



FLASHPOINT



ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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EDDIE MUNRO'S JOURNEY

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFE WITH THE RAF (PART 2)

SPRING 2020

www.rafanddfsa.co.uk

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FRONT PAGE

The picture was taken in Australia and was sent by Steve Barraclough of the Tasmania Fire Brigade whose article about his experiences out there appears in this edition of Flashpoint.

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"THE SILVERFOX" EDITORIAL

So here we are in 2020 in a new decade and welcome to another edition of Flashpoint, but I don't think that any of us envisaged that at the beginning of this decade that it would bring such a challenge for all of us. I can only hope that all our members and families are coping with whatever circumstances the pandemic has created for you, as the situation of each household can be, different, complex and difficult. So at this point all I can do is to wish you well and hope that you are managing as best as you can! It was pleasing for me to get a phone call from the Lincoln Branch of the RAF Association to see if I needed any help.

So I hope the arrival of Flashpoint on the door mat is a welcome diversion for you all? Firstly I am flattered and honoured to become your new Vice President and a thank you to Ron Brown (our new President) and for the Committee to think me worthy of the position. Secondly I would like to say a great thank you for the positive responses about the last Flashpoint and I have received many interesting bits and pieces via email and snailmail that can be included in future issues and I would like to give a special mention to "Dutchy" Holland, Jess Jessop, John Goupillot, Gerry Schofield and especially Tony Eaton who has sent some forty emails worth, which I have yet to sort out once this edition has gone to print. (I think I may have time on my hands!) They are not only of interest for the magazine but a welcome addition to the museum

library archives, but please keep sending articles of interest to me and your letters because I have said before "ITS YOUR MAGAZINE" (please forgive me for the shouting.) So come on you "Young Guns" let's hear from you, please.

It seems that the Association will be going through some more changes with the news that Neil Slade our Chairman is standing down due to health issues and that Howard Harper our Vice Chairman also wishes to stand down for the same reasons. So in the Chairman Vacancy Notice within the magazine it will tell you how you can express an interest, if you fancy the challenges of one of these vacant roles. I did have a good rant about my concerns for the Association in my last editorial, so I would appeal to the younger members of the Association to really consider their position and really think about putting themselves forward and bring new ideas and some forward thinking on how to preserve the Association for the future. Please think about it.

Our "Treasured Treasurer" Trevor will carry on, but would be interested if another suitably qualified person came along to take on the reins. Although I agreed to take on the editor's job again to save the magazine with Steve Shirley's encouragement I would like another editor to come forward, whether that person is from the Museum we will have to see? But if a new editor doesn't come from within the Museum and one of the Association members want to

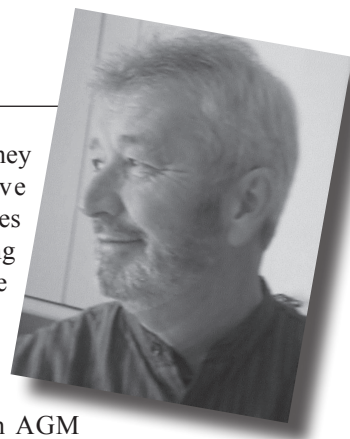
take it on they would have the resources and backing of the Museum.

Within the magazine there is an AGM report and an explanation about the cost of the last reunion which may have put members off attending, as we were thin on the ground, so hopefully the venue for 2020 at Coventry and cost will encourage you to attend?

So I hope that you enjoy this edition of Flashpoint? I think the article from Christopher Barraclough an ex RAF Fire Fighter now with the Tasmania Fire Brigade is interesting and different and it was pleasing that Steve Bowden featured in an exhibition in Lincoln "A Century of Valour" telling the story of bravery in the air and on the ground, it also included another RAF Fire Fighter Corporal Brian Murphy who was awarded the George Medal for his bravery in a fire at RAF Coningsby in 1957, it is all explained in the Museum News, with Brian Murphy's citation on another page.

Please take care of yourselves and stay safe.

Steve Harrison



AGM REPORT

At the AGM in October the following took place:

Election of the Association President

Ron Brown was elected

Election of the Association Vice President

Steve Harrison was elected

Trevor Hayes the Treasurer explained that sufficient funds have been collected to complete the Memorial project, so any surplus monies would be forwarded to the Museum, anyone wishing to donate monies to the Museum could they please do it by standing order. The museum bank details are as follows:
Account number 53037545 Sort Code 60-13-15.

From the floor of the AGM there was a grateful thanks to Steve Harrison and the band of helpers from the Museum for the latest edition of Flashpoint.

Apologies from the Committee as to the price of the last reunion

At the start of organising the reunion four members one of which was an Associate member was at the hotel looking over it when a manager quoted the price would be £154 for two nights, this was heard by the members present, but on receiving the paperwork from IOW Tours it had risen to £184 per person.

After many phone calls from the Chairman, myself and staff from IOW Tours to the hotel management who said this was not quoted, but after many queries we raised, all of a sudden, a surcharge was placed on the Gala Dinner. At this stage, time was against us to cancel this booking, so apologies yet again to all if the price put you off, I think I've got it right for the 2020 reunion.

Hope to see you at Coventry

*Regards to all
Mike 704 General Secretary*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hi Steve,

I was quite surprised on opening the current edition of Flashpoint, to see your editorial as I thought Reg was doing such a good job as editor. However, I can imagine how disheartening it can be when very few articles are being submitted, although he did publish my last anecdote. Perhaps it wouldn't have helped mentioning that with having only eight years RAF service and with over fifteen items published since the millennium I was beginning to run out of material!

Like you mentioned, Internet social websites are slowly encroaching into to how we communicate, and our own Facebook group is doing just that! A periodical magazine like Flashpoint cannot compete, especially when seeking old pals etc., and I have myself used it quite frequently to raise debates about the pros and cons of superseded fire fighting equipment. Receiving almost instant responses, but not always favourable ones, but that's life and we are an uncensored group! However I still consider that Flashpoint has a role to play and is ideally suited towards the longer anecdotes that would not be feasible on line! I can understand how the younger end sees our publication as part of an "old boy's club", especially with stories that begin with "When I was in..."!

I recall mentioning diversifying a little with more interesting anecdotes to George Edwards, and he did give it try together with publishing some of my experiences in the civvy fire service before enlistment. I don't recall receiving any adverse criticism afterwards, so maybe it might be worth another try at encouraging others to give it a go! Deciding how diverse these submissions might be, may take some thought and I like the idea of you teaming up with the rest of the "museum gang" to make Flashpoint a successful project, as this is the norm with printed media!

This is just an idea that you could put to the team, but what about offering a proof reading service as I am sure the stories are out there and some members may feel embarrassed about submitting articles with poor spelling and grammar. It would be ideal via email, as corrections could quickly be returned to the author for approval before publication.

On a separate note, I was very sorry to hear that once again you may have to move to another "home" for the extensive collection currently forming the Museum. It's a pity that I have resided too far away to be able to offer my help/knowledge as a retired HGV technician, but I just hope that things work out and the all the effort put in over the years comes to fruition with the Museum of RAF Firefighting becoming a popular Lincolnshire attraction!

Just another suggestion, would it be feasible to have as another means of income such as "cab rides" for members and ex-firefighters. I watched a recent video clip of the Mk. 9 driving around the roads of Lincolnshire and the sight and sounds brought back many happy memories. I realise that there could be issues with insurance, especially with making a charge for running costs (including a small profit!), but many Heritage railways do something similar!

Well, I will finish with wishing you and the Museum team all the very best of luck in the future with both the collection and our Association magazine!

Regards, Andy Gaskell (328)

Dear Editor,

Reading Dave Kirk's article about RAF West Raynham and his reference to the 'ghostly' sightings reminded me of a supposed ghost at RAF Leeming. In his book 'Ghost Stations' Bruce Barrymore Halfpenny tells the tale that in early September 1956 an RAF policeman was once on patrol with his dog when the dog suddenly stopped and stiffened. The policeman carried out search but found nothing but he felt and detected a presence. The author then writes of a huge spoil heap situated on the outer of edge of the airfield and that Sammy, a local poacher told him that the spoil was where a bomber had crashed during the war and that the wreckage and all on board had been covered over by soil. He then goes on to write that in the 1970s a civvy MT driver thought he saw a ghost like figure in hangar No 3 and 'from that day, the hangar remained locked' I arrived at Leeming as an AC1 Aerodrome Fireman in September 1956 and the station was akin to very large building site due to ongoing work preparing for the arrival of the Gloster Javelin and preparations for a V bomber bolt hole FOB. The station was being run by a skeleton staff and there were only five RAF policemen on the unit at that time and they most certainly did not have police dogs. The first time police dogs were deployed at Leeming was when the first Valiant's then Vulcan's arrived on exercise. The spoil heap was just that, a result of excavations by the contractors. It was later utilised as the Javelin cannon test firing bed. Like West Raynham, Leeming had its resident ghost; a 'Squadron Leader Halifax' who was supposed to have been shot down on a raid over Germany and it was said he had been seen descending on a parachute over the station. As for the locking of No 3 hangar, Leeming at that time was the busiest flying training station in the RAF with no fewer than five training elements based there, it was also an MDA, hangar space was at a premium and that hangar most certainly was not locked. It has to be said that the tales of ghosts on RAF stations apparently take on a dynamic of their own and over time the stories seem to self modify.

Dave Kirk's article was a very good read.

Yours, Tony Eaton, Northallerton.

Dear Steve,

My thanks to Tony Eaton and Ray Preston for enlightening the Association of the passing of Bernie Josling.

I served with Bernie for approximately for two and half years at RAF Dishforth, Bernie was one of only seven firemen who came from below Birmingham all the rest (58) were either Yorkshiremen, Geordies or Scots, Bernie came from London (Woolwich)

A couple of noticeable things about Bernie was whenever he went off duty he would always be smartly dressed, collar and tie and so on, when off duty on station he would be washing or ironing his shirts, he even had creases in his denims together with his highly polish willies. The most noticeable thing about Bernie was very dry sense of humour; some of the northern lads had a bit of a job working out what he was on about.

