



# LAA NEWSLETTER

Serial 31

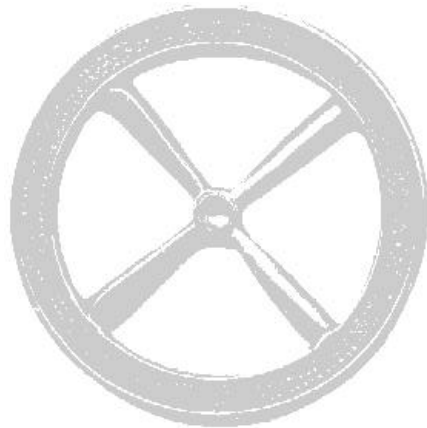
November 2001

## HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

**AGM 2002 WESTON-SUPER-MARE**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**  
**REUNIONS**

### Inside this issue:

COMMITTEE MEETING AUGUST2001	2
FABEA APPRENTICE 80TH ANNIVERSARY2002	4
MEMBERSHIP MATTERS	6
BLUE STEEL TRIALS	9
6 TSU	12
THOUGHTS ABOUT THE RAFLAA	17
AN APPRENTICE	20
81ST AND FO RIPON	23
OBITUARIES	21
COMMITTEE	28
THE WHEEL NEWS	23



### 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

## COMMITTEE MEETING — AUGUST 2001

### 2002 AGM ARRANGEMENTS

Charles Hart stated that the venue had been provisionally booked at Dauncey's Hotel Weston s Mare and then outlined the provisional timings and menus

A Meet and Greet is to be planned for the Friday Night. Detailed arrangement will be discussed at the next meeting.

### RAFLAA MEMORIAL

The committee discussed the possibility of a suitable RAFLAA memorial using an original 1940's RAF Band drum that he had acquired. Bert undertook to approach suitable sites (Flowerdown House or preferably Eagle House) that may be willing to host a display for us. Grove House, where the "Freedom Sword and Scroll" are held was deemed unsuitable as it is not open to the public. If positive response were to be forthcoming then a costed proposal would be put to the next AGM.

### APPRENTICE ARCHIVES

The committee requested the Secretary to minute the fact that due to availability of space, the No 1 Radio School Records held in trust by the RAFLAA are being moved from the location of the Serco Offices at Henlow to The Signals Museum (Old RC Church) where they will be stored in a secure area. The Secre-

tary undertook to write to David Penberthy to get him to liase with Jo Holroyd. Future arrangements will be made to sift the residue of the photographs

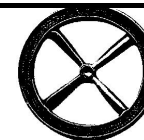
### FABEA MEETING REPORT

A copy of the minutes of the meeting was distributed to the committee members present. Glyn will produce a summary for inclusion in the Newsletter when there is room as the November issue is full. The Secretary was tasked to provide a list of current committee members to all attendees. The Secretary was also requested to write to John Luke (BRATS 192) requesting 10 tickets for the Armistice Parade. Requested for attendees at this parade should be further published at the September Function.

### TREASURERS REPORT

The income and expenditure for the first seven months is attached. This shows that our balance has increased by £564.95. This period takes into account the AGM, which was subsidised by the Association by £333.97. Two newsletters have been printed in this period. Donations include one wreath (£50) and one donation to Imperial Cancer Research (£25) and the award of £50 to Les Swainston at the AGM.

*(Continued on page 3)*



THE

NEWS

FABEA  
MAY 2002  
80TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF  
APPRENTICE  
TRAINING

---

MERRY XMAS

AND

HAPPY NEW YEAR

ESPECIALLY  
FOR THOSE SERVING IN  
THE MIDDLE EAST AT  
THIS TIME

AGM2002

Saturday  
13<sup>th</sup> of April 2002  
Weston-super-Mare  
Daunceys Hotel

BOOKING FORM  
ENCLOSED

---

ENTRY REUNIONS  
90TH  
76TH  
71ST

## RAFLAA COMMITTEE

APPOINTMENT	NAME	ADDRESS	TEL/E-MAIL	RE-ELECTION DUE	ENTRY
President	M a r t i n Palmer				91 <sup>st</sup>
Chairman	Bert Davies	20 Lakefield Ave Little Paxton St Neots Cambs PE19 4NZ	(01480) 217243 bertdavies@netscapeonline.co	Sep 02	79 <sup>th</sup>
Secretary	Glyn Price	"Sentosa" 9 Blake Hill Way, Abbeymead Glos GL4 4QR	(01452) 615265 glynprice@09sentosa. freeserve.co (home) gprice@technology.serco.com (work) (01452) 726300	Sep 02	102 <sup>nd</sup>
Treasurer	Tony Horry	Hillside Cottage Kewstoke Road Kewstoke W S M BS22 9YD	(01934) 628383 horrycorp@aol.com	Mar 03	76 <sup>th</sup>
Membership Secretary	John Farmer	8 Glenmore Road Minehead Somerset TA24 5BQ	(01643) 705443 RAFLAA@aol.com	Mar 03	77 <sup>th</sup>
Service Rep	Joe Holroyd	Well Cottage 36 High Street Guilford Morden Royston SG8 0JR	(01763) 853742 patandjoeholroyd@tesco.net	Sep 02	85 <sup>th</sup>
AA Rep	Charles Hart	9 South Road W S M BS23 2HA	(01934) 621969 charhart@supanet.com	Sep 02	71 <sup>st</sup>
General	Vic Gibbs	8 Old School Road Royal Lane Hillingdon Middlesex UB8 3WE	(01895) 235 076 Gibbsvic@aol.com	Mar 04	88 <sup>th</sup>
Craft Rep	Graham Beeston	87 Hornbeam Road Havant PO9 2UT	Home (023) 92346242 Work 0778 8795358 graham@mapleoak.co.uk	Sep 02	209 <sup>th</sup>
Tech Rep	Andy Perkins	107 Balmoral Way Worle W S M BS22 9BZ	(01934)417323 aperkins@schaffner.com	Sep 02	109 <sup>th</sup>
Newsletter Editor	Colin Ingram	Fairhaven Gooseham Morwenstow Nr Bude Cornwall EX23 9PG	(01288) 331629 cwingram@aol.com	Sep 02	88 <sup>th</sup>

## COMMITTEE MEETING — AUGUST 2001

(Continued from page 2)

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES REPORT****Recruitment.**

There may be a problem with the Appbe Web-site where until recently most of our membership enquiries have originated. There have been no enquiries since June. At first I put this down to seasonal changes but efforts to get enquiries through the system lately have been unsuccessful. Phil Mills is still unable to access the more 'involved' parts of the system and so we may a recruitment problem until we can resolve things.

