

# FLASHPOINT



ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



## Inside this issue

NEW ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS • ALAN WARDLES BEM STORY

LIFE AS A RAF FIREMANS SON • RAY SKINNER'S SQUARE BASHING

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS ABOUT DENNIS MACANN BEM

Autumn 2012 [www.rafanddfsas.co.uk](http://www.rafanddfsas.co.uk)

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**Co-ordinator Vacancies - East Yorkshire - Midlands, Scotland (1), South East and other areas as necessary. It's not too arduous, just a matter of keeping in touch, and promoting the Association when able to do so. If you can help, please contact a Committee member.**

## HOW TO JOIN

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Front Cover Picture: The painting is by Graham Blacker who passed away in June; this painting was one of his wife's favourites. Graham was an avid reader of Flashpoint and George and I thought it a fitting tribute to him.

## VACANCY FOR FLASHPOINT EDITOR

Your current editorial team intend to stand down after this autumn edition. We do require someone to come forward. We have made this known for some time, but there has been no interest whatsoever. If no one comes forward there is real danger of no spring Flashpoint! If you are interested please contact George or Steve for a chat about the post.



Well another year is creeping along to its end, and it's a welcome to your autumn Flashpoint. We have received a good many letters and emails in response to articles in the last issue, and contributions for this edition, we thank you all for taking the time and effort. We must apologise for an error in the summer edition, and that was in the 'Above and Beyond the Call of Duty' article. The award mentioned was a George Cross but the picture was that of a George Medal.

This will be the last edition that we act as editors, we are both busy lads and we have other projects which we wish to pursue. Whoever takes over the editorship will receive the support of us both and we will continue to write articles for Flashpoint. But at this point no one has come forward so if you are thinking about it then please get in touch with either of us.

Your Flashpoint editorial team duly attended the October 2012 AGM and for the benefit of those unable to attend we have completed a brief report on the proceedings. The AGM was opened by The Chairman Gordon Smith asking all present to stand and observe one minutes silence in memory of our thirty nine colleagues who have passed away since the last AGM. There followed the Reports from committee members. Once the reports were reread and any questions dealt with the election of committee positions took place. Gordon Smith having spent the last four years in the Chairman's post had declared that he was standing down as chairman and three nominations had been received for the Chairman's post; Neil Slade Mike Clapton and Arthur Elton. Each candidate gave a short address outlining some background information about themselves and all present were asked to vote for their preferred candidate. A show of hands then took place and Neil Slade received the most votes and was duly elected chairman of the Association. Other election of officers of the committee included Geoff Varley as the new Vice Chairman Mike Clapton as the new Secretary and Trevor Hayes volunteered to take on the role of Reunion Organiser and continue in post as treasurer. Our Association President Dennis McCann BEM thanked all those members of the committee who were standing down for their commitment hard work and dedication. Dennis then thanked all members of the committee for their efforts on behalf of the Association.

After the election of Officers two proposals were put before the AGM

### Proposal 1

That the Association vehicles that are currently on loan to and under the care and maintenance of Steve Shirley and his team at his RAF Fire Museum at RAF Scampton be donated to Steve Shirley; Steve Harrison put forward this proposal and addressed all present on the work and developments taking place at the Fire Museum at Scampton. Steve is well placed to inform all present and answer any questions him being a member of Steve Shirley's team. The proposal was passed unanimously and it was agreed that the vehicles be donated to Steve Shirley. For those not familiar with Steve's museum Steve informed us that there are forty ex RAF & Civilian Fire vehicles in various conditions and states of repair at Scampton. Steve went on to say that Association members and their family and friends are cordially invited to visit the museum and witness for themselves this little piece of RAF Fire Service history. Visits to the museum have to be made via Steve Shirley, contact details on page 3.

**Proposal 2** that lapsed members who wish to rejoin the Association only pay the current years subs; proposal agreed unanimously.

**Other business** included a suggestion by the membership secretary Brian

Ford that if any member is aware of the bereavement of an Association member they notify Brian that way he can make sure the information is circulated to those within the Association who need to know. Additionally it is Brian's intention to send an Association condolences card to the family of any deceased members' relatives; (see obituaries page) all present agreed that this was an appropriate gesture of good will. The newly appointed Association Secretary Mike Clapton made a suggestion that all area coordinators provide the Flashpoint editorial team with a passport size photograph of themselves; this could be included in future editions of Flashpoint the plan being that members would be able to identify their area coordinator at reunions.

Steve Harrison asked all present to consider submitting articles to Flashpoint and we reiterate that request if editors don't receive any articles we won't be able to produce Flashpoint and finally, Christmas will soon be on us, so to all of you we both send our very best wishes to all our members and their families and hope you have good health and happiness in the New Year. Special thoughts go out to our serving members who may be spending the festive season away from home take care guys and gals.

*George & Steve*



*Photograph which was taken at the October 2012 reunion of five ex RAF Masirah crew mates circa 1967). Left to right: Jim Croll, Jim Smith, George Edwards, Paul McGhee and Steve Harrison. Pity Smiler Meeson wasn't there. Photo taken by another ex RAF Masirah Fireman Ben Zaccardelli (circa 1974)*

# New Association Committee Members

## Neil Slade newly appointed Chairman of the Association

I was delighted to be elected Chairman at the AGM and will do my utmost, with the Committee, to support the Association.

I became a member in 2010 after watching the parade at The Cenotaph on television. The commentator pointed out the Royal Air Force Fire Service approaching the Cenotaph. I went on the web and found the site and joined.

I left school in 1963 and spent about three years fitting fire and burglar alarms plus bleeper systems. These were in various locations in the South of England. Due to a merry lunch time in a pub we had a mishap with a big and little dog where we were fitting a burglar alarm. The four of us were asked to leave.

1966 I joined the R.A.F. as a fireman. I was asked by the recruitment W.O. if I had any experience. Yes, I said, I have a Boy Scout Fire Fighter badge and signed on the dotted line. It was to RAF Swinderby and RAF Hemswell for basic training



followed by RAF Catterick trade training followed by two trips to RAF St Athan for driving courses. RAF Wyton was my first posting which was followed by a tour of the Gulf. My non- stop tour of the Gulf

ended in Bahrain at RAF Hamala. 3 ACC/ADC. My next posting RAF Marham only lasted about a month as I was selected for Queens Flight. Last posting was at RAF West Drayton.

1975 I joined British Airways Fire and Ambulance Service as a Station Officer, this lasted eighteen months as the section closed down. I was lucky enough to get a posting as an Overseas Duty Officer in the Gulf. This lasted till around 2005 when I was informed, due to cuts, that I was heading back to Heathrow. I was put in the pool and started looking for jobs in the airline. And back to Jeddah, I went as the Airline and One World Partners as The Hajj Operations Co-ordinator saving a fortune in fines and a very large budget.

2012 January saw my departure from the Airline. 36 years completed. At the moment I am a volunteer for The Guide Dogs for the Blind and now the Chairman for the RAF&DFS Association!

## Mike Clapton newly appointed Secretary of the Association



I was called up for National Service on 15th Sept, 1958, Battle of Britain Day!

Then was kitted out at RAF Cardington where, I signed on as a regular Airman. Then on to

Square Bashing at RAF Bridge North, from there to RAF Sutton on Hull for Aerodrome Fireman training, from there on to RAF Weeton then posted to

RAF Dishforth. I married my wife Sheila on Aug 27th 1960 and have a son and two daughters 7 grandkids and on one the way, great grandkids. After the RAF I served as a Fireman with the Air Force Department Fire Service at RAF Kemble. While at Kemble I joined the retained section of Gloucester Fire Brigade In 1966 and changed to full whole time member in 1967. I then went on to spend 36 and a half years with the Gloucester Brigade most of them as a Leading Fireman retiring in 1994. On retirement I drove a school bus for 4 yrs, then got a job carrying out aircraft re-fuelling at RAF Fairford, filling up B52--B1Bombers with go juice for the Bosnia' and Desert Storm conflicts, finally I retired in 2005 as the P.O.L supervisor. My interests are too many to mention them all but joined the RAOB in 1966I 'm Secretary of the local Crib League, President of the Darts League, and Life member of Cirencester Rugby Club, a Gloucester RFU supporter and at this moment I'm the Standard Bearer for the Cirencester Branch Royal British Legion.

## Geoff Varley newly appointed Vice Chairman of the Association

Ex ATC Cadet 1952 to 1956

RAF Fireman from 1956 to 1960. Joined and worked for the Marshall of Cambridge Group from 1960 until retirement in 2011 (over 50 years service)

The Varley family (Hazel, my son Guy and myself), has served the Marshall Group of companies for over a 100 total working years.

I Joined the ATC in 1978 (Commissioned in 1985). Was CO of the Cambridge Squadron 1988 to 1995 (Still remain on the Civilian Committee as Vice Chairman). Retired from Uniform post in 1995 and took on post as the Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Wing Treasurer, a post I still hold as at this date.

Held the post of the RAF&DFS Treasurer from 2002 to 2008

In retirement I am still an active member of the Girton Village Neighbourhood Watch Team (NHW), and last year (for my sins), I was appointed to an Area Representative Post on the Cambridgeshire NHW Executive Group and am now working closely (not inside I hasten to add), with the Police at top levels.





## Association member Alan Dickens Letter to Flashpoint

Hi George and Steve thoroughly enjoyed the article about RAF West Kirkby in the last edition of Flashpoint. I had the great pleasure of meeting and working with one of RAF West Kirkby's last Station Commanders Group Captain Henry James Gemmell CBE Mr Gemmell was the President of the Liverpool RAFA Branch until he passed away in 1984 for fifty years I have been involved in the Liverpool RAFA branch many of those years working closely with Group Captain Gemmell consequently I got to know him very well and what a gentleman and a character. He was shot down in World War One escaping captivity by hiding in a barge 'was the CO of No 2 Squadron during World War Two and he was he used to tell me only the second RAF Pilot to fly through the Khyber Pass. His tales of yesteryear always enthralled me and I remember his tales about Goolie Chits were captivating.

God bless his memory and to be called a friend by him and his lovely wife Joyce was indeed a great privilege and I will always be grateful to them both.

*Best wishes Alan Dickens*

For those not familiar with the term Goolie Chit here's some information to enlighten

you. Don't know if aircrew still carry Goolie Chits but were fairly sure they did during our time in the Middle East (late 1960's Steve & George Flashpoint editorial team).

