

103rd Entry Association



Newsletter

No. 22
September 2002

Editor: Bob Procter

Editorial

Not the best way to start, but my apologies for this newsletter being over a month late. Most of my time this year has been taken up with my other *job that of a credit union director at BAE SYSTEMS where I used to work and the affect of the new regulatory body, the FSA. And I thought retirement was the time for myself, T should have known better. Then to cap a good year I was off sailing in the Baltic for a few weeks in July.

At the end of this letter is the invitation for the 40m Anniversary Bash at the Kings Head in Aylesbury. Get the form back to Mick as soon as you can.

We have lost Jeff and Jeanette Lloyd this year. They have moved to Cyprus. We wish them all the best and hope that they will keep in contact.

Also in this edition are letters from Bob Mawson and Dotig Pearson with their potted histories.

Does anyone know where Mick Bossy has moved to as the last newsletter came back to me?

Bob Procter

Off to Cyprus

Most of you will probably know by now, we have finally made the decision to retire and to move to live in Cyprus.

Jeff retired on the 31 March and we have sold our house in Newport. The sale hasn't been completed yet, but we expect to be shipping (by 40 foot container) all our worldly goods to Cyprus around about the middle of May.

'e have bought a two bedroom / two bathroom villa with a swimming pool, in a remote village 1200 feet up in the foothills of the Troodos mountains, at the western end of the Island, midway between Paphos and Polls. Both of these thriving towns are only a fifteen-minute drive away.

Our new address, with effect from 1 June 2002 will be:

Mr Mrs J Lloyd
Polemi Village
8549 Paphos

CYPRUS

Tel No: 00357 975 5793

(If calling from Cyprus 9975 5793)

E-mail: jayandutv699@hotmail.com

Our new adjoining house, which will be completed

by 1 June Akrotiri, is situated in a lovely rural area and has vineyards adjoining our property to all sides, and yet we are only 200m from the edge of the village and the nearest Taverna! The garden is a decent size (84Qsqm) and is very much a building site at the moment, so we are looking forward to creating, from scratch, our new garden. We plan to plant Orange and lemon trees, bougainvillea, oleander and hibiscus, to add to the existing fig and almond trees and a solitary oak.

We have always loved Cyprus and it's people since we lived there between 1970-1973, when Jeff was in the RAF. The final decision to move was prompted by disillusionment and uncertainty at work (Jeff worked for a large American telecom company) The UK workforce was cut drastically last year (with the same amount of work demands spread across those remaining) This year they have made further reductions with still more plannedit was time to get out!

We are looking forward to our new life which we hope will give us more time to continue doing what we do here in England, cycling, gardening, walking, bar-b-que's but with a more predictable climate.

There arc some things we are going to miss,

Gordon and Tony
Income tax and National Insurance
The 'Anchor' at High Offley
Petrol at 79p/ltr
Rain in the summer
Global Crossing Telecommunications Ltd

We have been supported in our decision to move by Ben, Hannah and Jeff's mum, without whose support we would have been unable to realise our dream.

We will, of course, be coming back to the UK from time to time for holidays, but in the meantime if you should find yourselves on the Island at any time, then please give us a call.

Jeanette and Jeff

An Epistle (24)

When I read Newsletter No. 211 noted Bob's appeal for more material. For some time now I have enjoyed reading other people's articles. In my current capacity as a 'gentleman of leisure' I no longer have any excuses and feel that a contribution is due.

My memories of Halton include good Friendships - many of which continue today, excellent technical training, wonderful sports facilities, stunning countryside and petty discipline. It was this last item which caused me to rebel a little after two squeaky clean years and in the end I was glad to be away.

After a dreary Christmas it was really refreshing to go to my first unit - a home posting for me at Wittering and the company of several 103 mates (a dozen as T recall). VTF was the Victor OCU and seemed to enjoy better morale than the two resident squadrons (100 & 139) that had centralised servicing. Pete Laslett and I had two and a half years on the unit before departing overseas like a few others. This coincided with the end of the victor era at Wittering and the introduction of the Harrier. We had happy times both at work and socially. The only thorn in my side was a Geordie trade manager who was so much like a gorilla and had trouble stringing words together to the point that he made me look positively human. Sample: "Mawson, Harkness, Newell! Stop playin' *!*!* darts in that *!*!* crewroom and put yer *!*!* overalls on. Ah got a *!*!* job for yer ya!"
 [Language Bob - Ed.]

