



FLASHPOINT



ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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THE UP'S AND DOWNS OF SERVICE LIFE • INTO THE UNKNOWN!
RAFA NATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL AWARD • MUSEUM NEWS
THE FRIENDS OF THE EL-ADEM RADIO SERVICE • RAF LUQA
THE FIRE FROM HELL • 36 YEARS AND OUT (ISH)

AUTUMN 2020
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FRONT PAGE

The front page image shows one of the new vehicles for the Defence Fire Services by Angloco; designated MPRV which is Multi Purpose Response Vehicle. Replacing the RIV. It can be deployed as a primary appliance or alongside the new Oshkosh Striker which you see on the centre page. Hopefully in the next Flashpoint a more detailed report about these vehicles will appear.

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"THE SILVERFOX" RAMBLINGS



As people across the country are forming "Bubbles" welcome to the 'Bubble' of Flashpoint, where hopefully you can immerse yourselves in the stories of our firefighting brethren and forget for a short time the personal challenges that the pandemic has brought your way. Unfortunately due to that, this year's reunion and AGM has had to be postponed until next year, a notice about the arrangements will be found further in the magazine, but I suppose it gives time for people to consider if they are going put themselves forward for one of the vacant roles within the Association.

Firstly, thank you once again for your support and the contributions you have sent my way to ensure that we have a magazine and also some material for the next edition. So if your story hasn't appeared in this one it will in the next. It is not often editors have said that in the past, so I am grateful for it but please keep sending me stories, it doesn't have to be big or your life story

maybe a small incident in your service that is funny or a memory that you would like to share. If I could ask if you submit an article could you send in it 'Word' format via email and if you don't do email instead of posting me the printed article can you consider putting it on to a memory stick and posting that to me and I would return it. If you can only hand write a story then so be it and I will gratefully accept it. Producing Flashpoint is not an easy task and although time consuming the feedback you get for the end product makes it worthwhile. I do sometimes get some criticisms and as long it is constructive I don't mind. Dave Kirk forwarded me a story sent to him by Dennis Miller, son of an ex RAF Firefighter Arthur Miller and in that story there are some good unseen images of Sutton on Hull, Dave has put them on the website. Dave is also keen to receive images and information to put on the website, so before those photo's get put back in the album or in the drawer get them scanned and send them to him

and if you don't have a scanner see if a member of the family can do it for you, or send the originals to Dave and he will always return them. Also I always like to see letters from members and it is your platform to engage, so thanks to Tom McCrorie, Dave McBain and Andy Gaskell and just to say to Andy that No! it wasn't me dressed as Father Christmas in that DP1 that was on the back page but my good lady who is a Louth girl was delighted to see a Louth street in an edition of Flashpoint.

So I hope you enjoy your Flashpoint? It has been good to talk to a few of you on the phone and if you want to contact me please do so. My good wishes to you all and keep safe.

Steve Harrison



*I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when life is done.
I'd like to leave an echo whispering softly down the ways.
Of happy times, and laughing times and bright sunny days.
I'd like the tears of those who grieve, to dry before the sun
Of happy memories that I leave when life is done.*

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

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| Colin Ellicock 276 | Dave Clark |
| Malcolm Thompson | John King 1048 |
| Stephen Bluff | John Baker 578 |
| Eric Jenkins 127 | Graham Kennedy 10 |
| James (Lofty, Big Jim, The Toffee Man) Hansford 674 | |

It is also with great sadness that we report the sudden death of Olive Arnold, the wife of the late John Arnold, member 394. John was once the vice chairman of the Association and Olive gave him every support and continued attending our functions right up to the last reunion. She leaves a son and two daughters.

2020 October REUNION & AGM Postponement

Due to the Corona virus, this year's AGM, booked for October 2020, has been postponed and a future date in 2021 will have to be agreed. At the moment our organiser has advised the association that hotels are not taking bookings for reunions until May or later. If a deposit is placed and the hotel goes out of business then we lose the money.

We are hoping by leaving it until later that there will be greater movement of people and meetings of the general public will be safer.

The new arrangements once agreed will be forwarded to you in the next edition of Flashpoint or in a separate newsletter.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR of FLASHPOINT

I must apologise to David McBain for not publishing his letter in the spring issue 2020 which was sent in response to my editorial in the 2019 winter issue.

Hi Steve,

I read with some dismay your editors article in the latest Flashpoint. The two things that concerned me, and should concern our membership and the RAF community as a whole, are the future of the magazine and of the Fire Museum itself.

I know that social media has its part to play in today's society and probably the majority of our members use it on a daily basis, but I think it would be sad to see the demise of Flashpoint because of this. I do not use things like Facebook personally, preferring to use the less intrusive forms of social media, emails and the like.

I am one who looks forward to the magazine when it comes, and I always scour the old photos to see if I recognise or remember any of the old faces. It's good to note that other people have kept photos and with them kept their memories alive.

I suppose that is part of the reason for the lack of material from members is that they don't think that they have anything to say. Well I was only in the service for five years in total, but in that time I was given a wealth of experience and learning which stood me in good stead after I had left and I have used that recently in articles that I have sent to the magazine. Not only were these about my RAF life but I also sent in an article which was published in the autumn 2018 edition concerning "A visit to the Battlefields"

I am only one member in an organisation of 400 plus paid up members and yet I have managed to recount some experiences and sent some photos that hopefully others will have found of some interest to read within the pages of our magazine. That means that there are another 400 plus members out there who have something to tell us about their life experiences in the service and of other things that might be related and of interest. Hopefully they will realise and send them in.

My friend George Turnbull and I can be seen on the front cover of your autumn edition of Flashpoint as part of that "Duty Crew" when we visited the Fire Museum. The purpose of my visit was not only to see the Museum first hand but to gift most of my helmets and memorabilia that I had collected from my career in the RAF, and also after at Luton Airport,

Bedfordshire Fire Service and London Fire Brigade where I retired from in 2002. You also produced my RAF Sharjah Radio magazine on the back cover.

When visiting the museum I realised just how important it is as part of what we are. Steve Shirley and his guys and girls have done a marvellous job in putting together something which is an historical asset to our service and organisation and I just can't believe that they continue to struggle to find a permanent home for it. There is so much that can't be seen when visiting the museum because of its semi permanent nature of its position, and yet there is also so much to see that George and I spent the whole day there.

As an organisation I know that we have supported the work of Steve and his volunteers over many years, but it seems to me that more must be done to impress upon the wider Air Force community just how great a treasure this collection is. It should also be seen as a fantastic educational facility.

I hope that my email to you will go some way towards galvanising our members into supporting both of the good things that we have in Flashpoint and the Museum. Hopefully a greater spread of members, young and old will realise that they do have something of interest to put in and that it can be better expressed in our magazine than by other media.

The museum needs to continue to be supported whilst we press others to give us a permanent home for it. Scunthorpe is a bit out of the way for some of us, but I live in Luton and George lives near Newcastle and we gave it a go. We met overnight in Lincoln, did the BBMF at Coningsby first and then Scunthorpe the following day. Above all the volunteers should know just how much their efforts are appreciated by our organisation. I would say to the members that "you won't be disappointed if you give it a try"

Many thanks to you for keeping the editorship going

*Regards
Dave Mc Bain*

Hello Steve,

The latest Flashpoint has never been so generously received as I am very short of reading material with self imposed "house arrest" due to my age and my wife's medical condition, I wonder how many more weeks we will have to put up with this?

On to a lighter note, thanks for publishing my letter and I really hope you get plenty of anecdotes to fill the next edition after your timely reminder to our members, it must have been so disheartening for Reg (and previous Eds !) not to have sufficient material to fill the pages!

I found "Museum News" particularly of interest in regard to the ongoing body work restoration to the Volvo FL6 undertaken by Stagecoach Bus staff at the Scunthorpe depot.

Stagecoach N.W. was the last company I worked for before retiring in 2009 and although I don't personally know Steve & Mark (Stagecoach have depots all over the UK , with thousands of buses)

I just knew they would do a great job on the Volvo using the time old method of coach painting!

We also carried out coach painting at the Preston Depot with a small team of body workers and it was always to a very high standard with little specialist equipment required! This method needs no extensive masking up or the need for a spray booth, lending itself speedily for minor repairs to body skirts and damage caused by over hanging trees etc!

Just high quality brushes, coach paint and the necessary skills is all that is needed.

I was always amazed how the painters managed to leave almost no visible brush marks and a consistent thickness of paint, even in difficult corners and around door grab handles. Although being shown, it's not something I could master to the same standard so I wisely stuck to my spanners!

So I consider you have a got a high quality paint job there on the Volvo FL6 (we had a big fleet of B6's, the Volvo Bus equivalent) that will last for years.

