

READY



Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

Newsletter

Serial 21

January 1999

Fine for Final Freedom Parade by Charles Hart

Just about everything went right for the Final Freedom of Weston Parade held on a glorious September morning. Whoever selected the date deserves recognition. Even Locking's Mascot Donkey performed on cue and the Boy Entrant Flight did their duty and flattened it all out before the LAA marched over it.

HRH Duke of Gloucester was the reviewing officer as Honorary Air Marshal and the parade was observed by Marshal of the Royal Air Force The Lord Craig of Gulf War Fame. CinC Personnel and Training Command was also present along with assorted local dignitaries including the deputy Lord Lieutenant of Somerset. The real star of the morning however, apart the 11 files of LAA members and the

Donkey (He received the largest ovation from the sizeable crowd), was the lone Spitfire that provided the fly-past at the Royal Salute. It was difficult to keep the eyes front during its pass across the front of the parade. Needless to say, everyone taking part or just being present at the occasion had a highly nostalgic and wonderful morning.

Reunion

Immediately following the parade we held our reunion at Dance and Partyscene which, for those who have not yet managed a visit, lies about a mile south of the Winter Gardens. In the past we have held the event at RAF Locking, but with the Royal visitor on the base this

(continued over)

In this Issue

In Memorium	2
Request for information	2
Report on AGM	3
Flowerdown House Presentation (picture)	6
Entry News	6
Award of the RAFLAA Trophy	7
A Brief History of RAF Locking and No. 1 Radio School	8
Looking for 70th Members	12
Letters	12
Stop Press	12

In Memorium

GERRY RUSSELL

76TH ENTRY

The news of the death of Gerry Russell, 76th Entry, reached us too late for inclusion in the last newsletter. Mike Collier, also of the 76th Entry, has asked for the following words to be published in his memory.

On completing his '12', Gerry worked in the computer industry. Unfortunately in 1986 he was forced into early retirement by the onset of Rheumatoid Arthritis. This became progressively worse and by 1996 he was confined to bed with almost total immobility.

This did not prevent him from joining the LAA late in that year. Although for obvious reasons he was unable to attend functions, he enjoyed the remote contact provided by the Newsletter.

Sadly he died in May last year, a month before his 60th birthday.

EDITORIAL

First may I, on behalf of the Committee as well as me, wish all readers the very best wishes for the coming year.

Of course I should have been wishing you a Merry Christmas at this point, but I missed the target again! I won't try and justify it beyond saying there was too much to do and too little time to do it in before Christmas.

This edition is mostly focussed on the events surrounding the last AGM. This is not because there was a shortage of contributions, but because after including the official stuff it would have been a bit awkward fitting any of the other articles into multiples of four pages ... think about it!

So for all you willing horses out there, don't despair, I will get your literary efforts into print - hopefully the next time around.

Meanwhile, I hope that you enjoy this issue.

(continued from page 1)

developed sore throats through talking too much and lost little concentration for the following AGM. A few were grateful for the respite when the AGM started, but did make a point that things could have been conducted with less noise.

AGM

The fifth Annual General Meeting ran its course in the afternoon much as expected. Just over a hundred members turned up so our fears that a midweek reunion would deplete our ranks went unfounded. Indeed, at the evening Dinner Dance the number ing rose to 148 which is the highest we have ever had. So thanks to the support of members we had a really splendid day.

Air Vice Marshal Ekanayake Edward Rohan Amerasekera DFC and Bar, Royal Ceylon Air Force (RCyAF)

I am writing the biography of the above named officer, and would like to hear from anyone who knew him at any stage of his life, in order to obtain details, photos, anecdotes etc. ...

Rohan served with the RAF Bomber Command (1941 - 45) as Navigator with No. 158 and No. 640 Squadrons with a brief training period with No. 35 Squadron. He complete 52 Operations (2 Tours) and was awarded the DFC and Bar.

