



Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

Newsletter

Serial 24

August 1999

Reunion and AGM time again!

Welcome to the third quarter Newsletter. In this edition we are mainly concerned about the AGM and reunion.

If you intend coming please see the proforma and take action straight away; there is not much time left. Arrangements are now well under way for the events and we look forward to seeing and meeting you on the morning of Saturday the 25th of September.

An AGM agenda is enclosed along with the audited balance sheet for 1998/99 and the programme for the day.

No propositions have been submitted by members to change the Constitution so there is little amendment required. However, if you have any inputs it is still not too late to get in touch with the Secretary but please do so before the Meeting. It is too late for the

Committee to decide things on the morning.

Member's ladies are welcome to attend the AGM and Reunion so don't leave them at home wondering what you are getting up to. Lunch and tea are available as last year and the price remains the same; however, we have had to increase the cost of the dinner dance tickets to £15. Details appear in the enclosed application proforma.

Finally, our thanks to the members who have put pen to paper and have produced copy. Much of this has not been included in this Newsletter, but will appear in the Christmas edition. It is always good to hear from you especially when you want something included. Lots more please, especially ideas for extending and empowering the Association.

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In Memorium Roy Tanner, 91st Entry

The sad news of the death of one of our members, Roy Tanner, 91st Entry has reached us.

Roy, who left the Service as a Flight Sergeant in the mid-eighties, died during the evening of Monday 23 August 1999.

Roy's career in the RAF included service with 112 (Bloodhound) Squadron at Woodbridge and Episkopi.

When he left the RAF, Roy joined GEC Marconi where he worked for fifteen years.

Colleagues and friends remember Roy's interest in restoration of cars from parts "scavanged" from scrap yards, and in particular his interest in steam locomotives. More recently, as a member of the 92 Squadron (Battle of Britain) Locomotive Society, he was part of a team who successfully restored a steam loco to running condition on the Nene Valley Railway. The occasion was marked with a Spitfire fly-past.

In a touching tribute, Shiela has asked us to point out to other wives that the RAFA and SSAFA are around to help, even if you only need a shoulder to cry on.

Roy also leaves two daughters and a son. The Association extends fraternal sympathy to his family.

Information supplied by Shiela Tanner and Tony Hatten (93 Entry)

EDITORIAL

On previous occasions I have said that I have written parts of the August News Letter on which ever far flung beach I found my self washed up for the Summer Hols. But not this year! For this reason, and the fact that my hols were slightly later this year, you are getting this issue in September (early I hope) rather than August.

This does mean that publication is uncomfortably close to the reunion date, so why not stop reading this straight away, fill in the form at the back of the letter and get it in the post. This will give poor old George Ring time to make the arrangements, send out tickets etc. and leave you with a clear conscience to settle into that old armchair and enjoy this month's offerings. (Who am I kidding?)

The lack of time also means that this volume will be a tad slimmer than usual. Happily this is not due to a lack of articles, for which which I thank the contributors and promise to include in the next issue (approx Christmas!)

Which brings me onto the question of who is going to produce the newsletter in the New Year. As stated in the last issue, for no other reason than a heavy personal workload, in the New Year, I will have to hand over the job after the Christmas issue.

I understand that the matter will be raised at the AGM, so to give you some idea of what is involved in producing the news latter, there is a small article later on about how I go about it.

I decided to do things differently to my predecessor, Charles Hart, and no doubt my successor will want to do things his (or her) way. After all, part of the fun is to get a little creative. So the article is only a guide, the new compiler has a completely free hand to do what he wants, and no-one is likely to criticise them - for obvious reason!

Committee Jottings by Charles Hart

Comittee Changes

As indicated in the last Newsletter, there has to be some Committee changes because members are elected for a 3 year period. Of the current Committee the Chairman, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Gen Rep (Doug Reid), AA Rep (Glyn Price), Tech Rep (Andy Perkins) and Craft Rep (Barry Cox) have all come to the end of their term. The Service Rep post is already vacant and Doug Reid is to stand down anyway at the AGM.