This pandemic is causing no end of

difficulties for businesses and organisations and it must be frustrating that restoration work has to cease for the time being, especially when you have an eager team of volunteers!

I also suppose its causing problems in seeking a new home for the museum with this partial lockdown and I noted there was no mention of anything that was on the cards!

I did see this week in the press that Scampton is to close in 2022 and the Red Arrows transferring to nearby Waddington, so there was no real long term future there either for the museum!

What with all these MOD drawdown's and closures within all three services it cannot be easy for Steve Shirley, so fingers crossed for a brighter future!

Regards, Andy Gaskell 328

P.S. Is that you impersonating Santa on the roof of the DP1 in Louth?

Hi Steve

Tom McCrorie, Member 739.

About page 19 of the spring 2020 issue, in the Ron Shearn piece. At the foot of the page he has said a bit about Andy Self and Davie Ayre . Davie Air should be spelt Air as Have know Davie for more than 50 years and Davie hated anyone spelling his name Ayre . Alas Davie passed away a few years ago. RIP.

I still keep in touch with Dave wife Robbie. I have to photo stat it for her. Dave did 3 tours at Catterick as a Cpl, Sgt, instructing duties also as a Flt/Sgt trade standards, he also did 3 tours at Kinloss where I met up with him.

Could you correct the error in the next copy, if it is not too much bother? Thanks' very much Tom.

Tom, I am sorry about the spelling but Ron wrote the article and I was not aware of the mistake I could always send you an amended copy which I can do on my computer. My contact details are in the magazine if you wish me to that.

Ed

Book Recommendations

Action Stations Revisited

The complete history of Britain's military airfields

No1 Eastern England

By Michael JF Bowyer ISBN 0 947554 79 3

If you are interested in aviation history then this book should satisfy your needs. It has airfield map of eastern England and index at the beginning also what is appealing is that the station histories are brief and it has a great index at the back which is split up into various categories, so if you want to find RAF Maintenance units or RAF Flights or OCU's for example it makes it much simpler. It also contains some 250 images from the author's personal collection, the majority of which are previously unpublished.

I know a lot research can be done on line (which I do), but if like me it is always good to have a solid book in your hands

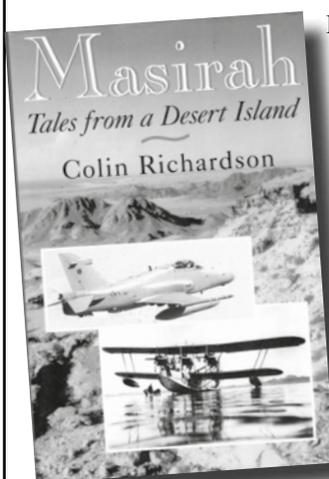


Masirah Tales from a Desert Island

By Colin Richardson ISBN 1 85821 801 2

If you enjoyed your posting to Masirah then this is a good read. It was written by an ex RAF Pilot, who after his career in the RAF joined the Sultan of Oman's Air Force as a Strikemaster ground attack pilot at Salalah during the Dhofar War.

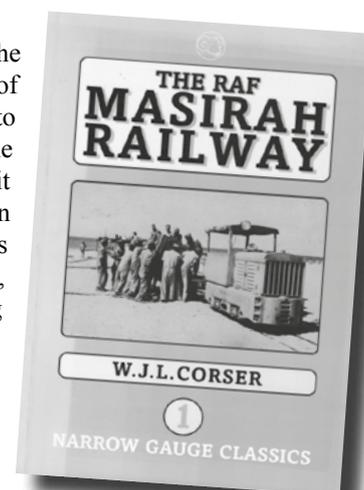
The book covers not only the military history but has a chapter at the beginning about the pre history to the twentieth century, the preface also describes the island it wild life and includes maps. The book covers the 1930's and the early seaplane base to the development of the War Time and Post War airfield. Throughout the chapters it is divided into years, so you can look up the years you where there, or dip in and out of the book.



The RAF Masirah Railway

By W. J. L. Corser ISBN 1 89923 1

A fascinating book which follows the building of the railway in 1943 and its subsequent rise and fall of use over the years until Masirah was handed over to the Sultan of Oman's Air Force in 1977. For anyone serving at Masirah it will refresh the memories if it was in use when you did your tour, as it depended on volunteers to keep it going. I remember long walks from "Surf Beach and around the North of the island, stopping for a few beers in the boat club and having a ride back to camp. (Ed) But if you have a railway enthusiast as a friend it would be a good present for them.



The Up's and Downs of Service Life

Grab a cuppa and a couple of biscuits to keep you going maybe?

So, having asked the beautiful Jacqui to marry me things were all fine and dandy. Except - they actually weren't.

While home on leave I was told by phone I was posted, to BFPO 47, RAF Gutersloh at the end of May '87 due to a manning change. I later discovered I wasn't the person drafted but my Warrant Officer, in his infinite wisdom, decided as a 'singly' I should be the one to go, over moving a married man with no children. I was gutted, Jacqui wasn't that impressed either.

This clearly wasn't how we had envisaged being together. Over 130 miles apart, we'd be in contact by phone and together over our weekends off, but that was our lot and we were going to have to get on with it as best we could.

Now I'll readily admit I'm biased, but I believe Wildenrath was the best RAF Station in Germany. However, Gutersloh ran a very close second. I'd been to 'Gut' before having deployed from Wildenrath for Harrier Force duty during Exercise Crusader 80, so knew my way around a bit already. The historian in me loved it to bits too. A former WW2 Luftwaffe base, many of the buildings were original and I was living in it and amongst it, a historical kid in candy shop stuff. But it wasn't Wildenrath because that's where Jacqui was.

So while Jacqui carried on at the Driving School, I moved to Gut and got stuck into playing with Harrier GR3s, Pumas and Chinooks, and learning my way around my new station.

Life was good, but weekends were better. I would get away to see Jacqui at Wildenrath or she could come up to me at Gutersloh. We quickly developed a good knowledge of the local 'Pensions' or bed and breakfasts, and spent as much time together as we could, before saying our muted goodbyes and heading back to our respective duties.

While at Gut I deployed into the field again, this time with 4 Sqn, had a weekend away on rates in a 230 Sqn Puma to Stuttgart, supporting the Harrier GR3 and Puma performing air displays at Rossfeld and Goppingen, and had fun with the US Army on an exercise parked outside the crash bays. Life wasn't too bad, and as time went by our meeting like ships passing in

the night routine was just about enough to keep us both happy. Jacqui also had an internal move from the Driving School to Tanker Pool. She loved it because she wasn't driving a desk anymore, but an AEC Mammoth Major tanker.

It was decided, by someone who clearly knew better than me that I should become a Breathing Apparatus (BA) Servicer. So I packed my bags and it was off to the College of Knowledge at RAF Catterick in September of '87 for the course.

I was really enjoying the course, and was about half way through, when I was called out of class to take a telephone call from the fire section at Gutersloh. The call was from a Flight Sergeant, Larry Moulton, who I'd worked with at Wildenrath. I stood and listened, incredulous, at what he had to say.

It turned out that there had been another establishment change, and a Cpl was to be posted out - to Wildenrath! Unlike previously where the decision was out of my hands, this time was very different. Larry explained how he knew Jacqui was at Wildenrath, had spoken with the Warrant Officer, and rather than send the Cpl that was drafted, uprooting him and his family, would I like to go in his place back to Wildenrath??? Does a dog need two dicks!! The answer was probably spurted out a bit hastily, but was also a no brainer, yes I'll go back!! The phone call to Jacqui that night was electric - expensive in a UK phone box, but electric.

I returned to Gut having completed the course, and carried on working waiting to be told the date when I was leaving. Stood in the crash bays early one mid October morning, vehicles checked, bay floors washed - in walked the Warrant Officer Red Ted Firmager. Standing in the doorway looking straight at me he shouted 'what the f**k are you doing here? Ted was very firm but also very fair so my reply of 'I f*****g well work here' was received as it was meant. With a grin he replied 'No you don't, you're posted - today!!' taken aback I could only reply 'really?' Ted, grin still large on his face, replied 'yes really, now get the f**k off my section'. I didn't need any second bidding.

I was told at around 8am in the morning that I was posted. Slightly stunned, and grinning like a feline with parentage from Cheshire, I returned to my room, changed into civvies, went to SHQ for my blue

clearance chit, filled my car, packed my boxes and got them to the freight centre to go to Wildenrath the same day, handed back my room, had a proper farewell from Red Ted, finished clearing from the Station and was in my car driving out the main gates of Gutersloh at around midday. Phew. At just after 14.30 I pulled up at the main gate of BFPO 42, handed my 1250 to the Snowdrop on the gate and simply said with a big grin on my face 'Hi Cpl Thompson, I'm posted in'

So, Jacqui and I were separated by over 130 miles, for just over five months. We both later admitted to each other we were worried we'd not survive the separation, but were both equally sure that if we could get through this we'd be fine. We did, we were, and it made Jacqui's detachment to Red Flag in Nevada for 6 weeks in late October and November '87 child's play.