**Advertising**

The Association is being advertised on Teletext re Ch 4 page 174 about 1 week in 8. (Enquiries have been filtering through as a result). The Independent Pilots Association have agreed to provide us with free advertising for AGM's etc. If we require other advertising there would be a charge. Flypast Magazine will put us in their Aviation Association & Societies Directory for £15 per entry. We have been included in the RAF News Associations & Societies Directory free of charge; if we require any other advertising there will be a charge of (about) £15 per column inch. Other organisations (SAGA and Aviation mag's etc) charges are still considered to be too expensive for the return to be gained. "Word of mouth"

is still a reliable source of enquiries although the follow up rate is not good.

**Membership**

This year to date we have had: 7 new members, 4 resignations and 2 deaths

Currently we have:

- 570 names on the Members database
- 395 'active' Members (a reduction of 4 since AGM).
- 106 'ex' Members. I have approached 25 so far about rejoining (without much success!). The remainder I intend to approach this winter.
- 35 members who have not yet paid their subscriptions for 2001. These are being 'chased'.
- 91 names on the enquiries list. I have attempted contact with the most recent 30. Very little response as yet.

**Subscriptions**

We are well into the current subscription 'reminder' programme, with a good response so far.

Members are still a bit slow to take up Life Membership, perhaps we

(Continued on page 4)

## COMMITTEE MEETING — AUGUST 2001

*(Continued from page 3)*

should advertise more? ( although having said that we have had 4 applicants for life membership this year so far), there are currently 17 life members listed.

Standing order payment of subscriptions is currently running at 221 out of the active membership of 395. 9 new Standing Orders have been started this year.

## FEDERATION OF APPRENTICES AND BOY ENTRANTS

### MAY 2002

**W**hy don't you make a date for the event 2002 ?

The 80th Anniversary of the start of the apprentice Training Scheme is to be celebrated on the 26th May 2002. This will take the form of a Church Service at St Clement Danes with a ceremony involving the laying of an

apprentice wreath followed by a buffet lunch in the Royal Courts of Justice.

Timings: Service at 11.00 a.m. followed by lunch at around 12.30 p.m.

Dress: Lounge suit, or equivalent, with medals.

Further details will be available in the next Newsletter

## EDITORS COMMENTS

**T**hank you to all contributors for this Newsletter I cannot help thinking there are a lot more ex-Apprentice stories to come out of the wood-work.

Some of the Entry Reunions are showing signs of 'Senior Moments', so make use of the Newsletter to advertise your gatherings and how about an article or two sharing the results of the events —missing out the sordid bits.

For all those wishing to include articles in the next Newsletter please note my change of address, e-mail remains the same.

Rather early — but may I wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year to you all and your Families.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the AGM

Colin W Ingram (Newsletter Editor)

## APPLICATION FOR AGM 2002 DINNER/DANCE TICKETS

### DINNER DANCE AND FINGER BUFFET

**Name:**

**Entry No:**

**Address:**

**I will be attending the 2002 AGM and wish to stay at Dauncey's Hotel on the Friday and Saturday nights (12 and 13 Apr 02)**

- 1. Please book a double room for me at £56 per person:

Total cost £112

- 2. I wish to book both lunch and dinner:

Please provide tickets @ £20pp £

- 3. I wish to attend the dinner dance only:

Please provide tickets @ 16-50pp £

- 4. I wish to attend the finger buffet lunch only:

Please provide tickets @ £5-00pp £

\_\_\_\_\_

Total

Please delete as appropriate. **Remember – to take advantage of the special accommodation offer you must return the application by end of November.**

Cheques to be crossed account payee and made out to the RAF Locking Apprentice Association

Please post your application to:

**Mr A Horry  
Hillside Cottage  
Kewstoke Road  
Kewstoke  
Weston-super-Mare  
BS232 9YD  
Tel: 01934) 628383  
email:horrycorp@aol.com**

STANDING ORDER MANDATE



To .....		Bank		<b>STANDING ORDER MANDATE</b>	
Postal Address .....					
Bank	Branch Title (not address)		Sorting Code Number		
HSBC	WESTON - SUPER-MARE		40	-	46 - 18
Beneficiary's Name			Account Number		
R AF LOCKING APPRENTICE ASSOCIATION			41368877		
For the credit of		Account Number			
Amount		Quoting Reference			
Amount in words					
The sum of	£	Amount in words			
commencing	Date of first payment	and there-after every	Due date & frequency	until further notice in writing or	Date of last payment
PLEASE CANCEL ALL PREVIOUS STANDING ORDER/DIRECT DEBITTING MANDATES					
IN FAVOUR OF:		RAF LOCKING APPRENTICE ASSOCIATION		Account to be debited	
UNDER REFERENCE No.				Account Number	
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 MATTERS

One of the Associations continuing (and ever growing) expenses is the annual "Membership Reminder Letters" and "Follow up" letters. In an effort to reduce this cost we are adopting a **TWO HITS AND OUT** policy. Members will receive two reminders only, after which their membership will be considered as lapsed.

**(Of course members can always save themselves being chased, writing cheques and so on. They can also save the Association money)!**

**How?**

**By taking out: Life Membership**



Taking out Life membership involves making a 'one off' payment of £100. Just write to the Treasurer telling him you wish to become a Life Member and include a cheque. It's as easy as that!

**OR**

**By starting a: Standing Order**

Starting a standing order is a little more complicated, (but not much!). When your next reminder comes in, fill out the enclosed Standing Order (SO) form and return it, along with the reminder to the Treasurer. (If you want to do it now), use the attached SO form.

Either way, you can save yourself a lot of time and trouble and the Association some monies which can be put to good use elsewhere.