In World War One Royal Flying Corps Pilots in India and Mesopotamia carried a "goolie chit" printed in four local languages that promised a reward to anyone who would bring an unharmed British aviator back to British lines. The term "goolie" is British slang for "testicles" and was so called (and still is called by the Royal Air Force) because, in the areas where the chits were used, local tribesmen were said to turn over aviators to their womenfolk, who castrated the pilots for use as servants.

*What a tremendous achievement and commitment by Alan fifty years service to the Liverpool RAFA branch many of them as welfare Officer . On behalf of all my fellow ex RAF Veteran Liverpoolians a big thank you Alan and I mustn't forget your side kick also an ex RAF Fireman Phil Southern keep up the good work both of you. I never served with Alan but had the great pleasure of serving with his side kick at RAF Sharjah and what a character was Phil. Ge (Flashpoint co ed)*

### RAF Sydenham Detachment 1970's

A request from your Flashpoint co editor George Edwards for any information photos/recollections from any ex RAF Firemen who may have completed the three month detachment to RAF Sydenham ( Belfast) in the 1970's. During the detachment we were billeted on HMS Maidstone berthed in Belfast Dock. Interestingly the Maidstone had been used as Prisoner of War accommodation during the height of the 'Troubles' but the ship was condemned as unfit for POW's but it was deemed suitable accommodation for RAF Firemen! Those detached came from Brize Norton or Fairford Fire Sections. Despite completing the detachment I have no photos and can't remember many of the lad's names I served with. I would like to put together an article for Flashpoint about this unusual and interesting little bit of RAF Fire Service history. All material received will be greatly appreciated and returned. Hope you can help

*George*

## Ron Roberts Memories



Dear George and Steve

I recently received a copy of 'Flashpoint' and I was intrigued to read Mick Haywood's Desert Island Disc's in which he mentions me when we were in Cyprus in the 1950's and my record collection. Yes I was, and still am a fan of Brenda Lee and remember playing her for ever as there wasn't much choice then; it was either Brenda or Johnny Cash. I can't picture Mike, but if he held the moniker "Yorkie" then I know him well.

I hope the photograph of me (bottom left Cpl) and my colleagues at 113 MU Nicosia may jog Mike's memory. Yes we had a mock fire place in the restroom also an outside garden featuring crossed axes and the fire badge, all designed by 'Yorkie'.

*Yours Faithfully Ron Roberts*

*I hope this jogs the memory Mike and maybe you could submit another article about your artistic work? If you are 'Yorkie' that is. (Steve, co-ed) Great photograph as well Ron.*

# Remembrance Sunday 2011

The morning of the second Sunday in November usually finds me on parade outside the British Legion Peterhead branch, with fellow RAFA members, for the annual Remembrance Service. If we are very lucky while we are marching, we get a cold crisp but sunny day, but usually it is overcast with a strong freezing wind from the North Sea pulling at our overcoats and, for those wearing them, their old military berets

Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 however was very different. Because we (my wife and I) were in Malaysia, we accepted an invitation to attend the annual Remembrance Service organised by the British High Commission here in Kuala Lumpur. It is held near the Malaysian National Memorial site at Tugu Negara, Lake Garden. Here there is a statue of 7 figures representing the nations who fought in the Malay Emergency of the 1950s. At the time it was built, it was the largest collection of bronze statues in the world. The statue is based on the Iwo Jima one in the United States (6 figures), it is quite striking.

Nearby are two areas sheltered from the hot sun and full of the badges of many military sqns/regt/ships, including those of RAF Changi, Tengah, Seletah and Butterworth. RAF Changi is of particular interest to me because I served there from 1969-71, and one of the last firemen to leave, (except of course, for that small band of merry men who managed to get seconded to the Singapore Armed Forces for an addition six months). One other badge attracted my attention, that of the RAF Far East Flying Boat Wing, does any reader know of it? All these badges are on the ceiling of an open air corridor around a pool. The location is a must visit for any former British service personnel who served in Malaysia

Given the heat out here the open air service at the War Memorial starts at 8am and last for up to one hour. It is a mixture of ceremony and informality, in that before the service starts a number of international school children, guides and cubs running around collecting money (for charity) in exchange for programmes and poppies. The service itself did indeed start at 8am prompt, with the singing by those present, led by the choir of Garden International School, of "Abide with Me"; this was followed by prayers by representatives of the Christian, Islam and Sikh religions. The prayers were for all who have died in the name of peace since the end of WW1

Col Tan Yan Yee of the Singapore Armed Forces read, "In Flanders Field". The bugler from the Malaysian 6<sup>th</sup> Royal Rangers played "Last Post" which was followed by a two minute silence. Wing Commander Rod Dawson of the Australian Royal Air Force recited "To the Fallen" The memorial service ended with everyone present singing "O God, our help in ages past"

Next came the laying of the wreaths, led by the British High Commissioner Simon Featherstone. He was followed by representatives of a number of the many High Commissions and Embassies here in Malaysia, including the USA, India, Namibia, New Zealand and Ireland. The local societies of St David, St Andrew, St George and St Patrick laid wreaths, as did the Royal Engineer Association (Bomb Disposal) and a number of schools, Brownies, and Guides. A total of 38 wreaths were laid.

Although only 9am, the sun was becoming quite hot and although water was freely available throughout the service, more sustenance was



required. All those attending the service were invited to the British High Commissioner's residence for a full British breakfast. This was served, buffet style, partly in his shaded garden. Because Malaysia is a Muslim majority country, there was no pork on the menu; instead, alongside the mountain of fruit and cereal, toast, tea and coffee, we were offered beef bacon and chicken sausages!

It was a really enjoyable experience and for someone like me, having served in Singapore, standing to attention in the hot sun, even for a short period of time, brought back many memories.

Would I have preferred Peterhead in November with a bowl of hot soup and a pint in the British Legion? That's a difficult question to answer!!

*Gerry Schofield*

## Duties of a Manager

In abbreviated form a manager is described as a person who has to:

- Decide what is to be done, to tell someone to do it; to listen to reasons why it should not be done; why it should be done by someone else; or why it should be done in a different way.
- Follow up and see if the thing has been done; to discover it has been done, but incorrectly; to point out how it should have been done; to conclude that as long as it has been done it may as well be left as it is.
- Wonder if it is not time to get rid of the person who cannot do the thing correctly; to reflect that, in all probability, the successor would be just as bad or worse.
- Consider how much simpler and better the thing would have been done had he done it himself in the first place; to reflect sadly that if he had done it himself in the first place he would have been able to do it in 2 minutes, but as things turned out he spent two days trying to find out why it has taken someone else three weeks to do it incorrectly.



# ALAN WARDLES B.E.M. STORY.

Alan's story revolves around RAF Acklington in Northumberland, the most northerly county in England which made it ideal for the defence of the north eastern coastline. The station originated in WW1 and was closed after the hostilities but was reopened in 1938 and became part of 13 Group (Fighter Command.) It first flew biplanes but progressed to Spitfires and Hurricanes.

Over the years this station became a support unit for aircraft practising their weaponry skills over the North Sea and low flying air tactics by aircraft from various forces under the umbrella of low flying area 12. In the early 1970's only the Air Traffic control tower and Fire Section remained on what was left of the airfield and an enclave off the northern peri track was provided for 'A' Flight 202 Squadron, (Search & Rescue) with hard standings and a servicing hanger to operate their Wessex helicopters from.

In 1971 some married quarters the Sergeants Mess and other buildings were allocated to H.M. Prison Service and the construction of two prisons also began.

Alan explains that on a recent visit to the area virtually all of the once airfield had been taken over by the Prison Service with H.M.P Acklington and H.M.P. Casterton now stands there. 'A' Flight of 202 Squadron now operates from RAF Boulmer.

**Alan goes on to say:** I was posted to RAF Acklington in 1971 as the NCO i/c of the RAF Fire Service detachment to provide fire cover for the Wessex helicopters of 202 Squadron Search & Rescue with 6 airmen under my control. Our parent unit was RAF Boulmer where fire cover was maintained by RAF Defence Fire Service making me and my team the only RAF Fire Service members serving in the county of Northumberland.

Our two fire vehicles were ACRT's and on this particular sunny afternoon I was using one of these to visit Squadron Headquarters when a call through from the ATC Tower saying "There was a fire at Acklington Motor Company and could we assist?" Knowing that the nearest civilian fire brigade was at Amble a few miles away I immediately responded to the call and took the action as described in the award citation. I must stress however that my supporting crew member carried out an excellent response and deployment.



**The citation;** as it appeared in the Supplement to The London Gazette 13<sup>th</sup> November 1973

**In September 1971 Corporal Wardle was posted to Royal Air Force Boulmer, as the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Fire Section, located at Acklington but on the establishment of Boulmer. On 21<sup>st</sup> June 1973 the Fire Section at Acklington was alerted that there was a serious fire on the premises of the Acklington Motor Company situated in Acklington village. The fire started beneath a car which was being repaired over a servicing pit and was caused by an accumulation of petrol fumes which had been ignited by a flame from a welding torch. The fire involved a car and an oxyacetylene trolley which was being used by a mechanic who was then trapped in the pit as a result of the fire. The Airfield Crash Rescue Landrover was immediately sent to the scene of the incident. Corporal was not at the Fire section at the time, but on learning of the incident on the communications radio on the second Airfield Crash Rescue Landrover, he acted on his own initiative and drove to the scene of the fire. On arrival, he fought his way into the building, which was filled with smoke and toxic fumes, and immediately noticed that the set of oxygen and acetylene bottles was excessively hot and that the hoses from these bottles were feeding the fire. Assessing the danger and with complete disregard for his own safety, Corporal Wardle approached the bottles, turned off the control valves and pulled the bottles**

**clear of the building to a safe area. Having previously positioned his two vehicles for maximum effect, Corporal Wardle extinguished the fire with dry powder, thus enabling the civilian mechanic to escape from the pit, relatively unharmed. Corporal Wardle acted completely professionally throughout the incident and with complete disregard for his own safety. As a fireman he was fully aware of the dangers inherent in a fire in a garage workshop but by his coolness and by his prompt and magnificent example in the face of danger, he averted a serious explosion and almost certainly saved the trapped mechanic from death or serious injuries.**

I visited the garage a few years ago but sadly Gordon the mechanic had passed away, but I did speak to some relatives and a friend who had been told about the incident. There are some photographs taken of RAF Acklington on the Association website posted by Ron Newsome who the station before the period of the incident. I left the unit in November in 1973 bound for RAF Salalah and received my award from Her Majesty the Queen on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1974 at Buckingham Palace on my return to the UK on posting to Scampton.