The late Mike Hayward, Bob Dickinson, Fred Greenwood, Georgie Lovie and I tried to find out the whereabouts of Bernie so as to get him to join the Association, Fred, George and I now know why.

RIP Bernie, your journey done.

Mike Clapton 704 General Secretary

THE CENOTAPH



I am a 55 year old guy originating from Edinburgh and spent 23 years of my life in the Royal Air Force as a Firefighter. I left the RAF when I was 40 years old. My priorities had changed and it was time to settle into a quieter life with my wife and young daughter. We chose Blackpool and purchased a small guest house to run as a family business. We soon found that our income was lower than in the RAF so I, through necessity, found a new job as a Prison Officer. Life was nice and settled, running our business and working for the Prison Service. We made many new friends and enjoyed a wide and varied social life.

This life, we had made for ourselves was to change quite dramatically at the age of 49. I took a tumble down the stairs at home, sustaining a traumatic brain injury. I was rushed to hospital and was in a coma for 6 weeks. This had a profound effect on my family and I was left with various injuries such as loss of balance meaning I had to use a wheelchair, also a loss of hearing in my left ear, loss of smell, difficulty with speech and double vision. This can be very frustrating at times and finds me very short tempered. I have maintained many friendships and accumulated some great friends throughout my life so was

very honoured to be invited down to the Cenotaph to take part in the Remembrance Day March. I admit that through my injury, my self confidence took a big hit. Now I was to take part in a March that would see me meet up with friends I knew from my Air Force days. I admit that where it not for Headway and the people around me, I would never have had the confidence to attend such an occasion. But some 6 years after my tumble the thought of not attending never crossed my mind.

Now for the logistics, this wasn't going to be easy. My Carer Steve used to live in Watford and his mum lives there. He called her, explained the situation and she gladly invited us to stop with her on the Saturday night. We travelled to Watford the day before the parade stopping with Steve's mum. In the morning (bloody 6am) we drove to Stanmore and boarded the tube into the centre of London. We went for a cup of coffee at a pub (first time for everything). After our coffee we then went to Horse Guards Parade to meet up with the other Firefighters who were marching. We had to cross a few street barriers such as security and the London Met where so helpful, moving barriers for us and ensuring we had a clear passage to Horse Guards. We then met up with friend's old

and new waiting to March and show our respect to the many who gave their lives for our freedom.

The amount of waiting around is bloody awful, we stood there from 9 am until 11 am then marched towards the Cenotaph. About a quarter mile from it we stopped again and the service and the wreath laying began. Then around an hour later we marched towards the Cenotaph. We all payed our respects and took the salute. I must admit I smiled at Steve, who has not an ounce of military in him having to march.

We all arranged to go to the pub afterwards and catch up but we, sadly, couldn't stay. We had to get back as we had a full day of travelling ahead of us. We went to the tube station where we were taken straight through the passenger gate and told we would not be paying for the tube (thanks London Tubes). We got back home safely and I have been invited back next year. This is something I will gladly be attending again. RESPECT.

Kind regards, Keith.

AUSTRALIAN FIRES



Christopher Barraclough an ex RAF Firefighter now a member of The Tasmania Fire Brigade tells his story of the Australian wild fire's he and his colleagues had to face.

I think only one word is sufficient: Respect.

It has always interested me how life goes around in circles. Having served in the RAF Fire Service (1990-1996) for 6 years, it was a part of my life which in many respects I much prefer to forget. Yes there were happy memories, but most of it still angers me. As a young, naïve and cocky 19 years old, I enjoyed the thrill of firefighting, but hated the seemingly endless years of bullying and on the receiving end of much physical and mental abuse which only inspired me to get a proper education and get the heck out of there, and inadvertently making a solemn oath to myself that I shall never again have anything to do with the fire service. Strangely enough quarter of a century later, after achieving my personal goals in education, military, civilian and political life, I returned to the fire service as a basic fireman doing the hands-on, end of a hose duties, and absolutely loving it. The sense

of mateship, and getting stuck in and doing something important in the community when they need it most, gives me immense satisfaction way beyond what I could ever imagine. True the comradery is different than 25 years ago, but the basic firefighting skills and techniques are still the same, just different types of fires. Thank goodness we do not do NBC, nor do we do aircraft fires with all their ammunition, and instead we have massive vegetation fires. Ship, vehicle, and house fires are all pretty much exactly how we trained in the RAF – no difference, just feeling a little older.....

I live a small country town and fortunate enough to join the largest and busiest Volunteer Fire Brigade in Tasmania – George Town. I am proud to say that in the first month on being in this station, I attended more fires than the entire 6 years in the RAF. Not only are the number of callouts in larger numbers but the variety is beyond what I could have ever imagined. Vehicle accidents, ship fires, train catching fire, domestic (we call it structure) fires, vegetation fires are all in abundance. Then there are the “campaign fires” – the exceptionally large vegetation fires which go on for extended lengths of time, like the recent fires that have appeared in the

UK media in recent times – 9 million hectares. And being part of that is a unique experience which was a massive adrenaline rush as it was frightening.

In November 2019, after watching on the news of the gradual build-up of fires in NSW and QLD during the previous 6 months and finally realising that they were completely out of control, I applied for deployment to NSW, and in mid-December I flew out to be part of a 19 strong Northern Tasmanian deployment to NSW. Each of the 19 men and women came from different Volunteer stations around Tassie, having never work with each other before, all taking annual leave from our workplaces (civilian jobs) to work alongside the already exhausted NSW Country Fire Service, NSW Parks and Wildlife, Canadian Firefighters, South Australian Fire Service, and Western Australia Fire Service, all working together in a vain attempt to take control of the advancing fire front.

Within hours of arrival we started what we came to do, and for 5 days worked from 10am to 2am, with a 2 hours travel time to and from the fire front. Exhausting work but necessary. In temperatures of mid 40oC and strong winds, we were initially faced

with a 6 metre flames advancing towards a local town. Our sole objective was to stop the advancement by using fire to combat fire – back burning.

Unlike the UK, most of these areas are so remote that there is no track to drive down to approach the fire, so the convoy of fire trucks was led by a bulldozer pushing its way forward through dense vegetation, up and down extremely steep terrain (at one point the gradient of the hill was 70o).

Like all firefighting, water preservation is a must, as the re-supply via water tanker was usually a 45 minute round trip. And you are bound to ask – what about drafting (suction) from a nature source, however there was no natural source to draft from, as we are suffering from a major drought and all natural sources in this area were bone dry. Being the remoteness of these areas, no fuel reduction has ever to undertaken, so fires with a gust of wind spreads extremely quick whether it is up or down a hill, and would burn with the intensity that you can normally expect from our local indigenous trees. Very quickly daylight resembles night with dense smoke burning both your eyes and throat. Such is the intensity of the heat of the flames, vehicle paintwork starts to blister and side mirrors melt. It is extreme. What you see on the news is exactly what it is like all over the place. People are horrified by the sights seen on the television, and as a fireman you have no option other than to stand your ground

and fight the fires knowing full well that if you do not stop these fires, more lives will inevitably be lost, more homes will be destroyed, and more livelihoods will go up in smoke. Having served in a war zones in both Northern Ireland and Afghanistan I draw similar parallels to the fear inside you, and having to ignore that fear to stay alongside your fellow mates and fight the monster in front of you.

This for me has been an awesome experience, not only the bond you immediately form with the mates you work with and being inspired by the true firefighters sense of courage and bravery that seeks no accolades other than the knowledge that the job was

done together with professionalism, against all odds fighting those fires of such intensity and ferociousness. Those Volunteer Firefighters, and Parks & Wildlife rangers are amazing, as are all firefighters throughout the globe, who happily give up their time and freedoms to help others. Amazingly, after 30 years I finally get it. I get the whole purpose and essence of who and what we are, and we are all the same, firefighters understand firefighters, we are one of the same albeit of many nationalities throughout the world. This is who we are and this is what we do.....



ARCHIVE FROM THE FIRST RAF CATTERICK MAGAZINE

The image of the magazine is of the first that was to be produced at RAF Catterick, There are 8 preserved copies at the museum but we don't know how many were produced.

FORWARD BY GROUP CAPTAIN D.A. PEACOCK, OBE, ADC, RAF. COMMANDANT, RAF REGIMENT DEPOT

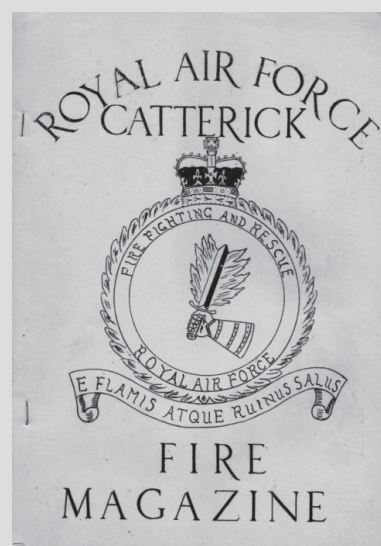
“It is ten years since the Fire School at Sutton on Hull moved to RAF Catterick to become the Fire Fighting Squadron of the RAF Regiment Depot.

Since 1959 there have been many changes in the subject matter taught on the Fire Squadron. A number of new items of equipment have been brought into service and many more changes in techniques and equipment can be foreseen.

It is my hope that this magazine will help those of its readers who have not been to Catterick for some years to keep in touch with the work being done here and that perhaps you at the ‘Sharp End’ will help us to keep in touch by sending us your contributions. We will welcome on any of the articles.

I wish the editorial staff the success this deserve in this venture”

D. A. Peacock
Group Captain
Commandant



MUSEUM NEWS

I cannot believe where the last year has gone! Quite simply, I have never been so busy since I retired from full time service.

