



FLASHPOINT

ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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Front cover picture: RAF Cranwell

Welcome to the summer 2023 issue of your magazine. It's been a busy time behind the scenes as preparations are being made for the AGM, moving the association forward and planning for the memorial at the arboretum.

This edition is full of stories from members that are too long to put in one edition so they will be in parts to be added in future editions. A big thank you to all that have contributed so far. It is you the members who keep flashpoint going.

We have over 400 members and we all have a story to tell so dig deep folks and put your memories down on paper and get them over to me.

We have introduced a few new topics to the magazine. From the man cave which is about what we have of interest in our man caves and there is one in this edition from our webmaster Dave Kirk. Another is introductions from your committee members and the first is from our Vice President Steve Harrison.

Music for me takes me back to different parts of my life and in particular certain points in my RAF fire Service Career so we have also introduced Desert Island Disks where we can look at what music takes us back to and my wingman Silverfox has started us off on this idea too.

My modelling is taking up a lot of time. In particular getting the Mk9 into production. I will be doing them in batches of 25 and the first twenty five are spoken for but as soon as these have been built painted dispatched I will advertise for the next twenty five and so on. My next release will be my all time favourite the Mk7, a real man's truck.

Yes, I will also be releasing a Mk8 at some point(after all it was a MK7 in different clothing and she did do her job when she got there). I also have an MFV ready for production but am holding off for now

as these are 1/48 scale and will be quite expensive due to production costs on account of their size. You can also still order any of the figures in my collection.

Sadly, the obituary list is yet again too long so lets all take a moments reflection for all those that have gone to the Crash Line above.

Well enough of my waffle. Enjoy the magazine and above all take care of each other.

All the best, Reggie(editor)

REUNION WEEKEND

Dear valued member,

As our annual Reunion is almost upon us again, please do not delay in booking your place. Several members and their guests have already secured their places for this year's unmissable social event, so please do not delay and book as soon as you can to avoid disappointment.

The reunion and AGM Meeting will be from Friday the 3rd till Sunday the 5th of November at the Sketchley Grange Hotel and Spa, located in Hinkley Leicestershire, LE10 3 HU.

All the details regarding the reunion weekend are in this edition of Flashpoint and online as is the booking form. To book online simply visit <https://sfevents.wuffo.com/forms/raf-dfsa>

As a member of the association you are of course welcome to attend, and should you decide to do so, we look forward to seeing you there, pulling up a sandbag, swinging the lamp, or of course you could just have a chat with any friends you may meet up with.

On the Saturday evening there will be an evening meal with entertainment included. The entertainment this year will be vocalist Max Hutton who has a wide-ranging repertoire of songs. His act can be viewed online via YouTube.

However, should you decide not to attend because the reunion weekends do not offer you what you personally would like to see, then, would it be too much to ask of you to get in touch either by phone, email or letter to any committee member whose details can be found on the inside cover of flashpoint and let us know how we might change things in the future in order that we may provide you as a valued member a more memorable weekend, and one that you would want to keep returning to.

Regards Don Pape - Deputy Chairman

REUNION ACCOMMODATION

Below is a copy of an email sent to our Deputy Chairman, Don Pape which I received today 19/07/2023. If you plan on attending the reunion weekend, may I suggest that you book soon to avoid any disappointment with accommodation. These weekends are fantastic and always a good laugh. It is great meeting up with old mates and making new ones. Hope to see you there

Reg Metcalfe(editor)

Hi Don and Mike

Just to let you know that we now have the following bookings in terms of room type...

10 x sole occupancy

7 x double/twin occupancy

This means that we cannot offer any more discounted single occupancy rooms as there are not enough double/twin bookings to cover the subsidised cost. The hotel will accept more sole occupancy bookings, but anyone who books from now on that is not sharing with another guest will have to pay the full £35 per night single supplement charge from the hotel. If we get an influx of double/twin bookings then we'll be able to offer more singles at the reduced rate, but as bookings have really slowed and we're currently at 10 guests lower than we had at the end of July last year (that's 20% down), it's not looking positive.

I've updated the web portal with the higher charge, but obviously the printed hard copy forms which went out with flashpoint will now be incorrect. The updated form is attached if anyone requests a copy.

I've attached a list of members who haven't yet booked that attended last year, perhaps you could contact them to see if they plan to book and ask them to do it ASAP? If we can't increase our numbers soon I'm concerned that the hotel will move our group to one of their smaller event spaces which isn't as good as the one we have currently and may also mean we couldn't take any last minute bookings.

If you can let me know on the above that would be great.

Kind regards

Sarah Fletcher - SF Events Ltd

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

May I wish you all a very warm (literally) welcome to the summer edition of flashpoint. I that hope you and your families have been able to make the most of the sunshine and recharge your batteries. As usual your committee have been working very hard getting ready for this year's reunion which, as usual, encompasses the AGM. The Committee meets once a month via Zoom and discussions normally last at least two hours. When you couple that time with the other duties, we perform it is quite a commitment. For the most part we tackle all the issues raised with our normal positive attitude, working on the principle that if a firefighter can't fix it no one can! Sadly, we have no control over the current situations affecting the global economy and as such we have had to take a hard look at the current finances of the Association. This involved a bit of a deep dive into our operating costs and what would we need to do to keep our heads above water. Thanks to the efforts of our treasurer, we have been stable for quite some time now. This has enabled donations to be made to the Memorial Fund and the Museum of RAF Firefighting to help safeguard the legacy of permanent reminders of the service that we have all been proud to serve. Without the support of the Association, both projects

might have disappeared forever. That said, the Association itself is under threat. We need to make sure the balance stays healthy and so a couple of things have been done to cut down on costs. Several members have volunteered to receive their Flashpoint magazine electronically which means a significant saving on postage, and this includes envelopes and paper. The standard of the Flashpoint is the best it's ever been, so we didn't want to cut down on pages, size, and quality. The addition of colour photographs has enhanced the magazine considerably and long may that continue. Hard copies will always be available to members who like something to hold and hang onto but for others, an electronic copy is fine. You choose. A copy will always be archived in the Museum so there will always be something to look back on. We've got everyone issue since day one. This year we have decided to raise the membership fee to £20. We have not taken that decision lightly as we know every penny counts these days. We haven't had a rise in subs for years so it's long overdue. The plans for this year's reunion are now pretty much sorted and I look forward to seeing as many of you there as we can get! If you haven't been before, I encourage you to give it a go! I must reflect on the number of comrades

who have passed away this year. It's very sobering especially when you see someone who you worked with has answered their final call. It's so easy these days to put a message out on facebook but really, there's nothing better than sitting down with an old mate, drinking a pint or two, talking about the good old days and putting the world to rights. We still need to attract new members, especially from those serving today. I urge all of you to think about how we can make the Association more attractive to the next generation. I intend to be around on the Saturday afternoon to listen to any thoughts both positive and/or negative about what we can do to improve the Association. Finally, none of us on the Committee are getting any younger so if you'd like to put yourself forward and volunteer, we'd happily take you on board. The same goes for area reps. We're going to try and re-launch those to see if there's a way of getting together even if it is just to share the cost of travelling or maybe offering a lift to someone who is no longer able to drive? I'd like to close by thanking the present committee for all their support and commitment to their duties, without them, we simply just couldn't do it.

Steve

WHO ARE YOU? (Yorkshire for my profile)



Steve Harrison.(AKA Silverfox) Association Vice president, Assistant Flashpoint Editor, and Co-Ordinator for Lincolnshire. Let me introduce myself. Many Association members will know me, but some of the newer members will not. I joined the Royal Air Force in Kingston upon Hull in 1965 and after my fire training

at RAF Catterick I was posted to RAF Manby in Lincolnshire but worked at RAF Strubby, bussing every day. The other stations I served at was Masirah (twice) St Athan, Oakington, Medmenham, Wyton, Bawdsey, Laarbruch, Marham, Waddington and finished my service at Brize Norton in 1990 as a Flight Sergeant having decided to PVR with still thirteen years to go. One of passions is Flashpoint I have been editing this magazine since Autumn 2011 when I Co-Edited it with my great friend George Edwards (RIP) then stepping in between editors over the years and now I am wingman to our present editor Reg Metcalfe. I believe it is the corner stone of our association and would not like it to decline. I also volunteer at The Museum of RAF Firefighting as mainly the librarian but as any volunteer do anything that is asked but there are limits as age sometimes is a barrier to some physical activities!!! But I have spent many a happy hour helping to restore the Mark 6 which you see in the background of the image shown.

I receive lots of phone calls from members from time to time as regards Flashpoint and the Museum when they cannot get hold of Steve Shirley and I welcome any other calls from anyone, even it just for a chat if you are on your own. My contact details are on page 2 of the Flashpoint.