**THINK ABOUT IT (BUT NOT FOR TOO LONG), and DO IT! (You know you really want to!).**

**NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION**

The Association is currently investigating the distribution of the Newsletter by E-mail. Those of you who are on the Internet will (hopefully) have received e-mails explaining what is intended and asking for your comments. It is possible that we may have missed one or two (see my

*(Continued on page 6)*

## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

comments in the item below), so if you are on the 'net' and have not yet been contacted please get in touch with your Membership Secretary for details. If you have received the e-mail(s) and have not responded please do so ASAP!

For those of you who have responded, this issue of the Newsletter is being sent out as a trial, both in 'hard copy' and on the net. If you have not received your e-mail copy please let the Membership Secretary know. If you have received it but are unhappy with the format please contact the Membership Secretary.

## ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP DATABASE

The Association maintains a database of member's details. This database is only as good as the information supplied and entered (the old adage 'rubbish in = rubbish out' is very relevant).

The e-mail exercise to ascertain member's views regarding distribution of the newsletter certainly brought this home. Out of nearly 200 members who are on the 'net' there were quite a number of members who had changed email addresses and had not let us know. This has meant considerable expense in postage and telephone calls to track down the new addresses so, if you do

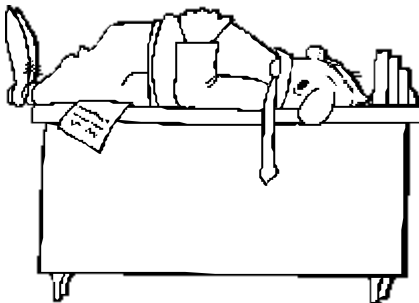
change your details in any way please! please! please! send the Membership Secretary the changes. This will be doubly important when we go over to sending the newsletter out by e-mail.

## ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP LIST

At last we have got around to sending out (reasonably) up to date membership listings.

You will notice that the format has changed from the A5 booklet to a spreadsheet read out. The listings are compiled by RAF Locking entry and alphabetical order, as it is felt that most member's interests lie in their own entry and those immediately before and after. It is also felt that this style of listing is easily amended and of course is cheaper to produce.

From the desk of :- John Farmer.  
(Membership Secretary)



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

RAF Locking  
Apprentice AssociationApplication 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 ...../...../.....

## THOUGHTS ABOUT THE RAFLAA

the reminiscences. Alas this did not come to pass, but in those early days each new Newsletter contained a list of the latest recruits and slowly a few old acquaintances have been renewed. We also had the good fortune to visit RAF Locking a place I had not seen since 1965 before it closed forever which brought back many memories. So as each AGM came around my wife and I would make the annual pilgrimage. However for the past three or four years we have not attended the AGM part of the weekend, just the Meet and Greet and Diner Dance as we felt the meeting was getting to stuffy and formal and very service orientated. At one stage there was a tendency to mention some of those who had attained commissioned rank by their rank, it altogether felt very much like being back in the service, which having been a civilian since 1973 I now find quite alien. I have raised some of these points with some colleagues in the RAFLAA and they in general reflect my thoughts. So what do I want from the association, basically its simple. All I want is a couple of newsletters a year with names and entries of new members to see if there is anyone I knew amongst them, a few anecdotes and a social meeting once maybe twice a year where me and my wife can have a weekend away and renew acquaintances. It has not gone without notice that we have not received a membership update now for several

years, so I haven't a clue who from my entry has joined in the last three to four years. What we appear to be moving towards I'm afraid is a more and more complex club which is getting wrapped up in bureaucracy and procedure while searching for new ventures to get involved in and in the process not serving the members basic requirements.

I'm also a member of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association and I think the RAFLAA could do well to take a leaf out of their book. We meet once a year, usually in October for a weekend in the Jarvis Hotel in Solihull. The AGM takes about 1/2 an hour, and the rest of the time filled with social events plus photo's and video's of any recent return visits to the Far East. We get about 3 newsletters a year which are brief but relevant and about every two years someone volunteers to organise a trip back to the Far East. The whole atmosphere is friendly and buzzes with reminiscences and except from those I knew personally I haven't a clue what rank they attained.

Finally these are my views, they may not be the view of the greater membership, I have no objection to this letter being published in part or whole in the Newsletter to solicit the views of other members. I know the committee put a lot of effort into running the RAFLAA but I would not wish that effort to be misplaced as this will only lead to a further drift away of members.

## AGM 2002

As set out in the last newsletter, AGM2002 is to be held on 13 April 2002 in Weston-super-Mare at Dauncey's Hotel which lies on the sea-front to the North of the town. It is ideally placed close to a large car park and the side roads around about are generally light of traffic at that time of year. A map to get you orientated is included.

The hotel is family run and offers a good standard of accommodation with many rooms offering a view over Brean Down. The price of accommodation is typically £33 per person per night bed and breakfast for a room with a sea view; however, we have reserved a small number of double rooms at a special price of £56 per person for 2 nights bed and breakfast booked through the Association. If you wish to grab this outstanding offer you will have to be quick since the hotel has placed on it a deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> December. After this date the offer is withdrawn so it is first come, first served. Unfortunately, the hotel was unable to offer a similar discount for single rooms; however, if you contact the association (Charles Hart) we may be able to get a special price for those coming unaccompanied.

The cost of the Dinner Dance, the AGM finger buffet and tea after the meeting will cost you £20 each with all

the events taking place in the hotel. Should you wish to attend just the AGM the buffet will cost you £5 and those of you who wish to attend the dinner-dance without the preliminary events the cost is £16-50. This year we have decided to subsidise drinks purchased from the bar by charging just £1-00 a glass whatever its content.

