



RAFLAA Newsletter

SERIAL 64

NOVEMBER 2012

IN THIS ISSUE

EDITOR'S NOTES.....	2
RAFLAA ANNIVERSARY.....	2
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.....	3
2013 AGM and Reunion.....	4
FALKLANDS CONFLICT.....	7
BLACK BUCK.....	7
MY VERY SMALL PART IN STOPPING GENERAL GALTIERI.....	8
MY FALKLANDS WAR EXPERIENCE.....	19
MY FIRST FALKLANDS DETACHMENT.....	21
APPRENTICE DAYS.....	27
Hut Numbering.....	27
LIFE AFTER LOCKING.....	30
ON THE WAY TO WORK.....	30
BRAT AT LARGE.....	33
RAFLAA.....	37
Minutes of the 48 th Committee Meeting.....	37
REUNION OF 72 ND ENTRY.....	45
OBITUARIES.....	47
BRIAN CHILLERY (POSTSCRIPT).....	47
KEN SHIRES.....	47
IVAN RANN.....	48
DAVID PAINTER.....	48
CLOSING THOUGHT.....	49
RAFLAA COMMITTEE.....	51

EDITOR'S NOTES

Hello to you all,

First and foremost I am sure everyone will join me in thanking Chris for doing such sterling work producing the Newsletter over the years, he deserves a well earned break. The challenge now is to follow in those footsteps and remembering 'it isn't broken, so we don't have to mend it', just maybe a few tweaks here and there.

If there is anything that you the readers would like included in the Newsletter then please just contact me and I will do my best. Thank you everyone who has contributed to this issue, I apologise if your article is missing it will be in the next edition.

As part of this Newsletter and in celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict, I thought it appropriate to make this our theme for this edition. I apologise for not including some articles but they will be in the next Newsletter.

Report from Dave Gunby he is now on the road to recovery, we look forward to seeing you Dave at the AGM.

RAFLAA ANNIVERSARY

The inauguration of the RAFLAA was held on 19th June 1993. It would therefore seem appropriate that this 20th Anniversary landmark date be recognised. Any ideas and suggestions on how and when we as an Association wish to celebrate the occasion please let me know. Ed.

Colin Ingram (88th Entry)

colin.ingram90@gmail.com

Tel: (01288) 331363

Fairhaven

Gooseham

Morwenstow

Bude

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EX23 9PG

Deadline for next issue - 23rd January 2013 for March 2013

Please send all comments, contributions, ideas and feedback to the newsletter editor. Soft copy preferred!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

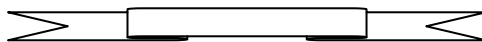
Pete Crowe tells me you are on the lookout for Falklands stuff for the newsletter. Alas, I wasn't there to fight - I learned something at Locking!

However, I did find myself down there shortly after the war finished, as the enclosed attachment shows. If it is any use feel free to use as much as you like. Edit to your heart's content as it is lifted straight out of my autobiography written for my grandchildren etc.

To put it in context, I was an AEOp (Air Electronics Operator) for most of my 30 years service. I spent a lot of time flying on helicopters, as a crewman on SH Wessex, then later as a winchman on Whirlwinds, before spending my last 8 years as a Radar/Winch Operator on SAR Sea Kings. By 1982 I was a 'hairy old master' fast approaching 40!

Regards Paul 'Cedric' Challice 95th

Peter's story under Falklands Conflict Ed.

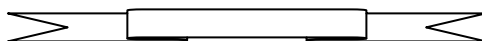


Colin,

I only remember part of the hut block numbers, for the 95th Entry C Squadron, which were Huts 359 & 361 on the side facing the footpath between the other hut block. I cannot remember the numbering on the other side of the hut block. No doubt someone in the 90th may remember, as they filled most of the huts in the remainder of the block.

Doug Webster 95th

Story continues under Apprentice Days Ed

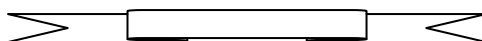


I have in my possession my complete set of Training Manuals from my Apprentice Training as an Air Radio Fitter covering the full 3 years. Do you know of any Organisation or Museum who might have any interest in them and be prepared to take them off my hands before my wife finally persuades me to bin them? Maybe you could mention this request in a newsletter.

Best regards

Pete Purdy 94th Entry

Now I regret getting rid of my Type 80 and Console 64 notes. Is there anyone that can help Pete out with this one, there must be a good home somewhere and who else has managed to hang on to his Locking Notes? Ed.



NOTICES

NEXT REUNION AND AGM

The 19th Annual Reunion and Annual General meeting of the RAF Locking Apprentice Association will be held on [Saturday 27 April 2013](#) at the Webbington Hotel, Loxton, Weston-super-Mare.

It will follow our usual format with the AGM in the afternoon and a dinner dance in the evening.

Full details will follow in the November edition of the Newsletter but put the date in your diary now.

The hotel has kindly agreed to keep the hotel rates at the same level as for 2012: £75 B&B for a double or twin room (double occupancy) and £60 for a single room for a **2 night stay (Friday & Saturday)**. For the Saturday night only the rates are £85 B&B for a double or twin room (double occupancy) and £65 for a single room.

Rooms can be booked now so call The Webbington Hotel, Loxton, Weston-s-Mare, BS26 2HU Tel: 01934 750100 Or Email: sales@webbingtonhotel.ecilpse.co.uk Remember, these rates include the ability to cancel up to two days before the event without penalty so book now.



RAF Locking Apprentices Association

Dinner Menu Saturday 27th April 2013

Cream of vegetable Soup

Classic Prawn Cocktail

Peeled pink prawns seated on a shredded ice berg and topped with Marie rose sauce in a martini glass

Garlic Mushrooms

White mushrooms cooked in creamy sauce with a side salad

Duo of Melon Platters

Honeydew and Galia melon served with raspberry coulis and mango sorbet

-O-O-O-O-O-O-

Fillet of Red Mullet

Butter fried with cherry tomato and coriander seated on radicchio leaf

Chicken Sauté Chasseur

Pieces of chicken cooked with tomato, mushroom, onion and tarragon sauce

Roast Leg of Lamb

Whole roasted with garlic, onion, carrots and rosemary, finished with thyme sauce.

Stuffed Aubergine

Stuffed with selected mixed vegetables and feat cheese finished with black olive dressing.

All Served with Tomato Potatoes, Savoy Cabbage, Carrots & Fine Beans

-O-O-O-O-O-O-

Chocolate Gateau

Almond Tart

Raspberry Profiteroles

Selection of English Cheese & Biscuits

-O-O-O-O-O-O-

Coffee Served with Mints

**APPLICATION FOR RAFLAA AGM AND DINNER – 27th April 2013
DINNER DANCE AND FINGER BUFFET**

Name:

Entry No:

Address:

Date:

I wish to book both lunch & dinner for myself and/or partner: Please provide tickets @ £30 pp £.....
 I wish to book the dinner/dance only for myself and/or partner: Please provide tickets @ £21 pp £.....
 I wish to book the buffet lunch only for myself and/or partner: Please provide tickets @ £10 pp £.....
 I wish to bring guests to the dinner/dance. Please provide tickets @ £31 pp £.....
 My wife/partner would like a place on the all day coach to Wells and Street (Clarks Village) @ £20 (**Applications for the coach must be in by 1st April 2013**) Please provide tickets @ £20 pp £.....

Total £

Please complete as appropriate.

Cheques to be crossed account payee, and made out to “RAF Locking Apprentice Association”

Please **post** your application to: **Mr A Horry, Hillside Cottage, Kewstoke Road, Kewstoke, Weston-super-Mare, BS22 9YD**
 Tel: 01934 628383 E-mail: horrycorp@aol.com

Please complete the **total number** of each menu choice for all your party and return with your booking form and cheque.

Member Name	Starters				Main Courses				Desserts			
	Soup	Prawn	Mush rooms	Melon	Mullet	Chicken	Lamb	Aubergine	Gateau	Tart	Profiteroles	Cheese

Rooms at the Webbington Hotel For accommodation, please contact:

Webbington Hotel, Loxton, Weston-s-Mare, BS26 2HU; Tele: 01934 750100. email: info@webbingtonhotel.eclipse.co.uk.

Rooms will be charged @ £75 double, £60 single B&B per night for a 2 night stay but £85 double and £65 single for a 1 night stay. Please telephone the hotel direct and quote RAFLAA when you book to secure the reduced rates. **ACCOUNTS MUST BE SETTLED WITH THE HOTEL.**

FALKLANDS CONFLICT
'BLACK BUCK' OR VULCAN XM607

The charity, and organisation Vulcan To The Sky, recently organised a talk on the operation mounted to bomb the airfield at Port Stanley. This was given by Martin Withers DFC, who was the captain of the sortie. The venue was the RAF Museum at Hendon, which also enabled me to view, and enjoy the Museum after my last visit many years ago. The timing was of course perfect as this year is the 30th anniversary of the Falklands war.

I was familiar with the story, as I'd already read the book, 'Vulcan 607' by Rowland White, but the additional, personal, details from the lips of the person involved was fascinating. One element of the story didn't really come out in the book, which was that when the operation was first discussed, the idea was that the attack would be at low level – 300ft, using delay, or retarded bombs. Martin Withers regarded this sort of attack as '....almost suicidal..' because it would put them at the mercy of radar guided flak whilst they turned and climbed away from the target; that's if they could even find the target from a low-level approach over sea. Their radar, NBS – really H2S of WW11 fame, would not be able to provide a good enough fix in time. This was all before the advent of GPS, and Doppler navigator (Green Satin) with GPI Mk6 isn't very reliable over 4000 mls. of sea! There would also be the problem of higher fuel consumption at low level, so the idea of a low-level attack was shelved in favour of a mid-level attack, much to Martin's relief! But it would still put them in range of the close airfield defences.

Martin Withers in 607 was in fact the first standby, the prime crew were led by Sqd Ldr John Reeve, in XM598, however, just after take-off from Ascension Island, the seal of the direct vision window failed, and the aircraft could not maintain pressure, and returned to Ascension (with a bit of a heavy landing due to fuel and 21 1000lb. bombs!). And so 607 became the 'one'.

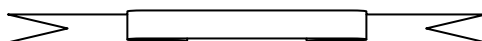
The major problem was the in-flight refuelling, which took a minimum of 13 Victors to ensure that the one Vulcan could reach its target and return. The planning was complex, and Martin admitted that he hadn't grasped it all at the briefing, however, he would be accompanied by a flight refuelling instructor, so that bit was covered. There were problems on the way with fuel, they were using more than had been expected, they had to contend with refuelling in an electric storm, and in radio silence. At one point, the Victor tanker itself was low on fuel, so could not provide Black Buck 1 with all the fuel expected, but could not explain why because of radio silence, just coloured lights! The aircraft of course had to be modified to be equipped with ECM (electronic counter measures), which would be effective against more modern Argentine radars, not the cold war relics fitted. They also had to learn visual bombing, something not bothered with during the nuclear strike age.

The impression that I gained from the talk, was of the dedication and determination to get the job, that they were tasked to do, done. The damage that they inflicted on the runway at Port Stanley ensured that the task force could not be attacked by fast jets from Port Stanley itself. It also ensured that the Argentines had to consider that an attack could be made on the mainland, which again ensured that their fighter and strike resources were spread more thinly.

During the question & answer period after the talk, one member of the audience asked if Martin and his crew had been offered any counselling by the RAF, because of his concerns that they might not return. Martin gave a pause, and replied calmly, that it hadn't occurred to him, after all, they had been on nuclear strike standby for a large part of their service, which they knew had a certain element of risk! I think the question indicated a major change in the attitude of current thinking, it would seem to some, that going to war and doing one's duty is not enough – we have to have counselling!

I encourage everyone to read 'Vulcan 607'. To those who worked on or were involved with V bombers during their service, it will bring back memories, but more importantly reinforce the knowledge that the RAF engenders the best of people, and that esprit de corps that is elusive to the public at large, is still as strong as ever.

Tiny Kuhle (87th Entry)



A LITTLE BIT LIKE SPIKE MILLIGAN - MY VERY SMALL PART IN STOPPING GENERAL GALTIERI

Thursday 8th April 1982 4pm, the day before Good Friday. My wife poked her head out of the front door of our house in Harwich, Essex. "Telephone it's for you." I had just started a weeks leave over the Easter period and was working on my Hillman Avenger 1500cc - what a good work horse.

'Looks as if you going to have to come back Paul, how long will it take?'

Flt. Sgt. Ken Kenny ringing from the 57 Squadron flight line at RAF Marham.

'About two hours' I replied.

'Don't leave it too long.' was the parting shot.

Before the summer was out Ken would be awarded the BEM for his work on Operation Corporate.

I hurriedly grabbed what kit I could - not much as I was already living in Marham Sgts' Mess and commuting at weekends. My wife looked somewhat anxiously at me.

'I have to get back' I said - to what I didn't know? I made an arrangement that should I be moved away from the base, I would phone her with a code saying I was going to have to go to the Dentist!

The South Atlantic situation was already big news and we had been warned that something was in the offing for us. One of our colleagues at Marham had, that week walked back into the Mess with a grin on his face, having been one of two airmen seconded to the British Scientific Research Station on South Georgia and captured by the "Argentinian Scrap Metal Merchants" who'd invaded the defunct whaling station there. He had subsequently been repatriated with the rest of the Scientific Team. Neither had been sussed as members of HM Royal Air Force¹.

The working week that followed was hectic for some, with 2nd and 3rd line servicing bearing the brunt of the work in readying what aircraft were already in the shed and fitting more modern avionics kit to the fleet. I won't go into detail as

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

to what was fitted, suffice to say that the Victor K2 had been re-rolled as a Tanker Refueller some years before but its onboard navigation kit remained essentially 1950's, "cogs, gears and bicycle chains" as one "Nav Radar" recently said on a BBC4 documentary - and he was talking about the Vulcan! Better (none radiating) avionics kit was made available from various (robbed) sources. Some installations were incomplete due to the lack of cables to connect them up - and test equipment to check them. For my money Victor Tankers were very much the bottom of the pile as far as operational aircraft were concerned. (*twas ever thus - if current news broadcast are to be believed*).

