



Royal Air Force Locking Apprentice Association

# Newsletter

Serial 25

December 1999

## Time to change. Time to look ahead.

**CHAIRMAN URGES MEMBERS TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ABOUT HOW THE ASSOCIATION SHOULD BEST FACE THE CHANGING FUTURE.**

As it approaches the Millenium, the Association is entering its seventh year, and facing a period which is marked by significant change to its operating environment. Perhaps the most significant of these is the final closure of RAF Locking, which removes, in a sense, the focus of the Association. It poses, for example, the question of where the next reunion should be held, and indeed what form it should take.

Additionally several committee members, who have served since the Association began, either stood down, or changed their roles at the September AGM. There was a strong feeling among them that new blood was needed to bring in fresh ideas.

Another unwanted, but never-the-less unavoidable consideration is that, in common with the other Apprentice and Boy Entrant Associations, we face the prospect of diminishing membership through the inevitable march of time! A start has been made to manage this situation through the FABEA, and this needs to be developed.

In his address to the AGM, the chairman urged all members to make their feelings and opinions about these issues known. This could be done, by writing to the secretary, or even the newsletter.

A full account of the AGM appears inside this edition.

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The RAF Apprentice and Boy Entrant website can be reached at <http://www.appbe.com>

## In Memorium Dick Wharmby, 90th Entry

It is with deep regret that we have to report the passing of Dick Wharmby of the 90th Entry, who died on 12 November 1999, after a long battle against cancer.

As well as being a member of the RAFLAA, Dick was also a member of the 90 A/A Association.

Group Captain Wharmby left the Royal Air Force in the early nineties, when he became Senior Manager for British Aerospace at Khamis Mushayt in Saudi Arabia.

Among the senior appointments held during his career, Dick was CO of RAF Chivenor before taking up operations planning duties for 'Desert Storm'.

He leaves his wife, Anne, and two sons as well as his parents.

The news of Dick's passing came from the secretary of the 90 A/A, Phil Mills.

## Editorial

In the last newsletter I said that I was hoping that someone would soon come forward to take over as Editor the newsletter. No sooner said than done, a veritable avalanche of applications arrived and a selection Board was hurriedly convened ('tis fortunate that we include a magistrate among our numbers). After long hours debating the pros and cons of all candidates the successor was chosen, and the command "*make white smoke*" was issued! Sorry, got a bit carried away there.

He is Colin Ingram of the 88th Entry, a worthy candidate in every sense — he has previous experience producing newsletters, has got his own computer (which he is upgrading in anticipation of loads of emailed contributions from you lot) and he is keen! So I am very pleased, and grateful to be handing over the baton to Colin in the certain knowledge that it

has gone to a good home ... but not before I have my final words (as editor at least).

As with the committee members who felt that a fresh approach is needed from time to time to keep things buzzing, I am leaving the job with mixed feelings. Like many 'Services' oriented jobs this one seems to fit the pattern of 95% not-a-lot-going-on and 5% sheer panic (as it is at the moment) trying to meet deadlines. You will know how successful I have been by whether you get this in time for Christmas, but its looking dodgy at the moment!

For me, the most rewarding aspect of the job has been the opportunity to make several new contacts and friends in the process of following up articles. Many of these have been in person and others by phone or Internet. Best of all I have been able to renew friendships with a good number of my own Entry, which in itself has led to an embryonic (albeit loose) Entry Association of our own.

I have also had loads of fun putting the news letter together. In an effort to stimulate contributions I have been able to enjoy the occasional, slightly tongue-in-cheek shi scam. Just occasionally this achieved the desired increased in my mail bag, an example of which appears later in this edition. Sometimes the provocations just didn't work. For example, for each edition I tried to think up an excruciatingly corny banner headline — but without reaction. I have tried blatant lies, e.g. reference to the Gate Guardian as being known to 'generations' of apprentices as the "Spit-on-a-stick", but no response. I was beginning to wonder if any one was reading the newsletter, but recent kind comments from a number of you who apparently enjoy the 'read' tells me that some do! My sincere thanks to them for taking the trouble to write to me.

The only regret that I have about the whole experience is that I have never been able to successfully introduce decent quality pictures or colour into the Newsletter. This has largely

been a limitation of the technology and budget available to me, so it couldn't be helped.

I would like to record my thanks to all the people who have contributed over the years, because without them it would have been very hard going.

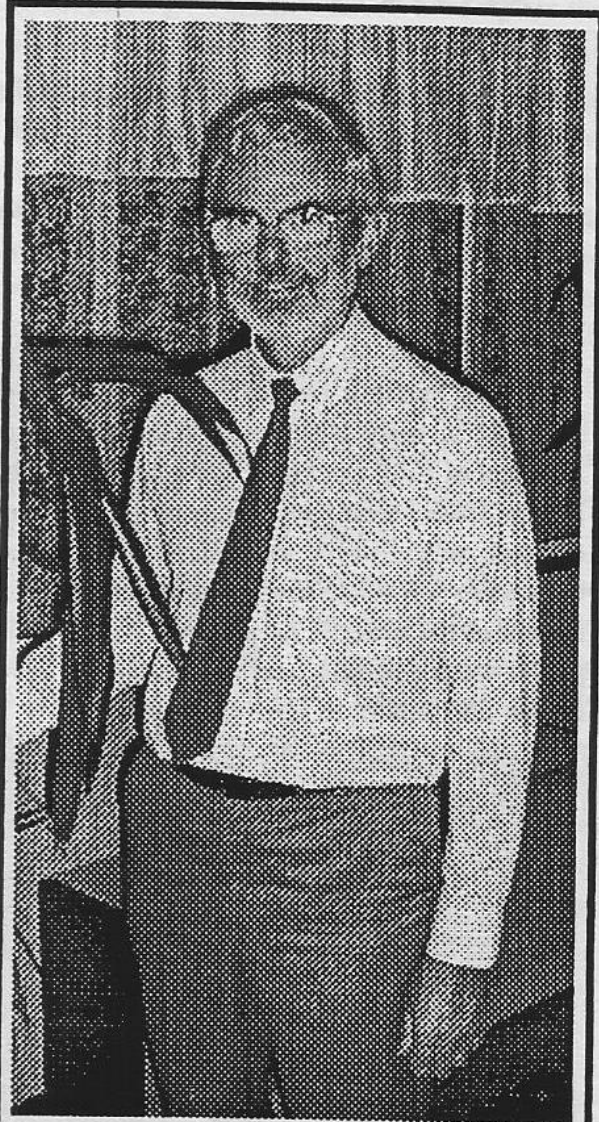
In particular, I want to record my grateful thanks Charles Hart. After handing over the job to me after his own stint as editor, he would have been more than justified in walking away and leaving me to it. Instead he has been a regular contributor, and endlessly supportive in the production process. He still (along with his wife Wendy, I suspect) takes care of the distribution including stuffing envelopes, and sticking on labels and stamps, then pushing the lot into post boxes around Weston!