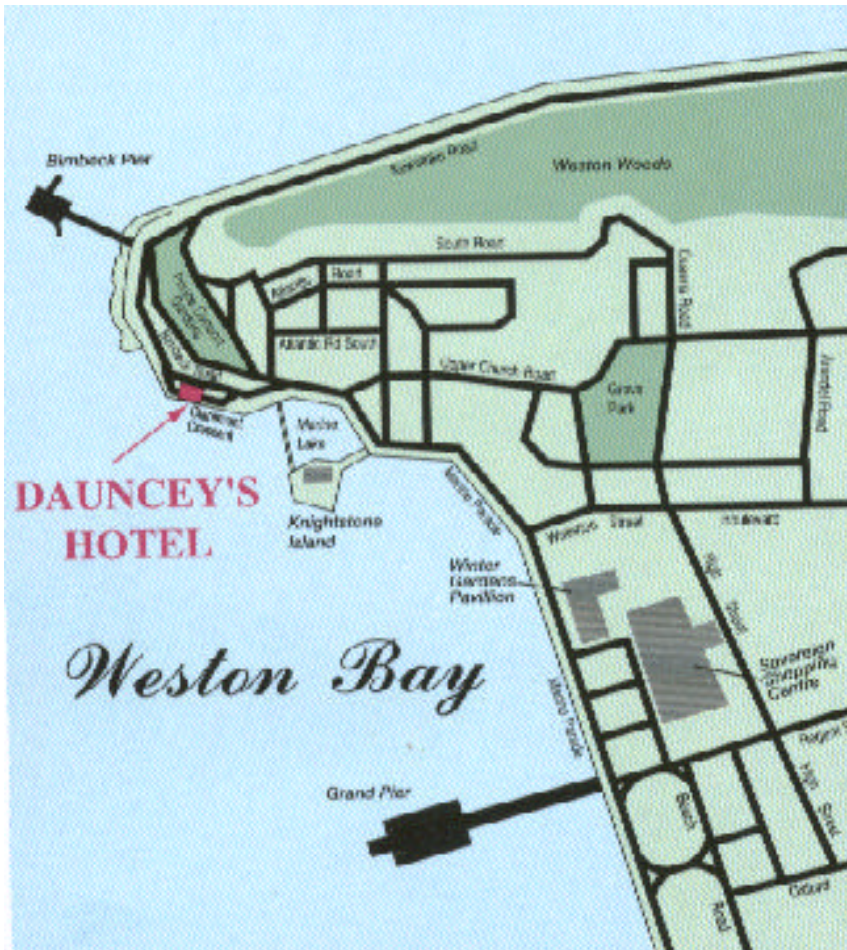
### The timetable of events is:

- 12 Apr 02 - Informal Meet and Greet; 8-00pm, Dauncey's Bar
- 13 Apr 02 - 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

(See page 20 for Form)



AGM 2002



## 81ST ENTRY AND FLYING OFFICER T A RIPPON DFC

James Pettigrew (81<sup>st</sup>)

Having seen the obituary for our much respected flight commander I began to search among my old photographs and I found a copy of the enclosed together with the names and home towns of those in the photo. The original photo was taken with a simple box camera and is a bit fuzzy, no auto focus in those days, but I have had this enlarged and slightly enhanced.

Our LAA was Tin Maung of the Burmese Air Force but he was not present

for the photograph but I do remember that he was an excellent boxer.

This was taken some three months after we volunteered and as we are all wearing our best hats perhaps it was taken after an Entry Commander's inspection or a compulsory Church Parade.

The photograph was taken before I went off to join the band after Christmas leave. Later I was to return to the Squadron at the beginning of our second year as one of the first two LAAs from the 81st Entry. In 1957 I was invalided out of the service so I never

**Hut 358 December 1955**

**Back row:** Dennis (Canterbury), Ross (Edinburgh), Luck (London), Vincent (Taunton), J M Pettigrew (Barking)

**Centre Row :** Critchley (Portsmouth), Graves (Reading), Bufton (n/k), Auger

(n/k), Buggy (Brighton), Horder (Southampton), Kennedy (Glasgow)

**Front row:** Prowse (Milton), Thomas (Birmingham), Fg Off Rippon DFC, Chiddicks (London), Harbison (Colerne), Newman (Bristol)



## OBITUARY – NORMAN ‘LEFTY’ WRIGHT 94<sup>TH</sup> ENTRY

*(Continued from page 21)*

precious to him and not a day passed when he and his family did not feel grateful to the donor's family for their gift of life. Throughout his protracted illness he met the problem head-on with great courage and fortitude, he fought the good fight; never losing his sense of humour. Since his illness, he has been unable to attend the 94<sup>th</sup> Entry annual reunions and I am sure we shall all miss him very

much in the future.

Norman and Michele enjoyed 33 years of happy marriage and raised a family of 3, they being Simon, Catherine and Janine, all love and miss him very much. On a personal note, I will miss the regular contact that I have enjoyed with Norman over the past 10 years and will remember him with great affection.

## OBITUARY— PADRE SCHOFIELD

Bob Machin (100th)

I am writing to pass on the sad news that my father-in-law, Philip Schofield died on August 20th at Nightingale House Hospice in Wrexham. He was 80 years old.

During his 18 years in the R.A.F., he served at many stations in U.K. and overseas including, RAF Coltishall, RAF Changi, Aden, RAF Butzweilerhof, RAF Halton and two tours at RAF Locking, in 1953 and from 1960 to 1964.

On retirement in 1970 he was the Director of Studies at Ampert House in Andover.

He will be remembered by many ex-Apps I'm sure. His gift for Magic and Ventriloquism enabled him to mix easily with all strata of Service and civilian life. His dummy,

“Jimmie”, allowed him to crack jokes and poke fun at the pompous in a way that a Padre could not, and served to carry his Christian message to young and old alike.

Along with his wife, Dorothy, the indomitable “Mrs.S.”, the P.M.U.B. Club was always welcoming and friendly. A home from home for young men far from their own families. Dorothy died in 1969.

As a Minister, his message was always straightforward and he gained immense respect from all his congregations. Padre's Hour with him was something to look forward to. He is sadly missed by his family and his friends worldwide.

## MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE BLUE STEEL TRIALS

Bob Fairchild (85th Entry)

### THE AUTHOR

I joined the RAF as an Apprentice in the 85<sup>th</sup> Entry in 1957, and trained as an Air Radio Fitter. I really only had two types of job during my service in the RAF:-

- As an Air Radio Fitter on Valiants at RAF Marham - mainly on 214 Squadron, which at the time was the RAF's sole flight refuelling squadron.
- On Blue Steel, initially trials in South Australia, and then for a year in the UK at Scampton and Wittering.

I bought myself out of the RAF in 1966 to join International Computers and Tabulators, now International Computers Limited (ICL) and part of Fujitsu. I continue to work for ICL, currently as a Quality Assurance manager on Defence projects, and I work closely with the RAF.

