



FLASHPOINT

ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



IN THIS ISSUE

**MOTORING MAYHEM • BIG AL • CANBERRA'S AGAIN
GRAHAM KENNEDY • THE DESERT DIARIES OF GRAHAM MELLOR
RAF RIYAN • THE LAST TREE STANDING • LIGHTNING MEMORIES
NEW PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT • CLASSIC LAND ROVER GATHERING**

AUTUMN 2021
www.rafanddfsa.co.uk

Who To Contact - Officers and Committee

Patron

Air Marshal Sir Roger Austin KCB AFC RAF (Ret'd)

President

Ron Brown Member 294

38 Sedgebrook, Liden, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3 6EY.

Tel: 01793 496307

Email: brown026@virginmedia.com

Vice – President

Steve Harrison

58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ

Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568

Email silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com

Chairman

Vacant

Vice- Chairman

Howard Harper Member 682

11 Lester Drive, Haddingham,
Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 3BW

Tel: 01353 968061

General Secretary

Mike Clapton Member 704

4 Fairfax Road, Cirencester, Gloucester, GL7 1NF.

Tel: 01285 655314

Email: fire.bucket@btinternet.com

Treasurer

Trevor Hayes

2 Gypsy lane, Hunton Bridge, Kings Langley,
Hertfordshire, WD4 8PR.

Tel: 01923 331975

Email: hayes.trevor425@gmail.com

Membership Secretary

Brian Jones

4 Bluebell Close, Pakefield, Lowestoft,
Suffolk, NR33 7EH

Tel: 01502 567524 / 07772247295

Email: 813jones@talktalk.net

Flashpoint Editor

Reg Metcalfe

18 Pategill Court, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 8LN

Home 01768630339 Mobile. 07548873159

Email: advisorp@btinternet.com

Assistant Flashpoint Editor

Steve Harrison

58 Gospelgate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ

Tel: 01507 355740 / 07949043568

Email silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com

Remembrance Parade Co-ordinator

Paul Murray

Sweet Apple Cottage, 5 Upper Weald, Calverton,
Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK 19 6EL

Tel: 01908 261254 / 07866 940689

Email: pmurr7753@gmail.com

Web Master

Dave Kirk

1 Fyling Road, North Yorkshire, YO21 3NA

Tel: 01947 604613

Email: webmaster@rafanddfs.co.uk

AREA CO-ORDINATORS

The Co-Ordinators Committee Member

Vacant

Lincolnshire

Steve Harrison

58 Gospel Gate, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9JZ

Tel: 01507 355740

Email: silverfoxy2k@hotmail.com

Cornwall, Devon & Somerset

Terry Mortimore

32 Newbridge, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3LX

Tel:

Email: terry_mortimore@yahoo.com

North West & Wales

Vacant

North

Robert Atkinson Member 108

4 Fairway, Stella Park, Blaydon, Tyne and Wear, NE21 4LL

Tel: 0191 4148176

Norfolk

Vacant

RAF

Steve Shirley MBE Grad I Fire E

16 Rutland Way, Scampton, Lincoln, LN1 2UJ

Tel: 07912 658402

Email: steve.shirley@firemuseum.uk

South

John Hurl

34 Copt Elm Close, Charlton King, Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire, GL53 8AE.

Tel: 01242 522503

London

Vacant

Scotland

Alec Robertson

12 Kinclavin Crescent, Murthly, Perth, PH1 4EU.

Tel: 01738 710487

Cambridge & Suffolk

Vacant

Northern Ireland

Kenneth Green

2 Brooklands Drive, Whitehead, Carrickfergus, Antrim,
Northern Ireland.

Tel: 01960 372595

Essex

Vacant

Front cover

Fire Training, old school, RAF Khormaksar

Well folks here we are again back at the helm of our fantastic magazine and hub of our Association, without which there would be no association. The main problem when I was editor last time was lack of content or the promise of a story which never came to fruition. I ask you all to dig deep and get your content to me.

My main worry is that many of our members are over 50 and that we have no younger members to carry the association on. I'm guessing they may think it's an old man's club. Well, I for one used to think that. My first AGM was at Grantham, and yes, the majority were over 50. The thing is those guys (me included) have so many tales that they love to share and I for one love listening and sharing precious time with them. So please ask the young ones if you know any to join the association.

One good thing that happened to me this year is that someone put a picture of an RAF Fire Service plaque on Fb as someone on eBay was selling it. This plaque was hand painted and, on the back, it had a list of RAF Stations and JR Yates. Straight away I thought of legend most of us know as Brum Yates or Chiefy Yates. Anyway, I contacted Brum and we had a cracking conversation. It turns out that Brum made the Plaque on his second tour at Honington. So, Dave Kirk had asked the seller if we could have it to give to its rightful owner but that was not to be. Well, the only option was to bid for it for Brum. I stuck £99-99 on as my highest bid and paid no where near that. This is fantastic as it brought the two of us together after 24 years. More importantly Brum and said plaque are now together.

Right, you lot that live up north. My friend Hilary, the Verger of Catterick Garrison Churches, runs a Veterans Café in St Aidans Church Hall every Thursday from 1730 and 1930. Don't worry that its in a Church Hall as its nothing at all to do with religion



unless of course you want it to be. Plenty of the lads are already coming along so please come and support us. Its already turned in to an RAF Fire Service Cafe.

I would like to give Silver Fox a big thank you for the support he has given me and for all the support he doesn't realise that he is going to give me in the future. Thanks Steve for your support with Flashpoint and also for being there marra.

*Stay safe all and best wishes`
Reg*

Mike Hunter

I first met Mike Hunter in 1963 when he was the Station Fire Officer Grade III at RAF Topcliffe in Yorkshire with a brief to oversee nearby RAF Leeming where I was based. In fact the first time that he visited the station it was to have a one sided conversation with an over bearing leading fireman. Mike had a practical outlook to fire fighting and his pet saying was, "I haven't a clue about a BTHU but show me a fire and I'll soon put the (expletive deleted) out.

Mike's story began in the 1930s when he joined the RAF and trained to be a Cranwell fireman. He progressed through the ranks finally attaining the rank of warrant officer. One of his many overseas tours in the mid 1950s took him to Akrotiri in Cyprus in where he was the senior fire officer for all units. His tour of duty coincided with the rise of the terrorist organisation EOKA and when all servicemen were always in constant

danger of being shot at or attacked with bombs. Despite the terror, the families of servicemen were never considered to be legitimate targets and as such they could travel around freely.

One day Mike was taking his daughter to school by car when he was flagged down by two Cypriots and as Mike slowed the car two men drew their revolvers and fired three shots. Two of the shots missed but the third grazed Mike's cheek and nose. Mike seizing his service revolver returned the fire and missed the gunmen but succeeded in shooting a passing Greek civilian and like he was, managed only to graze the man. By then the two gunmen had run off into the crowd. Mike found out later that one of the gunmen was none other than Nicos Samson a notorious EOKA terrorist who up to that time had shot and killed 21 British servicemen. Warrant Officer Hunter was the first serviceman to survive an

assassination attempt by Samson. As a result of Mike's report, Nicos Samson was captured and gaoled.

Mike Hunter resigned from the AMFS 1971 and took holy orders and became a vicar within the Church of England. It was while he was conducting a local funeral service that I met up with him again, I was driving the hearse. It was then I asked him about the Cyprus episode and that is when he told me his story. Mike was as earthy as a vicar in his outlook as he was while in the RAF Fire Service.

He was given the Parish of Thornton le Moor near Northallerton. After about a year his church literally fell down, not due to a storm but to its inherent instability. From then he ministered as roving vicar until his retirement.

Anonymous



**David Frost
Member 479**

From David's Wife Barbara

David died on 12th May from prostate and bladder cancer. David was 88 years old and served in the fifties and sixties.

He joined the Association on 20th Jan 2000 and was married to Barbara for 15yrs.

**Albert Gosnall
Member 792**

Albert died on 7th February, and his funeral was held on 17th. He died of cancer and other complications. Albert was an RAF Corporal Fireman stationed at Tangmere among other places and later a Leading Fireman in Cheshire Fire Service.

**Richard Duncan
Member 734**

His Son, Scott wrote:

This morning I said goodbye to my father Richard Duncan, or as a few of you will remember him Dickie Duncan. Dad had been fighting vascular dementia for over the past 16 months, during which time we saw his health slowly deteriorating along with loss of his mobility, Despite that he was a fighter to the end. I was lucky enough to follow him into the Fire Service, and those who knew him always had good things to say about their time working alongside my father. During his 22 years in the RAF Dickie served at Leuchars, Singapore, Malta, Hong Kong, Kinloss, Gütersloh and Belize amongst others and as son I could not be more proud of him. Unfortunately, I missed him passing away before I could get to him. He was a devoted Elvis follower, and so it was very fitting that at the time he passed away, burning love by Elvis was being played on radio 2.

RIP Dickie

*Proud and exhausted the lads stand
a welcome brew clasped in hand
Proudly worn on the sleeve of coats
their formal badge denotes.....*

So, it's time again to say farewell to our departed firefighting brothers. Below the friends we have lost, may they rest in peace, Per ardua ad astra

**Jim Bloom
Member 1063**

From Michael (Nobby) Clark

Sad news I'm afraid Jim passed away on Friday the 16 July at 2020 hrs, he died peacefully with his family around him, in St Barnaba's Hospis. A couple of weeks ago I had a very long conversation with Jim at his request, he made it quite clear that he did not want any sort of ceremony at his funeral, just his close family, his actual words were no flags or medals etc, he meant no disrespect to the association or his service colleges. Although Silvia has said since then she would like it to be published in a Flashpoint.