*Alan Wardle B.E.M. member 473.*

## Letters

Hi Steve, what a great job you and George have done for this issue. (Summer 2012) Thank you for placing in my article on page 15 re- Mark 6 servicing and the long letter from Gerry Schofield whom I served with at the same time as him at RAF Changi.

Of particular interest was the article by the Webmaster Dave Kirk on awards and I believe future entries will show a lot of interest.

Looking up Lac Osborne's details on London Gazette supplement for his award date and finding he was indeed a recipient of the George Cross, why was a picture of the George Medal shown and not the George Cross? However keep up the good work.

Hopefully I may get to an Annual meeting if the venue comes anyway the Newcastle area. Cheers for now.

*Alan (Alan Wardle BEM no.473)*

# Life As An Raf Firemans Son

## LIFE AS AN RAF FIREMANS SON (My memories 48 years later)

Ever wondered what your children thought of it all?

My earliest recollection was when I was 4 years old. Dad, mum and I were stationed at RAF Manby, late 1960s. It was about 9am, and my grandparents were staying with us, sleeping in the spare room. Suddenly there was an ear piercing jet engine noise over the house. I ran into their room shouting a re-assuring “don’t worry, its only The Macaws, don’t be frightened!” I had absolutely no idea what “The Macaws” were (Jet Provost aerobatic team) but I knew this familiar noise well, something to do with the RAF, the RAF that I was part of because my dad was part of it, and because of that, there was no need to worry. I don’t know what startled my grandparents more, the sudden noise or me bursting into their room!

I played in a field opposite the house on some dis-used taxi ways, fascinating, all these big wide roads leading to circular areas of concrete. I didn’t know what a taxi-way was, but it was the RAF, so it must be okay, everything RAF was always okay.

Dad worked at RAF Strubby, a relief landing ground, several miles from Manby. I went to Strubby several times to visit the fire section, it was always so exciting. I think it was based around Nissan huts and the pride of place was a Mk6! I was totally fascinated by it, 5 firemen sitting in the front, driver in the centre, nice square looking monitor on the roof. It looked huge. It had “millions” of wheels that were all twice as high as I was. Dad would set fire to a petrol doused dis-used aircraft by firing a Very flare at it and when he wanted the section to attend, fire another flare into the air. It was so exciting. Along would come the tenders and all too rapidly

put out the fire. It was thrilling.

I loved the smell of the old style white RAF firemen’s helmets and whenever I got the chance to stick my head inside one, I did, and then dreamed I was operating the monitor. The aviation fuel smelt surprisingly good too, as did the distinct smell of the inside of fire tenders which was pure heaven!

Dad and mum sat me down one day as a 4 year old and explained as best they could that dad had to go to Sharjah in the Middle East for several months on his

own, a place with lots of sand. I assumed it was somewhere near Mablethorpe! I had no idea how long “several months” actually were, I thought it meant dad would just be home late one night.

Several months later dad returned, browner than he looked when he left, bearing gifts for me of beautifully handmade toy garages, forts and farmhouses that he had meticulously made out of wood. Truly fantastic handmade toys which I cherished, I still have the garage 42 years later stored in my loft, a treasured possession.

Then it was Germany, RAF Laarbruch, early 70s. I didn’t know where Germany was, but it didn’t matter, it was all exciting. I remember thinking that it was all so normal, not like those “civvies” that stayed in the same village for their whole life, we were the normal ones. On the way to Laarbruch I noticed the strange yellow German buses and the strange

road signs. I never questioned why my school and everything else was camouflage green, or covered in camouflage nets, or why there was so much barbed wire everywhere, it was the RAF it just seemed so normal. I loved Laarbruch, the excitement of it all. The smell of the pine trees, the constant



A young David McCann

noise, Buccaneers, Canberra’s and Phantoms, tannoy messages, patrolling RAF Police Landrover’s. We temporarily lived in Holland whilst waiting for a married

quarter on camp to become vacant. Dad collected me an hour after school every day to take me back there. One day he was very late; I just sat there waiting for him, with not a care in the world. I was safe, all the RAF grownups were our friends, and we were one big family. Eventually a TACR arrived, the driver telling me to climb on board as dad was busy dealing with a crash.

We got our married quarter. I explored the woods next to our house and found a great place to hide and watch the take offs and landings, adjacent to the approach lights. Brilliant, I would spend hours there with my friends watching the action. I loved our house, a solid floor loft and a cellar! There was the swimming pool on camp, cinema, woods to explore and make dens in, bowling alley, loads of clubs etc. Far too much to do and so much excitement. No British TV back then!

Mum told me that dad had got an important medal and we had to travel to Bonn to have it presented by the British Ambassador. It was a warm day; I think the Station commander lent us his car and driver to get to the British Embassy. I was dressed up in a very smart outfit and given a strict table manners reminder. All I can remember is wanting to get back to Laarbruch to play in the woods and hoping dad would not get any other medals that would take me away from more important things like building dens! But I was very proud of him. Station exercises really got the adrenalin going, the sirens, other NATO aircraft “bombing” the station, everyone running round in gas masks and NBC kit, everyone seemed to have a gun, all as I rode my push bike in my swimming trunks on the way to the station swimming pool. But it all seemed so normal. I didn’t know who the Russians were but I knew they were nasty because we had instructions to destroy our dog should dependents ever have to be evacuated back to the UK.

I remember the long unlit coastal road from Zeebrugge to Calais and the late night dash from the missed ferry at Zeebrugge, along to Ostend to just miss another ferry, then Dunkirk to find no ferries that night and finally Calais. You waved at other GB cars back in those days.

Next was RAF Abingdon. I had a great time in the cub scouts and we did a lot with the local village church that the RAF Padre ran, I thought all churches were run by the RAF. Aircraft wise, I was one disappointed 8 year old. Boring chipmunks were soon replaced by boring Bulldogs. The highlight was the occasional





*A grown up David with daughter and his dad Dennis*

visit by an Andover, Hercules or Belfast. However, there was a Mk7 fire tender to get excited about. I loved exploring the fire engines, I sat on dads lap as he steered a Mk 7 down the taxi way. Fantastic! I had a go of the monitor as well during a practice hot fire on a Shackleton. Brilliant! Mum and dad had to attend many "Do's" in the mess as dad was CMC. Dad would dress up very smart with his dress medals and mum would look beautiful in her latest outfit and I would get a babysitter. I didn't know what went on at these "Do's" but I knew not to make much noise the next morning as dad would always have a "very bad headache".

Then, dad was off to RAF Gan in the Indian Ocean for 9 months unaccompanied. It seemed normal, that's what our dads did, went away to strange sounding places. I felt sorry for him, all alone without mum and I, on some island millions of miles away. I hoped he wouldn't be lonely. I would have to do the gardening for mum. We both missed him very much and I couldn't wait for him to come back.

Dad came back brown again announcing that we were going back to Laarbruch, or at least, he and mum were, because at the time I was

sitting an exam to get into a private school. I thought "If I pass this exam, I stay in England. If I fail it, I will go with them to Laarbruch" Not a hard decision. Off to Germany we all went. I was overjoyed. At last, some fast jet action, a proper RAF station! The day I arrived I went straight into the woods to see if I could find my aircraft spotting place from before. I was in heaven Buccaneers and Jaguars, plus loads of visiting fast jets. I could have spent my whole life sitting there with my friends, watching the action cycling quickly up to No1 hanger with friends whenever we spotted a visiting aircraft landing. You could feel the tension on camp at the approaching TACEVAL. All of us "kids" knew Laarbruch had to do well. I loved the sounds of the air raid sirens, the excitement of it all, the seriousness. I used to time how long it took the Rapiers to leave the station on their way to deployment. The Bloodhounds that had yet to be dismantled looked awesome in the misty mornings. With a Mk9 to explore up at dads section plus an Angus domestic tender, what more could a young boy want. There were decoy Lightning's and Canberra's to explore on a quiet Sunday. Dad told me not to "explore" anywhere near the QRA area

or bomb dump. I knew this was serious stuff. You knew where you could go and where you shouldn't. When dad was orderly officer I used to go and watch him salute the RAF Ensign as it was lowered each night outside SHQ."That's my dad" I used to say proudly to my friends.

I never feared the nasty Russians because I knew the RAF was the best. If they did make a surprise attack, we armed our underground den with some stones to throw at them.

I had the best childhood anyone can ever imagine. I was proud of dad, and proud of the RAF. I now have a daughter and if I can give her half as much happiness as a child that I had as a child she will be the happiest girl in the world. The smell of aviation

fuel got into your lungs and the constant aircraft noise shook our windows and rattled your bones. Because of what our dads were part of, the Russians never did come. Did the aircraft noise ever bother me? No, it was the sound of freedom!

*David McCann*

*Thanks for great story David; I know that a lot of fireman's children will relate to it. Recently George (my co-ed) and his family visited Coningsby and all the familiar places of a world that seemed safe and normal. A few years ago my family and I looked around Marham married quarter area and airfield perimeter and our two boys were recollecting all the mischief that they used to get up to.*

*Steve*



Here's a photo to warm the cockles of any heart. Eight year old James Plunkett ( my youngest grandson) proudly presenting WO Steve Bowden QGM with a box of chocolates in appreciation for the hospitality shown by Steve and his team to our family during a recent trip to RAF Coningsby Fire Section . During our trip round the fire section I noticed in Steve's office framed photographs of Steve shaking hands with The Queen, David Cameron and David Beckham photos related to the bravery and outstanding leadership shown by Steve during the catastrophic fire he and his fellow RAF Fire-fighters attended in Afghanistan in 2010. At our recent reunion I gave Steve a framed photograph of James and Steve shaking hands. James will never forget his meeting with a real hero and his photo now stands in Steve's office alongside Steve's other photos.

*GE coed.*

# RAFDFSA Shop

Those of you unable to attend reunions should be aware that we have a range of RAFDFSA and CRASH goods for sale, which are also available by mail order via us and the Association website shown at the bottom of each page. We look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the reunions.

Regards and best wishes Allan and Marilyn

Contact details: - Allan and Marilyn Brooke  
20 Chestnut Grove, Farndon, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 3TW  
Tel: 01636 688 680

No personal callers please.