Life was good, we were madly in love, but more importantly we were together again.

I think it's what most of our readers will relate to.

Pete Thompson



WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

1145 Stephen Holden

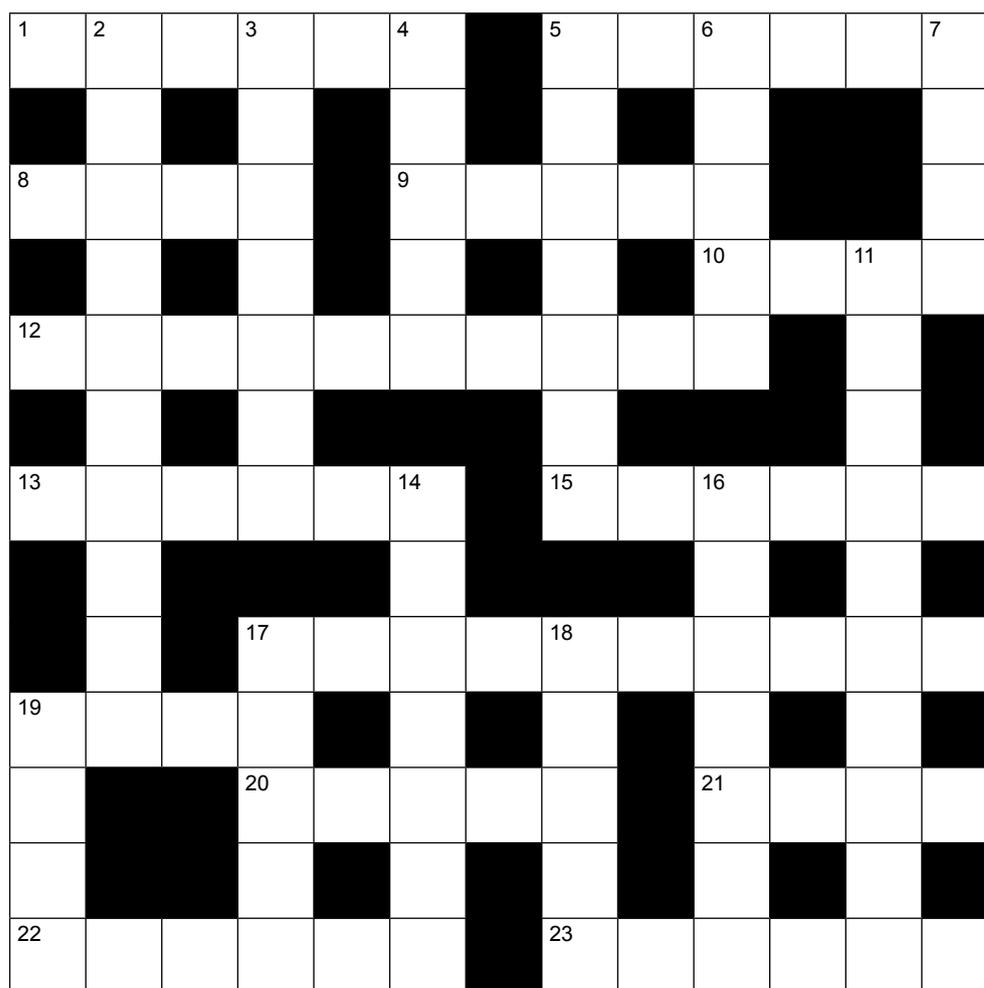
1146 David Bantock

1147 Albert Hay

A warm welcome to you all who have joined us.

Enjoy your edition of Flashpoint and let's hope you have a few tales of your experiences that you can share with us.

Flashpoint Crossword No 14 by Firefly



Across

1. Puddings saved for later? (6)
5. Teacher of unruly stream. (6)
8. Receptacle for 1 (4)
9. Stand from this when shouted from above. (5)
10. Aircraft with comms, or vehicle travelling to it. (1,1,1,1)
12. Critical temperature you're reading. (10)
13. Urges Humpty Dumpty and his lad perhaps. (4,2)
15. Proceed with ladder perhaps, (6)
17. Deluge not heavy found on vehicle roof. (10)
19. Is at bubbly beverage? (4)
20. Internally fire ignites as a rule. (5)
21. This word can be common or proper. (4)
22. Snowdrop's canine friend. (3,3)
23. Vital gas somehow gone containing two unknowns. (6)
2. Flights too unruly to illuminate stage. (10)

Down

3. Joins up English itineraries. (7)
4. Bowlers target found in best umpire. (4)
5. A dream I mixed with wine. (7)
6. Fishy parts? (5)
7. Oddly riot out of source. (4)
11. Duo run hose erratically to London concert venue. (10)
14. Initially no ordinary Orderly Sergeant in Gateshead lassoing. (7)
16. Type of rods one may have assembled. (7)
17. Dismissed in flames! (5)
18. Strange dog in Australia.(5)
19. Pop group wearing Breathing Apparatus both ways. (4)

Into the Unknown! - By Pete (Dutchy) Holland

One day, in May 1958 on arriving home from work on the farm at Whitcombe Kenn near Exeter, my mother said "There's a letter for you with OHMS on the front". I replied, "Don't worry mother, it's probably from the Tax Man". But on opening it I found it was my 'call up' papers for National Service. My next step was a visit to the Labour Exchange in Queen Street, near the museum, where I signed on the dotted line. Then a medical examination at Government Buildings, situated now where Sainsbury's is. I passed A1!

I arrive at RAF Cardington for signing on, kitting out, issuing of a service number and a 1250 ID card and swearing in service for the defence of the Queen. The memorising of your 7-figure service number was difficult at first, but soon fell into place. After a few relaxing days and getting to know my peers, we were herded on the train at Cardington en route for basic training at RAF Bridgnorth, Shropshire, innocently not realising what we were letting ourselves in for. On arrival at Bridgnorth, all hell was let loose from drill instructors, bellowing orders for us to swiftly grab our kitbags from the guards van and get on the trucks outside the station. On the short journey to RAF Bridgnorth, we were all in a state of shock and silence. This was our first taste of service discipline and thoughts of just what we had let ourselves into. On arrival at RAF Bridgnorth it was worse than at the railway station with even more drill instructors screaming in your ear to get a move on or else, which we did at high speed. Basic training or "Square Bashing" as it was popularly known was 12 hectic weeks of non-stop billet and kit inspections. Cleaning and cleaning again, physical training, marching and rifle drills and increased team work discipline. Then the great day arrived for the "Passing Out Parade" the day everyone on the three squads had been waiting for.

From there I was posted to RAF Sutton on Hull, School of Firefighting and placed in the hands of instructors "Rocky" Rich and Mc Caffery for basic firefighting training over a number of weeks. I can still smell the strong characteristic odour from foam liquid kept in metal drums, made from animal blood, horn and hoof, the sound of trailer pumps at full revs, and the difficulty at first holding a fully pressurised non-lined delivery hose and brass branch pipe and nozzle. Passing out from RAF Sutton on Hull and after completing an oral and

written exam, my next posting was RAF Weeton, School of Driving Instruction which was near to Blackpool. In October and November, the weather was colder than I could ever imagine. We were billeted in the usual timber huts, heated by one small coal stove that we all took in turns to collect fuel to keep the fire going. The glass in one window pane was cracked with a piece of glass missing, and on waking in the morning; there was frost on top of the blankets on beds near the window. Driver training was over several weeks, starting on a Bedford truck, followed by a short wheelbase Landrover, an airfield towing tractor and finally, a Mk5 crash rescue tender. As new drivers we were taught the double-declutch method of changing gear, due to heavier fire vehicles having a crash gearbox instead of a synchromesh gearbox. We had to pass a road test in each vehicle, including a systematic pre-vehicle oil, water and tyre pressure and before driving off, a check around the vehicle. On successful completion of the driving course, we were given our postings, with all my pals being posted to Germany and for me it was a dream of National Service in the RAF to become a Fireman and then it was into the unknown and a posting to RAF Weeton.

The day of my first posting to an RAF base! Names were called out in order; popular postings were Germany and Aden at the time. My turn came very abruptly, HOLLAND! "Sir" All I heard was ...den? To my surprise it was RAF Yeadon, my reaction? Where's that? Well it was near Leeds, which is now Leeds and Bradford Airport.