He returned to Ceylon in 1946 and served at RAF Kandy as an interpreter. He then the RAF and worked for the Dept of Civil Aviation in Ceylon, and in 1951, with the inception of the RCyAF, he joined as a Squadron Leader.

Rohan rose to the rank of AVM and was the first Ceylonese to command the RCyAF (1962 - 70). He died in 1974.

If you can help, please contact:

Charles Ameresekere, 40 Kilpatrick Drive,
Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, M1R2B6.

Tel: (416) 750 7416

Email: as173@freenet.toronto.on.ca

Report on the AGM by Charles Hart

The AGM itself started at item 3 (Chairman's Report), since our President was still at the Royal Luncheon. However, the meeting was easily modified and was back on track immediately he arrived and the following notes are set out in order of the agenda.

President's Address

The President said that although the day was focused on Locking's closure, from the Association's viewpoint it was still about the meeting of old friends and he was delighted to see such a successful gathering. Referring to the Final Freedom of Weston Parade, he said that Marshal of the Royal Air Force The Lord Craig considered the occasion especially enhanced by the civilian flights on parade and congratulated him on the formation of the apprentice association. The President said that he was delighted to welcome the Chairman of the RAFCAA, Fred Hoskins and Clem Smith of the Ruislip Apprentice Clerks to the reunion and said that the Association would be welcoming the President of the Brats 192 (RAF Locking BEs) at that evening's dinner dance. Ending on a sad note, he had to record the deaths of 4 members since the last Meeting. Bill Forbes, 76th had died in November 1997; Bob Pritchard, 82nd had died in March 1998; Gerry Russell, 76th Entry, had died in May 1998 and Barry Gray, 98th, had died within that very week.

Presentation of LAA Trophy

This year the Station awarded the RAFLAA Trophy to Corporal Nicholas Head, who is employed at Locking on the training executive. In handing over the Trophy, the President said that the Association was pleased to present the award for excellent work in a supporting role. Cpl Head's cheerful attitude and willingness to undertake management tasks outside his job description made him a valuable assistant to the Station's executive. In particular, his commitment set a fine example to young trainees and provided an essential youthful role model.

The President said that Corporal Head was the third recipient of the Trophy and his excellent performance was what the Association had in mind when it was decided to commemorate the RAF Locking Apprentice movement. He went on to say that Cpl Head was now part of that ongoing story and was delighted that his hard work and dedication had been recognised. A fuller picture of the work that Cpl Head performs at Locking appears later.

Chairman's report

The Chairman, in his report, thanked the members for attending on what to many was an awkward midweek day. He also thanked the members of the Committee for their work over the past year and then reviewed the Association's achievements. He spoke of his pleasure on attending the commemorative service at St. Clement Danes in April where a memorial stone was dedicated to all apprentices and boy entrants. He outlined the subjects discussed at the Federation of Apprentices and Boy Entrants which was increasing in size with the Polish Apprentice Association now well established together with a newly formed Administrative Apprentice Association representing those who served at St. Athan, Bircham Newton and Hereford. He foresaw that the FABEA would gradually assume greater importance as ex-apprentice numbers became fewer and he was happy to record that a very friendly and cooperative atmosphere had developed between the member associations.

Membership

The Membership Secretary reported that active membership stood at 402. Regretfully, this left 96 ex-members who have not renewed their memberships since joining. On recruitment,

he said that during the past year he had advertised the Association on Channel 4 'Service Pals' teletext pages and in the RAFA magazine 'Air Mail.' This latter advertisement produced a few new members. Both mediums will be used again this year. The Internet has also proved to be productive especially in finding overseas members and this has been due to the outstanding work of George Burville (91st). Despite all else, word of mouth is still the most productive method of finding members and the Membership Secretary urged all present to get in touch with old friends and persuade them of the benefits of joining. He also spoke of the Membership directory and said that he is maintaining it regularly and issuing amendments as they arise. However, much of the information is derived from the renewal slips and he was concerned that life members might fall by the wayside since they were not sent subscription proforma. He therefore asked all members to let him know immediately when any of their details changed so he could update the data base.

