

# 103<sup>rd</sup> Entry Association



## Newsletter

No. 21  
January 2002

Editor: Bob Procter

## Editorial

As I start this editorial yet another year is over and another Triennial has come and gone and we're all that much older and wiser. Did I say 'wiser'? More on the Triennial later

I really must make a plea for more articles etc. from all of you so that the newsletter remains vibrant, newsworthy and worth reading. To this end and to get the ball rolling we are starting off with a 'Wing Commander Spry' of Airclues fame article by Dinga Bell, who by chance was also at the Triennial. We have all had these experiences in our time in the Royal Air Force, so come on, get the pen nibs scratching. Talking of Spry, it has come to my notice of the sad demise of this amazing character and follows the article by Dinga in the form of an obituary.

Do you fancy a flotilla sailing holiday? Don't miss the open letter from Mick Woodhouse – I can certainly vouch for this type of holiday as I joined Mick last year and have already booked my place for this season.

Barry Neal has also written his potted history with an excellent slant on one particular episode of his career.

Ex 103<sup>rd</sup> brat from down under sends welcome contribution to Association funds and a letter. Want to know more?

See Lost, Found and Re-united and A Letter from Down under.

John, webmaster of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Entry website has asked me to tell you that "Mindit.com" has finished its free service which told you by email when the site had been updated and that we will now have to check ourselves. Perhaps it might have more hits now, John.

Finally, now that you all have this year's diary, be sure to make an entry in the year planner for 2003 for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bash to be held at the Kings Head in Aylesbury on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2003.

Bob Procter

## Triennial Reminisces

Bob Procter

This was my first experience of the reunion and what a time the few of us that attended from our entry had. To start with I booked into the Queen's Head in Aylesbury for the whole weekend – thanks again for that Les. Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September turned out to be one of those glorious autumnal days with bright sunshine and by the time I had arrived at Halton the warmth of both the sun and the welcome of the organizers had set the scene for a truly memorable day.

The reunion started by registering at the 'Welcome Hangar' where there were areas groups of entries could

gather. On looking around the hangar I spotted a face that I knew, it turned out to be a neighbour from St. Annes; both of us had retired from BAE, but neither of us had realized we were both ex-brats! Time for a refreshing beer, then wander around the real and model aircraft static displays; both types of aircraft later gave superb flying displays.

The familiar sound of drums and the skirl of bagpipes broke the air and on marched 'The Golden Oldies Band', in the centre of the band was our very own Ken Bannister beating the bass drum with great aplomb. Up and down they marched on the aircraft dispersal pan entertaining us with all those tunes we had come to 'love'. The Drum Major though wasn't a patch on Tiny Cowsill and he certainly couldn't have cleared the telephone wires at Main Point!

Time for more beer, lunch and a 'networking' committee meeting (but no minutes to take) and watch the aircraft flying displays, the highlight being a large-scale model of a Beverley – I swear its wing span was in excess of 18ft and from where we were sitting it looked like the real thing.

Later we walked up to the Workshops assembly point so that we could form up in entry order to march (walk) up the hill in form of a parade to 1/2 Wing Square. We were quite close to the back and I have it on good authority that the Band reached the square even before we moved off; some 3000 ex-brats marched up the hill that day. Past the path through the woods, the Air Comms house, past the now defunct Guard Room and on to the square we marched and still the D.I's shouted at us to keep in step and pick our feet up! We formed up six deep in a hollow square and after the speeches were made a lone bugle sounded, it made the hair on the back of my neck stand up and I realized just how much those 3 years spent together meant to me. The final three cheers for Halton Apprentices really did shake the foundations of the Chilterns!

Later, I was told that the oldest member of an apprentice entry who was at the reunion was from the 3<sup>d</sup> Entry, which coincidentally was the same entry as my father was in.

All in all, it was a truly memorable day, and I urge those who have not yet joined the HAAA to do so now and come and join us for the next reunion.

## Hunter Towing

By Dinga Bell

Most of you know me as 'Twink', some as 'Dinga' and others as 'Jerry'. Whichever name you know me by, you will of course, always remember the shy, retiring and

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humble lad that resided quietly in the corner of the rigger's room. Whilst at the HAAA reunion the other day I just happened to bump into a couple of the entry and we were gossiping about the state of the English countryside and the amount of litter there was around. Yeah, Ok after a couple of beers we were chewing the fat. It got round to the subject of Singapore and 'when were you there', sort of questions.