### POSTING TO NO 4 JOINT SERVICES TRIALS UNIT, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

I was posted to RAAF Edinburgh in January 1964. The RAF V Bomber force had already switched to a hedge hopping role and had relinquished its white anti-flash finish in favour of a traditional camouflage top. Blue Steel had likewise been modified from its high altitude launch capability to one of a low-level drop.

Blue Steel trials were nearing an end - a posting would normally have been for a two to two and a half years. My posting was for one year only. I was aware that No. 4 JSTU postings for some people in South Australia had been extended to five years.

### MY 4 JSTU JOB

On arrival at Number 4 JSTU, I was assigned to the small telemetry team.

While not part of the operational Blue Steel system, telemetry was an essential requirement of the trials. Telemetry sensed the performance of key functions within the missile, transmitted the data to Woomera Range Control, to be recorded for later analysis.

In simple terms the team's job (there were nine or ten of us) was to prepare the black box containing a line-scanner / switch and the radio transmitter, to fit it in the weapons bay of the Blue Steel (shared with the UKAEA telemetry systems), and check out the continuity of the line wiring, which linked the sensing transducers to the box. In addition, a member of the telemetry team would fly out to Woomera to observe each launch through the telemetry signals received and displayed as histograms on ground equipment. By monitoring key functions on the approach to the launch, as well as during its flight, we could identify faults within the missile and halt a drop, which would otherwise have

*(Continued on page 10)*

## MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE BLUE STEEL TRIALS

*(Continued from page 9)*

been unsuccessful. The objective was to press the panic button, and abort the drop if there were any signs of malfunction within the Blue Steel's complex rocket, guidance and navigational systems.

Unfortunately, quite often the telemetry itself would fail and the drop would be aborted for this reason only. Over the years the telemetry system and the team gained a bit of a reputation.

### MY CLAIM TO FAME

As a new boy, and single at that, I was sent to Woomera at the earliest opportunity. Each visit was for just one or two nights. I normally flew out in a Viscount, but had a couple of trips in a Dakota – an experience in itself!

I quite liked going. The range and the village were both interesting places. Bloodhound, Blue Streak and other trials were in full swing. It was the first time I had seen young girls riding heavy, high-powered motor-bikes. I was surprised to find many foreigners / new Australians employed in Woomera. While there, I first heard the descriptions *Croat* and *Serb*. To me these guys were simply *Jugoslavian*. Many years later, these descriptions were to become commonplace in media reports of a serious, still ongoing world issue.

I remember the Woomera weather being extreme. The days were usually beautifully warm and sunny, but the nights were bitterly cold, and it was normal to wake up to a visible ground frost.

Anyway, after my first three trips, the powers that be, realised that the drops had been achieved on time, first time, and were all a success. It was said, "Fairchild travels to Woomera with good luck in his bag". Consequently, I was "invited" to observe most of the remaining drops, which all went pretty well.

Over approximately seven months I observed about nine drops. That was a very good record – my mate Mick Kelly (also an ex 85<sup>th</sup> Entry Apprentice) saw only about three over a five year spell. And one of his only "flew" a few hundred yards before ploughing into the bush.

So, in spite of all the government money which was spent on the project, and the employment of 1960's high technology, the successful completion of Blue Steel trials in South Australia really relied on good luck – MINE!

### BLUE STEEL – THE LAST TASK?

I left the RAF in 1966 to join the developing computer industry.

Sadly, I heard nothing more about Blue Steel except possibly in 1982 when the Falkland Islands were still

*(Continued on page 11)*

## OBITUARY – NORMAN 'LEFTY' WRIGHT 94<sup>TH</sup> ENTRY

Pete Purdy (94<sup>th</sup> Entry)

Norman Wright was born in Hornchurch Essex in October 1942, when he was 5 years old his parents emigrated to South Africa and later moved to (the then) Northern Rhodesia. He returned to the UK aged 16 years to join the Royal Air Force, originally with the 93<sup>rd</sup> Entry at Locking and later (having seen the error of his judgement!) joined the 94<sup>th</sup>. He quickly became a popular member of our Entry, where his unmistakable South African accent and sense of humour quickly became his trademark; his height and build made him an extremely good basketball player (he later went on to play for RAF Germany) and athlete. He graduated in 1962 as a Ground Wireless Fitter.

In May 1968 whilst serving in Holland at AFCENT he met Michele and Norman (who was never one to let a good opportunity pass him by) and her were married in December of that year. Following demob in 1972 they returned to Africa where he was employed by the Zambian government as a Radio Engineer, later moving down to Botswana to join a friend in an ill-fated project building hovercraft which went bankrupt and then moved on to Durban in South Africa.

In 1976, by then with 3 children they returned to the UK to settle in Newcastle and Norman began a career in Social work. When fully

qualified, he began working with people with learning difficulties and eventually became responsible for running a unit that specialised in enabling disabled people to get into real employment. It was during this period that he took up running and completed 5 half Marathons and 2 coast-to-coast runs.

In 1994, a serious back problem forced Norman to retire prematurely and wishing to remain intellectually active, he embarked upon a Social Sciences course with the Open University. The OU course, which he attacked with great enthusiasm kept him busy for the next few years and he graduated with a B.Sc in Social Sciences.

In 1998 Norman contracted a very serious and progressively debilitating lung disease and in 1999, all treatment having been unsuccessful he was considered suitable for a lung transplant. Newcastle Freeman Hospital is a centre of excellence for lung transplants and the procedure was carried out there in March 2000. Post-operative recovery was quite good but with several infections in 2000 and a severe episode of rejection in February 2001, which required intensive care treatment. He was re-admitted to hospital on August 21<sup>st</sup> 2001 with a lung infection and passed away peacefully on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

The transplant gave Norman an extra 18 months of life with his very close loving family, a time that was very

*(Continued on page 22)*

## AN APPRENTICE

Ken Keeling

I Wonder ...

Who could it be who acts on free,  
Who fools about in endless spree,  
Who could not care less for anyone,  
Who frequently sings some low down  
song?

Who keeps sick people up all night,  
Who argues 'till you say he is right,  
Who lays in bed when reveille sounds,  
And often smokes when out of bounds?