Finance

The Treasurer reminded the Meeting that although he had undertaken the duties of Treasurer over the past year, his appointment had yet to be ratified by the membership since he had volunteered for the post after last year's AGM when the then treasurer had stood down. So after what he had to say members still had the opportunity to reject him.

He said that he hoped the members had taken the opportunity to study the audited balance sheet. In comparing the Association's profit and loss figures for this and last year's values, he said that generally income had remained stable showing just a slight increase. Purchases had also remained reasonably stable but within the overall figure there had been significant changes. An increase in travelling expenses and a much larger printing cost had skewed the figures significantly. In the future, he foresaw that the costs of postage and printing would continue to rise reflecting the nature of an organisation which tries to keep in regular touch with the member-

ship. However, he saw no reason for any additional funds so was recommending that the renewal subscription remain at £7-50. This proposal was accepted by the membership and they also, surprisingly, accepted the balance sheet.

LAA Committee

Apart from ratifying Tony Horry's appointment as Treasurer no committee members needed to be re-elected this year; however, since the Association was now in its 6th year, several committee members were required to stand down at AGM99. These include the Chairman, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Service Rep (Doug Cornford), Gen Rep (Doug Reid), AA Rep (Glyn Price) and Craft Rep (Andy Perkins). Because of the high number, staggering of retirements was highly desirable. So, the Chairman is now asking members to think about the situation and is calling for volunteers. If you feel that you have something to offer and would like to be a committee member, please contact the Secretary who will be pleased to offer more information. Its good to talk.

Constitution Amendment

Only one simple amendment was required to the Constitution this year and was passed by the membership. It involves the financial year of the Association which has, until now, run from 1 Jan to 31 Dec; however, interest payments from Barclays Bank are credited in Jan so it had become the practice to issue the balance sheet from 1 Feb to 31 Jan. The Constitution therefore needed to be changed to bring it into line with current practice. Members are therefore requested to make a written amendment to their Constitutions as follows: in para 7, delete 1 Jan to 31 Dec and insert 1 Feb to 31 Jan.

Other matters

Although there were no formal propositions from members, several points arose from discussions during Any Other Business. Briefly, it was decided that despite advances in printing technology there was no great demand for

an enhanced newsletter. So any changes in the future will be evolutionary ones. On the question of Apprentice Memorabilia, the discussion centred on the problem of a permanent storage facility. Temporary homes might be found but there was a long term problem. Also, since it was unlikely that the Public Record Office would want the Apprentice records currently held by RAF Locking, they may be offered to the Association. This would increase the problem; and if the offer was not accepted, would the records be pulped?

During discussion it became apparent that the Membership were in favour of taking responsibility for whatever memorabilia accrued. It also became apparent that members thought that the Association held title to the shields in 3(T)Block whereas they belong to RAF Locking and would be transferred to Cosford. This at least means that the remainder of the collection stay together.

Members discussed the future of the Trophy and again had to be reminded that it belonged to RAF Locking and not to the Association. The President made 3 points; the Trophy represented a large investment; a high level of skill had gone into its manufacture and it was a focal point commemorating RAF Locking apprentice training; it was therefore right that it should move with the School to RAF Cosford. Members were divided on this and whilst it was apparent that the majority of members approved the transfer a number thought that if there was an option, then it should remain in Weston and be awarded annually to the local ATC.

Whilst discussing the Trophy, the purposes for which it was awarded were also discussed. Some members thought that the award should go to an outstanding trainee; however, because there are now so many prizes offered to those passing out at the top of their entries, the RAF-LAA Trophy was purposely made general in nature so that other individuals who made an outstanding contribution to engineering training were eligible for the award. Whilst still on the subject of the Trophy, it was suggested that

the reasons for the award this year seemed rather thin and it was agreed that a more detailed resume would be included in the Newsletter.

