



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

**Issue 34  
June 2012**

# Newsletter



*Congratulations to her Majesty  
on her Diamond Jubilee.  
From The 103<sup>rd</sup> Entry Royal Air  
Force Halton 1963 - 1965.*



**Your Next REUNION IS COMING**



**Just a Year to GO**

**The next Entry Reunion will be on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2013 at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffs**

**Website** <http://www.thenma.org.uk>

**The plan will be to meet at the Arboretum for the daily Remembrance Service, and then to move to the Halton Grove for our own reflection**

**An informal get-together and buffet will be on Saturday night, the 22<sup>nd</sup>, at the Three Queens Hotel, Wetmore Road, Burton on Trent**

**Website** <http://www.threequeenshotel.co.uk>

**Mark this occasion in your diary and keep your eyes on the Entry Website for updates. <http://www.103rd-entry.org.uk>. There will also be more details in the next newsletter.**

**It will be the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion of us joining the Royal Air Force and making friendships that have stood the test of time.**

**Let's make this reunion one to remember for the next 50 years**

**Look on it as a Parade, not a request for your attendance.**

**People make Reunions**

## Editor's Comments & Editorial

I hope this newsletter finds you all in good health and looking forward to Summer and Autumn and the increased outdoor activities these times bring. It is always good to hear of successes and triumphs amongst our members' their families and friends and a great sadness to hear of those not enjoying quite the same standard of life as the rest of us experience. At present we have 3 of our number who are in care. It serves no good to name them, suffice to say 2 of them are in the South of England and the other in the North East. Should you feel that you could visit any of these members please contact our Entry Secretary (Les Garden) or myself and we will furnish you with details of the members and their circumstances.

As time passes I suspect more and more will need help and comradeship and who could be better placed to provide some company for those not as fortunate as ourselves than people who started their RAF careers at the same time and experienced similar experiences and concerns. Memories, common experiences and hail and hearty conversation can be a good medicine.

It has recently come to the committees' attention that our "First Boss" Wing Commander Peter Ayerst has now moved to a residential care home near his old home in Beckenham.

His grandson informs us that he is reasonably hail and hearty, but is 91 years young and as I am sure we all know time takes its toll of our minds and bodies. Should you feel you would like to visit him his grandson says you would be most welcome, but it will need arranging. Contact me if you would like to visit him.

The general idea for newsletters is that they should inform and entertain, but of course that will depend on its subscribers. I hope that you the members will be writing to the editor with your stories or articles. The content of a newsletter doesn't appear by magic, someone has to write it.

What are needed are your war stories, funny incidents, places you have been etc. So dig out those memories from the dusty corners of your mind put them on paper and send them to the editor. In digital form is useful, but handwritten will do just as well.

This issue has a couple of articles from Entry members, one from a regular contributor (Ken Bannister) and an account of life between Halton and now for one Jeremy Bell otherwise known as Dinga, both make interesting reading through the eyes of a couple of riggers.

**BGL**

**The "Ton Threes" now have a page on Facebook.  
Please join us and make it even easier to get in touch.**

The first article was received sometime ago from Ken Bannister and shows that once you get the aircraft bug it is hard to shake it off even in retirement.

# Drivers Airframe

If you have read 'Vulcan 607' you will have noticed Barry Neal's name in the air to air refuelling plan for the Black Buck mission which took place during the Falklands Campaign. Barry was a flight commander on one of the Victor tanker squadrons based at Marham and then shipped out to Ascension Island. He was the White Section leader on the first Black Buck mission, the one that made the headlines. If you ask him he'll tell you all about the 'interesting' landing that White section made on their return to Ascension.

What you may or may not know is that Barry is still actively involved with a Victor tanker called 'Lusty Lindy'.



Lusty Lindy is owned by André Tempest and is lovingly cared for by André and his dedicated team of Victor enthusiasts. She is based at the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington, which is just outside York and a couple of times a year, she does fast taxi runs on what are called 'Rolling Thunder' weekends. I was fortunate enough to be on the flight deck in one of the rear seats in 2009 when Barry carried out one of these runs. Unfortunately, due to there being only two thirds of the runway available to us, we were limited to 80kt instead of the 120kt we usually aspire to. The runs are carried out in a very professional

manner and Barry assures us all that Lusty Lindy will not part company with the runway!!



On this particular run, one of the occupants on the flight deck was Martin Withers who is the Vulcan display pilot. Martin was the captain of the reserve Black Buck Vulcan and was thrust into the limelight on that first raid when John Reeves in the primary aircraft had to turn back due to a pressurisation problem.