**Malcolm Sandford
Member 786**

Malcolm died on Saturday 17th July of heart failure after being unwell for two years and undergoing lots of surgery during that time.

From: Lorraine Smith

**Graeme Smith
Member 1117**

It is with deep sorrow I inform you of the passing of my beloved husband William Graeme Smith on the 27/07/2021 after a long brave fight with the big C. During his service career he was known as Bill or Jock.

Graeme signed up in the Royal Air Force Fire Service in 1967 for 13 years, and served at the following stations, RAF Lindholme, RAF El Adem, RAF Kinloss, RAF Wildenrath (Harrier Force), RAF St Mawgan, RAF Buchan and RAF Catterick (Fire Fighting and Special Safety Squadron).

The position that he truly loved and made him the proudest he ever felt in his service was when he applied for and was selected to be an instructor at Catterick in 1977. During his time he trained over one

hundred new firemen and was extremely honoured that he had been given the opportunity. During Graeme's last couple of years he was in contact with some of his lads on Facebook and it gave him great satisfaction to see how well they had done for themselves both in the RAF and Civvy Street. He must have got something right, and they did too.

Last year we were fortunate enough to visit the Museum of RAF Firefighting at Scunthorpe for their last open day and it turned out to be very emotional for both of us. It started as soon as we arrived at the hotel with the guys that were there coming up and introducing themselves, 40 years just melted away for him. When all the firemen gathered for the photograph with the truck the smiles on their faces said it all. It was not the only time I cried that weekend. He had tried to explain to me about the brotherhood of RAF Firemen but I had never understood it till then.

Thank you to everyone that came and spoke to both of us it meant so much.

Once an RAF Fireman always an RAF Fireman. Graeme's words not mine.

Thank you to my daughter Tracy, son in law Craig and granddaughter Natalie for helping me with this.

Dave Fitch

From: David McKeown

On Sunday 4th July, I received the very sad news from Helen Fitch, that after a long illness David Fitch had passed away. Dave was an ex-RAF Fire Service Flight Sergeant well liked and respected by those who served with him.

I had the great honour of being one of the Pall Bearers for Dave along with Danny Foster, Clwyd Jones, Alex Aitken, Dave Grundy and Bryn Williams MBE. It was a good attendance by Dave's brothers. Apart from the above the following were in attendance:

Barry Purdy, Kenny Purvis, Dave Ayles, Simon Mitchell and David McKeown.

It certainly was a proud experience for all of us. Carrying Dave out to the hearse to the sound of the RAF March Past brought tears to all our eyes.

Far too many brothers passing to the Crash Line in heaven. We shall all meet one day especially for me, if there was a Mk7 for me to play with.

Rest in Peace and God Bless you all



L to R

Alex Aitken, Clwyd Jones, Dave Grundy, Bryn Williams MBE, Dave McKeown, Simon Mitchell, Kenny Purvis, Dave Ayles, Reg Metcalfe, Danny Foster and Barry Purdy



HELLO TO NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to James Clark 1154, Tony (La La) La Planche and to re-joining member Clive Winnett. As numbers dwindle it is always good to see new and "Old Faces"

A Jim Bloom Tale

Jim recently passed away, which saddened me greatly as he was a good friend over the years, but I will always remember him with a smile. Jim was a great character and always good for laugh, but he was a good fire-fighter and had a serious side when the situation demanded it. One of my favourite memories was when we attended the Fire Prevention Course in 1980 together along with Dave Jowett, who else I cannot remember.

At the time my car was a Sunbeam Rapier Fastback that I had bought off Terry Tait while serving at Laarbruch

and I was still running it. (I should have had the foresight to keep it- a classic now) Previously I had trouble with fuel starvation and it was, as it turned out the lining from the fuel tank breaking up and coming down the fuel line. But I managed to struggle down to Manston.

Having told my tales of woe on arrival, there was a suggestion that there was a motor club on site (which most stations had in those days) and it could be fixed over the weekend at the motor club. So the tank was taken out and I think it was Dave who said we will burn it out and that should get rid of the problem

after a flushing out. So Dave set fire to the tank via a taper, but the tank was empty, consequently the vapours ignited went up in the air about eight feet, to the astonishment of us all, and we all just creased up with laughter. This has remained in my memory since then and made a very boring course very interesting. (RAF Fire-Fighters on Fire Prevention Course what else would you expect!!)

*God bless you Jim
Steve Harrison*





I passed out of RAF Sutton-On-Hull as a newly qualified fireman in the spring of 1959, and was posted to RAF Weeton where I was to attend a driving course. I was just 19 at the time, but despite that I already held a driving licence and had driven lorries prior to my National Service call-up.

My instructor at Weeton was Cpl Goode, who I met up with again in Sharjah. We got on well and I picked up one or two useful points from him along the way. Whilst at Weeton I also decided to get my first car. I borrowed £40 off my then girl friend (we had been saving up prior to call-up), and bought a 1937 Rover. At this time I was pally with an Irish lad (Paddy) and thanks to his organisation, he and I went out with a couple of nurses. Unfortunately, every time we managed to get them in the car the back tyre kept going flat, so I decided to look for another car.

We were hunting for new wheels in Blackpool, and Paddy was nowhere to be seen while I was looking at a nice Standard 9. Just then though, Paddy came running round the corner shouting "Come and look at this Barrie!". When I got round the corner there was a 1937 Buick 30. 9HP with spare wheels in each mudguard.

Paddy looked at me and said "We could have some fun with this"

To which I replied "What happens when we are posted?"

He said he'd buy it off me. The dealer than asked what car I had and when I pointed to the Rover he said "Tell you what I'll do, - a straight swap."

"There you are" sez Paddy, "it won't cost you anything!"

Having completed the transaction we headed to a fuel station in the new vehicle and I filled her with £5 worth of petrol, which was all I had at the time. Imagine my face when I saw that the fuel gauge

needle barely moved! The Buick had eight cylinders, a foot starter, and only a six volt battery to turn it all.

Anyway, the course eventually finished and we had to parade outside the cinema to get our warrants. Looking around, I could not see Paddy anywhere, and when I enquired some of the lads told me that he had taken off with a nurse the night before. So there I was stuck with this big car, hardly any money, and posted to RAF Buchan, up in the back of beyond North of Aberdeen!

That Saturday morning, having used all my money on fuel, I set off dressed in my best blue on the long road north. Later that day, somewhere in the middle of nowhere, steam started coming out of the bonnet, so I pulled over to have a look. As I was making my inspection an AA Man on a motorcycle and sidecar came over the hill. He stopped and asked me if I was in the AA, and when I said "no" he promptly started up and left me. After I while I found an empty bottle, which I filled from a stream and I used it to top up the radiator and consequently managed get back on the move again.

I later picked up an RAF lad who was hitch-hiking to Perth, and we had fish and chips together when I dropped him off. It was getting dark by now, and shortly after setting off from Perth the car began to shudder and jerk, so I pulled onto the grass verge, realising that I had run out fuel. Fortunately, I had a gallon can of petrol on board for just such an emergency. Normally, to start the car I used to take off the air filter and pour petrol into the air intake. It would then just be a matter of pumping the accelerator, pressing the starter button and away she would go. However, this time it didn't work, so I'm stood there at the side of the road and by now I'm starting to panic a bit. After a little thought I decided the only thing I could do would be to ring the RAF Station, so

I started walking back the way I'd come until I reached a bungalow, and knocked on the door. The lady who answered the door told me she didn't have a telephone but there was an old gentleman a bit further back did, so I started walking again. When I reached his house I told hem what had happened, and asked to use his phone. He told me not to worry, adding that he would get his garage to come out to me. Again feeling a sense of panic I informed him I had no money, only my 1250, but he told me to go back to the car and wait, which I did.

After a short wait an Austin 10 arrived on the scene, and again I explained what had happened and that I had no money. We tried pouring the rest of the fuel into the air intake but still it would not start, so the mechanic said he would tow me into Brechin. Looking at the size of his car compared to the Buick I told him he must be joking, but he assured me it was just round the corner and downhill all the way. Next, the tow rope broke but despite that we managed to push the car back onto the road and tried again. By this time it was getting late, and as we approached the garage I saw it was all shut up. There was a chap stood outside with his arms folded looking none too happy, but the mechanic had a word with him and he asked me how much fuel I needed. Again I explained I had no money and was trying to get to RAF Buchan where I was posted to. He told the mechanic to put eight gallons in, after which he jumped in with me helped me start the car, before proceeding to give me directions. I thought we were going to a police station but when he told me to stop and follow him it turned out to be his house. I could not believe my luck when he then put me up for the night, gave me breakfast and put me back on the road telling me to send the money for the petrol when I got paid. I arrived at RAF Buchan at 2:30 on Sunday afternoon.

At Buchan, us fireman lived with the fire piquet, and by this time I'd decided to sell the car. One of the fire piquet was a chap called Paul Alierno, a Greek Cypriot and a weight lifter. He asked me how much I wanted for the car and I said £40.

"I can't give you it all now," he said, "but I can give you £20 up front,"

I agreed to that on the condition that I would keep the log book until such time as the full price was paid.

About three days later an RAF Police Sergeant came in and said the local police wanted to speak to me. A detective asked me if I owned the Buick, and I explained that I had sold it but was keeping the log book in lieu of full payment. On hearing this the detective came up close to me and whispered in my ear.

“If I were you son, I would give him the log book.”

So I did.

It later transpired that Paul had no license or insurance and that the police had already done him once before for doing the same thing with a motor cycle. Furthermore, I later found out that he had driven the Buick over the cliffs and into the sea!