After complaining through the system that we were short of a "turret tools" to crimp the connectors onto one important piece of new "Electronics Warning" equipment, an SAC from the MT section suddenly appeared on the flight line asking for me. He showed me a piece of paper authorising him to rob the Crown Jewels if necessary. He asked me if items I wanted were on a list he had. With eyes wide open, 'Yes!' I replied and off he went to Honington in his mini van. He was back within two hours, handing me two turret tools (the total supply for the RAF! So I was told). Grinning like a Cheshire cat, he said he'd had to threaten the Chief in the Radar Bay before one of the tools was handed over. One turret tool went to the South Atlantic, the other remained at Marham to complete installations there.

In early 1981, two civilians from RAE, with me keeping an eye on them, checked the positioning of an aerial that they said was to be fitted to the Victor. In April 1982, I appeared to be the only person who remembered where that aerial needed to be placed. No record or paper work of their visit or their findings seemed to exist. Without the navigation equipment that hung on the end of this particular receiving aerial, I suspect some of the aircraft could not have completed the task in the South Atlantic. The spot chosen was the only place free from interference from the aircraft's extraneous electrical noise.

Easter Saturday night saw me, after about 15 hours on the Line at a dance in the mess. It was about 10pm and I had quaffed a very welcome beer and was surprised to be invited to dance a waltz by a very pleasant lady from SHQ, only to be interrupted (the waltz that is) by someone calling my name (dammit).

'You're wanted on the phone!' I went into the foyer to hear aircraft taxiing into the Station Flight dispersal.

'You're wanted back at work' came the voice.

More equipment was being unloaded from Buccaneer aircraft that had arrived from somewhere up north. I got to bed well after midnight.

Easter Sunday afternoon and all was quiet on the Line but that too was interrupted by a Hercules suddenly landing on the short cross runway and disgorging men with guns who spread out to either side of the Herc' which then commenced a rapid taxi and take off, only to return, braking heavily to pick up the same gentlemen. The aircraft then took off again and the "exercise" was repeated about four times.

'So that's how the Israelis do it!' came from the back of the crew room.

On the Tuesday of Easter week my Boss, Sqn.Ldr. Bill Lloyd, called me into his office late in the afternoon and said. 'I want you to go out and choose six men from your trade desk and you are one of them!' After some fairly abrasive past conversations with him and loads of dumb insolence from me, I took his comment

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as a “chosen one”, to be a compliment. Before the summer was out, he was awarded an MBE.

Wednesday saw us being briefed in the Ops Briefing Room by the Station Commander - Group Captain Price. We were to deploy to Ascension Island in the South Atlantic and some indication was given to us as to what this volcanic island was like by a Sergeant who had been there²!

We were told little else and sworn to keep the whole thing a Secret - the information was to remain in the briefing room. Later we heard that a Russian Fishing Trawler with a forest of radio aerials was berthed in Kings Lynn Harbour and we should be even more careful as to what we said and did. This seemed to be a bit of a joke amongst us. For me, raised during WW2, the whole of the Cold War and mindful of the “Jaw of an Ass”, I was brought up short after being told that some of our Squadron members had gone into Kings Lynn in KD uniform to buy sun tan lotion, camera film and other necessities for a “routine Detachment”, as some of the younger ones believed. It was going to be a detachment like Red Flag etc. where we tanked fighters to an exercise and were home within a week or so! I know some were quite shocked to think we were possibly going to war, with what that implied.

That Wednesday evening I phoned my wife, bless her and complained of “tooth ache”. There was a long silence and then “Oh!”

Saturday morning the 17th April saw us all in the Station Flight crew room waiting for a VC10 and Hercules Transports. The 10 would be the most comfortable of course and the quickest. My boss made sure I was on the 10 - bless him - the advance party again! Whilst waiting for the off, we were plied with copious plastic beakers of coffee and biscuits from Marham’s Mess. It dawned on me that I had no eating irons or anything to drink from and didn’t quite know where we were finishing up. I slipped a beaker in my pocket and drank from another and told one or two of the younger ones to keep hold of their beakers. It had a domino effect and all the beakers disappeared into hand baggage.

Antonov’s from the UK Company “Heavy Lift” arrived loading articulated Fuel Bowsers driven from Carlisle or Bicester. Their civilian drivers were literally Press Ganged into getting onto the aircraft and being flown to Ascension with us - no questions! I spoke to one of them after we arrived. He had only a wash kit, towel and the boiler suit he stood up in with him.

The Captain of our aircraft was Brize Norton’s Station Commander who had been at Marham for a briefing and he was anxious to get airborne. At midday we did a rolling take off via the peri track onto the main runway that would have pleased Andy Hamilton entering a chicane.

We were off. - To Brize Norton! And a couple of hours delay, whilst Brize Station Commander evacuated the aircraft and a fresh crew took over. We were allowed off to stretch our legs and I heard one of my colleague’s phoning his wife, saying where he was, what he was flying in and mentioning Ascension Island. This on a telephone that was on the wall outside the Brize arrivals lounge!

Whilst talking security breaches, my wife at home in Harwich and an ardent bridge player, was talking to an RAF Officer at her card table. He worked at MOD and was on leave in the town. He asked her about me and where I worked. She replied that currently, I was away. ‘Oh if he’s on the Tankers he’ll be on Ascension Island!’ he announced to the room. That was the first she knew of my location and

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gave her enough ammunition to remonstrate with me for not sharing a “state secret”! All she knew was the “toothache” and the BFPO address I’d sent her after we arrived on Ascension³.

We had a refuelling stop in Dakar-Senegal. It was dark and we were not allowed off the aircraft because we were “politically sensitive”. We were checked visually by what was described as a security officer in an off white trench raincoat. The ritual cabin disinfectant spraying was carried out by one of the ugliest men I have ever seen. He was followed by a second man equally as ugly. One of my colleagues, a known (t)wit, was kneeling in his reverse facing seat and remarked when the first man passed - ‘Oh I see you’ve brought the wife!’ Those around us who heard it, choked and I thought that’s it! - Handcuffs, an unpleasant international incident and a smelly Jail. Fortunately neither man gave any indication they understood.

We landed in the dark, on Ascension’s Wideawake airfield at about 4am on Sunday 18th April. We were allowed off the aircraft to stand like lemons on the side of the pan. I was a smoker then and a colleague and I went to the edge of the dispersal away from the aircraft and lit up - the first fag since Brize. We had been there for a few moments when an SAC supplier crept up to us and whispered politely. ‘You’re smoking next to an ammunition dump Chief. Do you think you could move away a bit!’ Daylight revealed a mountain of weapons, ammunition, missiles and cardboard pack up boxes.

My first thought on viewing the volcanic scenery, was water and we found a tap at the dispersal edge and tested it. It seemed potable and no one to my knowledge suffered from drinking it (Ascension’s water supply is desalinated sea water). However as time went by, the American BX and Mess did supply us with plenty of water and an iced brew of lightly flavoured water, which was an acquired taste. In the initial setting up period the Americans did us proud with high quality meals and loads of fresh veg and meats, exceptionally good coffee, fruit juices and yoghurts. This luxury however, didn’t last for the Ground Crew (gripe), though it did for the Aircrew! More of that later.

On arrival at Ascension we had three tasks: Sleeping Accommodation, Crew Room/Stores and Transport. Suddenly we had a Land Rover and Trailer which materialised from thin air literally, the huge cardboard boxes, revealed a scrap metal yard of eating irons, mess tins in two sizes (I’d handed my issued ones in at Locking in 1957ish, along with the Big Pack - Small Pack and water bottle - Remember?). I felt somewhat vindicated when I couldn’t find any mugs. They were discovered later, somewhere in the pile, plastic “Bendy” mugs with handles. We also discovered a mountain of Arctic sleeping bags filled with goose feathers, fit for a tropical island? Like scroungers, we grabbed what we needed, amazed that we didn’t have to sign for anything. Having said that, we did quickly acclimatise to the weather and were eventually grateful for the enveloping warmth of the sleeping bag at night. A plea did come later that anyone “owning” two sleeping bags should offer one up as there was a shortage (that word again). The same applied to dunnage (wooden blocks and chocks to stabilise the loads on the Herc’s). There were some very fancy home made beds, desks and chairs in our accommodation as time wore on.

On day one (Sunday), a group of us were despatched to our accommodation area which transpired to be “Two Boats”³ half way up Green Mountain. Two Boats, so called because of the two halves of a whaler rowing boat set either side of a track

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

leading to Green Mountain, the highest point on the island. ⁴ Two Boats is about half way up the mountain and three miles or so from the airfield. Used by sailors as a resting place in the 18th and 19th Century whilst getting water from a rain collecting sump on top of the mountain (It was a long way up)

Two Boats was/is a community of workers from St Helena who do a tour of, I think two years before returning to St Helena. It had two Clubs, hutted sleeping accommodation and communal showers and toilets in each hut complex and a Sports Hall. The Sports Hall was initially to be home for us - It included an Earthquake/Volcano Warning Siren! At the Hall, RN Chef's already in residence with their own hutted sleeping quarters had set up a Mess for all (other) ranks. The badminton courts floor space was initially to be our sleeping accommodation which caused friction with the Navy as they wanted it for a dining room. We began by laying out the Arctic sleeping bags to form a sort of bed space, which under the circumstances would have been more than just cosy! I scouted for somewhere to sleep in the open air. Fortunately word came from the airfield that the rest of the ground party had drifted in by Hercules, and they had found Safari beds and tents! We set to, creating a tented city on the gentle slope outside the Sports Hall for all 55/57 Ground Crew. We had tents to spare thanks to the acquisitive nature of lads being set free in a "sweet shop" of military equipment. We erected all the tents we could find. Colin Muskett (a "Fairy" of course), discovered a chain of light bulbs in one of the packups and we put one bulb in each tent. Colin then discovered one handy 230 Volt power socket just inside the badminton court door. How that single 13 amp socket fuse never blew, I don't know (but I can guess!). Some one in the party had a kettle acquired from somewhere. As the designated "Housing Officer" (by my Boss again), I never found out who. When it went "On", all the lights would dim to a candles glow. Meanwhile: 57 Engineering Officer, Flight Sergeant, and 55 Squadron Warrant Officer had their accommodation near to Georgetown the Capital and close to the Airfield. Later as the Aircrew arrived, all shared bunk bed accommodation in the same area and ate in the American BX (ground crew, for once, had the better accommodation deal).

Within a few hours we had created a village at Two Boats of about forty or fifty tents which allowed us to have two men to a tent instead of six. I was lucky to commandeer a tent to myself which I coveted for the whole time I was there. We discovered the swimming pool and the two bars at Two Boats, one bar (Saints Bar) for all ranks and the second that catered for the elderly amongst us, called the Senior Club which behaved for us as a Sergeants Mess. It had a verandah with a brilliant view of the Island towards the airfield.

On that first Sunday night we descended on the Saints Bar, only to find all the draught beer had been consumed by Royalty the previous night. Prince Andrew and his "cohorts" had come ashore and been carousing there. We mere mortals were not best pleased at the lack of beer - Sir! All that was left was tinned South African Castle Beer but it went down well enough. It is worth mentioning here that Ascension and St Helena the sister island farther South, were re-supplied from South Africa by sea once every three months. I do not remember drinking draught beer the whole time I was there. We shot the population of Ascension to in excess of three thousand (from something like 300) at the peak of the operation. For all their faults, the Navy kept the supply of field rations going for us whilst in residence (whilst the Americans fed our Aircrew!). We had a Mess tent on the airfield which had a field kitchen, operated for 57 by one SAC Chef and one SAC Mess Steward whose task it was to keep us ground crew fed whilst on shift about

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

40 of us per shift. In my opinion, both airmen deserved more than just a medal. We had a period of about five days when the airfield was crammed with superfluous bodies all wanting to get in on the action un-officially. I met one Padre who was living like a down and out, scrounging accommodation, bedding and meals where he could find them. Eventually these "gash" bodies had to be repatriated as they were quite literally a drain on the resources. I asked our Chef how many people he catered for and the number ran into many hundreds literally, during one single lunch hour. During one memorable night shift, those two lads, by arrangement, cooked fish and chips for us 57 ground crew as a treat. Fish caught in the harbour whilst off duty. The smell brought every nose on the island looking for the source. It became a battle to keep interlopers out. Those lads were still on the island when I left and all credit to them. They received no support the RN Chefs - whose daily task at Two Boats was little more than would be expected in a normal Mess. As far as I could see there were at least six of them working shifts, living in hutted accommodation, with a PO in charge. The two lads on the airfield during our shift were operating a field kitchen at sea level, using field rations supplemented with what extra could be obtained from the farm on the island. 55 ground crew had another two airmen for their shift on the airfield, who no doubt did the same sterling job - they fed us well - and I lost weight. The Navy Chefs at Two Boats to their shame worked normal shifts, their effort was minimal by comparison and I had more than one run in with their CPO who wanted us to clean the Mess after use - On principle I refused to allow it. What 55 did was their business.

Ascension Islands earth structure is volcanic debris, sharp pumice and sand on the coastal strip stretching inland but the higher you climbed the vegetation increases and the landscaped on top of Green Mountain⁵ is lush with banana trees prickly pear cactus, ginger bushes and a variety of exotics, planted by the plant hunters from Kew Gardens in Georgian and Victorian times. The very tip of Green Mountain is a volcanic plug about 40 foot wide, filled with rain water and contains goldfish and carp. I was privileged to see my first egret, land crab, watch Sea eagles, Albatross, Frigate Birds and best of all seeing a Leather Back turtle laying eggs. I didn't have a camera with me!

If any one reading this has any shots of what I have describe I would be grateful for the contact I have found some on the internet follow the Superscripts.