Email: allana.brooke@ntlworld.com or marilyn.brooke@ntlworld.com

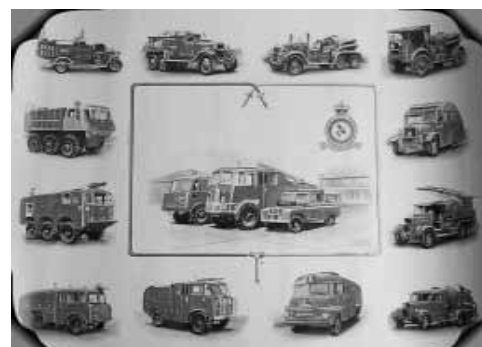
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Cheques & Postal Orders made payable to RAF&DFSA Shop Account.

AMENDMENTS FOR AUTUMN 2012 FLASHPOINT

## RAF & DFSA SHOP PRICE LIST 1.10.12

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# Leaving the Service? Are You Job Ready?

I left the RAF in 1989 after a 22 year engagement and attended Strathclyde University to study a Post Grad Diploma in Careers Guidance. For many years before my demob date I had studied for a Degree in Social Sciences with the Open University. I had a single goal in mind and that was to become a civilian careers adviser. I knew what I had to do to achieve my objective, because I had taken the time to find out. I was prepared and ready for my personal challenge.

Many people leave the Service with a “head in the sands”, I can’t face it attitude, which comes from fear of the great unknown beyond the station gates. The problem is that approach is both useless and stressful, because at some point we all have to leave and move on in life.

Many people when confronted with a new situation panic! After many years in uniform they just do not want to face reality and plan for their future. They prefer to believe something will turn up. Because they are qualified in their particular military career, they believe getting a job post RAF will be easy. Even without proper preparation, in an economy with plenty of jobs, you might be lucky. In today’s fragile job market no serious preparation, could mean no job. If you have already left the Service and are at present unemployed, you will be frustrated and perhaps angry that having served your country, no one in civvy street will give you a chance. You may feel that your face is up against the wall and that there is no future. This is not true but to change your future you must change your approach to finding your future. Step back from the wall and look around you

## Preparation

In this article I will not be taking about applications forms or CVs, perhaps next time. Today I want to discuss the stage before a CV has been sent off or an application form completed. I want to talk about some serious PREPARATION! Without it you will fail to achieve your goals.

When you look in the mirror in the morning, what do you see? What you don’t necessarily see (or think about) is a computer, or in this case, your brain. That brain of yours is (like a computer) full of information, some we use, some we don’t. Every day we are uploading information to our brains. Some of the information, we “down load” for our daily needs, but much of it we just leave there and forget about it. That’s because we are just too busy to think about it and so it just gets stored. However when a life changing event happens, like leaving the Service or actually being unemployed, you have to employ new tactics and use all that stored information in your brain

Look again in the mirror and ask yourself, “Who am I?” “What can I offer an employer”, or new employer, if you are looking to changing jobs? We rarely ask ourselves these questions, but they are vital, because if you don’t know who you are, how can you “sell” yourself to a potential employer? How can you complete an effective CV or application form?

In each of the above scenarios the solution is the same. You have to know what **Skills, Qualifications/Knowledge, and Experiences** you have (and just as important, which ones you don’t have) and which ones apply to a particular employment opportunity.

## Action

Get a couple of sheets of A4 paper and at the top of each write Skills, Knowledge, Experiences and then set to work emptying your brain of all relevant information. The important word here is ALL. You can brain storm for some information, you can ask friends and family etc to help. You do not need to rush the process because some information, like a previous course or an experience, you did years ago will not come readily to mind.

I suggest you start with your **Qualifications/Knowledge**, this is the easiest. Start with all your school, college etc qualifications.

Next add all the military qualifications and certifications you have achieved, no matter how unimportant you think they were/are, then any certificates from sports or hobbies activities.

What **Skills** do you believe you have? These are important because employers value soft skills very highly. The problem is that many people do not recognise they have particular skills an employer requires. Your skills could include: Listening, Organizing, Team Working, Flexibility, Sense of Humour, Adaptability etc. Service personnel, by the very nature of their jobs, posses many skills, think about yours and list them. Please don’t be modest, now is not the time. Remember you are collecting information about yourself to “sell” to an employer in a CV/Application form and during an interview.

Now to list your **Experiences**. It is important to empty that computer (brain) of yours of all your previous lifetime experiences, work and play. A lot of them will not be relevant; however you will not know that until you see them down on paper. It’s a bit like panning for gold; you have to sift a lot of rubbish before you get to the important stuff. Once you have identified your “gold”, you can discard the rubbish

What I am suggesting will take time, however if you do not know who you are at present, I can guarantee you will at the end of this exercise.

Once you have collected all your Skills, Experiences and Qualifications and Knowledge, this becomes your personal data bank of information. From this vast amount of data you can then select what you need for particular job search.

*Good Luck. Gerry Schofield*

# Ray Skinner's 'Square Bashing'

It was late October 1958 when I went R.A.F Cardington to sign on and get kitted out. I and the other recruits were taken to the clothing stores where we were issued with the following. A working blue and best dress uniforms, a peaked hat, and a beret, 2 cap badges, 1 pair of parade boots, 1 pair of best boots, 3 shirts, 6 detachable collars, 3 pairs of underpants, 3 pairs of socks, 1 brass button stick, a set of three brushes, two for polishing boots and 1 clothes brush, a physical education kit consisting of 1 T Shirt 1 pair of shorts and 1 pair of pumps, 1 housewife, (a sewing and repair kit) and 1 kit bag. The uniforms and other gear were stamped with our service numbers. Mine was 4245200. The uniforms given or rather thrown at me were about four sizes too big, I still wonder why they were not a bit nearer to my size. I had to put my feet in a machine that was supposed to measure them, "Size 12" said the Sergeant in charge of the machine, as we couldn't really argue with any of the stores personnel we had to grin and bear it. So all the footwear was that size, not bad for a guy who normally took eight and a half! We were also issued with a white pint mug, a knife, fork, spoon, and a webbing belt. We were then taken to the tailors where they made various chalk marks on both uniforms which were left for alteration. Then it was a trip to the camp barbers. Whilst awaiting my turn somebody took the Mickey out of the barber, he turned round pointed at me and said "I shall remember that". I protested my innocence; he replied again in the same voice. My turn arrived and I was a bit nervous at what would happen. It had taken a lot of trips to my hairdresser's back home to get the D.A. looking right and a fair bit of cash as well. The barber started to cut the back and sides regulation length. He gave a chuckle and put the clippers straight across the top of my head, I looked in the mirror totally shocked. "You might as well take the rest off now" I said which he did so I finished up with a close crop. The rest of the flight waited outside till everyone had their hair cut. As I waited one of guys came over and said he was the one that took the rise out of the barber and when the last man came out so did the barber who came over and apologised, I said "not to worry what's done is done."

So it was back to the holding billet to

pick up the knife, fork, spoon and mug and off to the mess for a meal which I enjoyed, unlike most of the of the Flight who turned their noses up, it was then is back to the holding billet for the night. The next morning after a wash and shave etc it was then down to the mess for breakfast and back to the billet to put our utensils away and back to the tailors to pick up our uniforms. We then had to go back to billet to change into our best uniforms then all our civilian clothes were packed up and sent home, everything else was stowed away in the kit bag. We were all issued with travel warrants to our various destinations, either RAF Bridgenorth or RAF Wimslow which was my destination. We boarded a transport vehicle and were taken to the railway station. When the train arrived, we all boarded and there were eight to a carriage in my compartment and I got talking to a certain Alan Smith who was also going on the fire fighting course at Sutton upon Hull after square bashing. On arrival at RAF Wimslow we went for a meal after which we were taken to the billet that would be our home for next six weeks or so. Unlike the room described by Dave Stevenson in his book "A Journey Through My Life" page 28 for as clean and shiny this billet looked as if it had not been used it was dusty and the floor really scuffed up. A lot our members from earlier years will remember this from their time in the R.A.F. The reason for the state of it will be revealed after our passing out parade.

We were given a demonstration how to spit and polish the parade boots and get the rest of our gear ready for the inspection in the morning. We were shown how to make a bed pack and how lay stuff out on a towel across the bed and told to get our uniforms ironed and get the billet up to scratch. Sometime before we had been issued with three blankets, which we took six inches off and cut into six by six pads, the gadget for cleaning the floor was a block of wood with a pivot handle attached. This is where a couple of pads came in use one with polish put on and under the block which was swung about by all of us in turn. The other pad was used to shine with, so there was not much sleep for us that night. At six o'clock in came a guy blowing a whistle yelling "hands off cxxs and on with socks" So after a wash and shave etc it was into working blue. Corporal Vickery

whom was to be our mentor for the next six weeks and a couple of AC 1's walked in and brought us to attention. Boy did they find loads of faults with the billet. When it came to my bed lay out my mug was smashed against the coal burning stove in the centre of the billet "Filthy" I was told, so I had to buy another mug from the NAFFI shop. The corporal handed out blue discs to go under the cap badges and told we were now E Flight No. 3 Squadron. We were dismissed to get our cutlery and mugs then brought to attention and ordered outside at the double. This where the pads came into use for they went under the boots and we sort of skated out to the entrance of billet. We were then lined up in threes and marched to the mess for breakfast, when we got there the Corporal said we were "A flipping flopping shambles" or words to that effect. I managed to borrow a mug off another bloke from another Flight who was just coming out of the mess. After we had eaten, my only moan was that the tea was mashed in a big urn with the sugar and milk already added, to my taste it was very sweet. We were marched back to the billet to stow away our utensils, I managed to return the mug as the flight from whom I borrowed was quite close.