A question arose over the availability and distribution of membership handbooks. It was explained that all members were mailed a handbook last January and that as new members joined they received one in their joining pack. The problem was that once lists were distributed, amendments occurred leaving the documents immediately out of date. Newsletter updates were the only way of adding information for it would be far too costly to reissue the handbook on an annual basis. Thus only new members would receive an up-to-date list. A suggestion was made that the lists could be distributed at the AGM but this would account for less than a quarter of members. The Chairman said that a more acceptable method of recording members details and distributing them would be sought in Committee to keep down the initial cost.

A member asked if the Association had considered recording the names of deceased members on a Roll of Honour or recording them in a Book of Remembrance. The Meeting discussed the matter and it became apparent that members were generally in favour. The matter is to be discussed by the Committee and decisions would be notified in the Newsletter. If you would like to offer an opinion on the matter please get in touch with the Secretary.

On a point concerning recruitment to the Association it was pointed out that Saga magazine offered a free notice board to promote the organisation although this was only open to Saga members. Another member suggested that the British Legion magazine also offered the same service and had as wide a circulation. These avenues to recruitment would be investigated.

Finally, Glyn Price said that he would like to produce a video of the Final Freedom of Weston Parade and he would be pleased to hear from any member who had taken shots of the



Picture by Tony Horry

Charles Hart presents the RAFLAA Plaque to Gill Baker, Manager of Flowerdown House

(continued from page 5)

event. If he could obtain copies from members he would edit a composite from the best shots for showing at the next AGM.

Date of next meeting

The Meeting discussed when to hold the next AGM and reunion. The main points to arise were that the event should be held at the weekend and that September was the favoured month, June, July and August being holiday months. One member suggested that September would clash with Entry reunions but the consensus was that there were always other events anyway whatever the date chosen. There were no suggestions that it be held anywhere else than in Weston-super-Mare. So possible dates for the diary are the 18th or 25th of September.

Entry News

72nd

John Smith wrote in with a short account of the 72nd Association Reunion. I'm sorry to say that the paper clip attaching the account to his covering letter failed, and the account is lost – sorry guys. If you send it in again I will include it in the next newsletter.

In his letter John mentioned that at the AGM it was mentioned that there was a possibility that the term 'apprentice' may be reintroduced in the RAF. He suggests that we ought to mount a "Bring Back the Wheel" campaign. Any comments?

99th

The first organised re-union was held at Holme Lacey House near Hereford. This venue, a Warners Holiday Centre, produced a weekend of entertainment appropriate to December. A repeat event is already booked for next year.

Award of the RAFLAA Trophy

Cpl Nicholas Head was the young NCO who was awarded the RAFLAA Trophy for 1997. Nick is an Eng Tech (L) and although he looks 18 actually joined the Service as a mechanic L Mech (AF) in 1985. After several tours including one in Germany, he enjoyed his 'Fitter' training and passed out into the relatively new trade of Engineering Technician (Electronics). Since passing out in 1991, Nick spent 7 years on the Tactical Communications Wing (TCW) which has taken him to all sorts of places like the Gulf and to Bosnia. He missed the Gulf hostilities but has served several times in Split and Kiseljac just outside Sarajevo which was just as nasty.

When sent to Locking his post was designated as Falkland Islands shadow replacement. So it was natural that he should end up in the office of the Training Wing Adjutant. This was not exactly what he had in mind expecting to be on the training equipment maintenance staff but he has made the very best of a management support role which has given him not only a very broad view of Training Wing but also the Station.