Pete, along with Sandy Hamilton and myself would sometimes go into Peterborough on a Saturday morning to peruse the local 'totty'. My mother often provided lunch for us and my young sister was always pleased to see me bring my RAF pals home! Both Sandy and Pete went to Goose Bay next and the last I heard of Sandy several years ago was that he had married and was living in Canada. Pete met Yvonne whilst at Wittering and they have been together ever since. That reminds me; I have a suitable photograph, which ought to go on the web site. This period was the last time I saw Yogi Forbear or Dave Cochran. Both were in officer training at the time - Dave at Cranwell and Yogi somewhere in East Anglia. There was a rumour some years ago now that Yogi had gone to work in the USA.

Charlie Chaplin was in the next block at Wittering and I recall him helping to fix my ailing car on more than one occasion so that I could go out for the evening. His departure to Changi in 1968 was marked with a memorable bash, which started in the Malcolm Club, moved on to the AI Club and included a fine 'Zulu Warrior' in front of Mrs 'Chiefy'! I recently went to Charlie's retirement party at Coltishall with Brian Lee. Al Simmonds was also there - someone I hadn't seen for about thirty years! Apologies for the looney phone call a couple of years ago Al. T didn't know at the time that you were the SWO. No wonder you had to be sensible!

Another fine social occasion at Wittering was the wedding of Chris and Heather Wales circa 1967. I seem to remember that Chris was based at Cottesmore, the wedding service was in a village west of Stamford (Ketton I think) and the reception in Wittering village hall, which I think was down to Chris's father who was based at Wittering. The entry was fairly well represented and at one point in the afternoon there was a recce to the Cottesmore

area in order to decorate the marital vehicle which had been considered quite safe at its remote location! Later in the proceedings Chris's father very generously donated a barrel of beer to us for fear of it going to waste. We put his mind at rest and it was transported to Sandy Hamilton's room where it became considerably lighter! We were in fine fettle that evening for the AI Club dance!

In spite of the wonderful social life in and around Stamford I was managing to keep myself in reasonable shape and became involved with the RAF Athletics Team and also played rugby for Wittering in the off season. I even recall a trip to St Athans, with Chris Wales and Nick Pearson for RAF Gymnastic Team selection. The other two went on to represent the team and went on tour whilst I chose to concentrate on the spear throwing act.

May 1968 saw me on my way to Akrotiri with mixed feelings. I was leaving behind lots of good friends and also the UK athletics scene, which had become a big part of my life. However, I had always wanted to spend time overseas - especially somewhere warm and sunny! One of the first people I met was Dave Murphy, who was living in the next block and introduced me to my first kebab house in Limassol. I spent several happy months with 1563 Search & Rescue Flight on Whirlwinds (later 84 Sqn equipped with Wessex). There were many changes taking place at Akrotiri late in that year, mainly brought about by the disbandment of Strike Wing (four Canberra squadrons) and the introduction of a new wing comprising two Vulcan squadrons. January 1969 saw me off to 70 Squadron looking after Argosys. Life was much busier now and the whole station had a real buzz about it. We worked hard, played hard and didn't sleep much! T recall Mick Smith on 70 -1 even have a shift photograph as a record. I haven't come across him since though.

I had a wonderful time at Akrotiri and did not particularly want to leave when the tour was coming to an end except that T was missing out on the UK athletics scene. I did manage to squeeze an extra couple of weeks on the island though - if only for a board of enquiry. Right at the end of my tour 70 Sqn was due to re-equip with the C130. It was during a nightshift at this time that the first of the new squadron aircraft was due to arrive to a reception committee. About an hour prior to this, yours truly and a couple of others were carrying out nose U/C functionals following a steering jack change. I was making the flight deck selections, there was a guy on the hydraulic rig alongside the nose (Ron Inskip) and the third member (Vince Fernandez) lying underneath witnessing the operation. After several retractions, Vince decided that he had seen enough - how many cycles do these blokes want to do? He set off towards the crewroom for some liquid refreshment. He had gone but a few paces when the starboard main leg

collapsed and the aircraft fell on to its wing tip. Vince would have been crushed under the nose fuselage had he stayed put and naturally went into shock. The new aircraft taxied in past the listing Argosy and did not receive the anticipated reception. Several squadron members found it highly amusing!