We were ordered outside and marched to the parade ground, as the Flight Corporal Vickery brought us to a halt he made me step out and asked "What's up with your flipping flopping feet "or words to that effect. "Permission to speak Corporal", "granted" he said. I explained that the footwear that I had been issued with was size 12. The Sergeant who issued them to me at RAF Cardington had a machine that measured your feet and had put mine under it, "size 12." is what he called out to the guy fetching the kit. The Corporal asked me to take off one of my boots, he saw that it was half packed with paper told me to put the boot back on, he then told an AC.1 to take charge of the rest of the Flight. We went back to the billet to collect the rest of my foot wear. Then it was off to the Clothing Stores where Corporal Vickery explained the problem to the Flight Sergeant in charge. He went to fetch the relevant articles, he told me they do not do half sizes so he had brought size nines. "Thank you Flight Sergeant" I said "that would be fine." Normally this would have been taken off my clothing allowance





*The photograph is of E Flight No.3 squadron October 1958. I am on the back row extreme right. Alan Smith, third from left middle row and of course Corporal Vickery in the middle of the front row.*

but on this occasion this was waived. So it was back to the billet wearing the new unpolished boots and put the other things away then on to the parade ground where the Corporal told the AC1 to halt the flight and stand them at ease. He then marched me up and down the parade ground until he was satisfied, then I joined the rest of the guys and we marched around the parade ground for a further half an hour. It was dinner time and we were dismissed and told to make our own way back to the billet as we would no longer have to be marched from the billet to the mess, so we picked up our mugs and cutlery and made our way to the mess. It was a roast lamb meal followed by apple tart and custard. For once all our plates were left empty.

After two days I suddenly felt a vicious pain in the side and I was taken to the camp hospital and examined. The doctor said it was not appendicitis, but it could be a rather severe dose of constipation, this turned out to be the case, I was prescribed liquid paraffin. After two days I woke up early in the morning and made a dash for the toilet, I must have been in there ages as the medics kept knocking on the door to see if I was alright I finally emerged from the toilet feeling drained but the good thing was the pain in my side had gone. By 12 noon I was allowed to rejoin my flight and I found out they were on the parade

ground doing rifle drill. I went to the billet to fetch my 303 rifle, and returned to the parade ground. I asked for permission to join them which was granted, me and I took up my normal place in the line out. I had never done any rifle drill before so I just followed what the guy in front of was doing, all went well until the order to "shoulder arms" was given, over my shoulder and on to the ground clattered the rifle. The Corporal gave me a right tongue lashing with a lot of expletives thrown in. He ordered me to pick the rifle up as fast as possible which I did I was asked to explain myself and I told him I had just come out of hospital and that I had never done any rifle drill before. I must have caught him in a nice mood. "Not to worry" he said "you will have to get the members of the flight to teach later on." As it was there were a few re-enlisted guys in the flight and they took on the task. When I got as good as I ever would likely to get, they said it would cost a few pints next time we were off camp. I thanked them for their patience and said it was a small price to pay. I fulfilled my word the following evening.

Things were progressing very well and we were enjoying the training a lot more. On the very first time we had physical education we entered the gym, to be greeted by a Corporal instructor tossing a pink and blue ball around, he suddenly

tossed it towards me I took a jump and headed it only to be knocked back into a wall "Not seen a medicine ball before" he asked "Not that colour Corporal" I replied, it looked just like a beach ball. We carried on doing some running about and some physical jerks then we were told to take five minutes rest. He reappeared bouncing a ball about and asked if anyone had played basketball at all, my top and shorts as stated some time back were about four sizes too big my shorts were way past my knees, nobody put their hand up. "Okay medicine man let's see if you can take the ball of me," the Corporal said. I had noticed previously that there was a basketball pitch taking up a good deal of space in the gym. I studied what the Corporal was doing for few seconds, calmly walked up to him and sticking a hand out took the ball dribbled it just past the half way line and launched straight into the basket. He was slightly taken aback, and said "take another shot," this time I bounced the ball off the backboard and into the basket. He then told me to report back for training at 19.00hrs as I was now a member of the camp basketball squad, but this stopped me getting of camp that night with a few of the guys. At the appointed time I reported back to the gym and the first thing the corporal did was to hand me a top and shorts about my size, "Can't have looking like a nerd" he said, and was introduced to all the other guys in the squad. The training was great and I threw myself into it whole heartedly, this I did at every training session. I got told there was game coming up against an army team but I would have had my passing out parade before that. Half expecting to be back-flighted for it, the instructor said "No I would never do that to anyone" I wished him and the squad the best of luck with the game. I later found out that they had won fifty points to thirty.

We were also taken to the rifle range for target practice, and were each given six rounds. Lying on the ground I was just about to take aim when a couple of bullet holes appeared on my target. So I fired at the other guy's target, he finished up with a marksman's badge! The two holes in my target were at the top and bottom corner not even scoring, I got a ticking off and given another six rounds which I put in a

*continues over page*

tight group in centre of target. "Why didn't you do that the first time" I was asked. We were then given lessons on how to put together and dismantle a sten gun, (I think that's the right name), I also took a few shots with that.

I found out we were to have hand grenade practice the following day and I managed to get out to a local joke shop and purchase a rubber dummy one. When we at the practice site the next day we were shown how to take the pin out and throw it at a large earth bank about fifty yards away, we were behind a wall of about six foot high sand bags. When it came to my turn I pointed to the dummy one which I dropped, unseen by the Sergeant Instructor saying "Is that safe Sergeant." He took one look and cleared the sand bags from a standing jump, of course I picked the dummy up and said "What shall I do with

it?" "Throw the damn thing and fast" was the reply. I went to throw it but it slipped out my hand and bounced along the floor. "Oh! We have a joker in the group" he said. Straight away I apologised for any stress I might have caused. The Sergeant took it good heart and said it was the first time he had been caught out. I did mention he should have been in the high jump team.

Finally the day for the passing out parade arrived and we marched to an R.A.F. Band which was very uplifting and made us all feel ten foot tall. After the parade we were all running up and down the billet, and I twigged on then why the billet was such a mess when we first saw it. Corporal Vickery came to congratulate us and said we one of the best flights he had ever worked with. He then started to ask people where they originated from, Alan Smith, who was also going to Sutton

On Hull for Fire Fighting Training after the weekend pass which was coming up., asked the Corporal where he came from, "Hounslow" he said. "Struth and hells bells" I remarked "What's up with you" he said. I said, "you live at number 72 Treaty Road and have two sisters one called Heather and the other Audrey, who likes Jazz". "Blimey" he said "are you the one who takes her to the Jazz clubs?" "That's correct Corporal" but it was on a plutonic arrangement as I was engaged to my first wife at the time. He shook hands and mentioned me to her next time he was at home. I said "give my sincere regards to your mother and father." Audrey got married a few months later I heard. That is it as far as I can remember of my days spent at square bashing.

RAY SKINNER (Member 793)

**WARNING! The reproduction of this article from the Daily Mirror might be painful for some Fire Fighters!**

**DAILY MIRROR, Thursday, October 7, 1965**

## **RAF Regiment soldiers show their paces with foam guns instead of rifles**

### **WORLDS FASTEST FIREMEN**

By Allan Staniforth

*The fastest firemen in the world-airman-soldiers who use foam guns instead of rifles-showed their speed yesterday.*

They demonstrated the 'Lifepath' technique on crashed and blazing aircraft which has been developed by the RAF and now being adopted by airports all over the world.

With its men wearing only light fire resisting suits over string vests plus boots, helmets and gloves, carve their way into an aircraft fire, laying down a powder path in front of them to open up an avenue to the plane

At the same time, they are backed up by a giant six-wheel tender, firing 5,000 gallons of foam a minute out of a four inch nozzle.

#### **Practise**

*When the firemen went into action at their training station, RAF Catterick, yesterday, the foam blasted hundreds of gallons of blazing aircraft fuel out of the way in 40 seconds and extinguished it completely in two minutes.*

All the firemen are members of the RAF



Regiment. And the regiment's job was simply to defend airfields, but now more than half its strength are firemen, stationed at RAF airfields around the world.

*They practise fire rescue techniques on all sorts of old aircraft, including a*

*Victor bomber, an old Hunter of the Black Arrows aerobatic team, and Javelin all weather fighters.*

All are stripped to bare hulks but keep the cockpit canopies and seats where men might have to be rescued.



# Memories of the RAF Fire Service & the RAF Regiment

Reading the latest edition of "Flashpoint" (summer 2012), I noted with interest the comments in the Editorial about the RAF Regiment's 70th Anniversary and the time when we were amalgamated with them in trade group 22.

I recall there was general disgruntlement when the Regiment took over the Fire service, as a considerable number of their NCO's remustered over and it did cause a "slow down" in promotion for those who had expected to get on the "ladder"! Taking this aside however and from a purely personal view, I always found the "rocks" to be a rough, but friendly bunch and in the main, treating me as one of their own (although I never did a gunner's course)! To bolster this, I have recalled a couple of anecdotes in regard to our time together in trade group 22! (Names omitted to save embarrassment!)

My first posting after trade training was at West Raynham in Norfolk, which at first was closed to flying, so we just had the one Regt. SNCO, who was in charge of ground defence training. I don't think he was kept very busy, as "Sgt B" was always dropping in to the section for a brew and blather! One summer's day he called with a request for volunteers to accompany him to the army ranges near Thetford, to fire off a surplus of old ammo that the armoury wished to dispose of. Luckily at the time I was on days, awaiting my security clearance for the SAM site and mainly employed servicing the station's stock of fire extinguishers, so my SNCO i/c gave me permission to go.

Early the following day, we met up at the armoury, a small group made up of LAC's & SAC's from various trades. "Sgt. B" arrived with a mini bus and we followed him inside to collect our weapons /ammo. To my surprise we were not issued with SLR's, but 303 Lee-Enfield rifles and an ageing Bren LMG, together with several boxes of 303 & 7.62 ammo! After loading up with everything including rations for the day, a pleasant drive through the Norfolk countryside brought us to the ranges. Knowing that the 303 rifle and Bren were completely "new" to us, "Sgt. B" ran through the safety/operation procedures of both weapons and then we commenced loading the magazines. I was surprised to see that the Bren used magazines instead of belted ammo, but it was explained that after WW2 most Bren's had been converted to these and 7.62 ammo, so that

magazines from the SLR rifle could be also used. I soon found that with the 303 rifle, I was getting a better "grouping" than with the SLR, but the bolt action and smaller capacity 10 round magazines, did limit the rate of fire. The highlight of the day came when I was paired up with an MT driver to form a LMG team. Now I have to admit that I just love firing machine guns (like the Sterling) and having a crack with a "Bren" had been eagerly anticipated. So we took turns at being the gunner and loader, finding the weapon easy to fire, but rather heavy to carry. Now at this point I should have taken more notice of the wicked gleam in "Sgt. B's" eye, as he explained how we were now to carry out "advancing with the weapon"! Basically, we had to run forward, then set up and fire, then run forward again and so on. At first this seemed easy, but as we advanced further forward and became breathless, our aim wavered all over the place, sometimes missing the target completely. I was relieved there were no low flying aircraft near us at that moment, as I am sure there would have been a "blue on blue"! We also had a spell in the "butts", marking and raising the targets, with the crack and spurt of sand close by, as the rounds hit home were very sobering, especially when a spent tracer bullet "fizzled" about like an angry wasp.