It quickly became obvious on day 1, that we would have to split into a shift system and the usual 12 hour shift was discussed. This wasn't liked, as it meant rotation would be difficult especially with two separate Squadrons ground crews wanting to work autonomously and time away from the airfield would be limited with probably, no time off. We decided by popular consent on a 24 hour on, 24 off system with the shifts running from midday to midday. This saved the two ground crews from mixing, thus preserving their own Squadron identity and had the advantage of allowing for a full day away from the airfield every other midday. It worked well despite some anxiety in senior quarters about individuals sleeping whilst on shift. It never really posed a problem and as time went by we quickly settled into a routine. One of our Flight Line Mechanics came up to me one evening saying he had found a dead body. He seemed very worried. He took me into our tented stores area and showed me two large tri-wall cardboard boxes stacked on top of each other. "In there" he whispered. I looked over the top of the open tri-wall boxes at nose height to me. On the ground, flat on his back was one of our Crew Chiefs, arms crossed over his chest with hands on shoulders - fast asleep! I

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

tended to sleep when I could, under the tent skirt close to my desk to monitor what was going on. (The Boss didn't like it!)

The Airfield Tents were pieced together so as to give the maximum amount of cover for equipment, briefing and debriefing rooms and aircrew rest areas. It was a joy to watch our Ops Security officers struggling to put up their own tentage with comments like "I haven't done this since Cranwell!" Our two squadrons of aircraft took up much of the limited pan area and certainly we were the most active in the early stages with sorties going out almost every night at the start of our operations. The 24 hour shift also gave us time to see crews off and welcome them back again, much to their surprise to realise we had been on shift throughout their very long sorties. The midday hand over, 55 taking over from 57, and vice versa allowed for final aircraft prep from the oncoming shift for possible evening sorties and for debriefing on returns. All take offs were during the evening with the exception of aircraft rotation back to the UK. A quick briefing for the oncoming shift and away to lunch at the cooler Two Boats. My routine was to eat lunch first then shower, change and go to bed to sleep or read till the late afternoon then go for a swim before the evening meal at Two Boats. The evening spent in the bar (maximum two beers) chatting and an early night. Breakfast next morning, compliments of the RN then dhobi, reading and readying for another night away from 'home'. The routine on the airfield was much the same with a briefing to start the day which included a welcome intelligence briefing on what was happening farther south - some of it frightening - very frightening. One BBC crew with camera rolling entered the tent unannounced. I have never seen a blackboard erased so quickly and a scuffle in the doorway kept them out. Our only news was from the BBC World Service and the sound of Lilli Bolero (being played at 3am) will always remind me of sitting in a tent listening to the BBC World Service whilst waiting for aircraft to return. The Island suddenly became flooded with the Sun newspaper and Playboy magazine our other source of information! One of our intelligence officers had a relative working for the Daily Telegraph and the word went back. Wonder of wonders we had a day old or so, newspaper delivered with a decent crossword. During the night we debriefed the crews then turned the recovered aircraft round to fly out again to bring the one aircraft that had flown over the target home. Last aircraft down usually arrived mid morning before we went off shift. So from an evening take off of around 7pm we could expect to see the last aircraft back around 11am the following morning after launching and recovering up to 13 aircraft in total. In the early stages it was very tense watching the aircraft start up, taxi out and take off. The process would take about thirty minutes or longer. The crews knew it was pot luck as to who went the whole way. I stood in as a (supernumerary) Crew Chief one evening with the reserve aircraft. One of the main force aircraft on startup, suddenly sprayed fuel all over the place and shut down. I heard the Captain of my aircraft say "That (Sqdn Ldr) surname - What a player!" My reserve aircraft was suddenly in the pile and I could hear the groans from Captain and Crew. They all had nicknames for one another. The Captain was 'Tarzan' the co Pilot was 'Jane' one of the Nav's was 'Boy' and of course another was 'Cheetah'. They kept this banter going whilst I stood with the long lead intercom outside. Tarzan went from reserve, to flying the full sortie down and back and I met them on landing. I suspect they thought I had jinxed them, not being a proper Crew Chief!

The first operational sortie was hair raising and it must be remembered that the RAF had not carried out a (Bomber) formation take off and join up like this since

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

WW2. We were briefed that they would take off, orbit and formate somewhere off the Island and then head south. They took off in daylight near dusk without a problem except for a jam whilst taxiing out on a crowded single taxiway and a serious risk of debris ingress to engines from the jet blast of the aircraft ahead. About 2 hours later the Boss came rushing in and got us to form a party to grab brake chutes from the runway. Three aircraft were coming back on empty. One at least, may not make it onto Wideawake's single runway. Four of us headed off in a Landrover and managed to get parked up at the end of the runway. The three aircraft came in, line astern and we could see their landing lights very close together. The first landed and took a long time rolling very fast down the runway before deploying the brake 'chute. The pilot then slewed the aircraft so as to put the 'chute off the runway. He then changed his mind about jettisoning and taxied onto the peri track before releasing it - a good move! The second was on the runway as the first was just leaving and the third came in close behind. All the pilots carried their chutes off the runway before jettisoning which left us very little to do but scramble the chutes up and let them pass. All three taxied back to the pan unaided.

Tactics changed after that and there was no orbiting formation. From then on just up and go, leaving the last airborne to catch up. Generally these were not young aircrew. Most had crewed on V Bombers all their flying life. Their airmanship was superb and they were the very best crews to work for and with.

Life settled into a routine and for the Fairies (Avionics Trades) there was little work other than routine preparation needed on what became, electronically, (because of the "new" kit) very reliable aircraft. As usual the 57 Fairies got the job of supporting the other trades with jacking aircraft and generally making a nuisance of our selves. We emptied the Elson's at the cesspit and did general driving jobs acted as crew bus drivers and so on. (To be frank I thoroughly enjoyed it)

We heard that the Task Force was on its way and one lunchtime at the end of the shift we were going to Two Boats in our Bus when about five lads from the Welsh Guards were acting up at the side of the road. They were eating Chips etc bought at the American BX bar and generally relishing being on dry land. One of them suddenly leaped onto the bus startling the driver and announced "We're Fit!". Then, it didn't mean quite what it can mean now - but if the cap fits. We were all tired and totally unimpressed as one after the other they leaped aboard. We drove on! I have often wondered if Simon Weston was among them. Certainly a little later around the same time we gave Lt. Col Chris Keeble (who took over from H. Jones) a lift in our Minibus on his way to a briefing with a couple of para rankers and their RSM.

Shortly after I arrived on Ascension, my mother in law - bless her, said she was sending me a food parcel. I wrote home (pre-email, mobile phones and laptops) and said "Don't send anything by sea!" The reply I got was "Don't worry I know a man who is coming your way and he will drop it off". I was surprised early one morning on getting up and looking over the cliff edge at the incredibly beautiful view from Two Boats, to see a familiar ship anchored below in the Harbour at Georgetown. The MV St Edmund - the train ferry from Harwich to the Hook of Holland had been commandeered to go south. My then, house in Harwich overlooked Parkeston Quay and I saw the Edmund's, early morning arrival, every day of the week I had leave and at weekends. So this was what Ma in law was up to, using a Harwich Ferry crew to get me some troop's comforts. The Edmund didn't stop but continued south carrying my food parcel. I eventually got it some

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

weeks later - the day before I came home! The war in the South was by then nearly over and the St Edmund having - ploughed all the way down, the Atlantic had brought Argentinian prisoners back to Ascension for repatriation. My parcel was hoisted by helicopter net, as the sole last item off the Edmund before it sailed down south again. St Edmund finished life as the re-supply ship for St Helena and Ascension. That bag of goodies saw more real action than I did!

During one night shift my boss asked me to get back to Two Boats as there were some Marine's there needing accommodation. I arrived and in the half light was met by a very rough bunch of about 40 Marine Commandos and a Major who introduced himself as Mike Norman. 'I've seen you on Telly, Sir' I said. 'Have you!'" came the gruff reply. This was Sir Rex Hunt's Marine "bodyguard" captured and lined up on the floor (at the start of the proceedings) in that famous photograph. I showed them to the spare tents we had. Major Norman immediately called for a Sergeant to bring a torch. I reached up and switched on the light. 'Bloody Brylcream boys he said with a grin' They stayed with us for about 10 days if memory serves. At one point during their stay we had a scare that some Argentinian gentlemen might try, by fair means or foul, to take out the Tanker Ground Crews. The marines then became our bodyguards at Two Boats. Plus the SAS not too far away. There was a threat and shots were reportedly fired in the Georgetown area but we never heard the result. We did stand down all the Ground Crew on another occasion when we heard there may be a possible Entebbe style raid. Just: five unarmed Trade Managers, the Sqdn Flight Sergeant and a couple of Crew Chiefs to baby sit the aircraft. We doused all the lights except the one over the Flight Sergeants head! Sorry Ken. More dangerous was the constant re-supply of ships in the harbour by helicopter before they too joined ship and headed south. One dropped a landrover from about 100 feet almost onto the (American) Medical Centre in Georgetown. - ooops! One Sunday we had 1 Squadron Harriers descend on us. The Control Tower was staffed by the Americans and CO of 1 Squadron flew up to his window and bowed. The story went that the controller fell of his chair thinking the Harrier was coming through his window.

I think it was that same Sunday that Wideawake Airfield had more aircraft movements than Chicago O'Hare, reckoned then to be the busiest airport in the world. Wideawake's event was in the Guinness book of Records. The mood changed when we heard at 3am on the BBC World Service that the Belgrano had been sunk. On another we were briefed that the troops on the Falkland Islands had literally one day's rations left. I gave an RAF Parachute Jump Instructor (PJI) a lift from the airfield back up to his Two Boats accommodation. He had flown all the way down and back in an air to air refuelled Hercules and acting as dispatcher for Col. H. Jones replacement. The PJI was very tired and not a little shaken by the experience and said so. He said he had put H. Jones replacement out over the target to complete a free fall high /low manoeuvre. I gather the powers that be were not best pleased with this.

We did get guns - a Sterling sub machine gun for me and two magazines (about 60 rounds which outdoes the officers 9 rounds in their 9mm Browning pistol, as was stated (as a threat - not by me) during a Taceval when a sprog officer got stropky. Our weapons were issued and kept safely in the armoury - and as the packaging says on all service equipment "Not to be opened till required for use" which never came thank the Lord. We all however, did fire a weapon on "active service". SLR's on a 25 yard range near the beach. No more than five rounds and all of us (I think) missed the target much to the disgust of the weapons specialist Corporal

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

from one of the Guards regiments. His final and very polite comment was "Well, we all have our own specialities and I have no doubt you are very good at yours!" Whilst waiting our turn we watched a few members of the SAS: firing from the standing position, at Coke cans lodged under the turret of a WW2 tank, using Kalashnikov rifles, at a ridiculous distance - and hitting them. Another group were lobbing phosphorous grenades around without taking cover. A Bombardier motor cycle approached our Corporal to report that there were some unexploded grenades left on the range. The Corporal said very quietly "Well you know what you can do with them!" We watched from our safe distance whilst these super heroes walked forward, found the grenades and placed, I assume, plastic explosive from their pockets next to the duds and then retreated, shouting 'Firing!' and exploded them. We were impressed. Bruce Willis could not have done better and I was very proud as a Fairy - to be an observer. Later, a couple of us, off shift, were given a lift back up the mountain to Two Boats by these gentlemen in one of their open top long wheelbase Landrovers. On stepping in, I trod on about three Kalashnikovs lying on the floor. I apologised and was given a very, very ominous look. The Landrover went up the mountain road like a rocket and I casually asked what was under the bonnet. More ominous looks - these Gentlemen are not normal - none of them spoke only the driver. What surprised me was there age. They were not young.

And so a very exciting life went on to become very routine. We heard of the losses and were sad for both sides. We closed the airfield again and doused all the lights, moved all our vehicles up to ring a Red Cross aircraft and turned on our headlights blinding anyone looking out at the airfield. We watched as Argentinian POW's were transferred from buses to the aeroplane for repatriation. They were mostly no more than kids. As too were the lads I had with me, average age under twenty one. The war was coming to an end for us too, 2nd and 3rd line Avionics servicing was being done in pump up tents on the airfield removing the need to ship U/S equipment back to the UK and we became established with huts replacing the airfield tents. The Boss called me into his office to tell me at the age of 43 I had been promoted. I was frankly gob smacked having put up a "black" in my fifth year as a Chief Technician back at Cosford. My posting was back to Marham and the 3rd Line Avionics Servicing Bay - exactly where I had started in 1959 as a 20 year old JT fresh out of Locking and I'd hated it. You win some you lose some. However this is not the end of the story. Whilst waiting on Ascension for the VC10 to return us to UK, the Aircraft's Captain was approached by a very fresh faced Guards officer who asked if there was room on the aircraft for three of his men. No problem said the pilot just see the Loadmaster (Sandwich Commando). She found all three a seat on the not very full aircraft. We refuelled at Dakar in Senegal and this time we were allowed off for a smoke - well we'd won hadn't we. Back on the aircraft the "sandwich commando" noted that three people were missing. I leave you to conclude who they might have been? So ended my sojourn on a beautiful Island in the sun. We arrived at Brize after midnight with no reception party but on exiting the aircraft we waved to the fresh air with the words "Hello Mum!" and climbed down the boarding steps, through to immigration and an announcement from a Customs Officer who said 'OK Fella's' tonight's fee is a fiver each. Yes we all paid him a fiver - except one person, regardless of the fact that we were mostly carrying less than the duty free allowance. The one person who didn't pay was carrying a brown wooden ammunition box with a typical military silver padlock. (his only luggage) He stood in front of the burly customs officer and grinned. "Open the box!" With no movement and still grinning at the customs

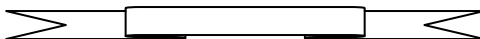
Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

officer who was becoming angry. "Open the box!" he demanded. A man in a navy blue Crombie coat approached the Customs officer from behind and tapped him on the shoulder. The officer turned, looked startled and said 'Oh - Yes sir. Alright you carry on'.

There was a car waiting outside and the individual was whisked away. No such luck for us, a wait for transport to come from Marham. I asked a very nice lady if it were possible to open the bar in the arrivals lounge. "No", she said "It's after hours" "Please?" I said. "Where are you from?" she said. '57 Squadron Ground crew back from Ascension'. 'Open the Bar!' she shouted "My son was Flight Line Mechanic on 57 Squadron at Marham. I wish I could remember his name. He was known to all of us. And thus commenced a homecoming party with English beer.