Two members, Graham Beeston (207th Entry) and Bert Davies (79th Entry) had expressed an interest in serving on the Committee and will be standing and it is hoped that other members would volunteer from the floor. So, if you would like to join the Committee here is your chance to influence the direction in which the Association moves over the next few years. What if there are no volunteers? Hopefully, the arms of current Committee Members can be twisted sufficiently to make them stand for re-election.

RAFLAA AGM99

The AGM was one of the major items discussed at the last Committee Meeting held on 12th August. The details are set out on a separate sheet and we hope that you will make a special effort to attend. We agreed that the format and programme should follow closely on last year's model which was considered a successful format. And, of course, we shall be holding our dinner dance that evening.

The programme for the AGM weekend is included with the Newsletter along with the customary applications for Lunch and Dinner Dance tickets. At the AGM itself the President will be presenting the RAFLAA Trophy to its 4th recipient, Warrant Officer Phil Fuller; we shall be reporting on progress during the year and looking for your support in the future. We shall also be seeking your approval of the

balance sheet and we will be asking you to regularise the annual subscription. The Chairman wants to hear from you on what you would like the Association to do in the future and to this end we shall be putting out the little used suggestion book for people's ideas. Last year, sadly, there was not one entry - at least the year before there was a demand that the bar be opened earlier.

For those who haven't got one, the "Apprentice" video will be on sale as well as the 1950s recruiting video we obtained from the Imperial War Museum. Ties and miniature wheels will also be available. The agenda for the Meeting will be available together with the balance sheet. Minutes of the last AGM and all Committee Meetings held since will be available for those who like to read such things.

Last year, being a bit special because of the Royal Freedom bit we went over the top with the funds by running a free bar. In fact we were only a few pounds overspent but it was decided that we could no longer be so profligate with members funds so decide a new drinks policy. What has been agreed is that the drinks will continue to be subsidised so that all alcoholic drinks per unit quantity would be priced at £1.00 and soft drinks would continue to be free. This arrangement, of course, would be for the meet and greet only. Drinks at other times would be at full cost.

In the evening the Dinner Dance will commence at 7-00 for 7-30pm at the same venue. An application form for tickets, priced at £15-00, is enclosed.

Balance Sheet

We append the balance sheet to the Newsletter. It has been audited and our financial affairs have been given a clean bill of health. The auditor of course had a few observations on the way in which we keep our accounts but

overall we are in a healthy situation which means that we can keep the subscription at its current value of £7.50. Apparently, its all down to Sage, whoever he is. The agenda for the AGM included with the Newsletter shows that the balance sheet is an item to be discussed and we shall be asking for your approval of the finances.

Places to stay in Weston - super - Mare

We have had a few enquiries on where to stay in Weston so again here is some information on hotels and places where you can find good accommodation.

Firstly the Tourist Information Office address is; *Beach Lawns, Weston-super-Mare.*
Tel (01934) 626838.

It is situated close to the Grand Pier and they are an extremely helpful office who will advise and supply lists and even book accommodation for you.

Accommodation is still plentiful in the Town but there are fewer good quality small hotels now than there used to be since many have become nursing homes. Those that remain are highly competitive but are not providing discounts unless they receive a coach full of members! On the other hand, it is always worth haggling since many hotels exist on a coach a week.

Still top of the shop is the Grand Atlantic (Seedy but still has '20-30s charm), AA 3 Star (Tel (01934) 626543).

The Royal Pier, AA 3 Star, Birnbeck Road, (Tel (01934) 626644) has better views.

Good accommodation is available at:

The Dorville, RAC 2 Star, Madeira Road,
Tel (01934) 621139.

The Rozel, AA 2 Star, Madeira Cove,
Tel (01934) 415268.

The Royal in the Town Centre, AA 2 Star,
Tel (01934) 623601.