Author’s note:

I was promoted to LAC on my posting to Buchan where on arrival I found there were two other firemen, Geordie Hall who was a Drum Major, and Al Stewart. Our boss was Sergeant Banks, a Jamaican chap who we called Monty, because he always walked with his hands behind his back like General Montgomery. Our kit consisted of an old Bedford Water Bowser and a trailer pump, and as I was the only driver it always puzzled me as to what happened when I went on leave.

I must have upset Monty at some stage as he would not let me take my SAC exam, so in January 1960 I did an exchange posting to Marham.

I vividly remember my arrival at Marham; it was a Thursday and I sought out the OIC, WO McCrann.

“LAC Trueman reporting for duty Sir” sez I; trying to make an impression.

The WO looked me up and down before saying dryly:

“You see that door behind you? It’s open, so fuck off out of it and don’t come back until Monday.”

Barrie Trueman



*Barrie Trueman & Geordie Hall
Manning the Bedford*



*Barrie Trueman & Geordie Hall
Soda Acid Pose*



*Barrie Trueman & Geordie Hall
Buchan Fire Section*



My first posting as an RAF Fireman in 1977, following square bashing at RAF Swinderby and Trade Training at RAF Catterick, was to RAF Scampton, at that time home to a couple of Vulcan Bomber and Hasting Transporter squadrons.

Only a few short years previously my family been stationed there, Dad John then a CPL, my Mum Vera and younger sister Julie. I had been a Patch Brat and gone to the school opposite the guard room, the wing of the gate guard WW2 Lancaster Bomber overhanging the playground. I wasn't to know at that time but I was nearly to achieve where the Germans failed in destroying the same Lancaster a few years later. I had scumped apples from the officers' quarters and gotten up to mischief all over the camp with other kids, often being chased by, and been too quick for the RAF Police (Snowdrops) to catch.

On joining up I had learnt some valuable lessons from Dad such as "do what you're told", "keep your eyes open and mouth shut", "Corporals and Sergeants are always right", "make plenty of tea", "don't get caught". "never volunteer" and "always keep a sense of humour". Unfortunately, Dad didn't pass on "use your common sense".

The CPL in charge of one of my very first domestic shifts was a smashing bloke, Big AL. Well over 6ft, built like a Crash Bay door with hands the size of a NAAFI tea tray, easy going, and good sense of humour, fair minded and luckily for me, the patience of a saint.

That night as we snuggled under RAF issue itchy grey blankets, the crew began to tell me stories of ghostly goings on around the camp but in particular in the Fire Section itself and the adjacent Air Traffic Control tower (ATC). I never slept a wink as the rest by now snored loudly nearby. In the early hours I nearly screamed when I saw the creepy figure cast on the dormitory ceiling of the devil himself and a wolf like creature. I only realised when I heard "sit Trojan" that it was a police dog and handler patrolling nearby, their shadow cast by the sodium

light on the end of the watch-room wall.

I was out of bed and on my feet having bounced off the ceiling when the phone next to Big AL loudly rang a few hours later. AL was answering "yes, no problem, will do", put the phone down and looked around for a volunteer. The rest of the crew had slipped further under their blankets and melted into the bed springs knowing that a call in the early hours was never good news. Pea soup fog had descended over the whole airfield and the Snowdrops had asked could we put the taxiway lights on to prevent their roving patrols from getting lost in the mire.

I soon discovered that I had made the cardinal sin of being in the right place at the wrong time, or as they say volunteered by default, by now standing at the foot of AL's bed. I questioned why it should be me sent on this dastardly task and AL being a fair man said we would play a game to decide who should go. We played Eeny Meeny Miny Moe but the bit I don't remember ever playing at in the school playground not a mile down the road was the ending finishing in Eeny Meeny Miny Moe I've got two stripes now off you go. Big AL thrust a BA torch and the spare ATC keys into my hands and gave me a gentle shove with his foot towards the Tower. With stories of ghosts and ghouls foremost in my mind and with words of encouragement from my crew mates, I cautiously made my way to the front door, the Tower resembling a spooky mansion appearing through the swirling fog.

After dropping the keys several times because of shaking hands, I managed to find the right one and gingerly stepped inside. I crept up the first flight of stairs when like all BA torches it went flat; I was left in pitch dark, every shadow now about to jump out at me.

Only after several steps did I realise that the footsteps behind me was the echo of my own yet to be worn in squeaky crash boots on the highly polished floor. I inched my way further up the steps and nearly died as I rounded a corner and saw the figure of a crashed WW2

pilot, it was in fact an upturned floor mop in a galvanised bucket standing upright next to an airman's rain coat on a nearby hook. The smell that seemed to permeate the building was I discovered later coming from me – fear I can assure you is brown.

I eventually, and to me, bravely made my way into the Tower and found the correct light panel. I had remembered from my recent induction training by ATC Staff that the lights needed to be switched on in a certain sequence, or what was known as "pulsed in" which was to prevent overloading the electrical circuits.

I was really pleased with myself as the correct blue coloured taxiway lights appeared out of the gloom. I should have left it there and walked away but my undeveloped common sense kicked in. I spied the big red Crash Phone on the main console and thought it would be a hoot to give my unsympathetic and by now snoring colleagues a rude awakening.

I chuckled to myself as I heard the unmistakable AOoo AHhh sound of the crash alarm blaring out in the Fire Section next door. My smug smile began to wane as red indicator lamps began to illuminate in front of me as the phones were answered. "Guardroom here", "Medical Centre", "Ops Room", "Police" and the unmistakable voice of BigAL "Fire Section here". I had, it seemed rudely awoken half of the camp deep in slumber as there was no flying operations due to the bad weather. I made some feeble excuse of having knocked the phone off its cradle in the dark, hurriedly replaced the handset and scurried back towards the Fire Section.

Silhouetted in the doorway looming out of the fog waiting for my return, was the unmistakable figure of Big AL. I was assisted inside by him grabbing me by my ill-fitting and thankfully oversized crash jacket leaning me up the side of a crash truck. If the lads in the vehicle museum ever come across an old MK9 with an indent of a skinny LAC in it - that's me.

Big AL was no fool he knew exactly what

I had done (but couldn't prove it), and had also realised that I had agreed to babysit for him and his wife the very next night. As he pondered what punishment I should receive and with my oxygen supply quickly running out I managed to wriggle free. Like Snowdrops had failed to catch me as a kid, my speed, cunning and agility enabled me to avoid AL for the rest of the shift.

He was still muttering about it as I went round to his house to begin babysitting his baby son so he and his lovely wife could have a rare night out together. His face was a picture as she held me to her chest, stroked my cheek and told him to leave me alone. I swear steam came out of his ears when she kindly opened one of his beers and thrust it into my hand, and he was positively apoplectic when she produced a plate of lovely food for me to eat.

AL had just about forgiven me when a few days later we received a call to a fire outside the Guardroom. This was my first real fire so I was keen to impress everyone, but most of all get back into Big AL's good books.

As we neared the incident in a MK9 AL turned, pointed a massive finger at me and said something about a monitor.

I carried out what I thought I heard to the letter, using the foam monitor at maximum revs I blasted a three wheeled Robin Reliant car with an engine fire from the roadway outside of the guardroom 20ft across the road, it came to a stop under the wing of the up to then unaffected gate guard Lancaster, but both now smothered under a huge blanket of steam and foam.

I was still gleefully giving the throttle full wellie when out of my right eye I saw Big AL appear looking like the abominable snowman, giving me hand-signals not found in any Manual of Firemanship or the AP957. From my left eye I caught sight of the Station Warrant Officer (SWO) at the Guardroom door oddly jumping up and down on his peaked cap, mistaking his waving fist as a sign of encouragement.

By now cross-eyed, I saw my crew mates looking back at me, their mouths wide opening the middle of the road poised near where the fire once stood with a hose-reel branch, albeit nothing but a trickle of water coming out of the nozzle. I managed a nervous gulp before using my overly large crash jacket; Big AL assisted me (one handed) from my lofty monitor position and brought me to earth with a bump. Well, it was a splash actually which didn't help. I dug a deeper hole for myself by remembering one of Dads snippets of advice "always keep a sense of humour". I foolishly tittered as more foam splashed over AL and trickled off the end of his nose.

To my eternal thanks my crew mates rushed to my aid and prised AL's fingers from around my throat. I had done what I thought I was told, "monitor". My mistake was not listening to the full set of orders given to me by AL or listen in to what he told the rest of the crew – "Dave you deploy upwind, engage the PTO then assist John on the branch. John, you run out the hose reel and extinguish the fire, be prepared with a foam branch if necessary, Mick – You get in the monitor hatch operate the controls to the hose-reel and foam branch if required". I of course focused on the word "monitor".

I don't remember the size of Big AL's crash boots but I should. I felt them in the seat of my (thankfully) oversized crash kit pants for the rest of the afternoon as we cleaned up foam from the roadway and the Lancaster under the beady eye of the raging SWO.

I was beginning to learn though, noticing that the usually immaculately turned out SWO was improperly dressed, I thought about retrieving his crumpled sodden cap from a puddle of foam and giving it back to him. Seeing his crimson face and gnashing teeth made me realise I wasn't as brave as I thought I was.

AL was about to read me the riot act back at the Fire Section, when I reminded him that I was again due the babysit, and that I would of course tell his lovely wife he was still picking on me. Another caring stroke from his wife and several of AL's

cold beers was just what I needed.