Paul Kite 81st Entry

1. <http://www.britains-smallwars.com/Falklands/South-Georgia.html>
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Ascension_Island
 - a. <http://www.operationcorporate.com>
 - b. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_Boats,_Ascension_Island
5. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Mountain



MY FALKLANDS WAR EXPERIENCE

On 2 April 1982, when the Falklands War broke out, I was the Officer Commanding Engineering Wing at RAF Wyton. It was my second tour as a Wing Commander, having served at Strike Command as the Wing Commander Offensive Support (Jaguar & Harrier) & Electronic Warfare for 3 years previously. Before that I had attended the Advanced Staff College course at Bracknell.

I have outlined this short synopsis of my career because each of the tours mentioned, influenced my decision-making in what proved to be a very exciting and fulfilling tour at RAF Wyton. I, like everyone else, was riveted to the television news and the resignation of Lord Carrington, a highly regarded Foreign Secretary, who had been caught off-guard in late March 1982. What would the Government do about this calamitous situation? Not a lot, was the popularly held view, but such people had not reckoned on Margaret Thatcher and her determined leadership in protecting the rights of the Falklanders and the sovereignty of Great Britain.

On the 2 April, as the shock news broke of the Argentinean invasion and Margaret Thatcher announced the formation of the 'Task Force', it was not at all evident that RAF Wyton would play any role in the Falklands campaign. My Staff College attendance a few years earlier did, however, ensure that I was acutely aware that the RAF was completely un-prepared for a campaign like the Falklands. The RAF order of battle (ORBAT) had been developed primarily for the 'Cold War' doctrine with little emphasis on 'Out of Area' operations, let alone one who's supply chain stretched 8000 miles, or 16,000 miles return and had to be in place within weeks! In my view it followed that, given our lack of preparedness, all aspects and Units of the RAF were likely to be involved to some extent and I carried out a review of all key RAF Wyton engineering personnel and their leave plans to ensure that we were ready.

RAF Wyton was home to a disparate collection of squadrons and units: 39 Squadron comprising PR9 reconnaissance Canberra Aircraft; 360 Squadron EW Training T17 Canberra Aircraft; 51 Squadron with their special Nimrod R aircraft; the Devon aircraft VIP flight; the Electronic Warfare Support Establishment (EWOSE); The Joint Analysis & Intelligence Centre (JARIC) and the Electronic Warfare Avionic Unit (EWAU).

The initial Military activity went into assembling the Naval task force and planning the logistics for its journey South. The fact that the Aircraft Carriers HMS Hermes and HMS Invincible were leading the Task Force South within 3 days of the Prime Minister's announcement showed how quickly things would move, but not the most optimistic among us believed it would all be over within 70 days. Such rapidity of action set the scene for how quickly things would move across the RAF and Wyton was no exception. Operational thinking moved very rapidly towards how to provide intelligence; reconnaissance and electronic warfare support 'In Theatre' and RAF Wyton was the base that had all of the facilities required to deliver such support. It wasn't long before I was involved in a number of highly classified meetings to see how best to exploit the resources of the 600 personnel and technical capabilities that I commanded. The fact that I had occupied the HQSTC Offensive, Support Aircraft and Electronic Warfare desk just 6 months earlier and knew most of the people still in the Headquarters and their procedures were a great help.

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

Even now, it is difficult to be too precise about what we did because there still security caveats, but I will try and address some of engineering challenges we faced without being specific about aircraft role and type.

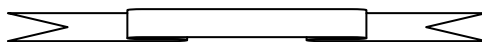
Range was a big factor so we had to look at how best to fit ferry fuel tanks in all sorts of unusual places to aircraft never designed to transit such distances. This involved making design changes far beyond what would normally be expected at Unit level. Direct liaison with the BAES Design engineers, largely cutting out the Staff modification approval process became a 'de facto' way of doing business. We would often come up with results within 3 days of the requirement being placed.

Secondly, EW protection was essential for all aircraft operating in Theatre but some older aircraft only operated using DC. To overcome this, we raided the RAF Museum for certain Pylons and the wing hard point mountings needed to carry them. We modified this old equipment to take modern Electronic Warfare pods on one wing and we designed and assembled a 3-phase Ram Air Turbine generator on-site by welding it into an 11 inch steel tube which, in turn, we welded pylon mounting lugs to in order to mount the whole assembly on the other wing. There were clearly quite differing drag characteristics on each wing and we had to ensure these could be accommodated and that the RAM could be feathered when not required to generate 3-phase power. We routed the 3-phase cables from the RAM across engine hot spots to the EW Pod on the other wing and installed a 3-phase relay that was operated by DC. The 3-phase AC power was switched by installing a DC EW on/off switch in the cockpit. This gave the pilot the capability to switch the EW pod on or off but they could not change the EW programs once airborne. The pod had to be pre-programmed before each sortie and this brings me to the need for special and current intelligence. Other Units within the Station were capable of providing this and they did so with quite stunning success.

Another aspect of the RAF Wyton contribution was EW Countermeasures, largely undertaken within EWAU and EWOSE. The most prominent activity, but not the only one, was the Exocet counter, particularly following the loss of HMS Sheffield.

All of the RAF Wyton engineering personnel worked 7X 24 from the outset with great enthusiasm, despite having leave cancelled or curtailed in many instances. I personally have never experienced such a rewarding phase in my working life, as I did during the Falklands Campaign. The professionalism and endless innovation of all the personnel who worked for me, many of who were ex-apprentices, seemed to know no bounds. While our contribution was but one small part of an outstanding achievement by the RAF as a whole, we all believed we helped to make a difference.

Martin Palmer (91st Entry)



MY FIRST FALKLAND DETACHMENT

Mid June 1982, two days after the end of the Falklands War and the rumours started. They wanted some long range SAR cover in the Falklands, to cover the Harriers etc who were defending the islands. Apparently 202 Squadron were favourites and Coltishall at the head of the queue. Sure enough, both Coltishall

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

Sea Kings, plus a third from the squadron headquarters at Finningley would be sent out as soon as possible. Coltishall would provide most of the three crews required, with a few people drafted in from other flights.

Bloody hell! The war is barely over, if indeed the Argies have given up completely, and my name is on the list. First, it was a quick trip to Culdrose to do a crash course in the use of NVG (night vision goggles), in case we have to do any 'sneaky beaky' work. It made me chuckle; we were signed up as competent to use NVG with a total of about 5 hours training; the support helicopter crews considered that the minimum monthly training to remain current, once they were qualified!

Then came the exciting bit, fighter affiliation. Fighter Affil means learning how best to avoid being shot down by a fighter aircraft. This was considered necessary in case the Argies came back for a second go. After a briefing by people who had never been close to a fighter in their lives, we flew out over the North Sea to be 'attacked' by Lightning fighters from RAF Binbrook, in Lincolnshire. Basically, the best helicopter tactic is to remain low level and hope to avoid detection. Once seen, however, the ploy is to climb, to gain some room to manoeuvre, then turn towards the attacking fighter, and dive. This means the fighter has the minimum time to aim, and is also drawn into a dive, from which he has to pull out, sooner or later. One young jet-jock got carried away with making dummy attacks on our Sea King, and at one point was below us, leaving large ripples on the surface of the North Sea. When we told him we were at 35 feet at the time he went all pale!

So about the middle of August the first detachment left, flying by VC10 to Ascension Island. Then we were flown by RN Wessex out to the British Rail ferry Norland in the middle of the night, only to sit around until cabins became vacant later in the morning! The Norland had taken the Paras down at the beginning of the war, and seen action in San Carlos Water. We were looked after in the mess by two male stewards – 'Wendy' and 'Princess' - queer as nine-bob notes but well thought of by the troops; apparently they had both been out on deck in 'Bomb Alley' loading ammunition during an air raid! Also on board was a CSE (Combined Services Entertainment) Show - Roger L' Idiot, his wife, and a couple of dancers. We spent ten days getting down to Stanley; eating, drinking and playing Risk or Monopoly. We discovered the food had been loaded somewhat haphazardly, so the cooks fed us whatever came out of the container they currently had open. This meant we were eating all sorts, lamb chops for breakfast, sausage, bacon and egg for dinner, etc.

At the end of August 1982 we arrived in Stanley Harbour and were transported to another ferry called Rangatira, originally from New Zealand. This is where we were to live for the next few months. The Rangatira stank to high heaven due to a primitive sewage system. It also made its own water by processing seawater, which came out of the taps, brown and stinking of shit! You could find 'Rangatraz' in thick fog, just by the smell. And I'm not kidding! The three Sea Kings arrived by ship and were flown ashore at Navy Point, a desolate bit of land on the north side of Stanley Harbour, and, at least in winter, inaccessible except by boat or helicopter.

As we had three aircraft and three crews, it was decided that we would stick with the same crew, at least for the first month, rather than the usual 'pick and mix'. I was crewed with pilot Paul Cunningham, from Coltishall; co-pilot Mark 'Bogbrush' Crouchman, from Brawdy. The name 'Bogbrush' came about because Mark had grown a beard because of a 'skin complaint, made worse by shaving'; (actually his

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

neighbour was the MO, who signed his 'excused shaving' chit). The winchman was Nigel Richards, better known as 'Niggly Ricketts', who I knew from Odiham; he came from Boulmer

Sitrep: (military speak for Situation Report). It was early August, so the equivalent of February in the Shetlands, in other words, cold, wet, windy, and frequent snow showers - not ideal flying conditions. The job in hand was to hold some sort of SAR standby, mainly for the Harriers, but also for the rest of the service personnel in the Falklands, and to act as support helicopters, i.e. humping and dumping bodies and supplies.

The crews were accommodated on the Rangatira, but because the harbour was liable to be closed to small boats due to bad weather, we opted to sleep the duty crew ashore, initially in tents, and later in portacabins. The idea was that if we had one crew ashore they could fire up a Sea King and bring the rest of our crews to Navy Point, even if the harbour was closed. This meant one night in three was spent, cold, sober, and frightened, sleeping in isolated spot, easy pickings for any Argie raiding party. Remember, at this point we had no idea if the Argies were well and truly finished, or whether there were still some fanatics out there who would come back for another go!

We settled into a routine of one day on SAR standby, when the duty crew were restricted to a few hours 'tasking', so they were still fit to be scrambled for a night job. Day two you flew from dawn to dusk, normally about 0800 to 1800, flying troops and supplies all over the islands. The second day was normally followed by a monumental 'piss-up' in the mess and a lie in, to recover. Day three was theoretically a day off, to rest and do your 'dhobi', but in practice, you usually had some sort of admin job to do as well.

A typical day's tasking would be to arrive at the 'triangle', a small patch of grass outside the Governor's house in Port Stanley, at about 0800, for the first pick up. This would normally be a mixture of pongos and their kit. There was a certain amount of confusion at the triangle, as each group of troops had been told they would be picked up by helicopter, but Sea King, Wessex, Scout, Lynx, were all the same to a pongo. They were then briefed on the call sign of the helicopter, but not everyone had radios, so we put the call signs on the nose and sides in black 'bodge' tape. We opted for SA, SB, and SC, (S for Sea King, and A, B, C as we had three aircraft). This reduced the number of troops coming up to the door to ask if we were 'their helicopter'. When the first Sea King went back to the UK for a refit a few months later, the replacement came with a letter S already painted on, ready for the second letter. This remains on the Grey Whales to this day!

Note: Because of some quirk of the military mind, none of the helicopters were referred to by their proper names; Chinooks were 'Wokkas', because of the noise they made; Sea Kings were 'Grey Whales'; Wessex were 'Walters' as in Walter Wessex; the Lynx and Scouts were 'Teeny Weenies', as in Teeny Weeny Airways! Later, a captured Argie Huey helicopter was refurbished, painted red, and operated by the Falkland Islands General Air Service, and was known as 'Figas'.

The flying, in all weathers, was hard work. We frequently had to land on for snow showers to pass through, which led to a game of guessing how long the snow would take to clear. The pilots didn't realise I could see the snow on radar and calculate how long it would take to pass, so I won a lot of the bets! A regular job was the ration run, with up to 5000 lbs of rations, carried internally - all loaded on and off by the rear crew. Rule of thumb - every foot depth of rations distributed

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

through the cabin equated to 1000lbs, so 5000 lbs of rations meant I was trapped in the radar cabin after about 4000lbs had been loaded, so the last half a ton was loaded by one guy! (In 1984 one of the pilots, 'Charlie Rats' had a go in the back during such a trip, just to show how easy it was, and he soon changed his opinion about lazy rear crew)

Our new role as SH helicopters introduced the SAR guys to a whole new game. Niggly Ricketts and I had considerable SH experience, which stood us in good stead. For instance, to carry an underslung load (USL) it had to be correctly rigged with wire slings, chains, etc. If it wasn't in the 'book' as a cleared load, the SAR guys were stumped, but Niggly Ricketts and I knew the basics of slinging a load, and after gingerly lifting the first one, if the load flew OK we were laughing. The difficult bit was writing a report to amend the 'book' for future generations. If all else failed, there was a rule, which said any load in a cargo net was automatically a 'cleared load'. Now the Wokkas had some wickedly big cargo nets, big enough to put a vehicle in. Bingo! Cleared load!

Another advantage Niggly and I had was quite a few hours in the left-hand seat of a Wessex. Now a Sea King is a bit like a big Wessex, so we persuaded the bored pilots it would be a good idea if Niggly and I had a go at flying, whilst they honed their skills at humping freight, and counting pongos on and off the helicopter. As Niggly and I demonstrated to the pilots that we were reasonably competent, albeit unofficial, pilots, we got to fly more and more, including underslung loads into some quite difficult spots.