Who polishes buttons and spits on boots,  
And joins the Band of bull mad brutes,  
Illegal creases and crew cut hair,  
Yet when skiving comes, he'll do his  
share?

Who wears those shining shashed peak  
caps,  
And doesn't like the NS chaps,  
Who often chases NAAFI girls,  
The ones who don't have pinned up curls?

Who pays no attention in class each day,  
Who hacks at desks in friendly play,  
Who pushes in the NAAFI queue,  
Then passes the blame back onto you?

Who whips away to Worle Golf Club,  
Then quietly slips to the Windsor pub,  
Who whips wireless spares to sell in town,  
Anything for a gash half-crown?

Who goes special sick when it's PT or drill,  
And says he's in pain or has a terrible chill,  
When its CO's parade and it's all Best Blue,  
Who hides in that field behind SSQ?

Who could it be that spends his time  
On 'Jankers' parade for some silly crime,  
Who jeers and shouts in the Astra at night,  
And is always fusing lights?

But being more serious, who can smile,  
And have a joke when others writhe  
And muck in together and share the rough  
And prove he really is quite tough?

Who proves that Service spirit's great,  
And is always prepared to help his mate,  
And isn't really a bad bloke you know,  
Well who is it?

AN APPRENTICE

-I'm telling you so!

Anon

## MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE BLUE STEEL TRIALS

*(Continued from page 10)*

temporarily occupied by Argentina. There was a report in the press on a Vulcan, which was forced to make an emergency landing in Brazil. Apparently, the pilot had snapped off the nose probe during in-flight refuelling en route to Port Stanley. The Brazilians had impounded the aircraft and it's "large missile". I assumed the missile to be a Blue Steel, with a conventional warhead. If it was, then the two job elements of my RAF service came together with this incident, which also was likely to have been the last threatened live operational use of Blue Steel.

Can anyone confirm if the Vulcan on this sortie did in fact carry our missile?

## POSTSCRIPT

I have contacted the reunion secretary.

It would appear that there is still a Blue Steel in Adelaide, and that the ex-4 JSTU people living in the area plan to help restore it for display in the South Australia Aviation Museum. The restorers occasionally visit the range at Mirikata and pick up spare parts from the bush. That is after 40 years - a good job that most of Blue Steel was stainless.

Actually, of interest to LAA members, is the fact that many parts were manufactured just across the road from Locking, in Banwell. Remember looking through the fence when pretending to do a cross-country run.



## 6TSU THE "MIDDLE" YEARS

John Farmer Membership Sec (77<sup>th</sup>)

Reading Brian Davies memories of 6TSU in the last newsletter brought back a few memories for me.

I served in 6TSU from 1964 to 1966 when the unit was originally known as: APCE (Air Portable Communications Element). The name was changed to 6TSU about half way through my tenure. The unit was originally an integral part of 224 Group and the C/O reported directly to the OC Commanding. Although we remained part of 224 Group after the change of name we developed our own command structure. APCE/6TSU was responsible for providing Air Portable and Land Mobile communication resources throughout the FEAF Theatre. The unit was equipped and staffed to set up and maintain a complete Airfield Communications requirement at very short notice as well as numerous other 'signals' related tasks including front line Radar units in Borneo and Joint Service Operations.

The unit was considerably smaller in those days consisting about 100 personnel (rising to about 170). Originally with an Flt Lt in charge, a WO and assorted Senior and Junior NCOs and Airmen (and of course Tambi the chai wallah and his sidekick). The CO was later upgraded to Sqn Ldr and PO's were posted in as flight commanders with WO's and

Flt Sgts in support.

Accommodation was basic; with most of the equipment stored and maintained in a small hanger or garage like wire mesh bays. 2<sup>nd</sup> line radio servicing was carried out in an air-conditioned breeze block hut at the bottom end of the unit compound. The accommodation did not change all that much during my stay (although we did get a smart Office block when the new CO arrived)! The unit consisted of flights of Telegraphers, Ground Radio Servicing and Motor Transport personnel.

The Telegraphers manned the signals centre in the HQ 224 Group compound, went on 'JOCOMEX' (Joint Operations Communications Exercise) jollies to RN and Army units (to learn each other procedures). There were ugly rumours about trips to RN ships and free issues of beer and spirits! They also manned the various "away teams" (to use Star Trek parlance); Brigade Air Support Officer Support Communication Teams (BASOCs); Mobile Air Operation Teams MOATs and such like which usually involved leaping into land rovers and racing all around the country side. All very romantic sounding, but (sometimes) very hard work in dreadful conditions.

The MT flight took care of the fleet of Land rovers and specialist vehicles and air portable/mobile signal cabins

*(Continued on page 13)*

## 76TH WHERE ARE THEY

MIKE COLLIER (ex - 76th)

I am still trying to locate the last three "missing original members of the 76th. My hope is that someone might have met one of them at one of the stations mentioned below or better yet might still be in touch. Failing that did anyone work with them in civvy street? Any data, no matter how trivial it might seem, could be useful. Hence:

1. Were you at Brize Norton 1966/1967 and came across a Ground Wireless Fitter Sgt. WILLIAM (BILL) ALBERT SMITH. Originally from

Durham. Demobbed around Feb 67.

2. Or at Abingdon 1966/1967 and came across an Air Radio Fitter Cpl. DAVID (DAVE) BROKENSHERE. Originally from Plymouth. Demobbed around Apl 67.

3. Or at Finningley 1964/1965 and came across an Air Radar Fitter Cpl. DONALD JOHN PHILLIPS. Originally from Teddington, Middlesex. Demobbed around Nov65.

Please call Mike Collier 01386 553298. I really would be most grateful for any scrap of information.

## NEW BOOKS - ELECTRONIC AIRBORNE GOLDFISH

'ELECTRONIC AIRBORNE GOLDFISH' by Air Cdre John Clements with a foreword by Air Marshal Sir Eric Dunn KBE CB BEM has been published recently. His story commences with the posting in January 1940 to St Athan of six newly graduated apprentices (36th entry) from the Electrical and Wireless School, RAF Cranwell, with the task of ground and flight testing aircraft fitted with production units of the of the earliest airborne radar equipments. Within a few years two of his colleagues were killed on flight-testing duties and he experienced a ditching in the Bristol Channel in 1942. By the beginning of 1945 he had carried out some 300 flight tests of 10 different radar equipments in 18 different aircraft.

