  
on deployment 1976**

Force had three TACR1s and three TFWTs which were almost as bad as a Mk8! I did two deployments with 3 Sqn using TFWTs after which it was all TACR1s.

I also did a Squadron exchange with 3 Sqn which involved going to Husum, a German Luftwaffe base that flew Fiat G91 fighters. It was situated near the Danish border close to the Baltic Sea so we stopped over at Hanover on our way there. I went there with Ron Jones, and as Jimmy Fulton would not let us take a fire vehicle as we would need a crew of three, Ron and I were just there to advise the German firemen while the Harriers were flying. However,

we did get the use of an open-top VW as a run-around from 7am to 6pm daily while we were there.

At Husum the Germans asked if we wanted to do a cruise from Flensburg to Demark. This sounded like an excellent idea, and after three hours afloat on Baltic Sea, we thought we would all get off the ship; only to be told that it was only dock for twenty minutes. Needless to say, it quickly

became a six 6 hour drinking cruise!

We had all our meals in the Unteroffizier mess over the weekend, but on Monday we had to eat in the Conscript's Mess where the food was terrible, so Ron and I used a local schnell imbiss in town.

That was my last trip with 3 Squadron.

I then moved to 4 Squadron where I did five more Deployments, mostly with Bill



**Ken Thompson, Tam McCrorie & Ken  
Sumner on deployment 1976**





Creaser, Taff Allan and Ken Sumner.

We did a few trips to Senalager range, and for deployments there we contacted the local German fire service in a small town called Augustdorf. They were always very helpful, and let us use their showers so we could get two showers out of three days; the third day you would be put in charge of Fire Piquet on the site. The local firemen were great, we got there using ATC land rover took the two ATC guys with us too or alternatively we sometimes used the Ambulance with Mick the medic and his driver.

On Saturday night we would meet some of the other site fire crews at a Bar in Augustdorf. We'd have a few beers then move on to the nightclub next door which was called the Sexy Royal. It all happened there! ... so I won't go into details.

On the last five deployments we had a three-ton truck on the site, with 4 beds as Jimmy Fulton stayed on our site. We carried all the equipment such as extinguisher refills and Light Water. We also had a fridge for the beer which was connected to the generators. There were only two fridges on the site, one in the Pilots' tent and Fire Section

three-tonner. The beds were arranged two each side of the wagon, and folded down with a mattress on each; all the comforts of home! All our rubbish had to be tied up in a bag hanging from a tree to stop wild bores foraging through it.

I also did two one-day detachments to Dümpel, a glider airfield, for their air shows in 1975

and 1976. Harriers were only jet to land at Dümpel, with the Vulcan, Nimrod and Red Arrows operating from Cologne airport.

The first time was with Ron Jones and Steve Parry, and on arrival we were given 20 beer tickets each, then at the evening dance we got another 20 beer tickets - impossible to drink all that! We were also given a pewter wine glass each as a gift.

The next year I went with Sam Gill and Bill Creaser. Again, beer tickets were 20 in the morning and another 20 in the evening each, but for three beer ticket you could get one Asbach brandy. The AOC RAF Germany was there, so we invited him for a drink with the fire crew, and after three brandy's he said we were trying to get him pissed, so he left to join his fellow officers. This time we got two stone beer mugs with the Dümpel crest on them, which I still

have to this today.

I did a three nights and four days at an army camp in Munster for the Harrier display there. While there we got to watch army tank battles from the back of a Stalwart truck. The German Leopard tanks against British Centurions tanks and Helicopters were great to watch. In the town of Muster nearly every bar had a sign on the door saying it was banned to British servicemen. The camp we stayed on was occupied by an Army tank regiment consisting mostly of Glasgow nutcases, it was an experience!

My next Squadron exchange was Entzheim France with 4 Squadron Harriers, Entzheim was half civilian airport (Strasbourg) and half French air force base and I went there with Steve Parry and Bill Creaser. the French crash crew consisted of six or seven French firemen and about twenty conscripts who were treated badly. I did not like the way they were treated. Picture above of Saturday night party in the hangar.

I did another trip to Sennelager with Taff Roderich, Terry Dynam, Eddie Longman, Bill Creaser, and one other. This time we got to see two Harriers firing the Snab missiles before a tank battle started. Bill Creaser did an 8 mm film of it; his film was about seven minutes long and he converted it to a DVD which I still have also on my computer, but not it's too clear.

During my time on the force we got around a far bit looking after the Harrier Squadrons, but alas two years into my tour they left Wildenrath for Gutersloh, and I did my last year on the Crash line. After that I was posted to Kinloss, but that's another story.

*Tom McCrorie  
Mem No 739*



4 Sqn Harrier Vertical Take-off Deployment 1976

## The Pyrene Mk 8 Crash Truck: Love it or Loath it?



Love it or loath it! No, not a TV spin off featuring Kirsty Allsopp and Phil Spencer but a choice for firefighters to make regarding the Pyrene Mk 8 crash truck. It was prompted by the fine article by Andy Gaskell in the Winter 2024 edition of Flashpoint.

If you need a reminder then it is the crash truck in the photograph. The Museum's own restored Mk 8. The picture was taken in front of the training school bays at CTE Manston, as I knew it, that many of us know well but those stories are for another day...

This article has been compiled from comments detailing personal experiences of the vehicle posted on the association's Face Book page although there are probably many more from members who are not active on that forum.

The story of the Mk 8, from our perspective, starts in late 1969/ early 1970 at RAF Abingdon as recounted by Ron Brown. RAF Abingdon was at the time in Transport Command with 46 Sqn flying Andovers.