So it was on the train to Leeds, then by local transport to Rawdon. Settling in was good, the fire section was only manned by eight men and the aircraft were Chipmunks for flying training. In time it was put on closing party, which would happen very soon. I played football in the Yorkshire Half Holiday League and cricket for the camp at Pudsey where I believe Len Hutton started his career. I also enjoyed the Yorkshire countryside and the cities of Leeds and Bradford.

In September 1959, I was detached to RAF Biggin Hill to cover as fire crew for the air show and the flypast for the Battle of Britain aircraft on the Sunday. Although the air show went well, things went a bit wrong for one of the Spitfires from the Battle of Britain flypast. The crash alarm sounded, the appliances were manned, and the message was that a Spitfire had crashed near Bromley on the Oxo Cricket ground.

We drove through Bromley on a peaceful Sunday afternoon, ringing the bell (no 2-tones in those days.) On arrival we found that the Spitfire had crash landed on the cricket square. It was a good job it was tea time as all the players were indoors. We carried out all the procedures we were taught in our training. On inspection of the aircraft where it was on the square you could see the port wing had an imprint of three cricket stumps. The pilot, AVM Paddy McGuire, KCB DSO OBE survived the crash landing. If anyone is interested you can Google "Spitfire Crash Oxo Cricket ground" and you will see plenty of images and the newspaper article of the time.



My next adventure after a period of embarkation leave was a posting to Cyprus at RAF Akrotiri where I would spend the next two and half years. A land boy and happy to have my feet on the ground, my next journey began by train from Exeter to Southampton Docks, to embark on the troopship HMT Dunera. The journey would take around ten days, my first sailing trip, sounds good?

Boarding the troopship, I learned that it was Army run and found out later the discipline was real!! Settling on board was something new to me, "That's your space for the next ten days" Yes Sir" Next to me was Taffy, he looked ill, pale and drawn. He said "It's a bit rough isn't it?" I replied "We haven't left Southampton Water Yet!" Little did we know what was in store for us? We went into the English Channel, a slight swell, and then a message came over the tannoy "Be prepared for a force 9 gales in the Bay of Biscay." I said to taffy "Hang on to Bellsnellie" (Google that one!)

As we all settled in, tasks were allocated to us and mine was the captain's runner and I had to report to the bridge. With a Force 9 imminent it was not looking good and when I got to the bridge the captain said "Stay there and hold tight" I've seen such seas in films, but this was for real. Passing through the storm we docked at Gibraltar for a pit stop then hopefully into the calmer Mediterranean Sea but it wasn't to be as it was still pretty rough. It was a joy when Malta came into view and we sailed in to Valletta Harbour, what a lovely sight, stunning in fact, and we were happy as well because going ashore was on the menu.

So it was onward to Cyprus and the port of Limassol, where we weighed anchor off shore after a fourteen day journey. We were ferried on smaller vessels to the port and on the quay many troops were waiting to go home. I got to the top of the steps of the quay and a voice belted out "Duchy nice to see you" It was a comrade of mine living back home, he had just finished his two and half years in the Middle East with the RAF. It was the late Dudley Gardner.

On the journey from Limassol by bus to RAF Akrotiri, I noticed a big salt lake which later played a part in my fire service career. On arrival through the camp gates, the Fire Section was on the left and all the appliances about eight were positioned outside. The next day I had had to report to the section and was briefed on what was expected of me as a member of the



Outside the new crash bays

section by W.O. (Wally) Hammond. The establishment was around eighty as I recall, many were National Servicemen.

The domestic fire duties and crash duties were carried out from different locations. Domestic was carried out at the section near to the camp gates and the shifts were four days on four nights and four off. The work was the usual inspection of appliances, fire inspection of buildings and the tented areas, so getting to know the camp area was vital as there were fire calls day and night.

There was no crash bays at this time and we were situated near to the main runway out in the open.

The control tower was just a glorified shed with windows opening outwards, so in an emergency, of which there were many the controller would just lean out of the window and shout the message "Standby for aircraft landing" The aircraft at Akrotiri were mainly Canberra's. Five squadrons at this time, with the "Cold War" going on so we got the V Bombers, Vulcan's, Valiant's and the Victor's (more about a Victor later) One incident I can recall involving the arrester barrier was when an aircraft from the USA aircraft carrier the "Forrestal" had to take the barrier. On arrival the barrier was in a lethal state of tension and the pilot shouted "How the hell do I get out of here?" "Just be patient sir" OK guys job done.

My first aircraft incident and fatal crash was on 26th October 1961. I was on nights and operating from the new crash

bays. Around 03.00 the alarm sounded and the message was relayed as a mid-air collision, possible crash site was the Salt Lake area. All the topography training we had carried out proved invaluable. I was driving Crash 2 and on arrival the scene was total carnage. What had occurred was that a Javelin (XH906 of 25 Sqn) and a Canberra (WD995 of 32 Sqn) had collided whilst carrying out practice night interceptions. We had arrived at the Javelin and after carrying out the fire fighting the Navigator's body was found, the pilot had managed to eject and survived. This was a sad sight indeed and I have never forgotten it 58 years on. Also, sadly the crew of three on the Canberra did not survive.

Looking back, Akrotiri at this time was being built up covering a large area; the accommodation for the fire crew was very good, six in a room with big fans to keep you cool. One regular problem were the bedbugs, they would bite and suck your blood, so to combat these blighters we would on occasions on a hot day out the mattress went in order to try and find the invaders. We had many happy days on domestic crew and crash duties with four days off. In those days we were confined to the station, but we had the NAAFI, the Palace House and many stars came to entertain us. We swam in the sea. What a life!

I have always been a keen sportsman and in the services I was well catered for and the fire section football team were a good team playing other sections. Rugby was my second game really, playing on hard

surfaces, no grass and in one game I lost many of my teeth when stamped on, not a pretty sight. Consequently I spent many days in hospital and a surprise for me was when on one occasion I had dysentery and on investigation, it was found that the water in the mess was contaminated by a dead mouse in the water cooler!!!

I volunteered, on my days off from normal fire duties for the Mountain Rescue Team, I was surprised when the Flight Sergeant said "We need a driver and radio operative" which sounded good to me. We had plenty of training, but I was lured into other tasks as well, learning to ski, many route marches, carrying a pack on your back in hot and cold weather on the Kyrenia Mountains.



All was going well when the Flt Sgt on one exercise said "We are going to carry out a cave rescue and you are in the team" I thought why did I volunteer? But I was in a good team of experts in their field. Do as you are told. Yes Flight. What a challenge, 24 hours of darkness. On reaching the end of the drop what a glorious sight was seen called the "Cathedral" Next we took the casualty out on a bamboo stretcher, what a rescue in the end, always a great memory.



Jimmy Edwards at the Fire Section bar

Taking leave and with the freedom after the conflict was enlightening; to explore the island was something I will always remember. To see the Troodos Mountains covered in snow and to enjoy a holiday in the Lebanon and Beirut the capital and in those days a lovely place.

In time we all enjoyed the night life in Limassol and on a trip to Nicosia we visited the places of interest, then someone said "Let's check out the nightlife" and we came across "Live Tonight. The Dance of the Seven Veils" What a long night!!

One great thing I remember was the Fire Section had its own bar and we had a visit from a great comedy actor of the time Jimmy Edwards.

My two and half years in the RAF Fire Service at Akrotiri were nearing completion, but in June 1962 my dream of going home was overshadowed by two aircraft crashes. The second one involved a Victor tanker (XA929). As I recall, it was when we were just finishing night shift and the changeover was due at 07.00 but because of operational delays our pickup was late in arriving. I heard the Victor getting ready for takeoff and after passing the crash bays it lifted off and came down again; aborting its take off, the chute deployed but was ripped off, then utter chaos. When we arrived at the scene the heat and carnage was horrific and the mass destruction of this aircraft and the smell of fuel and burning flesh will always remain with me. We then had try and locate the bodies and worked three or four days to

clear the sight. In the days that followed we had to try and get rid of that smell with showers and carbolic soap. This was the worst incident of my career and I have never forgotten the crew of the 10 Sqn Victor that was based at RAF Cottesmore.

The cause of the crash was an incorrect flap reading which led to wrong selection of flaps on takeoff. By the time the pilot had realised the reason for the aircraft not becoming properly airborne it was too late to avoid the crash. The co-pilot ejected shortly before the crash but his ejection was outside the limits of the seat and he did not survive.

So as my tale comes to an end I thought I would remind you all that at this time Cyprus was in a terrorist situation and many British troops were killed and injured. On the 16th August 1960 the action was resolved and partition took place which currently exists today. As for the British, a sovereign base area was formulated to secure British status in the area surrounding Akrotiri and Army bases at Episkopi and others. During those troubled times the serviceman death toll was 386 with many injured and many of those that fell are buried in the British Military Cemetery at Dheklia.