Finally, I would like to record the support of my own wife Vron, who has let me neglect her in the aforementioned times of panic, so that I can 'play' with the Newsletter, without(ish) a word of complaint!

All that remains for me to say is that I wish you/hope that you enjoyed (delete as appropriate) a happy and peaceful Christmas, and that you all achieve and receive what you want in the New Year.

That's your lot from me in this role, but I will be back as a contributor in the future, KKK.

*Chris*



*Colin Ingram (88th), the new Editor of the Newsletter taking refuge behind some foilage at the recent dinner dance held at Dance Scene following the 1999 AGM.*

*Contact details for copy are given at the foot of the last page of this edition as usual.*

### Latest on Locking

According to local news papers, the army will not be taking over Locking as had been hoped for, instead they have settled for a site in Scotland.

So it looks like the end of a military presence at Locking. Local conjecture now centres on a number of possibilities.

First on the list is the likelihood of the site being developed for housing, which is certainly what is happening in the vicinity of the camp. There has been talk of a prison, and Weston has been delared as a target town for housing the growing numbers of refugees entering the country.

However, this is all "dodgy Gen" (see later article) so we still have to wait and see.

# Committee Jottings by Charles Hart

*The Sixth Annual General Meeting was held at Dance and Party Scene at Weston Super Mare at 2:00 pm on 25 September 1999. It was attended by approximately 80 members as well as the committee. Secretary, Charles Hart has written the minutes of the proceedings, from which the following condensed account is produced.*

## Presentation of RAFLAA Trophy.

The President, in presenting the RAFLAA Trophy to Warrant Officer Phillip Fuller RAF, said that in early 1998, as Training Squadron Adjutant at RAF Locking, Phil was responsible for the Trade Management School which, it was decided, would move to Cosford about a year before No 1 Radio School was transferred. On receipt of the order 'Carry on Mr. Fuller' Phil got to work planning and executing the move of the TM School to RAF Cosford.



*The President presents the RAFLAA Trophy to W.O. Fuller*

So successful was the transfer that it was seen as an excellent pilot scheme for the main move and so who better to do that job than Phil. Consequently, Phil was put in charge of planning the exodus, making sure that inertia was overcome and providing the momentum to get training restarted in its new home. Such

was Phil's attention to detail, his thoroughness in planning and his constant hands-on effort that no major problems ever occurred. His performance was rightly judged as of paramount importance to the smooth and efficient way in which the training machine was transferred between the two Units and his constant effort and committed service made him a worthy recipient of the RAFLAA Trophy for 1998-1999 which he was pleased to present.

The President said that Phil's work still continued at RAF Locking; he was making sure that assets were secure and seeing that all was neat and tidy before the RAF finally leaves the Unit after a period of 60 years. He went on to say that toward the end of the year Phil would leave the Service after a full career and he wished him and his wife Sarah all the best for the future.

## President's Address

The President said that his address would be short and to the point. He observed that the Association was now entering its 7th year and a large number of the Committee had reached the end of their Constitutional period. Happily, he said, many were standing for re-election so the old faces were not abandoning ship but it was an opportunity to introduce new blood to take the Association forward into the future. He went on to congratulate the Committee on what had been achieved and thanked them for their hard work and committed service to the Association.

Sadly, he had to report that one member, Roy Tanner had died during the year. Roy was from his own entry, the 91st, and had served for some

years on bloodhound reaching the rank of FS before leaving the Service some 15 years ago when he joined GEC Marconi. Two years ago he was forced to retire having contracted cancer and died last month.

### Chairman's Report

The Chairman thanked the President for carrying out the presentation of the Trophy and the kind words said about the Committee. He noted that the presentation could be the last time it was made in front of the membership and therefore the end of an era. He thanked the members for attending and warmly welcomed the ladies: they risked being bored to death, he said, not only by the proceedings but also when members fell into reminiscent mode.

He said that it was time for the Association to look ahead. He was conscious of the fact that several of the Committee had served for more than seven years now and that change was necessary; moreover, the Newsletter editor had carried the burden for 3 years and so he too was due to be relieved.

The Association had a quiescent period when compared with the 'high' of last year's Royal Parade; moreover, the closure of RAF Locking had left things rather flat. He thought a new focus was needed and he suggested that a new project might fill the bill such as a memorial to Apprentice training somewhere in Weston-super-Mare. The Committee would be looking into this but he would be pleased to receive any suggestions the membership might have.

Attempts to establish contact with 1 S of TT at Cosford had not been successful due to the difficulty that the Unit had experienced with its extended telephone system; this still had bugs and many offices had had to change numbers. Nevertheless, he had found out that the Trophy was recognised and would be awarded annually as at Locking. Although no suitable ceremony was available, it was hoped that presentations would be made on VIP visits when arrangements would be made for the

President to go over to Cosford to complete the business.

He went on to report that he had, on behalf of the membership, attended the Federation of Apprentice and Boy Entrant Associations (FABEA) at RAF Henlow where each association reported their progress over the year. He said that the FABEA was an important meeting point and he thought it likely that it would become more important as time went on and members became fewer. It was inevitable, he said, that Associations would draw closer together as memberships diminished because of ageing.

Finally, he added that Henlow was also in the news on two other fronts. Firstly he outlined the initiative to build a communications and electronics museum there which had already started under the leadership of Sqn Ldr Howard Newbold. Howard, he said, needed all the help he could get and if there were any members living in the area who would like to contribute, he urged them to get in touch. Secondly, he said, he had received an offer from the RAFSEE Commandant and Station Commander, Air Cdre Mike Davison to hold our next AGM on the Station. However, we would have to fit in with the Station Diary and make up our minds quickly. He said that he hoped this offer would be discussed later in the Meeting.

### Membership Secretary's Report

Mike West (99<sup>th</sup>), the Membership Secretary, reported that since formation of the Association, 537 ex-apprentices had joined; however, the current active membership was now 395 and one member, Roy Tanner (91st entry) had unfortunately died this August. Roy's death had brought the total who had passed away since 1993 to 10. On the matter of future recruitment he said that it was largely due to word of mouth although ex-apprentices were finding the Association on the Internet. There had been, he said, some minor changes to the Association's web site involving the address and it was now possible to post notices directly

on the notice board rather than go through George Burville. He said that he was most grateful to George as were all the other associations for his help and efforts on the internet web site and he wished his thanks to be recorded.

He said that the Membership Directory was due to be republished in the new year. He was still concerned that members who pay subscriptions by standing order or are life members do not get the opportunity of informing address changes because they do not receive renewal slips. He therefore asked members to inform him as soon as possible of changes to address details so that the data base and membership directory could be maintained. This would ensure that newsletters and correspondence arrived at the correct address.