It is hard to believe that we have been in our current location in Scunthorpe for over a year now. Sadly, this is very much a report of two halves, so I'll begin with the negative side of things first. When we moved into Billet Lane it was on the clear understanding that it would be a temporary measure whilst North Lincolnshire Council found us a new home to permanently establish the Museum once and for all. It soon became very clear to myself and the volunteers, that as far as we were concerned, we had found the perfect location. Despite our best efforts to convince the Council they continued to look for an alternative venue but sadly to date, they haven't found us one. We only had a one year lease on the building and that expired on the 17th December 2019. We had expected to vacate the building on that date and so much of the last part of the year was spent packing ready for yet another move. The team at the Museum have also spent a considerable amount of time and effort attending meetings, giving interviews to local television, radio and newspapers to highlight our situation in the hope that a new home could be found. There is plenty of empty property available in Scunthorpe but sadly all of it is beyond the funds of the Museum and without a considerable injection of cash or a charitable let we cannot move forward. The Leader of the Council gave us his word that he wouldn't see us kicked out on the streets and I'm very relieved indeed to say that he is a man of honour and as such we are still here! We remain very focused on trying to persuade the Council to let us stay put, but the building has already be advertised for rent at a commercial rate of £19,000 a month! There is a meeting pending between the Museum, the Leader of the Council and the Local MP to see if we can find a way forward. That in itself gives us optimism, as there would be little point in calling a meeting if they didn't think it was worth reviewing the current situation. I'm always happy to talk over the situation with anyone who gets in touch, but sadly, I have had to issue a statement on our web site and on social media putting right some hurtful rumours and mistruths that had been circulating about the situation. As well as potentially harming our position with the Council, some misquotes really upset the team who

work so tirelessly to preserve our heritage. Last year over 10,000 man-hours were spent working in the Museum. These are only the hours recorded on our sign in/out sheets in the Museum and they don't take into account all of our activities that take place away from the Museum itself. Thankfully, the statement seems to have worked and the armchair experts who do little or nothing to support the Museum have gone silent.

Now for the second half, which I have to say is far more up-beat. The open days that we held this year (which were limited by the Council for legal reasons) have been an amazing success. Over 6 days spread throughout the year we saw over 2500 people attend. That doesn't take into account numerous private visits. Clearly we have a product that appeals to a wide cross section of the population and not just ex RAF/DFS Firefighters. We have had considerable support from Humberside Fire & Rescue Service including a visit from the CFO himself. The brigade attended all of our open days and even brought their special "wrapped" Scania in its "Least We Forget" livery for our final open event which was used to commemorate Armistice Day. Local Units of the Air Training Corps have turned out in force to support us and

be involved, happy that there is something with a real RAF connection in their County for tomorrow's Air Force to be inspired by. The British Heart Foundation, The Humberside Road Safety Partnership, Arson Investigation Dogs and various other community based groups have supported us which in turn has increased our community footprint considerably. The support from the people of Scunthorpe has been first class, so to, the support from local businesses. Shot blasters, engineering companies, motor vehicle parts suppliers, local garages, windscreen companies, Stagecoach to name but a few have been fantastic. We couldn't have pressed ahead with a multitude of projects without their support, often giving the services for free or for considerably reduced rates. The most graphic illustration of this support comes with the recent restoration of our Volvo FL6/14 ex ASU RAF Wittering. Ex RAF Firefighter Dave Grant now works as a driver for Stagecoach. He approached his Engineering Director, Mick Forbes to see if the Company could assist with the restoration of the said vehicle as we were struggling to make head way with its cosmetic restoration due to lack of funds and tight time scales involved before we might have to move out of Scunthorpe altogether! Dave must have caught him



Steve Andrews and Mark Thompson of Stagecoach with the finished Volvo

on a good day because Mick agreed that the vehicle would be repainted free of charge by the team at the Scunthorpe Depot. Another local company, James Selby Transport, moved the vehicle from the Museum to the Stagecoach Depot free of charge so a massive thank you to them also. Stagecoach does not respray its vehicles, but instead uses a technique called coach painting. This is a dying art which basically involves hand painting a vehicle to the highest standards with brush marks barely visible. The purists out there might argue that this technique isn't right for a vehicle as young as ours, but with the offer of the job being done free of charge, we couldn't refuse could we? Despite a considerable amount of prep-work being carried by ourselves, Steve Andrews (painter) and Mark Thompson (Bodywork) had to spend a great deal of time and effort getting the vehicle ready for painting. This task was much bigger than anyone had anticipated and at one point we're sure Mick regretted saying that they'd do it especially as buses were piling up in the yard awaiting repair!

In the depth of winter, painting commenced. The cold temperatures caused havoc with the spread of paint even in the workshop as both undercoat and top coat were applied. Thankfully the skill of both men shone through and the finished result is a real credit to them. The vehicle will now undergo further works back at the Museum with the hope of returning it to roadworthy condition later in the year.

The real success for us is measured by what we have achieved over the past year. Firstly, our 40 volunteers remain positive, committed and in reasonably high spirits despite the uncertainty that hangs over us all. Without them, there simply wouldn't be a Museum and as such, I'd like to thank each and every one of them for sticking with me and for working so hard to make the dream a reality. One really nice aspect that has flourished this year is the social gatherings that have occurred in Scunthorpe on the nights before the open day. Again local hotels have offered good rates for food and drink and the support for Veterans has been fantastic. It's been wonderful for all of us volunteers to socialise with old friends and workmates whilst pulling up the odd sandbag or two! The ladies have also joined us on our nights out and many of us have provided them with excellent entertainment as they watched us trying to re-live our youth



Mk9 back to production

oblivious to the passage of time. To my mind, this is what it's all about. Perhaps the Association could learn a thing or two from this format. I believe we've had more people at the social events and open days than we've seen at many an AGM? I hope that given the right circumstances, the AGMs might take place at the Museum in the future?

With nearly all of our exhibits packed away awaiting yet another move, we have concentrated our efforts on the vehicle fleet this year. The Mk9 has received a considerable amount of attention in terms of its roadworthiness and its operational capability. Fire Engines are exempt from MOT, but they must be kept in a road worthy condition if we are to take them on the public highway. Andrew Thorpe, a new volunteer with a background in Fire Service and Vintage Commercial Vehicle Preservation, has spent hours carrying out servicing and repairs to the MK9 engine and chassis to ensure that this 40 year old vehicle is fit for the road. This task alone consumes a considerable amount of money, especially when you consider Andrew, like all of our volunteers, gives his time and skills for nothing. Oil, filters and consumable parts alone came to over £900! A fact often over-looked by many of us as we were used to simply taking a vehicle to MTMS for it to be repaired oblivious to the actual costs involved. Spare parts can be very difficult to locate and even with our vast stocks we often have to go searching. This task is made even more difficult given that so many British Fire Engine Manufactures and support industries are no

longer in business. We are becoming quite skilled in locating companies who can re-manufacture/refurbish parts that have long since disappearing from the shelves.

This was very much the case when it came to repair work on the Mk9 monitor. After a complete strip down, a crack was located in the monitor outlet casing. This was replaced with a spare whilst the original part will be kept and eventually repaired. This casing is held together with a bolt. Sadly due to excessive corrosion, the nut on this bolt was so badly corroded that it couldn't be re-used. We had no spares. The thread was unique to the bolt and to the Mk9 monitor so the nuts had to be made from scratch. Two nuts (we need a spare) cost £90 and that was with mates rates! Whilst this repair was being carried out, the hand rail on the monitor was found to be so badly corroded that the whole thing needed to be replaced. This was built entirely from scratch and is testimony to Andrews's skill and ingenuity. Put quite simply, the finished result is magnificent. The vehicle now produces from the monitor like the day it left the factory. I would happily put it on the run tomorrow. Not bad for a vintage vehicle? This work will continue. I don't suppose we'll stop until the day you can't buy diesel anymore and we're all driving around in electric fire engines wondering why we ever polluted the environment with dirty noisy smelly crash vehicles!

We can't tell the story of military firefighting without telling the story of firefighting in general and for that reason we have carried out extensive repairs on our 1972 Dennis



Austin K4 Looking good with some more work still to do

D-Type Fire Appliance ex-East Sussex Fire Brigade. This particular vehicle is powered by a 4.2ltr Jaguar engine similar to the one used in the back of the MK8. This machine is quite a rare beast. Alf Godson, our 85 year old mechanic, who served with Humberside Fire and Rescue Service as their Brigade mechanic has been volunteering with us for over a decade now, since he came out of retirement, set about this project with his younger assistants, Jim 82 and Colin 75. None of them come from a military background and its only Alf who has a fire service background. The others help, simply because they want to. They love being part of the team. The heat exchanger in the PTO had split and this was allowing water into the PTO casing and mixing with the oil. A fault not found in any book, but thanks to Alf's lifetime of experience, he knew what it was. To get to the pipe, all of the prop shafts, PTO shafts, Gearbox and PTO had to be removed. This is no mean task when you don't have ramps or a pit! The sight of an 85 year old lying on the cold concrete floor working his magic is a sight to behold. It is quite literally humbling. We offer to do the work for him under his guidance, but his stock answer is always "by the time I've told you what to do, I'd be quicker to do it myself". Once the parts were removed and the fault confirmed, the copper pipe had to be fabricated from scratch and reinstalled. Every part was inspected, serviced and overhauled before going back on the vehicle. The brake cylinders were replaced, brake pipes replaced, electrics serviced, oils replaced and replenished. In short, we've pretty much got everything back together as new. It took 6 months and several hundreds of pounds, but worth every penny.

The same can be said of our 1940's Austin K4 60' Turntable ladder and our Dennis Trailer pump. Both have had ground up restorations. The Austin has been in the workshop for about 3 years, its progress slowed by two workshop moves, whilst the trailer pump has only been worked on since arriving in Scunthorpe. The Austin has very much been a team effort, but special thanks must go to Alf, Jim, Colin, Gareth, Gary, Eddie and John. They have done a fantastic job through a great deal of adversity, and the end result is truly stunning. The paint job alone makes it stand out amongst our entire fleet. I can't wait until the MK9 is as shiny!