The prototype arrived in late 1969 or early 1970. It was just the chassis with water and foam tanks; a Jaguar engine driving the pump and no bodywork apart from the cab. The vehicle was just the regular Bedford chassis and engine but with twin carbs. The rear of the vehicle would have, I suspect, looked something like the photographs below. The photograph on the right is of a completed vehicle with the Rootes air blower in the centre of the picture and the Jaguar engine sitting behind it.

Unfortunately, the provenance of the pictures is limited. They are from a gallery by Edmund Peschel and appear on the Association's website. If you know more about this photograph collection, please let the editorial/museum team know.

The two Cpls, Ron Brown and Norman Johnson, together with an SAC (name sadly forgotten), carried out evaluation tests for a couple of weeks involving driving and handling, and then wrote an evaluation report. All tests were carried out on camp using the taxiways and rough areas.

The evaluation report was scathing; stating that it would be "lethal in the hands of an inexperienced driver". The reason was because of the weight being carried on a basic chassis making it very unstable. The high position of the Jaguar engine, Rootes pump/air blower and media tanks significantly raised the centre of gravity of the vehicle. If cornering at 15 miles per hour (or more) the chassis would twist and the inside rear wheel would come off the ground about six inches. It was also very slow in terms of acceleration, taking quite a distance to get up to 50 mph. Andy Gaskell, in his article, detailed a number of handling issues. The report's only favourable comment was its use of an independent engine to drive the foam pump.

"As usual", Ron says, "we were ignored and we soon got our first Mk8 as they had all those spare Bedford chassis and as the fire service needed a new vehicle, they obviously decided to kill two birds with one stone." This had been mentioned when the vehicle arrived for evaluation and it is their belief that MoD's minds were already



made up and it was just going through the motions by sending it for evaluation. The latter view is supported by other comments in the same vein that the service needed a new foam tender and that the MoD had a surplus of Bedford RL chassis and cabs and somebody had the bright idea for the Mk 8. A comment also suggested that whomever “designed it needed a kick up the arse!”. A thought shared by many no doubt.

Another recollection, this time by David Brown, saw him, as a Cpl, and possibly Geoff Dow collect the first production model from the Pyrene factory at Brentford near Heathrow. Some will say it should have been left there! David reported that the engine was not governed at that time so it was not bad to drive being empty of liquids. However, the range was very poor and required numerous stops for fuel. RAF Medmenham was the first stop, then across to RAF Brampton, up the A1 to RAF Bawtry and then straight up to RAF Catterick; the final destination. There it would undergo operational trials during late 1971/early '72.

And so, they were here to stay and served until the early 1990s. A lot of stations had Mk 8s including Abingdon, Akrotiri, Brawdy, Brize Norton, Catterick, Chivenor, Manston (CTE), Odiham, RAE/DRA Bedford, Scampton, Stornaway, Valley, and Wittering, to name but a few.

Training with and on the Mk 8 was always interesting. This is an area that prompted a few comments.

Dave Kirk reported that his most “pain in the arse” experience with a Mk8 was at Catterick whilst on his FT2 course (training for going from Cpl to Sgt; the practical side involved being assessed as a Crew Commander). “We had been on the run all day fighting all the evil practice incidents the Distaff set up for us and after the final debrief were quite late getting to the wet area. Having finally replenished the water & foam liquid tanks and given it a quick wash we set off back to the Hangar only to run out of fuel on the other side of the airfield - it was a long walk back to the hangar and by the time I got there they were wanting to lock up.” No doubt a lot of unhappy bunnies that evening.

Tom Stewart commented about the driver training at Chivenor. They would often use the spare crash truck and drive out to Mullacott Cross and back. In this case it was the MK8 that had been given a major refurb and respray. Two of the lads had been out quite a while on their drive and the Sgt was getting a bit anxious. Finally, the fart/bang of the MK8 was heard and ‘she’ came round the corner and as she turned into the station, they saw that the lockers on one side were held together with bailing twine. Devon hedges 1, Mk 8 Nil!

It is 47 years since I was on my basic training and the one thing that immediately comes to mind about the Mk 8 is; ‘make sure you open the doors at the rear of the truck to make sure the engine/blower doesn’t blow up’. Just shows how well

that was drummed into us! A point also noted by Gerry Samson “I remember us guys from RAE MOD PE having to have training before using the MK8 as we hadn’t used these before, and as already mentioned, not opening the engine bay doors for air circulation and the Jaguar engine seizing”.

During the crash phase of the training, we had an interesting situation develop. During post exercise replenishment another fire was set; not sure if this was planned or a mistake by FGSU. However, none of the vehicles was ready; the crash line was a TACR, a Mk 7 and a Mk 8. For some unknown reason the Mk 8 was first to respond to the ever increasing pall of smoke over the fireground. So, off we trundled, the Mk 8 making like a cantankerous cow on the way to the parlour. Round the corner at the top of the hill and there was the Varsity on the hill shrouded in smoke and flame. We set to work and the TACR and Mk 7 arrived a short while later closely followed by the shiny red Mk 9 we weren’t allowed to play with. Me thinks the instructor got cold feet and considered his future if the Commandant’s new Varsity were lost that day.