Probably the most competitive hotel strip in town

is along the sea front in Knightstone Road (head toward the North end of the Town when you reach the Grand Pier). Some names to look for are:

The Mentone, Tel (01934) 626153

Midland Hotel, Tel (01934) 621217

Monaco Hotel, Tel (01934) 621910

The Old Colonial, Tel (01934) 620739

Also worth a look are the

Bay View, Tel (01934) 624893

Bayside Tel (01934) 642494

which are both run by the same proprietor.

Federation of Apprentice and Boy Entrant Associations

Our Chairman was the only member to attend the meeting. This is the summary he supplied:

a) It was agreed that approaches to the BE Association should continue despite the attitude of their Chairman.

b) Enquiries into the decision to hold further church services at St Clement Danes showed the costs to be too high; moreover, the numbers required could not be guaranteed.

c) The proposed FABEA tie had received little support and was now on the back burner.

d) It was agreed that names for the Remembrance day parade would go to John Luke. Tickets would be allocated on a first come basis.

e) Reports from Associations brought up no outstanding projects. Of main note was the amazing response Halton had received after the Royal visit and the unveiling of the Apprentice Memorial.

f) It was agreed that the Ruislip Association would conduct the next FABEA Meeting at the RAFA club, Bedford.

Entry boxes

Many members have spent time identifying old photographs and transferring them to their

entry file box. When RAF Locking was still extant these boxes were kept in a secure location within 2(T) Blk and appeared at our reunions. When the Station closed, they were transferred to a temporary place of rest in Peter Crowe's loft.

This unsatisfactory state of affairs has been discussed by the Committee and we have decided to enlist the aid members in overcoming the problem. We would like a volunteer from each entry to take charge of the entry box and to keep it up to date. This will remove some of the boxes from Peter's house; for the rest of the ones unclaimed we will have to decide whether or not they are worth keeping; some, for instance, contain nothing other than a photocopy of the passout list. The boxes will be taken to the AGM, so if you would like to take charge of your entry's box, it can be collected when the Meeting is finished.

War Memorial Extension

The Association has received a letter from the Royal British Legion, Weston Branch, outlining a scheme to extend the War Memorial in Weston's Grove Park. This was necessary since it had been known for a number of years that there were many missing names, but no room on the existing plinth to record them. These include names of those who died on active service in conflicts other than WWII.

The RBL have now decided to put the matter right, and have asked local service organisations for help in funding the extension, including the RAFLAA. On behalf of the Association, the committee have agreed for a donation of £50 to be made from Association Funds.

In a letter of thanks from the RBL, members have been asked if they know of any Servicemen/women from the Weston area who have been killed on active service after WWII to send in details.

Lest we forget

(Slang expressions)

I am indebted to the Changi Association for the following memory joggers (part of a much longer list).

Incidentally, if you ever served at RAF Changi, it really is worth joining the Association. Contact the editor for more details.

Erk, or Sprog — someone who still saluted corporals.

Bogs — A semi-sterile ablution area devoid of hot water, light bulbs and toilet paper, where personnel could shave, write on walls and relieve tensions.

Square Bashing — A form of square dance, performed in hob-nailed boots on frozen tarmac and carrying rifles salvaged from the Crimean War. A D.I. acted as caller. A common call was "Left, Left, Left Right Left", which explains why left boots wore out sooner than right ones.

Bull — a period of relaxation granted after a hard day's square bashing, when apprentices could hone their combat skills by perfecting one of the following deadly crafts:

- a) scraping the paint off polish tins until it shone like a mirror.
- b) Cleaning and oiling rifles in case the Crimean War started again.
- c) White washing stones around the flag outside the Guard room to match the surrounding snow.

Blanco — A bottled instrument of torture devised by DIs which had to be purchased at the NAAFI out of a miniscule wage. Blanco was used to paint webbing a different colour from when it was issued. I.E. if it was blue you painted it white, if it was white you painted it blue. If it was the right colour you scrubbed it clean and started again.