December 1970 saw me back in the UK - posted to 51 Sqdn at Wyton where I stayed until the end of my service in 1976. I couldn't believe how dark, dingy and wet everywhere was. I was a confirmed sun worshipper and wanted to go straight back to the Med. However, 51 turned out to be a brilliant squadron and we had our fair share of sunshine detachments. I recall Geoff Lace was with the squadron when I arrived - minus one eye as a result of a Canberra wing tip detonator "accident". He was known to leave the false one in his beer on occasion when he had to visit the loo! The other ex ton 3 with 51 was Brian Lee who appeared in about 1974 following an exchange tour at Offert to find me swinging from a beam in the crewroom. That, of course, is his story. I have no recollection of the occasion!

Wyton was another home posting for me, had good sports / training facilities and gave reasonable access to London for athletic meets. We also enjoyed a good social life. There were some very cosy pubs on the banks of the Ouse. Rog Bitter lived close to the Ferryboat Inn at Kneedingworth and used to entertain the locals with his guitar skills. Roger and Lesley were also generous hosts and would make my Aussie girlfriend and I welcome at weekends.

I had also kept in touch with Colin Frame since leaving Halton. By the time I returned from Akrotiri "Stubbs" had extracted himself from the RAF and was pursuing an aeronautical engineering degree at Loughborough. I was well entertained there on many occasions including dining - in nights. Those boys knew how to party!

Alex Nicholson also appeared at Wyton during this period. We have been promising each other a round of golf for the last two years. This year Alex!

August 1976 saw me coming out of the RAF at the end of the 12 year engagement. I had played a lot of sport, travelled a bit but had not really pursued a career. I decided to make a fresh start and went to work for the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Bedford for two years whilst finishing some college work that I had started in my Lime at Wyton. I also married Gayle at this time. We had met at Akrotiri originally where she was a 'scaly brat' finishing off her 'A' levels down the road at St Johns School, Episkopi.

In 1978 we moved to Hampshire when I transferred to Farnborough as an aircraft supervisor with the experimental flying set up. One of the first people I bumped into was Dave Adams. Also, in the early

80's, Don Avery arrived on to EFS as a Nav and was having a great time flying all sorts of aircraft such as Buccaneer, Comet, BAG 1-11 to name a few. We were both living in Liss and shared some happy hours playing squash and drinking the odd pint. Very thirsty game! After a spell in town Don was later posted to my old squadron at Wyton.

My face seemed to fit at Farnborough and, in spite of planning to go back to the Bedford airfield due to house prices, I had successive promotions where I was, and found no openings to return. I was spending long hours at work and Gayle and I were feeling financial pressure all the time. This and other issues were taking their toll and we unfortunately parted company in 1986.

I stayed at Farnborough and ran one of the aircraft maintenance hangars for a few years after that. In 1992 we changed status to become part of the Defence Research Agency. I took the opportunity at this time to move across into the business area and took over the management of our sub-contracts. I had always liked the look of the job and -enjoyed building working relationships with different parts of the aerospace industry that provided us with support.

In 1993 the experimental flying and support operation was market tested and fortunately the in-house bid was successful. DRA went on to become DERA, and central government decided to co-locate UK experimental flying at one airfield. Flying operations at Bedford and Farnborough were shut down in 1994 and those of us who wanted to keep our jobs transferred to Boscombe Down. The transition was a difficult time for a lot of people. Morale at Farnborough was poor towards the end but once we had re-formed at Boscombe there was a more positive mood and a feeling that we were building something that would succeed in a more commercial environment (lean and mean!).

We had gone to Boscombe with the DRA fleet as a honed down department. Ultimately we combined with the resident DTEO aircraft fleet and its support department and ended up as an organisation four times as big. Surprisingly I remained as a one-man band after the merger with a substantially increased workload. By late 1998 I was getting some unpleasant symptoms, which apparently were stress related. I didn't really understand what was going on and paid my GP a rare visit early in the next year. After being referred to a specialist it was assessed that my workload was too high and should be significantly reduced if I wanted to avoid 'burn out'. The department was unable to assist me and after six months I had a complete break down. Unfortunately, this sort of thing has become far too common in our society. I had a long spell off work and did go back for a while but the upshot is that I found it necessary in the end to take early retirement. As it happens I was retiring at the same

age that I would have been had I stayed in the RAF. At least now I have the luxury of focusing more on health and fitness - something that I always enjoyed doing. I live in a beautiful part of Hampshire close to the South Downs and spend much time outdoors on a mountain bike or on the golf course. This is all very thirsty work and how fortunate it is that there is a fine selection of country pubs. Good things come out of adversity!