Picture by Tony Horry

His job description is couched in terms of computer network updating and maintenance, manning control, keeping postings in and out in step with the local unit establishment and assisting HQ staff as required. In practice this means anything from trying to tease out the mess of postings in not being matched by those out to being confronted by the Station Commander demanding manpower statistics immediately - just the sort of job we all like. Nick has blossomed in carrying out the tasks involved and over the period has been particularly innovative in developing new spread sheet information. This work, in providing essential statistical information, has continually helped ease the management task, as well as bringing Cpl Head to the centre of attention. He has, by his commitment to the job and his 'can-do' innovative thinking, rightly impressed all and the award of the Trophy is fully justified.

Nick's future is now known to him. He likes TCW so much that he is going back there and why not? His Wife, Emma, is an SACW clerk on the Unit who will be looking after his pay and allowances whilst he's on detachment maintaining mobile Satcom in Bosnia or the Gulf!

A brief history of Number 1 Radio School and RAF Locking.

On the 24 September 1998 we were privileged to visit Locking for the last time. There we were to see the station as it is today – in some respects it was a sad experience for it is merely a shadow of the Locking of our days. However we were made very welcome by the Station Commander and his staff, and basically had permission to roam where ever we wanted. A highlight of the morning was a presentation by a (comparatively) young Flight Lieutenant who's name I have forgotten. His unenviable task was to tell us about the history of the station, and how Number 1 Radio School came to be there! He did very well, considering, and I for one learned a lot. I thought it worth including an edited version of his presentation in this issue. It does not pretend to be especially accurate, or complete. If you want to take issue with any of the points made, you know what to do

The Station Crest

The station crest is a good place to begin. The lighthouse and the seagull are taken from the coat of arms of Weston-Super-Mare confirming the close links we have always enjoyed with this town. The key is the key of knowledge and the motto "DOCEMUS" which means, "We teach", both entirely appropriate for a station which has always had a training role.

RAF Locking Today

RAF Locking remains the Alma Mater of TG3 (Ground Electronics) and TG11 (Telecomms Operator) tradesmen. Trainees arrive here today from the School of Recruit Training at RAF Halton, to undertake basic trade training courses. We also run Further Training courses for TG3 technicians and an extensive pre-employment training programme covering many different specialist areas. The Station itself is organised in a very simple two-wing structure - Training Wing and Support Wing.

Origins of the Station

RAF Locking has been a training school since its formal opening as No 5 school of Technical training on 2 Jan 1939 by a party of seven officers placed under the temporary command of Wing Commander Glaisher DFC. From March until April the strength of the Station grew to over 1700 Servicemen.

The Station formed itself into three wings:

No 1 Wing trained Fabric workers

No 2 Wing trained Flight Mechanics

No 3 Wing trained Flight Riggers.

The Station saw considerable activity during the war as a target for enemy bombs. However, this did not deter the training programme. By 1943, the station had settled into its role devoted to the training of flight line mechanics, airframes and engine fitters, fitters, marine and carpenters, boat builder.

Wartime Locking was a huge establishment. When a station parade was held some six thousand personnel would be assembled on the square. Although the Station has remained open continuously since then, activities were considerably reduced for two years in the late 1940s until the second great phase in the station's history began with the arrival of No 1 Radio school.

No. 1 Radio School

The origins of the School can be traced to the Royal Flying Corps who recognised the need to train some of their men as wireless operators and mechanics. By 1915, instruction in the field was being undertaken by no 9 Sqn. RFC at St Omer in France. The Sqn. disbanded in France and reformed under its commander Capt. Dowding (later Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding) at Brooklands to continue its wireless training task. Before the end of the year,

the Sqn. moved to the Town Hall South Farnborough where it became the School for Wireless Operators. In December 1916 the School moved to Blenheim barracks, South Farnborough, where it was commanded by a Lt Col JB Bowen later Air Cdr Bowen. In Nov 1918, the Wireless Operators School was transferred to the RAF, and in early 1919 it moved to Flowerdown near Winchester and was renamed No 1 (T) Wireless School. At Flowerdown operators were taught Morse code with a requirement to send and receive up to 25 words a minute. Semaphore was also taught. It was ideal for close proximity line of sight communications where Morse was considered overkill.