I related a story to these dear friends of mine and they thought that perhaps I should share it with the rest of 'the best.....'.

There was this flight lieutenant by the name of... I can't really print his name because it leaves me open to slanderous accusations, but he became Wing Commander F\*\*\*\*\*. At IT would you believe it? Well he had to be good at something, because he knew nothing regarding the mechanical trades. He thought 'sooties' were smuts from the chimney. Actually, maybe he had a point.

Monsoons, rainstorms that you could drown in, caused yours truly more than a little bit of bother. At 135 mph, this Hunter tried to beat the monsoon at Tengah. He did not make it. Half way down the runway, and in the middle of my cup of coffee, the siren goes and the Tannoy tells us of a state 3. Then... two minutes later we are told that it was a Hunter and that that airfield was black. Now 'wet' I could understand, but black... Meant nothing to me!

A big hairy arsed chief comes crashing into the crew-room and asks us if we would kindly like to go and see what the matter was. Actually his words were quite unintelligible and far too harsh for my delicate ears. As I was IC the crash crew that week, I got 5 or 6 of the guys to go out and peruse the situation while I rang the tower to see what was needed.

The Hunter was nose down in the monsoon ditch and they had stopped all flying in and out of Tengah. So that's what black means? I pulled all my training from the bottom of my little brain and thought of bowsers, anchors, cables and winches. Good eh? I can still do it now. It just takes a little bit more time. Like a week.

Out we go. 10 guys, led by me, to the Hunter, a sorry sight, with its arse pointing to the sky. The rain had stopped. The lads were good, they did everything I told them and the cables were hitched up in the twinkling of an eye. It took about 2 hours but it seemed quicker. The bowsers are in the right place to act as anchors. The winch bowsers were prepared and everything was hooked up. We all wanted a coffee, but I thought that it was wiser to continue. About 4 hours had gone past by then.

Then a funny thing happened... This nameless flight lieutenant appeared. I greet him, as you should. Very respectful of rank as you all know, and away I go to take charge of the pull. When I had got to the winch truck I turned round to find this Flt. Lt. standing in the middle of the pulling area.....between the cables.

"Oh shit" says I, and walks back to find out what the

gentleman thinks he is doing.

"I'm going to observe the operation," says he.

"Sir. Not from there you're not." I said.

"Corporal, just get on with the job"

Red rag to a bull comes to mind, but then so does crass stupidity.

"If you think I'm going to take up the tension with you standing there....." My finger was poking him something rotten in the chest. I won't go on. You can imagine this polite Corporal explaining to this rather dense individual.

When I tried to explain, he pulls all his rank and orders me to continue. I turned round and stormed off back to the Corporal on the winch vehicle and told him to get all his guys together and get back to MT. I then got into the crash Rover and picked all my guys up and took them back to the squadron. We were settling down to a nice cup of coffee, when from outside there is a noise of a siren getting closer and 20 seconds later there is a squeal of breaks outside. We carried on drinking our coffee, well it obviously had nothing to do with us, when this rather irate Group Captain, by the name of L\*\*\*\*\* came screaming through, and I do mean through, the door of the tea-bar.

"Who's in charge of the crash crew" he shrieked.

"Me Sir" says I, a little warily, standing up and looking my accuser in the rather red face.

"Well get your \*\*\*\*\* arse out there and get that bloody Hunter off my runway" he says, getting redder.

"Sir"... And out we went... F\*\*\*\*\* was not to be found!

An hour later the Hunter is safely ensconced in the 20 Squadron shed, and Bell is in with the Flight Sergeant. Who informs me, in the kindly way that Flt. Sgt's have, that the Group Captain would like to see me the next morning.

I report at the appointed time...actually I was 30 minutes early...fear I suppose ...and he made me wait.

Ushered in, dead on time, the Group Captain came round his desk to greet me...oops. Big mistake! He gave me a resounding slap around the back of my head and launched into a tirade that Attila the Hun would have been proud of.