I'm only a mile or so off the A3 at Liss, halfway between Guildford and Portsmouth. Ex Ton3's are always welcome to call in if passing through the area.

Bob Mawson

Found - Doug Pearson (25)

Well, despite the rumours, I am still around. Many thanks to Mick Woodhouse for taking the trouble to dig me out, or is it up? Still can't get over how cunning Mick was. Well done mate! Well I suppose I owe some sort of explanation after being AWOL for 35 years.

After Halton, I went to 229 OCU at Chivenor, looking after Hunters. Excellent place to be, especially in the summer. My first arrival at Barnstable railway station is memorable for "standing dumb struck on the platform listening to two local porters having a conversation, and I'm wondering what country I had arrived in. Couldn't understand a single word they said!

Once I had settled in, my immature haste to sink before I could swim led me into deep personal strife on the marital front. Somehow managed to survive even though I had other intentions. However, decision was either made by me, or for me. that civi street might be a good move, so out the gate I went. All my worldly possessions contained in one spanking new, no expense spared, cardboard suitcase from the NAAFI. I remember being miffed that I couldn't even keep my issue carryall. Spent a short time staying at the Union Jack Club at Waterloo and got to know London pretty well at that time. Did various part time jobs whilst there to help the finances and to stop being bored. They were mainly in the Catering trade. Kenco coffee houses were a favourite. Thought I was very cool working in the Kenco's in King Road Chelsea for a time.

My longest job was driving an Ice Cream van for a bloke who had lost his licence due drunk driving. Quite an education to be flogging ice cream on Oxford Street whilst keeping an eye out for the 'Old Bill'. Accompanied the owner to Bow Street Magistrates Court on a few occasions. He merely peeled a few notes off his bankroll to pay the fine, then back on the streets. I used to be horrified how

he bumped up his prices whenever an American foolishly came to the van window. All great fun though.

Then got down to a proper job again with BEA at Heathrow. Started off on permanent night shift, which is a life style in itself. Managed to add a HNC to the ONC I had from Halton. Also built up the Aircraft Engineers Licences over the next few years (had to be a fitter as well as a rigger). Moved around a bit within BEA doing various jobs looking after the A/C. Then about 17 years ago I became a Duty Control Engineer in Maintenance Control (alongside Ops Control). The job title has changed a few times over the years but essentially the task remains the same. Co-ordinating the recovery of AOG aircraft worldwide and working with the Ops Department when engineering problems means too few aircraft to do the job. It's a job which really suits my needs, hence I am still doing it. Means working rotating shifts which I see as a bonus. I have only worked a straight day shift for 3 years of my time at BA. Looked on it as a punishment! If you are ever arriving or departing LHR from the north runway then feel free to give a cheery wave, or some other appropriate gesture, through the window when passing the blue building next to the runway on the perimeter. You never know, I might be there to respond.

Gerry Miller recently e-mailed me some photos from our time at Her Majesties pleasure in deepest Bucks. A photo of the 103rd 'Farmyard' had me puzzled for a while, must have been taken with the wrong lens I thought! I seem to remember it being much bigger than portrayed! Story of my life some would say. Great shame our efforts to borrow a Stage Coach came to nought. However it was not for the want of trying, but now I think we must have been certifiable to attempt it. Even if we had managed to get it on the trailer, I really cannot imagine how it would have stayed on there whilst we drove back down the country lanes to Halton. Not to mention the police patrol, which intercepted us shortly after aborting the ^ mission. Just as well we failed. We could all still be paying for it had we succeeded.