In July 1919, the name was again changed to become the Electrical and Wireless School. Shortly after the war, Lord Trenchard introduced the Aircraft Apprentice Training Scheme. In Jan 1922, apprenticeships began at the School, the majority of apprentices being trained as wireless operators/mechanics. The remainder was trained as electricians and instrument makers. In September 1929, the School reopened for business at RAF Cranwell. In the 1930s, there were several reorganisations of the school and of the trades it catered for. In November 1938 the school changed its title to No 1 Electrical and Wireless School with the creation of a second school at Yatesbury.

With the outbreak of the war in 1939, other schools came into being because the training load increased. No 1 and No 2 at Cranwell and Yatesbury became signals schools, 3 and 4 were established at Compton Bassett and Madley in 1940. Radar schools were set up, and to confuse the issue these were also called radio schools. In 1942 however somebody saw fit to resolve this confusion by renaming and renumbering all the schools as Radio Schools. Altogether there were 15 Schools in use during the war. No 1 Radio School as we know it came into being in Jan 1943.

With the advances in radio engineering and the rapid development in military electronics during the war, there was an increased demand for trained personnel to operate and maintain these ever more complex equipments. In an effort to

meet this demand, between Feb 1940 and Sep 1945 some 68000 trainees passed out of No 1 Radio School alone.

After the war, the School continued to provide training in the radio and radar trades for apprentices, national servicemen and regular airmen. In Oct 1950 the School moved once again, this time to RAF Locking and the second phase of the station spoken of earlier began.

The move.

No 1 Radio School's move from RAF Cranwell to RAF Locking was primarily due to the then Commandant of Cranwell, however its move to RAF Locking can be accredited to Wing Cdr Roberts. The story of the move, as told by Wg Cdr Roberts in the book *The Flowerdown Link* goes like this:

In 1949 the Commandant of Cranwell, Air Commodore "Batchy" Atcherley, sent for me (I was acting CO as Gp Capt Evans was in hospital). He told me that No 1 Radio School had to leave Cranwell as he was moving all of his airmen to East camp, and in any case he could not do with a lodger unit any longer! He said that the Aircraft Apprentices should be at Halton with the others. I gave him the "Message received and understood" in morse and discussed the situation with the Gp Capt on his return.

Later the Senior Air Staff Officer of Technical Command called a meeting at Halton which I attended with the Gp Capt. We were first taken round some dreary, damp World War 1 hangars and buildings and two of the big barrack blocks which they said could be converted to classrooms. Then followed a heated conference in the Officers mess where I pointed out the utter unsuitability of the available accommodation for our radar and radio equipment. SASO and the Chairman retorted that "we signals people made our black boxes too complicated!" Anyhow, in the end, the meeting agreed that the accommodation at Halton was unsuitable and Gp Capt Evans and Wg Cdr Dunn be given a list of possible stations to inspect and report on. The list included RAF Locking which we made our first port of call. There were four

large brick hangars built in 1938/39 to house spare aircraft. They were being used as the Armament and Engine Mechanic School (National Service). The huge buildings were not sub divided. As the hangar door opened with a clang we saw about 110 classes of airmen with their instructors standing around engines laying on the concrete floor, looking rather like an Arab market.

Again we had to point out that to make these excellent buildings suitable for our purpose, separate brick rooms with ceilings would be needed — dust free and secure because the equipment was very expensive. Inventory holders could not accept responsibility unless they had secure storage arrangements and neither could they be responsible for its serviceability unless there were dry, dust free conditions.

In the end we got all we demanded and the move from Cranwell took place and No 1 Radio School, RAF Locking came into being.

Training within No 1 Radio School at Locking can be split into two phases: apprentice training and post-apprentice training

Apprentice training

In the early 1950s all apprentices were under training for three years. There were three intakes a year, each approx. 100 strong. At this time all engineering apprentices, on completion of their training at Locking or Halton went for a few months to St Athan for some practical on-the-job training before being posted to their operational unit. That way they hit their new unit fully productive.