"What the \*\*\*\*\* do you think you were \*\*\*\*\* doing yesterday afternoon." It lasted about 10 minutes. I thought that I was going to die. When he had calmed down, he invited me to sit down and he let me give him my side of the story over a cup of coffee. I knew he was a civilized man.

What he said to F\*\*\*\*\* I never found out, but I bet he didn't give him a slap.

...There is a story about a bike but another time...if I'm asked?

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## OBITUARY - WG CDR SPRY

Wing Commander S H P Spry DSO DFC AFC DFM RAF was the youngest son of a Brigadier from a Guards regiment. Born during the First World War (1916 is the best estimate from records) he enjoyed a privileged background (Norton nanny, clockwork train set, and two oranges in his stocking at Christmas) and attended public school. Unlike his brothers who all joined their father's regiment, Spry rebelled. He had no desire to wear puttees, spurs and a stripe down his trouser leg but instead yearned to be a fighter pilot in the RAF. He would often gaze into the summer skies and watch Sopwith Camels practice their up-diddy-up-ups and decided that this would be the life for him. He refused to accept his allocated place to study the classics at Oxbridge, choosing instead to feed his craving for aviation matters by joining the Royal Air Force in 1934.

After flying training he quickly achieved his ambition to be a fighter pilot and as his expertise developed so did his fame, and his successes during the Second World War won him the DSO, DFC and DFM. He gained a reputation of superior airmanship, and was never shot down. On many occasions he was attacked by enemy fighters and despite his aircraft being severely damaged, on one occasion beyond all recognition, he would always manage to land the aircraft on British soil and walk away from the wreckage.

The post war years saw Spry involved with the test flying of aircraft and he gained an enormous number of aircraft types in his logbook. In June 1956 after 20 years flying, Spry joined the staff of the Directorate of Flight Safety at the Air Ministry. His reputation for sound common sense, his vast experience in aeronautical matters, and his forthright observations made him a natural choice to become the leading commentator on flight safety matters in the RAF. His very first comment was regarding his posting notice and was to the effect that if the Air Ministry wanted some mahogany-bound fighter pilot to do their equivocating for them "they could damn well look somewhere else." Thankfully, he was assured that he would be free to express his own opinions without fear or favour. And for the next 45 years he continued to do just that, shunning all offers of retirement.

Many of Spry's early comments in *Airclues* reflected the blame culture prevalent throughout the RAF at the time and would make most reader's eyes water today. "What a stupid trick"; "This airman, by his incompetence....."; "I am getting fed up to the back teeth with this loose article business" would be common expletives for the scapegoat who was deemed to be responsible for an incident or accident. Aircrew, operations and engineering personnel would live in fear of a Spry comment, criticism or devastating summary of an incident or accident. These comments quickly attracted criticism from some quarters.

Spry, shaken but not stirred by these criticisms, admitted

that he had a far from spotless record but argued that this was not a requirement to make flight safety comment. He stated that it was not the individual cases of error that were of interest but the fact that incidents and accidents illustrated common errors. Names were always omitted from articles as they were unimportant, but it was important to publicise the ignorance, carelessness, or laziness of personnel who made the mistakes that lead to an aircraft accident. Harsh words but perhaps not surprising as the RAF had well over 200 aircraft accidents in 1956! Indiscipline and non-adherence to procedures was often identified as the cause!

And so unperturbed by the criticism and with the aim of publicising incidents so that others could learn from them, Spry continued his work. An occasional "well done" or even a congratulatory comment was occasionally seen in print. However, Spry's exasperation was still evident on occasions when he perceived that personnel were making stupid mistakes. On his 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in post, it was noted that he hoped "to continue being rude, dogmatic and pedantic for a further ten years - as he doesn't care whom he upsets as long as flight safety statistics continue to improve." By the 1970s the "I Learnt About Flying from that..." articles had really taken-off and were clearly well received. For the next 25 years it was these articles that were the most read in *Airclues*. "Spry's Column" was also a familiar feature in the magazine, and a couple of flight safety themes would be the focus of each issue. In 1976 the Inspectorate of Flight Safety (RAF) formed and Spry joined an august body of colleagues.