Nigel Bayes has been working on the trailer pump throughout the year. An ex Nottinghamshire Firefighter who owns his own ex-RN Dennis F8, his mechanic skill and attention to detail has produced a masterpiece, which, he assures me, will run and pump first time. That day is drawing ever closer as we hope to have both vehicles completed in time for the VE day celebrations later this year.

On that note we have also entered into a partnership agreement with North Lindsey College. This has seen students visit the Museum with the intention of gaining valuable work experience by working alongside our volunteers on various projects. In return, the college will also be undertaking a number of tasks back in their workshops under the guidance of their teachers as coursework. They are currently restoring a 1940's Scammell Wheelbarrow pump to working condition and are assisting with repairs to the exhaust system and petrol tank of the Dennis Trailer Pump.



Nigel looking happy with the progress on the Trailer Pump

Community engagement is a phrase quite often circulated in the Museum world. It means, quite simply, reaching out to the widest possible demographic that you can to ensure that your project appeals to as many people as possible. Ideally you want them to visit and get involved so that everybody benefits in some way or another. With this in mind, we recently allowed a "Youtuber" into the Museum to film his own piece of work for uploading onto the internet via his own Youtube Channel, "xtreme Garage". To date, this film has been viewed by 23000 people! Hopefully, this will go a long way in raising our profile worldwide.

As always, I can't mention everyone by name but I would like to say a big thank you to those who have signed up to our standing order supporter's scheme. Without you, we simply couldn't survive. We currently have no visitors, which mean no real income. Sadly, we still have bills to pay every day so your money is quite literally helping us to stay afloat and survive. Considering the size of the trade and the Association, it might surprise you to learn that we only have about 15 supporters who make a donation through our standing order scheme and perhaps a



Example of a Scammell Wheel Barrow Pump

dozen who have made a one-off pledge. Believe me, we actually need every penny and I hope that you can see we spend very wisely to ensure that our past will be preserved for years to come. I'm sorry that we keep going on about it but without continued support, we simply won't survive especially if we lose our current home and have to pay for commercial storage. If you can spare anything, please sign up to SOS or make a donation via our web site. You can even send a cheque or good old cash. We recently received a £20 note from a British couple living in America, who simply wanted to help us out. Bless them!

Finally, other projects continue at least two days a week with a good turnout of volunteers on every occasion. The library continues to answer research questions on vehicle history, operating instructions and general matters connected with the trade and the wider world of Fire Service history in general. We assisted Aviation Heritage Lincolnshire mount their exhibition, A Century of Valour in Lincoln Cities "The Collection Museum." The exhibition featured Guy Gibson's VC and other notable awards and artefacts and installations relating to the Counties wider military aviation associations through both world wars and beyond. We supplied information on Brian Murphy who won a George Medal for displaying courage and extreme devotion to duty when leading firefighting operations on a Canberra in a servicing hangar at RAF Coningsby. One of the aircrafts fuel tanks was alight but Cpl Murphy unhesitatingly led his duty crew into the confined spaces of the bomb bay, where despite further hazards from the explosion of starter cartridges, they succeeded in localizing and controlling the fire.

We also put them in touch with ex WO Steve Bowden who was awarded the Queens Gallantry Medal. His citation reads:-

Warrant Officer Stephen Bowden from the RAF has been awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal for actions in Afghanistan over 16 and 17 May 2010. Being one of the first to arrive at the scene of a massive fire at Camp Leatherneck (adjacent to Camp Bastion), Warrant Officer Bowden immediately recognised the severity of the situation and, without hesitation, assumed command of the incident:

All I could see was a big black cloud of

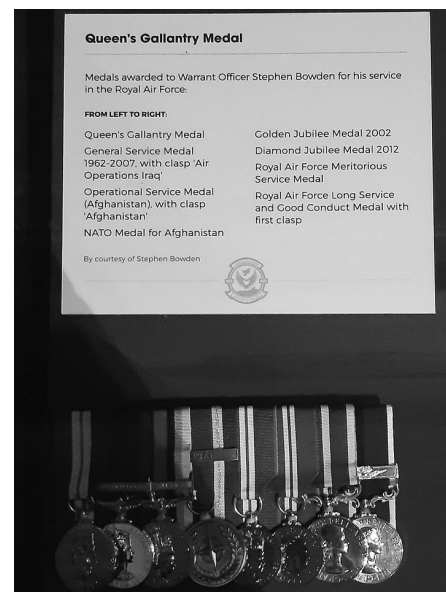


Display at "The Collection" Lincoln "The Bastion in the Air"

smoke, and I thought we're going to have to go into that," he said. However, the situation worsened some forty minutes later, as a catastrophic dust storm took hold, with gusting winds exceeding 60 knots driving the fire and reducing visibility down to metres. This combination of dust storm and inferno generated a grave threat to WO Bowden and his team's lives, but, with a display of incredible awareness of the situation, WO Bowden decided to remain and fight the fire, only withdrawing his team at the last safe moment: The fire was about the size of two football pitches, and I knew there was welding gear in there, which meant gas cylinders, and we were concerned that embers were blowing in the direction of Camp Bastion," said WO Bowden. "It was the most serious incident I've attended in 35 years' service. Showing no fear, WO Bowden was the last to withdraw from the fire, spending considerable time and exposure to personal danger in accounting for all his men. Leading from the front, WO Bowden brought his team back to tackle the inferno, halting it on the opposite side of the street to the bulk fuel installation containing over one-and-a-half-million gallons of fuel. Despite regular explosions and the knowledge that there were more gas cylinders in the area, WO Bowden led his team deep into the heart of the blaze to push the flames back and relieve the pressure on the threatened fuel installation. Despite suffering disabling smoke injuries to his eyes, and in some pain, WO Bowden remained at his post throughout the night and well into the next afternoon to oversee the successful culmination of the fire. His citation concluded: There are no doubt that Bowden's courageous and unselfish efforts

in leading his team of brave firefighters was fundamental in minimising injury and preventing loss of life in this incident.

His medal group was on display at the exhibition and both Steve and I attended the opening night. So nice to see RAF Firefighters publically recognised.



Steve's Medal Group

Sadly this year, we have been asked to provide an escort Fire Vehicle for the funerals of two ex-RAF Firefighters who sadly have answered their final call. The ACTR escorted William Howard Beech and John Patrick on their final journey.

I also said farewell to my friend and Museum Volunteer Brian Harris. Brian who was ex RAF and AFDFS assisted me during the Museum's formative years at Manston when I served there as an Instructor. He also kept the place ticking over until its closure and subsequent move to Scampton.

Gentlemen, We Salute You, Steve Shirley.

Steve has ask me to add that due to the Covid 19 situation the Museum is now closed to all our volunteers, so there is no restoration work or private visits, so our small income stream has halted, as mention before if you can see your way to consider the Standing Order Scheme it would be appreciated. If you need to contact the Museum for any reason then please phone 01522 730198 leave a message and someone will get back to you, or email or use the Facebook page as we are still answering enquires. The volunteers are keeping in contact through our Whats.App group and the phone

(ED)