In October 2009, Lusty Lindy again did a high speed taxi run, which coincided with a Falklands Campaign reunion. At this reunion, Barry gave a presentation on the tanking side of the Black Buck missions and this was followed by Martin Withers who gave his side of the story. The whole weekend was a huge success and was attended by aviation enthusiasts from all over the country.

If you want to find out more about the Yorkshire Air Museum and Lusty Lindy go to their website by the usual Google route and it is all there. The last high speed run was done in October 2010; for various reasons a run has not been possible since then. Let's hope it won't be too long before the roar of the Conways is heard again in that part of Yorkshire.

Ken Bannister

**Just to show things haven't changed much for centuries here is a copy of an article I received recently.**

MESSAGE FROM THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON TO THE BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE IN LONDON-- written from Central Spain, August 1812

Gentlemen,

Whilst marching from Portugal to a position which commands the approach to Madrid and the French forces, my officers have been diligently complying with your requests which have been sent by H.M. ship from London to Lisbon and thence by dispatch to our headquarters.

We have enumerated our saddles, bridles, tents and tent poles, and all manner of sundry items for which His Majesty's Government holds me accountable. I have dispatched reports on the character, wit, and spleen of every officer. Each item and every farthing has been accounted for, with two regrettable exceptions for which I beg your indulgence.

Unfortunately the sum of one shilling and ninepence remains unaccounted for in one infantry battalion's petty cash and there has been a hideous confusion as the number of jars of raspberry jam issued to one cavalry regiment during a sandstorm in western Spain. This reprehensible carelessness may be related to the pressure of circumstance, since we are war with France, a fact which may come as a bit of a surprise to you gentlemen in Whitehall.

This brings me to my present purpose, which is to request elucidation of my instructions from His Majesty's Government so that I may better understand why I am dragging an army over these barren plains. I construe that perforce it must be one of two alternative duties, as given below. I shall pursue either one with the best of my ability, but I cannot do both:

1. To train an army of uniformed British clerks in Spain for the benefit of the accountants and copy-boys in London or perchance.
2. To see to it that the forces of Napoleon are driven out of Spain.

Your most obedient servant,  
Wellington

**Is this for real or is it from "Blackadder" I will let you make your mind up!!**

**BGL**

**Can you name three consecutive days without using the words Wednesday, Friday, or Sunday?**

**ANSWER IN THE NEXT EDITION.**

**BGL**

**The "Ton Threes" now have a page on Facebook.  
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THE SECOND OF THIS ISSUE'S ARTICLES COMES FROM JEREMY BELL (DINGA TO HIS FRIENDS AND ENEMIES ALIKE). IT IS ONLY FAIR TO POINT OUT THAT HIS OPINIONS ARE NOT NECESSARILY THAT OF THE EDITOR, THE CHAIRMAN, THE COMMITTEE, OR ANY OTHER PERSON LIVING OR DEAD, BUT I AM SURE WE WOULD ALL STICK UP FOR HIS RIGHT TO HAVE THOSE OPINIONS. THANKS DINGA.

## Retirement

By Grumpy Old Crab

My first retirement was forced upon me. I joined up with youz lot but the RAF had decided that they had had enough of me at around the year 2000. I thought that it was a bit short sighted but, apparently, they knew better. Don't they always? They kept telling me that it was because I had reached a certain age, cheeky bastards.

Anyway the thought of going out into the big wide world terrified me. I rather liked the niche that I had built for myself. But I did all the right things ... I applied for a course of "Technical Authoring" at Chippenham college and knuckled under. Stone me! I did not know that there was so much to writing technical books. I never had this amount of trouble explaining to a bone-headed mech how to change a foo-foo valve.

Having passed the required tests, I put my name on the books of a company who know about these things. They offered me a job at GKN-Westland (GKNW); a very small firm in Yeovil who apparently try to make helicopters. At least that is what they told me. Although how they managed to build anything defeats me. I was set to writing modules for the removal and fitment of mechanical bits to the Merlin. Mechanical under the naval interpretation includes the donkeys

It would appear that the Navy, to save space, combine their "riggers" and "sooties" into one trade. Seems strange to me...I would have thought that getting rid of a few senior officers and making the boats bigger with the money saved, would have made more sense.

GKNW had a unique style of management. Actually that is putting it politely; for "unique" I think you need to substitute the word "crap"! Working with ex-navy personnel made the working atmosphere good and friendly in the most part. Ex-RAF (crabs) made up about 5% of the floor with about 20% being civilian (no service time)...a total of about 180 people.

