



Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

LAA NEWSLETTER

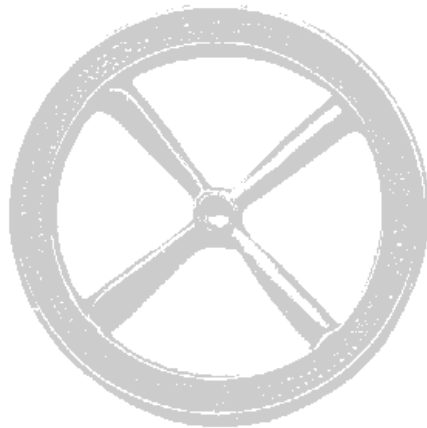
Serial 34

August 2002

ROYAL AIR FORCE LOCKING
APPRENTICE ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER



The Apprentice Prayer

Teach us good Lord, to be thankful
For all the good times we had,
The skills we have learned,
The friendships we have shared
And the companionship we have enjoyed.
May all who have served the apprenticeship of the Wheel
Be ever mindful of the needs of one another.

Amen

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COMMITTEE MEETING — JULY 2002

28TH COMMITTEE MEETING -
HELD AT RAFA CLUB WES-
TON SUPER MARE ON THURS-
DAY 18TH JULY 2002

- Present:- Bert Davies 79th Chairman
 - Tiny Kuhle 87th Deputy Chairman
 - Dave Gunby 72nd Secretary
 - Tony Horry 76th Treasurer
 - John Farmer 77th Membership Secretary
 - Charles Hart 71st AA Rep
 - Vic Gibbs 88th General Rep
 - Colin Ingram 88th Newsletter Editor
 - Andy Perkins 109th Tech Rep
 - Graham Beeston 209th Craft Rep
- Absent:-
- Joe Holroyd 85th Service Rep

**ITEM 1 WELCOME AND
APOLOGIES.**

The Chairman opened the meeting with a greeting to all and an expression of pleasure at the size of the attendance. The secretary had received just one apology for absence.

**ITEM 2 MINUTES OF PREVI-
OUS MEETINGS.**

a) It was proposed by Charles Hart and seconded by John Farmer that the minutes of the AGM2002 in April be accepted as a true record. All

agreed.

b) Tony Horry proposed that the minutes of the 27th Committee Meeting in January 2002 be accepted as a true record. Graham Beeston seconded and all agreed.

ITEM 3 MATTERS ARISING.

Outside the meeting further discussions took place regarding the siting of a display cabinet within the RAFA Club to contain RAF Locking apprentice memorabilia. Only the Treasurer of the club was involved but it seemed that the club would agree in principle to site a cabinet. There remains further talks to decide the size of the cabinet and its agreed position.

Any other matters arising are dealt with in the ensuing minutes.

ITEM 4 TREASURER'S REPORT

Tony Horry presented his report to the committee and distributed copies. The most notable aspects of the report were the relatively small subsidy (£143.25) from the association funds for the 2002 AGM/Reunion, and the cost effective impact of the e-mail distribution of the newsletter (Costs halved).

(Continued on page 3)