By 1958 after a tour at the Radar Research Establishment, Malvern, he had operated, although never formally aircrew, a total of 22 different radio equipments in 29 different aircraft ranging from biplanes to jets. His story concludes with his last posting from 1973 to 1976 as Air Officer, Support Command Signals Headquarters, RAF Medmenham.

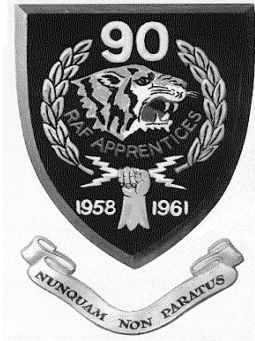
Obtainable (soft back, 124 pages and 50 photos and illustrations) from Paterchurch Publications, 6 Laws Street, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire SA72 6DL. Price £10.95 including postage.

Or, for a signed copy, from Air Cdre A J B Clements, 11 Chelwood Close, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2RR.

## 90 A/A ASSOCIATION

NOT YET FOUND

742 Allen R  
745 Aries N  
743 Ashton R  
747 Baker K  
808 Baldwin A M  
750 Beale D J  
801 Boreham W H  
951 Broadhead E A  
802 Brooksbank D  
098 Burgess G  
813 Butterworth R J  
818 Chambers J  
400 Christie A H  
819 Claridge S L  
759 Collings B A H  
764 Cox D V  
926 Cronin J A  
770 Devine M J  
821 Edwards T A  
821 Good F  
841 Griffiths R A  
846 Harper A P  
772 Harvey C H  
949 Howlett W S  
935 Houseman W A



NOT YET FOUND

782 Humphrey W D  
783 Johnson R J F  
787 Kelly A L  
791 Leachman D H R  
905 Millar J D  
851 Moore J F  
852 Mount P E  
860 Nixon A D  
862 Pearson G F  
857 Pyne R D  
944 Rowley P  
866 Rye A  
962 Smith D J  
876 Smith J K  
869 Southerton D J  
877 Stevenson D  
886 Taylor D M J  
885 Thompson D G  
892 Webb C  
893 Webb S A  
895 West R A  
897 White C P  
884 Whyte J  
899 Williamson R

### WANTED

INFORMATION HELPING US TO FIND  
R.A.F. 90 AA COLLEAGUES  
FOR OUR Y2K REUNION

UK TELEPHONE OR FAX: 01563 822588

INTERNATIONAL : +44 (0) 1563 822588

## 6TSU THE "MIDDLE" YEARS

*(Continued from page 12)*

used by the unit (and kept our younger drivers under control)!

Ground Radio Servicing Flight maintained, installed and recovered the unit's very comprehensive range of communications systems and equipment.

Compared with today's technology some of the equipment used *was* antiquated. At times we had equipment on loan for special jobs that appeared to have had been given to HM Govt as part of Lease-Lend in the 2<sup>d</sup> World War. Rumour had it that one particularly ancient piece of equipment was found to have a label marked "Noah and Sons. Ark Builders." When you saw what the Americans and saw some of the equipment were using at that time it made you realise just how far we were behind! Even the Army had equipment that was more in keeping with the age and task in hand! In fact some of the Army equipment was issued to us in the end to make up some of our deficiencies. The problem appeared to be that the RAF seemed to have had very little experience and almost no equipment for use in 'mobile signals' scenarios. Those of you that served in Borneo at the various signal sites (Does "Fairy-land" ring a bell?) may remember the Intercommand Transmitter and Receiver equipments crammed into containers on the back of 3 and 5-ton truck chassis. (Oh for a modern Satcom system)!

I am glad to say that sense prevailed and some modern, up to date equipment was eventually provided. (Even some of that was only loaned! remember the Collins KWT 6 equipments, on loan from Bomber/Transport Command?). The KWM 2 equipment mentioned in Brian's article was purchased to provide operations radio links connected to the telephone system (some one had obviously been reading some 'HAM' magazines and cottoned onto the Yankee 'phone patch' system). Trouble was it didn't work very well (sometimes not at all) when connected to field telephone exchanges or the Malaysian telephone system. However the equipment did have its uses. I was tasked with setting up an Air Movements support Network using the KWM2 equipment. Having installed the equipment at various sites I was left with the suitcases (that no one in Borneo wanted to take responsibility for)! So I had to take them back to Singapore. The Customs/SIB inspectors at Changi were not at all impressed by my explanations as to why I was in possession of 24 empty Samsonite suitcases (was I engaged in suitcase smuggling perhaps)? It took a series of phone-calls to my CO before I was allowed through.

When I arrived in Singapore the area was on a war footing and much to my wife's horror I spent many

*(Continued on page 14)*

## 6TSU THE "MIDDLE" YEARS

*(Continued from page 13)*

months away on exercise or occasionally on active service (you received the princely sum of 1/9d active duty allowance so this type of operation was much sought after by our younger, more 'gung ho' types).

Within 3 weeks of my arriving on the unit the 'enemy' flew 3 Hercules aircraft right through the Singapore Air Defence Radar screen and deposited a hoard of paratroopers in the jungle near Labis in Malaya. I was sent at very short notice, 'up country' by helicopter to install a temporary radio link for a BASO (Brigade Air Support Officer) prior to the arrival of the Land mobile support team. Having installed the link I was advised to report to the QM Sgt of the Gurkha Regiment Company who were manning the site. As it was Tiffin (meal) time my mess tin and ration pack were taken away for the preparation thereof. The mess tin was returned full of hot tea still with the plastic bag full of tea leaves, the plastic bag for the sugar and the small tin of condensed milk (punctured) complete with label floating on the surface. It was some of the best tea I have ever tasted! The meal that followed was:

- Curried tinned herrings
- Rice
- Tinned mixed vegetables

Breakfast next morning was:

- Curried tinned herrings
- Rice

Lunch was: (guess!)

- Rice
- Tinned mixed vegetable

I was glad to be recalled to base before dinner that evening! even though I had to help load body bags full of squishy bits onto the helicopter (the things we did for queen and Country)!