Poor AL was by now beginning to get a twitch whenever we were on duty together, rather like Chief Inspector Dreyfus in the Pink Panther films. So, to get a little respite AL readily agreed to let someone stand-in for me for a couple of hours on a week-end night shift. One of the older lads was getting married and I was invited to the wedding. As the day progressed some of my off-duty crew mates rang on my behalf to ask if I could attend the reception to be held in a nearby Greek Taverna. AL kindly agreed but, on the proviso I didn't drink, and was to be on duty no later 21:00.

At 23:30 on the dot I appeared in the Fire Section mess room doorway swaying from side to side. fully dressed in crash kit, but with a white carnation in my top button hole, beret on back to front, trouser braces dragging on the floor carrying an empty bottle of the very potent alcoholic Greek drink Ouzo. Although to be fair, most of it was soaked into the front of my baggy string vest and long-johns.

Big AL, now resembling a wet start on a Fighter engine or DP2 diesel spluttering into action on a cold morning, smoke coming from every orifice, cleared the table and chairs in the mess room in one stride and grabbed me again by my still oversized crash jacket, only this time I'd been too drunk to zip it up and slithered out of it onto the floor. "What have you got to say for yourself" was about the gist of what I think he was saying? "Do you want me to babysit Saturday?" was about the only legible words I could string together at that particular vital moment.

AL, bless you I learnt a lot from you about how to get the best out of your blokes. I did learn from my mistakes I promise, and throughout my career in the RAF Fire Service and in Local Authority Fire Service remembered to treat all Numpties like me with the same understanding and compassion you had shown me, especially those I wanted to babysit for me.

*Mick Goupillot
Member 359*

Canberra's again

Here I am in 1971 January Tour ex From Sunny Malta getting ready to head back to Blighty Posted to RAF Cottesmore nr Oakham, well almost as just before my return flight I ended up in Imtarfa Royal Navy Hospital near Medina due to my legs being rearranged and beauty treatment to my Ribs and Jaw being carried out when out and about celebrating by a few local Beauticians.

My Tour had now ended, and I had to wait for a Aero Med flight home as the original flight the Skipper said No to me flying in plaster casts, so I got an extra fortnight on the lovely Island spent in RAF Luqa Sick quarters ward.

Eventually I got back to Wroughton Hospital and had a little work done on the knees got 10 days leave at home then had to report to Cottesmore, were I was met by F./Sgt Jim Dimmick NCO i/c Fire Section a pleasant fella and I got off on wrong foot and called him chief were he promptly pointed out the crown above his tapes and said "do you see a propeller son I do not fix aeroplanes I sort out fire crews, do we understand each other" Of course I then said yes Flight, but he took it ok.

I was placed on Sgt Ken Burt's crew with Norman Harrogate, Colin Cutler, Tom Forry, Del Simpson, Pete Broadly and Cpl Bill Thompson, the crash line consisted of

ACRT 1, Mk6, 1 Mk5a, 1 DPII, and a 1 DPI., The section was a 2 bay with watch room office and crew room with a caravan for duty domestic crew sleeping area and fire piquet after cease flying.

The Aircraft at Cottesmore 1971 were 3 Sqn's of Canberra's 98-360 and 231OCU

And of course, the Argosy's of 115 Flt checkers.

Not long after my arrival Fs Dimmick was posted and his replacement was F/Sgt Ken Stangoe followed closely by Sgt Eddie Worrel a few of the Old hands were demobbed

Pete Broadly and Norman Harrogate during this time 1972 and I qualified as a Mk6 driver.

A new Fire section was constructed near the Hangars and electronics building a purpose built 4 Bay with Dormitory at the rear store room Crew area showers and changing room at the front a watch room with an overall view of the airfield and of course the F/Sgt office attached.

Crash 1	Crash 2	Crash 4	Crash 3	Crash 5
ACRT	Mk6	DPII	Mk8	DP I
Sac Ewing	Cpl Fielding	Sac Caulfield	Sgt McCamley	Un manned
Lac Hayes	Sac Magee		Sac Barley	
	Sac Doolin		Sac Telfer	

Also, at this time a few new faces started to arrive Cpl Mick Fielding LAC Steve Hayes SAC's Steve Barley, Billy Robb, Andy Doolin, LAC Ian Symes, Peter Caulfield and Clive Bunting on his second tour, Sac Dan McGee, Sgt's John McCamley and Joe Smart appeared, with Sac Len Mooney re enlisting.

Life was going along nicely no accidents or anything untoward just visits from AOC's viewing the New Section, Then the dreaded Mk8 arrived replaced the Mk5a.

The rest of that year it was peaceful the odd chimney fire car incidents and wash downs the old Bomb scares of course, it wasn't until 1973 that things started to go wrong, we had 1 Canberra crash 3 miles from Runway 22 in to woods and the crew managed to eject safely

Then During the year night flying increased it at this time we had another Canberra crash near Woodbine Farm, North Witham, 1.5 miles NE of Cottesmore, Rutland at 23:00Hrs last aircraft of the night.

The crew then was NCO I/c Cpl Mick Fielding

I was sitting in Crash 1, my leg between the door and windscreen enjoying the peace when the klaxon crash alarm sounded, and Cpl Fielding (Mick) shouted out to me a Canberra has crashed 2 SOB on approach. Young Lac Steve Hayes jumped in and away we went racing off the airfield via crash gate 1 on the Greetham side, Heading out to the A1 North everything going through our heads Steve charged the Powder system on route we soon turned off the A1 on the slip turned right under the bridge and the Crash site was just on the right behind the Fox Inn, On arrival we just went into auto mode cut a path into the

cockpit to find both crew had ejected, and this point the Combine arrived and extinguished the remaining fires, then during the operations the Mk 8 with Sgt McCamley, Sac's Steve Barley and John Telfer appeared on site coming in from off duty to assist, a search commenced for the Aircrew, The Navigator, he was located in the Fox receiving help and refreshments, as Sgt McCamley and myself and the SMO set about searching for the Pilot and unfortunately located him in a field 200 yards from the impact area the S.M.O. checked the Pilot and unfortunately there was nothing that could be done. The area was cordoned off. the Lincolnshire Police started to carry out further searches as the aircraft had ended up over the Lincolnshire Border. The Pilot (26yrsof age) was removed from his ejection seat and taken to RAF Medical Centre Spittlegate near Grantham.

It was well into the night when we got stood down (Mick) Cpl Fielding and SAC Steve Barley stayed on as Crash guard with the Mk 8, the remaining crews with Sgt McCamley went back the Fire Section and replenished the appliances, I still taste the dry powder, The "Dustbin Detectives" RAF Police called asking why we didn't lock the crash gate after us they couldn't find the lock.

All said and done the crew acted professional throughout the incident and I feel we all learnt something to carry



The Fox Inn on the A1 south Crash site was 300yds to the right of this. In Morkery Lane

us through our careers. The then Chief Constable of Lincolnshire told the Station commander that he thought his people were professional but the Fire crew attending that night were so above his people and could not commend us high enough, I was proud to have been a small part of that.

This shows the crash site and the route that crash 1 took to the scene marked in yellow

The square above the impact area is the fox inn, the route Crash 2 Crash 3 and 4 took along the Thistleton road to left of airfield then Mill lane high street coming along Broadgate to scene.

Member 321 Bob Ewing

A Brief account of the Accident

Narrative:

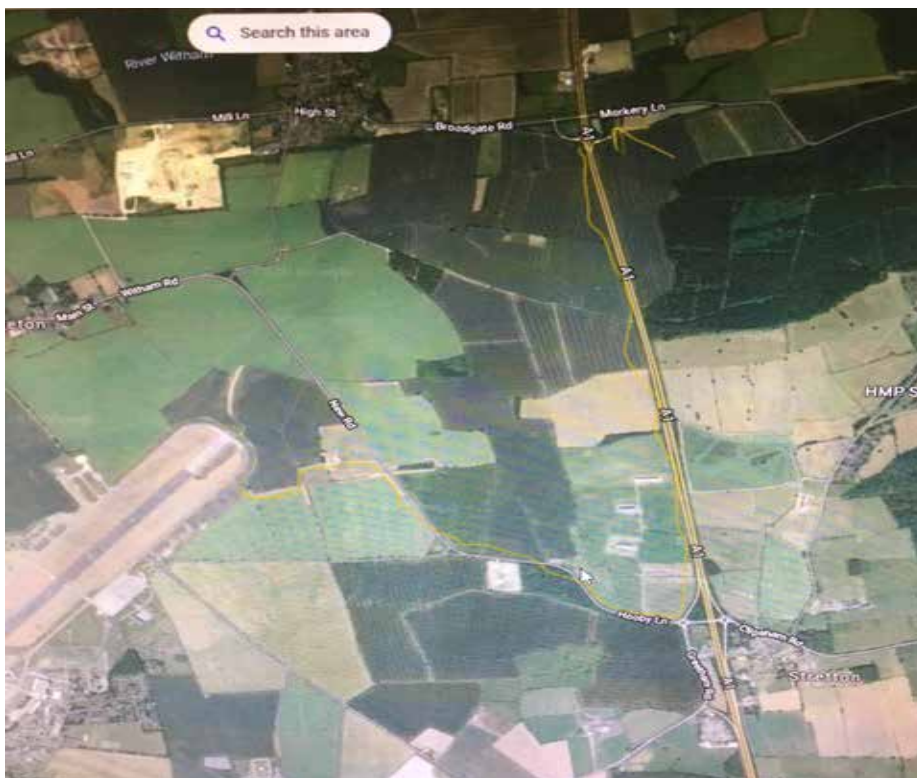
Written off 2/8/1973: Yawed during a practice asymmetric approach to RAF Cottesmore, Leicestershire. The crew ejected, the aircraft crashed into a field off the A1 road, east of The Fox public house, near Woodbine Farm in North Witham parish, one and a half miles north east of RAF Cottesmore. The pilot's chute did not deploy, and he was killed. Pilot later named as Flt. Lt. D.J. Dennis. Flt. Lt. T.M. Murray (Navigator).