A spectacular end to the day came when a Squadron Leader (antique weapons collector) turned up from Marham with an old Blunderbuss he wanted to try out after it had been "proof tested". After loading with gun powder and an assortment of small nails, etc., he fired at a standard NATO target from about a distance of around 10 metres. There was a huge "bang", together with a cloud of smoke from the "trumpet" shaped muzzle and when the smoke cleared the target had been completely shredded with just the stick remaining, now that was impressive!

That day we spent on the ranges was not a training requirement, but an extremely useful way of using up old and surplus ammo, by educating us in basic field craft and weapons skills. "Sgt. B" didn't have to do this, but I have always appreciated his efforts in showing us a little of what the trade of Regt. Gunner entails and that one day, irrespective of trade or rank we may have to take up arms to defend our Airfield and Country!

I also recalled an incident while serving

at RAF Bruggen, during a "Taceval", when being surplus to the Crash crew, was detailed to drive our CO (Regt. Flt. Lt.) around in a minivan for the duration of the exercise. Feeling a little out of place in blue crash kit, knowing that he would be wearing "combats", I called at the armoury and collected a SLR rifle which was my allotted weapon. I was surprised that no mention of my attire was made when I collected "Flt.Lt. E" from Station HQ, but his attention was focused on the SLR in the back of the van! He wanted to know why I had been issued with a rifle (which in the confines of this vehicle, would have been difficult to handle) and on his instructions we drove back to the armoury, accompanying me inside, to discover the reasons behind the "cock up"! The SNCO armourer explained that although MT drivers were issued with Sterling sub machine guns, no one had considered that the majority of fire fighters were also MT drivers and hence the issue of SLR's. "Flt. Lt E" ordered that I be issued with a SMG and stated that he would be rectifying this anomaly, by making amendments to procedures so this would not happen again in the future.

I was surprised to see the how much it mattered to our CO, that we were properly equipped for any eventuality, as there was general feeling that as fire fighters we were "second best" in the Regiment and not a priority! In fact not long after, we had to be armed while on duty at the SAM site, as intelligence reports stated that the Baader-Meinof terrorist group were planning on causing mayhem on a military installation in the immediate area. Not only were we issued with Sterling SMG's but live ammo as well, with a briefing on how to deal with any intruders!

That was quite a scary time, until intelligence downgraded the risk!

In mid 1976 the RAF Fire Service was on the move again, this time to trade group 8, alongside the RAF Police in Security, and the "mudguards" removed from our uniform with mixed feelings.

How did we get on with the "snowdrops"? Well that's another story!

*Andy Gaskell (328)  
July 2012*

# BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

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2012 brings the 30th anniversary of the Falklands War. This conflict brought about one of the most daring long distance bombing raids in history. It also was to bring the Sea Harrier into its element. Two of the books cover this subject. Rowland White's books are excellent and his research is brilliant it is well worth buying his books.

*Steve (Co-Ed)*

## SEA HARRIER OVER THE FALKLANDS

By Commander 'Sharkey' Ward DSC, AFC, RN

A first-hand account of the air war by this self confessed 'Maverick' pilot in which he is quite damning about bureaucrats, Inter-Service rivalry, (especially the RAF) and the Navy hierarchy.

## VULCAN 607

By Rowland White

A gripping story about 'the Vulcan bombing raids on the Falklands and the Victor tankers which supported them. (The Black Buck Missions) This story received plenty of good reviews and well deserved. Although Commander 'Sharkey' was scathing of the cost of it and thought the Sea Harriers could have done the job more effectively. (He hates us Crabs).

## STORM FRONT

By Rowland White

The True story of that 'Secret War' in Oman, which covers the whole story involving the British SOFA pilots who supported the SAS. I think Rowland White's writing is superb he just gets the details right and you get fully immersed in his story telling.

## PHOENIX SQUADRON

By Rowland White

This is another epic story by this good author. The scene this time is British Honduras (Belize) in 1972 when Guatemala was threatening to invade. So the 'Ark Royal' and the Navy Lads went to sort them out.

I haven't read this one but George (Co-Ed) said to me in an email "He is a top notch writer and some of his descriptions of the Phantom and Buccaneer are marvellous. Although its mainly Aircraft carrier based for those of us who have scurried about under both aircraft types during our airfield days can't but help to be impressed with Rowland's turn of phrase and prose.

## AIRFIELD FIRE-FIGHTING IN EASTERN ENGLAND

by Eddie Baker.

This is a mega book, some 266 pages covering RAF, USAF, Civil airfields and other airports. It has the history of RAF & USAF trucks, some information about bases including a list of trucks that served at that base with the registration numbers and plenty of photographs.



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## Expedite! Expedite! Expedite!

*Below is a story about a RHAG incident which reminds us all about how things can go wrong on a busy station and there is pressure to be quick. I've carried out many RHAG's on many stations the busiest Laarbruch and Stanley where I must have done about 250 in my four month stint and at times the pressure to carry out quick recycle was often as there was no diversion airfield and quite often there has been C130 on approach while we scabbled around like ants.*

*Steve (co-ed)*

When I was at RAF Honington which now seems a long time ago, it was 1971 (or 72). I was a young SAC, not yet a driver and was part of the crash crew on nights during night flying. We got a call from ATC to say that a Buccaneer was returning with dodgy hydraulics and would be engaging the approach end RHAG at runway 27. When it had engaged we got it off the wire then, as we did in those days put the tripod off crash one in the middle of the wire in order to reposition the grommets on the wire. Suddenly we got a call from ATC to say that a Devon was on finals and could the crash crew expedite. Believe it or not nobody on the crew had heard the word expedite before! We looked at each other and said "What does that mean"

I think it was the sergeant Pete Crouch who said we better clear the runway. Seconds after we got clear the Devon

landed safely. Back to the bays as 2 Buccaneer's were taxiing for take-off. 2 minutes later crash one was asked to go and check the first Buccaneer with a suspect blown nose wheel tyre. Cpl Jim Bloom & SAC Eddie Calvert was dispatched Bob Johannson and myself were listening to the 'storno' on Crash 2. Eddie reported from crash one that the Buccaneer had engaged the RHAG with its nose wheel! Bob and I looked at each other like Eddie had gone daft. The combine was dispatched and I heard Sgt Pete Crouch say to Jim Bloom "start looking for ground equipment" I immediately thought, Jesus the tripod! When we had "expedited" the bloody thing had been left propping the RHAG wire up. I have often thought that the Devon crew were seriously lucky to have missed it considering how far up from the threshold it was.

There was surprisingly little fuss made of the incident Jim and Eddie were both charged, Eddie got found not guilty and Jim got fined a tenner. The other thing was nobody ever forgot what expedite meant!!

*Mal Ray*



# Little Known Fact about Dennis (Dan) McCann BEM

Little Known Fact about our association President ex Warrant Officer Dennis (Dan) McCann BEM.

Many members will know Dennis McCann either as a familiar and friendly face at reunions or like Steve Harrison and I you may have had the pleasure of working with Denis during your RAF Service but did you know that as a young man Dennis was evacuated from his home in Manchester and he was to spend five years of his young life staying with relatives in the Canadian outback. Furthermore during the evacuation journey from Liverpool to Halifax Nova Scotia his ship the SS Newfoundland was torpedoed.

I have along with my friend and former RAF Fireman Jim Johnson carried out some research at the Liverpool Maritime Museum and obtained the following information and obtained from Denis his recollections of what for a young child must have been a very frightening experience

The SS Newfoundland set sail from Liverpool on the 8th September 1940 as part of one of the many convoys that were leaving Liverpool during this dark and highly dangerous period of World War two. She was torpedoed shortly after leaving Liverpool but was able to limp into port in Southern Ireland and underwent repairs that enabled her to continue on her perilous journey.

Dennis arrived in Canada none the worse for the experience and was then to spend five days travelling by train to a small town on the Canadian Prairies called Hythe. He



*Ss Newfoundland*



*Warrant Officer Denis McCann BEM ready to go on parade again at the Cenotaph*

met up with his uncle a Canadian Mounted Policeman and his family's and lived with his Canadian relatives for the next five years as one big happy family. This period in Dennis life was he recollects an adventure to beat all adventures. He goes back to Hythe almost every year visiting his relatives and the people he went to school with. Denis's tale I'm very pleased to say has a happy ending not so for the poor old SS Newfoundland.

After completing its journey to Nova Scotia she remained in service and in April 1943 whilst operating as a hospital ship

and preparing to exchange prisoners of war off the coast of Salerno she was bombed and set on fire. Nineteen RAMC personnel were killed along with twenty crew members (who were mainly Liverpoolians). It is recorded that one hundred survivors (mainly wounded Canadian troops were plucked from the sea by other British warships operating locally; meanwhile poor

old SS Newfoundland ended its days on the sea bed off the coast of Salerno.

Many thanks to Dennis for sharing this information and special thanks also to Lorna at the Merseyside Maritime Museum records office who very kindly assisted Jim and me as we undertook our research. After quite an interesting and unusual childhood Denis joined the RAF in 1950 retiring thirty years later. During his long and distinguished RAF Career he saw overseas service in Egypt, Borneo, The Maldives (Gan), The Near East ( El Adam), the Middle East (Sharjah), The Far East (Seleator & Borneo d) and two tours in Germany (Laarbruch) postings in the UK included West Kirkby, Sutton on Hull, Old Sarum, Strubby, North Holt and North Cotes Manby and South Cerney.

It was while he was stationed at South Cerney that Denis first met our Association Vice President Keith Penfold. Keith and Dennis were both promoted Corporal on the same day way back in the early 1950's and they remain very good friends to this day I had the great pleasure of working with Dennis at Laarbruch and whilst I have very fond memories of my time spent with Dennis at Laarbruch my most memorable is the time in 1978 when Dennis and I played in the same football team in a charity football match against a Mike and Bernie Winters Combined Services Entertainment team.