Apart from fuel issues, i.e. the lack of it, the Mk 8 seems to have been prone to various mechanical issues. Brawdy had three Mk 8s and they seem to have been beset with problems. Ron Fillis provided a list of incidents that he recalls:

- Driving on site and a back wheel coming off and crashing into our stores;
- Coming back from the RLG (Relief Landing Ground) at St David’s and the prop shaft dropping off;
- The embarrassment of driving back from the RLG up the hill past Solva village at 2 mph on the way back to camp;
- Going to a call out at MT and running out of fuel (we had been to the RLG) - bloody machine only had an 18 gallon petrol tank;
- Firing up the Jag engine and blowing the exhaust off when it back fired!

“I hated the bloody things and we had three of them - so glad when we got a TACR2 for the RLG runs.”

Colin Miller had the pleasure of driving the school’s command reserve to Brize Norton (Author’s note about 160 miles from Manston). It was so economic, he noted, that he must have refueled it 5 times before he got there! Colin says, “I had to come off the M4 at one point as I was low on fuel, back then you could only use certain fuel stations. I was lucky to find police patrol vehicles in a lay-by, after they stopped laughing at the vehicle, I was directed to a garage”. Not the only mention of that rather annoying feature of the Mk 8.

It wasn’t all bad and the Mk 8 did have its uses. Apparently, one thing it was quite good for was laying the gooseneck flares in Salalah, and a skilled driver could actually extinguish them with the Mk8 exhaust.

Akrotiri had one and it was used to fight the Bondu fires if the Angus domestic was out of use. For those that don’t know the term, I didn’t, these were fires in dry parts of the surrounding areas of Akrotiri and very similar to wild fires.

It was also useful for various japes that you guys got up to. A couple of those were recounted and are reproduced here including an interchange between Tim Alderman and Mark Clayton:

#### Tim Alderman

Scampton (probs around ‘84 winter time). I’m driving and Claydo (Mark Clayton) is standing in the monitor hatch, we’re both wearing the intercom headsets. Claydo is talking to me like a tank commander, I can’t see proper coz I’m crying with laughter and I nearly lose it on a bend in the snow and was inches away from hitting a building. Talk about instant mash men...

#### Mark Clayton

Remember you switching the ignition switch on and off on the Mk 8 causing it to backfire

#### Tim Alderman

...classic Mk8 procedure... they were great times back then...

Was this a regressive moment harking back to those dark days when the fire/rescue service was part of the Regiment?

During Barry Brough-Scott’s time at Valley, some 40 odd years ago, it was time for pre-AOC inspection. The inspecting officer from Support Command was well known for his vehicle checks. One of his favourite checks being the tray under the Mk8 rear engine to catch oil drips. He would whip it out and voice his displeasure at the oil drips on the tray.

So, not only was the vehicle brought up to inspection standard but the drip tray was painted and highly polished. Blue role was placed on it to catch any drips and whipped out seconds before inspection. As he whipped out the tray and started ranting about oil stains he had to bite back his words.

Apart from the information about the Mk 8, my Facebook post brought a number of other reminiscences. One that was interesting, to me certainly, was an answer to where the museum’s Mk 8 served. Steve Shirley kindly replied “our Mk8 did serve at Odiham and was the first appliance I rode on to a shout when I was an LAC, over 40 years ago! It still works a treat.” It must have left an impression as he was involved in its restoration.

The Mk 8 was the last of the line of blown foam crash trucks used by the RAF/MoD and, on the whole, was a step backwards in terms of performance that the service

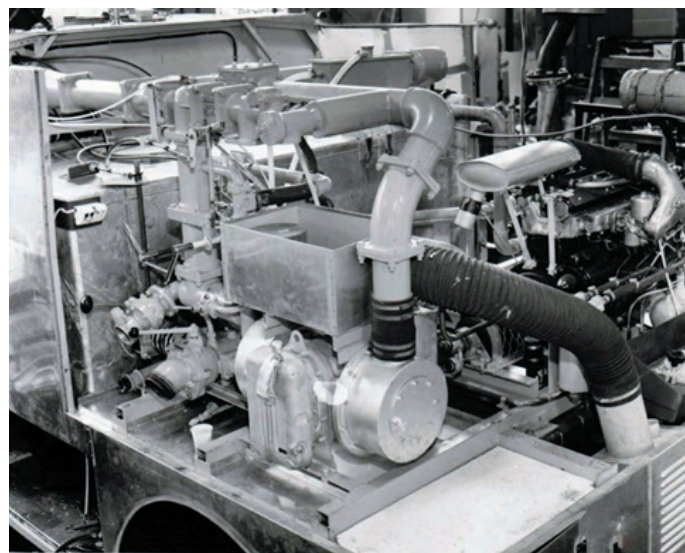
needed at the time as a successor for the Mk 7; that was left to the Mk 9 but that is another story for another day.

Like it or Lothe it? That was the question I posed at the start. Well, the consensus appears to be a little of both with loathing it being the prominent view for lots of reasons, mostly associated with the base vehicle’s shortcomings, but the blown foam fire-fighting system with the pump drive being independent of the prime mover is seen by many as its only virtue. Succinctly put by one correspondent; loved and loathed right enough everyone loved the foam and the jag engine, and hated the truck.