The relevant training debate

Brian Davies certainly drew fire with his article in the last newsletter about the worth or otherwise of Locking training. Here is a sample of the responses received.

Graham Howard (99th) ...

Due to a lazy nature, with verbose opinions, my service career was very mediocre, but I feel that I must add my six penny—worth to the relevant training debate.

I cannot remember being told that on leaving Locking an ex.App would become an immediate, fully productive fitter. That accolade would come with “shut up and listen” to the experienced mechs. and fitters. To me, Locking was designed to give you a very good grounding in a wide range of subjects and skills. Once the principals are learnt, then they can be adapted to any job. Today, I still use many in the running of my own small business.

In twenty-two years I spent very little time servicing the equipments taught as an App. It was not until a 5T PG on the 4130 computer, and that was only because it was a prerequisite for flight simulator ‘Q’ annotation, did I receive any relevant equipment training course.

Unless specified, with a Locking Apprenticeship and on the job training, there should be no need for a major equipment course. In the last fifteen years I’ve repaired many TVs and VCRs without manufacturers back—up, it’s par for the course, and shows how good the Locking instructors were at getting information into a sixteen year old thicko.

Could I use this occasion to suggest a subject for future debate, “The Rule Book is for the guidance of wisemen, but for the total adherence by fools” The simulator trade was born from many donor trades, some of which came from beyond the Fairy Kingdom.

Now! That is when an ex-apprentice can be called cocky, arrogant and intolerant.

Bill Smith (76th) ...

The article on ‘relevant training’ by Dai Davies has prompted me to put finger to keyboard. My experiences will obviously be very much different to the vast majority of others as I only served a few months in the ‘real’ Air Force. In the first few weeks though I did find that I was expected to service equipment that had not been covered in training. ILS needed someone and as I was daft enough to admit that at Locking I had been in the same room as an ILS installation, that someone was now me. The fault was found, although I cringe now at the time that it took me.

In October of 1957, ten months from Locking, I had a motorcycle accident which damaged my right arm and shoulder, and so in July 1959 after spending the intervening period in various hospitals and rehabilitation units, I was medically discharged.

My first job outside the RAF was as an Examiner Telecommunications for the army at a vehicle depot. This rather grand titled job meant that I had to check the various types of radio equipment fitted in all sorts of lorries and trailers, this ranged from the ubiquitous no. 19 set installed in almost any vehicle to SWI broadcasting transmitters fitted in long trailers and their associated receiving trailer complete with teleprinters. Obviously I had seen none of this equipment before but I was able to transfer the theory given me in training to the practice of checking serviceability. However, I had to learn to drive, which apprentice training had not prepared me for.

After a year of this I obtained a job at Rolls Royce in Derby, in their Vibration dept.. (Good for a few laughs when I tell people this!) Practically all of the circuits that we had been

taught at Locking were used here, both in valve and transistor form. The switch to using transistors was quite painless, and although a group of us did persuade the local tech. college to put on a few evening classes they were more physics lessons than the use of semi-conductors. Here though I was able to compare training systems, RAF versus civilian, and the only advantage for civvy training was that apprentices were brought up in the working environment. The theory depended upon which tech. college was attended and in which county that college was, one apprentice lived in Staffordshire and so had to do an HNC in heavy electrical work. The RR training school did redress some of the balance, but overall I reckon that I more than held my own. (There was in the dept. though a good library where many

would sneak off to and find out about the various circuits that they had to use, the 'handbook of preferred circuits' being well thought of) It was here though that I realised that a knowledge of maths., including calculus, greatly helped in the understanding of electronics.