On return to "Blighty" I was posted to RAF Wyton in Cambridgeshire and there I remained until I was de-mobbed in 1963 and returned to the West Country to start a new adventure!!

Pete (Dutchy) Holland, member 475.

RAFA National Presidential Award



RAFA National Presidential Award for our Association Treasurer, Trevor Hayes and his wife, Pat.

The RAFA National Presidential Certificate has been awarded to Trevor and Pat Hayes for dedication to veterans' welfare and fundraising for the Abbots and Kings Langley RAFA Branch. The award is given in line with the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

The nomination is as follows:-

Pat and Trevor display unstinting commitment and leadership and are exceptionally professional in all that they do. They work tirelessly throughout the year and continuously put the needs of others before their own.

Since 2010 they have raised in excess of £70,000 for the Wings Appeal. For more than 15 years they have planned and executed the Annual Battle of Britain Parade and Service in Abbots Langley. Working with the local authorities, they ensure both go off without a hitch.

Several local RAF Air Cadet Squadrons, veterans and other youth groups take part and are always led by a band, something the Hayes' always manage to arrange-

even though bands are getting fewer and further between. Pat and Trevor also support the Remembrance Day Service at Hemel Hempstead School each November, representing the Association.

During the year they arrange visits to museums, local attractions, RAF Families Days, an annual garden party, a fish and chip supper, lunches in local restaurants and many other branch activities to give members the opportunity to stay in touch. In December, they organised a substantial Christmas dinner with live entertainment, a bumper raffle and small gifts for each guest.

Pat is a very active and dedicated Honorary Welfare Officer in Watford, Hemel Hempstead and surrounding areas and many veterans and their dependants benefit from her diligence.

The nomination goes on to say: - "They are a very caring and active couple at the centre of their community and branch and are RAFA to the core. Undoubtedly, without them the Abbots and Kings Langley Branch would cease to exist and many veterans and beneficiaries currently, and in the future, would suffer".

When they learned of the award, Pat and Trevor said:-

" It came as a great surprise when we learned that we had been awarded The National Presidential Certificate and are humbled that we were worthy of such an honour. Over the years we have strived to do our very best for the Association and have met many interesting people, especially in our Welfare and Wings Appeal roles. The generosity and gratitude of the public towards the Royal Air Force never ceases to amaze us. It is wonderful hearing stories from veterans who are also grateful to our volunteers. Our Branch continues to thrive but without our committee and our members, we wouldn't be where we are now, so it is a joint effort all round.

There is nothing more rewarding than providing welfare support and bringing joy into the lives of those less fortunate than ourselves who have fallen on hard times, through no fault of their own.

Pat and Trevor it is no less than you deserve, congratulation from all the members of our Association for such sterling work. Ed.





The new Oshkosh Striker which has a High Reach Extendable Turret (HERT) will gradually replace the MFV for the Defence Fire Services. At the moment the first few have been delivered to RAF Waddington, RAF Brize Norton, RAF Northolt and MOD Corsham to support initial training before they become operational in September 2020. This has been a special build for the MOD being narrower and having a smaller wheelbase to enable them to fit into existing fire stations.

As Firefighters we are all used to dealing with the unexpected but I don't think anyone one of us could have predicted the effects that the COVID-19 Pandemic would have had on the world let alone the Museum of RAF Firefighting!

Firstly, of course, we went into lockdown. All activity stopped. Shows were cancelled and we all waited to see just how we were going to get through this dreadful period in our lives. Given that most of our volunteers were in the vulnerable age group and with most of us having underlying health issues anyway self-isolation became the norm. The Association of Independent Museums issued guidelines that stated the collection could be visited once a week for security reasons which also included viewing the collection as a whole to ensure that it wasn't at risk from any failure of infrastructure such as leaking roofs, burst pipes etc. We also had to check for deterioration caused by infestation of insects and other natural elements. I undertook this task throughout and it was really weird sometimes being the only person on the road on the journey over to Scunthorpe and back. Stranger still was walking around the building for a few hours everytime totally on my own. I'm so used to the museum being a hive of activity!

The Council obviously had other issues to deal with so we entered a period

of complete silence from them. In a strange way, you could say the Virus has actually done us a favour. Our lease expired on the 17th December and yet we are still in the building some 8 months later. All of the pressure that was placed upon us to get vehicles ready for shows was taken away in an instant. With no work being carried out, we couldn't spend any money. We had no open days to get ready for. What on earth were we going to do? Well the first thing that we had to think about was how are we going to pay our monthly outgoings like insurance, phone line, internet etc. without visitors? Thankfully, the standing order supporter's scheme came to our rescue. Without this scheme we would, quite simply, not have survived. The income generated falls just below what we actually need to balance the books, but several private donations also came in to help us survive and these have ensured that we've broken even each month. Several museums are on the verge of closure as we speak so I cannot thank our supporters enough for giving us the chance to survive in these harsh circumstances.

Ignition
SEND YOUR STORIES TO THE EDITOR: hc.rafanddfa.co.uk
Heritage Commercial, Entry Publishing Ltd, The Gables, Down Court, Tadding Hill, Tadding, York.

A PERMANENT PREMISES IS WANTED!
Museum of RAF Firefighting, 14 Billet Lane, Normandy Enterprise Park, Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire, DN15 9YH
Phone 01522 730198

A 1944 Fordson Van Officer Type 1 nicknamed 'Warty'.

A 1944 Fordson Van Officer Type 1 nicknamed 'Warty'.

A 1944 Fordson Van Officer Type 1 nicknamed 'Warty'.

KETTERING VINTAGE RALLY & STEAM FAYRE
Owing to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions for any outdoor public events and not knowing when they will be completely lifted, and in the interest of public safety, this year's event which was planned for 26-27 September 2020, has been postponed.
The next Kettering Vintage Rally which will be their 21st event, will now take place over the weekend of 25-26 September 2021.
For details Phone: 01536 509144 (5 days Mobile: 07940 06333) or Email: cust@rafanddfa.co.uk or visit the website ketteringvintagerally.co.uk



The Big Man himself has not lost it, memories of cleaning out the bays! Although with a new look squeegee!!

We needed to keep the museum alive in people's minds so a couple of articles appeared in the Daily Express and the Daily Mirror and the August edition of the Heritage Commercial magazine. These articles did have a positive reaction and we received numerous calls wishing us well for the future. It was just the lift a lot of people needed!

With lockdown easing, it wasn't long before the volunteers wanted to return to the museum. Fortunately, ex RAF Firefighter Sgt Kev Brereton who is a Health & Safety professional, carried out all of our risk assessments and these have enabled us to safely return to the museum to pick up where we left off. First man back was 82 year old ex RAF Firefighter Eddie Munro who stated that if he had to spend another day stuck at home we might as well dig a hole in the garden and chuck him in. Suffice to say, we put him straight back to work!!!!!!!

As reported in my last update, we had several vehicles being worked on prior to lockdown. We have picked up where we left off. The ASU Volvo, Dennis F108, Austin K4, Mk9, Dennis D Type and Mini Bedford Domestic are all in the midst of frantic activity to get them finished for display. More items have arrived during lockdown including photographs, manuals, books, uniforms and extinguishers. We also have several vehicles on offer!

Talks have recommenced with the Council



Eddie back on duty on Crash 1

which is a good thing. They still want to rent out our building commercially, but given the current economic situation we hope that such a tenant will not be forthcoming. The Council are still stating

that they won't throw us out unless a viable commercial tenant comes forward. Let's keep our fingers crossed that this won't happen for a long time. In the meantime, however, there is talk from the Council about them building us a new building. This would involve something along the lines of a lottery grant and it would of course take a long time to realise this sort of ambition but at least it shows that there is some positive thinking going on.

We have started to open up the museum to small private groups by prior arrangement and this has so far been very successful. The most important thing is to keep everybody safe so we're working on the theory of quality not quantity!

Finally, I want to send each and every one of you my very best wishes for the future and I hope that one day soon we'll all get together, pull up a sandbag and talk about the good old days once again. Stay safe!

*Steve Shirley MBE
Chairman/Founder
Museum of RAF Firefighting.*

If you need to contact the Museum you can via 01522 730198 leave a message and someone will get back to you or email enquiry@firemuseum.uk. There is also the Facebook page. If you want to consider starting the Standing Order Scheme to support us, the details for the bank are; Sort Code: 60-13-15 Account Number 53037545. Also if you shop on Amazon you can go to Amazon 'Smile' and choose to support a charity of your choice when entering the museum it must be entered exactly in this way; Museum Of Raf Fire Fighting so then every purchase you make some will go to the museum, a very tiny amount I must admit but the more people who do it the better. Thank you.