Apprentice life at Locking was somewhat different to that of Locking today. Apprentices were restricted to camp during their first three months of training, after which they were allowed out at weekends, and then in uniform. Apprentices in the senior entry gained the privilege of being allowed off the camp in civilian clothes, but these were restricted to a blazer, flannels, white shirt and Apprentice wing tie of course.

In the mid sixties, due to the change in the school leaving age, the 2 year Craft apprentice

scheme was introduced. The 3-year apprentice became a Technician Apprentice, graduating as a corporal and gaining an Ordinary National Certificate

In the early 50's the Air Force looked after its Apprentices financial interests, during term time they only received a proportion of their pay on payday. The remaining pay was saved up and then given to them in total on the last day of term. The 50's school was very different to today's training school.

Not only did it care for the Apprentices' financial well being, it also ensured that they all got away on leave without any hold-ups. Once receipt of their pay and enforced savings, the apprentices were embussed and with two SNCOs as escorts, taken to Locking Road Railway Station (now Tesco's) where they were entrained on a special train to Bristol. At this point the caring stopped and they were no longer considered the responsibility of the School.

In reality life was hard for the apprentice. Other than a bicycle for the senior entry only, apprentices were not allowed any other form of transport on the camp (or within a radius of 20 miles). You had to work three Saturdays a month and attend Sunday Church parades. Added to that there was the monthly COs parade where the whole camp including the padres took part. The parade square was invariably filled to capacity, and due to the number of Squadrons being inspected, the parades could be quite an ordeal — especially in extreme winter conditions.

Post Apprentice Training - 1976 to today

With the graduation of No 122 entry on 3rd march 1976, 54 years after the first apprentice entry to the (then) school at Flowerdown, Apprentice training at the School ended. From this point on, trainees entered the service direct from civilian life as either mechanics or technicians.

In 1978 the School saw the creation of Trade Group 3, the new TG to meet the ever-increasing need for Specialist Ground Electronic

maintainers. TG3 was subdivided into three specialisms – Airfield, Telecommunications and Air Defence. Although the emphasis of the School has always been on technical training that changed also. In 1989 the training of TG 11 moved from Cosford to Locking. This fine upstanding trade is an evolutionary descendant of the Wireless Operator and with their move to Locking the wheel had, in a sense come full circle with the operators resuming their rightful place at the sole remaining Radio School.

The School not only trained basic electronics and communications tradesmen. They also encompassed the wide range of specialist pre-employment courses of today. The school also naturally took on the Trade Management Training which prepared the newly promoted NCOs and SNCOs for the additional responsibilities of promotion in the technical environment.

With the end of the cold war and the significant reduction in the Services manpower and real estate, the training throughput of the School was dramatically affected and the school population plummeted from about a thousand to practically nil. However we now have in residence a more respectable figure of about 400 trainees. In the early nineties the RAF concluded that it was over-training its electronics tradesmen on entry into the Service, and that many first line tasks could be carried out by mechanics. Accordingly in 1993 the trade group was rationalised to create a single ground electronics tradesmen, the universal ground technician known as the Eng. Tech. El. and the days of the Direct Entry Technician ended. All new recruits entered the service as mechanics with the possibility of further training to technician after time in the service. Serving technicians and mechanics had to undergo painful assimilation to become the new Electronics technician.

Today we see that wheel turning full circle yet again. Now the Assimilated mechanics undergo a further training course of 43 weeks with the latter stages of this course being devoted to equipment specialisation back into the three

trade specialisations of Airfields, Telecommunications and Air Defence.