One of the tasks we picked up at the triangle was to place a wooden cross on top of Tumbledown Mountain, as a memorial to the Scots Guards. A small group of Ghurkha engineers came up to the aircraft, carrying tools, bags of cement, jerry cans of water, and one of them carried the wooden cross. It was so big it only just fitted into the aircraft, and a wag remarked the Ghurkha carrying the cross looked as if he was on the way to a crucifixion! We set off to Tumbledown, but the top was in cloud, so we hover taxied as far up as we could go, then hover-jumped the troops onto a flattish rock near the top. We passed the cross down to them, and then dropped the bags of cement and jerry cans to the troops on the ground, who caught them, one by one. Imagine catching a 5-gallon jerry can, weighing about 55lbs, dropped from some 6 feet above your head! The cement dust blew all over the place, and the Ghurkhas on the ground looked like a collection of Mr Pastry's! Later, passing Mt Tumbledown when the weather had improved, we noticed the cross was on the eastern end, and not quite at the top, but not a bad job, considering the conditions. I'm sure the Scots Guards were quite happy.

However, life was not all rosy. We did some pretty hairy flying as well, including one night job, which could easily have led to the non-existence of this story!

Log book: 15th September 1982, Pilot Paul Cunningham, 7 RN survivors from boat aground near Roy Cove to the Triangle, 3 hours 5 minutes night.

We were scrambled to Prince William Sound, on the western side of West Falkland, to a party of seven RN personnel from a wrecked boat, now in a dinghy and hypothermic. We got airborne and climbed to a safe height before heading west to Prince William Sound, an inlet several miles deep and up to a mile wide. Once clear of land we let down on radar until we established a hover at 50 feet over the water. Unfortunately, the survivors were ashore at the head of the bay, a mile or so behind us. The wind was too strong to turn and fly downwind, so in the pitch black, we started reversing. The survivors saw our lights and fired a flare,

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

which was seen by the co-pilot. He took control and started flying towards the flare, which then went out! Next came an urgent cry from Niggly Ricketts in the doorway to warn the pilots that we were about to fly tail first into the water, followed by the emergency instruction 'Up, up, up!' 'Bogbrush' the co-pilot said 'I can't see anything, you have control', and Paul Cunningham the captain took the controls and PULLED. We shot skywards, using a bit more than the maximum torque allowed, and eventually established ourselves at a safe height, still in the pitch dark.

Then came the difficult bit. Having nearly killed ourselves, we had to go through the same procedure again, and let down over the water, and reverse the helicopter back to where the survivors were still waiting. We achieved this without too much drama, and found our survivors, sitting in a dinghy, high and dry on the beach. So much for hypothermic casualties in need of urgent assistance. They would have still been alive next morning, cold, but alive, and we had just risked our necks because someone had exaggerated the situation to ensure a helicopter was sent! The survivors were winched on board, and were somewhat surprised when we declined to drop them off at their base, which just happened to be Roy Cove, another dark inlet a few miles away. We dropped the navy guys off at Port Stanley and retired for the night. I remember admiring Paul Cunningham's bottle, for going straight back to repeat the exercise that had nearly done for us!

So life continued, flying until we were fit to drop. In fact I held the record for the number of flying hours in one month – 117 hours 50 minutes in October, when 35 hours was a hard month's flying in the UK! Eventually we got into November, and two crews, including mine, were going home. We were on our very last task, lifting USLs from a ship in Stanley Harbour. In fact the loads were captured Argie vehicles etc that we were lifting ashore to be used as targets on a firing range. As it was so cold, Niggly Ricketts and I did a couple of loads each, swapping over to thaw out in the radar cabin. I was in the doorway, talking the pilot over a load, when we all heard tones over the intercom. I thought it was Niggly playing with equipment in the radar cabin, as it sounded just like the test sequence from the RWR (radar warning receiver). 'Turn it off, Nige'. 'I'm not touching anything'. Then Bogbrush said 'It's not in the aircraft, it's coming over the UHF'. Then we twigged. The noise we could hear was 'Auto-tone', the automatic transmission from a fighter aircraft when the pilot ejects!

A very tired SH crew, with thoughts of going home soon, suddenly became an alert SAR crew. A quick look around showed a Harrier diving towards the sea, with a man in a parachute somewhere above it. I dropped the USL back on the deck of the ship, to the surprise of the hooking up crew, and off we jolly well went, bit between our teeth. Niggly Ricketts started to get changed into his yellow immersion suit, ready to go into the water, and the rest of our crew followed the ejected pilot, watching him splash into the outer harbour a minute later. We were established in the hover beside the downed pilot, while Niggly Ricketts was still getting into his kit. I remember making 'stay there' gestures to the banged-out jet jock, not that he was going anywhere, sitting in his dinghy, surrounded by floating parachute. A fleeting memory of Dave Bullock passed through our minds, then it was over the side with the winchman, and in no time we had one wet jet jock in the cabin, uninjured, but still on his way to hospital in Port Stanley for a check-up. [Dave Bullock, ex 90th, was a winchman who drowned, together with the pilot he was trying to rescue, when the helicopter downdraft inflated the pilot's parachute. Dave was awarded a posthumous George Medal.]

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

On the way to the hospital, I noticed the casualty had what appeared to be small cuts on his cheeks, although they weren't bleeding. The small cuts are quite common on ejectees, caused by fragments of the canopy Perspex getting between his oxygen mask and his visor. However, on closer inspection, the 'cuts' turned out to be facial hair, what's known in the RAF as 'bugger's grips'! So, after over three years on SAR, I finally had my first ejectee. He turned out to be Wg Cdr Peter Squire, OC 1 Sqn. (In 2003 he was Air Chief Marshall Sir Peter Squire, Chief of the Air Staff)!

Our crew were all chuffed, our first real job. Then the downer as our flight home was threatened by the requirement to give evidence to the board of inquiry. Eventually we all made it to Ascension Island by C-130 Hercules, then VC10 to Brize Norton. I arrived, smelly and knackered after over 24 hours in transit, to be met by Margie and the boys. Margie drove us to Swindon, where we dropped the boys at their Granny's then Margie took me to some posh hotel, ostensibly to borrow some glasses for her brother's pub! I was so knackered that I didn't question it until she said to bring my bag into the hotel! Then I twigged. She had booked a night in the honeymoon suite, complete with four-poster bed!

Paul 'Cedric' Challice 95th Entry

Remember Still

*I still can smell the heated steel
But the cold sea is all I feel
I still can taste the smoke and flame
Rising from where once laughter came
I still can hear the cries of men
Fighting the fear consuming them
I still can see those that still remain
As we abandoned this weary game*

*They are still, still there, still together
Still brothers in arms
At peace, all quiet, all still*

*I still smell the fog of that day in May
That covered up our aggressor's way
I still can see the confusion reign
In the eyes of those that try to explain
I still hear the sound of icy waves
Lapping the steel now their rusting grave
I still think back to that place in time
When luck ran out on friends of mine
They are still, still there, still together
Still brothers in arms
At peace, all quiet, all still
Still there*

*In Memory of the Crew of HMS Sheffield
Attacked May 4th 1982 with a loss of 20 men*

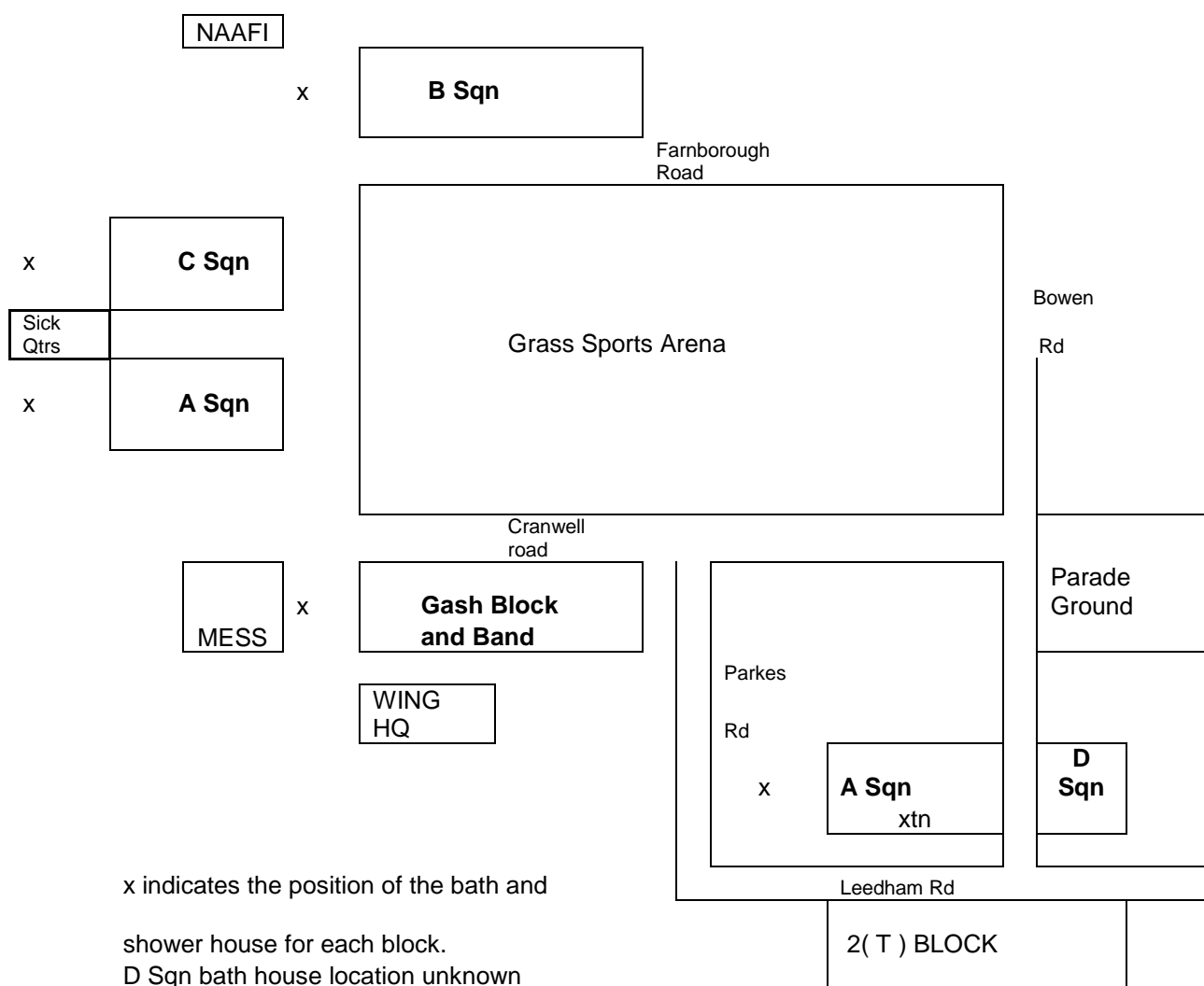
APPRENTICE DAYS

HUT NUMBERING

And so the story unfolds, well done Brian (memory - what a wonderful thing!)

There is more to come unfortunately ran out of space in the Edition – Ed

Apprentice Wing- Wooden hut Squadron block locations (NOT TO SCALE)



The hat band colours allocated for each Sqn were

- A- Blue
- B-Green
- C-Grey/Silver
- D- Brown

With the arrival of larger Entry's, beginning with the 200 plus of the 87th, the Apprentice Wing expanded in Jan 1958 to accommodate the 88th Entry who, being part of A Sqn. were located down by No 2 Tech Block taking residence in the odd numbered billets facing Leedham Road.

D Sqn. was formed with the arrival of the 89th Entry in May 1958, then with the arrival of the 93rd Entry, in Sept 1959, also of D Sqn. they were both billeted on the opposite side of Bowen Road which led down from the parade ground, again facing No 2 Tech Block.

With a single doubter, the above layout is on as firm a ground as it can be, for including Bruce's 26, the numbers in agreement are presently 34 to 1. Ken Allen of the 87th also provided anecdotal evidence, in remembering that 372 was nearest the main gate and faced the sports field/arena, with 373 at the rear, for it was the tacit responsibility of occupants of 372 to keep a lookout for F/Sgt Burley trundling gracefully along the road on his bike.

Although it doesn't quite tie in with Ken Togood's original 373 to 384 for B Sqn the above hut numbering agrees with his original supposition that the even numbers faced the arena.

A number of 87th also confirmed that huts 313, 315, 317 and 319 were definitely in the Gash/Band block, and my thanks to Barry Dinnage for confirming that the even numbers in this block faced the arena also, as hut 319, in which he lived in whilst in the band, definitely faced Wing HQ.

So there we have it, certainly for B Sqn the hut numbers are pretty conclusive, but unfortunately, except for your contribution Colin this is not true with regards to A, C and D blocks where the jury is still out, as not a soul from other Entries came forward to cast any firm light on these blocks. Neither did we get anywhere with explanations of the identities of the replacement brick blocks, even though members of the 97th confirmed to me at the last AGM they were at Locking when B block was the last to be demolished.

With the responses so far virtually exclusively from past members of B Sqn, it looks as if with the march of time, for the majority, myself included, the memories of our sojourn spent at Locking all those years ago are fading fast and getting dimmer by the minute, so I wonder if we are going to get much further on this subject any time soon.

It certainly looks as if nobody in all of the wider LAA membership had the foresight to make a specific record of such matters; I put it down to the fact most of us had far more important things to attend to, such as learning what the heck a CRT was, when it was about.

With the limited response so far I believe I have taken the survey as far as possible at this moment in time, so I have appended an Excel layout that shows the disposition of the 6 wooden style barrack blocks that formed the enlarged Apprentice Wing in more detail and, hopefully to achieve a bit more clarity, have separated out the individual blocks and hut numbers from Kens original. Perhaps something similar could be put on the LAA website which would allow for

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

continuous updating as and when individuals have a flash of inspiration and remember where they resided all those years ago.

In closing I would like to take the opportunity to thank all who put finger to keyboard in sharing their snippets of information and memories, and would like to finish on a lighter note with a true story passed on, again by Ken Allen, regarding one LAA Mooney.

After a day of hard schooling 'Ching' Rashbrook of the 87th was flaked out on his pit with an unlit cigarette in hand, when in walks Mooney and tells Ching he's going to charge him for smoking in the billet. The conversation went something like:

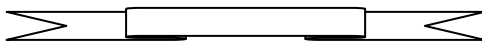
Ching: "No I'm not smoking"

Mooney: "Yes you are-you've got a cigarette in your hand".