In the 1980s, pictures of Spry seemed to suggest that he had undergone some form of cosmetic surgery. The long chin was still evident but the lack of moustache and fresh complexion made the sexagenarian look like a junior pilot. Spry's Column was still published in *Airclues* along with other flight safety articles, incident summaries with more reserved criticism and a healthy exchange of correspondence. Spry had matured and his comments were clearly more constructive, pointing out areas where other aircrew could fall into the traps that other had. Another 10 years on and Spry, always clinging onto the hope of eternal youth, is pictured marching intently to his next assignment. In May 1996 he reviewed 50 years of *Airclues*, and commented that the flight safety lessons learnt over the previous years were often still valid but needed to be taught in a relevant way to new audiences. Flight safety concepts needed to evolve and the need for flight safety would always be there to prevent accidents. It was clear that Spry felt that his publicity efforts were worthwhile.

In 1998 came the Big Change, beginning with the January edition of *Airclues* in which there was no picture of Spry. Had he retired, departed, disappeared in a chariot of fire? In fact none of these were the case; he had become the invisible Spry. The handlebar moustached World War 2 pilot image was deemed to be a rather outdated. In the summer of 1998, he was promoted - not in rank, but to the

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editorship of *Airclues*, which had become the RAF's flight safety magazine. From then on the all-new visually appealing style *Airclues* gained considerable popularity. Indeed, in 2001 *Airclues* won the accolade of a complimentary review on the PPrune website! Spry was still very much in the background as Editor carefully commissioning articles designed to appeal to a broad cross-section of readers. He would still add his comments to articles and give the benefit of his experience on all flight safety matters.

With a shrinking but diversifying Armed Forces carrying out more and more joint operations, it has been decided to form a Defence Aviation Safety Centre on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002. The demise of *Airclues* was imminent and Spry could see the writing on the wall. Clearly it would be inappropriate for a RAF fighter pilot and veteran of the Second World War to comment on flight safety matters involving the other services. Spry understood that he had reached the end of his professional life and will finally retire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2002.

Wing Commander Spry's contribution to flight safety over 45 years has been most significant. Whilst his comments may not have been politically correct, tactful or respectful on some occasions, they have always been intended to raise the profile of flight safety and to stimulate debate. His experience in flight safety matters was vast but he relied on the input of many of his colleagues from other branches to ensure that comment was well considered. Where he hurt feelings or bruised pride, he would have been glad that his comments had been noted and that an issue had been discussed. Where he provoked response, further debate and action in the cause of flight safety he knew that his duty had been discharged successfully. He will be writing an open letter of thanks to all those who had contributed to articles for *Airclues* over the years. Theirs had been a most valued contribution to flight safety and to the continuing success of *Airclues*. He hopes that the same interest and support will be given to the new magazine to be published by the Defence Aviation Safety Centre.

Barry Neal - no not Wg Cdr Spry!

## Flotilla Sailing – An Open Letter from Mick Woodhouse

December 2001

As you know I love sailing and am obsessed with my flotilla sailing holidays in the Mediterranean. Last season was my most successful so far when I had a week in spring in the Southern Ionian with three inexperienced newcomers and a fortnight in the autumn with three sailors for the first week and a mixture for the second on a bigger boat. Everyone enjoyed themselves, although the sailors would have liked a bit more wind on occasion. All said they would go again sometime, one would like to go

to the Caribbean!

I am writing to you as somebody who has either said they might be interested in going next year or who, I think would enjoy this type of holiday and possibly hasn't considered it before. I have 'pumped' my past companions for their thoughts, their apprehensions before they went etc., please pass this letter on if you know of anyone else who might be interested.

In the past I have referred to them as sailing holidays and some people might have interpreted that as days spent doing Ellen McArthur impressions, fighting the wind and waves and stopping at night only to eat and recharge the batteries, then coming home for a rest! This year's companions have impressed on me that it is really touring the islands and coastline using a sailing yacht as transport for about six hours a day, stopping for a swim sometime and evenings spent socializing and eating with other crews. Something I hadn't realized is that at home we are governed by work, the phone, news, shopping, television etc., take these things away and you can relax, it takes a couple of days and you see people unwinding. You can see the change taking place as they get to know strangers and their worries that they won't fit in, can't sail, are going to be seasick, sun burnt, bitten by insects etc. are found to be groundless. I pride myself on being able to get crews who will mix well, some come as friends, some family, some bring friends, some as almost strangers, but all have something to contribute. Conversation is always varied, most haven't heard all my jokes before which is a bonus!