THE



NEWS

**Next AGM
April 2003
Weston-Super-Mare**

**75th Golden Reunion in
September 2003**

**RAF LOCKING
CLOSURE VIDEO
Still available
from
the secretary**

RAFLAA COMMITTEE

APPOINTMENT	NAME	ADDRESS	TEL/E-MAIL	RE-ELECTION DUE	ENTRY
President	M a r t i n Palmer				91 st
Chairman	Bert Davies	20 Lakefield Ave Little Paxton St Neots Cambs PE19 4NZ	(01480) 217243 bertdavies@netscapeonline.co	Sep 02	79 th
Deputy Chairman	“Tiny” Kühle	22 Tavistock Close Woburn Sands Milton Keynes Bucks MK17 8UY	(1908) 583784 Hans.Kuhle@t-mobile.co.uk	April 05 (Election to be ratified at 03 AGM)	87 th
Secretary Elect	Dave Gunby	29 Toynton Close Gregg Hall Estate Lincoln Lincolnshire LN6 8AL		April 05 (Election to be ratified at 03 AGM)	72 nd
Treasurer	Tony Horry	Hillside Cottage Kewstke Road Kewstoke W S M BS22 9YD	(01934) 628383 horrycorp@aol.com	Mar 03	76 th
Membership Secretary	John Farmer	8 Glenmore Road Minehead Somerset TA24 5BQ	(01643) 705443 RAFLAA@aol.com	Mar 03	77 th
Service Rep	Joe Holroyd	Well Cottage 36 High Street Guildden Morden Royston SG8 0JR	(01763) 853742 patandjoeholroyd@tesco.net	Sep 02	85 th
AA Rep	Charles Hart	9 South Road W S M BS23 2HA	(01934) 621969 charhart@supanet.com	Sep 02	71 st
General	Vic Gibbs	8 Old School Road Royal Lane Hillingdon Middlesex UB8 3WE	(01895) 235 076 Gibbsvic@aol.com	Mar 04	88 th
Craft Rep	Graham Beeston	87 Hornbeam Road Havant PO9 2UT	Home (023) 92346242 Work 0778 8795358 graham@mapleoak.co.uk	Sep 02	209 th
Tech Rep	Andy Perkins	107 Balmoral Way Worle W S M BS22 9BZ	(01934)417323 aperkins@schaffner.com	Sep 02	109 th
Newsletter Editor	Colin Ingram	Fairhaven Gooseham Morwenstow Nr Bude Cornwall EX23 9PG	(01288) 331629 cwingram@aol.com	Sep 02	88 th

COMMITTEE MEEETING — JULY 2002

(Continued from page 2)

Charles Hart proposed the committee accept the report and this was seconded by Graham Beeston-All agreed.

ITEM 5 MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

John Farmer presented his report to the committee and distributed copies. Recruitment was still slow and the Appbe web site was almost a 'dead duck'. New avenues for advertising including the RAFA magazine 'Air Mail' were being investigated. Current membership rests at 395.

On the plus side there had been a surge in the number of members opting for the SO method of subscription payment. There had also been increasing use of e-mail both for the Newsletter and for sending reminders to 'lapsed' members.

It was proposed by Dave Gunby and seconded by Charles Hart that the committee accept the report and all agreed.

ITEM 6 ACCESS TO ARCHIVE RECORDS

Following a discussion to find the best way forward it was agreed that details of individual service records should not be released to other than the individual concerned. A sub-committee of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Secretary and the General Member will review the records and extract Entry lists showing the service number, full name and date of birth of each member that was attested into and passed out with each Entry. It was hoped to commence this review in September and produce the resulting database by the end of 2002.

Association members would then be offered the opportunity to view their entry list at the next AGM or, if sufficient interest, at an open day at the Henlow Museum.

(Continued on page 4)

COMMITTEE MEETING — JULY 2002

*(Continued from page 3)***ITEM 7 PROVISION OF RAFLAA SOFTWARE.**

Following a discussion regarding the hitherto tortuous method of producing the e-mail version of the newsletter, and the removal of access to Adobe software due to the resignation of Glyn the committee decided to authorise the purchase of their own software.

Consequently John Farmer was authorised to spend up to £200 on the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Publisher. The software would be licenced and owned by the RAFLAA.

The chairman proposed the spend which was seconded by Charles Hart and all agreed.

ITEM 8 RAF LOCKING SITE

Tony Horry reported that North Somerset C.C. have agreed that some commemoration of the existence of No1 Radio School should be made. To that end it has been included in the development plan for the site. Further discussions are likely in the near future and

Tony will represent the RAFLAA in these discussions.

The chairman thanked Tony for his report and looked forward to further progress.

ITEM 9 SUITABILITY OF 'EAGLE HOUSE'

The committee was able to see the facilities at 'Eagle House'. The club treasurer was on hand to display the club's capabilities. The committee felt that the club would be fine for their meetings but AGM/Reunions would be out of the question due to room sizes and capacities.

ITEM 10 RAF LOCKING CLOSURE VIDEO

The secretary informed the meeting that he had received 10 copies of the video and had distributed 4 to furnish orders. He will keep the balance and they are available at a cost of £6.00, which includes post and packing.