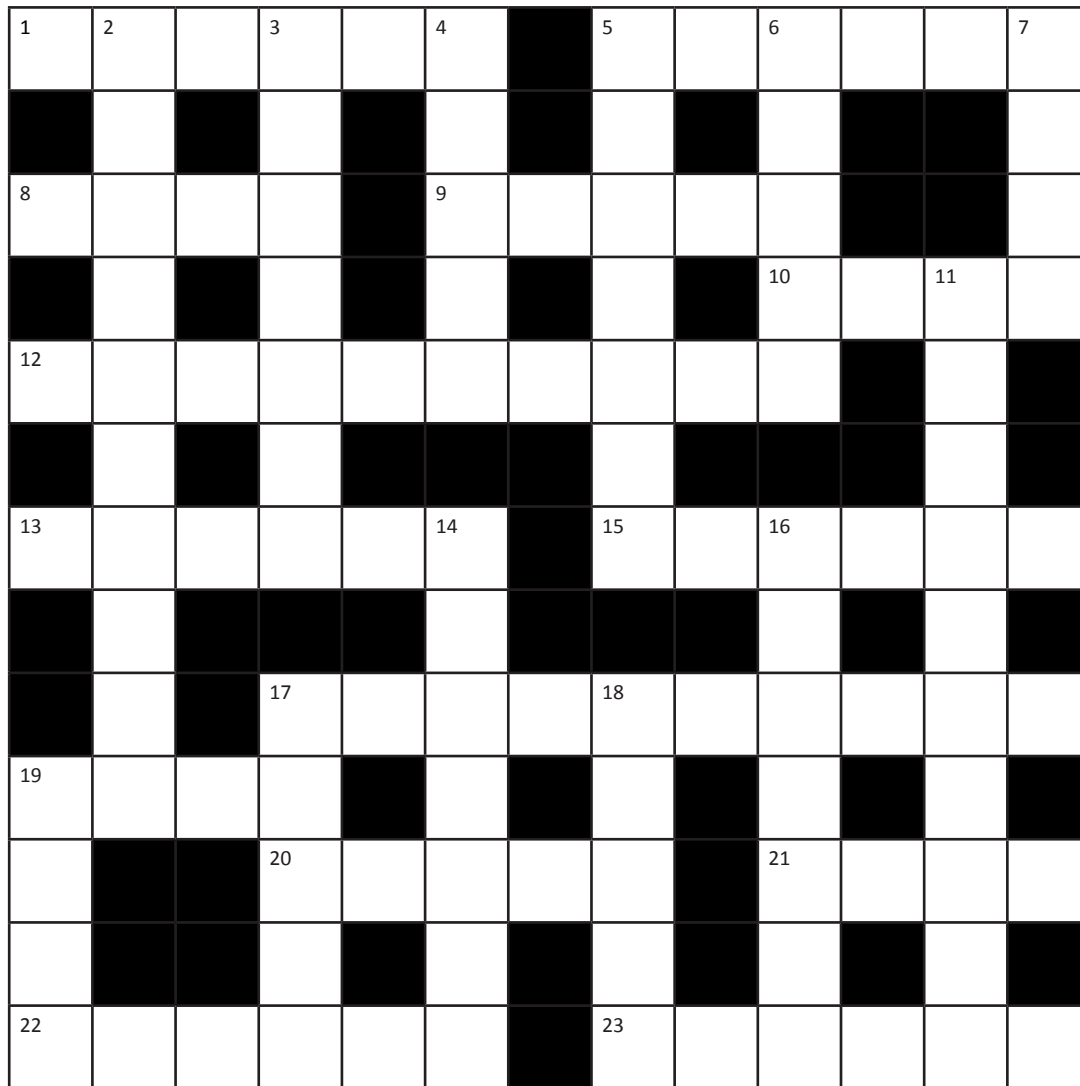


This image is rather unique and special. During one of the Museums open days, apart from about 200 visitors we had about 60 plus serving and retired RAF & DFS Fire fighters attend, about 50 plus on this photograph. In the centre you will see one lady; she is Ann Garside, sister of LAC Ian Bagshaw who was tragically killed while on duty at RAF Waddington in 1986. She has kept his memory alive during all those years through posts on a Facebook RAF Fire Service page, supported by Fire Fighters who were there at the time (myself included.) Ann had not met many of us and wanted to attend the open day in the hope of seeing some of us; it was a very emotional meeting for all. Steve Shirley invited Ann to stand in the centre of the group in honour and in memory of Ian, which was a fine gesture as Ian may well have been in that photograph if he had lived. (R.I.P)

Ed.



FLASHPOINT CROSSWORD No 13 BY FIREFLY



Across

- 1. Opening to wartime Chief of Staff. (6)
- 5. Home of Concorde found in loft strangely. (5)
- 8. Weary wheel covering? (4)
- 9 & 15. Inexperienced deity manned during strike action. (5,6)
- 10 Imperial measurement found in church. (4)
- 12. Does train speed? No, it's the opposite! (10)
- 13. Breathing Apparatus aged relation wears old fruit. (6)
- 15. See 9.
- 17 Fall over Falklands mountain.(10)
- 19. Freed German hides the rim. (4)
- 20. Handy digit. (5)
- 21. Trenchard perhaps, likes our rifle drill initially. (4)
- 22. Type of pump, or try oar perhaps. (6)
- 23. Donkeys heading south to evaluate. (6)

Down

- 2. Extend yoga strangely like arterial blood? (10)
- 3. There's a PM here to start with. May be? (7)
- 4. Pat of a Squadron not starting and not heavy. (4)
- 5. Sense charge for fish. (7)
- 6. Muddled line going North to Soviet Leader. (5)
- 7. Endless late shift coming soon. (4)
- 11. Angry exchange is my speciality. (10)
- 14. Our army or where it's equipped from? (7)
- 16. Odd sled could be tricky? No they're easy! (7)
- 17. Four fish are a rare treat. (5)
- 18. Fifty-one support Zodiac scales. (5)
- 19. Arab leader hiding in the mirage. (4)

Eddie Munro's Journey

Eddie is a keen volunteer at the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting and at 82 years old is one of the oldest. Recently Eddie suffered mobility problems so his daughter Jo began bringing him to the Museum since it moved to Scunthorpe. Joe saw how happy he was among it all and she really enjoyed it herself, so much so that she has become a member of the team taking on a variety of jobs, from helping her dad with restoration work to helping with catering, compiling all sorts of data, the list goes on. Well done Jo, you make your Dad proud. Eddie has a remarkable recall of detail of his entire career to the dismay of all the volunteers. So here is his story.

Edward Munro born 4th August 1938 Grantown on Spey and was called up to carry out his National Service soon 14th May 195 he became M5044945 AC Munro.

Firstly I was sent to RAF Cardington to get kitted up, then went on to RAF Bridgenorth for 8 weeks basic training, then on August bank holiday Monday I was sent to RAF Sutton on Hull, the home of the RAF School of Firefighting for my fire training. I was the first to arrive out of 28 of us who were attending a new training course which lasted 8 weeks; I got a good high mark on the course which was 70% and then I was sent to RAF Weeton near Blackpool for a further 8 weeks driver training which included four weeks driving a 3 ton Bedford, then carried out a test then two weeks on Landrovers and another test. It was then a week back on the 3 ton Bedford truck which included night driving and I passed all the tests. Then in the final week it was driving the vehicle of your trade, which at that time was a MK5.

I then had 2 weeks leave and then on the 28th December I was sent to RAF Innsworth to be kitted up to go abroad. So it was on 31st December 1957 I was sent to Cyprus, we had 13 weeks there, then we went by boat Limassol up to Basra, we had 3 days in Basra then had a 750 miles convoy over to Hibbaniya. In Hibbaniya we worked with Hunters, Venoms and Vampires, we also had to cover the lake on which the seaplanes used. It was at Hibbaniya that the first crash we had to attend was a Hunter with a collapsed wheel.

There were two airfields, the main airfield and the plateau strip which about six miles away. During my time on the plateau we were kept busy looking after goosenecks and the glim lamps plus all the other jobs on the airfield. There was a holiday centre at Lake Hibbaniya were every once in a while we would get a seaplane landing.

Along with a large collection of elderly machines which included 45 Monitors, Fordsons and two rather dilapidated Merryweather's



It was in July 1958 when King Faisal II was assassinated, and so we all had to stay on base under close arrest by the Iraqi army, they were at every single doorway. We still however had to man the runways; we were still being watched over by the Iraqi Army who was just sat about on chairs. We only had 16 or so minor incidents after that, planes running off runways, wheels not down etc, no one badly hurt or killed.

It was in early September 1958 sixteen of us firemen were sent to Nicosia, I for some reason was left in the transit camp, so I decided to head off down the NAFFI to drown my sorrows. After a few hours I decided I had had enough, but just as I was leaving there was a HUGE explosion behind me and the NAFFI door hit me in the back

of the head and I was knocked out. It turned out that it was an IED hidden in the sofa. The explosion killed two and injured six. After a couple of days in the hospital, I was sent to the guard room to tell them what I had seen, which wasn't a lot. I had one more week in the transit camp, during this time I was in a convoy from Nicosia to Eyosnicolius. We had to stop on the way due to an ambush, no-one was injured, and had to go back to Nicosia. I never did find out who carried out the ambush.

It was one Friday night while still in transit camp when a guard came looking for me to go to Episkopi. I arrived in Episkopi quite late at night and I was given a camp bed and bedding and told where the Fire Section tents were, then I got settled down for the night. At 7.15 the next morning I was promptly tipped out of my bed by a large man asking silly questions and wanted to know who I was and why I was there, seeing the blank expression on my face he let me go back to sleep. It turned out that it was the SWO!!! A few weeks later during one night when he was taking his poodle for a walk by the fence he was challenged by a Cypriot guard, he shouted "friend or foe" and as the SWO bent down to pick up his dog, he got a shot from a 12 barrel shot gun in an unmentionable place!!

Episkopi had a magnificent airstrip which was just outside the camp boundary; it was 1,378 ft (420m) long and landed Austers, Chipmunks, Helicopters and Pioneers. We also had to provide fire cover for the three services C in C residences for helicopter movements.

In September 1959 The Fire Officer got a bee in his bonnet about us unruly, untidy, undisciplined firemen so he decided to have a clear out. A sergeant demoted a corporal promoted and the rest of us spread out to

Crash Bays at the Plateau Strip

One incident that happened was a Hunter returning with the nose wheel hung up, so we had to lay a foam path. Unfortunately he ended up completely missing the foam path and ended up crashing, the ejector seat jettisoned, but only ejected part of the pilot!!!!



the four winds. Two went to Akrotiri, two Nicosia and two sent home who near to tourex anyway. I and one other were sent to El-Adem

We arrived at El-Adem nearly frozen to death in a Beverley, where the WO in charge sent me and other guy to the bombing range. We had a SWB Landrover with a ladder on top, two or three hand fire extinguishers, an asbestos blanket, a 5 gallon drum of whitewash and two paintbrushes. Our job was to mark out any hits on the targets for a few weeks. I was then sent to Tobruk. It was fairly peaceful there; we only had 2 major incidents, a fire at the JSP fuel installation and a fire at the furniture store in town. In march 1960 we had a 19 day exercise in the desert to transport troops and equipment in Beverley's to Timimi which was an ex war aerodrome 90 miles from El-Adem and at the end of April 1960 I got sent home.

After one month's leave, I was posted to RAF Finningley, it was fairly peaceful there, and just a couple of bomb hangs ups, some embankment fires, thing like that, nothing too major.

In September 1963 I was on the move again and posted to RAF Coningsby as a MK6 driver, but for the first 7 months there I never actually sat in one!!!

Then I was sent on emergency PWR to "Taiwan" which turned out to be misspelt, it should have been Tawau, which is where we finally ended up landing on June 1964. We had gone via Changi Singapore, where we had to have a medical and a dental check up where I fell out of the chair!! We then flew to Labuan in a Dart Herald where we stayed for three weeks. We went to the general office to collect a new camping kit, company paperwork and a gun, we landed in Tawau at 11am and our first incident was at 1pm the same day, a Royal Navy helicopter had crash landed in the sea, we had to just stand there as we had absolutely no equipment apart from the land rover we were in!!

At Tawau there were the Dakota DC3 Malaysian airways that came through 3 times a day, there was also 4 Royal Navy Wessex on station on PSP platforms, all the building were tents.

After we had been there 3 weeks, 5001 squadron arrived; I was driving a digger making a road when a Beverley landed with a MK5 on board for the section. There were only 3 of us in the Fire Section; the sergeant couldn't drive it, the Corporal who couldn't reach the pedals, and me. So I bet you can guess who had to back it off the Beverley!! But I managed to do it without scratching it!! We then spent the rest of the day servicing it, got it running and producing foam, the four



Luxury Accommodation at Tawau

Malaysian firemen who were with us were absolutely amazed by it and were climbing all over it. Now things started happening, the army were in charge of the kitchen so everything we had was either tinned or fried!! We lived in 4 man tents; we had 1 bed, 1 wardrobe and 1 locker each, and floorboards made out of packing crates, the domestic site was about 500 yards from the tech site. It rained every single night torrentially between 7pm and 8pm. Guard duty was 2 nights a week for everybody. We were approximately 2 miles from the island of Sabatik which was Indonesian property.