E Flammis Atque Runins Salus

MY DESERT ISLAND DISCS

This photograph pictures a 19-year-old version of Steve Harrison on a 'Desert Island' (RAF Masirah) in 1967 playing the Beatles 'Hard Day's Night' (is there some irony in that?)

I have always loved music of various genres from Nat King Cole to Pink Floyd and I could list numerous songs or pieces of music which reminds me of places in my 25 years' service. But here is the top 3. "We've got to get out of this place" by The Animals. This was around in 1965 while I was carrying out my basic training at RAF Swinderby and I remember well the nights while we were bulling boots or when we had just received a rollicking from our instructors that we used to burst into our version of this song. "Albatross" by Fleetwood Mac. When this is played, I am transported back to 'Surf Beach' at RAF Masirah(Oman) a place where I spent many a time (two tours worth) watching and listening to the surf crashing down

on the beach and watching dolphins, barracuda, sharks, and rays and seeing many more wonders. Also, when I went to the RAF Stanley at the Falklands, I had the great pleasure of having a cruise aboard the S.S.Uganda! On that trip I was amazed at this albatross I used to watch which followed the boat for about 5 days.

"What a Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong. This also has links with RAF Masirah. My parents at this time had never traveled aboard at all and I used to write home to them about all the wonderful



sights I had seen in nature at Masirah, and the adventures I got up to. So, they sent this song as a request for me at Radio 65 (The Masirah radio station) I like many other folks I could have a very longlist, but I will leave you with these.

CIVVY FIRE SERVICE YEARS (PART 1)

Leaving school in 1965 was fast approaching for me and after some thought about my future with the help of my careers teacher, I discovered that a new training scheme was being implemented by the County Fire brigade which allowed lads to join two years earlier than the normal age of eighteen. My uncle had been the Chief Fire Officer at the factories of Leyland Motors Ltd., so I was keen to join and luckily was accepted into Junior Fireman course number two!

The course was for two years and thirty-one of us (several from other Brigades) would be based at the Lancashire County Fire Brigade training centre at Washington Hall near Chorley. Although during our training we would be non-operational, were permitted to attend large incidents for observation and helping to make up afterwards, as Home Office rules forbid any actual fire fighting! The course syllabus was extensive and we were resident at the centre five days a week, being allowed home at the weekends and bank holidays. Two Sub officer (SubO) instructors were assigned to us, and a Station officer (StnO) in the position of chief instructor for all recruits. It was soon clear why we had been expected to have attained GCE 'O' level grade as

there was a considerable amount of time spent in lectures, but this was interspaced with ladder and hose drills (including hook ladders). Part of the week included a trip to the local baths for swimming and two days set aside for attendance at a local technical college studying Maths, English, Physics, Chemistry, Hydraulics and Building Construction. In order to achieve this we were split into Red and Blue Squads, which meant a more convenient number for training, especially on the drill yard.

In addition to all this, we had equipment to clean and maintain, together with our accommodation, all to a very high standard! Our uniform was the standard issue of reefer jacket with Junior Fireman "mudguards" on the shoulders and flat cap (with red band). Fire fighting kit was also of the period, the helmet comb painted red, but we were not issued with personal axes due to Home office rules.

So the first year of training was full on, with the second a little less so when reaching seventeen, undertaking light vehicle driver training by ex-police instructors. Following on however was an Outward Bound Mountaineering course (six weeks duration) during late autumn/winter in the lake district, as if we had not done enough, this was based

on fitness, resilience and teamwork! The Latter part forming part of the local mountain rescue team, attending two incidents in the Fells! (I can expand on how the course panned out in a further account if our Ed is agreeable!)

It was also planned that we would be detached in small groups to various departments within the Brigade, such as Fire Prevention, Stores, Vehicle Maintenance, Control room and Admin. The CFO wanted us all to take part in the Annual Brigade Display at Washington Hall and we were split into our training squads for this with one carrying out a Physical training display and the other Continuation marching Drill without commands, of which I was part of the latter. Conveniently, those marching skills came in very useful during basic training at RAF Swinderby, some years in the future!

I have several anecdotes (some amusing!) to relate from those two years of very intense fire service training, and can safely say I came away with a sense of team spirit, of looking out for your crew mates that carried me through my working career!

To be continued.....

Andy Gaskell (328) amended version

STEVE DAVEY'S MEMORIES

Part 2 – The adventure continues.

As a Gunner/Fireman I could now be employed in either capacity, and low and behold my next posting was to 15 Field Sqn RAF Regiment, which was stationed at RAF Changi in Singapore. I arrived there with another convert, Sgt Ray McIntosh, and we duly presented ourselves at the Sqn HQ situated on a remote camp at Telok Paku, on Changi Beach. The Sqn Ldr CO had us in together and gave the shortest arrival briefing of my career.

It went something like “I expect my NCOs to shoot, swim and drive better than the men”

Not all at the same time I was thinking.

Not long after that he was posted, and his successor who had served in Burma during WWII, and was the holder of the MC, was every bit the professional soldier.

I remember one particular evening when the Squadron was assembled on our parade square under the short Singapore twilight. We had been formed up in readiness for a pre-detachment briefing of some sort, and were lined up by Flights awaiting the arrival of our CO who was attending an Officers Mess formal function. Eventually he alighted from his Land Rover in full mess kit, complete with a red silk-lined cape of some description and started to make his way to the waiting Squadron.

As he approached one of my airmen, a Glaswegian, said in a gruff stage whisper....

“Fuck Me it’s Captain Marvel”

This was the time of the Borneo Confrontation, and detachments to Brunei, Kutching, Tawau and Labuan followed, together with a more attractive one in Gan. I attended a Jungle Warfare School Small Arms Instructors course at Kota Tingi, and went on exercises in Malaca, Butterworth and Frasers Hill in the Cameron Highlands, all in Malaysia.

Of the 30 Months I spent on 15 Sqn I did something like 15 months away from my wife and family in Singapore. Before the end of that tour we had the chance to revert to our former single trade and I jumped at the chance to become a Fireman once more. However, my jungle days weren’t over yet, and a second RAF Labuan detachment followed. This time it was to take charge of the small Fire Section there. Apparently, despite there



RAF Labuan Fire Section circa 1963

being Main Operating Bases at Changi, Seletar and Tengah, Far East Air Force Command could not find a Sgt Fireman from anywhere else in Singapore who was available to go. I duly landed in Labuan in a 48 Sqn Hastings, and as I went down the steps I met the man I was relieving coming across the pan; non other than Sgt Dennis McCann! We would often recount this episode on Fire Association Reunions.

No5 Flying Training School (FTS) at RAF Oakington was the next stop. Time has dimmed the details, but I was allocated a married quarter at the station and had managed to move in with my family before I was due to arrive for duty. It was 5 am on a brilliant July sunny morning when I discerned a tapping on the bedroom window. On investigation I discovered that there was an airman outside throwing gravel at the glass.

I opened the window and he said “Mickey Finn Sarge. You are to get your crash kit on, bring an overnight bag, and report to the tower at once”.

“I haven’t arrived at the station yet.” I told the lad.

“I know,” said the messenger “But the Flight Sergeant says you must come in.”

I got to the tower and climbed the stairs to local where the controller said:

“Where have you been?”and in almost the same breath. “That’s your aircraft on the Left, ‘T’ for Tango.”

So it was back to the pan and across the concrete to a Vickers Varsity that was waiting with engines running. I climbed up the steps into an empty fuselage and the door was closed sharply behind me. We taxied out, took off, and in about 10 minutes we landed again at what turned out to be RAF Stradishall. After taxiing in, the doors were opened to allow 3 more firemen to enter, also dressed in crash kit. They slumped down in the fuselage and

we resumed our flight.

Freshly back from the Far East, no one had ever told me what Mickey Finn was, and I had no idea where we were going. Conversation with my erstwhile colleagues was impossible, so once we had levelled off at the top of the climb I worked my way forward over my now sleeping companions to the cockpit. There I found the Captain in the left hand seat smoking a pipe, and a 5 FTS student on the right covered in maps.

“Where are we going?” I shouted above the Radial Roar.

“Persia!” said the Captain.

Before returning to the fuselage, I took a quick look at the compass and noted we were flying west. I had a small diary with me with World Maps in it, and reckoned Persia was in the East. It was all a bit unreal, 682 Davey on a Mickey Finn mission to the Middle East.

Mickey Finn was a Bomber Command operation where all the V Bomber strike force in the UK would deploy from their own stations to remote units assuming that a hostile nuclear attack was imminent and their own locations would be prime targets.

Half an hour later we landed at RAF Pershore in Worcestershire.