He went on to say that he is to continue advertising the Association on Channel 4 'Service Pals' teletext pages and to use the RAFA Airmail magazine. Also, it had been suggested that both SAGA and the RBL magazines both had notice board facilities which might be used and he requested help from members of those organisations. Overall, he felt that the Association was in good shape, recruitment was buoyant, and although some members had been lost, a fair balance was being maintained over the year.

### Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer informed the Meeting that an apology was due to those members who had received a double reminder when they had already paid their renewal subscription. The error was his and due to the turbulent period of moving up to Cosford. He was happy to inform the Meeting that he had now retired and that there would be no recurrence!

He said he hoped that the members present had looked at the balance sheet and supporting profit and loss account. Those paying attention would have noted that the Association had made a loss over the year of nearly £750. This was due in part, he said, to converting cash to

stock by purchasing Association ties at a cost of £463. There was also substantial 'other' which was represented by the purchase of the plaque presented to Weston's RAFA Home, Flowerdown House, and the annual subscription of the Membership Secretary's Internet connection.

The Treasurer quickly covered a number of smaller points. He said that there was a small cost in postage and time in sorting out errors made by banks and building societies. Members will have noted that the drinks from the bar at the reunion were no longer obtainable at no cost' and the dinner-dance tickets had had

/over

### I'm very well, thank you

There's nothing a matter with me.  
I'm as healthy as I can be.  
I have arthritic knees, and my blood is thin;  
But I'm *awfully* well — for the shape I am in.  
Arches support my feet  
(or I'd never get out on the street).  
Sleep is denied me, night after night,  
But every morning I find I'm alright.  
My memory's failing, my head's in a spin;  
But I'm *awfully* well — for the shape I am in.  
The moral is this — as my tale I unfold,  
That for you and me who are getting old,  
It's better to say "I'm fine" with a grin,  
Than let folks know the *real* shape we're in.  
So how do I know that my youth is all spent?  
Well, my get up and go has got up and went.  
But I really don't mind ...  
... when I think, with a grin,  
Of all the *great* places my 'got up' has bin!  
*Adapted from the Admin Apps newsletter, who  
cribbed it from the Brats 190 Newsletter, and  
goodness knows where they got it from!*

be increased for the first time in six years; this would help reduce the drain on funds. On postage, this facility was increasing all the time but, overall, the overheads' had been reduced this year. The Auditor was satisfied with the accounts and had few observations. The Treasurer said that he believed the accounts to be healthy, the financial situation was stable and that there would be a surplus of income over expenditure at the end of the year. Therefore, he foresaw no requirement to increase subscriptions and he commended the account to the Meeting.

The balance sheet was unanimously approved by the members.

### Election of LAA Committee

Members of the new committee were elected/re-elected and are included as annex to this newsletter.

The Chairman express thanks on behalf of all members for the commitment to the Association shown by Doug Reid and Doug Cornford who had now left the Committee. He said, both were founder members of the organisation so had had a long association working for and with the membership.

The Chairman explained to the Meeting that, although outside the business of electing the Committee, the Newsletter editor/compiler played an important part in the Association's communication with the membership. Chris Horn (99<sup>th</sup>) had now completed a sterling three year stint and was in need of a rest (*all say ahh! -Ed*) which meant that a new Newsletter editor was needed quickly. He was therefore delighted to welcome Colin Ingrain (88th entry) who had gallantly stepped forward to fill the vacancy. He said that he was extremely grateful to Chris for his sustained effort over the period and on behalf of all the members thanked him for a job very well done in producing the Newsletter.

### Amendment to the Constitution

The Chairman said that there was only one

small alteration necessary to bring the Constitution up to date. It was necessary to delete sub-paras 10b and 10g which appoints the Commandant of RAF Locking as vice-president of the Association and an RAF Locking liaison member. Since there was no longer an RAF Locking there was no vice-president nor a need for a liaison member.

### Subscriptions

The Chairman said that the Meeting must decide on the annual subscription. During his report, the Treasurer had shown that the Association's finances were in good order and that expenditure in the coming year was considered to be no greater than this year's. Therefore he recommended that the subscription remain unchanged at £7-50. This was accepted unanimously.

### Disposition of Entry Boxes

The Chairman said that the Association now had a problem with the storage of Entry boxes. To overcome it, it was proposed that entries take over responsibility for their own box. Since not all entries were represented at the Meeting this would only partially overcome the situation; however, it was a start. Many entry boxes, he said, had no contents and it was proposed to discard these. Those boxes that had contents but were not claimed would be retained until such time as a responsible member takes charge of it. Boxes were available for collection after the Meeting from Gen Rep, Peter Crowe.

### AOB

#### *Vote of thanks*

Ian Davies proposed a vote of thanks to the President, Chairman and Committee for their dedicated service over the past year which was unanimously endorsed by the Meeting.

#### *Video clips plea*

Another plea was made by Glyn Price for more video snippets of the Royal Freedom Parade in order to produce a worthwhile record of the event. This brought a response from Neil Castle

who said that he had passed on some video dips to George Burville. Glyn Price affirmed that he would contact George. He would, as a result of a suggestion, advertise in the Weston Mercury for help.

#### *Comms museum*

The Chairman outlined the plan to create a communications and electronics museum at RAF Henlow and introduced the idea of an apprentice tableau. Ideas were needed before a proposal could be put forward; it would have to be properly funded and additionally maintained over a period of years. He said that any ideas that members might have would be much appreciated by the Committee. A question from the floor suggested that the museum might be in direct competition with the Neatishead radar museum although this was thought to be sponsored by Trade Group 12.

#### *Next AGM venue*

The Chairman raised the question of holding the next AGM at RAF Henlow which he considered a very good offer. A rapid straw pole of members present suggested that they preferred Weston; however, it was agreed that of those present, many would come from the local area anyway. The Chairman suggested that holding the AGM in a different location would enable other members who could not get to Weston to be able to attend. He said that the Committee would discuss the possibility of a move and in the meantime the subject would be aired in the Newsletter.

#### *Notification of deaths*

The Newsletter editor raised a problem that occurs when members unfortunately die. He said that, generally, news gets to him too late to include an obituary in the appropriate Newsletter and he often found it difficult to obtain information on members who had passed away. He asked members to bear in mind that there was not a strong communications network in existence and that if they knew of a member who had died it was important that they inform the Newsletter editor immediately and not

presume that someone else had passed on the news.

#### *Apprentices Website*

Peter Horry, who had earlier requested that the Association set up an Internet website, not knowing that one was already in existence, asked that the address be included in the Newsletter and on all correspondence. The Chairman said that this would be seen to.

#### Date of next meeting

It was agreed to hold next years meeting in September on a date to be decided. The location would also be decided and notified to the membership via the Newsletter.

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#### Still thorough after all these years.