ITEM 11 VENUE FOR 2003 AGM/REUNION

The Chairman reported that due to his continued lack of mobility

STANDING ORDER MANDATE



To		Bank		STANDING ORDER MANDATE			
Postal Address							
Please Pay	Bank	Branch Title (not address)		Sorting Code Number			
HSBC	WESTON-SUPER-MARE			40	-	46	-
Beneficiary's Name		Account Number		Quoting Reference			
R A F LOCKING APPRENTICE ASSOCIATION		413 6 8 8 7 7					
For the credit of	Amount	Amount in words					
£							
The sum of	Date of first payment	and there-after every	Due date & frequency	until further notice in writing or	Date of last payment	and debit my/our account accordingly	
commencing							
PLEASE CANCEL ALL PREVIOUS STANDING ORDER/DIRECT DEBITTING MANDATES							
IN FAVOUR OF:	RAF LOCKING APPRENTICE ASSOCIATION			Account to be debited	Account Number		
UNDER REFERENCE No.							
Special instructions							
	Signature(s)				Date		
Note: The bank will not undertake to							
a) make reference to Value Added Tax or pay a stated sum plus V.A.T., or other indeterminate element.							
b) advise remitter's address to beneficiary. c) advise beneficiary of inability to pay. d) request beneficiary's banker to advise beneficiary of receipt							
e) accept instructions to pay as soon after the specified date as there are funds to meet the payment, if funds are not available on the specified date.							

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



**RAF Locking
Apprentice Association**

**Application for membership of the
Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association**

Name Serving member HM forces. Yes/No

Address..... Entry Number.....

.....

.....

Post Code

Telephone No.....

E-Mail Address.....

Name for Identity Badge

Membership Fee: - .. £10.00

Do you require an LAA tie? (Cost, £6 per tie - max 2 ties) (Qty) £.....

Total Enclosed £.....

(Please make cheques payable to: - Locking Apprentice Association)

.....

Return this form together with your remittance to: -

Mr A. Horry (RAFLAA Treasurer)
Hillside Cottage
Kewstoke Road,
Kewstoke,
Weston-super-Mare
North Somerset.
BS22 9YD

Tel. No. 01934 628383

e-mail horrycorp@aol.com

For Committee use

Comments

Membership Paid/...../.....

Database Updated/...../.....

Acknowledged/...../.....

Tie/...../.....

Badge/...../.....

COMMITTEE MEETING — JULY 2002

and the rapid onset of cataracts he had been unable to progress his action to locate an active RAF Station as a venue for the next AGM. He had hoped to visit RAF Cosford with a view to holding the AGM there but this had not been possible.

In view of time scales required for organising functions the committee decided to hold the 2003 AGM/Reunion at Daunceys Hotel, Weston-Super-Mare with the same itinerary as 2002. The committee realises that this flies in the face of the alternate home and away venues concept but they had little choice. The chairman asked Charles Hart and Tony Horry to set the wheels in motion so that our AGM/Reunion could take place during April 2003. Tony and Charles accepted the task.

ITEM 12 PROPOSED SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

For the committee's interest and information the secretary provided a map, which showed that 75% of the membership lived south of a line from the Wash to the Bristol Channel. It is the

deputy Chairman's resolve to organise activities in different parts of the country. To this end with the assistance of Vic Gibbs a visit to a film studio is a possibility (West London). The secretary has an idea for a visit to RAF Neatishead Radar Museum (Norfolk). Whatever we do it is important to have someone in the locality to do the leg work. The deputy chairman promised to give further thought to the matter, and approach the membership via the newsletter with some suggested venues.

ITEM 13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The chairman showed pictures from the FABEA 80th Anniversary event at St. Clement Danes and the Royal Courts of Justice in May. There were 25 representatives of the association together with Gladys Burville and Betty Restall (Widows of George (90th) and David (71st) respectively). Two photographs were passed to the newsletter editor and the secretary agreed to compile a

COMMITTEE MEETING — JULY 2002

few words covering the event.

The chairman produced a sample forage cap which the FABEA committee propose for the use of members on commemorative occasions such as the Remembrance Day parade at the Cenotaph. The chairman proposed that the association purchase 5 caps of various sizes at a cost of £10 per cap. John Farmer seconded and all agreed.

It was pointed out that the procedure for distributing badges to new members needed streamlining. It was decided that John Farmer will order them as before. They will be sent to the secretary for distribution with the welcome pack and the invoice will be sent to the treasurer.