Dennis has produced a wonderful tale of his time as a child and life during and after his RAF career. The full story will be included in the RAF Fire Service book that is in the process of production.



*RAF Strubby Command fire fighting competition winners 2 years running 1968/69.*

*Back row, left to right Fred Coverdale, ?, Jock Smith, John Sherry, Mick Carlson, Roger Smith, ?, Morris Alan.*

*Front row, left to right ? Pete Muir, F/Lt Turner, Dennis McCann, Pete Taylor.*



*Photo of Lorna from the Merseyside Maritime Museum and Flashpoint co editor George Edwards; Lorna receiving a copy of George's book that is now on display in the Museum library. Photo Jim Johnson*

# 'Times Gone By'

Since I started volunteering at my local Soffam shop in the book department I have met some interesting characters. It was while talking to Alasdair that I mentioned something about aircraft and he told me that he had worked at RAE Bedford. I later learned that having obtained an honours degree in physics at Glasgow University he had joined the RAE in 1962 where for four years he was involved in experimental flight simulator studies. He then transferred to the Gust Research Section in Aerodynamics Flight Division at Bedford in 1966 where his working environment increased in size from a small office to anywhere from Oklahoma to Singapore.

A few weeks ago Alasdair brought in a few papers that he had written also along with those was a copy of a station magazine from RAF Tengah dated November 1968. In the centre pages there is an article about a top level project which he was the lead scientist. It was called 'Project Coldcat' which was British-led and involved RAF & USAF personnel using a USAF RB57F aircraft and an RAE Canberra which was a PR9 with a strange looking nose and a tail from another Canberra. The project was all about seeing what the air turbulence was like from 50,000ft to above 60,000ft in tropical areas, as research had already taken place in colder areas.

Although I had joined up in 1965 and had volunteered for Singapore I never got there. After I read the article about his work I started reading the rest of the magazine out of pure interest. In those heady days of a shrinking British Empire the magazine was typical of its time contained squadron news which at the time were 20, 81, 45 and 74 Squadron's, which was of interest to me as I was in Masirah with my co-ed mate George when 74 Squadron Lightning's passed through



supported by the Victor tankers which I would also work with later on in my career. Also there was news from all the Section's including Mech Eng (ground) which stated that on the 11th September, the Station Commander presented Safe Driving Awards to members of the MT, Fire and Police Flights. Of the 116 recipients, 111 of them received diplomas, medals or bars to medals already held. Then there

is a strange paragraph about the Fire Section! It said 'Experiments by the Fire Section to mate the Mk5A Fire Tender with the Domestic failed miserably. The only foam produced was from the lips of the drivers' superior officers.' I read this as the Mk5A and the Domestic truck had crashed into each other. I wonder if any of our members where at RAF

Tengah at that time and could shed any light on the subject. Also in the magazine was all the sporting news, different club reports, ranging from the 1405 (Tengah) Cub Scouts to the Aero Wives Club. It is also full of advertisements and there is one which is reproduced here, about the 'Morningside Guest House' did you stop there? The strangest one was I found was for 'The White Bear Restaurant' which says 'Enjoy superb Russian Cuisine in cosy continental surroundings, was it full of spies? Just to emphasise the colonialist influences look at this address for the 'Beverly Guest House' 5 Buckley Road off Newton Road!

Also shown is the front page of 'Tengah Times' to show the strange looking RAE Bedford Canberra, does anyone remember seeing it or aware of that project?

I hope you enjoy this look back at an RAF which has long gone which may revive a few memories. (Steve co-ed)



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- DUCAL ENJOYMENT with moderate charges.



# Recipe Corner with Dave "Stevie" Stevenson

Our fellow member and author of 'A Journey Through My Life' Dave "Stevie" Stevenson managed to rustle up some more treasures from his worldly travels which are some unusual recipes. You need a big heart and a big oven!

*Stevie I like cooking but I'll stick to the Roast chicken thanks: (Steve Harrison co-ed)*

## Elephant Stew

1 elephant, medium size, salt and pepper to taste, brown gravy (lots) 2 hares (optional)

Cut elephant into small pieces (bite size). This will take about two months. Keep the trunk! You will need something to store the pieces in. Place in a huge pan and add enough brown gravy to cover. Cook over a kerosene fire for about four weeks at 456°F. This will serve about 3,800 people. If more are expected the 2 hares may be added. But only if necessary, as most people don't like hares in their stew

*(The above is reprinted from 'Loaves and Fishes Multiplied' by the Union Presbyterian Church, Fort Mill USA)*

## Recipe for a Happy Home

10 cups of love, 5 cups of loyalty, 3 cups friendship, 5tsp hope, 2tsp tenderness, 4 parts faith and 1 barrel of laughter. Take love and loyalty and mix them very well with faith. Add tenderness, kisses and comprehension, season with friendship and hope. Flavour abundantly with joy. Bake with Sun rays, serve generously. The ingredients can be increased at will, But NEVER DECREASED.

## How to cook a Husband

(Circa 1934)

A good many husbands are entirely spoiled by mismanagement in cooking and are not so tender and good. Some women keep them in a stew too constantly in hot water: others put them in a stew: others keep them constantly in a pickle. It cannot be supposed that any husband will be good and tender if managed in this way, but they are truly delicious if properly treated. Don't keep him in the kettle by force, as he will stay there if proper care is taken: if he should splutter and fizz don't be too anxious some husbands do this. Add a little sugar, the variety that confectioners call 'Kisses' but on no account add vinegar or pepper. A little spice improves him, but it must be used with judgement. Do not try him with something sharp to see if he is becoming tender. Stir him gently lest he lie too long in the kettle and become flat and tasteless. If you follow these directions, you will find him very digestible agreeing nicely with you and he will keep as long as want to have him.

*(From Bermuda 'Best Recipes')*

## Stuffed Camel

1 whole camel, medium size. 1 whole lamb, large size. 20 whole chickens, medium size. 60 eggs. 12 kilos of rice. 2 kilos of pine nuts. 2 kilos of almonds. 1 kilo of pistachio nuts. 110 gallons of water. 5 pounds of black pepper. Salt to taste.

Skin, trim and clean camel (till you get over the hump) lamb and chicken. Boil until tender. Cook rice until fluffy. Fry nut until brown and mix with rice. Hard boil the eggs and peel. Stuff the cooked chicken with hard boiled eggs and rice. Stuff the cooked lamb with stuffed chicken. Add more rice. Stuff the camel with stuffed lamb and add rest of rice. Broil over a large charcoal pit until brown. Spread any remaining rice on a large tray and place camel on top of rice. Decorate with boiled eggs and nuts.

This serves a friendly crowd of 80 -100.



## It's Christmas Day all is secure

T'was the night before Christmas and he lived all alone in a one bed roomed flat made of plaster and stone. I had come down the chimney with presents to give and to see who in this home did live. I looked all about and a sad sight I did see no tinsel no presents not even a tree no stocking by the mantelpiece just boots filled with sand. On the walls hung pictures of far distant lands a few medals and badges and then a sober thought came into my mind, this house was different it was dreary and drab and I found an old soldier alone and forlorn asleep on the floor. His face was so gentle his home so poor not how I'd pictured a once brave soldier home from some distant war. I realised the families I saw this night owed their lives to soldiers like him willing to fight so children could play and adults could celebrate a bright Christmas Day. We all enjoy freedom each day of the year thanks to soldiers like the one lying here. I dropped to my knee and started to cry. As the soldier awakened I heard a voice murmur Santa don't cry this life was my choice I fought for freedom never asked for more my life was my God my country my Corps and then he rolled over and fell fast asleep; as I sat there and pondered and shivered from the cold night chill before he sat up and said "its Christmas Day and all is secure you carry on Santa you've great joys to bring;" One look at my watch and I knew he was right and off I went into the night.

Author unknown but kindly sent to Flashpoint by Warrant Officer Steve Bowden QGM.

Graphics by Will Edwards proud grandson of a former Royal Navy Veteran & a former RAF Veteran





Since the last Flashpoint we have lost quite a number of our Fire-Fighting Family, not all members of the Association but 'WE WILL REMEMBER THEM' for they were one of ours!

**Jim Coates** (member 428) passed away 6th August 2012

**Ron Hoddle** passed away November 2011. Ex RAF and MOD Fire Services, served at REA Bedford, REA Farnborough and AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield. Was Chief Fire Officer at AWE Fire Service.

**Jeffery Brooke** (member 606) passed away 8th December 2011. He joined the RAF in February 1946 and served at 21 MU Lordbridge, Brize Norton, RAF Gatow (during the airlift) and finally at Morton in Marsh.

**Paul Kitchen** passed away July 2012 after a long fight with cancer. Paul did two stints in the RAF Fire Service from 1973.

**Herbert Block** (member 814) passed away 27th February 2012. The majority of his service was at the experimental unit (A&IEU) Martlesham Heath near Woodbridge.

**Fred Canham BEM** passed away July 2012. Ex RAF Fire Service Warrant Officer, Fred served from 1953 to 1986

**Kenneth Williams** (member 558) passed away on 13th August. Ken served from 1960 to 1965. He left as an SAC and went on to become Chief Fire Officer for British Aerospace, Chester.

**Mick Fielding** Passed away 20th October 2012. Mick served for 37 years retiring in 1996

**John Wilson** (member 284) passed away September 2012.

At the AGM it was announced that a sympathy card would be sent to member's partners/family that have passed away

which would be signed by the committee. It was also agreed that Brian Ford our Membership Secretary should be the first point of contact when one of our members passes away. He would then ensure the card is sent and that the Flashpoint editor, webmaster and treasurer are informed. Thank you.

Below is the front of the card, on the inside it reads: From the chairman, Committee and Members



## IN MEMORIAM: Graham Blacker

The association was informed of Graham's death by his wife Brenda around June time and it was too late to include this news in the summer edition of Flashpoint. As you will read in Brenda's letter, Graham enjoyed his Flashpoint and loved to paint. George and I thought it would be a fitting tribute to Graham to put the painting which Brenda mentions in her letter on the front cover of this edition. No doubt he would have loved that and had a laugh about it!



*Graham Blacker*

It is with great sadness that I have to inform you of the death of my husband Graham Blacker member 87.

Graham suffered from Prostate cancer for

four years, he had radio and chemotherapy. He died then on the 14th March 2012 after only five days ill in bed but he never lost his sense of humour. He was quite a character; He is very much missed by us all. Graham loved to paint and a lot of his paintings were of aeroplanes. I have a painting of a Lancaster in the snow which I treasure.