Heavy artillery would come over the top of us to the airfield on the island, the Army Air Corps Beaver aircraft used to go up to direct the guns and one night I made the mistake of volunteering to be the spotter in the plane. I was instructed to lay on the floor of the plane and drop flares to tell the guns where to aim for, consequently lighting up the plane, until we saw pretty lights coming towards us, those pretty lights turned out to be tracers, until one hit us and went through the tail of the plane!! None of us were hurt, but I never volunteered for that again!

They had started building an actual station by then. First the ATC then SHQ, the airport building arrived, followed by the stores, then us, the Fire Station, then the MT Section.

So then we were under cover properly, not just tents. As far as aircraft, the Wessex then left and we got Malaysian Airforce Alouettes, they were awful, we nicknamed them plastic bubbles as that what they looked like.

One morning I was woken up by the guy in the bed across from me saying "there's something on my legs!! What is it!?" it was a very large boa constrictor. I started to move it off him, but as soon as it was disturbed, it went on its way anyway.

Soon we got a new regiment sergeant. He demanded that we dug some slit trenches across the end of our tents. We did tell him about the torrential rain, he just said never mind the rain, just do it. So we did. Three or four nights later, at around 04.00 we got a 'Stand To' call, everybody out, enemy aircraft approaching Indonesian Hunters. It was hilarious listening to everybody jumping out of bed and into these trenches, splash!! The air was a funny colour blue that night and the next day the Station Commander overruled the Regiment Sergeant and told us to fill in the trenches.

Although we now had a nice new station, we had no troop amenities. So the Station Commander decided it was time we had something for the troops to do when on downtime. We had a photographic club, as well as another three or four other bits to keep us entertained. We were given an amount of money from PSI to equip the places; the photo club was given \$400, so I took it upon myself to sort it all out. I had a word with a captain of a Borneo Airways flight, if he could help us at all; he said he could see what he could do. We didn't hear anything for a week or two, but then one day I got a message that there was a box for me at the airport, so off I went to collect it. The box contained a complete photographic studio, everything you would need, fantastic. The next time I saw the captain I asked him how much he wanted for it all and he said it was compliments of the Borneo Airways, which made the Station Commander VERY happy as he used it the most.

Things moved along for a few weeks and on Monday morning I was promoted to the dizzy heights of corporal. On the Tuesday we managed to acquire some material to blackout the photo lab. So I decided to go

down in the MK5 to collect them, but instead of simply reversing back out the way I went in, I decided to pull a u turn to go back out, but ended up stuck in the swamp!! I couldn't get it back out and had to go and get the royal Malaysian Regiment to help me. They sent an enormous Michigan bulldozer to pull it out for us, which had to all go through the Station Commander... oops... then I had to clean it down, clear it out and make sure it still worked okay, which meant a very late night. On the Wednesday morning at 9am I got a message to go to the Station Commanders office, now! so I went down there, knock, went in, there was only him and me, no witnesses etc. He simply said "Do you accept my punishment or do you want a Courts Marshall?" Hence removal of my stripes, which did actually upset another Corporal as he was being sent over to Singapore, but now this had happened, it meant he had to stay here.

The RAF then took over the kitchen HURRAH!! Decent food, the food was 200% better, fresh meat, fruit and veg all from the local shops, the buffalo steaks were gorgeous.

When we were on duty we had 24 hours on and 24 hours off. While off duty I used to drive the Ghurkhas out to do their jungle patrols. The drive was roughly 1 hour from the base, and then they were picked up two or three weeks later. The first time I went to pick them up I was five minutes early and got a rocket from their captain saying, I could have given their position away.

When they went out on patrols, they would take only one day's rations, a gun and a knife and they would live off the land. When I picked them up, they would invite me to a meal with them afterwards, and I had quite a few strange meals with them. Once we had a 26 foot snake, I also tasted wild boar, turtle which tasted awful, the wild boar was just like strong pork and the snake was curried so I couldn't really taste it much, and then there was the Ghurkha rum, lethal stuff!! When I went to take the SAS out, it would take about 30 mins to load the stuff they were taking with them, I think it was everything barring the kitchen sink!!

In early 1965 we had a visit from the Duke of Edinburgh over at Kalabakan, so I was sent over there to oversee the making of the runway so they could land, they had already started the runway and had got 500 meters on solid surface sorted, the top of a nearby



hill was being bulldozed down flat to make another 150 meters. Two nights before he arrived we had a tremendous storm and the last 150 meters of the runway was washed away. The plane however managed to land, it was a twin engine Pioneer, and whilst the duke was there, I had to fuel the plane and get it turned around in order for him to leave, so he left without any trouble. They had sent an Alouette for me to fly back to the station, which was a terrifying experience and everything rattled, I got back to Tawau before the duke had landed there so I was in time to watch him land again.

Two or three days later a helicopter crash landed at an outstation, as we arrived on scene, most of the crew were already out, but there was a passenger trapped and there was a load of commandos

all crowded around the helicopter but they were afraid to do anything as everything was sparking, the batteries had come loose. So we shooed them out of the way, undid the batteries, and got the passenger out and onto a helicopter waiting to take him to hospital, but apparently he died in the air before he got to the hospital.

A couple of months later on Easter weekend, we went on a fishing trip in the South China Sea. I was sat on the side of the boat, as I looked in to the clear crystal waters watching the most beautifully colourful fish I had ever seen, that night we were out a little late and heard a big bang and then a "plop" in the water nearby, then someone say "heave to!! The next one won't miss" it was the Royal Navy doing patrols, as apparently there were timed curfews on the water, we didn't know. Oops.

At the end of April on one Saturday night, after I had been nursing the end of an Oerliken gun, and had been on my feet for just over 36 hours when finally I crawled into bed, and then someone woke me up. I politely told him where to go, but it turned out to be the Orderly Sergeant with a telegram, saying as of now, you are being repatriated back to the UK as your father is gravely ill.

As I was clearing from the station, the Station Commander came to me to ask how I was getting home. I told him I would get on the next Dakota that left and he said to me sternly, that I wouldn't be and there was a plane due in at 11am, you're on that. so I did as I was told, got on that plane, when I got to Changi, Singapore, there was a staff car waiting for me, to take me to Singapore main airport. I changed in the back of the car, and when he got to the airport there was a representative of BOAC comet waiting for me, they had held the plane to wait for me which took me direct to Heathrow, and again there was a staff car waiting to take me straight to Euston station, where I got the train to Maltby, Doncaster, picked up my wife and daughter and went straight up to Scotland to see my father.

In June 1965 I went back on duty at RAF Waddington as a corporal, a fairly quiet time there, a few bomb hang-ups and wheels stuck on planes, but nothing major.

So it was in October 1969 I was posted to Gutterloh in Germany. Then in November 1971 got posted back to Waddington, where I was told that I couldn't sign on for any further time and I was discharged in 17th may 1972.



THE UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFE WITH THE RAF (PART 2) As recalled by Ron Shearn

Some time before the rail line to Catterick closed, I arrived at Catterick with mixed feelings. Jack Morrell met me at the station and both he and his wife, Gwen were most kind, and I much appreciated all they did, this kindness extended when my wife Muriel joined me at Catterick. In the months that followed, we kept in touch, but now only by cards and letters.

The majority of firemen had moved from Sutton and on arrival, I had a feeling that some considered me an intruder, for those that did not know me, I said was, "you will!"

I took over from John Walker, an extremely good fireman, very firm and forceful. On his leaving the RAF, John moved to Rhodesia, but his daughter, Jackie stayed behind and lived with Muriel and myself for some time. My views on certain things were not as some others thought. Perhaps I had the audacity to query things that had been gospel for many years. Right or wrong I learned 'my trade on the line', as many others had. I did not go to Sutton on Hull in 1943, for two or three weeks.

I have no intention of recalling and recounting all that happened during my years at Catterick – it would be much too boring, but, I am sure many will remember the building the school was in – Building 159; it housed classrooms, offices and small stores. The vehicles and main items of equipment were held in West Hangar. The maintenance staffs were also there.

The organising took quite a while, with staff coming and going, however, things were taking shape. The greater majority gave me tremendous support and the atmosphere was noticeably pleasant and friendly. However, one thing stood out on the station generally, and that was the tension between firemen and gunners. Neither wanted the other. At times it was carried too far, and a few people made it worse. I won't labour the point, but I tried hard to break the barrier. We all had jobs to do and we were all in the same air force. Perhaps our jobs were important, but without the aircraft we wouldn't have a job. Anyway as time passed it became light hearted banter. It was put to me at one time that I should lead the firemen in a 'walk out'; I certainly gave that no thought. What sprang to mind immediately was, we might make the headlines and I would be demoted to airman and spend the rest of my time in the Glasshouse at Shepton

Mallet. I think it was in the late fifties, that the possibility of a 'dual trade' was tried; I do not think it was very successful. Having said that, I did have two Gunners who had transferred in the early sixties, at Catterick, both instructing, they were a pleasure to deal with. After a while, the scheme seemed to 'die out'

Administration, is always time consuming, and not to everyone likes. For a year or so Bob Breen took it on, and he did it extremely well. Soon after arrival I realised the importance of training aids. They were very much in Vogue. Like many others, I'm sure; when young I was taken (dragged) to church/chapel every Sunday to listen to long boring sermons. The only thing I remember of those sermons was one person using a training/preaching aid. It was a model of a suspension bridge. This came to mind when thinking of aids for instructors. In this I was most fortunate – Ron (Smokey) Fairhurst was at the school and not due to move away for a while. He was a very well qualified instructor, without doubt the best at drawing and making training aids. I found Ron most co-operative and helpful.