The secretary asked when it was the turn of our association to host the next FABEA AGM. The chairman said that it was our turn in February 2003. The event is usually held at RAFA Bedford and two representatives attend. The chairman said

that he and the deputy chairman would attend all being well and he would do any organising that was necessary. Charles Hart proposed and Tiny Kuhle seconded that a sum of up to £100 be allocated for the provision of the buffet. All agreed.

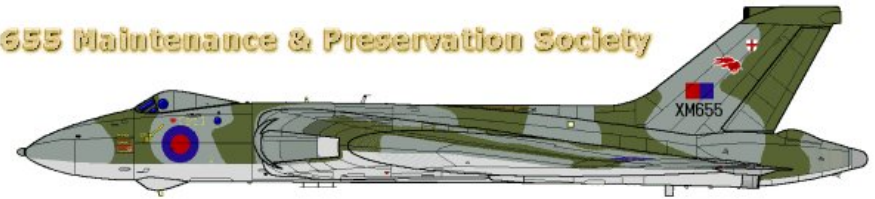
Vic Gibbs pointed out that we do not use a consistent letter-head for our written communications. The secretary agreed to create one and e-mail to the committee members.

The committee recorded a vote of thanks to Glyn Price for his valuable service to the association during the past 5 years.

The committee agreed to donate the sum of £20 to the RAFA Weston branch to be added to its 'Wings Appeal' effort.

XM655

655 Maintenance & Preservation Society



5th August 2002 - As you may know we cancelled last year's run at the request of the Vulcan Operating Company so our engineers took the opportunity to carry out major repair and maintenance work including work on the elevons and rudder. We have fallen behind on the schedule of work for two main reasons. Firstly we encountered major difficulties in the removal of the flying control surfaces due entirely to the many years of neglect after the first owner abandoned the aircraft. Secondly we have been short of manpower to carry out the tasks involved due mainly to changes in family circumstances and working patterns of the volunteers who have given willingly of their spare time in the past.

It has therefore been decided that it will not be possible to have a taxi event this year but to aim for one in May or June 2003. We realise that this will cause disappointment to our Vulcan friends not least to the engineers who have worked so hard on the aircraft through all kinds of weather. We will endeavour to get the aircraft ready for next spring, in the mean time will have to carry out engine ground runs to maintain the engines. We will advise (giving very short notice) when these will take place and this work can be viewed by attending the Saturday Market at Wellsbourne.

Thanks to Damien Burke.
XM655 Preservation Society

TREASURERS REPORT

Income and Expenditure Account for the period 1st February to 17th July 2002 is attached.

Annual General Meeting.

Our major expenditure in the period is the cost of the Annual General Meeting. The total account for all services provided by Dauncey's Hotel was £3,197.25 (+ £200 deposit paid in advance).

Within this account: Cost of the Bar = £275.25; Wine £173.00; Disco £130.00. Members have paid in £1923.00 which is included in the 2001/02 accounts. In this financial year a further £1131.00 was received, making a total of £3054.00 income.

The total cost to the Association for the event was £143.25.

Commemorative Event at St Clement Danes

25 persons booked for this event, including our guest, Mrs. Gladys Burville.

£260 was received for tickets and £325.00 was paid to FABEA for lunch tickets and the Association made a contribution towards the event of £100.00 I have not yet received an account for the travel expenses for Mrs. Burville.

Note: There is an outstanding query regarding payment~ by Vic Gibbs and Robin White cheques have not been received.

Printing & Postage of Newsletters —2002

Graham Beeston (MapleOak Services Ltd) has published two editions of the newsletters this year. Below is a summary of the accounts which shows the difference in expenditure as a result of the e-mail transmission of the June edition.

Edition	Printed Copies	Cost inc VAT	Post UK	Cost 2 nd Class	O'seas Cost	Cost	Total Cost
Feb 2002	412	£198.23	383	£72.77	28	£33.69	£304.69
June 2002	277	£91.13	264	£50.16	13	£12.59	£153.88

AGM — APRIL 2003

Our 2003 annual reunion and AGM is to be held on 12 April next in Weston-super-Mare and again at Daunceys Hotel which, for those who did not come this year, lies on the seafront to the North of the town. The hotel is family run and offers a good standard of accommodation with many rooms offering a view over Weston Bay and Brean Down. The price of accommodation is typically £35 per person per night bed and breakfast for a room with a sea view. We have reserved a small number of rooms at a special price of £29 per person for a night's bed and breakfast booked through the Association

The cost of the Dinner Dance, the AGM finger buffet and tea after the meeting will cost you about £22 each (prices have yet to be finalised for 2003) with all the events taking place in the hotel. Should you wish to attend just the AGM the buffet will be around £6 and those of you who wish to attend the dinner-dance without the preliminary events

the cost is £17-50. Again we have decided to subsidise drinks purchased from the bar by charging just £1-00 a glass whatever its content.