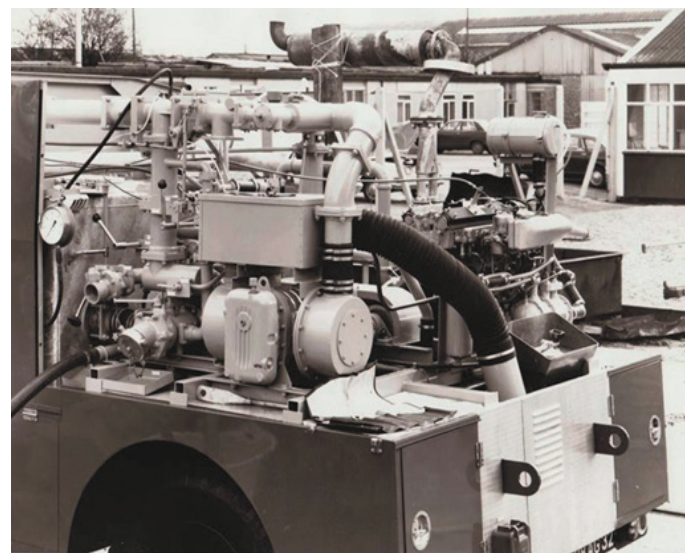
And the future? One Mk 8 is maintained by the Museum and there are two others that are known about. Possibly another one is about to be restored according to Graham Vale; a vehicle that served at Wittering and Stornaway. What does seem certain is that the Pyrene Mk 8 Crash Truck will not be forgotten.

This article is a compilation of the comments made by 25 members of the Association’s Facebook Group. All of the comments are gratefully received and have been incorporated within the article though not all contributor’s names have been included. The original comments, however, have been kept for use by the museum. On that point, if other members have experiences or stories, funny or serious, please do let us have them as it is important to record contextual information associated with museum artefacts; with that they cease to be just objects. Thank you to everyone for making this article possible.

*Article compiled by David Beecroft/  
1153*



*Mk 8 being built – shiny paneling and no hinges on the locker.*



*Completed unit – maybe under test. Jaguar 4.2l straight 6 and Rootes air blower.*



# End of Year and January 2024 Update

Firstly, and most importantly, Happy New Year to everyone who has and continue to help us through our journey to reopen to the public in our own permanent facility, something that is continuing to elude us as the future of Scampton is still being hotly contested by Scampton Holdings Ltd and West Lindsey District Council at the courts. We hope 2024 is the year for all where that and the £300 million investment is concerned.



The end of December was the deadline for us to get on the move again and pack up the inside of the museum headquarters at Origin, Scunthorpe, as they need to renovate the office space to enable them to sublet the facilities. Whilst this is not ideal for the Museum, we gratefully recognise the 5 years of support and storage that Origin Packaging has given us throughout at no cost and wish them the very best for the future.

The move signals the sixth time the



organisation has undertaken a large logistical move and this was definitely the smoothest it has been due our previous work consolidating, repacking and prying articles that were too far gone from the boss' cold, dead hands. Thankfully the latter was very rare, and usually a result of the flooding that had occurred in the headquarters due to the facility rather than mistreatment or packing on the volunteer's part.

In true museum fashion, we've managed to secure storage for our most valuable assets and library at another location at minimum cost which is warm, dry and accessible. This is a real bonus as the alternative was to put it in ISO containers and pray that damp and condensation doesn't happen in the time it is stored. As with the other

locations that we've stashed our exhibits, we won't be advertising its location to avoid unwanted attention but thank you to those who are providing it.

That left the small problem of the rest of the collection. After much head scratching and arm bending, MJD Commercials managed to persuade a long-term client, EFW Transport, to initially provide us a 40ft trailer to start the process at the end of November. As regular readers will recall from the last update, this is now rammed tighter than the cannons at Trafalgar, but we still had a significant amount left in the building. James from Haddington, another MJD regular, came to our aid and provided us with two 20ft ISO containers for hire at a real discount. With the date set, the biggest game of 3D tetris to fit the entire contents of the building into the containers and move them into secure storage would begin on the 16th of December.

As with the rest of silly season last year, it felt like seconds had passed before the volunteers were looking at the task ahead of us at the Headquarters, brew in hand. However, there was a slight problem as no ISOs had appeared as Haddington were tied up with a last-minute job in the next county on the Friday night. However, this didn't stop the volunteers shifting boxes and other plastics outside as the weather was favourable. After the hours allowed, the ISOs suddenly appeared with a reassuring honk of the airhorns as James entered with his impressive tractor unit which is fitted with a crane that looks like it could suspend a fully loaded MFV by the bumper without breaking a sweat. As expected, the two ISOs were offloaded with relative ease and the crew now started to bundle the articles and exhibits into storage well into the early evening of Saturday, leaving only due to low light levels forcing us to abandon play for the day.

The week before Christmas is usually the time to stick your feet up with a decent sherry but this was not the case for the museum staff who were back at it at full pace to finish off packing the ISOs and to vacate the headquarters building. Whilst it was a full effort, the staff emptied all the rooms, vacuumed and handed back to Origin before the deadline elapsed, marking the end of another chapter for the museum.

After a restful Christmas, the team reassembled back at Scunthorpe to deal



with the Vehicles that we were granted an extension to shift out of the yard as trying to secure logistics in December is difficult. A full company of volunteers turned out to start prepping one of our storage locations to get the extra vehicles moved and to ensure the long-term dead vehicles still moved and those that could limp were limping effectively. As we had no building, a temporary brew station was set up to ensure we had access to hot drinks and we had a standing briefing from the boss. Funnily enough, this was almost a quarter of the usual length so standing briefings are likely to be incorporated into future weekends to increase productivity. As with other weekends, the team split into two and we departed to our duties.

First order of the day was to DI and run up the RIV which would depart for storage under its own steam. This started at the first touch of the button – a reassuring start to the day. The TACR2 also started but the TACR1 was showing signs that the points and carbs weren't overly happy at being stored outside so will likely need to be look at next week before it is moved to the site. The spark plugs were also very black so might be burning oil so this is another thing for the list when we get it back under cover. The Mk9 also started but one of the air valves was stuck, requiring the entire tank to be drained and recharged which allowed the gear box to be toggled and prepped. The rear lights were also serviced as previous road moves identified an intermittent fault.