A few weeks later I took the I.T. Course at Upwood, it was a most interesting and enjoyable. The end result was most pleasing, then came a period when about 50% of my time was taken up with instructing quite a number of officers and ASCO courses. Other type courses were 'building up' and were rather busy; everyone seemed to be trying very hard and course results were good. Whenever it could be arranged, we would visit large organisations – hose manufacturers etc. By then the unit overall, was getting extremely busy. Many more officers were brought in and that eased Orderly officer duties. Prior to this move, only W.O.'s did orderly officer duties, which was every five days plus weekends.

We had a steady flow of official visitors, and I suppose the highlight for them was the Fire Crash Rescue. This is carried out almost entirely by the maintenance Staff (Hangar Staff). It was a pleasure to see them in action, and it certainly looked perfect. A particular visit went extremely well; the local press were with us for most of the day. Several papers published reports – with rather over the top headlines – 'RAF Fire Fighters have just thirty seconds to save blazing aircraft' - 'The men who risk supreme danger

to save others'. Yet another headline – 'Worlds Fastest Firemen'. I have retained the articles and for the first time in many years, I've read them again. There was quite a detailed 'write up' including quotes attributed to me – most embarrassing! There is a photograph of two of the basics, AC John Ball and AC Edward Wigg.

If my memory serves me well, I think that around early 1964, backtracking winter of 1963 was then when I went off to Maralinga for three or four months. Some referred to it as nuclear trials, but possibly nearer the mark is the effect of fire on atomic material in respect to radiation. In no way am I going into any detail; that would fill a book in itself.

Prior to travelling to Maralinga I attended a course at Aldermaston; this was a different world and all they were so helpful. Everyone seemed to have qualifications as long 'as your arm' and I wouldn't have been surprised if the lady cleaners had at least one 'A' level. The week at Aldermaston was important to provide background knowledge and advice before the tests at Maralinga were carried out.

After a very short time we left UK in temperatures below freezing, bound for Maralinga, Australia, men and certain items of equipment, into warmth between 30-40 degrees. I found it most interesting. There was a small Fire Section near the site. Soon, everyone had arrived two medics, one Wg/Cdr, one Sqd/Ldr, one Army and one Naval officer and one RAF Regiment Sqd/Ldr. I had a staff of a dozen. By this time, personnel from Aldermaston had arrived too and things were taking shape. I soon realised the importance of one Sgt medic. It was his job to control the flies. What a job he had! His name was Sgt Fry – he was quickly named Doc Fly!

All the personnel from Aldermaston were a delight to work with. If I ever considered that they would be rather staid, how wrong I was. At times it quite hilarious, they were far more unruly than 'Basic' Firemen.

It was obvious that previous tests had been carried out. Many large caravan type vehicles were already in place. Roughly the aim was to note the reaction of extreme heat on certain materials. A large area was used and posts and posts placed at various distances (miles). It was a case of following the 'plume' to check for levels of radiation. This was not always very easy – the protective clothing, the



Rescuers beat back flames to open the cockpit in yesterday's demonstration by RAF Regiment firefighters.

Picture by Mirror Camera-
man TOM BUIST.

This was the image from the article Ron mentioned

heat and driving over the terrain which was sand and scrub land. This would take considerable time. On return, it was a case of decontamination. A series of tests were carried out over a period of weeks. On completion of the tests, came the problem of trying to remove any lingering radiation. I presume the removal of all the 'hot spots' was carried out. This was very time consuming. The co-operation of all concerned made it a most interesting and happy experience. I believe the trials were most successful.

Then out of the blue, I was asked if I would like to return to the UK, choosing my own route. Everything would be arranged and booked. I never knew who set this in motion, I never really knew who I should thank and of course, it required permission from the Regt Sqd/Ldr McDonnell. He was based at Catterick. I had a high regard for him and I knew him rather well. I set off, managing a few days in Sydney before leaving for the Far East. I stayed in what was then Siam and in Hong Kong. I was fortunate enough to have a number of stops before reaching the UK, including Tehran and Rome, among others.

When I returned from Maralinga, sporting a suntan, (perhaps I should have shown some guilt, as I believe that the UK winter had been quite severe), I was once again met at the rail station by Jack Morrell who by now was my next door neighbour. On the station it was obvious to see that improvements had been carried out to our

main building (OP159). I was determined to improve the rooms and facilities. It took several years.

At Catterick we were running eight or so different courses, though not all at the same time. I thought morale was very high. It wasn't easy fitting the right instructor to a particular course. I know some were unhappy with certain courses but sometimes it could not be avoided. I placed a lot of importance to all courses, but possibly a little extra to the Basics; my thinking being, students on other courses were mostly already motivated and knew what the RAF expected – and also gave. I fully realised that many joined for a variety of reasons, and a home environment was so very different to living in a room with others. I felt the 'Basics' was the time, if possible not only to motivate, but also try to work and help others, and to develop pride, not only in the career they had chosen but also in the RAF itself. This was only my personal opinion.

Several of instructors were detached to Germany to carry out on the job training. Part way through, I spent a week there and found things running smoothly.

Around the mid 60's, courses were coming thick and fast. One Basic course stands out; the course results were outstanding; one 'A' pass and all others, passes with distinction. For such an achievement praise must go to the splendid team of instructors, Cpl Davie Ayre and Cpl Andy Self.

I have known few others to compare with the willingness, cheerfulness and infectious enthusiasm Andy Self demonstrated.

Sometime after I arrived at Catterick, I was determined we would, if possible have our own tie and magazine. Before he moved on I asked Ron Fairhurst to make the necessary drawings. I sensed there would be a few stumbling blocks, and it proved true. Not many, but enough to delay things for quite a while. It was a case of watching for personnel to change then trying again. The time to make a move came, and the go ahead was given for both tie and the magazine. Contact was made with the firms and the orders placed, and quite a number sold.

In the mid 60's I was posted to Gan for one year. I know many have been stationed there and many had little liking for the island. For me it was one- even the possibly, THE best posting. I was very fond of the Maldivians – and how quickly they took to smoking and swearing! Gan was a not a busy station, a staging post between UK and Singapore. The manpower was quite small in number. In my opinion there was always a pleasant atmosphere; there was quite a number of sporting activities to take part in. The highlight was when a Royal Navy Ship anchored offshore and a number of the crew came ashore to take part in a football match.

Not long after arriving in Gan, a letter came stating that a course from Pakistan would shortly arrive to undergo a course in Fire and Crash Rescue; it was to last quite a few weeks. Tongue in cheek, I requested that a qualified instructor be sent out. Back came the quick reply "surely you can cope" It did not take long to decide whom I thought would best carry out the task – Sgt Peter Crouch. He turned out to be a splendid choice. He may not have been a qualified instructor, but he did an outstanding job – far better than many instructors would have done. Undoubtedly he would require help; I selected Cpl Groves again a good choice. Peter had had received a commendation (before I arrived) for an incident involving an aircraft; I feel he well and truly deserved another one – he did not get it and I blame myself.

I hadn't been in Gan for long before I was given a secondary duty; "Radio Gan" which I took on with some trepidation. I surprisingly thoroughly enjoyed the task and can't remember having a happier time. Over the Christmas period we discussed

and agreed to raise money for charity – an attempt to break the World Record for continuous broadcasting hours. So over the Christmastide we set a new record for continuous broadcasting, live not piped, music for 202 hours and 3 minutes. Our record was soon broken!

Our chosen charity was Guide Dogs for the blind; it was carried by the pledge system; either requests a particular record, or pay for one not to be played. The highest bid to play came from the M.T. Section for “If I Ruled The World” they pledged £20.00. The banter during this time was tremendous. The six most requested records (in reverse order) were:

- 6th Place (a tie between) Irish Rover and Boots
- 5th Place Jolly tinker
- 4th Place German National Anthem (which rarely got beyond three bars before someone paid to have it taken off)
- 3rd Place Homeward Bound
- 2nd Place She’s got the Action
- 1st Place Good Vibrations

We were amazed at our success, raising £900.00 – a very large sum considering the strength of the station. This was 1966; the money collected was enough to train three guide dogs.

Much as I enjoyed my time on Radio Gan, my main responsibility had been the Fire Section which thanks to some very good NCO’s and airmen was operated most successfully.

It was good to return to Catterick though. I had quoted a preference for Bill Atherton, a very good instructor with a cool calm manner, to take my place when I was posted to Gan. He gallantly stepped aside on my return to allow me back into the chair.

There were several fresh staff and it took a number of months before I was happy that things were running smoothly. It is a great advantage when more or less the same staff remained together. I think it was around the mid 60’s when a young airman Tony Jones, took the basic course and remained in the RAF for nine years. After nine years as a fireman, he left the service to train as a Catholic priest. I don’t recall any other RAF Fireman becoming a priest. I must say he was very sincere in the role he had chosen.

It was around this time that a review of staff numbers was due to take place. We had quite a while to prepare our case, and we certainly needed that time. We had to justify the numbers of instructors required for every lesson of every course. The team carrying out this out had been well briefed and knew what awkward questions to ask. Often it was a case of thinking on your feet. Many will remember FLT/LT Geoff Harris who was with the Fire Squadron at that time. He was a tremendous help, very fluent in speech, powerful in argument and quite outstanding at putting pen to paper. After the ordeal I felt we came out of it rather well. He had been involved in Trade Testing in the RAF, sadly, he died fairly young.

Also about this time we had a suggestion from ‘Higher Authority’ to the effect that the training school move from Manston to Catterick. This seemed a good idea. We had a while to prepare classrooms, stores, (wet) training areas, and I thought everything was quite well presented. The more I thought about it the feeling became stronger – it would not take place. I had been to the school at Manston and they were very well set up, plus of course many had a house in the south of the country. By now I knew most of the A.F.D.S. Officers and when they arrived (in numbers) most of the ‘big guns’ were included. From the onset it was easy to guess the outcome. I do not recall all the negative points but I do remember thinking to myself how on earth we managed to cope. In the event the schools didn’t join, and somehow we managed to keep going. I actually found the A.F.D.S. easy to get along with.