The timetable of events is:

- **12 Apr 03**
8-00pm Dauncey's Bar Informal Meet and Greet
- **13 Apr 03**
10-30am Members commence arrival at AGM venue – Dauncey's Hotel.
- 11-00pm Bar facility open.
- 12-30pm Finger Buffet commences.
- 1-30pm AGM Commences with Trophy presentation.
- 3-00pm AGM complete. Tea served.
- 3-30pm Members disperse
- 7-00 for 7-30 Dinner Dance

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Nick-named 'Tiny' for being the largest person, in the largest entry to date (87th), was to be expected of service humour. I went on to become Wing, and Sigrist Trophy heavyweight champion, and also held the Wing record for hammer throwing.

Passed out in 1960 as an Air Radio Fitter and posted to Boscombe Down, where size again mattered, as they needed a big lad to cart the new ECM equipments about, which were

really just big, heavy, power supplies! I left the RAF after my 12 years, and remained with electronics, Marconi Instruments, Scientific Atlanta, and now in Quality Assurance with T-Mobile (nee One 2 One).

I offer myself to be elected as Chairman of the Association, because I feel I can contribute my experience of service, and commercial life, to benefit our Association. I would be honoured to be elected to serve my comrades.

LETTERS

I CAN'T REMEMBER

Just a line to say I'm living, that I'm not among the dead.

Though I'm getting more forgetful (i.e. mixed-up in the head).

I've got used to my arthritis, to my dentures I'm resigned,

I can manage my bifocals - but God! - I miss my mind!

For sometimes I can't remember when I look up at the stairs,

If I must go up for something, or have I just come down from there?

And before the fridge, so often, my poor mind is filled with doubt,

Have I just put food away, or have I come to take some out?

And there are times, when it's dark, with my nightcap on my head,

I don't know if I'm retiring - or just getting out of bed.

So, if it's my turn to write you, there's no need for getting sore,

I may think that I have written, and don't want to be a bore.

Just remember that I think of you, although you are not near,

But now it's nearly mail time I must get my brain in gear.

Here I stand beside the mailbox, with a face so very red -

Instead of sending you my letter, I have opened it instead!!

Denis Grant
76th Entry

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 16)

There is an old trades union principle: If you walk out you have lost control of the situation, stay in and make the system work for you. In this instance it is clear that change will only come about by people plugging away at that which they find offensive.

Finally, it must be remembered that had the spirit of friendship and comradeship been applied evenly, then this letter would not have been necessary.

Signed as above

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

D.G. PENBERTHY
 'Heathbank', Barrack Shute,
 Niton, Isle of Wight PO38 2BE

J.P.M. MILLS
 53 Hope Fold Avenue, Atherton,
 Manchester M46 OBW

Dear Editor,

To say that the Chairman was disingenuous in the remarks he made at the A.G.M. -as reported in the Newsletter, June 2002 — when he declared that Members should consider what they could do for the Association rather than expecting it to work for them, is evident.

He is aware that a Discussion Paper on the future of the Apprentice Records was prepared in January 2001, and its receipt acknowledged by the Secretary. That no further response was ever received by the author of the paper indicates that the Law of the Ostrich is not unknown in some quarters.

A letter was addressed to the Secretary in August 2001 — a reply to which is still wanting — in which Messrs. Penberthy and Mills volunteered their services to conduct a preliminary survey and cataloguing exercise of the Apprentice Records held at R.A.F. Henlow. This would have been carried out entirely at their own expense.

That two members were prepared

to give time, money and effort to the Association gives lie to the assertion that there are those who only take. That the offer was made in the spirit of comradeship and friendship - the Chairman's very own words - is also a fact ignored by him.