After the initial efforts, the team split and the other half went off to the storage site with the RIV to prepare it for additional vehicles to arrive the following weekend. We arrived to what we expected – vehicles de-sheeted, sheets torn to ribbons and a mud bath to rival Glastonbury in monsoon

season. Undeterred, the team set about untangling the sheets that had failed, unwrapping the tarps from the many fixtures on the vehicles as best as the time allowed whilst others sized up the available space and what could be done to fit more in the available space. The team realised shifting the spare wheels across the field on their pallets was a non-start due to the the lack of grip and stability. This then called for a cross fit exercise of tyre lifts and wheeling them over by hand. Whilst this would have been a breeze in the warm and dry, the wet and mud certainly made it a collective farse for the group. Thankfully, everything was shifted and no one took a face full of Mk9 tyre during transit.

The pallet truck again became a valuable addition to the team and the pallets of engines, transfer cases and other parts were rearranged to provide another pallet's width of space before being re-sheeted and weighted down. Whilst it did try and turn itself into a plough when it was trying to shift the engine block from a Mk6, the team employed wood sheets to spread the weight and get it shifted out of the way. By the end of the day, the F12 was re-sheeted, there was enough space for 10 vehicles and the team resembled a mud wrestling team by looks if not physique. Back at the headquarters, the RB44, Bedford TK and Shelvoke were inspected and started which is a positive step prior to the road move in a fortnights time.

In between the storms, the team again turned up at both locations for the vehicle moves under blue skies and decent weather which would soon deteriorate. But as in Fire Museum move tradition it was positively brassic. The team were blessed with the provision of two low-loaders fitted with cables which meant loading and unloading the vehicles was much easier and safer than on previous occasions where pulleys, strops and an external pulling vehicle was used. All the team pitched up at Scunthorpe and were able to prepare the cabins and other storage areas which will be moved the following week.

Following the process of all plans, the loading order agreed between the teams was swiftly shuffled to ensure the drivers were able to make best use of their time and runs between Scunthorpe and the storage area. Of course, the receivers were able to adjust and make do, placing the vehicles into the relevant spaces that were previously prepared. Although some vehicles were able to be moved on to the trailers, most were winched to avoid any potential damage from stalls or other failures which could happen at the absolute worst possible time. Other large items such as



compression hoses and POL lockers or tool chests were also loaded to make best use of the time and thankfully all the vehicles were moved over to the storage area ahead of the deadline.

Last weekend the volunteers descended on the main storage site and took down the tent which was destroyed in the storms before Christmas. Although it was only a shell, there has been some damage suffered when the poles broke which included a couple of lights and a few scratches. Not ideal and the museum are really disappointed that it has happened, but there was nothing we could have done given the situation we are in currently. Once the tent was down the exhibits were all wrapped as best as possible and maneuvered out into the spaces available to make more room for the incoming cabins which will be arriving soon. The Mk9 and TACR1 was also moved out from Scunthorpe under escort from MJD to their storage location and that marked the last of the vehicles that were stored at Scunthorpe.

Just the cabins to move next week and the museum will be completely homeless and in the hands of the political situation surrounding Scampton. Something we were hoping was going to be sorted long before now. All we can do now is meet where we can, try to make the museum collection survive financially for as long as possible and collectively bang the drum to ensure the government continues to understand the potential impacts of losing the £300 million investment that Scampton Holdings Limited worked tirelessly to secure for the future of Scampton and the benefit of Lincolnshire