Our resident body man John working on the "A" Series

THE FRIENDS OF THE EL-ADEM RADIO SERVICE

Fred Bickham sent me some information which was obviously from a magazine about how he tracked down one of his friends from the old days and had submitted his story to be included in the newsletter of an organisation that I never knew existed. That was 'The Friends of the El-Adem Radio Service' and their newsletter was called 'The Cue Sheet' I was curious about this and Fred sent me some old newsletters and list of contacts they had made, among them several RAF Firefighters. So below is a short history, written by John Moir who is the driving force behind all this, and Fred is still in contact with him. Unfortunately, the website is no more but through Fred I hope to talk to John and find out more what has happened to 'The Friends' and what the current situation is as regards the organisation. (Ed)

The El-Adem Radio Service know to all as TEARS began broadcasting from a Nissan hut at Royal Air Force Station El-Adem during 1958. Initially its programmes were transmitted via the airwaves and, it has been said some broadcasts were heard as far away as Canada and Switzerland!! With the arrival of BFBS at the garrison at Tobruk in 1962, TEARS was no longer permitted to transmit and so land-lines and overhead cables were put in place to connect the studio-now housed in a purpose built building-to the various huts, billets and accommodation blocks that formed the living quarters for those based in El-Adem. Eventually the lines were extended to the married quarters.

During its 12 year life-span it is estimated that as many as 1,000 worked in their 'off duty' time, at the studios of TEARS. Announcers (never DJ's!), controllers, technicians and librarians were all recruited to help maintain the service. TEARS programmes were heard every evening and also during the day at weekends. The wide selection of programmes included all aspects of music from Pop to Jazz and Classical to Country and Western – usually hosted by an 'expert' on the subject. Local interest items including interviews with the stars of touring CSE shows were also featured as well as links with BFBS and the BBC World Service – for sport and News. Messages from loved ones back home were read out and a favourite piece of music played during UK Requests which was probably the most popular broadcast.

The latter part of the 1960's saw the

introduction off outside broadcasts from the NAFFI, Station Sports Day and many other venues. A disco unit was also constructed which was used with great success at any other functions held at the Families Club and the various Messes.

Our last TEARS programme was last heard in March 1970. The final 'Closedown' programme went out shortly before the closure of the air base at El-Adem. Remarkably many of the programmes still survive on reel-to-reel tape. A compilation has been produced including that final broadcast.

John Moir

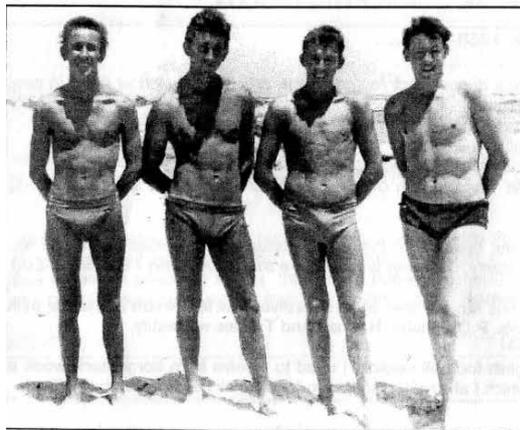
John Moir decided to try and trace some people that had worked on TEARS and that lead to the formation of The Friends of the El-Adem Radio Service and they had their first reunion in 1993.

Some of the firefighters that were on the contact list that Fred sent me are as follows. Fred Bickham 58-60, Dave Bramall (RIP), Tony Carr 64-66, Ray Cook 65-67, John (The Admiral) Fleet 61-63, Brian Jones 64-66, Chris Hughes 68-70, Dennis Moore 60-62, Gary Passmore 65-67, Ron Pearson 68-70, Stan Readman 57-60, John Rotherham (formally Bowman) 68-70 Bill Slater 67-69 and John White 61-63. Checking out the RAF & DFS membership there are six of them in the in the list above, Dave Bramall is unfortunately no longer with us.

It was the RAF Fire Service connection that inspired me to include this in Flashpoint also it is a little bit of RAF History that is not well known. I will follow it up with John Moir and include a small article in another edition. (Ed)

WE CAN TRACK THEM DOWN – WORLDWIDE !!

**by Fred Bickham
(Fire Service, 1958-60)
EL ADEM**



**Pictured from left to right in 1958 :
George Probert, Ted Fuller, Fred Bickham
and Stan Readman**

My old friend, Stan Readman, knew that another ex-Fire Service (1958/59) pal of ours, Ted Fuller, came from the Plymouth area. So he rang every 'Fuller' in the Plymouth directory. One of them turned out to be Ted's brother, Bob, who informed us that Ted now lived in New Zealand.

I made contact and arranged for a trip to see him and his wife Ann whom he had met at El Adem while she worked for the Salvation Army in Tobruk. Ted emigrated to New Zealand in 1972 and joined the Auckland Fire Department finishing up as Station Officer. He is now retired. His son is keeping up the tradition and is also serving with the New Zealand Fire Service.

We are still trying to track down another pal from El Adem days – George (Chopper) Probert.

**Fred Bickham & Ted Fuller
Auckland, New Zealand, 2003**



THE FIRE FROM HELL

One such fire was in a large warehouse near the Iron and steel works near the River Tees.

This is about a large fire in a warehouse on the docklands of Middlesbrough in 1959.

Not related to RAF fire-fighters, no not true, there have been many severe structural fires worldwide that RAF fire-fighters have attended and they will empathise with this story that is etched into my skull!!!

THAT FIRE

Most fires have some difficult situation to deal with, even the odd chimney fire can prove to be beyond the norm and give you a nasty bite. However, there were those fires that challenged all the resourcefulness that we could muster.

The building was about the size of four football fields and had a raised floor about 1 metre high to enable trucks to be loaded. This was before storage and health and safety regulations had been introduced for such structures.

The warehouse was used to store all manner of general goods in transit to and from the ships at the West Marsh Wharf. These goods were an unknown element to us and we had to expect all kinds of hazards from cylinders to paint produces and pesticides.

On arrival we were faced with a very severe fire situation with smoke we could see almost as soon as we left the station

some 4 miles away.

I was riding Water Tender 2 (a special appliance designed to get under the low bridges in that area) we approached under the low bridges and had to remove the top cover from the appliance. We arrived before the others that had to take the longer route.

We could see that there was no point in getting to work with our 200 gallons of water and there was no report of persons involved, so we went directly to the quay side and started laying hose from the river as we waited for the Fireboat to chug its way along to us.

Once the boats pumps were up and running we had an endless supply of water eventually running through a half mile of 4 inch hose.

A call was made to make pumps to 10, mostly from neighbouring brigades and 2 ambulances.

The fire was mainly involving straw and other packing material in the space under the floors, Just over a metre high and was difficult to get to; this was before dynamic risk assessment and the plan was very simple, get in, surround it and put the damned thing out.

Easier said than done, especially without breathing apparatus B/A, we could not get enough supply of oxygen cylinders for such a protracted incident.

We started in with Jet/spray branches (Brass London branches) from four

separate entry points. We had to force the fire ahead of us through all kinds of debris that had accumulated over the years and there were no partitions of any kind to prevent fire spread.

We had to keep low and at times we had to breathe inside the water spray or through the sleeves of our jackets in order to get some cool clear air.

The conditions were so bad that we had to change branchmen every 20 min or so. This was achieved by crawling along the hose to relieve one man then another a bit later, this way we could maintain constant relief for each fire-fighter.

I will never forget coming out for the first time and finding my mates sitting, standing and lying on the ground with steam coming from their uniforms, black streaks from sweat and tear marks on their faces, mostly smoking cigarettes and looking very distressed, some were taking oxygen from resuscitation sets and B/A cylinders.

I could hardly recognise some of them, but they all went back in time and time again without complaining.

It says something about our officers when I crawled to the branch to find that the other fire-fighter was our Chief Fire Officer Alf Leyland coughing, spitting and swearing and so black that I couldn't see his white helmet and I didn't recognise him at first.

He loved it in there at the sharp end and gave me a lot of confidence when I was scared out of my wits. I was so hot at times that the water on my uniform started to nearly scorch my skin. We had to hose each other down occasionally in order to continue. It was only after the incident that I thought how good it was to have hosed the Chief down.

It was no laughing matter at the time; during the rest of that shift (16 hours) I had to go back in another dozen or so times.

As we got further in we found that there was an inner lower floor maybe another 2 metres deep and it was decided to tie down a number of large hoses and let the water from the river flood the thing. The crews spent another three days damping down.

When I returned to the site the next day I could clearly see just how difficult it had



This is a much more recent picture but it gives an idea of the situation we faced. Without breathing apparatus!