Ching: "I've got my boots on but I'm not going anywhere"

I suspect Ching went far with his early signs of disdain for authority, what times we had eh!

Brian Colby 87th



I only remember part of the hut block numbers, for the 95th Entry C Squadron, which were Huts 359 & 361 on the side facing the footpath between the other hut block. I cannot remember the numbering on the other side of the hut block. No doubt someone in the 90th may remember, as they filled most of the huts in the remainder of the block.

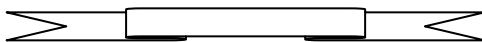
At the right hand end of these two blocks was the road at the end of the "sports" grass area. At the left hand end across the road was the Sick Quarters.

Whilst on the other side of the C Sqdn block was the road past the NAAFI, continuing to the YMCA and the OMQs.

I also remember that the "Gash Block" had the band in it initially, but later the 95th moved to it - 2 huts (I don't remember the numbering/position in the block, but I was in Hut 319), later the 99th filled the rest of the huts in that block.

Hope that will help to fill in some of the numbering part of the puzzle.

Doug Webster 95th



I think I now understand – Ed

LIFE AFTER LOCKING ON THE WAY TO WORK!!

With the numerous RAF stations that we were variously posted to during our service careers, sadly much diminished nowadays, the journey to and from them sometimes wasn't quite as straight forward as it should have been.

For example with a first posting after Locking to RAF West Raynham, it was close enough to enable me to stay at my parent's home in Norwich at weekends which entailed a Monday morning dash through the Norfolk countryside on my recently purchased Lambretta scooter.

Many a time I needed to duck to miss colliding with the odd brace of pheasants flying from field to field and on numerous occasions stopped to pick up road kills which were surprisingly eagerly accepted by the mess cooks. With many others on the camp commuting through the small roads in the area there was always a plentiful supply of pheasants and rabbits to enhance the usual weekly food rations.

During winter months it was advantageous to travel back on the Sunday night but with extremely dense fog banks drifting from the fields visibility could suddenly reduce to virtually nil and these journeys could turn out be somewhat exhilarating!!.

On one such occasion I realised that by simply sitting further upright my head was then above the white expanse and with the hedgerows pointing the way I duly increased my speed.

Unfortunately just as I hit an icy stretch I registered momentarily that a large white object was about to hit me from my port side, and within the blink of any eye I found myself sitting upright on the road hurtling along at about 30 mph, with the scooter spinning wildly just in front of me.

Grabbing the handlebars to prevent even more damage I remember chuckling to myself at the crazy situation I was in, all down to a stupid kamikaze barn owl that had it in for me. Was it coincidence or had my white helmet with painted eyes caught its attention? Fortunately at that time of night there was no following traffic and with the road remaining ice covered, I travelled for well over a hundred yards on my backside before gradually sliding to a halt. Surprisingly I was completely unharmed except for a small hole worn in my well made service issue cold weather gear; and unbeknown to me destined to come off that flaming scooter a total of 15 times in the 18 months that I owned it.

A year later and in my first car, an old Ford Prefect, driving back up the A1 to Middleton-St George after a weekend in Bristol on a freezing cold night and with the heater full on, I looked forward to getting into my warm pit, when suddenly within seconds of that cosy thought, everything started vibrating like crazy.

To my horror I realised the car was careering full tilt up the motorway's grassy bank and heading straight for a large wooden fence. Managing to gain control before ending up in a field I steered down to the hard shoulder and with the old ticker going 19 to the dozen brought the car to a halt.

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

Heaving a great sigh of relief I realised how perilously close I had come to crashing into one of the numerous concrete bridge supports that were a feature of that particular stretch of the motorway.

Realising I had made the near fatal error of falling asleep at the wheel, I stepped out into the cold night air, ran round the car a few times to fully waken myself then, with the heater turned completely off continued the journey to Middleton, vowing that I would never put myself in that situation again.

Just a week later however whilst travelling as a passenger with ex 91st Entry colleague Ian Davis, on one of our regular runs down to Bristol, we had the misfortune to make contact with a greyhound that suddenly ran directly across our path on the A1. With no chance for Ian to take avoiding action there was a resounding crunch, followed by the dog continuing across the opposite lane of the motorway, to disappear into an adjoining field. On inspection of Ian's car there was a clear outline of the unfortunate dog in the grille, which must have run on automatic, for when we eventually located it in an adjoining field the poor animal was completely lifeless. We both took the decision to travel by train for a few weeks after those little escapades.

The early morning commute from Sembawang to RAF Seletar years later entailed an interesting 10 mile journey on a scooter, a beaten up old wreck that I had manage to buy for the princely sum of \$30, passing numerous Kampongs (native villages built in the jungle) made even more pleasant with the smell of cooking wafting through the air and the wave from playing children.

It was during such a melancholy trip I noticed a large hairy spider in the middle of the road and decided it would be too dangerous to swerve to avoid, so on the spur of the moment ran over it at high speed, you can imagine my shock when arriving at the squadron hangar I found the beast sitting comfortably behind me on the rear seat.

Quickly flicking it with my beret caused it to land in a puddle of water and to my utter surprise it immediately leapt about 4 foot in the air, proving straight away how the bugger must have gotten its free lift. After finding out that others had even ridden over lizards and indeed snakes etc on their way to work I ensured I kept a wide berth of such jungle nasty's for the remainder of the tour.

The scooter co-incidentally turned out to be a bargain, managing to flog it for \$40 to the same Chinese garage that I had bought it from; I had enjoyed virtually 3 years of nearly carefree commuting and made a gain of \$10, so who could ask for more.

It was the journey from work that regularly turned out to be somewhat unusual with a posting to Coltishall in 1969.

After finishing one of my first night shifts I was amazed to be offered the chance to earn some extra cash by joining the squadron's team of 'Chicken Snatchers'.

Extraordinarily named it was, but as it said on the tin it meant literally snatching live chickens for transport to the local 'Birds Eye' factory in nearby Great Yarmouth.

I realised too late however that I had volunteered for a somewhat hard way to fortune, as it entailed 3 car loads of highly trained RAF technicians travelling many miles to remote farms at about 2 in the morning where, suitably attired in denims, beret and most importantly a face mask, we would be met by the farmer

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

who directed the motley crew to a dimly lit long wooden hut, where thousands of chickens awaited.

Walking forward slowly so as not to stampede the blighters we would each grab a single leg of a chicken, then with up to three of the birds in each hand, they were hauled out to the waiting lorry to be unceremoniously pushed into crates ready for transport. It was always hot and sweaty work, with the whole process taking a couple of hours in which everyone got covered in dust and feathers and with the odd bruise thrown in.

This was especially so at Xmas time, when we were expected to tackle monstrous turkeys which, besides being far larger, had the nasty tendency to fight back by continually pushing against one's wrist with their free leg.

As can be imagined the result of such a night's escapade ensured that it would be a group of scratched, bruised, battered and somewhat odorous technicians who would wearily wend their way back home.

On the one occasion, when our convoy was questioned by a police patrol they took some convincing that in the middle of the night this is what highly trained RAF technicians, ranging from JT's up to Chief Tech would be mad enough to do in their spare time. With night shift occurring on a regular basis my father gained a flock of over 20 hens in the process, but it was undoubtedly one helluva way to earn some extra cash and I would not of course recommend this form of overtime to anyone.

With the multitude of RAF stations available to be posted to within the UK, the Middle and Far East, our generation must consider ourselves lucky to have joined up at just the right period in time.

Although RAF Seletar is still functioning, after being handed over to the Singapore armed forces, with a memorable visit there a few years back to remind me, sadly far too many camps have reverted back to nature.

RAF Yatesbury is now producing wheat instead of technicians, and West Raynham now standing eerily intact but silent, with only the sound of skylarks hovering way up in the sky above the once busy hangars, or like our RAF Locking, sadly in the process of being demolished for some other nefarious usage.

With fond memories of the various journeys to work each day, through country and jungle and of course the wonderful cities, the likes of Chester and Lincoln, the steady diminution of RAF personnel and stations is a painful fact of present day life, but for us oldies the serving, and of course commuting to those far flung stations hold many fond memories, to which I am sure many of you have similar experiences.

From Brian Colby 87th Entry

LIFE AFTER THE RAF
BRAT AT LARGE IN THE B.B.C. (A YEAR IN THE LIFE)

From Mike Collier

Having spent the first 29 years of my working life learning about, working on and teaching aircraft related electronics, joining the B.B.C. in November 1982 was a huge step into the unknown.

As with starting any new job, the first day was an introduction to the site, the system and the people I would be working with. The plan was for me to sit in for a week or so, on one of the courses with which I was to become involved. Then, take on occasional lectures to ease me into the system.

The following morning, I arrived at a classroom with Course Manager, John Charlton. Having been introduced to the class as a new lecturer, I sat at the back for the duration of his 90 minute session. The students then had a 20 minute break. John and I headed for the lecturers common room. On the way, he complained that the next period was "Basic Transistor Theory", which he hated doing. Much to his surprise, I suspect, I volunteered to do it. He was dubious at first but showed me the lecture notes and O.H.T.s. When I stepped onto the dais instead of John, I could hear a ripple run round the class. They were obviously going to enjoy nailing this "rookie" lecturer to the white board. What they did not know, was that I had been teaching for over 20 years and had taught an almost identical lesson countless times before. It took only a few minutes for them to realise, that it was they who were going to have a hard time. My teaching technique was as far as possible, to do everything by question and answer. Individuals were fielding questions faster than they could dream up answers. John, who said he would sit in for my first session, to metaphorically hold my hand, quietly left after about 5 minutes. By the time lunch break came, the students were probably a little shell shocked.

After that John was happy to let me teach most of the basic electronics and sit in with him and others, when the topic was broadcasting related. It was the start of a very steep learning curve. My boss was very sympathetic with regard to my lack of practical broadcasting experience and organized a number of detachments for me. Along the way there were a few surprises, some odd, others unnerving.

The first of these occurred at the end of day one. I had been allocated an office with delightful views across open woodland. Just prior to knocking off time (5 p.m.), I tidied my desk in readiness to leave. To my surprise, the other lecturers carried on happily working on various tasks. In my previous existence at British Airways, if you stood near the exit at 4 - 30 (finishing time there) you could be trampled to death. I used the excuse that I was in "digs" and my landlady would have a meal ready. It did not take long to slip into the local pattern and on many subsequent occasions, returned voluntarily, unpaid, in the evening, to help any of my students who were struggling or to familiarise myself with equipment I had to teach the following day.

Another initial problem was the sense of humour. At B.A. almost everyone was ex-Service and we tended to laugh at the same things. At the B.B.C., things I thought

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

hilariously funny, were often frowned upon. The language was certainly less colourful and topics of conversation more cultural. It took some getting used to!

After a couple of weeks, I was invited to take a group of trainee Studio Managers to visit the Droitwich Transmitter site. As I knew nothing about ground based transmitters, potentially this could be a mite embarrassing. Fortunately, on arrival, I "buttonholed" one of the supervisors, who conducted the tour for me. My education was purely in airborne equipment, where components were as small as possible. I was amazed to see enormous capacitors, mounted on what I can only describe as trucks on a narrow gauge railway, complete with sidings. The trucks were moved by hand. Any required frequency change achieved by disconnecting the in use capacitor, shunting it into a siding and rolling in a different one from the "main line". The other outstanding memory is of a light bulb, suspended on a piece of string but glowing brightly, due to spurious radiation from the adjacent aerials.

To further my B.B.C. education, one of the lecturers took me to visit the Pebble Mill studios. Here, I encountered a terminology problem that occurred quite often in my early days. We were having a break in the canteen, a number of floors up, with panoramic views over Birmingham. Quite innocently, I asked "What's the building over there with all the scanners on top?" My companion looked at me in total astonishment. When I identified the building more accurately, he burst out laughing. In my world of aircraft engineering, a scanner was a metal dish mounted somewhere within an airframe. In the B.B.C. it was an 18 ton vehicle, housing a mobile T.V. control area.

A further aspect of working at the B.B.C. was coming into contact with people who were household names. My first experience of this was on the same trip to Pebble Mill. I was being shown something and without looking, stepped back for a better view in the process, treading on a foot. Unfortunately, it was one of a pair that stopped Charlie Chester's legs from fraying at the ends. He did accept my apology most gracefully. Later we entered the Green Room, prior to going onto the set to observe Pebble Mill at One and encountered Helen Shapiro and Humphrey Littleton in conversation.

My first serious detachment came early in 1983. Two weeks, split between Broadcasting House and T.V. Centre. There was so much new information, that a clipboard, note pad and pencil became essential equipment with rapidly scribbled notes being turned into comprehensive detail, later the same evening. The experience was invaluable, much of it eventually incorporated into my lecture notes. Although I had visited B.H. before, it was still an impressive place. There was certainly no substitute for observing first hand how the studio system worked between the presenter, producer and sound supervisor. The sound desk appeared at least as complicated as a 747 instrument panel. At the time, I would have found it hard to believe that eventually, I would be able to operate a similar desk with a reasonable degree of competence. A day spent in the in the Main Control Room, where all incoming and outgoing signals were routed via countless jackfields and a maze of double ended cables, was also rewarding. A particularly outstanding memory, was sitting in for a while with John Dunn, during his early evening programme. He was a true gentleman and while discs were playing answered all my probably naive questions. Earlier, in the Green Room, I had a brief conversation with his guest for the evening, Bill Maynard (Greengrass in Heartbeat). It took a while for the novelty of being in close proximity to celebrities to wear off.

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

The second week heralded the first of many visits to TV. Centre. It was fascinating. I was "farmed out" to different areas, starting with Video Recording, then Telecine, where feature films were converted to T.V. format. Next came News and finally the Studios themselves. I was shown everything I wished to see, with someone always there to offer an explanation. In fact the whole time I was at the B. B. C., being a lecturer at Wood Norton, was an "Open Sesame" to any technical or production area in the Corporation. The only exception I ever came across occurred on this visit, when Michael Hurll, directing a 'Top of the Pops' rehearsal, refused permission for me to watch from his Production Gallery. No explanation but I suspect the clipboard made him nervous.