## OBITUARIES



*Proudly worn on the sleeve of coats their formal badge denotes .....*

*Safely through flames and destruction they will fight*

*Yet, ignoring their peril and their plight.*

### REST IN PEACE BROTHERS

Member 85 Roy Hammett October 2023

Member 255 Kenneth Green January 4th, 2024

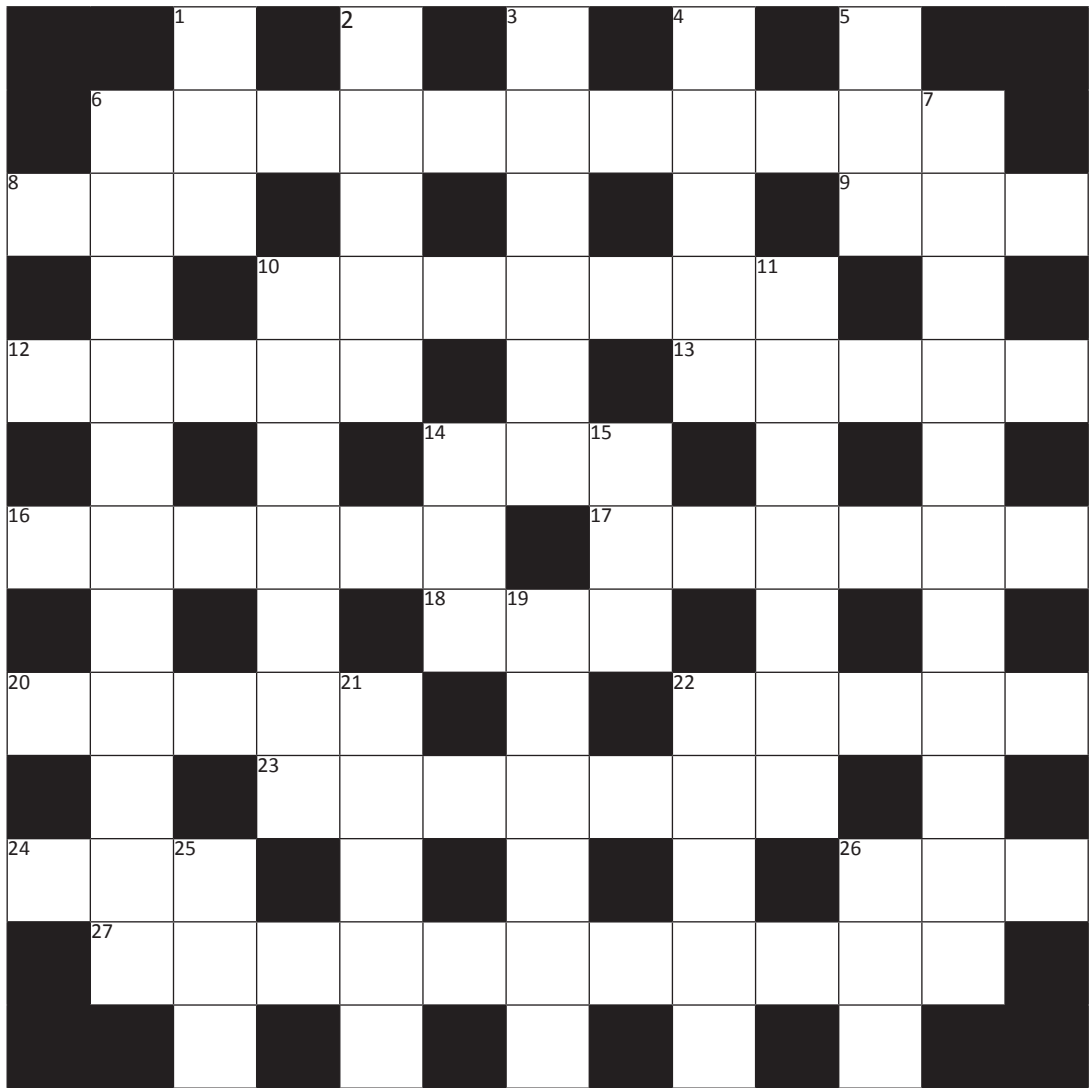
Member 485 Gabriel (Cos) Costello BEM January 24th, 2024

Terry Dawber January 2024

Lenny Scott February 2024

Sympathy cards were sent to 1025 Geordie Dingle and 636 Terry Sedgewick on the passing of their wives Catherine and Sue respectively.

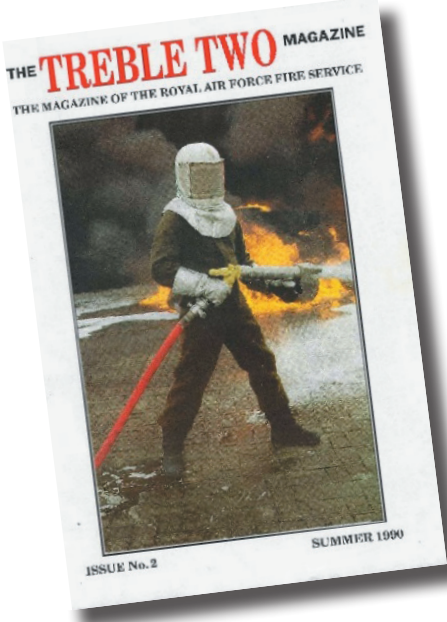




- Across**
6. If cops urinate, take these. Fire perhaps? (11)  
8. Wipe or drill for baby firemen? (3)  
9. When we expect to see Basque separatists. *abbr* (3)  
10. A knot inherited from one's elders? (7)  
12. Gunners in can, work out. (5)  
13. Part of staircase is erratic trade. (5)  
14. Our red braces start to hold this sphere. (3)  
16. Chinook or Belvedere is twin this. (6)  
17. Talk from Salalah, Masirah, or El Adam. (6)  
18. .... Ice or powder that used to be seen on fireground. (3)  
20. Fruity headwear? (5)  
22. Prize or fire? (5)  
23. Devil in charge of Rushdi's verses. (7)  
24. Ms Lovelace nee Byron. (3)  
26. Yours truly having put the fire out. (3)  
27. Tragic tales about a type of withdrawal. (11)

- Down**
1. Garfunkel, perhaps, has craft. (3)  
2. Southern foot complaint met with derision. (5)  
3. Type of carpet going at Epsom perhaps? (6)  
4. Get a number or toe. (5)  
5. The first 4. (3)  
6. Top Gear presenters maybe, take fuel to Naval toilets. (6,5)  
7. Might you find a radish stall at this Suffolk Air Base? (11)  
10. Deranged gliders found around waists. (7)  
11. Do wrong in loft we hear, though variable. (7)  
14. Rum sort of number. (3)  
15. Initially buy a yacht to sail here. (3)  
19. Your relationship to *Flashpoint*. (6)  
21. Faucets surround a Spanish dish. (5)  
22. Insert to conform. (3,2)  
25. Consumed less than nine we hear. (3)  
26. Cool for a nerd primarily. (3)

NEW VEHICLE?



Some of members may well remember (if you are young enough) the TREBLE TWO magazine which came into being in 1990, having left the Royal Air Force in that year in June, I didn't see it. There were only eight editions, finishing in summer 1993. Having the privilege of working in the museums library we have several copies and looking through I saw an article about a vehicle which might raise some memories and see if any facts come to light which can be recorded for the vehicle's history.