Dennis Water Tender 2 for low bridges. (The lid comes off).

been for us. Most of us had minor burns and headaches. It was not easy moving around under there without the smoke and flames. What had made it more difficult were the tightly packed bales of straw, each one had to be pulled apart to finally extinguish the fire.

We had many serious incidents at Middlesbrough but I think that that was the most difficult one we had to endure especially as I was a rookie at the time.

I had worked with brave men in the Army but these firemen were something different, they went into action nearly every day of their lives and just took it in their stride.

I am honoured and very proud to have worked with these giants of men.

John Goupillot.



*A Typical scene at a large fire.
This is not a scene from Middlesbrough*

36 Years and Out (ish) – A Brief Summary

The journey formally started on 5th December 1983 when I signed on the dotted line at Ipswich CIO then off to RAF Swinderby the next day for my 9-week Basic Course (4Ft). The Military wasn't new to me as the old man was a RAF Policeman (I have counselling before you ask). Various postings as a Scale-E Brat were Spittlegate, Bishops Court, Bruggen x 2, Brampton, Laarbruch and Honington, happy days indeed. Swinderby was interesting and a doddle really and thankfully my old man's trade was not found out or the 9 weeks may have been more difficult than it needed.

Off to Catterick next, I arrived in February 84, cold and miserable but a thoroughly enjoyable course and time. Paul Steeles and Steve Parkinson were my instructors (good cop/bad cop but both good guys). The introduction was interesting as we (the Firemen) were dropped off with the Rocks and left to their mercy, tried to have us running around with all our kit. Mark Clayton shouted up, "but Corporal, were Firemen". Not sure if that made it better or worse. Oh how we laughed!

I remember fondly being blue lighted to the medical centre with a rather red face when being introduced to wheel brake fires. Words of "encouragement" from Steve to grow a pair and get in there and fight the fire with cries of "but Corporal, there's no water" and Claydo shutting the door on the domestic pump trapping my thumb in the door, with "mild" pain I was actively encouraged to "get on with it". All in all, a great time at Catterick, fondly remembered.

My first posting was to Honington with Tornados, Buccaneers and Hunters along with a Bomb Dump and SSA, nice and busy for my first posting. There were plenty of characters that encouraged much team bonding, as I seem to remember. Oh, beer, lots and lots of beer, smoking, Clag, Chase the Lady, forearm sessions and much more hilarity. Off to St. Athan for my free flow driving course immediately followed by my Tac-Ops course. If I never see St. Athan again it'll be too soon, I enjoyed all aspects of the driving but 17 days jankers and a day locked up in the cells was the determining factor. I had failed to sign on for Duty Runner in time (1 minute late) and failed to turn up for my 3 days jankers (went home) so got locked up and 14 days more jankers. Own goal really!

I was posted to Gutersloh in April 86. Without doubt the best Station, by a Country mile. A superb four years, and I loved every minute of it and would do it all again in a heartbeat. I loved the Harrier Force

"camping" stuff. A massive array of trucks and every conceivable kite there was coming in and out daily. One of the highlights was the rear left wheel falling off the TAR2 whilst hammering down the Autobahn; fortunately we'd just slowed down from "Smiths" to 60mph due to road works. I and Dave Taylor had a long chuckle over that one, nobody hurt but very lucky indeed as it was busy. Another RTA was when we were coming back for Field Deployment. We were in the TACR2 and towing a trailer on the Autobahn when the car in front decided to do a brake test on me, reasons unknown to this day. Probably going too slow for him or he just didn't like the Brits. Anyway, he lost as his Alfa Sud which was somewhat shorter after I rear ended him with the brakes full on (about as much use as a chocolate fire guard with that weight). We had a nasty chip of paint come off of the crash bar, shame. We had a German fireman with us so the Plod had the full picture, which was nice. Having seen many pictures of Gutersloh since its demise, it's a very sad place indeed, a terrible waste.

Next up in May 90 was a posting to Marham. Victor Tankers and Tornados two bomb dumps STCASMSU (some sort of missile servicing Unit) and SSA another very good posting with a lot of great characters also nice and busy. FT1 and GST1 were gained here, I acted up for a few months prior to a posting back to Honington, which sadly ceased as a flying Station and became the RAF Regiment Depot so it went down to a Domestic Unit with a crew of 5 for the SSA. There was not a lot going on so I was glad when my next posting came up in 99 which was to Saxa Vord, the Falklands in the North. What a blast, I was only there for 15 months as the draw-down was announced the day after I arrived. If you like isolation, it's a glorious place to live. A five hour round trip incorporating six short ferry trips just to go to the Co-Op!

Then I was posted to Brize Norton in late 2000, another good tour but thought I'd gone back in time the first time I saw the Fire Section, nothing a bucket of petrol and a match wouldn't cure. That said another good crowd and something different to fast jets with big crews. Got my 3rd at mid-point of the tour post JO2 Exams (Junior Officer 2, FT2 in old money), practical and IMLC (Intermediate Management and Leadership Course, GST2 in old money). The new Fire Station was built whilst I was there, not before time and a good Station.

My last posting (unaware that it would be at the time) was down to Manston on Instructor Duties, Basic Recruit Courses and Refresher

Courses mainly. I moved into 'Exams and Standards' for a while before going into the 'Force Development and Training Department'. It was a very rewarding place to work, in all 3 departments with lots of great characters. It was whilst in 'Exams and Standards' that my career path changed, Sim Nex (top bloke) made me aware of a vacancy for a Station Officer post at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston. I still had 8 years to go for my 30 years' service, however, an interesting challenge. I applied, interviewed, got the job and PVR'd with my last working day in the Royal Air Force on 31st March 2007.

Detachments:

5 x Tours of the Falklands
Machrihanish
Decimomannu
Essex Fire Strike
Londonderry and Belfast – National Fire Strike

Vehicles:

Mk7, MK8, MK9, MK10, MK10A, MK10B, MK11, MK11A, MK12, MFV, RIV, BV206, TACR1, TACR2. And some pretty lame Domestic Pumps.

Oh, MK9 for me, the Daddy though I'm sure all you MK6 boys will think different

Fizzers:

5 x Fizzers
1 day locked in a cell
More white lines painted than the Council
1 x LS&GC Medal

ENDEX, from a Royal Air Force perspective. A great 23 years surrounded by great blokes on great tours. Wouldn't change a minute!

So on to the next phase. It started at AWE Aldermaston as the Station Officer, a complex but interesting place. Things moved quickly at the New CFO (Divisional Officer) left "quickly" with the Deputy being side-tracked elsewhere in the business. I got the tap on the shoulder to fill the void, gulp! 2 x internal interviews to act up for 9 months and required to complete my Group Managers course at the Fire Service College, job done. Next came the interview for the post of CFO with external candidates from Local Authority, I got the nod (not lost on me that I was cheaper but who cares). Both Aldermaston and Burghfield Fire Stations came under my remit now, a great job!

A couple of notable events were the 2010 flooding, Burghfield was built on a flood plain, just where you'd want to build and house Nuclear Weapons, oh dear! The next "good" event was a notable fire in the explosives manufacturing area. That went down well, not. A few minor injuries and

loads of bad press, “the World is nigh” type of stuff from the inaccurate Press. A couple of very interesting Shouts.

Whilst having some inter-service banter with my boss, ex Lt. Col, on his way out he said he didn’t want me looking at the Sellafield CFO Job. Never heard of it, a quick Google at home, Cumbria and the Lake District, what’s not to like, better pay too! Applied, interviewed, I got the job, result. I Started in November 2011, a big place with 25,000 employees and contractors in total. Lots of high hazard, high consequence Nuclear Plants to get my head round. A very well equipped and trained Fire Brigade (as was the AWE Fire Brigade). Spent 5 years as the CFO before thinking, what can I do next when out of the blue an offer appeared? Still with Sellafield Limited but a 3-year secondment to the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO), Paris Centre. My role would be one of a team of 30 personnel carrying out Peer Reviews at Nuclear Power Stations covering a 3-week period. Each Station has a WANO Peer Review every 4 years to review gaps to excellence within specific disciplines; I looked at Fire Protection and Emergency Preparedness. An absolutely superb job and very rewarding and I travelled to Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium Germany, France, UK, Czech Republic China and Pakistan. Nice working with so many nationalities from around the World which opens your eyes in a positive way.

Back at Sellafield now on what may or may not be the last leg of my employment journey. Out of the Fire World, though not completely, I provide oversight for two of the high hazard, high consequence Nuclear Plants whilst keeping an eye on Site-wide Fire Protection measures, Fire Safety, Nuclear Fire Engineering and Fire Response. Whatever the future brings one thing is for sure, to get to where I am today is the result of my 23 years in the Royal Air Force Fire and Rescue Service and standing on the shoulders of giants within the Trade. I’d do it all again and exactly the same way, an absolute blast.