In 1962 I moved to RAF Sealand as a Radio Tech., there were still a lot of service personnel employed there and on the various lines we were mixed. Here I spent the next twelve years, my training had not covered divorce or the bringing up of a young daughter, but I coped after a fashion. Many of the influx of young radio techs. at that time were from the radio/tv trade, and here I am certain that RAF training was superior. If Dai thinks that the ex-apprentice approach was crude, try someone whose repair work was done with a boss looking over their shoulder and telling them that time means money, for the boss that is. The theory that many had received was rather inadequate, but all of us, when necessity forced it upon us, moved to another equipment, a couple of days with the AP and playing with the 'bench standard' set and we were ready. I found that no-one at that time

had worked with semi-conductors as I had, but when equipment with transistors started being serviced all involved managed very well. As books published in England on transistors at this time were like rocking horse manure, some of us sent to the USA for them so that we could improve our knowledge. No easy matter in those days either.

Many of us were allowed day-release to go to a local tech. college, and many of us chose to do the City and Guilds course which was radio rather than ONC/I-INC which didn't cover electronics at that time. Here once again I found that although biased towards Post Office work, I had done most of it at Locking. In fact, when doing the Full Tech. cert. in computers/switching principles all of the circuits involved had been covered in radar theory.

Some of the units serviced at Sealand were not popular with some people and were looked upon with dread, these were often ones that used discriminators of various types, such as the Foster-Seely, a circuit which is widely used. Automatic antenna tuners and circuits involving frequency generation and control appeared to give the most fear, and I never understood why. Could it be that the training of these people was deficient in certain areas?

I left professional radio work in 1974 to go into teaching, from which I have just retired. If anyone wishes to know what leadership isn't have a look at the education industry! However I have still kept an interest in radio/radar equipment of the 40/50s and have quite a few items, which I try to put into original working order, to undo the modifications made to them by various radio amateurs. (I was as guilty of mucking them about as anyone else.) One of the reasons for writing this is because I have just finished making a replacement coil former for a piece of ex-army equipment! Some skills always come in useful. Incidentally, if anyone has, or knows where I can obtain the motor generator of the airborne 10 channel VHF trans/rec. I would be most grateful, that is another project on hand. My wife terms such equipment as junk, but it puts a sparkle

into my eyes and I can guarantee a loving home for such as this.

The training at Locking also involved other workshop techniques which I have found useful, obviously further self training had to be done, but the interest to do so I am sure was started there. I can file, form and forge. and have made parts such as springs for pistols (not allowed these anymore) rifles and shotguns.

So the apprentice training for me has not only been relevant but was a transferable skill to other interests. An ex-teaching colleague, a wireless op. of wartime vintage used to say: "Hind-sight is belier than fore-sight by a damned sight." I feel that he was correct. We can all look back and say that this that or the other part of our lives was a waste or could have been done in a belier way, but could anyone have known at that time? The book published by the RSGB 'The world at their fingertips', shows that in the early 50s we were only just leaving the pioneering phase of radio. People who had developed the various electronic circuitry and had made discoveries in communications that are commonplace now, were still about and working.

The circuits that they devised and that we were taught are still about and working even in modern technology, we may not see them in the chip but they are still there.

As far as I can remember I did not particularly enjoy my time at Locking, but I didn't dislike it either, I knew no belier. But I do know that the alternative employment in civilian life was rejected at the time as not being anywhere near to being of comparable quality. We must not make the mistake of putting the values of today into what is after all, history. With you Dai I can say that I wouldn't have missed my training, and many is the time that I have looked at and listened to my teaching colleagues as they have pontificated on various mailers and wondered about their training, and I certainly wouldn't have changed places with them.

I hope that this is of interest, and if after reading it you remember that you have some old circuits or manuals or even a piece of equipment that you feel needs a good home, then think of me.

A Plea!

As mentioned elsewhere, the next issue will be (arguably) the millenium Christmas issue and my last. I would like to make it a special issue, so please, please, please get pen to paper and let me have your articles.

Particularly required are appropriate seasonal anecdotes from the far flung corners of the world – there must be loads.

Can anyone remember those Christmas greetings teleprinter banners made up from telytype characters. It would be nice to simulate some on the modern keyboard – any one know if it would work? Examples please on disc – I don't think my scanner could handle it, and my fingers certainly couldn't.

Thanks in anticipation.

Please send all contributions for publication to:

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