On returning to base, I was able to take on many more broadcasting related subjects. In June 1983, came the most memorable detachment of all, to Outside Broadcasts.

The first outing from there was with a P.S.C. crew to do an interview in an up-market area of Chelsea. The B.B.C. regularly hired transport, so we were in an unmarked minivan. On arriving, we discovered that the interviewee was out, so sat in the van to wait. Some 10 minutes later, two police cars hurtled into the street and stopped either end of the van and we were ordered out. Apparently, a neighbour had reported that we were acting suspiciously. Production of our B.B.C. I/D cards and showing them the O.B. equipment, saved us from a sojourn in Pentonville.

The following day, the visit was to an O.B. on a much larger scale - The All England Tennis Championships at Wimbledon. There were three complete scanner and support vehicle sets there. Over 30 miles of cables had been laid to connect all the various units together. One of the more unnerving moments of my B.B.C. career occurred, when I was watching the work in a scanner Vision Control area. There were four Vision Operators and a Vision Supervisor in the area. Camera Operators do not control brightness and contrast on their cameras. These are adjusted remotely in Vision Control by an operator using a control stick. Twisting the top adjusts one parameter, back and forth, the other. Each operator controls two cameras, a stick in each hand, observing the results on monitors. If a ball is bouncing in and out of shade, the operator requires considerable skill to maintain an apparently constant visual image for the viewer. While I was watching, one of the V. O.'s was called to the telephone. With the supervisor's permission, he left. The supervisor then turned to me and said, "Those two are yours". I was dumbstruck. I knew the theory but had never used the system practically. Suddenly, there I was, with potentially millions of people watching what I was doing. Panic ensued, when I realised that I could not remember which movement altered which aspect of the picture. Gentle experimenting had minimal effect. Large movements not an option, in case the red light on one of my monitors came on, indicating that I was on air. After what seemed an eternity, the V.O. returned and took over. I beat a hasty retreat to avoid a possible repeat performance.

My last visit of the week was to a horse racing meeting. My wife and I had stayed with friends for the duration of my detachment. Fortunately, Newbury was on our way home to Evesham. I scrounged a second B.B.C. pass so that she could come with me to the event. Once inside, we parted company, forgetting to arrange a rendezvous point. When I found her later, she commented that she knew where I was. "Who but you would be clambering around on the roof of a grandstand, in a lounge suit, clutching a clipboard?" I had been looking at the aerial system for

sending sound and vision signals, via an intermediate Links Vehicle, into Swains Lane in north London. The Engineering Manager on this occasion was very friendly, giving up his lunch break to show her how all the bits and pieces in the scanner worked. I learned a bit more as well.

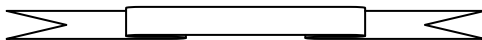
At this meeting, I was also introduced to the "horse's hooves" tape. Whilst it was reasonable to have commentators and cameras at different points on the course, it was not economically viable to have effects microphones everywhere. The commentators used lip mic's, designed to eliminate extraneous noise, which they did very effectively. So, to maintain credibility for the viewer, the Sound Supervisor had a quarter inch audio tape, with a continuous recording of galloping horses. This was mixed with the commentary in the sound desk. Levels were changed as the race approached and receded. For jump meetings the fader was dipped sharply, when the horses were airborne.

Back at Wood Norton, I was considered competent enough to manage courses and working hard to ensure that I could teach every lecture and practical on them. An area that caused me problems was films, which lead to my last major detachment, to the B.B.C. Film Unit at Ealing. At that time, the Corporation still used a lot of material shot on 16mm film and a steady trickle of our students were scheduled to be employed there. Whilst I gathered a huge amount of information at Ealing, I only had one external visit, to a film processing facility. Sadly, a lot of the explanations there went over my head probably due to my rudimentary knowledge of chemistry. However, the other accumulated data stood me in good stead, when I became involved with student film shoots and editing.

Shortly after returning from this detachment, I had a fairly serious personal disaster. As we lived close to Wood Norton, I used a bicycle for transport. The training unit was on a hill, with a steep descent to a secondary exit, blocked by a large pair of ornamental metal gates. Beside these, a small pedestrian gate, usually open, gave access to the main road immediately outside. My normal practice was to freewheel down the hill, then just before the gates, brake hard on my much more efficient front brake and if it was clear, ride through the side gate into the main road. On this particular evening, I followed my usual routine, pulled hard on my front brake and the cable snapped. At this point, I was travelling very fast, no time to formulate "Plan B" before I hit the large gate. The bicycle stopped almost instantly, catapulting me head first into the metal bars. Cycle helmets were uncommon in those days and I did not wear one. I picked myself up, blood dripping everywhere, handkerchief of little use in stemming it. Staggering back up the drive, I met one of my students, about to drive into Evesham. He dropped me at my doctor's surgery, where I was quickly ushered into a side room. When he examined the damage, my doctor advised me that an anaesthetic injection would be more painful than stitching without it. After some hair removal and scrubbing, he inserted 21 stitches to close the face and scalp wounds, topping it off with a turban type bandage. Later that evening, I drove out to retrieve my bicycle. It was a write off, crossbar buckled and front wheel driven back to touch the pedal crank. Strangely, I suffered no headache or other side effects. As I was still in my probationary year, I had no wish to create a bad impression at work. Next morning after an early surgery visit to have the bandage removed, I was at work in time to teach my first period session on Transmitter Theory. The class, I think, were surprised to see me and even more by my appearance, A line of blood caked stitches starting from my chin and disappearing into the new bald patch, plus a very black eye.

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

The next couple of months were relatively uneventful. Still very hard work but the learning curve was becoming less steep. My boss seemed reasonably impressed by first years work and my full time employment status was confirmed. I went on to spend a further nine very happy years at Wood Norton but that is another story.



RAFLAA

MINUTES OF THE 48TH COMMITTEE MEETING RAFLAA

Venue: Flowerdown House Weston Super Mare

Date: Thursday 26th July 2012 at 13.00hrs

Members Present:

Tiny Kuhle	87 th	Chairman
Chris Bryan	87 th	Secretary
Tony Horry	76 th	Treasurer
Colin Ingram	88 th	Newsletter
Peter Crowe	95 th	AA Rep/Webmaster
Jim Doran	219 th	Membership Secretary
Andy Perkins	109 th	Technical Rep.
Rick Atkinson	91 st	Service Rep.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 13.06hrs. greeting all members, followed by the reading of the Apprentice Prayer.

Item 1. Apologies

Apology was received from Graham Beeston, who was unable to attend the meeting

Item 2 Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the 47th Committee Meeting were reviewed, and passed as read. Proposed by Pete Crowe, and seconded by Jim Doran.

Item 3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Item 4 Treasurer's Report

Accounts as per the income/expenditure statement for Feb – July 2012 overleaf

Start of 2012/13 FY = £ 6563.97

Total Balance Sheet now stands at £ 6417.15 - reduced by £146.82

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

AGM	Income	Expenditure	Webbington costs
	£3,117.00		69 Lunches = £621.00
Webbington		£3,293.00	106 Dinners = £2067.00
Trophy (Cpl Joe Laird)		£50.00	80 Tea/Biscuits = £250.00
Trophy Expenses		£16.98	40 Wine = £480.00
Travelbilty coach		£160.00	125 Bar = £125.00
Music (Atlantic Crossing)		£220.00	
Wordsmith		£17.95	Deposit paid £200.00
Total		£3,757.93	£3,293.00

AGM Total Excess Expenditure to Association = £640.93 (In 2011 =£828.00)

Bar expenditure in 2012 was £125.00, in 2011 was £69.00 (£486.00 in 2010)

Refunds		
Phil Mann	AGM cancellation	£42.00
Martin Palmer	Guest Hotel room refund	£85.00

DONATIONS		
Flowerdown House RAFA	£40.00	RAFLAA Cttee Meeting (Feb)
Help for Heroes	£201.00	AGM fund raising

OVERHEADS:

Newsletters	Printing	Postage
23/02/12	£100.00	44 @ 0.58p UK; 2 Euro; 1 Airmail £30.57
01/07/12	£96.00	46 @ 0.69p UK; 1 Euro; 1 Airmail £33.74

Ties: Stock of ties has been replaced – 31 purchased from C.H. Munday at £222.12

Webhosting: (Peter Crowe) renewal £42.32 paid

Recommendations:

That the accounts be noted.

That deposit of £200.00 to be paid to Webbington for AGM in 2013

That booking of Atlantic Crossing be confirmed for AGM

That a donation of £40 be made to Flowerdown House for their hospitality for this meeting.

**RAF LOCKING APPRENTICES ASSOCIATION INCOME/EXPENDITURE
FEB 2012 TO JULY 2012**

Brought forward from FY 2011/12

Deposit Bond			Expenditure (Purchases)		
Business Money Manager A/C		5,188.15		Pins	0.00
Current A/C		1,351.49		Ties	222.12
Cash		24.33		Video	0.00
Total Funds		6,563.97	6,563.97	Social	0.00
				Donations	241.00
Income (Sales)				Name Badges	4.90
Membership Renewals					
Standing Orders	115	1,150.00		AGM – 2012	3,757.93
Cheques	11	153.20		Advert	
				Bank Charges	0.00
New Members	4	60.00		Audit	50.00
Life	0	0		Refunds	127.00
Ties	2	15.00		Bank Charges	0.00
Sales – Videos		0.00			4,402.95
Sales – Coins		0.00		Overheads	
Sales –Wheels		10.00		Travel	279.00
AGM		3,117.00		Printing	100.00
				Telephone	42.32
Donation (AGM Fund Raising)		201.00		Postage	30.57
			4,706.20	Stationery	0.00
Interest					451.89
Business Money Manager			1.82		
Deposit Bond					
Total Income			4,708.02	Total Expenditure	4,854.84
Total Balance			6,417.16	Surplus/Deficit	-146.82

Business Money Manager 5,189.97
 Current A/C 1,202.85
 Cash 24.33
Total Funds 6,417.15

Presented to LAA Committee - Tony Horry, Treasurer, 26th July 2012

Item 5 Membership Secretary's Report

5.1 Membership Details

The latest membership number used is 695 (691 at the AGM in April). Three new members have joined since the AGM in April making a total of four new members since the last committee meeting in February.

According to the data held by the Membership Secretary, as of today's date there are currently 361 active members.

5.2 Newsletter Hardcopy Requests

There are a total of 34 current active members, 2 of which are overseas (France and Australia) who receive hardcopies of the Newsletter together with 13 copies sent to widows.

5.3 Email addresses

Some email addresses are still rebounding and a small number of recipients have contacted Tony stating they haven't received the newsletter password. The database is being run from excel. A rebuild remains on the project list.

Golden Entry Certificates (92nd, 93rd and 94th Entry's) are about to be despatched.

5.4 Advertising

The Membership Secretary is still attempting to communicate with all the RAFA areas through RAFA HQ at Leicester via the Membership and Clubs Adviser. This remains a progress item. Other forms of advertising – via Special Occasion band concerts where free advertising is on offer or on tap.

5.5 Memories of Locking

Locking School Books have been received from Michael Harding-Hill as a piece of history. These are possible material for the museum.

Email, pictures and information regarding apprentice times from Keith Jenkin (85th)

Jim Doran, Membership Secretary

Item 6 Secretary's Report

The start to this year has been remarkably better than last year, when I seemed to be writing letters of condolence, non-stop. I hope that I am not speaking too soon, but so far, so good.

It was with great sadness, that I learned from reading the "Cranwell Wheel", that the RAF Cranwell Apprentice Association is to be wound up at the end of 2013. The demise of the association is mainly to lack of income, owing to the fact that their membership is decreasing rapidly through death, and obviously no new members joining. Any funds remaining at the end of next year, will be donated to the RAF Benevolent Fund.

When attending the FABEA AGM with Tiny, I also learned that the Brats 192 are to be wound up at about the same time for the same reason. It seems that they have faced up to reality and will terminate their existence, rather than gradually whither away

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

I would like to think that the LAA had many more years to run, but nevertheless, it is food for thought, and when the time comes, perhaps a similar action could be put in place for our association. How morbid is that????

On a happier note, two new members of which Jim (Doran) sent me the names, came from the 87th entry. His name was Bill Rudlands, and I could not place his face. I telephoned him, and it made me feel a lot better, because he could not remember my face either. He did wish to contact another member of our entry, John Gibson. I gave John, Bill's details, with his permission, of course, and now they are back in communication with each other. One of the highlights of the job. The other new member from the 87th is George Dixon.

Dave Gunby. I last communicated with his son Anthony on 24th July, and sent all the committee's best wishes to him, as I know, you would have wanted. Anthony said that Dave had had the operation on 23rd and was doing well. So that is very good news indeed.

The 90th anniversary of the Apprentice Scheme was celebrated at the NMA. on Sat May 12th 2012, organized by the RAF Halton Association. It was an event well worth attending, with the address given by Viscount Trenchard, grandson of Lord Trenchard, and was preceded by the fly-past of a Hawker Hurricane. One good day out.

Chris Bryan The report as read, was proposed by Jim Doran and seconded by Andy Perkins.

Tiny Kuhle offered a vote of thanks to Chris, for his work as Secretary.

Item 7. Charitable Donations.

Apart from the £201 raised at the AGM fund raising for Help for Heroes, it was decided that the committee could donate up to £250.00 to a charity of it's choosing, but that the Constitution would have to be amended at the next AGM., in order to accommodate this.

Item 8. RAF Locking Apprentice Memorial.

A meeting was arranged with Tony Horry, Pete Crowe, and the developers of the site, but the developer representative failed to appear.

It was decided that there would be no "memorial", but instead a "Monument" to be established, possibly a plaque on the side of a prominent building. A photograph of the stone erected at the NMA should be presented to the developers to give them some idea of what was required.

The Planning Officer, Jenny Ford, had been sent a map with all the road names of the old RAF Locking Camp, in order that they might be used when the new development took place.