Graham served in Egypt for eighteen months and then he went on to Nairobi where I joined him for a year at Eastleigh.

Graham was always glad to see his magazine come through the post; he would spend time reading it from cover to cover. We have saved all the magazines from the very first one so if anyone is interested they can have them; Of course the Magazines are much different now, they are much better than the first editions.

We weren't able to attend the Gala Dinners in later years because they were too far for us to travel; I know that Graham would have loved to go to the venues

*Yours Sincerely*

*Brenda*

## Ian Priestly

Retired former RAF Fire fighter died on the 20th Oct 2012 aged 73, after a short illness.

Ian joined the RAF Fire Service in Oct 1957 and underwent training as a Fire fighter at RAF Sutton upon Hull.

After tours throughout the UK, Middle East and the Far East he was granted a Commission into the RAF Regiment, this was in Sept 1979.

The funeral took place at the East Riding Crematorium in Octon near Driffield on Friday the 2nd Nov 2012.

He is survived by his wife Ester of 2 Westfield Rise, Beeford, East Yorkshire



## IN MEMORIAM: Warrant Officer Fred Canham BEM

It will be sad news to ex RAF fire fighters that Fred passed away on the 28th of June at his home in Marham. He was a character and a very likeable guy who had a long and distinguished career from 1953 to 1986. Although he was not an Association member I thought it only fitting that we should pay tribute to a stalwart of our fire fighting family. I was a young Sergeant when I served with him at RAF Marham in the 80's and he was a fair boss and a patient one with my constant desk thumping about the hours worked by the crews at that time. Then his famous phrase used to come out "Your Skating on thin ice young man" I know many of us throughout the years skated on that thin ice with him!

When news of his death appeared on the RAF Fire Service facebook page there where many tributes paid to him.

Fred started his military career in 1953. RAF Sutton-on-Hull was where Fred did his trade training to truly become "Fiery" Fred Canham. On completion of

his training, he was posted to Royal Air Force Lindholme in March 1954. After Lindholme, came the first of a fairly large number of overseas tours including Changi, Borneo, Wildenrath, Gibraltar, Malta and Akrotiri (Twice). Not to mention about eight UK stations. While in Gibraltar, Fred was awarded his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal – the second 'gong' he would get, after his campaign medal for his service in the Far East. He was also awarded the personal commendation of the Air Officer Commanding in Chief Strike Command for his work at Brize Norton. He was awarded the BEM while at Marham. Fred left the RAF in 1986 and settled in Marham village (him being a 'Norfolk Dumpling') and created his own business Marham Taxis which became a very valuable service for the people of the village and area, and one of the prime reasons for Fred becoming so well-known and so well-respected and loved within this small Norfolk community.



Fred leaves his Wife - Anne - eldest daughter Mandy, younger daughter Debbie and youngest son, Richard.

Editor's note; Thanks to Mandy his daughter and son-in-law Chris Pope for helping me with the information about Fred. RIP Fred.

## Poem

To the right is what I think is a great poem from my old friend Neal Moss. Neal and I became friends whilst serving on the same crew at Laarbruch in 1976; he introduced me to the band 'Pink Floyd' and I introduced him to astronomy, one set of stars for another! Fair exchange I think. Strangely enough one of Pink Floyds hits was called 'Dark Side of the Moon' which later on I made a reference to in a poem that I created called the 'Eagle'.

Neal went on from Laarbruch to serve till the age of 55 reaching the rank of Warrant Officer, although we both had long career's we never served together again, which was a shame but we have always kept in contact. I hope you enjoy his excellent poem but I think you have to be a fire fighter to under truly understand the meaning of it all.

*Steve (Co-Ed)*

### Team

bleedin' gears and now  
PYE squawking needs squelching  
and now IC hollering whilst  
slice of blue strokes the wet road

pump in, drive shaft rumbles  
lockers yawn wide  
chinagraph engaged to Perspex  
PRV engineering, BA Team breathing

cast iron yellow levered ajar  
two lengths run connected to  
head. Water. IC aware, go  
left hand search, attack overhead

siebe gorman weightless, dark  
and dark. Heat, noise and you and  
I, with those waiting touching our  
black umbilical. Waiting.

sudden surge night to day then  
air cools, lungs strain and backs  
ache. Inside and outside eyes  
meet, knowing. Team.

One of our members Brian Underhill is a keen reader of Flashpoint but his other favourite read is Memorial Flight magazine, which is the journal of Lincolnshire's Lancaster Association. He sent me the spring 2012 edition in which there is a story about a Lancaster BIII-EE136 which was stationed at RAF Bardney in Lincolnshire and later at Fulbeck. After 93 missions it was finally scrapped in the 1950's finding its way to the RAF Fire School at Sutton-on-Hull.

Below are 2 photographs. The 1<sup>st</sup> one I assume are Fire School staff, the 2<sup>nd</sup> one Brian is sure that the lad on the right is 'Lofty' Bower, who he did serve with and he wonders if anyone else could confirm that. The qualities of the photographs are not the best but good enough I hope.

*Reproductions of these photographs are by kind permission of the Honourary Chairman of the Lincolnshire Lancaster Association.*



*RAF Sutton-on-Hull Fire Staff*



## Letter from Colin Hall

Dear George and Steve

I received my copy of 'Flashpoint' today, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, and not at all ominous as it is once again a tribute to your hard work. You'll be a hard act to follow!

There are a few articles which will prompt a response from me, and I'll include that in a single e-mail covering more than one topic, and you can cut and paste whatever you wish to use.

### **First: "Above and Beyond"**

I have always thought, and it has been my experience with firemen, that they are in general a gregarious bunch but when the ordure hits the rotating parts they tend, always, to put all consideration of self-preservation aside and get on with whatever it takes to do the job in hand. That is heightened in wartime of course where awareness of danger is more constant, but it is nevertheless true that a system of mutual reliance such as a Fire Service will always produce individuals who go the extra mile.

Personally, I have witnessed a number of incidents in which individuals put themselves at risk and had they NOT been firemen and therefore "doing their job", some recognition would have followed. I, myself received burns which could possibly have been avoided had I stopped what I was doing, but to do so would have meant leaving others' exposed and it never entered my head to do that! It cost me in that I had to buy the beers, but we all knew! As firemen the experience is a feeling to be relied on, although never for long because we're not into those sorts of things are we. Selflessness, pride, mutual respect, are all items we never discussed! There is nothing, but nothing like the feeling you get when arriving at a serious incident and knowing you're not alone!

### **Second: "Get to Work"**

A nice photo of the Austin Gas Truck and how's this for memory from Sutton, and no recourse to notes... "The Austin Gas Truck carries 24x60lb cylinders of CO2 in for banks of six, giving a total of 1440 lbs of gas which equates to 11520 cubic feet of Co2".

The Americans had gas trucks which were bigger, naturally, and we even had a very similar vehicle to the Austin in the RNZAF except it was a Ford chassis and had a V8 engine.

*Colin Hall*



# Memories of the Membership Secretary

In the early seventies, after a tour in Singapore I was posted to Catterick as an instructor. While there, I was privileged to be working with Warrant Officers Rodulson and Shearn, The Maintenance hangar was run by Jock Arthur and the instructional team included George Nelson, Andy Self, and Gerry Kelly.

It has to be said that course failures were rare because of the dreaded "Back Flight" system and for an airman to be removed from training was almost unheard of. Sadly during my time there was such a lad who was completely untrainable and it was decided that he should be seconded to the Station Warrant Officer to await selection to another trade.

The "SWO" was Mr Gibbons, a very large fearsome "Rock" who put the fear of god into all ranks, he ruled with a rod of iron and at that time, the station commander was Group Captain Bumstead, one of the very best.

On the morning in question, the SWO had given this poor "erk" the task of painting the SHQ steps white. At about nine fifteen the SWO appeared and asked the airman if he had seen the C.O. "No sir" came the reply from the rigid lad, "Strange, its not like him to be late" he replied. About ten minutes elapsed and the SWO reappeared, snapped out the same question and received the same answer. "Dammit", I really need him, let me know as soon as you see him" and stamped off.

It was about ten minutes later that I entered SHQ and too my amazement I found the SWO and the CO absolutely helpless with hysterical laughter. Seeing my puzzled expression The CO tried to explain what had happened. It seemed to take for ever being interrupted by the pair of them going into paroxysms of laughter as each part of the story unfolded.

It would appear that shortly after the SWO had stormed off back into SHQ, up the

leafy lane, without a care in the world, strolled the Group Captain. As he arrived, he was greeted by a paint spattered airman who threw a up a semblance of a salute and said "Are you the C.O.?" "Well yes, I suppose I am" replied the Group Captain. "Well if I were you, I would get a F\*\*\*\*king move on, the SWO wants you and I reckon that you are really in the sh\*\*t!

Apparently the Groupie just calmly carried on inside and confronted the SWO and tried to ask him why he was in the sh\*\*t but his sense of humour overcame him and he just collapsed, with this paragon of military discipline and they both ended up helpless-as did I when they finally got the story out.

You see; we do remember the good times

## Unusual Variation Of A Foamite Alvis



John Irwin kindly donated to the 'Museum of RAF Firefighting' an AP for the Mk6 and several other pieces among them an old photo of this variant of what is in essence a MK6. This is the first time I have ever seen it. Has anyone ever seen one?

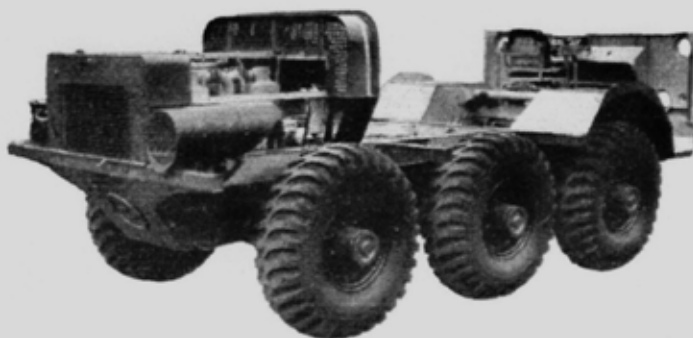
*An unusual variation of a Foamite Alvis 6 X 6 Crash tender as supplied to the South African Government.*

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