Per eyewitness report: "I was a rigger on 231 OCU at that time, from memory it was a Staff Navigator (Max M ?) whom I seem to recall felt the aircraft roll and buffet - then called 'eject' to the student. He thought the pilot had ejected safely and I think landed near the 'The Fox' on the A1 and 'popped in' for a drink (who could blame him?) Unfortunately, the aircraft had either rolled too far or was too low for a safe ejection for the pilot, comparatively slow ejection sequence on a Canberra. We were all absolutely gutted by it."

And another eyewitness account:

"I was a member of the crash and smash team from 71 MU, RAF Bicester that recovered the remains of Canberra WJ674 (231 OCU) in early Aug 73. It came to rest in a field just east of the A1 on the approach to RAF Cottesmore. We had to dig up the engines as they were completely buried

Member 321 Bob Ewing



Date:	02-AUG-1973
Time:	
Type:	
Owner/operator:	English Electric Canberra B.2 231 Operational Conversion Unit Royal Air Force (231 OCU RAF)
Registration:	WJ674
C/n / msn:	HP218B
Fatalities:	Fatalities: 1 / Occupants: 2
Other fatalities:	0
Aircraft damage:	Written off (damaged beyond repair)
Location:	near Woodbine Farm, North Witham, 1.5 miles NE of Cottesmore, Rutland -  United Kingdom
Phase:	Approach
Nature:	Military
Departure airport:	RAF Bassingbourn, Cambridgeshire
Destination airport:	RAF Cottesmore, Leicestershire (EGXJ)

Member No 10 – Graham Kennedy



Graham Kennedy was a founding member of the RAF & Defence Fire Services Association and a close friend of past Presidents Keith Penfold and Dennis McCann. Sadly, he died in August of this year but since then it has come to light that Graham had started to write his RAF memoirs. Despite not being complete, his jottings give us an insight into what life was like in the RAF Fire Service in the early 1950s. Here is Graham's story.

Chapter 1 - Enlistment



On February 18 1952, I left my Parents and the comforts of home to begin my long journey to enlist in the RAF. It all began with a trip to Birmingham and the Office for RAF Recruiting, where travel warrants were issued for Bedford by train. This was a slow but pleasant journey, picking up other recruits en-route until we reached Bedford. At the station we were met by, strangely enough, Bedford QL lorries on which we were taken to RAF Cardington for the fun and games of enlistment, swearing-in, aptitude tests, kit Issue, inoculations and all the other nausea associated with joining up. After a week there we were again taken by lorry to the station to board the train for RAF West Kirby. On arrival there we were greeted by our Drill Instructors, who proceeded to bawl and shout at us before we had even vacated the trucks from the railway station. On leaving Cardington we had been told to pack our crock mugs on top of our kitbags for easy access; however, the DIs thought it would be fun to hurl all our bags down from the truck head -first, thus smashing everyone's mug to bits. They then gleefully told us that it was a chargeable offence to be without a mug. Such was our introduction to the horror of life under the merciless control of Corporal Parkinson, the DI in control of Hut D3, Flight 144. The wooden huts were not exactly 5 Star either, with just a single cast-iron coal-burning appliance for which we seldom had enough fuel. It was a windswept and bitterly cold situation, making life for the twenty-six Prisoners - or AC2 Recruits as we now known, rather different to the one that we had all left at home. However, like everyone else in the mob, we took the balling and shouting, the endless marching, rifle drill and kit inspections in our stride; hanging out for the arrival of the day every recruit dreams of, the Passing-out Parade.

I must confess that I can recall little of the actual Parade; except for being a bit miffed that no one from my family was able to attend. However, I do recall that despite eight weeks of horrible grub; probably due to food rationing, and all the other deprivations we endured, we all looked, and certainly in my case, felt as fit as butchers' dogs. We were so pleased to be granted our freedom that we forgave our DIs their sins, and parted as friends, thanking them for making airmen out of a shower of Civvies. So, with hand-shaking and farewells made, it was goodbye to

West Kirby and off home for a few days leave before the next hurdle - the Fire-School at RAF Sutton on Hull.

Chapter 2 – Trade Training

It was 7 May 1952 and after a rather tedious train journey to Hull, I then took the bus which conveniently stopped at the main entrance to RAF Sutton-on-Hull. This was to be my home for the next six weeks. My first impression was favourable - it looked a doddle compared to West-Kirby; particularly the brick-built accommodation with indoor ablutions. When everyone had checked in and introduced themselves, we were greeted by our Instructors, Cpls Grant and McCabe, who both seemed to be very friendly, and made us all feel at ease. What a difference to the reception we got at Square-bashing!



The Intake was divided into two classes of about twenty, and each of us was issued with a RAF Form 619, - otherwise known as a Notebook! All fellow old wrinklies will remember the first page; which in my book, dated May 8, 1952, was headed CHEMISTRY OF FIRE; and so began Course 68A. The entry had been split into two groups - presumably to ensure efficiency, and quite possibly to create an aura of competition between A and B Flights in such events as Hydrant Drill. This took the form of an hilarious and chaotic attempt to run out three lengths of canvas hose, connect a one Inch brass nozzle, and shout – “WATER ON!” I do

not think that either team made much of a success of it at the first attempt, and as for the Hose-reel Carts - do not ask! However, they say that practise makes perfect, and we most certainly had plenty of it over the next few weeks. It was all good for encouraging team work, and during the course, a lot of friendships were formed - many of which were destined to last for years to come.

The late Ken Lowthorpe was a good team player who I got on with very well. We managed to stick together through Driver Training at Lytham-St-Annes, and eventually flew out to Egypt on the same Hastings, along with other Course 68 lads such as Ruebin Morton and [Wiggy] Higginson; both of whom ended up Aden. I never saw Ken again until the first Association Meeting at Shoreham in 1995.

An amazing coincidence occurred in 1956. On leaving the RAF I started a job at the Austin Motor Company as a Fireman, and who should turn up to start on the very same day but Ruebin Morton! Thankfully we were on the same shift, so it was almost like old times, but after the RAF I was becoming bored with the very tedious routine of endless patrolling the huge industrial complex, and seldom seeing daylight. Soon after I decided it was time to return to the job I trained for, having previously won a scholarship to the School of Furniture in Birmingham.

As for Higginson, the last time I saw him was when we said cheerio on the airfield at Khormaksar. That was a moment that will stay with me forever. Having said goodbye to my friend I found myself having been dumped on the airfield alone, to watch the two Bedford pick-ups vanish into the heat-haze. I had no option other than to follow the advice that had been shouted to me from the Corporal driver of the Steamer-Point wagon. "Head for that building over there!", he told me, pointing to a transit office in the hazy distance. It looked an awfully long way to walk carrying two kit-bags in the oppressive heat that Aden was notorious for, and it was at that moment I felt that it was time for Mum to sell the pig and buy me out!

However, I eventually made it to Transit Office, albeit in a hot, sweaty and dishevelled state, only to be informed that I had been sent to Aden due to a cock-up by Air Movements. I was then directed to an empty twenty-six bed Nissen Hut where I dumped my kit on the nearest



vacant bed and promptly crashed out for a much needed kip. After that, there followed four days in tents with the added misery of guard duties and fatigues, plus horrible grub. Nevertheless, it was quite a treat to be able to lounge about with no one to bother me at times and I had found the mess, though in that heat all I fancied was fruit salad. This was available in large metal containers from which you helped yourself to with the aid of large ladles. However, after three days skiving I was rumbled, and told that I should have stayed at Khartoum, where some of my training mates had deplaned.

And so it was that on the seventh of August 1952, I boarded a Valetta aircraft and left Khormaksar for the five hour trip west back up to MEAF4, as it was in those days. Flying at six thousand feet over Ethiopia was as bumpy a flight as I can ever remember, so it was with some relief that the next rather gentle bounce meant that I had finally arrived where fate had originally intended I should be.

Chapter 3 - The Sunny Sudan

It was now over 50 years since Corporal Jones of the Walmington-on-Sea Home Guard had been threatening the Mad Mahdi's whirling dervishes and fuzzy wuzzies with his cold steel, but in 1952 Khartoum was still under Anglo/Egyptian rule. The Airfield there was quite small by modern standards, a typical 1920s job with only two runways - 06/24, and 09/27. The small Control Tower housed a Sudanese Civvy controller and a couple of meteorologists, and next to the tower was a structure to provide some protection

from the terrific heat that Sudan is noted for. This consisted of six tall steel posts topped with corrugated sheets, which I was reliably informed was designed to protect the CO2 Gas cylinders on the Gas Truck and 45 Monitor. Under this we managed to squeeze the entire crash-combine, which in those days comprised of a Jeep with a Cpl/driver and Fireman, and behind that the Gas Truck and 45 Monitor parked side by side, and further back still a Bedford 500 gallon water bowser. The crews had to suffer the extreme heat when in the vehicles, rather like toast under a grill! Due to the sun, there was little relief to be found outside the canopy either, so it was not much of a choice. RAF Khartoum was a main staging post between Cairo and Nairobi as well as numerous other parts of the Empire, so could get quite busy at times. When aircraft were on final approach to land, the Controller would appear on his balcony to shout CRASH-CREW OUT! On hearing this we would deploy the vehicles out to the inter-section of the runways where we waited until all was clear. With the absence of radios, a green Aldis Lamp was used to give the signal to return to the Tower.