Peter Bryant had written to North Somerset Council, with the view that the water tower could be renamed as "Lewis's Folly", but since a private individual had purchased it, it was up to the new owner to establish a name, if required.

Andy Perkins proposed that the idea of a monument at the old site be abandoned since the site was in "an indescribable mess". Chris Bryan concurred

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

with that proposal, but the committee disagreed, so a monument is still on the cards.

Tony Horry proposed that the old site entrance should have an RAF motif, as part of the heritage.

Tiny Kuhle suggested that pressure be applied to the developers to provide a memorial.

Tony Horry proposed that there be no money forthcoming for the provision of the memorial from the LAA. since it should all come from the developer.

Pete Crowe stated that perhaps the developers might not have the money to erect a monument, but Rick Atkinson countered by saying that the LAA should be tenacious, and hold out for one, no matter how long it takes, and that our "marker" should be put down from the start.

Tony Horry, then said that when planning proposals had been submitted, then the developers should be approached regarding the site of the monument, and that he would write to them, since he was the "focal point", being so close to RAF Locking.

Action : Tony Horry

Item 9. AGM 2012.

Since the AGM at the Webbington this year was a success, that there would be no changes for 2013.

Item 10. AGM 2013 at the Webbington.

Regarding the venue for 2013 AGM it was decided to retain the services of the Webbington.

Proposed by Rick Atkinson and seconded by Jim Doran

Tables reserved for particular entries would be provided, although it was accepted that some committee members did not mind where they sat. No booking form for reserving tables would be provided on the website.

Because there was difficulty for the members at the back of the room to hear what committee members, were saying, the hotel would provide a PA, including two radio microphones.

The manageress stated that the room and meal prices would be the same in 2013, as they were in 2012.

Andy Perkins kindly volunteered to choose the meals from the choice provided by the hotel.

A coach would be provided to transport partners and spouses from the Webbington to both Wells and Street, Street being the outlet shopping centre. No price was discussed because the choice of two destinations would mean that the driver would not be free after the first "drop off" to pursue other engagements, so that there might well be a price increase on the previous year.

Andy Perkins would approach the bus company in order to obtain a quotation for the cost.

Action : Andy Perkins

Item 11. RAFLAA Website

When Tiny Kuhle and Chris Bryan attended the FABEA meeting at RAF Halton on 11th July, there were members of FABEA who complained that they could not access the RAFLAA website. Pete Crowe suggested that there were possibly two websites, the first of which he had no control, since a deceased member compiled it. The present website works well and only the most recent newsletters will be "password protected"

Item 12. FABEA2012.

The FABEA meeting was hosted by the RAF CAA., where it was realised that not only the RAF CAA was to be disbanded at the end of 2013., but also that the BRATS192, were considering the same timescale for their own demise.

Tiny Kuhle said that the CAA had approached us sometime earlier, with the proposal to merge, but that the LAA had decided against the suggestion, since the CAA had a different ethos from our own. However, any "ex - CAA" member, wishing to join the LAA. would be given due consideration. Brats 192, would be eligible to join the BEA

RAF Cosford had suggested that there be a No1 Radio School Association, and that this might be considered at the next AGM.

Colin Ingram suggested that there could be a Museum at No1 Radio School with regard to Apprentice Training, similar to that of the Boy Entrants.

There would be 6 tickets offered to the LAA for the Armistice Parade in Whitehall in November, four of which were taken up by Martin Palmer, Tiny Kuhle, Chris Bryan and Roy Mortlock. Jim Doran, Colin Ingram and Chris Tett were possibilities for the remaining two.

Item 13. Newsletter.

Colin Ingram wished to extend his thanks to Chris Tett, for all his help with the handing over the responsibility of producing the newsletter, and that the theme of the next edition would be that of celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Falklands War. He called on members for suggestions for that edition.

Colin Ingram suggested that the 20th anniversary of the inauguration of the LAA should be celebrated in some way.

Pete Crowe suggested that the AGM to held in 2014, should be on the nearest Saturday to the day on which the LAA was formed 20 years previously

Item 14. Any other Business.

Colin Ingram suggested that the constitution needed updating with regard to charitable donations.

Chris Bryan suggested that the concept of "Life Members" should be terminated for new applicants, since the idea of "Life Members" was a drain on the resources of the LAA.

Suggestion rejected.

Item 15. Date of Next Meeting.

Owing to the Secretary's inability to attend a committee meeting in February 2013, it was decided that the next Committee Meeting would be held at Flowerdown House, Weston Super Mare on 31st January 2013 at 13.00hrs.

The Meeting was closed at 15.45hrs

Action :Tony Horry

Item 16. Postscript - Chris Bryan (SECRETARY)

After submitting the minutes to the committee for inspection, to be checked for accuracy, Colin Ingram reported back with regard to Item 7. Charitable Donations.

He stated that at the AGM held at the Webbington on 21st April 2012, under Item 8, that the AGM voted that there should be no charitable donations.

Having spoken to other members of the committee either by e-mail or telephone, it was decided that the minutes should stand, (because they were an accurate account of what was said) but that there would be no charitable donations, as agreed at the AGM., and that the matter would be resolved at the next committee meeting to be held on 31st January 2013.

72ND ENTRY'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

The 72nd Entry Association have held 13 reunions over the past 30 years. None have been more enjoyed than our most recent. Over the 2 days 9th/10th September 2012 we celebrated our diamond anniversary.

Sunday the 9th saw the arrival, from 1pm onwards, of 36 men and 28 of their ladies at the Valley Hotel, Ironbridge, Shropshire. There was much handshaking, backslapping, kissing and even the odd full body press among those better acquainted as we booked in and headed for the bar (or the other way round). Dinner was an informal affair from 7pm. The food provided was excellent and the company of others no less so. There was no late night drinking as at former reunions, as at 76/77 not many of us can stay awake beyond 11pm.

Monday the 10th dawned and this was the day of our attestation 60 years on. The objective of the day was to visit No 1 Radio School and to this end we boarded our pre booked coach for RAF Cosford. We set off at 1015 and arrived as planned at 1045. The coach was waved into the station by preselected souls and the school WO Spike Sloley boarded the coach with the necessary passes and welcomed us. We drove to Flowerdown Hall and disembarked. We were ushered into the Atrium where seats had been arranged. WO Sloley addressed us more formally and introduced the CO WG Cdr Mike Wilson. The latter made an interesting welcome speech with references to then and now. There followed a short presentation by 5 senior students outlining the content of their training. As a token of our thanks the association presented a shield to the school for annual presentation to the sportsperson of the year.

We were split into 5 groups and allocated a senior member of staff as we toured the various training facilities. We learned a great deal about the way in which the training is delivered. Far different from 60 years ago. During the tours we enjoyed a prebooked buffet arranged with the No1 RS catering ladies. Departure was due at 1515 but it was delayed, as the classroom tours overran, until 1545. The coach driver was very accommodating.

The No1 Radio School made us very welcome and were only too pleased to answer our questions.

Back at the hotel more bar activity before a formal dinner with welcome drinks, corsages for the ladies and wine to accompany another splendid meal. Robert Gott read the apprentice prayer and said grace. As coffee was delivered the speeches began. Our youngest member John Bowditch proposed the loyal toast. Chairman Dave Gunby said his usual few words where he jokingly referred to "granddad and the computer" and also to the latest maxims from our Irish friend Murphy. Before the toast to absent friends Dave invited Fred Vening to circulate between the tables whilst reading the names of the 29 members who have passed away. Secretary Robby Packham, the man who makes these occasions happen, then said his bit and proposed the toast to "The Entry". On behalf of members Fred Ward thanked the Committee for their work and looked forward to the next reunion. We stayed up a little later than last night but not much later.

Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

The morning of the 11th saw us enjoying another splendid breakfast leisurely. It was as if no one wanted to leave. Then the handshaking and kissing mullarky began again.

All in all a splendid do and the upshot is that we will endeavour to celebrate 60 years from passing out at an appropriate time in 2015.

Dave Gunby 72nd Entry

OBITUARIES

BRYAN CHILLERY OBITUARY - POSTSCRIPT

Six months after their dad died two of Bryan's daughters, Mindy and Jan, decided to run in the Plymouth half marathon this June, raising funds for his chosen charity and following in their dad's footsteps, who had run a number of times in previous years.

Mindy passed on the following message to all her supporters:-

"Jan and I did the whole thing together in 2hrs 55mins 43 seconds deciding to run whenever people watching clapped, There were a surprising number watching and who all insisted on clapping. We ran for photographers too of course, but didn't find ourselves in any local papers next day.

After shouting to an old chap that we were only running when people clap, he joined us for and ran with us clapping all the way. His name was Dave and he was 80 years old, and had run the half marathon 8 times before, the last time when he was 77. He then took a short cut to meet us further up on the route and did it again! Dad's spirit lives on!

I told Jan to stop talking to spectators after that.

It was great fun and we are very pleased with ourselves and delighted with our medals.

Thank you so much to everyone who sponsored me.

We stayed on in Plymouth to join the rest of the family to sprinkle Dads ashes at Rusty Anchor, just below Plymouth Hoe, a place he felt a great connection to"

In a later email Mindy asked me to thank all who supported her, in which she raised over £400 in the end, the sponsorship and messages from the ex -87 Entry members in memory of her Dad were especially meaningful for her.

Brian Colby 87th

KEN SHIRES (96TH) – 1944 TO 2012

Regretfully I have to inform you of the passing of Ken Shires from cancer on 20th August 2012.

The cremation service was held on Tuesday 4th September 2012 at Horsham St. Faith Crematorium, Norwich, with 96th entry members Brian Farrell, Mike Thompson (best man at Ken's wedding) and Ron Spain attending.

Ron Spain (96th)

IVAN RANN (POSSIBLY 80TH)

Reported by David Penberthy, Ivan Rann died August 2012 at his home in Saint-Cyr-du-Bailleul, Normandy. Ivan was a Ground Wireless Fitter, possibly ex 80th Entry.

DAVID A. PAINTER 73RD ENTRY

(09/05/1937 – 22/03/2012)

On the 21st January Dave joined the R.A.F. as an Aircraft Apprentice at Locking, he was selected for training as an Air Radio Fitter. Dave fitted in well with his entry colleagues and he made many friends, many of whom became life-long friends.

Dave's time at Locking was lived to the full and included the construction of an under-floor storeroom for hiding civilian clothes and many other forbidden items. The presence of this storeroom was not discovered until long after the 73rd departed Locking!

After leaving R.A.F. Locking in December 1955 Dave was posted to R.A.F. North Luffenham and within a few months he was sent to Redifon Ltd in Crawley to learn the intricacies of the AI 17& AI 22 simulators. On completion of the course he was posted to R.A.F. Leeming (228 O.C.U.) to help with the installation of the simulators followed by 4 years servicing and development. Dave stayed at Leeming until the O.C.U. closed in August 1961 at which time he was posted to R.A.F. Coltishall.

September 1962 saw a posting to Singapore until April 1965 and a return to the U.K. Demob came in January 1967

Civilian life found Dave with British Airways at Heathrow as an Instructor on the VC10 flight simulator. Time saw promotion to Senior Instructor and aircraft changes to Tri Star and Boeing 777. He retired after 32 years with B.A.

One highlight in Dave's career was the presentation of a gold watch by King Hussein of Jordan in August 1985 in gratitude for the care and attention shown to the King during training by Dave and his team.

Retirement meant more time for golf. Dave was an active member of Burnham Beeches Golf Club. He also spent many hours searching for long lost 73rd Entry friends and he was active in organising several reunions at Weston Super Mare.

Dave lost a lengthy battle with Cancer and leaves his wife Pat together with sons Ian and Clive and daughter Julie.

Ben Cuming (73rd)

CLOSING THOUGHT

THE FINAL INSPECTION

The soldier stood and faced God,
Which must always come to pass.
He hoped his shoes were shining,
Just as brightly as his brass.

'Step forward now, you soldier,
How shall I deal with you ?
Have you always turned the other cheek ?
To My Church have you been true?'

The soldier squared his shoulders and said,
'No, Lord, I guess I ain't.
Because those of us who carry guns,
Can't always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays,
And at times my talk was tough.
And sometimes I've been violent,
Because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny,
That wasn't mine to keep...
Though I worked a lot of overtime,
When the bills got just too steep.
And I never passed a cry for help,
Though at times I shook with fear.
And sometimes, God, forgive me,
I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place,
Among the people here.
They never wanted me around,
Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here, Lord,
It needn't be so grand.
I never expected or had too much,
But if you don't, I'll understand.

There was a silence all around the throne,
Where the saints had often trod.
As the soldier waited quietly,
For the judgment of his God.

'Step forward now, you soldier,
You've borne your burdens well.
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,
You've done your time in Hell.'

Author Unknown

From Dave Newman 92nd

With Armistice Day coming up, I thought this appropriate - The plaque is on the cliffs in North Cornwall on one of my favourite local walks. Ed



Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

RAFLAA COMMITTEE

Appointment	Name	Address	Tel/email	Re-Election	Entry
President	Martin Palmer				91 st
Chairman	"Tiny" Kühle	22 Tavistock Close Woburn Sands Milton Keynes Bucks MK17 8UY	(01908) 583784 Hans.Kuhle@btopenworld.com	Apr 2013	87 th
Secretary	Chris Bryan	39 Fairfax, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG42 1YT.	(01344) 304725. suechris.bryan@googlemail.com	Apr 2015	87 th
Treasurer	Tony Horry	Hillside Cottage Kewstoke Road Kewstoke Weston-s-Mare BS22 9YD	(01934) 628383 horrycorp@aol.com	Apr 2013	76 th
Membership Secretary	Jim Doran	11 Saxonlea Close Rushden Northants NN10 6BF	(01933) 317357 Jimdoran12@hotmail.com	Apr 2014	219 th
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AA Rep/ Webmaster	Peter Crowe	14 Hillview Road Weston-super-Mare N. Somerset BS23 3HS	(01934) 412178 webmaster@raflaa.org.uk	Apr 2015	95 th
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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