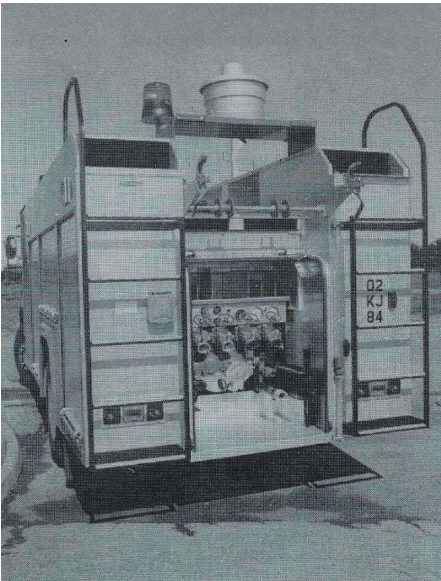
The vehicle in question is a RENAULT/DODGE COMMANDO G13. Below is

the article as it appears in the treble two magazine.

HCB Angus have recently completed the fitting of five new Domestic fire vehicles for the Defence Fire Services. These are the Renault/Dodge G13. The standard tilt driving cab is retained on the vehicle, but the rear cab window has been removed to enable communications with the rear fixed crew compartment. Two seats are provided in the cab and a four-man bench seat in the rear. The Commando is powered by a Perkins Turbo 6.354.4 diesel engine (147bhp), with a six-speed overdrive gearbox. The water tank capacity is 1,818 litres and is discharged via a Godiva MK75A manual priming pump.

**Pump Performance.** Low pressure 3,410 litres per minute at 6.9 bars. High pressure 272 litres per minute at 27.5 bars.  
**Overall Dimensions.** Length, 7.34 metres, Width, 2.34 metres, height 3 metres. There were five produced for the Army Fire Service /DFS in all and served in different locations.  
02 KJ 82 was Army Fire Service at East Riggs.  
02 KJ 83 DFS Donnington. (Colour Image Iain Kitchen)  
02 KJ 84 DFS Old Dalby also Shaibah Logistics Base Iraq.  
02 KJ 85 Army Fire Service Rheindahlen Germany.  
02 KJ 86 Army Fire Service Sennelager Germany then DFS Rheindahlen.

The black and white image shows the pump arrangement.  
It would be nice if any of our you did work with any of these vehicles or indeed what happened to them and if you have any comments that may enhance the history of this relatively unknown vehicle.



Steve Harrison



Donnington Commando (curtesy of Iain Kitchen)



Freely I served By Alex Petrovic aka ETHNIC

Time in. 01/10/1990  
Time out. 31/03/2020

By Alexander Petrovic V279600 (Ethnic)  
Defence fire service (Army)

My Adventure starts by applying to this advertisement in May 1990

And to my astonishment they let me in and on the 1st October my Adventure started.

As a twenty five year old rookie, I went to my first station at MOD PE Burghfield as a recruit firefighter , mid October I went to sunny RAF Manston for my Basic training .

And made some brilliant friends from the dark side and the TG8

In December 1990 I passed basic training and returned to Burghfield as a firefighter (unqualified)

On the 1st of April 1993 I transferred to DFS Bicester (Army) and in 1994 I became a qualified firefighter.

My career took me to Different stations. I transferred from DFS Bicester in November 1997 to DFS Kington, then Shrivenham and Marchwood, then transferring back to DFS Kington and in 2013 came back to DFS Bicester.

I have been stationed on sites and the assets what needed specialist fire cover,

I worked on nuclear weapons sites, Ammunition, storage sites.

Working with aircraft fixed wing and rotary and ships firefighting

I backfilled during my time at various stations from Fleetlands to RAF Odiham.

I supported OP FRESCO by back filling TG8 stations, so the RAF fire service could serve on the firefighters strikes.

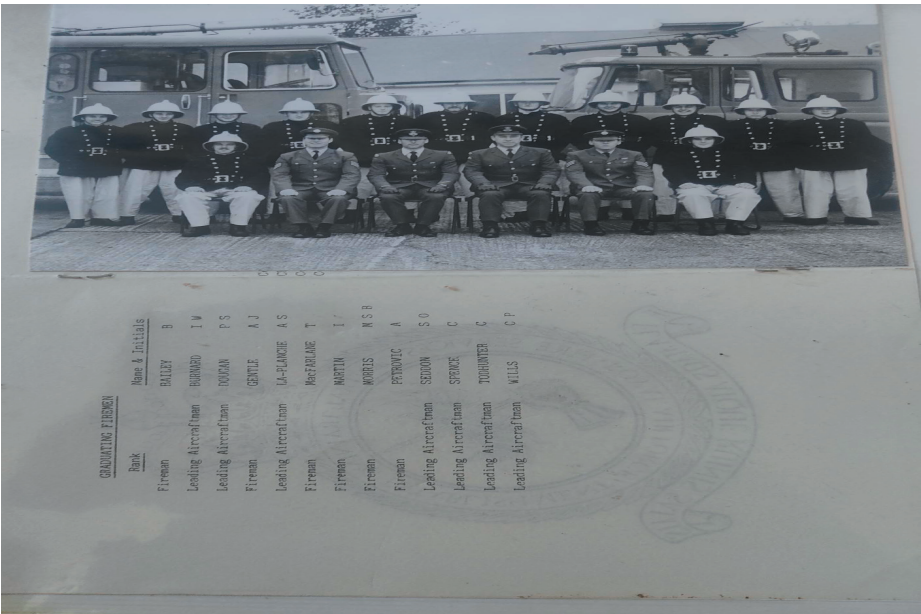
I had the honour to serve overseas and deployed from 1996 – 2008

I deployed to the former Yugoslavia (my fathers' homeland), where my language skills came to forefront.