The accommodation blocks were of single-story brick construction, with corrugated roofing and those on the rest of the camp were the usual layout of 26 beds, with an NCO bunk at each end. The Fire Section however, was divided into an office, store, and 6 rooms with a tiled veranda which ran around the perimeter. This was often used for sleeping on, as it was cooler than inside; no air-con. In those days!

Unlike the International Airport that stands on the site today, RAF Khartoum was a rather small and compact outpost. The Station Headquarters building was next to the main gate, and was a rather impressive structure reminding one of Foreign Legion Forts of the past. Opposite the entrance was the Parade Ground come Cricket Pitch, which was flanked on either side by the Mess and NAAFI. A medical centre lay behind a hedge, but was a very modest affair; then add to that the MT Section and a couple of hangers and that was about it. The SNCO IC the Fire Section was Sergeant Joe Proctor, a Scot, who was a firm but fair Boss. Joe was aided by Cpls Len Smith, a Geordie; and Jim McGee, an Irish lad who was my first crew chief. I was his number two on the Jeep on my very first day on an airfield, which was a proud day for me. Prior to that I had been on domestic duties along with other new lads, while we learned the Camp layout and did such jobs as painting and re-filling 2 gallon Soda Acids and Foam Extinguishers, and even a 30 gallon wheeled monster which was much fun to set off! It was during this period that my old mate from West Kirby and Sutton-on-Hull, Danny Glasscoe turned-up. He had been back-coursed at Sutton because one Sunday afternoon after the pub closed a few of us played football in Queens Gardens. Our Best-Blue tunics used to form makeshift goals, and Danny received a bad ankle injury, hence the delay. However I was pleased to see an old pal, and we became great mates, both electing to serve double tours at Khartoum. After six months service us old sweats were awarded our LAC propellers, which came with an extra shilling per day. There were no SACs on the section, it being a relatively new thing under the revised Trade Structure, so I decided to apply for the trade test, which I duly passed in December 1952. Since little was known about the test, the written element was posted in from elsewhere, and when it came to doing the Practical test two Warrant-Officers had to be flown up from Aden to assess me on such things as aircraft marshalling, using the Very-Pistol, plus various other practical tests which I quite enjoyed. All this must have cost the RAF a fortune, but more importantly it meant another shilling per day to me, which together with our local overseas allowance of two shillings and nine pence boosted my pay to the dizzy sum of thirteen and nine per day -LOADED! However, it transpired that I was unable to

hold the rank until having served one year.



The three months needed to meet this requirement soon passed and I was quite enjoying life on a rotation of crash crew, crash-relief and domestic duties. Then one day Sergeant Proctor told me to get my SAC rank sewn onto all my kit, and prepare to take on the job of IC crash-crew, since by then we had lost both Corporal Len Smith and Jim. McGee. The British were to grant provisional independence in March 1954, so we were helping to train Sudanese Firemen to take over airfield crash/rescue duties and in common with other trades, not all Tour-ex.staff would be replaced. And so it was that, with some trepidation I took over the wheel of our old World-War 2 Willys Jeep, with the logo of "I/C Crash-Rescue" prominent on the upstand below the windscreen. Danny Glasscoe was my number two, whilst old-hands like Jim. Eaglesham and Colin Davill manned the Fordson 45 Monitor, Austin CO2 Gas-Truck and the Bedford 500 gallon Water Bowser. After a brief few words of advice from Sergeant Proctor and a rare smile which I hoped meant good luck, it was off to the airfield in my new job.

Our airfield was also home to Sudan Airways, whose offices were in the same Hanger area as our Air Movements section. Despite being kept busy, their three DC3 Dakota aircraft, as well as their De-Havilland Herons and Doves were all well maintained and always immaculate.

Apart from these, we had a regular flow of RAF Hastings and Valleta aircraft transiting through, as well as the Tropical Experimental Unit from Boscombe Down. The variety of new aircraft from there made our job more interesting as we needed to examine them for means of access/escape etc. The Canberra Jet Bomber, still secret at the time, was awesome. Giving it our close attention we were struck by the absence of any means of escape for the Navigator; the Pilot and Engineer both having Martin-Baker ejection seats, the first I had seen since Fire-School. It also provided me with a chance to do something useful when after re-fuelling, the ground crew managed achieve a start-up fire in the port engine. As usual a wheeled appliance holding two twelve pound CO2 bottles was handy so I discharged both into the engine, and all was well.

Camp life could be pretty tedious unless you were into sport. Fortunately I was mad on football but in that heat it took a few weeks to acclimatise, leaving only the modest sized swimming pool for a swim or game of water-polo. Here, there was a problem as I could not swim! Finding me sat in the shallow end for a cool-off one day, Johnnie Stevenson assured me that he could soon teach me to swim, and despite my doubts, with his encouragement the day soon came when I swam my first width. I could never thank my pal enough for that, and took to swimming at every chance I had. There was no Camp Cinema, so RAF lads were obliged to walk to the Army Cinema at South Barracks. This was a few hundred yards toward the Nile, in fact the open-air screen, with it's loose rows of bamboo chairs was called THE BLUE NILE. At the rear of the seating was a Bar selling India Pale Ale or Gin and Tonic. On the rare nights that it rained it was hilarious, as we would all sit cheering at a chance to cool off. The walk back to camp took us through the Tented Camp of the Askaris, Sudanese troops who provided our camp perimeter and airfield security, they were a friendly bunch and always good for a laugh.

Sadly that is all Graham wrote before he passed away on 7 August 2020

THE DESERT DIARIES of GRAHAM MELLOR



MASIRAH AUGUST 1972 TO April 1973

I had been married 4 months when I was posted to Masirah for a nine-month unaccompanied tour just what I wanted!! We took off from Brize Norton in a Hastings aircraft a four-prop job via Cyprus. After a few hours we were approaching Akrotiri when we were told to divert to Nicosia as an aircraft had had difficulties on the runway, when we landed in Nicosia we disembarked the aircraft and spent the next two hours in the terminal before we could carry on to Akrotiri, we stayed overnight and left



early the next day.

I had just got off the aircraft and I was approached by a fireman in crash kit asked if I was a fireman I said yes and he said 'great I'm going home, come with me and you can get changed and get on crash 2 for when the aircraft takes off to go back to Cyprus', talk about an early start but that's what happens in places like Masirah.

a local person working in the fire station I cannot think of his name anyway, he kept disappearing for a few days now and then and I asked my crew chief where he goes and he said He is the Sultan of Oman's chief executioner so he goes and does what he has to do. He did have the second best house on the island but that's another story.

Not long afterwards we all decided to build a pond in the accommodation outside area to make our living quarters more appealing there was already an aviary with budgies, which I got roped into helping to look after them. We appropriated the materials through our known contacts and set about making it. Nearly everyone contributed to the making of it and the filling of it with sea water and fish and I must admit it was and looked amazing, one of the lads introduced a stone fish its spines are poisonous, of all the known persons who got thrown in or sat in it no one ever got stung to this day I don't know why.



Graham with Amid also known as Sambo (Ed)

After a few days I started to settle in got shown the most important places i.e. where work was, the "Crazy Horse Club", the swimming pool and the NAAFI. I took a bit longer to get used to the heat I was not used to 120 F in the shade, but I gradually got used to it and started to enjoy my tour the other guys were a good bunch, now I cannot remember some of the names except for Steve Harrison (silver fox) Mal Ray, surname of Lamb, hopefully a few more may come out of the little grey cells. We had

I and a few others were volunteered for the Desert Patrol hit and run team under the command of a Flt Lt and a person I think from the RAF Regiment or it could of been the resident SAS Sgt. Our role was to annoy anybody who decided to invade or attack our little island we had two Landrovers, small arms and Mortars which we all learned how to operate One training session we were all engrossed in some shooting when one the lads sat on a scorpion you should of seen him dance around saying "I've been stung", "I've been stung", well we all sat around and



laughed our hats off as you do in those circumstances, when he calmed down and we stopped laughing he was told it was a non poisonous one, we dropped him off at the med centre and carried on with the training.

There were not many aircraft incidents on a staging post like Masirah but a Vulcan wheel fire was a bit of excitement.

Early on in my tour I was took over to the civilian camp comprising of engineers etc who looked after our camp including the bulk fuel installation which was our biggest danger on the island we popped



over to them quite often for chats, beer or two, curry and sometimes a film. We had a swimming pool on site which was used all the time until an announcement came through 'All swimmers MUST where appropriate clothing because two ladies were going to be working on the island and they will have access to the swimming pool at any time, well that went down like a lead balloon.

To keep moderately sane you had to keep fairly busy so trips were arranged to go bondo bashing, fishing, sailing or where we were concerned Gemini training as we were the rescuers if anything went in to the sea or to help with other incidents, I can remember a few times we didn't have an engine available so we use to take the small pump of the fire truck and use that as propulsion

by god did it work, a few times we nearly lost everything into the sea but it was great fun. Every so often we got a delivery of cigarettes from the customs people back home to be dived between all the smokers which went down well, on one occasion the NAAFI saw our Warrant Officer and asked if we could burn approx 1 million cigarettes as they were out of date and the paper was turning a bit yellow, our warrant said give them to the lads but no they had to be burned the NAAFI gave nothing away. I was detailed to go and burn them and the NAAFI bloke stood over me nearly all the time to make sure I burned them; at least I managed to save a few thousand which were divided up to all who smoked.

During Christmas 1972 the whole island was put on alert and we had a couple of aircraft attached in to help protect us as the powers to be had intelligence that we were going to be attacked After a couple of days it was announced that the Omani Government had apprehended the dissidents and we returned to normal. We had a cinema on the island which



was used all the time first time there I saw everyone with their feet up on the chair in front I said what's that for my mate said camel spiders they bite but you won't feel it so I quickly put my feet up.