Oakington was the only station I ever got caught for a Church Parade, a rare event for any fireman. It was Remembrance Sunday service in the village, and a very memorable one for me. The Admin Sgt who was running the affair ushering us into the church with traditional military efficiency. When one hapless airmen walked into the chancel still wearing his peaked cap, the Admin Sgt came up to him and whispered in his ear “Git your ‘at orf in the ‘owse of the Lord, c * * t!”.

At RAF Oakington in 1966 the heating ducts around the station had become home

to a colony of free breeding feral cats. The RSPCA or some other humane animal organisation provided us with steel trap cages to place in the ducts and hopefully catch the moggies. This job fell to the Firemen.

The "Pest Control" officer came into the section one morning and asked SAC Paddy Tipper ...

"Any luck last night?"

"Yes Sor" Sez Paddy. "We got a ginormous black one"

"Was it wild" enquired the Flying Officer?"

"Well it wasn't very happy Sor" was Paddy's reply!

* * * * *

It's now 1966 and I'm posted to RAF Khormaksar in the British Protectorate of Aden, the busiest RAF Station ever. At the time there was an increasing terrorist threat from FLOSY (The Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen) so Khormaksar had a Rock Ape (RAF Regiment) Squadron detached in for specialist reaction in and around Aden. From time to time they would search areas of the camp, including the large number of Adeni Arabs and Ethiopian civilians employed therein. The Fire Section shared a compound with Air Traffic Control which was surrounded by a chain link fence and barbed wire, complete with a guarded gate entry.

One day the Regiment descended on our compound in force, and made all the civilians stand against the perimeter fencing with arms up and legs spread. Fire vehicles used to be equipped with a battery powered loud hailer as part of the SST kit, and one fireman decided to take advantage of that to create his own amusement. Taking in the scene before him, he grabbed the loud hailer and after hiding himself in the Crash Bays made the following broadcast:

"As you can see by the bodies on the wire, we run a tough camp here"

The Regt Squadron Leader was not amused.

However, that was just a typical example of the service humour, and the way airmen were in the days before political correctness.

I remember one day the airfield at Khormaksar was attacked with improvised

mortar bombs. As a result of this attack contingency plans were drawn up and the job of locating any resulting craters in the sand fell to the firemen!

* * * * *

Khormaksar closed in 1967 and my first tour at Brize Norton followed, then a tour on recruiting duties. I was posted to Edinburgh and subsequently to a new "C" Class office (1 man) in Taunton, Somerset, just eleven miles from my birth place! I struggled with the local patois in Scotland, particularly the Fife Miners dialect, but was right at home in Taunton though. (Oooooooooooh Arrrrrr).

* * * * *

From there it was back to Brize Norton as a Flight Sergeant where I was given the job of OIC Concorde Fire Contingent at nearby Fairford. I recall during this tour Sappho Bird Scaring equipment was introduced into the RAF, and our WO at Brize, George Bartlett, attended a heads of section brief someplace before passing the gen on to us. George described the apparatus and how it was to be mounted in a DP Truck. He explained the ornithological research carried out and the making of bird distress call tapes to disperse the flocks.

He then told us what he called the "Modus Operandi"; it went something like this:

The ATC controller will ask for a Sappho run to a location on the airfield.

The DP driver will go to the location and position his vehicle upwind of the birds he is to scare.

He will select a tape appropriate to the predominant species present, and play it over the vehicle loud speaker system. This will cause the birds to become airborne.

The flock will then be dispersed with an explosive cracker cartridge fired from a Very Pistol

I think we were all enthralled by George's description of the system and then he ruined it all with his final remarks.

"There is only one problem with this equipment and expense" he said.

"What's that Sir?" a member of the audience asked.

George's reply has

me tittering to this day. "The birds hear the truck coming and fuck off!"

* * * * *

A brief posting to RAF West Raynham in 1974 before I met the real *raison d'être* for the "Cold War", Royal Air Force for the first time in RAFG and the Eastern outpost of Gutersloh.

West Raynham is a pretty remote spot in the Norfolk hinterland where a visit to Swaffam's Saturday Market the best (if not only) thing to happen each week. We were accommodated in a Married Quarter at RAF Sculthorpe, an American Base. The AMQ was a large bungalow and my most vivid memory of it is the heating system. It had two oil fired boilers either of which would have powered a Mersey Ferry. Each room was heated by hot air entering at ceiling level, a concept which defies hot air its natural propensity to rise! Consequently you had to fill the top of the room first resulting in a hot head and cold feet. My American Neighbours were paying a lot less for the oil than us so this was not a problem for them to keep pumping and defy the laws of physics.

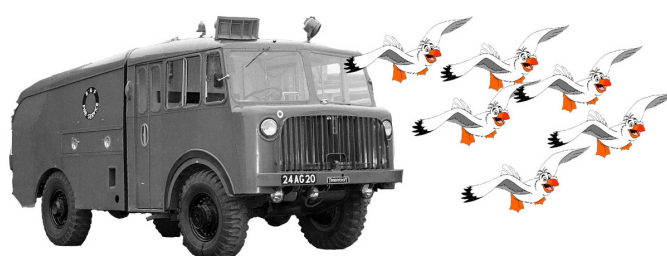
One advantage of living with the Yanks was that at least we had a high level of security with the Air Police (AP) patrolling 24 hours a day. On my way off base one day I was driving slowly I thought when I was stopped by an Armed AP Officer. What I'd thought was a weapon was in fact a speed gun.

Very politely, he said "Pardon me Sir, did you know you were driving at 23 MPH in a 15 MPH zone?"

Being my usual flippant self I said "I wondered why I felt dizzy".

He either ignored or did not appreciate my sarcasm, and said "I will have to give you a citation"

"Thank you very Much" Sez I, thinking that a citation was the same as been cited for bravery and not a summons!



MEMOIRS OF AN AERODROME FIREMAN-EPISODE TWO

During august 1959 I was posted to 5 PDU Innsworth to be kitted out ready for a Gibraltar posting. Following about 2 weeks of doing nothing interspaced with collecting overseas kit and getting the necessary injections we were told that we would be going out to Gibraltar by the troopship HMT Devonshire, we were due to sail the following week so it was back to doing nothing. During the week we discovered that the launch of the new mini car was due so on the launch day we went down to a local garage and joined the throng looking at the latest motoring sensation.

A few days later we were paraded with all our kit (two kitbags and a small pack) and told to board a troop train which was to take us to Southampton docks. After boarding the train we set off on a very long slow journey to the docks, at midday the train pulled into a siding somewhere and we were given a packed lunch and tea then it was back onto the train and on with the journey.

We arrived late evening and the train pulled directly into a long dockside hangar; as soon as it stopped we were offloaded picked up our kitbags and small pack and were marched down the dockside to the ships gangway. Following loads of shouting and noise from a variety of military people we climbed the gangway onto the ship and at the top we handed over our kitbags for storage and retained our small packs for use on the voyage. We were then allocated bunks and a mess area



Aircraft Visitor

for the voyage and at the same time were nominated for fatigue duties, I was one of a very few who did not get allocated for fatigues so had an easy voyage.

The ship sailed during the night and first thing next morning we were all paraded on our little deck area and told that we were to have an FFI inspection, along came some medical people and as they passed everyone you had to drop your trousers and pants so that they could examine you, what they were looking for god only knows. The journey was uneventful with activities to kill the time and about 4 days later we arrived in Gibraltar harbour; offloading the troops there was more complicated