I served in the following countries.

- Bosnia 1996 -97
- Kosovo 1999
- Oman 2001
- Cyprus 2002
- Iraq 2003- 2005
- Afghanistan 2008

I had the pleasure to drive certain fire appliances in my time. My EFAD at Manston in 1996 , my instructor was a real



DFS Bicester 1993



DFS Bicester 2013



Fleetlands



RAF Odiham



DFS Marchwood October 2002 on OP FRESCO training Royal Marine Commandos to become firefighters , met most of them again in IRAQ in 2003 .



DFS Bicester - 1993



DFS Sipovo - 1996



DFS Camp south Oman - 2001



RAF Split - 1996



DFS Pristina - 1999



RAF Akrotiri - 2002

dodgy character (cant remember his name Reg, any ideas lol)

Part of the fire safety team, my job was to maintain all the FAFAs in Theatre , 1389 FAFA were serviced by me. 98 were 90 litre foam extinguishers.

I have undertaken certain activities for DFRMO and representing them at remembrance parade in London, the Iraq and Afghanistan remembrance services and meeting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2006 at the Buckingham palace tea party.

During my time in service, I was awarded the following Medals and awards

- NATO Medal Former Yugoslavia
- NATO Medal Kosovo
- Queens Golden Jubilee
- GSM Iraq with clasp
- Foreign & Commonwealth Iraq Reconstruction
- GSM Afghanistan with clasp
- Fire service long service & good Conduct
- Queens Diamond Jubilee
- Citation award
- NATO General Officer Commanding Citation for Bravery
- BOSNIA 1997

I have had the pleasure to serve her majesty Queen Elizabeth II and a proud member of the Defence fire service , making friends from the TG8 and other DFS stations

My 29 years in the MOD has been an adventure and too many storsy to tell in this article.





DFS Umm Qsar Iraq 2003 (check the reg on the Bedford)



DFS Bicester 1993



IRAQ - 2005



DFS Marchwood 2007 (check the name of the ship)



Me and Saddam 2003 UmmQsar



Bosina .. paint it red or go Army green Boss, spent may an hour with a brush painting that Landrover



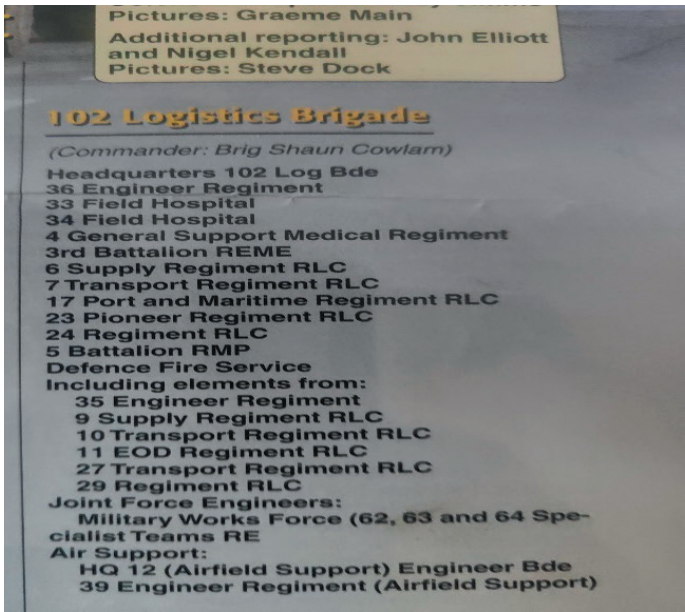
RAF Split Fire station oops section - 1996



This is what the Army did to us Bosnia 1996



Afghanistan 2008



Taken from the Soldier magazine 2003



## NEW MEMBERS



Thank you to our new members for joining. Over the last year we have lost a lot of comrades and friends, and this has depleted our ranks somewhat. It is nice to see two ladies join our association, Pat Hayes who is the wife of Trevor Hayes our Treasurer and has been voted on to the committee to assist Trevor. Jean Hammett like a few other ladies has joined as an associate member following on from her husband Roy, who sadly passed away in 2023.

As always as we say to new members, we would like you to contribute to the Flashpoint magazine, it is your magazine and it's your stories that make it, even the ladies have had stories told from their prospective and some more contributions would be most welcome.

### ATTENTION TO ALL PRESENT MEMBERS

Brian Jones the Membership Secretary has asked if you could forward to him any change in contact details i.e., Change of address, phone numbers and email. This will ensure the prompt distribution of Flashpoint and maintain his records. The emails are important also because of the PDF copies of Flashpoint which are sent out. Thank you.

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

- 1192 Gordon Wain
- 1193 Collin Stone
- 1194 Pat Hayes
- 1195 Gavin Keegan
- 1196 Jean Hammett
- 1197 Johnathan Pullen
- 1198 Mark Sowden
- 1199 Peter Clive Woodley

	A		S		R		D		O	
	P	R	E	C	A	U	T	I	O	N
W	E	T		O		N		G		E
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T	R	A	I	N		E		T	R	E
	O		R		O	R	B		R	
B	L	A	D	E	D		A	R	A	B
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A	D	A		P		D		T		F
	S	T	R	A	T	E	G	I	C	A
	E		S		R		N		N	



*R.A.F. Marham 27th July 20-06.*



Arthur Elton.

Howard Harper.

Joe Shackleton.

Steve Doran.

Dave Kenyon.

Ron Gaunt'