Our fresh water was made every day by a desalination plant, we had to drink at least 6 litres of water a day so we were given two bottles of Robinsons juice a week to make sure we did, social drinking was not included.

On the island we had two foam layers each with a water capacity of twelve thousand gallons and a foam concentrate

I think of one thousand gallons.

It took us two weeks to fill just one of the foam layers as it needed fresh water, the foam compound at this time was in 5 gallon tins so they took some filling as you might have guessed we didn't use them much.

Well I Cannot finish without mention of the Crazy Horse Club which we were told the firemen built some years ago, what a place some great nights were had in that place.

A few names to remember Bill Allbury, Jeff Hill, Ben Dulson, Jack Ashhurst,

Kev Mann, Dave Ward.

I had a great tour and what made it great were the lads that were there so no matter where you all are and if you remember me, God Bless.

Graham Mellor (member 1134)

It was a good tour just the same as my first in 1967. Nice to have shared the experience with you Graham (Ed)



THE LAST TREE STANDING

Fire, fire ,fire, fire at the bombing ranges at RAF Nordhorn in lower Saxony., maybe 60 or so miles away from our station at RAF Gutersloh.

Off we went in the Thornycroft Mk7, blue lights and two tone horns, everything passing us on the Autobahn, why not our top speed was something like 45mph, so we switch them off embarrassingly. Why a Mk7 for grass fires we'll never know, it was sent back the next day.

On leaving the autobahn we passed through a small village, on rounding a corner my Mk2 bone dome rolled out of the cab never to be seen again!!

Large areas of heath land had been on fire but had been mostly extinguished by the locally employed German firemen when we arrived. We spent several days damping down the hot spots with the range station modified Nubian DP1 with a roof mounted water monitor.

Transport for recognisance was in the shape of an old American White M5 half-track



Modified Dual Purpose, DP1

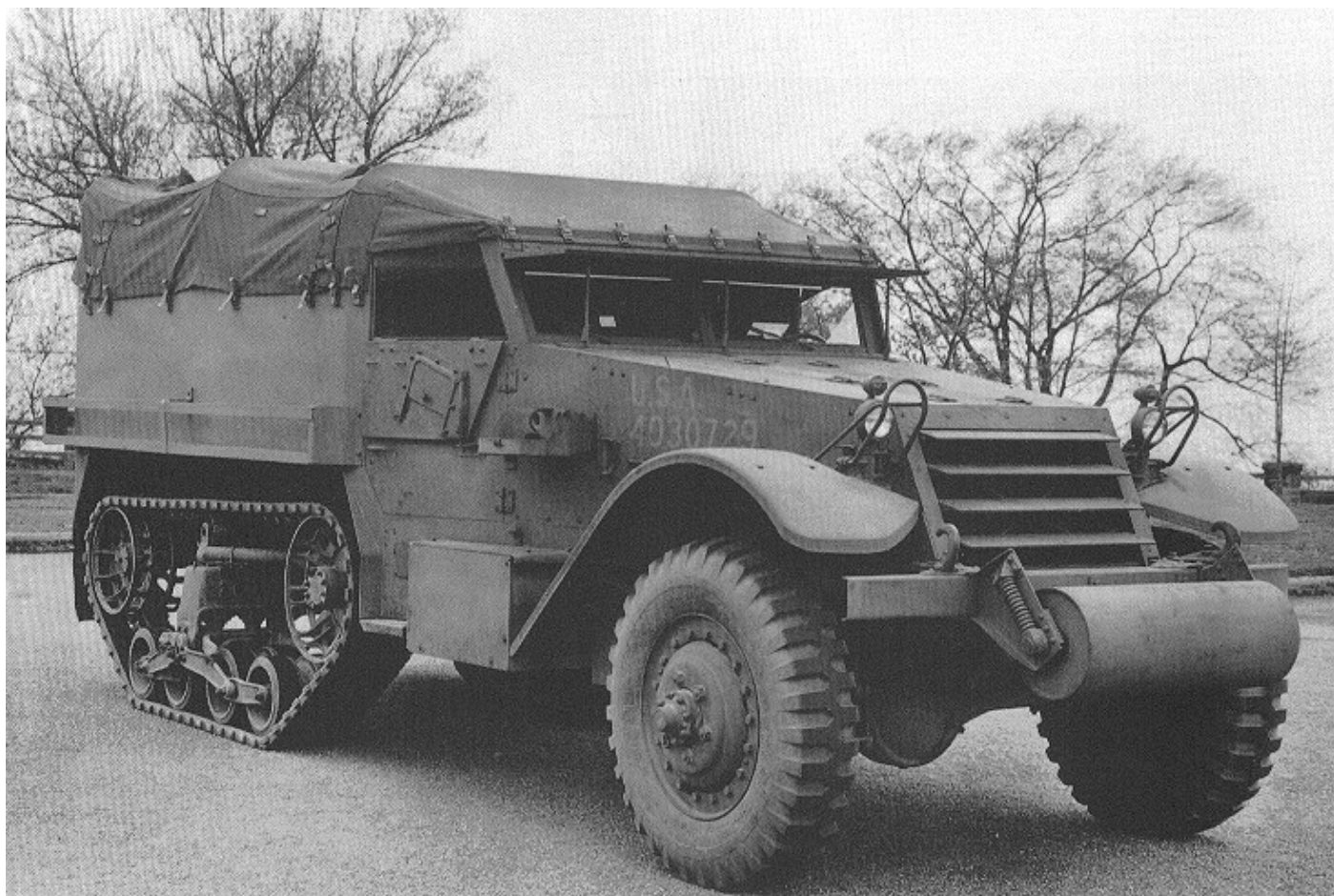


Late one night, feeling very tired, I was driving the half-track far too fast down a narrow track, I was a tank driver in the army so I knew best how to drive the thing!!!! Suddenly I spotted a sharp left hand bend, I swung the wheel around as fast as I could, it needed a full 5 turns to change direction, we only just made it, we all started to laugh at the close shave when out of the darkness a right hand bend appeared, no way was I going to be able to get this monster around again. We just shot straight ahead, up the bank and hit the only tree left standing after the fire. It broke off and crashed down onto the soft canvas roof and crushed it nearly to the

floor. Fortunately the lads were sitting at the sides and we all; unlike the last tree standing, had a lucky escape.

They wouldn't let the expert tanky drive it anymore!!!! Months later, back at camp, as the section storeman, I had a call from Supply Sqn, "Had we lost a helmet going to the Nordhorn fire? "Yes we had. Well it has been returned to stores, you don't need to blame anyone else, it has your name on it". Oops!!!!!!

John Goupillot (disgraced tank driver)



US White M5 Half-track

Lightning Memories



Like many people I am a fan of the Lightning aircraft. A rocket on wheels with wings is often how they are described. I was in Masirah in 1967 when 74 (tiger) squadron passed through with the Victor tankers to the Far East. One of the aircraft had to stay behind for repairs; on the day he left I was doing that great job, filling 'Goosenecks' and was waiting clearance to go on the runway after he had left. Usually fighter aircraft when visiting Masirah did something spectacular, like a Britannia beating up the airfield, or a Hunter flying

upside down along the runway. So I got out the Landrover and waited in anticipation I was not disappointed as he left the runway the pilot stood it on its tail, engaged reheat and he climbed and climbed and I lost him in a clear blue sky. That was some 46 years ago and the memory is still clear.

Some years ago about 1988 I purchased a photograph of a Lightning from the Lincolnshire newspaper which I thought was spectacular and recently I posted it on a Facebook page to try and get some information. It turned out the aircraft was

one of three on the last photo shoot. The shot was taken from the tail end of a C130. The pilot was Marc Imms and the aircraft was XS923 with tail letters BE.

The Pilot of JS was Jake Jarron, Ian Black and John Carter was in BT and at the back is BE flown by Marc Imms.

I know many of our members may well have served with Lightnings and thought it may be of interest. Also just to add I have recently treated myself to a Corgi 1-48 scale of a 74 Sqn Lightning. Steve is a happy bunny!!! (Although it says on the box 1969 it was 1967 when they went through Masirah.)

Steve Harrison.



In addition to this another photograph was posted of the three aircraft involved.



Classic Land Rover Gathering



L to R. Eddie Munro (RAFFF Vet) Jo Munro, Dave Grant (RAFFF Vet), Steve Shirley (RAFFF Vet) Chris Bradley (RAFP Vet), Kevan Wright (Ex AWE FF)

On the weekend 24/25th July, a small team of volunteers attended the Classic Land Rover Gathering at Lower Farm, Skillington.

We were responding to a request to take part in a recreation of a famous 1960s Land Rover Special Projects Display photograph which featured one of our actual vehicles, a Forward Control Land Rover Fire Appliance.

According to an article written by James Taylor that appeared in the August issue of Land Rover owner international magazine, the two Forward Controls that the RAF took into its domestic fire service in 1965-1966 were intended to provide fire cover for buildings. But the RAF eventually decided they weren't what they wanted and didn't buy anymore.

The first one was a four-cylinder model, 01AG32. It had a body by fire-tender specialist HCB-Angus to an apparently new design with folding entrance doors behind the rear section of the cab. As far as we know, it spent its entire service life at RAF Fylingdales, the signals intercept station in Yorkshire.

The second one had a six-cylinder engine. It was on the second of only two 6-cylinder Series IIA 109 chassis built for the home market and became 27AG24. Bodied in the same style by HCB-Angus, it went to No 1 Air Control Centre, at Wattisham in Suffolk.