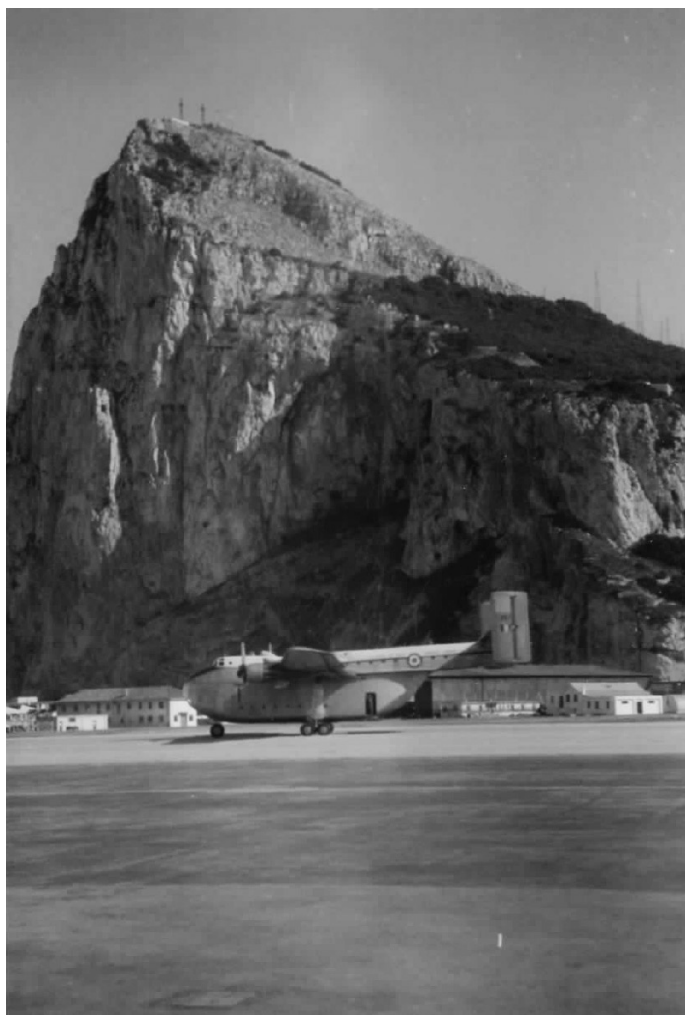
as you had to climb down the gangway at sea and jump onto a big floating platform with all your kit, the platform was towed to the quay and we were offloaded onto the dockside. Lots more shouting and issuing of orders and people were dispersed until only 4 or 5 of us were left, eventually we were told that we would be temporarily billeted at RAF New Camp which was essentially where we had landed. About 4 days later we were moved to RAF North Front where I was to spend the next 3 years living in room 14.

Following the normal arrival procedure I then reported to the fire section for duty and was put straight onto a crash crew based under the ATC building., the crew chief at that time was Cpl Bob Webster. My tour in Gibraltar was a happy one and I witnessed many experimental changes that became the norm on many airfields. Who can forget the early RHAG system where huge anchor chains were laid along each side of the runway with wire hawsers stretched across the runway supported by cut-off parts of car tyres. The first RN aircraft that did the trial landing and engaged the system disappeared down the runway dragging the hawser and all the huge anchor chains with it in a huge cloud of dust and noise but stopped safely, afterwards the chains were towed back into place by the refueller section and set up for re-use.

During my tour we were issued with a .303 rifle line throwing, which was carried on the MK6, and we had to learn how to load and fire it correctly. Additionally, about



Crash Standby 1959 Cpl Bob Webster Crew Chief. Note: Forerunner of RHAG anchor chains at side of runway:



Replacement Crash 1 c1960

mid-tour the section was equipped with an inshore Zodiac rescue boat powered by a big petrol outboard engine, the engine had to be run regularly in a cut-down 50 gallon drum full of water which meant you got very wet if you were the one nominated to test run it. We also used to practice boat launches of Eastern beach which was hilarious as often about 6 of us would steady the boat in the waves whilst one of the crew tried to start the engine which could be difficult at times, if the sea was a bit rough and the engine refused to start right away boat plus crew regularly found themselves back on the sand and the pantomime started again. We also, in the early days, used to take the boat down to New Camp to practice picking up casualties that were in the water, you had to circle round the casualty (a 5 gallon drum) and learn how to get alongside to correctly rescue the casualty, eventually we learned how to do it without drowning the unfortunate 5 gallon drum. Incidents did happen and on one occasion we were moving quite fast across the harbour when the centre support strut jackknifed and the

boat shrunk from full size to less than half size with amusing results, everyone survived and we were eventually fully qualified to launch and operate the Zodiac.

About mid-tour the runway was resurfaced by a firm from Scotland who were based in a wooden hut complex on a flat piece of ground under rock gun, the team operated from the ATC next to the fire section and a lot of fireman had fun driving road rollers and other bits of runway repair equipment along the side of the fire section.

In my 3 years we had no serious incidents, the biggest fire I attended was on one night shift there was a major fire in Devils Tower road and the night crew were sent to assist the local Fire Brigade where a garage and tyre store had gone up in flames but luckily no one was injured. During my tour we had numerous standbys but nothing serious occurred. Gib was an interesting place to be especially as we used to get a vast range of different types of aircraft ranging from WW11 through UK and US military aircraft to an increasing number of the then modern civil aircraft plus of course



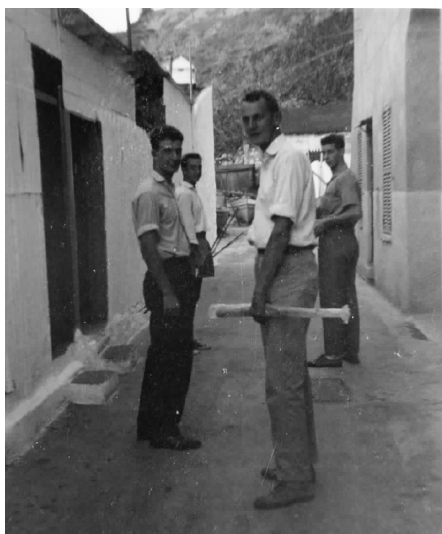
Gone fishing Catalan Bay 1959



Some of the firemen during 1960 -1962. The chap in the dark glasses at the back was not a fireman

the resident sqn which at that time was 224 sqn flying Shackletons. For aircraft aficionados examples were Neptunes, Albatrosses, Lincolns, Scimitars, Vixens, early Gannets etc.

In those days the Fire section had duties which often meant driving through the rock tunnels in a 4 ton truck to the other side of the rock which could be quite hairy as the clearance for the truck with the cover on was marginal , at that time the other side of the rock was open to military only ; to get up to rock gun then you reversed up the last part of the road .When I first arrived in Gib all the shower and washing facilities were salt water, each area had a small sink with one small fresh water tap so one of the first things that you did was get a large tin can which you filled up with fresh water to tip over your head after your salt water shower, for those who remember it was very difficult to get a lather with salt water soap. During my tour they changed the salt water for fresh water, definitely a day to remember. In the early part of the tour if there was no flying in the afternoon



ATC used to let us go down to the radar site on the side of the runway for a swim, if an aircraft called up we quickly returned to the crash bays. Because the main road crossed the main runway we were forever rounding up pedestrians who were ambling across the runway when the barriers went down.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Gibraltar and was lucky enough to take holidays in Spain, Morocco, Portugal, France, the Balearics and of course the UK. The main downsides to my tour was that I was injured in a trailer pump drill which went badly wrong leading to me spending two weeks in BMH followed by a further week

in the station sick bay before returning to duty. Additionally I broke an ankle twice during my tour, sport does not pay!!!.

As my tour ended I was advised that I was going to be posted to RAF Stradishal in Suffolk, a station that I had never heard of. Returning from Gibraltar was by air trooping as the era of troopships was largely over so roughly two hours after boarding a Britannia I was in England and starting my tour-ex leave prior to going to my new posting.

MY MAN CAVE PHOTO



My man cave pic is of these three plaques that I brought back with me from Salalah in 1977, after what was probably my most enjoyable posting as a “singly”.

The one on the left is the Station Plaque made to mark the end of the RAF presence in Dhofar. The first RAF air strip at Salalah was constructed in 1928 when the biplanes of the time had to refuel every 100 miles or so. As well as being a staging post, it was used to support many conflicts, the last of which was still ongoing in March 1976 when I was drafted out there. At that time, it was known as RAF Det Salalah as although the airfield was run by the RAF, it was essentially a Sultan of Oman’s Air Force (SOAF) operating base. The main aircraft based there were Strkemasters, Skyvans, Defenders, and various helicopters, all used to support the soldiers fighting in the Jebel (hills), overlooking the plain where Salalah was situated. During the final few months when the war had been won, it was

interesting to see the transition from active military base towards becoming an international airport. A new runway was built, and barbed wire started to come down giving the place an altogether more relaxed atmosphere. If you look at it on google earth today it looks totally different again.

The plaque in the middle of the photo was produced by 27 Parachute Field Ambulance (PFA) who manned the Field Surgical Team (FST) from March to July 1976 and presented to the Wobbly Wheel. I was the last Head Barman of the Wobbly Wheel, a secondary duty that was both challenging and rewarding, and a job that finished with great satisfaction at the end of my tour. The FST was very much like a MASH unit as seen on TV, and the sense of humour amongst the staff was very similar too. Anyone falling asleep in the Wobbly was likely to wake up with one or more limbs set in plaster of paris! We worked pretty closely with the medics there, and they were all great characters, especially the 27 PFA lads.

The plaque on the right was made to commemorate the RAF Fire Service presence on the Base. We were known locally as the Red Trucking Company (RTC) owing to the fact that while every other vehicle there was painted in desert camouflage, ours maintained their bright red Fire Service livery, with white roofs to reflect the sun. We had two crews of nine, which consisted of a Cpl IC, six SACs and two locally employed Police/Firemen manning a TACR 1, Two Mk 7s, a Mk 8, and a DP 3. We also had a Gemini inshore rescue craft which was handy for going snorkelling on our days off. Despite being a long way from home, morale was generally good and a few of us volunteered to stay beyond our nine month tourex date to see the end of the detachment.