I remember the firemen’s strike. Quite a number went from Catterick to Glasgow and I know they earned the admiration of many. I also recall ITV showing a program of Service personnel under training and at work; it showed them in a dreadful light – it was like a farce. I wrote to the programme makers in rather strong terms – there was no reply; they probably laughed and tore my letter up!

I was shortly due for another overseas tour, and Andy Self was on his way, which necessitated finding someone else to take over the magazine task. I knew this would not be easy; however, I had no intention of it folding up. I chose Sgt David Johnson. He did a splendid job. It required the co-operation of many, particularly the staff at TRG Wing H.Q.

In the latter part of the 1960’s I was posted to Gibraltar (my first time there). I took over from Charlie Framingham. (He died many years ago).

Quite a number of the staff were Gibraltarians, I found them a pleasure to deal with and I got great co-operation from them. The senior one was Fred Chappory – what a grand person he was – a tower of strength in keeping things running smoothly between Brits and the Gibraltarians.

We had quite a few incidents including aircraft, regrettably one fatality. There were two other Fire Services, The Dockyard Fire Service and the City Brigade. We had an excellent relationship with both; and any joint exercise we held was I’m sure beneficial and enjoyable.

I found it very difficult to understand why some grumbled so much at being stationed in Gib (I know some moan wherever they are!) The gate to Spain was closed, but if one wished, it was a case of by air or ferry to Tangiers, then by boat to Spain. Tangiers was most interesting, also French held Ceuta.

My office was immediately behind the control room and there was a squawk box. On one occasion the box had been left open when one of the Gibraltarians was speaking with Sgt Dick Colsell, I heard Dick say “you had better see Father” and in came the lad. I wasn’t a Padre but it confirmed my earlier suspicions and I said nothing.

My time to return to the UK was fast approaching and I realised that I would miss Gib very much. I’m sure the staff knew that I thought very highly of them and so many others there. The Gib staff was very supportive and I knew how much I would miss them and probably never meet up with them again. How wrong I was!

I made my preparations to leave Gib. There was a delightful night with staff a few days before departure. I felt quite sad, not only missing the sea, sun and sand, but also more importantly leaving so many friends, and without doubt the staff I had. However I knew that I would meet a number of the staff back at Catterick.

We returned to the UK by road, going by ferry to Tangier and on to Spain. As we were passing the runway, I noticed all the fire vehicles were lined up. Suddenly

water and foam came from each vehicle in farewell. It was very kind and thoughtful. I believe it was down to David Johnson's crew.

Back at Catterick, it was nice to be 'on the chair' again, and indeed nice to be 'home', I took over from George Rodulson. Oddly enough, it was the second time I had followed him – previously I had taken over from him in late 1945 early 1946. It's most unusual, but each time we returned to Catterick, we occupied the same married quarter. This was to be my last posting, and in the years of service I had remaining, I planned to try and improve and encourage the personnel. There were several NCO's that I thought could 'take over' from me and, I'm sure, improve things. For many years we were known as the Fire School, then it was changed to Fire Squadron, this did not go down well with everyone, many were up in arms at the change. I made no attempt to fight the change; it was easy to see it coming and understand the reason for it. It was just a matter of time.

I had no intention of allowing myself to slow down during my final years. Working hours were most pleasurable and I was fortunate with the staff I had.

Around 1976, for a number of days, gloom held over the Squadron. During a demonstration of rescue from a burning aircraft something went dreadfully wrong.

Cpl Roland Moriarty was carrying out the rescue, and while climbing onto the aircraft; he fell backwards into the fire. As he fell, his helmet and one glove dropped off. We managed to extinguish the fire to his clothes and rushed him to SSQ and then to hospital. I won't go through all the details. Roland was badly burned and he left the RAF. I called to see him at his home some months later. I found it very difficult and I felt quite helpless.

Being at the School for a good number of years, I believe I did my share of being 'on the line'. To name all whom I have worked with, advised, or been supported by; those who were friends, irrespective of rank, would read like a 'Who's Who'. To me they were all special. I have the RAF to thank for allowing me to meet all ranks and many interesting people in civilian life.

About six months prior to leaving the RAF. I was offered a post at Fire School Stanstead Airport. This I accepted and visited the school a number of times. I then decided not to take up the post owing to private circumstances despite the post being held open for me for several months and being offered more money. In no way was I looking for extra money, I was very embarrassed but had no other choice but to turn the offer down.

My farewell night at Catterick was very emotional, seeing old friends from far and

near and, realising how hard the instructors had worked to ensure that it would be an unforgettable evening. I still treasure the items presented to me, especially the Hose Reel Cart made by David Pennington I believe. This was so well made, correct in every detail. David was with me as a Cpl in the 60's. I have never been able to thank him, as I've been unable to contact him. I remember David very well – he kept himself extremely fit. He would play badminton continuously for x number of hours in order to raise money for the local residence for elderly people. I cannot recall how many hours he achieved – it was certainly significant enough to generate a handsome cheque through sponsorship, sufficient for me to ask the Commandant to present the home. The Commandant did so.

My years in the RAF have been without doubt extremely happy. It has allowed me to meet so many splendid people of almost every rank and to make so many friends. We cannot live on memories but it is great to remember incidents and people – so many people, with affection.

Like others, I received an MBE. I found that most pleasing. I am a Royalist; Britain is my country right or wrong.

CHAIRMAN and VICE CHAIRMAN VACANCY

Due to health issues the Chairman, Neil Slade, and Vice Chairman, Howard Harper, are standing down from their positions on the committee.

The Association is in need of a new CHAIRMAN and VICE CHAIRMAN.

THIS IS OUR OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK FORWARD AND IS YOUR TIME TO SHINE.

New faces, new personalities, new ideas, to embrace changes that will see our Association grow and move forward into the future.

We have many younger members that could fill these positions, and many, I am sure, well capable for consideration, with a strong vision for our Association's

future direction.

Applicants must be full members and be elected to office at the Annual General Meeting which will be held on 17th October 2020 at the Citrus Hotel, Coventry.

Each candidate should be proposed and seconded, in writing, to be with the Secretary within 28 days of the AGM.

Please send proposals to Association Secretary, Mike Clapton, whose details are on page 2 of this issue of Flashpoint.

Thank you.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to our new members who have joined the Association, hopefully you may have a few stories of your experiences while serving that you can share with us in future Flashpoints.

1141 Michael Machen

1142 Alan Sanguy

1143 Clive Bunting

1144 Steven Skelly

ANOTHER MUSEUM DONATION

Many of you will have seen in the last Flashpoint a donation of wooden models to the Museum by June Medhurst daughter of ex RAF Fire Fighter John Davey, for new members here they are again.

This was supplemented by the donation of some more which many of you would have seen before.

Pauline McCann kindly donated Dennis's model's. Many of us will have seen these motorised models in action when Dennis brought them to reunions and demonstrated them and the surprise was when they actually produced water.

Big thanks also to Pip one of the museum volunteers who picked them up from Pauline's, Pip travels up from Kent when work permits. He's a popular guy as he always does the cooking of breakfast and lunch!!!!

Ed



2452756 ACTING CORPORAL BRIAN MURPHY GEORGE MEDAL

Emergencies involving aircraft fire were usually the result of flying operations. However, on 5th April, 1957 a fire broke out in a servicing hanger at Coningsby which housed Canberra aircraft. Corporal Murphy won the George Medal for his courage and determination in fighting the fire. His citation, published in the London Gazette dated 8th October 1957, provides an account of his actions:

On the 5th April 1957, a Canberra aircraft caught fire in a servicing hanger at the Royal Airforce Station, Coningsby. Corporal Murphy was in charge of the Duty Fire Crew which was called upon to deal with the fire. One of the aircrafts fuel tanks was alight and apart from the risk of this tank exploding the presence of 800 gallons of volatile fuel in the adjoining tanks made the situation extremely dangerous. Corporal Murphy, however, unhesitatingly led his crew into the confined space of the aircraft's bomb bay, from which, had there been an explosion, escape would have been virtually impossible. While operating in this dangerous situation, Corporal Murphy and his crew were subjected to further hazard by the explosion of powerful starter cartridges stored a few feet away, which blasted a hole in the fuselage and so caused the fire to spread rapidly in all directions. Despite this and the increased risk of the fuel tanks exploding, Corporal Murphy remained at his post, though his overalls and uniform were charred by the intense heat. Corporal Murphy displayed courage and extreme devotion to duty and by sustained effort in the face of great danger he and his crew succeeded in localising and controlling the fire while adjacent aircraft and equipment were removed from the vicinity.

Brian Murphy was born at Horton, Bradford on 10th August, 1931. He enlisted in the RAF on 24th November 1949, and became a Fire Fighter following recruit training. His initial service was spent at the Flying Training College, Manby, where he was promoted to LAC in June 195. In October 1956, he was posted to the Care and Maintenance Party, Coningsby, in the rank of SAC. He was promoted to Corporal in January, 1957. Corporal Murphy left the service in 1961.

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And in the Morning We Shall Remember Them



*Fire-fighter's who serve and have
served the crown.*

*Have sat in hostile foreign places,
With tired, lined, black sooty faces,
Often wet with tears or sweat,
Reeling from the violent forces they
have met.*

*With flame and smoke they are
greeted,*

*With courage and determination it
has been defeated.*

*No guns required for the 'Shout', Just
hose and water for the rout*

This is always the sad part, the loss of our friends and colleagues who have been part of our lives. Listed are members and non members.

Gordon "Geordie" Brown 389

John Patrick Walker

Tom Murray

Jack Tolcher 929

Al Vince

Ronald Newsome 774

Peter Mitchell 1006

Brian Harris 393

William Howard Beech



A GREAT PICTURE OF A DP1 FROM RAF MANBY (1960'S) DRIVING DOWN EASTGATE IN LOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE I WONDER WHO SANTA WAS ?