The proposal at the last A.G.M. - that Weston-super-Mare be the venue for all future AGMs. - would have made members' access to the Apprentice Files at Henlow difficult. Even though the proposal was defeated, it might be even more difficult for members now as the cabinets *containing the records given into the custody of the Association* were moved last year - soon after members' growing interest in their existence became apparent - from years of being stored in a place of relatively easy reach to the Museum at R.A.F. Henlow. Could this be a ploy on the part of someone to restrict access to the records? We should be told!

It is becoming very clear that the opinions of outsiders *i.e. non-Committee Members* are not welcome. This is redolent of all we loved of the Royal Air Force, do you remember? "You aren't paid to think, Laddie, you're paid to do what you are told." Happy, best-forgotten days, and the reason why so many of us moved into a world where we were expected to think and to react without having to thumb through Queen's Regulations first.

(Continued on page 17)

YOUR NEW SECRETARY

Never volunteer for anything!!

One volunteer is worth two pressed men!!

I am not sure which of the above maxims applies but nonetheless the deed is done and you have me (Subject to ratification at 03AGM).

I served my 'Apprenticeship of the Wheel' with the 72nd Entry the second entry to enlist at Locking. I struggled for a lot of the time but managed to pass out with them. I will certainly never forget those formative years, which is one reason for my volunteering to be your secretary in the Association's hour of need. My one disciplinary blemish during the 3 years was to be apprehended by a CAA in A Sqdn. when leaving the mess with a bulging blouse crammed with bread and a mug of tea in hand. I was, apparently, stealing another airman's rations and therefore I was to incur the wrath of the Sqdn Commander. 3 days he said- thanks I said- and duly served the sentence. They said the findings would be expunged from my service record, but when I asked to sign on beyond 12 years they said there are too many of you. I rest my case!

Oh the bread was for toasting with the iron in case you thought I was en route to the pig farm.

Following my service 'Career' there were a few unsettled years employed on Computer Engineering but being unable to settle near big Cities. Then a spell of 25 years with Brit Telecom as an engineer before taking redundancy and subsequently retiring completely in 2000.

On a personal note I am married to Anne and have been so for 43 years (They get less for murder). We have had 3 children now aged 42, 40, and 34. Anne and I live in Lincoln where we enjoy gardening, going on holidays and visiting family.

I undertake to serve the Association to the best of my ability and look forward to enjoying many gatherings.

N.B. I am already missing having Photocopiers, Laser Printers and Scanners to hand they are the things you take for granted when at work.

David Gunby

72nd Entry

FABEA 80TH ANNIVERSARY

The Aircraft Apprentice Scheme was introduced into the Royal Air Force in 1922 and was followed later by the training of Apprentices in other trades and by the Boy Entrant scheme, and it was our happy lot to celebrate its 80th anniversary on 26th May 2002.

The means of doing this was a commemorative service at St Clement Danes in The Strand, followed by a buffet lunch across the road in the imposing Great Hall of the Royal Courts of Justice.

A wreath of blue flowers was laid on the memorial stone and after the service, a cheque for £1,000 was presented to the church from the federation, all the member associations having contributed. some 500 people attended the service and over 400 the lunch.



The service was led by the Reverend David Mackenzie, Resident Chaplain, ably supported by various others including the Reverend Canon Doctor Fred Bailie for the Ruislip Apprentice Clerks 50th Entry (1938), and Reverend Bill Pegg, 9M9, 54th Entry.



REUNIONS

Has it been worth it? I don't know. Probably. You see I have a theory that life is fundamentally boring and that we have to occupy our time, to invent stratagems, e.g. paint pictures, write silly articles, walk the Pyrenees, to make it appear interesting. This is the curse of human intelligence and I often wish I were just a cow on some sylvan Somerset Level quietly and contentedly munching the cud and looking bemusedly at frenetic humans trying not to be bored. [Now I feel that Terry Clark won't immediately agree with this evaluation of life: he finds it exciting - but then he's always doing things, and that is why he's not bored. Ditto Bernard Leighton]

It was interesting - I had written 'good' first, but 'interesting' is truer - meeting the folk at Weston (and at Cambridge and Ironbridge and Retten-don) and they seemed so much nicer than I remember them. [There now! Was I a pariah or was it rancid imagination?] Mannerisms, stances, looks which people have, and which I'd completely forgotten, were what I found interesting for as soon as I saw the people those characteristics said that's Joe Craig, that's Gordon Needham, that's Noel Thorpe. At 16, at 17, we were the man we see at 60. Frighten-

LETTERS

To the Sprog who borrowed my H2S notebook in December 1958, - Could I have it back if you're finished with it?