So if you think you are a gregarious type of person who would benefit from a week of relaxation in beautiful surroundings, warm weather and sea, evening group meals in a taverna with party games afterwards, a bit of sailing, exploration and adventure in the company of like-minded folk, read on.

I have decided that I would rather not go back to the Southern Ionian next spring but would rather go to the Sporades in Greece, the southern coast of Turkey or the Croatian coast. The start date would be between the 1<sup>st</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> May and the yacht I would take would be between 32 and 41 feet long and take up to 8 people, although I would limit it to 4 or 5 so that everyone had the privacy of their own cabin. The holiday package, which includes flights, transfers to the yacht, hire of the yacht, personal and boat insurance and fuel will come to about £475. Food and drink are not included and will bring the total cost to about £600.

Flotilla sailing is no longer a case of mother duck and her brood sailing line astern each day. There is a lead crew of

Skipper, engineer and hostess on their own boat who brief the flotilla each morning on destination, weather, possible hazards, facilities etc. They see you off in the mid-morning and again late afternoon. They are very thorough and conscientious, have wonderful personalities and yet remain unobtrusive except at the parties! I am looking for

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holiday companions, not just crew, everyone takes their turn at helming, parking the boat and skippering if they want to, also preparing breakfast and lunch, washing up and provisioning. We have a ship's kitty for the common expenses and a voluntary purser to look after it and pay the bills.

If you are still interested and would like to know more, ring Sunsail on 023 9222 2222 and ask for a sailing holidays brochure (Website [www.sunsail.com](http://www.sunsail.com) - ed.) and ring me on 01865 340535. Bookings made and deposits paid before 20<sup>th</sup> January will get a 5% discount off the holiday price but extra persons can usually be added up to about a month before the holiday.

If you cannot make it in the spring I hope to go again in the autumn as I have done in the last few years, why not join me then?

PS – I have not told you anything about the yachts, which I seem to have made sound incidental to the whole scheme. They are purpose-made for Sunsail, usually under 5 years old and are really like big caravans that can sail, some surprisingly well. They are well kitted out with sailing and safety gear and all the domestic equipment required for a holiday in the sun, except for swimming towels. There is a cool box or fridge for the beer and a cooker with an oven, but I've never seen that used! There are usually 3 double cabins, one in the front and two in the stern with a single berth in the saloon, which I always claim. Oh! of course, there are heads (toilets), with shower and basin, most have hot water, - adequate but not spacious. Outside is a large cockpit from which you cannot fall out, a large foredeck for sunbathing and a sugar scoop stern fitted with another shower and from where we swim.

Mick has already arranged a week's sailing holiday in the Sporades from 9<sup>th</sup> May 2002 for a mixed crew of 4 including, himself and yours truly on an Oceanis 321 – check the website to see the layout of the yacht. I wonder if I could twist his arm for the following week, if any of you are interested. Planning is also underway for a sailing holiday in the autumn, so get your oar in early. Why not give your wife an extra holiday this year!

Bob Procter

## Approaching 38 years old!!

Well, not quite - wishful thinking! As I write this, though, I am rapidly approaching the point of 38 years in-Service, with another 15 months to go. That will clock up 39 years and 88 days - all of which have been pretty rewarding and enjoyable.

Remember the 2 groups of us that went off to Direct Entry commissioning and RAFC Cranwell Cadetships in early 1966? Well, in my case, it took until mid-71 to reach my

first front-line squadron tour as a co-pilot flying Victor K1 tankers (and the delay was not due to me being a lousy pilot (!), but to the aircrew holding system in place at the time). Air-to-air refuelling (AAR) became my speciality with 3 tours on Victor K1/K2s, including time as an AAR Instructor, 2 exchange tours in the US flying KC-135s and KC-10s, 2 AAR staff tours, considerable time spent over the South Atlantic in the Falklands Campaign and, finally, boss of the VC10 AAR and AT Operational Conversion Unit. What else? Well, Staff College, a HQSTC projects and CIS job, time as directing staff at the former Joint Service Defence College, and I'm now approaching 6 years with the RAF's Inspectorate of Flight Safety. The latter has been particularly rewarding and enjoyable, and I'm now something of an expert!