The future

Next year RAF Locking will close and the history of No 1 Radio School comes to a conclusion. The RAF training centre for the ground electronics trades will become an integral part of RAF Cosford under the guise of the various new Comms-Electronics Training Squadrons. The ethos of Ground Electronics training will come full circle with the introduction of the SAC Technician. The introduction of this new beast is a direct result of the changes the service has seen over the last decade. Our new role, reduced size and better equipment have led to a change in how we are to train personnel to get the most out of their service. The new style of training will achieve this, the aim being to deliver technicians directly from Basic Training who will not require any further full time technical training, apart from pre-employment training, until they are selected for promotion to Cpl.

As a Graduate from a Direct Entry Technician course in the mid '80s, there is a feeling of *deja vu* about the introduction of this new SAC Technician. Anyway, like it or not, that is the future of TG3. What is realistically still No 1 Radio School in every aspect except name, will move to RAF Cosford and the Air Force will introduce a new style DE technician the SAC technician.

Conclusion

Sadly this happy station, beautifully situated in a lovely part of the country, will close in late 1999. From the outset it was intended that three functions should be fulfilled:

- * Develop character
- * Provide thorough technical training
- * Build on previous educational knowledge

These three functions continued throughout the years at Cranwell, and manifested itself in the School at RAF Locking. However, despite the changes to the training of TG3, the re-invention of the Direct Entry Technician and the new location, I am assured of one thing; they will continue with our transfer to RAF Cosford.

AN APPEAL FOR HELP

As the RAFCAA, 70th Entry representative I am trying to locate as many ex-members as possible. To date with the help of ex-apprentices we have located 34 ex members (unfortunately three are deceased) living in the UK, Holland, Cyprus, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Australia.. The members located include those who were F/T'd from the 69th and those who passed out in February 1955 (following a re-sit) or those who passed out with the 71st Entry at Easter 1955.

If anyone has knowledge of an ex-70th member, I would appreciate it if they could forward details via telephone, email or "pigeon post"

Another initiative which we have started is the compilation of an Entry Scrap Book – i.e. a collection of any memorabilia to do with the 70th. from the beginning to the present day. If you have anything which we could put into it I would be grateful to receive it.

Keith Keeling (70th)

5M1 (70th Entry Cranwell/Locking)

Email – K367KEN@aol.com Tel: 01476 575315

Letters ... Letters ... Letters ... Letters ... Letters ... Letters ...

Less dBs?

I have recently returned from yet another most enjoyable AGM and Dinner Dance and have nothing but praise for those who take the time and trouble to organise them.

However may I make a request for the next event? I wonder if it might be possible to reduce the level of the music generated for dancing after dinner. Looking around the room during the evening, it seemed that a large majority of those present had come to chat with (or in this case shout at) old friends.

A 3dB or even 6dB reduction in output level from the disco, I'm sure would not detract from the enjoyment of the dancer, but would most certainly add to the pleasure of those who prefer to spend the relatively limited time we have together chatting.

Additionally, a number of old fogies already suffer from the combined effects of Anno Domini and exposure to noisy aircraft engines. High output disco systems certainly don't improve the condition.

I wonder, does anyone else have an opinion on this subject?

Mike Collier (76th)

RAF Seletar Association

There is an RAF Seletar Association, of which I am a member (and 'official' Historian), and I would ask if you would mention the Association in the Newsletter. I am not the Secretary, but have his permission to approach the RAFLAA in our quest for more members.

Members wishing to respond can do it through me.

Keep up the good work with the Newsletter ... reading and re-reading past copies when the beasts in the classroom are getting out of control takes my mind (what's left of it after 20yrs teaching) off the present and allows to at least day dream. The kids think I am real! laid back, but in reality I am thinking back to those "golden days".

Dave Croft (97th) Tel: 01262 677520

Email: DMCroft320@aol.com

STOP PRESS

There may be a reunion around April(ish). To be discussed at the Committee meeting on 4 February. Watch this space

Please send all contributions for publication to:

Chris Horn, 464 Locking Road, Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset, BS22 8QX
Telephone (01934) 511465 Email Chris_Horn@compuserve.com