All in all it was a great tour, and looking at those plaques brings back many happy memories.

*Dave Kirk
Member No 414*

MUSEUM NEWS

I had hoped to have some more positive news about developments with the museum at Scampton. Sadly, the indecision surrounding the future use of the site continues to rumble on. Whilst we remain positive it has become increasingly frustrating that we are unable to plan for a certain future. Court cases are pending, and it is hoped that the government will change its plans to use Scampton as an asylum centre. If that happens then the £300 million pound investment should be secure, and we will see things move forward rapidly, I'm sure. The consortium (Scampton Holdings) is also working on a plan to work in partnership with the government as the Home Office have already declared but they will not be using any of the original wartime buildings on site and that includes the four hangers. We hope to be able to get the collection back together and under one roof before winter of this year. This will enable us to consolidate what we have, restore items to show condition and begin planning the layout for our new home which will be a purpose-built building at some stage in the future. We may be able to open a temporary display in the hangar whilst we wait for things to move forward. Clearly this will

not be a quick fix. Once the collection is secure on site that must bode well for the future. Museum volunteers have continued to meet on a weekly basis, and we have achieved quite a lot since my last report.

We began by taking the TACR 1 to the former site of RAF Newton for the unveiling of a memorial. The TACR had previously been based at Newton. Pictured are Steve Shirley, Simon Wilson together with the Memorial creator Tom Nicholls and the man responsible for the project, aviation artist Tim O'Brien. Ex RAF Fiefighters Michael Blackman and Colin Murphy were also present.

The Mk9 attended a motoring get together at the former RAF Station, Sturgate. A high-speed run down the runway followed by a demonstration of producing on the move soon had all the petrol heads enthralled!

The rules regarding keeping a fire engine on the road have changed quite significantly if you are not classed as a Fire and Rescue service and your vehicle doesn't meet the threshold for being declared vintage. This means that we now have to MOT the more modern vehicles in the collection. The first to go through that process was the RIV.

The RIV is owned by museum volunteer, Stephen Farley and is on permanent loan to the Museum. Fortunately the vehicle hadn't been out of service for too long so mechanically it was sound. We did have a problem with the alternator but that was simply a case of two broken drive belts which were easily replaced. Some minor repairs were needed to a bent step but nothing that a little panel beating couldn't cure. Probably the hardest part was preparing the paperwork required by the DVLA to put the vehicle through the test. Unfortunately, the vehicle failed its test since the tyres on the front driven axle were over 10 years old. This was easily solved by swapping the tyres from the back to the front as the tyres on the rear axle were only nine years old. The vehicle passed its test on the second occasion. We do, however, realise that for it to pass its test next year we will have to buy two new front tyres. The sobering thought at this stage is the fact that a new tyre cost £1500. Clearly, we will have to consider all this in our financial plans in the future. Now that the RIV is MOT'd, we have taken it on the road to two shows already this year. It accompanied the WOT1, Royal Navy TACR2a, Mk9 and our mobile display unit



to the Lincolnshire County show and the Scunthorpe Armed Forces Day event. Our display received a great deal of interest at both events, and we did a lot to promote the Museum and its current plight. It is very important to keep the Museum in the public eye otherwise people will think we no longer exist. The TACR 2a, belongs to ex RN Aircraft Handler Stephen Robertson and is on permanent loan to the Museum. It has received mechanical attention, some cosmetic bodywork and partial repaint together with a new set of Royal Naval Air Command markings. Although we call ourselves the Museum of RAF Firefighting, we do represent all aspects of military firefighting. We also cannot tell the story of military firefighting without telling the story of firefighting in general. The future plans for the Museum are very exciting indeed.

We continue to receive artefacts into the collection, and these range from library material to uniforms and equipment. Obviously, our current situation means that we don't want to overstretch ourselves but all the time we have space we won't turn anything away. Sadly, our efforts to obtain

an MFV 2 direct from the MOD have failed and the last surviving example in service has now been sent to Ukraine. Clearly this was a blow to all the volunteers especially as we've been working on this project for over six months now. We understand the politics involved however and I would like to thank the chief fire officer Defence Fire Rescue, Sim Nex, Peter Brayford and Bob Hyde for their efforts in trying to release the vehicle into preservation. Hopefully we will obtain an MFV 2 in the future and let's hope it will not require too much restoration before it can be put on display. Currently there are no MFV's in preservation. That is quite a sobering thought!

I would also like to thank all those who continue to contribute to the Museum funds via the Standing Order Supporters scheme. Without your support, we simply couldn't survive. Could I please ask all of you to consider setting up a regular donation to the Museum via this scheme please. It really is very simple. You pay as much as you can afford into the Museum bank account on a regular basis. We are currently using this money to pay for

secure storage rental, CCTV and internet connection, phone line, insurance, and any other day to day expenses. What's left can then be used to continue with our various restoration projects and to build on the Museums infrastructure.

If you require any more information, please don't hesitate to give me a call and we can talk it over.

The name of the account is Museum of RAF Firefighting. Account number 53037545, Sort Code 60-13-15.

We are a registered charity 1172939

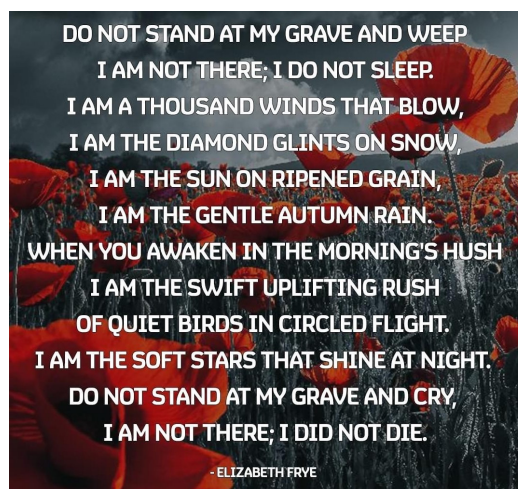
We hope to hold special events in the future for anyone who is a supporter once we get back up and running.

Thank you all for your continued support, we all know how proud we were to serve, lets make sure we can continue to promote the work of firefighters who work with our armed forces both past and present to ensure that our service is never forgotten.

ONCE AGAIN, ITS TIME TO SAY GOODBYE TO SOME OF OUR BROTHERS.



Dave Edgerton, member 187
John Bingham, member 728, passed 27th February.
John Dooling member 152, passed 7th February.
Howard (Jim) Vidler, passed 4th May.
Roger Brooks, member 16 passed 16th May.
Mick Richardson, member 988 passed 14th May.
Grant Fulton passed 14th May.
Tim Gates, member 1123 passed 28th May.
Martin John, member 1116
Brian Shields, member 1083 passed may.



Ellis (Tug) Wilson, April 2023.
Bobby Halliday passed 17th June.
Brian Ford, member 59 passed 17th June.
William J. Roberts, member 470 passed 15th May.
Lennie Daniels
Steve (Corky) Corkin
John Brady
Brett James
Bob Plumb

LIFE AFTER THE FALKLANDS

Introduction

You may remember my story 'Life of a Hanger Rat' where I described my experiences on H.M.S. Hermes during the Falklands' War? In which case, that story ended with a very brief summary of several tours of duty after the Falklands. Now, I will provide more detail of some of those tours of duty.

Fire Duties RNAS Culdrose

After having some leave, I was drafted to Fire Station RNAS Culdrose in September 1982. After doing a week's training I joined White Watch with a seven-man crew. My mentor was Leading Airman Mick Viles who was an interesting fellow, as he wore aircrew gloves whilst on duty. It was strange working shifts.

Our duty at Culdrose was 24 hours on, working 7am till 7am, then 24 hours off. The day after that was always 12 hours at Predannack Satellite Airfield, if it was open for training. If no flying, then we worked days in Culdrose Fire Station. After the Predannack shift, we did another day's training, manning 'Rescue 2' and 'Crash 2'. Then the whole cycle started again.

Weekend duties were different! We started from 7am Friday until 7am Monday. When Culdrose was closed to flying, a domestic crew was a four-man fire crew, which consisted of a Telephone Watchkeeper, two Naval Airman and a Leading Airman. Nightlife was good at the fire station, we had one television, one video recorder and one pool table, but our private vehicles were immaculate as we used the facilities to keep them clean and fill our time in.

At Culdrose we had a good working relationship with the 705 Naval Air Squadron, which was the Gazelle Training Helicopter Squadron (known to us as the Navy Shark Display Team). They would go to school fayres and I would volunteer, with a colleague, to go along with them, with the Navy TACR1 fire truck to provide fire cover and crash rescue duties, so the display helicopters could land.