01AG32 went out of service and was sold off to Meridian Fire Protection in London where it was used for dry riser testing. It was painted yellow and gained the civilian registration WYT946T. This vehicle is believed to have been scrapped leaving 27AG24 as the only survivor.

I purchased the Forward Control Land Rover from Newark Air Museum many years ago as they had no real interest in the vehicle. It had previously been used at Staythorpe Power Station in Nottinghamshire. Little did I know then, just what an important part of RAF Fire Service history it was!

27AG34 is awaiting restoration but the organisers of the show were happy to have it at the show in whatever condition it was. It is essentially complete, and we have had it running, but it does need a lot of work to bring it up to display condition.

We also took along the TACR1 and the ACRT and these also proved to be of considerable interest to the various Land Rover enthusiasts who attended the show.

As well as taking part in the recreation of that

original photograph which should have been the highlight of the weekend, we were also delighted to receive an award for the best military Land Rover of the show by the judges. TACR1 28AG00 stole the show (Much to the horror of all the camo covered gun spouting owners who had their vehicles on display)!

We now know just how rare these two Forward Control vehicles were, so if you served with either of them or indeed have any photographs of them in service or after, we'd love to hear from you.

*Kindest regards
Steve*

Thank you, Steve, wonderful to hear. Keep up the good work my friend. Best wishes to you and your wonderful team

Reg



Back in spring 2017 I wrote an article about RAF Riyan in which I expressed the fact that I had never heard anyone mention the place. As some of you know I served in Masirah, and I went from Aden through Riyan and Salalah to reach Masirah on the RSM flight. Much to my surprise I came across this story on Facebook. I ask the author if I could use it, as it mentioned the Fire Section it's a tale worth reading. (Steve Harrison).

I was posted to Aden in November 1964 after being married only 8 weeks. The posting was for one year unaccompanied. This little story is absolutely true although my memory has now forgotten the names of the two officers involved... maybe others in here may remember the occasion and can fill in the names. The first officer involved was a Flt Lt who was put in charge of the flight going out to Khormaksar (they actually nominated the most senior service passenger to be thus honoured).

I was stationed at RAF Khormaksar for six months and then for some undisclosed reason I was posted up country to RAF Riyan for the remaining six months. That station had only two commissioned officers: a Flt Lt and a Sqn Ldr.

Low and behold the Flt Lt just happened to be the same guy who flew out with me from UK – the first time I had actually seen him since that day. In his previous life he had been a pilot flying fast jets and I don't think for one minute that he enjoyed being forcibly detached from his toy for a year in the desert.

The second officer (and O.C.) was a Sqd Ldr who was also a pilot and he had flown Vulcan's before being posted to RAF Riyan. He took his previous life to a new level while he was stationed there.

His personal transport was a jeep and he modified it somewhat by removing the speedometer and replacing it with an altimeter. He also at times wore his bone dome helmet when driving around the camp. As I recall they had a somewhat lonely life as they were in each others' company for most of the time and rarely socialized outside their mini officer's mess.

My story moves on until the final days of the first officer's time at RAF Riyan – which also coincides with my own tourex time. It was a tradition of the camp that when anyone was tourex there was a dining in night a few days prior to departure. Keep in mind that there were only about 32 RAF personnel (no women) on the camp so dining in nights were not a frequent occurrence! Thus his and mine dining in night coincided and we both had to give jolly leaving speeches to the assembled camp. This to my knowledge was one of those rare occasions that commissioned and non-commissioned messes were combined socially.

After the dinner it appears that the two officers returned to their own mess and concocted a "leaving" celebration which they kept secret from the remainder of the camp. They decided that the following day (the day before the Flt Lt was due to leave) they would have a realistic fire drill on the other side of the airfield. Now RAF Riyan didn't really have an airfield or a designated "camp" as it was all open desert with a surrounding barbed wire fence that gave a token barrier to outsiders and camels. They set their fire away using old rubber tyres and then alerted the Fire Crew who then scrambled in their engines to the far side of the airfield. The Sqd Ldr was filming the whole episode close to the

fire on one of those hand-held 8mm cine cameras popular at the time. Unluckily for him one of the fire trucks headed straight for him and the driver was unsighted by the sun and drove straight over him! He therefore cine-filmed his own demise as he landed on the bondu between the wheels of this huge truck. Fortunately his injuries although serious were not life-threatening (a few broken ribs) but it did mean that he was no longer fit to be station commander and he was immediately casevaced out. Our Flt Lt was promptly appointed the interim C.O. until a suitable replacement could be flown out. He had such a sad face when I departed the following day leaving him standing on the pan instead of being tourex with me.

Ex RAF Firefighter Jim Lardner replied:

That's interesting, I was the crash one driver when this happened, remember it well, when I arrived on the scene, my mate and I saw the CO, but got on sorting out the dry powder hoses - didn't operate, not for drill - but then heard a kerfuffle through my helmet, turned around and saw someone looking under the mark 1 crash tender. The driver, a Jock, name forgotten, wandering around the vehicle muttering "that's me in trouble" but needless to say, he wasn't, the CO said it was his own fault, and, as stated he was flown out with damaged ribs and bruised pride. I was at Riyan 65 – 66.

New Partnership Announcement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 14/08/2021

Steve Shirley

Museum of RAF Fire Fighting

01522730198

enquiry@firemuseum.uk

Museum of RAF Fire Fighting and Scampton Holdings Ltd.

The Future of the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting

Scampton, Lincolnshire: The “Museum of RAF Firefighting” today announced a new partnership with Scampton Holdings Ltd, the company that will bid for the RAF Scampton site following news of the disposal by the MoD. This partnership will secure the future of the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting, if Scampton Holdings Ltd is successful in its bid, providing a permanent home for this historic and unique collection.

Steven Shirley MBE, Chairman and founder of the Museum said “The prospect of returning to our former home at RAF Scampton gives all of the Museum Team the hope of finally finding a permanent home for the collection. Our business plan fits in perfectly with the vision that Scampton holdings has for the site, preserving the past, safeguarding the future. Our aim will be to develop a first-class tourist attraction and educational facility that has the potential to become the leading fire museum in the Country.

“We very early on recognised the synergy that exists between The Museum of RAF Fire Fighting and the rich history of the RAF Scampton site. We welcome the opportunity to work with Steve and his team to make this dream a reality,” says Tom Lear, Project Lead, at Scampton Holdings Ltd. “As well as this opportunity, we are working closely with local heritage stakeholders including the RAF Scampton Heritage Centre to ensure their future is also secured.”

About The Museum of RAF Fire Fighting: The Museum became a registered charity in 2017. It is dedicated to telling the story of military firefighting with particular emphasis on the Royal Air Force Fire & Rescue Service. Knowing that we cannot tell the story of military firefighting without telling the story of firefighting, the Museum collection offers something for everyone. With 52 vehicles and over 20,000 exhibits, the collection is probably the largest of its kind in the Country. Many of the exhibits are unique and of National Importance. Not being open to the public for over four years has presented a number of challenges to the team, the most pressing of which has been the need to find a permanent home. Without this, the collection is at risk of being lost forever. Already, the collection has moved three times and each time the promise of a new home has not come to fruition. Working with Scampton Holdings, there is now a very real chance that finally, a permanent home might have been found which will secure the collection for future generations.

About Scampton Holdings Ltd: Scampton Holdings Ltd was formed in 2020 as a special purpose vehicle to bid for the site at Scampton. Their plans centre around a centre of excellence for innovation and technology, providing infrastructure for collaboration between commercial partners involved in projects including aerospace, satellites and drone technology. The secure airspace and operational runway are planned to be maintained. A heritage centre celebrating the sites history is planned, with a living museum and heritage trail around the historic site of Scampton forming one of the four pillars of the concepts proposed by Scampton Holdings Ltd.


For more information about the proposed development of the Scampton site please email: enquiries@scampton.org



photo credit Wayne Gilmore museum volunteer

CATTERICK VETERANS CAFÉ

NEED SOME BANTER AND A BREW?
FEELING LONELY AND ISOLATED?
THINGS GETTING TOO MUCH?
WE ARE HERE FOR YOU



COME AND HAVE A COFFEE
AND A CHAT

ST AIDAN'S CHURCH HALL
THURSDAY EVENING 17:30

TO BOOK ON EMAIL veteranscafecatterick@gmail.com
or txt. 07754 690 344

Fred Bickham RAF El Adem 1958-60

More tales from Butlins in the Desert or otherwise known as RAF El Adem.

One quiet and hot sunny afternoon on duty crew when not even the birds were flying, Cpl I/C Crew went up to the Tower to see if we could do a long-range radio check with Crash One. The Controller said no problem as there was no flying at all.

What I did not know was the Cpl's wife was coming out to a flat in Tobruk so we went, so we went this Billet and picked up a load of kit. We set off, I was on the radio, and we soon lost contact with the Tower. We kept going and dropped the kit off at the flat in Tobruk and returned to El Adem, a round trip of over 40 miles. I don't think the rest of the crew knew what we did.

Next morning Chiefy Dowling said "were you two down Tobruk yesterday". The Cpl said "yes Chiefy" and as far asking that is all that was said.



Relaxing in the sun, that's all we seemed to do at El Edem, just waiting for the NAAFII van to come.

*Back row L to R: Charlie Wratten, Cpl Gallagher, Shadow Girt
Middle row L to R: Clements, Yorkie Senior, Fred Bickham
Front: Pixie Pearson*



The FV 622 Alvis Stalwart Mk2 Reef Rescue Unit. In the late 1960's the RAF perceived the need for a method providing Quick Response and Crash Fire Rescue cover for RAF Gan. Two units were produced and it is believed that they were withdrawn from service around 1972.