John Smith (72nd) reports that whilst on holiday in the States recently, he noticed that the vast acreage of the Circus Circus casino floor in Reno, Nevada, has been carpeted with a design which incorporates the Apprentice Wheel motif.

No doubt mindful of the Number 1 Radio School motto, John was spurred on to further, relentless investigation into this unexpected discovery, and paying no heed to personal cost, he has discovered that the owners have not yet done the same at their Las Vegas establishment.

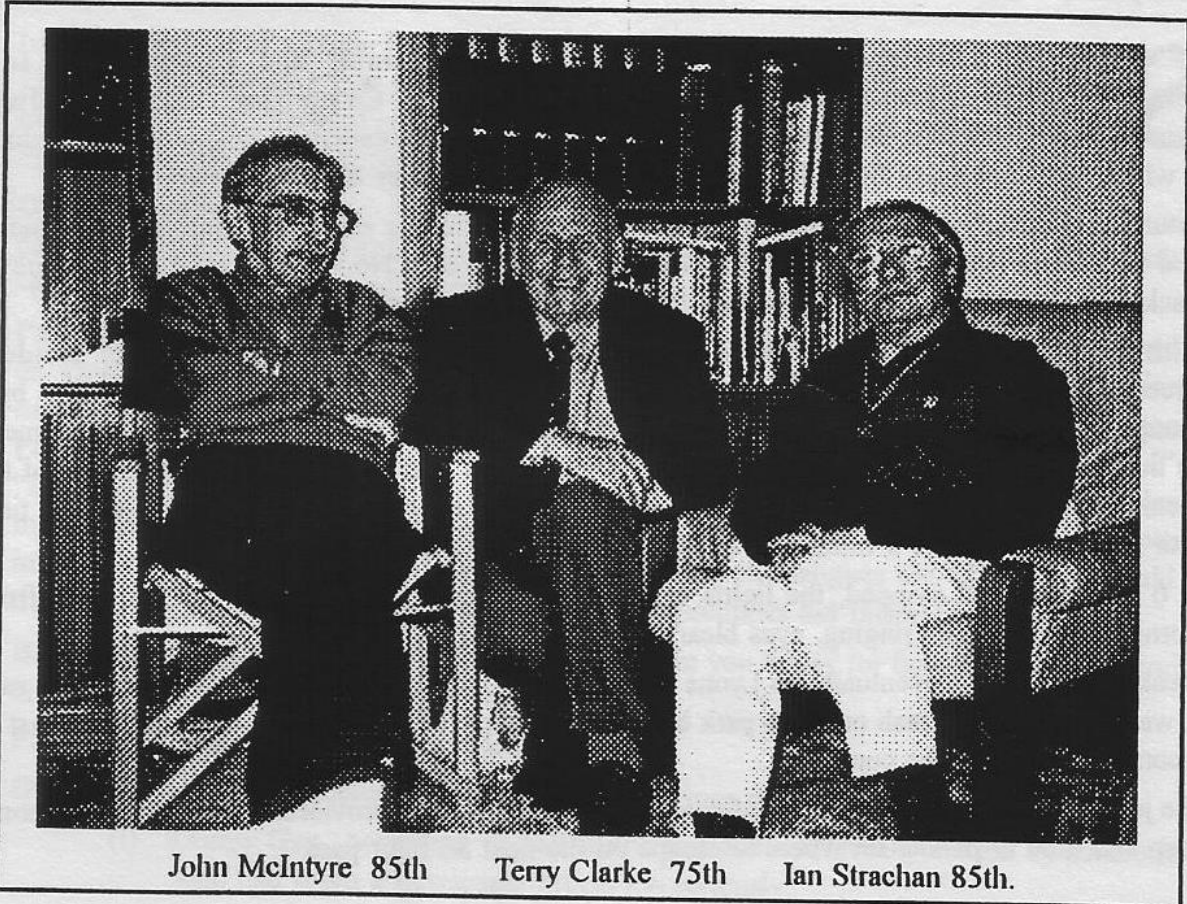
In the remarkable, yet characteristic thoroughness of the ex-apprentice, John is determined to continue his investigations until he has investigated all similar establishments in the USA.

Your editor has managed to secure a sponsorship deal for the exclusive publishing rights to his story. Please send donations towards essential expenses to the Editor ...



# Where are they now?

*Coincident with a suggestion that we include a regular feature on what you are all up to and where you are doing it, I received the following email from XXXX to kick it off.*



John McIntyre 85th      Terry Clarke 75th      Ian Stachan 85th.

In response to your request for articles, a small contribution from Australia:

Just in case you are considering a "Where are they now" section.

The picture was taken at Ian's 60th birthday celebration, July 1999.

All three of us worked on the Jindivik target aircraft system at the Woomera rocket range in the late 60's and 70's.

John transferred to the servicing of electronic systems on the fishing fleet in Port Lincoln, Sth Australia. He is now retired, has a few problems with arthritis.

Terry went into the insurance field and prospered sufficiently to retire early and globe trot practising his hobby of photography. He has a web site at:

[www.insuru.com.au/creative.htm](http://www.insuru.com.au/creative.htm)

Ian lives in the Barossa Valley, the premier wine producing area of Australia and is still in the defence business working for British Aerospace Australia in the manufacturing area.

It is worth noting that this picture was taken later in the evening after considerable testing of the local wine production.

**Ian Stachan 85th**

# Thirty Six Hour Pass

*My apologies to the author of this little reminiscence for losing the covering letter. I don't know who you are, but if I had to guess I would say it was Dave Croft – am I right Dave?*

*Any way, whoever you are, thank you for awakening some misty memories of early forays into the Big City for this country lad – but it was a club of a different hue that I went to! More along these lines please – Ed.*

**S**aturday lunchtime had arrived! The parade ground had cleared, and four intrepid apprentices headed out of Locking Camp for Weston railway station clutching 36 hour passes, ready for a weekend of excitement in London – Freedom! A whole weekend away from double cavity klystrons and Miller timebases – great!

Saturday evening was spent drifting from pub to pub sampling copious quantities of Watney's Red Barrel and Whitbread Tankard, followed by a large meal of No. 47 with fried rice and prawn crackers in one of the Chinese restaurants that had started to spring up in Soho.

With full stomachs and rapidly diminishing wallets the intrepid quartet headed for Wardour Street and the Pink Flamingo Club, an 'all night' music club where the music was provided by a young singer and organist from Lancashire called Georgie Fame and his band the 'Blue Flames'. As the night wore on, the music became louder, the room hotter and smokier. The object of the evening seemed to be to see how many people could be squeezed into a small cellar at a time with no ventilation and a minimum of lighting. This was really living!

At 6 a.m. the band stopped, the lights came on and every one was kicked out into the fresh morning air, with ears ringing, eyes bleary and heads aching.