Early February 1983 I was sent on a training course to be a flight deck tractor driver and a forklift truck driver. After the training course I returned to the fire station.

One notable event was an incident I involving a Cessna 337 crash landing at Culdrose. It would be a day I won't ever forget. I was working 'days' at the time



Predannack Airfield Control Tower

when a call came into the Fire Station. An inbound aircraft was coming in with undercarriage failure. A Cessna 337, code number G-BCBZ, with 7 persons on board including 2 young children and a 5 month old baby was diverted from St Just airport to Culdrose Naval Air Station. A foam runway was laid by the School of Aircraft Handlers fire section using Dennis Mk.9 crash trucks. Rescue 1 TACR was dispatched to 771 Search and Rescue Helicopter Squadron to man a Wessex helicopter with an underslung 90 litre foam extinguisher, to follow the aircraft in. Rescue 1 returned to the fire station because the Leading Fireman and Naval Airman flew in the Wessex. Therefore Rescue 1 needed to be remanned. It was my turn, with another Leading Fireman to attend the rendezvous point. We waited and waited. I could see the aircraft circling around the airfield to burn off its remaining fuel. The pilot completed a perfect landing on its undercarriage doors. I assisted in evacuating the aircraft by carrying away two children, one under each arm. Job done safely!

A barrel of beer

was put on at the NAAFI Club a couple of weeks later from the people who were rescued from the aircraft.

A New Department

A few months later I was moved to a new department at Culdrose called the Naval Air Support unit, based at Whisky Site. My role was to launch, recover and dispatch new helicopters to squadrons in the Royal Navy. The helicopters had been upgraded with new technology. I also had the job of looking after visiting aircraft to Culdrose. One day I had to borrow a flight deck tractor from the School of Aircraft Handling. I had to remove a Commando Sea King Mk4, transported from Cyprus during the Beirut Evacuation, from inside a Short Belfast transport aircraft. This was



Crash on the Airfield

an ex Royal Air Force aircraft which was now owned by a company called Heavy Lift.

I also had the job of looking after our two resident Gannet aircraft to present them for the air days. One aircraft was AEW model and the other was a training aircraft which ended up flying in the USA (Aircraft No. XT752). After several months of being there I was sent back to the School of Aircraft Handling to do my HGV driving training. After a six weeks intensive course, including a blue light course, I passed my driving training and returned to the fire station to do fire station duties. Here I met some old colleagues who I served with on HMS Hermes. While on the fire station we received our new rescue vehicle a Range Rover TACR 2. What a different vehicle this was from a TACR 1, as this carried 200 gallons of foam compared to the 100 gallons of the previous version.

I was on duty fire crew one day at Predannack Airfield when a trainee helicopter pilot did a running landing with a Sea King helicopter with his brakes on. This resulted in the helicopter's stub axle breaking on the starboard undercarriage leg, and the aircraft losing a starboard wheel. To stop the aircraft falling over we used an EPCO 8 tonne hydraulic ram, under its jacking point, to support it. We told the trainee pilot it was his lucky day because the EPCO equipment was being taken offline that night. The reason was that the new TACR 2 Range Rovers were going online the following day and they no longer needed to carry this equipment. Nevertheless, the EPCO remained on the floor of the fire station for future emergency use.

We did have some fun times on the fire section! One day we had a farmer, who had a pig farm on the airfield, looking all over the airfield for one of pigs! We had made a prank call to him stating he may be missing one of his pigs as we had just witnessed a pig wander past the fire station. We called other sections of the airfield to also call the pig farmer to state they had also seen the same pig. He subsequently spent many hours of his day looking for a pig which wasn't really missing in the first place! Another prank we played was to listen to the fuel bowser drivers' 2 way radio, which was on channel 3. We would send them to different squadron dispersal areas to refuel aircraft. But when they

got there, there was no aircraft to refuel! We then would call them up saying RTB (return to base) and then we would start the process all over again! We received phone calls from the fuel bowser section questioning the events, and we blamed the Fire Fighting School, as they used the same radio channel as the bowser drivers.

I remember one Monday morning well. We received our normal 6am phone call, on the red phone, from the telephone exchange, to wake us up ready for the shift changeover. I said 'thank you love' and put the phone down as normal. However, the phone rang again and she informed me there was an actual fire and this wasn't the usual wakeup call we were expecting! A dustbin wagon's waste had caught fire and he ejected the load onto the parade ground causing panic and a lot of mess! We then spent most of that day (our day off!) cleaning up his mess, as we couldn't leave it on the parade ground.

Sent up North

I was called into the Fire Chief's office one Thursday afternoon. I was due a frontline service draft (a change of duty, from second line, to front line service) and I was asked if I wanted to join 819 Naval Air Squadron, based as Prestwick in Scotland. I said 'yes' and joined them on the following Monday.

819 Squadron had several purposes:-

- defend the UK's North West Approaches from the Cold War Eastern Bloc submarines.
- defend Faslane Nuclear Submarine Base.
- provide detachments of helicopters to RFA (Royal Fleet Auxiliary) Fort Austin (a stores' supply ship).
- provide search and rescue duties to the North West of England and Scotland.

819 Squadron also provided helicopter services for covert operations by the Special Boat Service forces. But this service was always kept under wraps.

I did several tours of duty on RFA Fort Austin. On one of these tours, in the North West Approaches, an Exocet missile was ripped off a ship and was floating around in the sea! RFA Fort Austin was ordered to recover this missile and therefore all non-essential personnel were flown off the ship by Sea King helicopter. I was deemed as non-essential and had to board

the helicopter, to land at RAF Macrihanish. The whole journey was done in the dark and was not a pleasant experience, because the weather was bad and we couldn't see anything.

I was given a new job on the Squadron after they found out I had a HGV licence. One of my new duties was to refuel the search and rescue helicopter using the fuel bowzers. This duty was normally done by civilian drivers. They were not happy with me carrying out this duty because they lost a call out fee to refuel whilst on nights and also at weekends. It made life uncomfortable, but 'orders are orders' and I just got on with the job.

I also did an attachment, as an HGV driver, to covert operations. One day I had to drive from Prestwick to Norwich (RAF Coltishall) with spare parts for Sea Kings for use in covert operations. Whilst at Norwich I was informed by my Superior that I was to be a Flight Deck Officer on HMS Leeds Castle. I was then flown by Sea King onto HMS Leeds Castle in the North Sea and winched down onto the flightdeck. I was there for two weeks as Flight Deck Marshaller and then informed by the ship's Captain that I had to return to Norwich. I was being winched back up to the helicopter when I realised I wasn't gaining height! To the whole ship's crews' amusement, the aircrew played their practical joke on me and lowered me into the sea to give the impression that I was walking on water! They all had a good laugh and waved me off!

Back down South

After 18 months at Prestwick I was drafted to the Fire Station at Royal Naval Air Station Portland in Dorset. I had a training course which lasted a week and I joined the fire crew. The fire station was a busy place doing different duties, not like Culdrose. It was a military heliport and had no fixed aircraft based there. The only aircraft which could land were vertical take-off Harrier aircraft and helicopters, as Portland only had a short runway. (Although there was a rumour that a WWII Swordfish aircraft landed and later a Canberra aircraft did a 'touch and go' landing on the short runway). Whilst on the fire station I was up Portland Bill doing a fire extinguisher check with a Dennis Mk.9 fire truck, with a three man crew, when a call came through from the Control Tower to the Fire Station telling them that a Sea King helicopter had declared a 'pan call' (an emergency call).



RFA Sir Bedivere

The Sea King requested an emergency landing at Portland Bill landing site, which was a football pitch at the time. We took the call as we were already at the landing site and we deployed the Mk.9! When the aircraft landed the pilot was astonished at how fast we had got there! We told him it was his lucky day, as we were already on site doing the extinguisher checks. Fortunately we weren't required to do any firefighting duties, as the helicopter landed safely. We had to wait several hours with the aircraft until it departed after being checked over by the engineers from Yeovil. We found out that a magnetic chip detector warning had flagged in the cockpit.

One Monday morning we got a call at 4am to say there was a ship on fire in the Portland dockyard. It was a Round Table Class landing ship called the 'Sir Bedivere' (L 3004). We deployed the Mk 9 and when we arrived at the scene we could see smoke billowing out from the ship. Myself and the Junior Naval Airman were dispatched to fight the fire which was located in a compartment adjacent to the tank deck. We discovered that rubber dinghies had been set on fire deliberately, by persons unknown, to stop the ship from sailing! Their efforts were in vain because we put the fire out quickly and the ship set sail at 8am that morning.