I thought you might be interested in a particular jaunt while I was on VC10s. You may recall the various recoveries of the hostages in Beirut at the beginning of the 90s. I was on call to fly out to recover Jackie Mann in September 91 and, as ever, that call came following a Brize Norton execs tennis social on a Sunday afternoon. "Be in place in Akrotiri by first light on Monday morning" was the task so, off we went. Two crews including ground engineers, a FO rep, and a comprehensive aeromed and psychology team arrived at 3 am, went into crew rest and were then subsequently stood down overnight. The aircraft even had a kennel fitted to cater for the Mann's dog!

At that time there was little positive indication of Jackie's release, so we were put at-notice and the FO requested that we remained TFN. A late summer holiday in the sun beckoned - couldn't be bad we thought! On the Wednesday afternoon we got an indication that a release could occur in Beirut later that evening. Everything went cold overnight, although conflicting news reports from Iran and Lebanon quoted Jackie as having been released. We anticipated that we would go through the weekend and I decided to reduce to one crew.

On the Friday we got news that Sunny, Jackie's wife who was in Beirut, had decided to return to Nicosia for the weekend to stay with a good friend, a (then) prominent ITN news reporter. Not helpful as you can imagine, and presented me with serious logistical problems should we get the call to move. We offered assistance and medical support on her return and I visited her in Nicosia with the FO rep and 2 doctors to discuss plans for the next few days. She was adamant that we were not going to pick up Jackie without taking her and her friend with us, so we set up plans to get them to Akrotiri quickly when necessary. I did manage, though, to talk her out of bringing the dog too!

Nothing happened over the weekend, but Iran indicated a release soon, so we arranged for transport to be on standby in Nicosia should the need arrive. On the Tuesday we were pretty confident that Jackie would be released within 24 hours so we started to move the folks from Nicosia to

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stay at the Akrotiri station commander's house. The release was then expected to be in Damascus so plans were set and, while Sunny et al were en-route from Nicosia, we got the call to move. Got everybody together and took off for Damascus in the late evening. Pick up Jackie and fly directly home to Brize Norton was the plan. Then the fun started!

The reception in Damascus was OK; embassy staff did all the liaison and a small team of the FO rep, Sunny, the 2 doctors and embassy support went off to collect Jackie. All our passports were examined and then disappeared in the custody of a local - one of my pet hates anywhere in the world!! I was invited to take tea in the airport manager's office, and the waiting started. Some considerable time later, Jackie and the team arrived direct to the aircraft. I wanted to get out of there fast, but guess what? Yes - no passports. Jackie was in good spirits but very frail, so we settled him into the aircraft and let the medical team take care of him. About an hour later the passports appeared as if by magic; don't ask, I didn't want to know. Close the doors, start the engines and off we go - thank you very much, Damascus, and goodnight.

On take-off we dumped one complete hydraulic system and could not retract the starboard undercarriage leg. We had not been able to refuel in Damascus and, on doing the figures, realised we did not have the capability to return direct to the UK in that configuration. It was now somewhere about 5 am, I seem to remember, and where to go? I was not prepared to divert to anywhere but Akrotiri with Jackie on board, but I seemed to remember that the airfield had turned out the lights and locked up as soon as we left the previous evening. No problem, we'll head there anyway, I could call Nicosia on HF radio who could then get onto Akrotiri and get the airfield open - easy. Every HF combination was tried that we could think of, but could we get an answer from Nicosia - no. Or Episkopi flight watch. Eventually, a faint English voice was heard responding to my call; a "Speedbird" call sign, no less. I explained the situation, asked him to relay to Nicosia, Episkopi, whoever, and get Akrotiri open. "No problem" he said, and "oh, good luck"!