Breakfast followed – eventually, as Lyons Corner House didn't open until 8 a.m., so it was a case of wander around or crash out on a park bench for a couple of hours until a welcome breakfast of bacon and egg could be consumed.

The journey back to Weston from Paddington was uneventful and provided three hours of welcome sleep and time to ponder on where to escape on the next 36 hour pass.

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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 and other.

Anon

## Lest we forget

*Some more RAFese plagiarized from the Changi-ite, newsletter of the the RAF Changi Association (by kind permission) and modified to suit our readers. If anyone has any suggestions of their own to add to the list, please send them in.*

**Jabs** – A service ritual whereby anyone who had not yet become ill was used as a dartboard until they did.

**Irons** – consisted of a knife, fork and aluminium spoon which bent when attacking treacle tart. The knife doubled as a tool for scraping mud/noisome matter off boots and stirring blanco. Irons were also an essential part of the conditioning of young fingers by immersion in troughs of boiling greasy water, in readiness for workshop soldering exercises.

**Oppo** – A mate in a nearby pit who borrowed money from you on Sundays, paid it back after pay parade on Thursdays and borrowed it back again on Mondays. Some more exploitive oppo's oppo charged interest in money or kind, e.g. cigarettes.

**Pay Parade** – A service game played by all apprentices in crammed training block corridors on Thursdays. An officer called out names in alphabetical order, and any player with a similar name responding with the correct three digit code was awarded with a small amount of money. Penalty points were applied randomly, for example, "barrack damages", "PSI Fund" or "Donations" when a portion of the award had to be handed back to a SNCO. Basic rules of this game are that at no time were penalties to exceed the award, and refusal to co-operate invariably resulted in a forfeit involving getting you hair cut, fatigues etc. The award could be multiplied by raffling it, providing not too many apprentices did this at the same time.

**Barrack Damages** – An amount of money taken from you to pay for fictitious repairs occurring in someone else's (usually senior entry) hut.

**PSI Fund** – Collection for undisclosed purposes.

**Gen.** – Information. Traditionally there were three types of Gen.

- (i) *Dodgy Gen.*, consisting of half truths and guesses, usually started by someone who had taken a newspaper article too seriously.
- (ii) *Duff Gen.*, which came via the grapevine, was denied by NCOs and re-affirmed by an oppo in the next pit.
- (iii) *Pukha Gen.*, which was used as an A.M.O., then promulgated in S.R.O.s and lapsed with the passage of time.

'Gen' was often used by commcen people in isolated locations trying to make contact by teleprinter with the outside world, as in "INT DE GEN KKK". (*I once knew a couple of mechs who had spent too long in isolation and had developed a complete language in teletype code, Q codes etc. They could hold lengthy conversations with each other without once speaking an English word, much to the consternation of those around them – of whatever rank! – Ed*).

**Dhoby** – A process whereby used clothing was sent to the laundry and came back as sheets of hardboard with no buttons. Quite long and verbally passionate relationships could be carried out on the back of laundry cards between lonely apprentices and unseen correspondents who were hopefully female.

# The 'relevant training' debate ...

*A couple of issues ago Brian Davies commented on the relevance or otherwise of the training at Locking. In the same issue I raised the subject of the somewhat unnatural community that the Apprentices Wing was, and offered a thesis that some may have suffered psychologically as a result. These two issues have certainly stirred quite a few of you into action – Bingo!*

*We featured some responses to Brian's article in the last issue, and the rest are included here. Charles Hart even had a call from Mike Keen (78th) who lives in Coogee, West Australia who disagreed with everything Brian said.*

## A Relevant Experience

Here I am, sitting in front of a small box – which in 1961 would have filled at least one of the equipment labs in one of the Tech Blocks though probably more, *if* it could have been put together then.

This small 'box', as you will shortly see, does have a certain 'relevance' to Brian Davies interesting article in the June edition of the newsletter. Because many use their PC's (as I do) as word processors, the fact is computers have been a part of my life for about 31 years now.

Had it not been for the training I received at Locking, the path which brings me to this point would have been very different I suspect.

Just as when I last stood on parade at the last Freedom ceremony in Weston last year (an occasion that I will never forget). When the first command was given it was as if I had never been away; time had no meaning. It was the same when I began reading Brian's thoughts. Suddenly like the strains of a faint tune getting louder as it came closer I remembered discussions which we used to have in the billet and doubtless elsewhere vis; the need to know or not to know about this or that equipment / fact or possible examination topic.

It has actually taken a number of times reading and re-reading the article to get back into the spirit of what is being discussed and the mentality behind it

As a Ground Wireless Fitter also I found myself

in front of a reasonable number of equipment I had not set eyes on at Locking, or knew the remotest thing about. These included Pye fixed and mobile and also transistorised equipment. The latter was something of a farce. Training on this HF SSB kit mounted in a badly designed air transportable cubicle ( air conditioning outlet near the floor; equipment mounted above air conditioning level) was to say the least perfunctuary or totally lacking at Henlow where I was supposed to be trained on it. One of the reasons was that we weren't allowed to touch the kit as it was awaiting inspection! Another was that the 'Instructor' knew nothing about it; because he couldn't touch it either.

Also trying, and being *expected*, to miraculously find a fault on an airborne UHF set in this comms cabin in the Libyan desert with frozen air conditioned knees, no manuals, no test equipment and never having seen the inside of one imposed a certain disadvantage!

Going back to the question of the relevance of the training. Having taught for 10 years I am certain that foundations are as equally important as exactly what is taught later. For example, both Travis and Foster Seeley might well have been 1930's circuits but they were still important in understanding principles.

In this respect I think 'labs' could have been more closely allied to what we learned in radio theory. Instead of doing 'experiments' which you took out of a cupboard, set up on a rack, made the necessary observations and came to the necessary conclusion, how much better it

might have been if we had had to make up circuits from scratch and then get them to work.

I clearly recall a radio theory project, which was to take an electronic circuit (I took mine from *Wireless World*) build it and get it to work within radio theory periods in one week. So sitting in a classroom (sometimes nodding off) learning circuits and regurgitating the 'knowledge' in examinations could, I think, have been improved. I think that learning and then *building* a Foster Seeley discriminator might have been more useful.

It is evident from Brian's comments that some things at least had changed by the time I got to Locking. All the equipment was relevant, although I did work on VHF equipment that was dated – T1131s. In fact, these nearly drove me to tears of frustration and rage, trying for whole classroom periods to tune one myself. I was just left to flounder at the time with a transmitter which had faults on it that the instructor never bothered telling me about.

But the experience had its compensations. When I got to my first station I was fortunate enough to have an ex RAF Warrant Officer who looked after a bank of these on a transmitter site. Keeping my mouth firmly shut about what I did or did not know, this man showed a group of us how to tune one *properly* in about 30 seconds. It was like a light going on in the brain. By seeing it done on a transmitter that worked, suddenly everything clicked into place. When he offered the bribe of paying for tea break for the one who could tune it the fastest, I did it in about 10 seconds.