AA Hinson, 82nd Entry

ing, really, that we don't develop, that we are what we were; fatter, balder, more wrinkled, impotent maybe, but really still the same.

And I suppose since taking on this thing I've widened friendships: I enjoy the company of John T, Alex G, Bernard L, Brian Francis and Ken Snape - don't often see many others, except at reunions. Well, at least I think I enjoy their company. Perhaps I don't really? Perhaps I just like spending the time driving over to see them, filling in those boring hours, not living like a cow. Perhaps.

Since 1994 I've not really tried to find many other addresses. If the number of addresses found seems wondrously large then, coyly, I must admit it is not by my efforts. You see Mike Collier insists on letting me know the addresses of those who failed to pass out with us and who passed out with another entry.

But now the JAP team are fiercely searching, with the power of UK-Info Disk, for un-addressed names to make 2003 Golden Reunion just that bit more fulsome. Perhaps? Perhaps.

REUNIONS

(Continued from page 13)

And I won and Castle still hasn't paid, the swine! [I am so glad that Mike Collier wasn't searching out the names for the 76th at that time, for I'd have lost: he is very thorough and has been known to check out bones in charnel houses in an attempt to identify "lost" members]

Having found one or two addresses I would then send to those people a copy of the addresses of those found, and a copy of the pass out list, and ask them to search their own local phone books for the remaining names on the list. But I soon had to stop this, for telephone directories of say "Hampshire" spilled over into say "W Sussex" and angry people in W Sussex were telling me they'd just been phoned by someone (from "Hampshire" presumably) also asking if they were "John Bloggs, sometime of Locking?"

So then began a more solitary slog. There were then 108 BT phone books: it was a labour - and not of love. I would take about 10 or so names, with initials of course, and go through the directories, noting down numbers and phoning them in the evening. I soon learnt that it was best to start with the directories covering areas east of a line from the Wash to Southampton for that was, and still is, where most people were to be found. But for some names I might have to go through all 108 di-

rectories and when that happened the search was usually unsuccessful.

I then spent a day or two in Birmingham Central Library looking at NZ, Australian and some US phone books but with no success. But this was getting too much. Then a librarian (at Birmingham, I think) told me that the Australians had just put their electoral registers onto microfiche. So I drove to London and put the car into a car-park well known from frequent visits to the Festival Hall during the '70s and early '80s and which was not too far from Australia House. I had to wait a bit at Australia House because some guy was using the microfiche but when it was free I soon found several Clark, TB. I returned to the car to find that parking fees had risen considerably since the early '80s - £11:50 I seem to remember! Anyway I wrote to all the Australian TB Clarks and next thing I knew Terry was phoning telling me De Soyza was there, and Birnie and Price too, and that Mike Somerville was dead. [Not long before this I had been in conversation with a Canon M Somerville, of Wells I think, and he was not aware of Mike's state so it shows just how much they know about the life hereafter!]

By which time (mid '94) it was necessary to divert attention to arranging the first reunion at Weston-super-Mare....

* * * *

REUNIONS

Happy memories came flooding back for ex-RAF pals when they met for the first time in nearly 50 years.

Derek Foster, from Biggleswade last saw his old friends Rod Kent, Dave Painter and Ben Cuming in 1955 - 47 years ago.

The gang forged strong friendships when they met in their late teens and



trained as aircraft apprentices at an RAF base in Somerset.

As part of the reunion the friends visited the Signals Museum at RAF Henlow where they viewed some of the equipment they trained and worked on during their careers.

Derek and the others were all in the

73rd Entry at RAF Locking between 1953 and 1955 when they were aged between 16 and 19.

Ben and Derek made contact again on the Internet while Ben and Rod met across the airwaves through amateur radio.

The reunion was made possible thanks to the Aircraft Apprentices Association at RAF Locking.

At the reunion Derek said: "It's great to all be together again, it is as if we haven't been apart. We very quickly picked up where we left off."

And Dave said: "We haven't stopped reminiscing since we met. It's relatively easy to recognise each other even after all these years."