While working day shift one Friday afternoon, at 4pm, a call came through that INS (Indian Navy Ship) Viraat (Ex HMS Hermes) was on fire. Smoke was coming from a compartment below deck. The fire crew, including myself, were dispatched to the ship. Myself and another Naval Airman

entered the ship to locate the source of the fire; only to find it wasn't a fire, but it was a broken steam pipe! We had to send a 'stop message' on the 2-way radio to stop all other colleagues from entering the ship as they were not required. This brought back stark memories of HMS Sheffield on fire that I'd seen through a porthole when I served as part of the hanger party on HMS Hermes during the Falkland's conflict.

At Portland I drove a TACR2 (vehicle reg. 93RN22) whilst on crash duties on the heliport. One day a call came through about the newly received Scammell/Carmichael Mk.10C (call sign 'Crash 2') which would eventually replace the Dennis Mk.9 and driven by a Domestic Training Crew. The call was that 'Crash 2' was dealing with a RTA. Shortly afterwards, the call was revised to say that 'Crash 2' WAS the RTA! On attending the incident, with TACR 2, we found 'Crash 2' on its side on the Portland Causeway and in a ditch. It had swerved to avoid an oncoming vehicle on the wrong side of the road and gone through a Tank Farm perimeter fence! Not good for a brand new truck, which hadn't even started its service! Fortunately there were no casualties, but a huge sign supported by scaffolding and advertising ship 'open days' was demolished and scaffold poles had



INS Viraat

penetrated the cab. The Mk10C had lasted one week, but I don't know what happened to it afterwards. Although a new Mk10 was received as a replacement and provided a sterling service for many years!

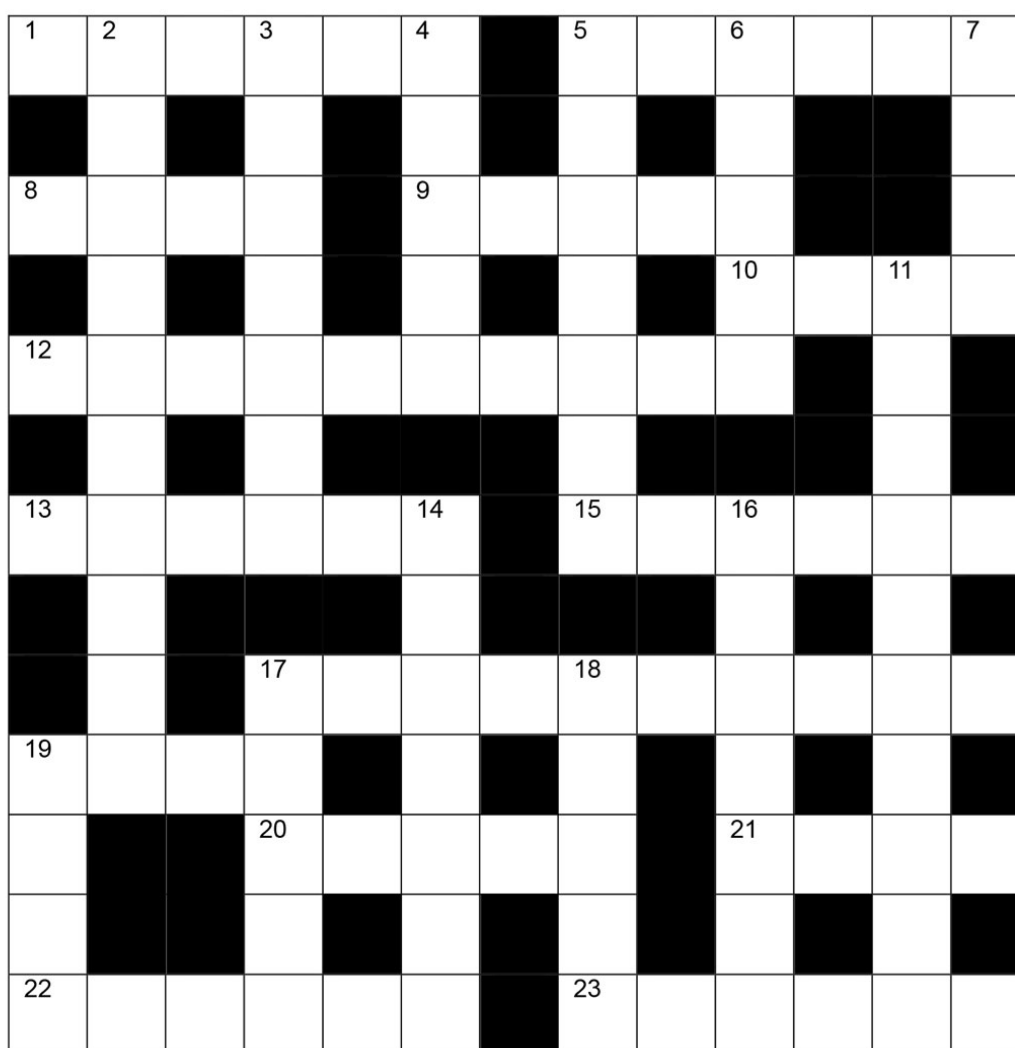
TACR2 (93RN22) has been purchased recently by myself and is now on permanent loan to the RAF Museum of Firefighting in Lincolnshire. I am currently the only ex Royal Naval airman to own an ex Royal Navy TACR2 fire truck. Added value is that I operated the vehicle whilst in service! .

By Stephen Robertson ex Naval Airman



TACR 2 93RN22

FLASHPOINT CROSSWORD No17 BY FIREFLY



Across

1. Sore appliance? (6)
5. Fool he will dress (6)
- 8 & 9. NCO aflame, orders weapon bay penetrator. (4, 5)
10. Southern fire remains worn around waist. (4)
12. Flower and flint worn by Campbell's cowboy? (10)
13. Shelves after junction found on tanks. (6)
15. Sapper's hint to save life. (6)
17. Goose Bay location. (4,6)
19. Mark left by cars perhaps. (4)
20. Endlessly extol or lift. (5)
- 21 & 22. SAPPHO perhaps? (4,6)
22. See 21
23. Goad PA making eastern tower. (6)

Down

2. Unruly chrome exit, describing release of heat. (10)
3. Do mince badly in devilish fashion? (7)
4. Royce's partner rotates. (4)
5. Trick spell of duty to find line on map. (7)
6. Fat old bees? (5)
7. Strange ache for everyone. (4)
11. After reorganisation, should deer have readied rifles for marching? (10)
14. Elite troops strangely rise to become cockier. (7)
16. Pull one up and tell us a story? (7)
17. Don't start to dread mistake. (5)
18. Sycophant making scrambled crepe. (5)
19. Payments coming back in crew's business. (4)

MEMOIRS OF AN AERODROME FIREMAN-EPIISODE THREE

During September 1962 I made my way by train to Haverhill railway station arriving at about 10pm on a thoroughly miserable rainy and foggy night. The station platform was poorly lit and very dark and looking outside all I could see was a flickering gas lamp. I asked the ticket collector where was RAF Stradishall and how could I get there, his reply was walk as there is no transport at this time of night. Luckily for me two others had got off the train and must have overheard my question to the ticket man as they asked if I was going to Stradishall, I said yes and they said that's where they were going and they had a taxi ordered and I was welcome to share it with them. They were going to the married quarters and when we arrived they asked the taxi driver to drop me off at the guardroom which was down a little side road off the main road. Arriving about 11pm the guardroom cpl let me in and gave me a bed for the night.

Next morning after breakfast and a visit to SHQ I made my way to the fire section and reported in and following all the usual admin stuff was allocated to one of the two crash crews. We normally worked a shift pattern of afternoon followed by a morning then a night shift five days a week. Night shifts were flexible as most night flying required darkness so in the winter night flying usually finished about 10pm but in summer we used to be on shift at 5pm to cover the end of day flying and were then stood down and given a time to be back for the start of night flying which usually commenced as it got dark and finished about 3am, after putting the wagons into the MT yard it was off to bed to get some sleep before the start of the morning shift. RAF Stradishall was an old WW2 station and in my time was an air navigation training unit flying Varsitys, Valletas and Meteors. There were no crash bays so the fire vehicles stood at the rear of the old ATC building which was fine in summer but freezing cold in winter. As it turned out the winter of 1962/63 was very bad and we were snowed in for several days, no flying was possible and livers-out could not get in which was good for them as the livers-in ended up clearing snow from the dispersals and the taxiways.

Life for me was progressing slowly and quietly until one evening during Feb 1963, I had just returned to the billet after tea and was relaxing when an admin sgt walked in and asked for one of our firemen by name, he was not best pleased when told that the



Crash Crew RAF DET Dalcross February 1964

person in question had already gone out. He then asked me what my name was and said your name is on this list (which turned out to be an emergency draft list) and you will do, get your kit together and be ready to move in an hour as you are going on detachment.