All too often much of my subsequent RAF equipment experience was rather different. Inadequate training or a lack of it to begin with, and then learning by trial and error. Trial is an appropriate word. I well recall such questions as "*whats the problem?*" or "*how soon is it going to be fixed?*" and looks which said "*he doesn't know what he's*

*doing*". This by people who understood absolutely nothing about radio kit – other than winding their microphone boom round and round while watching the radar timebase go round and round, until the wires inside snapped; and who then complained the equipment didn't work and expected the Wireless Fitters to fix it!

In short the experience of working in this kind of environment together with moving more than thirty times in a period of two years left me less than enchanted and I left the service – along apparently – with droves of others who seem to have had not too dissimilar experiences in the mad mid '60s.

What also occurs to me is that the mid '60's were a time of technical change, general upheaval and sometimes shambles so far as the services were concerned. A word that comes to mind is 'leaderless'. Certainly if a particular government minister had come near people I knew, he might have been 'done over' for such deeds as the TSR2, P1154 and other acts of appalling short sightedness and pointless waste.

Perhaps this all had something to do with what many of us experienced at first hand. If policy at the top was muddled, and defence cuts proceeded like a mad lumberjack laying about with an axe, it surely affected what you and I had to work on, cope with, or muddle through – including how my brother (86th) had to keep Canberra's serviced that – some of them – were really not fit to fly.

It must also have affected the amount of training that was, or was not, available.

In defence of Locking, the equipment that I trained on; VHF, UHF, ILS and UHF D/F (CADF)) I also had to maintain on my first station. There was a bit more besides, but the training *was* relevant.

However had it not been for people such as that ex-WO and another civilian who had been looking after ILS for years, it would have been a far less happy story.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Locking did provide something very worth while.

I think it stood us in good stead because three solid years of having it all dinned in to us at the beginning often made the difference later on between coping and keeping equipment going.

In this respect I also think that Locking did instil leadership, though it was the *overall* experience which made the difference; not some of the things that might have been dreamed up along the way to 'teach' leadership. Witness the fact in Brian's own words it was him and a number of ex Apps who made things work as SNCOs where he was. That too is leadership.

Having got out of the service and into the computer industry – at a time when you could see every component down to the last diode and transistor and it was very satisfying to work on them – the quality of Locking training became very clear. There is no doubt whatever that apprentices in the factory where I worked had not had the benefit of anything like as good training.

Just how much impact Locking had on me had been forgotten – if I ever really knew anyway. It was not until I marched and stood with other kindred spirits on that flawless, beautiful morning outside the Winter Gardens, that I felt a sense of realisation as well as completion for all that Locking gave and meant to me, yet the promise of which remained largely unfulfilled within the service.

Standing to attention in the bright sunlight, suddenly I became aware of a sound; first there was a monotone growl, then prayer like, a rising note as it banked, turned and came straight in, a wave of sound breaking across the face of the Winter Gardens. Surreptitiously glimpsed, there it was; the Spitfire; the duck-egg-green graceful silhouette on brilliant blue, and in an instant was gone forever. It surely plucked the heart strings

Gone too is the world that you and I grew up in and at Locking we were trained for. *But*, without the *principles* as well as the *culture* I would not have been equipped to begin what I've done since. Either in electronics or where

it has all lead to.

Until that final freedom parade it hadn't dawned how deeply Locking had affected me. But as soon as we began to march it did but quite how do you put it into words?

It was unique

David Hazell (97<sup>th</sup> Entry)

Dear Mr Horn,

Several weeks and one newsletter later, I am still uncertain whether your comments in the editorial of June 1999, about psychological scars and the seemingly pointlessness of training apprentices on obsolete equipment, not forgetting "workshops" were spoofs on the part of those who put pen to paper. Please tell me that you were joking!

Let me start with the last two points. Upon leaving Locking it became very clear that a knowledge of H2S 4a and the T1154/R1155 combination was of little use in the V- Force although I do recall an T1154 in the RSF at Gaydon in '55, and FECS at Changi had the combination fitted. However, somehow or another, the Airforce survived all of our efforts to subvert it with cries of "But I wasn't taught this at Locking, Chief!" Is it possible that the Air Force was wiser than we gave it credit for?

Leaving the 'crab-fats' for the rigours of civilian life, I began to learn something about electronics and quality standards with Plessey Radar. A change from Air Radar to 'heavy' radar was not without its qualms. "I'm not going near that, it's dangerous" was my reaction to my introduction to the AR-1, a 'Mickey Mouse' radar by later standards. However, I survived. If there are any psychological scars, they arrived at *that* point. Subsequently my experience broadened to include ground UHF and VHF as well as Tropo-scatter equipment.

It was at this time that I started to meet a lot of 'clever' chaps with H.N.D.s and even degrees. Funny, they were good kids with a piece of paper and a slide rule – this was b.c. (before calculators) – but their mechanical skills did not exist. 'Workshops' taught those of who had never used metal working tools prior to our

arrival at Locking more than we realised at the time.

I recall one occasion when the waveguide of a TMAR had been partially stripped during an annual inspection in the desert. One bright spark was seen bunging washers into the sand. When he was asked why, he replied that he never bothered to replace them! Yes, British, H.N.C. and two short planks! Does anyone remember the workshop poster showing a very cute little lady nut being chased by a lecherous old bolt; she was crying "No, not without a washer!" Something stuck all those years ago!

Now we come to the bit that wasn't commented on in the September newsletter: the psychological scars.

There were three sorts of Apprentice at Locking in my days; the 'hard men' who worked their tickets, then the bulk of an Entry who settled down and allowed the Air Force to work its magic upon them to turn them into QR fodder. The third group, quite small, decided that although the Air Force had its good points they were not going to be brain washed into the ways of the service. The result was that this group of apprentices learned the lesson of bending in the face of winds of unbeatable strength but bouncing back upon their own paths after the storm had passed. This ability has enabled me to cope with bumptious Americans, technically ignorant Arabs and downright stupid, young British managers for the twenty-five years I have worked overseas. If anyone is into psychological scars, perhaps a couple of years in Saudi Arabia would enable them to add to their collection.

It seems to me that those who complain about the time spent at Locking have overlooked the reality of the situation. Those three years were the equivalent of three years of public schooling. Yes, there *was* bullying, but that in itself was a lesson to be taken to heart; the bully and the bullied were given lessons in LIFE with all its inequalities. One result of that particular aspect of Locking was to get the best out of people without humiliating them, a lesson

remembered when dealing with multi-racial work forces.

The psychological scars? My first reaction was to snort "Nonsense!", but then I paused and heard, in the background, the rustle of petticoats, the bleeding hearts brigade!