Other operational visits (some pleasurable, some so quite pleasurable) come to mind. Malaysia; Gemas and Segamat, Malacca, Ipoh, runs up the East Coast and staying in the Government rest houses, Butterworth (lots of lovely Australian food and visits to Penang at weekends), Kuantan, Alor Star and Kota Bahru. Borneo; Brunei, doing a signals survey for one of the Radar systems mentioned previously and watching lightning strike after lightning strike hit the site, (as a matter of interest the whole of the top of the hill whereon the site was located was covered in chicken wire to provide a safety earth)! Kuching (and Kuching Market), Bario where we were marooned at a Dyak Longhouse for 8 hours, Bintulu where they had cicada's 4" long with noise the match, Tawau, where because we were so close to the border you went about armed and

*(Continued on page 15)*

## 71ST 50TH REUNION

In addition a search is being made for members of the Permanent Staff. Cpl. 'Ken' Bowles, Sgt. Ray Ellis (who was seen in Libya and Lehore – P.A.F. Training School – whilst employed by International Radio Limited, I.A.L. as it once was. He did not complete time to draw a Company Pension with IAL-Serco.

The names of Sgt. Ken Healey from Plymouth, 'Whispering' Smith in the A.I. Lab. And Don Fletcher, the H2S Instructor are known but not their whereabouts.

Of the D.I.s Cpls. Maxwell and Kattenhorne are still with us, the former in Australia and the latter in Berks., Sgt. Lee, R.A.F. Regiment is now retired as Squadron Leader, R.A.F. All of the early Locking – ites will remember

Denis Ward, the Cpl. D.I. who completed the eighteen month long N.B. S. Course.

If anyone has any information, however insignificant it appears, I'd be glad to hear from them. Someone out there has pieces to this puzzle, names of wives and sons are particular use when trying to find men, such information is sought.

As a foot note, the following are believed to have died, but I should love to be shown to be wrong: Sammy Salmon, Willy Wailling, Horror Davison and Ron Brindley, the Drum Major.

All letters will be acknowledged.

## THOUGHTS ABOUT THE RAFLAA

Gordon Shores (97th)

I read with interest the Chairman's Contribution in the Newsletter and it got me thinking as I was undecided whether to renew my subscription or not.

For some time I have felt that the RAFLAA has disappeared down a route that does not provide what I as a founder member want from the association. I have taken some time to make these comments as I am a firm believer that if you don't like the way a committee is running an organisation

and you are not prepared to join that committee to try and make a change then you have no right to criticise. However the Chairman has invited comment so here goes.

I thought about why I joined the association and the excitement at the inaugural meeting. I had hoped that old friends who I had not seen or heard of for 30 years or more would come tumbling out of the woodwork and there would be much catching up and not a little drinking of beer over

*(Continued on page 24)*



## 71ST 50TH REUNION

David Penberthy – (71st Entry)

The 71<sup>st</sup> will hold a reunion in April 2002 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of its arrival at Locking. However we are still short of twenty two faces to put to names and numbers.

The organisers face two particular problems, firstly no-one can remember who actually Passed Out in March 1955, the 'Official Passing Out List' appears to have several names missing. The second difficulty stems from the facts that members were F.T'd and C.T'd but there are no precise records to show what happened to whom.

On my list I have twenty-two names; there is a separate, much smaller list that would indicate that, in addition to the ones we are aware of, four more members of the Entry are dead. These names have been checked against the G.R.O. Deaths Index and cross-referenced to the Births Index.

### Known to have Passed Out:

- Tony B. Wilson — Ground Radar Fitter
- B. Robertson — Ground Radar Fitter
- Trevor G. Davis (Davies) — Ground Radar Fitter
- Mike Gibson — Air Radio Fitter
- Peter A.R. Ellis — Ground Wireless Fitter

### Presumed to have Passed Out:

- David F. Higgins
- Michael Carins
- John B. Rogers
- Aled Wyn Evans
- Edward A. Cain (presumed to have completed 12 year engagement)

### Fates Unknown:

- Tony D. Aldsworthy
- Tony Webster-Grinling F.T'd to 72<sup>nd</sup>
- J. D. Butcher - C.T'd
- I. J. Baker - F.T'd seen as L.A.C.
- Peter Gill - C.T'd
- N. B. Haddow - Worked Ticket
- B. J. Wooley - Worked Ticket
- Brian O. Harris - C.T'd
- T. E. Simpson - C.T'd
- J. H. Barter - C.T'd
- 'Tinger' D. G. Ling - F.T'd to 72<sup>nd</sup>
- Ronald W. B. Ingram - F.T'd possibly married Elinor Gross at Weston in the Summer of 1958

*(Continued on page 17)*

## 6TSU THE "MIDDLE" YEARS

*(Continued from page 14)*

ready. Thailand (now there's some memories to savour); Cheng Mai, setting up for the opening up of a brand new Air base for the Thai Air force (miles from anywhere) and being royally entertained by the Scots Guards and the Band of the Argyll and Sutherland Regiment, Udorn Thani where we watched an American vehicle mounted 'Forward Scatter' comms system disappear into a swamp, and of course Bangkok! Mark you; visits to Bangkok did depend upon the Aircrew who were ferrying you around. My last trip to Thailand was somewhat curtailed by an Argosy Pilot who flew 35 of us and 3 Landover's in an aircraft that dripped hydraulic fluid all over us from Don Muang to Singapore in one hop, and just because his bride of 5 weeks was arriving in Singapore. (Some people never seemed to get their priorities right)! Bangladesh; now there is one place I was quite glad not to go to. Visiting Chittagong and points south during the monsoon flood season was not

my idea of a pleasant place to be; and of course Australia, strange but not of us erks seemed to get to go to Australia?

It must sound as though we led a 'Life of old Riley' (as my father used to say). It wasn't quite like that all of the time. Granted there were good moments, a lot of them. But there were also a lot of not so good ones. The sense that you were on constant standby (normally 48hrs but quite often 12hrs), quick turn around and sudden deployments sometimes meant long, long hours at work, and of course the conditions up country were sometimes grim to say the least.

Having said that, the spirit in the unit was fantastic. Every one mucked in and supported one another. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.