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For Derek, 65, the occasion was his first visit to his hometown for 22 years after emigrating to Australia.

He is now retired and lives in a small country town near Brisbane but said he still regards Biggleswade as home.

He said: "I've met lots of people I went to school with and people who

knew my family. There have been lots of changes in the town, housing has replaced many of the open areas I remember from my childhood."

If you have any photographs, information or items of interest to the signals museum, contact curator Dave Thompson on 01462851515 ext7919.

Report by Mark Payne
Biggleswade Chronicle

REUNIONS

[Alex Gumbrecht asked Peter Platt to write an article for the 75th website - <http://homepage.dtn.ntl.com/alex812/75th/> - in an attempt to whip up interest for the coming 75th Golden Reunion in September 2003. This is the result, and we hope it might amuse - Ed.] (How could I refuse!)

HAS IT BEEN WORTH IT?

God, in whom I don't believe, has been kind to me. Well He didn't exactly give me DeCaprio good looks (and neither has the brain had quite that same quality of beauty either, especially these days!) but He's always ensured I've been warm, reasonably clothed, had a full belly, comfortable lodgings - and He did save me from marriage! Oh, there was a brief hiatus in this good fortune when He made me an Apprentice but He made up for that later by

ensuring early retirement from work then tending toward tedium - *and* with enhanced pension to boot!

With free time on my hands I began to think about earlier times (as do the unworked ageing) and wondered if I should try and contact old buddies (?) with the possibility of having a reunion. I pondered this for some time.

What was the point of a reunion? You've not seen, or been in contact with, those folk for near 40 years so why bother having a reunion? It's not as if we'd fought together in the war - hell it was only three years of an imagined purgatory mildly relieved by illicit beer in the Windsor and fumbling unrequited sex in Worlebury Wood. Indeed, was I the person to organise it? - me the spotty faced, big eared, callow youth with a liking for Beethoven and a strong dislike of calculus and all things involving teams? Per-

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REUNIONS

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haps the pariah of the entry? No! No! Better leave it to the entry leaders, the dynamos, the bounding extroverts, the Thompsons, the De Soyzas, the Craigs, et al. They were the people to do it. And in any case it's going to cost money and you know how mean you are...!

* * * * *

Satan, in whom I *do* believe, has been unkind to me. After more than twelve months shilly-shallying he tempted me into deciding to search out the whereabouts of those old buddies, whispering hissing in my ear "Just get it started Peter: do perhaps a couple of reunions, then let those dynamos of yesteryear come in and take the thing over." The old devil!

Fumblingly, as in Worlebury Wood, did I set out - only this time to try and find folk. I see I wrote the first letter on the 18th November 1992 to SSAFA at Shrewsbury requesting search tactics. Got nowhere really until somewhere I saw that an R Cooper was organising a 36th (Halton) Entry reunion: as he was local I phoned him on the 1st Feb 1993 and his advice was sound. What was needed was a list of names - say the pass out list.

On 22nd February I wrote to the station commander at Locking requesting a list of names for the 75th entry. I heard nothing. Then, on 30th April, I was summoned by ringing phone from

my bath and a bloody F/O John Hall told me about a S/L Joe Holroyd who was setting up the Locking Apprentice Association, and that I should contact him. In my half naked state (just like Worlebury Wood) I was not thinking (?) straight and forgot to ask Hall about a list of names, and later assumed that such lists were forbidden all clothed, as it were, in the secrecy of official Acts.

I went to the first LAA meeting in '93, met Dave Young and Brian Carpenter, and then went off on holiday walking the Pyrenees from Atlantic to the Med. - marvellous, I recommend you all do it before you all die! After, that I put a few adverts in various periodicals to which Mike Gentry and Tony Adcock, among others, responded and through whom got a few more addresses.

Really the breakthrough came from Neil Castle (76th) - he told me that pass-out-lists were not veiled in secrecy and a few days before Christmas 1993 he sent me a copy of the 75th list. Using BT Directories, and taking initially the funny names from the list, my first success was Tory, JR, - and it was only the second Tory, JR I had phoned! There's power in these lists, thought I, and soon challenged Castle saying I'd beat him in identifying 40 addresses for my entry before he had for his. A pint of beer was to be the prize.

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