During all this activity, I was trying to explain to a rather bemused Jackie what was going on, but I suspect to this day he did not understand. We continued to Akrotiri and set up for an instrument approach planning to overshoot and attract someone's attention if necessary (overfly the station commander's house, perhaps). At 10 miles final a welcoming soft and warm Brit voice said "Good morning, Ascot XXXX, you are cleared to land". The reception party was interesting, led by the station commander, but what to do with the Manns while we sorted out the aircraft. Luckily, the hospital VIP Suite was offered to allow them to rest and spend some quiet time together. We then set about rectifying the source of the hydraulic leak and deciding how to get home. The leak was repaired but the starboard leg had to remain down for the transit home; put enough fuel on board, re-plan, and let the crew

get a couple of hours rest before setting off - this time for Lyneham and the traditional reception.

Jackie and Sunny were escorted back to the aircraft, refreshed and with Sunny clutching a lovely bouquet of flowers given to her at the hospital. Off we set again and the trip home was largely uneventful; a relaxed crew and entourage, Jackie chatting away and eating well - except! The good ideas always surface at times like these. I spent ages on the HF radio discussing a Spitfire flypast for Jackie, and a planned live TV news interview for me and one of the doctors on our arrival. In view of Jackie's wartime background it was being planned for Cliff Spink to overfly our aircraft as Jackie stepped out onto the passenger steps. Did I think that would be a good idea and would he enjoy it? "Yes, I'm sure he would enjoy it", I replied, "but in his frail condition would the surprise would probably cause him to lose his balance and fall down the steps"! Hence, as some of you may remember, Sunny accompanying him onto the steps for the flypast and then both of them being accompanied down the steps to terra firma. I was not going to lose him at that point after all the effort we had taken.

After Jackie's rehabilitation Ruth and I hosted Jackie to dinner the night before he flew back to Cyprus and Nicosia. He was in very good spirits, was back to smoking despite medical advice, but actually seemed exhausted. Sunny had gone ahead to prepare a homecoming for them. By that time a house and support had been made available through benevolent agencies as they had both lost everything in the Beirut episode. She was so keen to make it a Xmas to remember for them both, and I gather she did. Sadly, a year later Sunny passed away and Jackie followed within a couple of years. The whole successful adventure had been exhausting but thoroughly rewarding with a lot of hard work, flexibility and initiative displayed by a very professional bunch of people.

Barry Neal

## A Letter from Down Under

Thank you for keeping far flung 103's such as myself in touch.

Michelle and I made our first visit to the UK in nearly 25 years last October. We had spent some weeks in September travelling in Italy with our eldest daughter Phoebe who had been teaching in Milan for the past 18 months. We had a lot of catching up to do as she had been away for both her 20th and 21st birthdays. Our travels took us from the Amalfi Coast via Rome, Milan (Sept 11), Cinque Terre (North of La Spezia), Venice and Como. Phoebe's now returned home to attend Adelaide University. We have two other girls Imogene who is 18 and off to Uni this year and Chloe who is 16 and still at

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high school. Michelle, my wife, is a portrait artist who I met in England while she was travelling. She is from Adelaide and I originally came here on holiday but was so impressed I emigrated.

After Italy we caught up with as many friends as we could in England. Chris and Heather Wales kindly put us up for a night at very short notice and treated us like kings. Thanks Chris and Heather, I hope we will be able to reciprocate your genuine kindness some day.

A brief summary of what I've been up to is as follows:

After Halton I spent a year at Abingdon (Blackburn Beverlys!). A year at Scampton (Vulcan B2s). Then navigator training and Hercules at Thorney Island and Lynham.

I had begun to feel that I was on the wrong career path and left to do some business training with Thorn Electrical and Portsmouth Polytechnic. Following that I started my own little company which somehow managed to operate in Wiltshire rebuilding old houses; in Essex building offshore yachts, and Italy helping to run a yacht charter company on the Island of Elba. I made money out of the houses; everything else we'll put down to great experience.

I met Michelle, came to Adelaide, went to Uni and studied architecture and after gaining some experience found myself in project management for construction and civil works. For the past 5 years I have been working for the City of Adelaide.

The Halton training and experience provided a great start for me and I wouldn't change it; I've even met an old Haltonian high up on scaffolding while inspecting building work!

Adelaide is an exceptionally beautiful City within easy reach of beaches and three separate wine regions. The food and wine here are fantastic and very economically priced compared with Europe. The main disadvantage is the great distance from other major population centres within Australia.

My best regards to all of you and thanks again for keeping in touch.