Another of Gerry's photos was of our 'holiday' in Wales. What a memorable time that was. Tried to be the hero jumping one of the many water hazards we crossed. Made a complete cods of it. The terra firma jumping off point turned out to be not so but terra moss floating on the surface. Must have looked quite interesting, me running at full lick straight under water. Later, I remember someone heaving a backpack over yet another bit of water only to have it seriously undershoot the landing zone. Ah well, wet already, might as well jump in and retrieve the damn thing. Never gladder to see the end of that particular day. But, I don't think I have ever tasted anything as good as the steak and eggs we had as a final meal, after all the previous Compo rations!

Shortly after moving to London I met the present Mrs Pearson, Louise. Lou spent much of her childhood in Australia and has family over there. One advantage of working for BA has been the opportunity to visit Lou's fam in Oz about every other year. Some of the family arc sheep farmers. That's the real Australia to me. One day I was out with a farmer to collect a 'mob*' of sheep from the paddock and bring them back to the farm for a session of teeth grinding. Never never never, wish to be reincarnated as a sheep. Apart from the attentions of a farmer with a dental angle grinder, there's an equally fun thing called 'crutching', where a layer of skin is taken off around the crutch. Much better than having blow flies infesting your backside, but I bet it brings tears to the sheep's eyes. Anyway, there we were driving across the paddock towards these sheep. Geoff, the farmer, whistling from inside his ute (pick-up to us Poms) to his dog, who I'm sure couldn't hear a damn thing over the noise of the motor. But the dog knew what he had to do. All is going well when one particular sheep tries to make a break for it and heads at break neck speed straight towards the wire fencing. I can identify with that sheep I thought! However, sheep charges into the fence and ends up going straight through it and into the next paddock. Now the games on. Swiftly drive back to the gate and in pursuit we go. No instructions to the dog that has already worked out what's required and is rapidly overtaking us. As we approach the sheep I am conjuring up a picture of yours truly diving out of the ute and wrestling the errant beast to the ground. At this point an element of self-doubt creeps in and more realistically I see England's sporting honour yet again losing out to the Aussies. However all was saved. Dog needed absolutely no assistance whatsoever, least of all instructions, and had the sheep pinned to the ground in a flash. Before I knew what was happening, Geoff was out and reaching into the back of the ute, retrieved a pair of sheep handcuffs. Geeze, I think, these two have done this before! Soon the sheep was trussed and dumped in the back for repatriation with the rest. Wonderful people the Australian farmers, and a very special place they live in.

We have 3 children. Eldest daughter on the final bit of her PhD in forensic psychology. My son joined the Army a few years ago after finding civvi street boring. He thoroughly enjoys service life. Youngest daughter graduated as a teacher last year and is now working in Manchester. None of them -married yet so we have that particular joy to look forward to.

It is really good to start catching up again with the old Halton mates. Congratulations to all who do the organising of the 103rd Association. Brilliant web site John. Hope to be actually meeting as many as possible in the coming years.

Doug Pearson

A Letter from Mick Wood house

Early last year I attended a committee meeting, really just to see Bentley Priory and for the beer and kept my head down. In the minutes I found that I had joined the committee! At April's meeting, in one of my increasingly senior moments, I genuinely volunteered to act as treasurer for next January's re-union bash" and to research accommodation in the Aylesbury area for those who will need it. I'm excited by the promise of this event in a format which is new to us for a reunion, less formal, with more chat time with long-lost friends in the lovely atmosphere of Les Shardlow's Kings Arms. Also from the number of "new" faces who appeared at the last dinner in Stratford and at the Window Dedication last year. I'm hoping that there will be more still, I've recently been in contact with Doug Pearson who has now joined the Association and I'm hoping to persuade three more of my former room-mates to do the same.

To give the committee an idea of numbers we can expect to attend, (remembering your partners, many of whom enjoy these re-unions as much as we do), I would appreciate your cheques as soon as possible, (a paltry £10). If you find out later that you can't attend we will mention you at the bash and donate your contribution to a good cause and you won't have lost a fortune.

Remember that I am a dinosaur regarding computers and modern things, with deteriorating eyesight and other faculties so please make cheques out in nice clear writing.

I will send out a list of accommodation to anybody who requests it, B&B appears to be about £30.

And Finally

If you have lost an address or are trying to contact an Ex Ton3 then please let any of the committee know and they will try to help. Also, if you move let us know.

For those changing their email address please send me notification of change.

See you all at the re-union.

Bob Procter