Per Ardua Ad Astr

E Flammis Atque Ruinis Salus

Stay Safe All and may all your careers be what you want from them. If you’re retired, enjoy.

Best Regards

Andy McDonnell Member 823

JUST ARRIVED AT THE OXFORD WAREHOUSE!

Oxford Diecast Ford WOT 1 Crash Tender RAF Bomber Command is now available to purchase.



A	F	T	E	R	S		M	A	S	T	E	R
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CHARACTERS OF THE PAST



*Warrant Officer W.L. Newbold standing in the cab alongside Mr Johnson an Air Ministry Fire Officer.
Hull Daily Mail image.*

Until recent times the highest rank attainable in the RAF Fire Service was that of Warrant Officer. It is fair to say that there have been a few strict disciplinarians amongst those who held that exalted rank, but there were some who more amenable. Ask around among some of the older sweats of the Fire Service and there was a man who literally stood head and shoulders above most, and that man was Warrant Officer Len Newbold. Standing 6ft 5 inches tall he totally dominated all of those came within the sound of his stentorian voice and forceful personality as he stamped his brand of discipline on the Fire School Sutton on Hull. Many trainee firemen will never forget when the Warrant Officer introduced himself to a newly arrived basic course. He would produce a pair of denim overalls with one sleeve missing and then move to the blackboard and draw a picture of a toilet. Turning round, he would fix his eyes on the non plussed airmen and say to one terrified erk 'What do you think that is' 'A toilet sir' would be the meek answer. The thundering reply would be 'No it's not a toilet, it's a shithouse and that is what

all of you will end up cleaning wearing a one sleeved pair of overalls like these if you don't work hard on this course' That was enough to cow any would be slacker amongst the new arrivals.

As if that was not enough for the sprog firemen to put up with, the discip Sergeant was another who was to chase and harry them whenever W/O Newbold didn't and he was Sergeant Smith. That Sergeant was almost as legendary as the Warrant Officer, but as Mr Newbold was remembered in awe and with a grudging hint of respect, Sgt Smith was to be remembered with a great deal of mirth. He was affectionally known as 'Penguin Smith' or 'Get your hair cut Smith' The reasons for these names were; He tended to flap somewhat and was prone to telling trainees to get their hair cut regardless of that most of them wore the crew cut, the hair style of the day.

Tony Eaton

WHO KNEW?

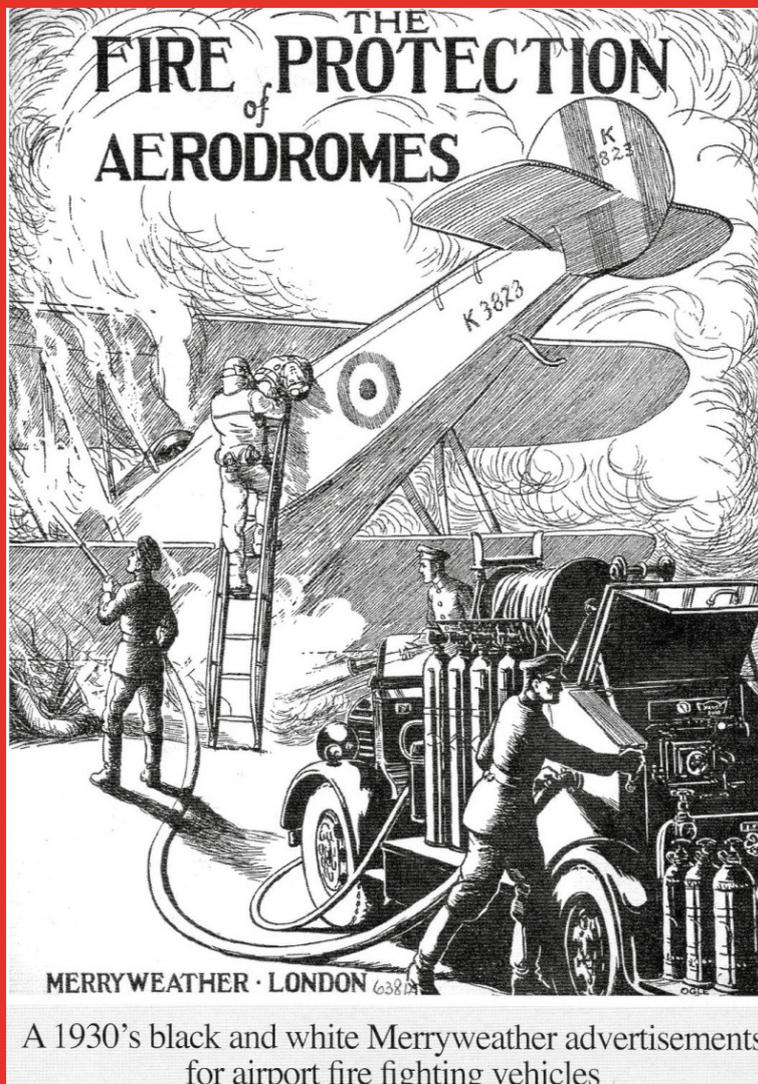
On most RAF wartime stations the Guardroom and the Fire Section shared to same building complex which was usually sited at the main gate. In the Fire Section side of the complex there were accommodation billets, section office, ablutions and a vehicle bay plus a fire extinguisher servicing room. This room was given the official but cryptic name of the E T Room. The E T stood for Early Treatment. The room was for the use of airmen who after a night out and who might have struck lucky with a local beauty to self treat. In the room there was a lavatory, a wash basin, a variety of powders, creams and ointments in tubes or round tins and something resembling a syringe for the self administration of the 'cures' All of this being sanctioned by the SMO. In the late 1950s and with the advancement of treatments of infectious diseases, the E T Room disappeared. The plumbing was ripped out the room redecorated and handed over to the SWO to be used as an equipment store.

The story of Arthur Miller which includes his part in this venture will appear in the next Flashpoint



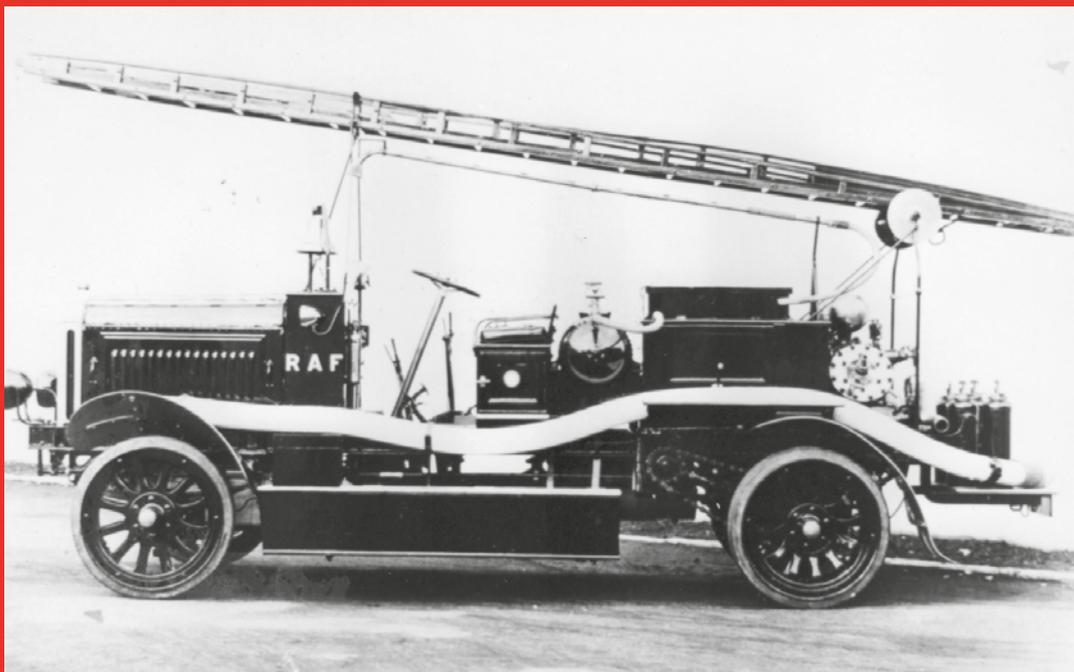
FIRE FIGHTERS: 30 members of the RAF fire-fighting school at Sutton preparing to leave Leconfield to fight forest fires in Les Landes, France, in 1949.

In memory of skies past



A 1930's black and white Merryweather advertisements for airport fire fighting vehicles

This image was reproduced in the Merryweather & Sons. Ltd. book which was a special publication by the Fire Brigade Society, celebrating the Society's 50th anniversary.



A MERRYWEATHER/HATFIELD CONVERSION FOR AIRFIELDS