Tom Maxwell

## Minutes

### NOTES OF A COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE 103<sup>RD</sup> ENTRY ASSOCIATION HELD AT THE KINGS HEAD AYLESBURY. 8th DECEMBER 2001

Present - BN, BP, JD, LS, MHFW, MW  
Apologies - CJW, LG, KB, NS

1. Treasurer to confirm that cheques have been sent for Ken Burn's family and the Whittle Memorial Window. **Action NS**

2. An advert for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bash to be placed in both the Entry and Kings Head websites. **Action JD**
3. Accommodation information for the Bash to be included in the forthcoming newsletters. LS to send BP information on local hotels etc. **Action LS**
4. Last newsletter did go out on time before the end of July, next one to be out before the end of Jan 2002. BP showed the committee a new design envelope with Entry badge as a watermark and with return address shown. This was approved and will be used for all future newsletters. **Action BP**
5. Editor of newsletter has requested more articles for publication. During discussions on next newsletter it was revealed that Wing Commander Spry of Airclues fame is to be retired next year. BN to supply BP with more info. Also MHFW to send BP anything which might be recycled. **Action BN and MHFW**
6. Further to the post meeting note on a dedicated page on the entry website in memory of those who have died, it was felt that a hyperlink to the similar HAAA web page might be a way forward. **Action JD**
7. Next meeting 20<sup>th</sup> April 2002 at the Kings Head at the usual time of 11.00 hrs. **All to note.**

### AOB

1. In an email tendering his apologies, KB proposed that the entry support the idea of a Band Window. This has been approved by the committee to the usual tune of £25. KB to advise NS of details. **Action KB**
2. BP still waiting for cheque from NS re expenses of newsletter supplies. **Action NS**

Bob Procter  
Stand in Secretary

## Lost, Found and Re-united

Since the last news letter a few of our number have either surfaced or re-surfaced.

Chris Wales last October had a visit from Tom Maxwell and his wife Michelle who now live down under. "We had a good evening chatting over what he has done since leaving the RAF and emigrating to Australia, as well as talking over old times. He seems to be doing very well in Adelaide as an architect in the Adelaide City Council. He was impressed with our Church Window. He also thought that he must owe something to the Association and has passed on £10".

(Extract from Email from Chris – Ed.).

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An Email dated 12<sup>th</sup> November from Les Garden reads, "Was wandering through the Sgts. Mess at Lyneham today with a couple of guys when I (literally) bumped into Chris Lacey. He is well and still flight "enging" as a master in the reserves helping to keep the Herc. fleet flying."

Mick Woodhouse through a friend using the [www.friendsreunited.com](http://www.friendsreunited.com) website has indirectly contacted Doug Pearson who apparently left the RAF just after we left Halton but has neither regretted joining up nor the leaving: more on this in the next issue if any more information forthcoming. Mick has also been in contact with Derek Palmer, Bill Rawden and Les Rogers.

If you have found or would like to contact someone from our entry, please drop me a line and we will add the info to this column.

## Classified Ads

# DON'T FORGET

### NEXT REUNION 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY BASH

WHEN 18<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2003  
WHY 40 YEARS SINCE ATTESTATION  
WHERE THE KINGS HEAD, AYLESBURY  
DRESS INFORMAL

## Web sites and contact information

For those of you on the net or just getting to grips with it for the first time, here are some useful websites. If you haven't got a computer visit your local internet café and get them to point you to the sites.

[www.103rd-entry.org.uk](http://www.103rd-entry.org.uk) - our very own website under the very skilful hands of John Dillon. Be sure to check out his other website which is concerned with the Battle of Crete [www.crete-1941.org.uk](http://www.crete-1941.org.uk)

And if you want a sneak reminder of Les Shardlow's pubs in Aylesbury and where we will be holding our next Reunion Bash, it's [www.kh-aylesbury.co.uk](http://www.kh-aylesbury.co.uk)

To contact me [bohp@cyberscape.net](mailto:bohp@cyberscape.net) or by snail mail

12, Cudworth Road St. Annes, Lancs. FY8 3AE

Tel 01253 711021

Also, if you wish to contact another member of the entry just let me know and I'll furnish you with the details.

Bob Procter

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