Psychological scars meant a hairy 'best blue', hob-nailed boots and Weston-super-Mare on a hot summer's afternoon. No civvies for some of us! Quite bluntly, there was nothing that the RAF could do to me in the early fifties that the Luftwaffe didn't do in Plymouth in 1941. Psychological scars? Psychological stuff and nonsense!!

Finally, would it not make sense to drop the dinner/dance 'do' and put on a 'noggin and natter' evening in its place? Or will the petticoats overrule the trousers — yet again? I find it rather sad to attend the 'meet and greet' only to see the miserable faces seated at tables while less than a dozen 'singlies' congregate at the bar. Come to think of it, a logical extension of these remarks would be an A.G.M. open to only to former Apprentices to be followed by a stag night. Or would such a proposal be seen to be leading towards zero attendance at the AGM?

I am uncertain why a future Editor of the newsletter should be a 'she' — unless there were female members of No. 1 Wing none of us ever saw! Perhaps a long suffering NAAFFI girl or even Gwen-of-the-water-tower-on-pay-nights could qualify at a pinch, but otherwise forget it, Mr Horn.

Having considered the implications of psychological scars more fully, if we assume for the sake of argument that they do exist, please can I have my compensation now?

Without scars, psychological or otherwise,

**D Penberthy, 71st.**

*I hope that readers won't mind me rising to the bait just a little bit ...*

Spoofs ... joking? — *Well yes, ever so slightly; see editorial (speaking for myself, not Brian).*

Noggin and natter followed by a stag do? — *see AOB of the AGM, the committee are looking for suggestions.*

Gwen? — *personally I have never heard of her, but if she ever existed, reminiscences to the editor please! The point is that I was not exactly expecting a stampede for the job of editor, and was casting my net widely (another fishing metaphor). Personally I cannot think of any good reason why, say, one of the wives shouldn't do the job of compiling the newsletter, if they had a mind to that is. Many of them have and continue to put in a lot of effort for our benefit anyway. If you don't buy that, see "It had to happen sometime" opposite.*

*Any way, all that is academic now thanks to Colin Ingram filling the breach.*

*Psychological scars? — No comment except to say that I thought you made my, your point very well! Long-live chauvinism! — Ed.*

#### **Apprentice NCOs in the Glass House?**

After watching programmes about the glasshouse on Sky TV, I sat eagerly awaiting for them to reveal that the place was actually run by apprentice NCO'S from Locking and that it had really been recorded in the 60's.

I would like nothing better than to meet the first apprentice NCO who decided that you had to be a real bastard and make every one's life hell! I don't think the powers that be really meant it to be that way. Finally ending up as an S.A.A, I only helped to perpetuate the situation. However, I would like to think I was always fair. Our role models set the standards that we abided by, and by becoming an NCO was a means of escape, I suppose.

As regards training, I do feel it did set me up for my career, but like many others I can't say that there are too many happy memories. I came across the guy I had the greatest respect for when I first became an L.A.A. One of the new entry decided it was not for him and returned home (a Scot as I remember). To me, that took a lot of guts — I wonder what happened to him.

If we were honest, there are probably many who wished they were somewhere else. The complaints about the standard of training in my case I don't feel were justified. I considered I was well prepared, after playing spoof with our instructor Flying Officer Pete Squires — I still take some beating!

Seriously though, I feel the problem with the ground trades stemmed from the fact that the LOCKING system treated them as the poor relations.

Anyway, regards to all my old mates, I think I've only met about six since I left.

If I once spoiled you day just remember that a few spoiled quite a few of mine!

**Pete Eddy 93rd**

#### **It had to happen sometime!**

*The following has been 'nicked' from The Haltonian — the Journal of the RAF Halton Aircraft Apprentices Association — Winter 1999 Edition ...*

It has been said many times in the Haltonian that no matter what subject is brought up, there is always an Apprentice involvement in it somewhere. The latest occurrence involves the quite common subject these days of sex change. At a recent reunion of the 73rd Entry, many of the assembled company were somewhat confounded when a chap who used to be George turned out to be Georgina. After the initial surprise, the party soon got going and, by the end of the weekend it had become an accepted fact.

Having been told of this occurrence, your editor was helping on the HAA stall at the 80th Anniversary Celebrations, when he was approached by a very smart lady who, on asking her if he could help her, replied "I'm 32nd Entry!" Being rather taken aback by this, all he said was "Are you a member of the HAA?". "No", she replied. So he gave her a form, she returned it with her subscription, and now is a member.



# The purple stuff

by Les Hardy (78th)

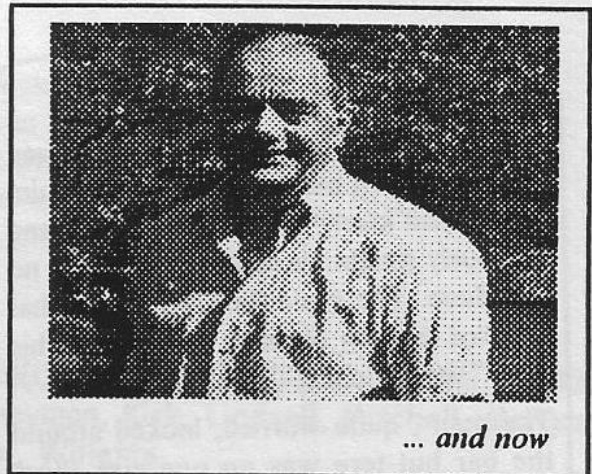
Keeping in touch with one's old school friends was one way of staying sane during those early September '54 days at Locking. What with having to get up at dawn, make your own bed, dash a couple of hundred yards for a hurried breakfast and then leave the place clean and tidy before marching the mile to the training blocks, it was quite a cultural shock to those of us who had just left school. In order to maintain some connection with the real world, I corresponded with my school mate Buckey' (aren't we cruel at that age? ) who had decided on a career in chemistry. Having already been at work for some weeks, Buckey had discovered a chemical which his colleagues often used to play pranks on the unsuspecting. I don't remember what it was called but it was used as a purple liquid, spread out on the ground to dry, and then, when walked upon, would produce miniature explosions. Around the LA's bedspace was just one idea; perhaps in the corridor to warn against marauding bed tippers was another; and it sounded great for a moonlight trip to the parade ground dais.



*Les Hardy then ...*

Buckey was all for sending me the formula so that I could make up some for myself but I suggested that it would be better if he shipped the product already made-up as I had no way of obtaining the ingredients - and didn't relish the thought of mixing volatile chemicals in a wooden hut. This he agreed to do and in due

course a small parcel containing a test tube of the purple stuff was winging its way from Up North' to the wild and woolly (well, those working blues! ) West. Winging is a most appropriate word here, as those of you who have spent time on the draughty platforms of Bristol Temple Meads station will know, the sacks of mail often fly from one platform to another when time is short to make the connection from the express to the Slow train to Weston. I believe that it was at this point my test tube was cracked and the purple stuff soaked into the ample packing material. It had the rest of the serene journey to Locking to dry out.