That night I arrived at 5 PDU and joined over a hundred others who had been sent from a variety of units, next morning we were rapidly kitted out with tropical kit and found out that we would be on our way to Singapore that night. We arrived at Heathrow and found our flight was delayed until the next morning so were crammed into hotels in London for the night then flew out the next day stopping once in the Middle East and a second time in Gan before finally arriving at Paya Lebar airport in Singapore where we were offloaded and trucked to RAF Tengah. The next day we were put into barrack blocks down near the Malcolm club and the station swimming pool. We were double bunked one above the other and each eventually got a small locker to store stuff.

Once we got settled in life quickly became boring, we had to be available once in the

morning and once in the afternoon for a roll call and at that time people were told where they would be going so very slowly the numbers in the billets began to drop. After about a month my name was called and I was told to report to the Tengah fire section that afternoon which I duly did. The WO said you are a MK6 driver and you start here tomorrow morning, your first job is to take the MK6 to MT and assist the MT in changing all the tyres and carrying out a service which turned out to be a dirty sweaty 2 day job. After that I spent the next month or so on days servicing fire extinguishers at Tengah and Jorong until I was again called to the office and told that they need a MK6 driver on one shift. That afternoon I drew jungle greens and joined the night duty shift to be one of two MK6 drivers, during my time on the shift we alternated driving duties so when I was not on the Mk6 I usually rode on crash one. I enjoyed my time on shift as the crew made me very welcome and included me in their off-duty activities even though they knew my stay would only be until a replacement fireman arrived. Tengah was a very busy airfield operating British, Australian, New Zealand and American Forces and we



Fire Section RAF DET Dalcross February 1964

always seemed to be on standby for some emergency although luckily in my time we had no serious incidents outside of a

Canberra running off the runway and a Javelin catching fire on a wet start both incidents were quickly dealt with without casualties.

During my time on the crash crew the Tengah firemen made me very welcome and during off-duty times they took me all round Singapore visiting places such as the Krangi, Chinatown, Little India, Haw Par Villa, Johore Bahru and the waterfalls at Kota Tingii to name but a few.

About 2 months later I was told that I was no longer needed and that I should report back to the detachment chief, it was back to attending roll calls and basically doing nothing all day. By now we were down to about 20 people and over 5 months into the detachment and we found out we were all single as all the married people had gone. One Wednesday evening our roll call sgt asked us if anyone was interested in a parachute jumping course at RAF Changi as there were places available which could be allocated to us, a couple of us expressed an interest and were told that it would be

fixed for us to go. Unfortunately it was not to be as a couple of days later we were told to get ready as we were leaving that evening to go back to the UK. I arrived back at Stradishall one day short of a 6 month detachment and found out the next day I was back on the emergency draft list.

Life quickly got back to normal and was quiet up until Battle of Britain where I volunteered to go to Biggin Hill for the 1963 annual event which passed with no problems. During the early part of 1964 I volunteered to go on detachment with 38Group and was one of a large number of different trade groups who arrived at RAF Kinloss where we were divided into two detachment groups with one lot going to RAF detachment Dalcross and the other to RAF detachment Milltown. I ended

up on the Dalcross detachment and we duly took a number of fire tenders to Dalcross which was a tented camp operating Hastings, Beverley and Argosy aircraft. Believe me at that time of year living in a tented camp in northern Scotland with no hot water and thin tents was not a happy experience, sometimes when off-duty we would scrounge a ride into Inverness where in the railway station you could have a hot water wash and shave for a small price.

The detachment ended after two weeks and 4 of us were nominated to take a DP and a MK5 from Dalcross to RAF Macrihanish which was re-opening as an RAF base. We left Dalcross early in the morning as we were told it was an all day drive to get to Macrihanish, all went well until early evening when the truck I was in broke down going up a hill and refused to restart. We decided that the other truck would go on to Macrihanish and get them to send assistance, bear in mind at this time there was no such thing as mobile phones plus we had not seen another vehicle most of the day.

We sat and waited for several hours and daylight turned to darkness then eventually we saw approaching headlights and an RAF minivan arrived with an LAC mechanic who told us that he was straight out of training and had never worked on a fire tender but that he would do his best to try and get us going. Very soon the carburettor was lying in pieces in the vehicle cab and after a good cleaning it was refitted but still the engine refused to start. He said he would give it another strip and clean and if it did not work then he would arrange for us to be towed into the camp, things looked bleak but lady luck smiled on us and when he said try to start



Emergency Draft hard at work in Singapore 1963



Start of night shift RAF Tengah 1963

it the engine started and continued to run. We cautiously commenced our journey and a couple of hours later arrived at the camp where although it was approaching midnight a hot meal was ready in the combined mess facility. We remained at Macrihanish for a couple of days then were given instructions for our next destination. I was to go to RAF Ouston to boost the fire section crash crew to enable it to handle



Start of night shift RAF Tengah 1963

large aircraft carrying paratroops. The journey from Macrihanish to Glasgow was a day trip by bus with about an hours stop midway to allow you a toilet break and to get some food. We arrived in Glasgow early evening where we said our goodbyes and went our separate ways. My journey was by train to Newcastle where I arrived about 10pm and found that I could not get to Ouston that night so I spent the night in

the railway station surrounded by down and outs. The next morning I made my way to the bus station and got a bus going near RAF Ouston, The bus driver told me he would stop at the bus stop near the camp and would call me which he duly did. I got off the bus and walked about a mile up to the camp where I was booked and sent to the fire section, they fixed me up with a bed and told me that I was on the crash crew



Crash Crew line up RAF Tengah 1963



Visitors at RAF Tengah 1963

the next morning.

About a week later the exercise ended and I was given travel warrants and told to return to my parent unit which meant a bus trip to Newcastle followed by the rail journey back to Haverhill and Stradishal. On my return it was back onto a watch and life settled down to the established shift pattern at the base. During late 1964 I did my last detachment from Stradishal which was once again to Biggin Hill for Bof B, the day passed quietly with the usual flying display in good weather but as the visiting aircraft departed after the programme finished we had our first and only incident. A Sea Vixen lined up and started its take off run on the wrong runway, when the pilot realised his mistake he tried to stop and turn onto the taxiway at the end of the runway but did not quite make and ploughed into the ground alongside the taxiway. We could see what was happening and were on the move before the crash alarm sounded, luckily for the pilot the aircraft did not catch fire and the pilot was safe and out of the aircraft by the time we arrived. It was then a case of checking to make sure everything was ok and that there was no lurking fire and afterwards leaving vehicles to cover the defuelling operation.

When I was at Stradishal some of the single

lads used to drive for MT at weekends and doing that during my time there I went as far as Birmingham delivering/ collecting people and goods as required plus visited a whole host of stations most who no longer exist; examples were Duxford, Honnington, Oakington, Debden and the

missile site in Thetford Chase whose name I have forgotten.

During Feb 1965 I was informed that I was being posted to RAF Labuan during Aug/ Sep and late Aug my tour at Stradishal ended.



Javelin aircraft RAF Tengah 1963



Battle of Britain Crash Crews RAF Biggin Hill 1964



Sea Vixen accident RAF Biggin Hill Battle of Britain 1964



Sea Vixen accident RAF Biggin Hill Battle of Britain 1964



Sea Vixen accident RAF Biggin Hill Battle of Britain 1964

From the Man Cave

Whilst talking to various firefighters on Zoom I noticed that nearly all of them had some sort of fire memorabilia in the background. That got me thinking about a new feature, From the Man Cave. I have asked each of the committee members to get the ball rolling by sending in a picture with a brief explanation. Here I have American Firefighter Bunnykins by Royal Doulton. He was produced in 2002 as a limited edition specifically to raise funds for the 9/11 disaster relief fund. Mine is number 1588.

Please support this new feature and send your pictures into Reg with a brief explanation of what it is.



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A WARM WELCOME TO NEW AND RETURNING MEMBERS

Its pleasing to see new members joining and re- joining we would like to see you at future reunions and please contribute to the Flashpoint as this is your magazine. Thank you.

1187 Alexander Petrovic

1187 Colin Wearn

1188 Gary D Smith

1189 Ross AB Thomson

1190 Ant Walbank

1191 Melville Wardlaw

ATTENTION TO ALL PRESENT MEMBERS

Brian Jones the Membership Secretary has asked if you could forward to him any change in contact details i.e., Change of address, phone numbers and email. This will ensure the prompt distribution of Flashpoint and maintain his records. Thank you.



Lincolnshire Show and Scunthorpe Armed Forces Day