*... and now*

The clerk working in B Squadron office had plenty to keep him busy, - just one of his tasks was so sort the incoming mail into Entries. It was easier to stand at the mail sack, read the addresses on the letters and throw them a few feet into one of three trays. That was until he picked up my parcel and threw it. This was the ultimately indignity. The dried purple crystals decided that this was the moment they had been created for. The tip of the first crystal was broken, a puff of purple powder was accompanied by a loud crack. The violent change of air pressure was such that adjacent crystals were broken and a chain reaction then followed with the parcel exploding with a loud

bang and a cloud of purple smoke.

I was called down to the office oblivious of any of this, was asked who wanted to kill me and struggled for several minutes to find an acceptable explanation for the parcel. I must have thought of something plausible as, somewhat shattered by the interrogation, I was allowed to leave with the remains of my parcel. At this point I decided that I was not cut out to be a prankster and so we never did have that parade on which the DI jumped up and down like a cat on hot bricks as he stamped around on the dais.

Did you hear about the one on the window ledge of the – well perhaps another time.

### Bob's Fillers

A Chap entered a pub and ordered a beer. He heard a soft male voice which told him that he had lovely eyes, and he turned and nervously sought his admirer, there was no one there. The voice then whispered that he liked the way the man had combed his hair. "Very fetching".

The man, quite worried, looked around the bar but there was no one else there except himself and the barman who was at the other end of the room.

The voice was even softer this time, "you are a very attractive man." At this the customer became very agitated and called the barman over. He told him about the voice and the fact that he wasn't used to such flattery. The barman smiled. "Take no notice of him, sir, that's just the peanuts, they are complimentary!"

### Does anyone know Mick Green?

*Charles Hart has received a letter from Willie Huggins, a member of one of our sister Associations, the RAF Administrative Apprentices Association, asking for help in finding a friend ...*

Dear Charles,

From 1954 to 57, as a newly promoted Sergeant, I wielded power as the 'Drafter' for signals types from my Eyrrie at Medmenham. I might even write something about the strange breeds of humanity we had in the RS (Radio/Radar Servicing) empire there. There were some great guys and I have happy memories of that period.

One of my particular friends was a GWF (CTRL) by the name of Mick Green, full initials were, I believe, M. G. (*admin types know about these things!* – Ed). He was an ex-apprentice, and I was able to help him enormously. Whilst at Medmenham his PWR came through, and I heard from my friends at Gloucester that there was a slot coming up at Eastleigh. I mentioned this to Mick and he told me that his wife-to-be had an uncle who was a farmer out that way. Need I say more? Mick went to Kenya, whilst I had to make the best of Washington DC ... Ah well, we have to take the smooth with the smooth.

Mick was from Hampshire, New Forest area I think. Has anything been seen or heard of him within your Association?

**Willie Huggins MBE**

*Now, if you would like to contact him with news of Mick Green ... or perhaps to ask a few questions about the posting you didn't get to Eastleigh or Washington around that time ... Willie can be contacted on*

Telephone: 01452714311

or

email [williehug@aol.com](mailto:williehug@aol.com)

# Entry News

## The 72nd Entry, 47 years on

*The 72nd Entry Association are making a concerted effort to trace missing members of the Entry. Any one having any information is asked to pass it on to John Smith, their Secretary who's contact details appear below.*

On attestation day, September 10th 1952, the number of members of the entry was 108. Shortly afterwards we were joined by 4 Boy Entrants from RAF Yatesbury making our original total 112.

Thus the entry was made up of:

107 in the number range 588110-588216

4 in the number range 588240-588243

1 in the Royal Ceylonese Air Force

92 members of the entry passed the 3 year course and 20 were either re-classed or left the service.

At the Moment (10/09/99):-

The number of members whose whereabouts are known is .....	74
The number of members who are known to have died is .....	4
The number of members not yet found or who have become lost is ....	23
The number of members whose names are unknown is .....	11
<u>Total</u> .....	112

The names of those not found or lost are:

Bowditch, Bradstreet, Brown (13 ), Campbell(DK), Campbell (JR), Carpannini, Clarke, Elmes, Fine, Fisher, Gregory, Higgins, Honeyman, Kirk, Lindsell, Mitchell, Morgan, Potter, Rider, Sainsbury, Thrower, Weston, Willetts.

The numbers of those who have no names are:

588116, 588126, 588139, 588142, 588158, 588184, 588189, 588191, 588194, 588195, 588207, 588211 (Some names would be:-Styles, Brumby, Wilson)

In addition the whereabouts of the following who passed out with us, but who came down from 70th, 71st Entries, are known:-

John Perks, Brian Harrison, Tony Parkinson, however I do not know the whereabouts of William Bradley Lewis (70<sup>th</sup>) or W.A.Morgan (7 1st).

The whereabouts of our Flight Commander Flt. Lt.T.A.Rippon DFC., RAF. and our drill instructor Cpl. Dennis Ward are also known.

John Smith, 40 Summervell Drive, Fareham, Hants, PO16 7QL.

### **72nd Entry Association Reunion**

The 72nd Association held a very enjoyable reunion at the Post House, Crick, Northants, on the 18 September 1999. This was attended by 23 members accompanied by their Ladies.

In the presence of the Life President, TA (Ripp) Rippon DFC (Flight Commander) due to a slight illness – Anne and Ripp celebrated their Diamond (60th) wedding anniversary on the 1st October 1999. The life Vice President Dennis Ward (former DI) gave a very humorous reminiscences of some of the ‘behind the scenes goings on’ at Locking in the early ‘50s.

It was agreed that the 50th Anniversary since joining, will be held at the Grand Atlantic Hotel, Weston-super-Mare on Saturday 14th September, 2002.

**John Smith (72nd)**

### **99th Entry Christmas get-together**

Although there is no formalised Entry Association, it is fast becoming the custom for some members of the Entry to meet up for a weekend around Christmas.

For the second year running, twelve of the Entry and their wives spent a thoroughly enjoyable weekend Holme Lacey Hotel near Hereford. Activities at this fully equipped leisure centre included eating excessively, drinking just enough to make the party swing, cabaret and dancing. Inevitably, many of the wives explored the locality for essential last minute Christmas shopping! The theme for the weekend was “A Christmas Party” and proceedings certainly lived up to the name!

All of the members who attended last year were there again this year, except one couple who had to drop out for family reasons. In addition three new couples joined the party.

The ‘tradition’ will continue next year by popular consent. Already a number of rooms have been booked at a similar hotel near Harrogate.

Any one in the Entry who hasn’t previously attended, and would more information, about the 2000 get-together should contact me.

**Chris Horn, Telephone 01934 511465**

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