Knowing what the left and right hands are doing would be a great advantage, but when the hands are on different bodies it does add a degree of difficulty. Kev, an ex-crab rigger chief, was my mentor. He was patient with me while he taught me the intricacies of the computer programme needed to write the modules. I was a bit slow! Managing the section we had a couple of people; one an ex-CPO, Iain, and the other an ex-crab rigger chief, Keith. Iain looked after the Naval and Canadian Merlins' and Keith the RAF and others.

You'll appreciate that as a contractor I had no rights; none whatsoever. One day the



priority of the aircraft that they needed me to work on changed five times during the morning depending on which of these highly rated, ex-service, Westland managers was passing my desk at the time. They just didn't talk to one another; each had his own target. In the end Kev lost his rag and shouted at them!

I found very quickly that GKNW was a company ruled by a fear, and that fear was carried by people who knew not what they were doing. This is the same firm that Heseltine, some years earlier, was prepared to allow to go under, but was voted down by dear old Mrs. Thatcher.

I was taken into GKNW on the promise that I would become permanent within a year, but when I started to ask questions I was fobbed off with various excuses; all sounding like leaking sieves. So I decided to jump ship. That's a naval term...OMG I'm metamorphosing.

I applied to the Civil Service, the only other employer in this area to employ experienced aircraft engineers. I was put to writing amendments to the Sea King AP until AgustaWestland (AW) decided to bid for that contract. And then some stupid Sdn/Ldr (manager) wanted me to drive up and down the 303 to work at Middle Wallop. I looked at him incredulously and, innocently, asked him if he thought I was mad and that, at my age, I wanted to join the 303 west-bound rat-race on a Friday afternoon? He was not amused!

Two days later I joined the Sea King Integrated Project Team. Integrated was a misnomer as it comprised of AW and us; "us" being civil servants and Navy personnel. As AW is only interested in

screwing as much money out of the MoD as it can, there was always going to be a conflict of interests. 5 years later they dropped the "integrated" part of the title! Oops!

So here I was cruising and keeping my seat warm, just like a good civil servant

should and the years passed ever faster. I found that there were good managers in Civvy Street but that you had to look really, really, hard for them; I had one such. In the civil service you apply for promotion. You do not get it because you have earned it. Heaven forbid! You do have to show that you are competent with the financial side of the business and also that you have a passing knowledge of the systems for management; assessments and that sort of thing. Even the ex-servicemen find it hard to comprehend but it doesn't stop them applying. And somehow they undergo the officer selection course where they undergo a lobotomy. It amazes me how these people ever kept control on a boat.

Which brings me onto another quirk of the civil service management ... they are not allowed to say anything bad about you unless you have raped a cow in public or torn a child limb from limb in Hyde park at midday. And even then they can only say that this man/woman is not really suited to farming or child care etc. This then brings me to main crux of this missive ... At the age of 65 I decided to work a three day week. I thought at the time that it would suit me with time at home greatly increased. What I did not take into consideration was that changes were afoot; lots and lots of ginormous changes.

The first of these changes was probably the worst...my "line manager", Bill an ex-naval chief, was 65 in January and retired leaving me in the hands of another ex-CPO. The difference was that Bill and I could talk the same

language and discussed, quite openly, a number of subjects. Not least of all was the way that the government, any government, was helping the three forces to disintegrate. The new man, John, will not listen to discussion and certainly would not buck the system. With the spine of a flatfish he says that whatever the grown-ups say is correct. As if that was ever true!

Being a secretary (me?) to two of his meetings he will, now, not allow me to send out the minutes. Not because the minutes are incorrect: oh no! But because my introductory "email", apparently, is flippant. As if! I have now worked in "civvy-street" for eleven years and I am amazed that there are so few even reasonably good managers. I am fed up of working for people who apparently wear the rank of manager, but fail to be able to make the decisions that allow them to manage well.

I really do accept that things need to change, but the changes that I have seen the various "Defence Ministers" make over the past 15/20 years beggar belief ... An army that is financially controlled and almost forgotten about when the soldiers turn in their uniforms; an RAF that consists only of pilots and petrol pump attendants; the technical element being farmed out to civilians; and a Navy that has few matelots and NO battle group. All three are subject to the control of civilian firms dependent on what that firm has supplied.

Did you know that we have three times the number of admirals than we have warships ... and I do not count mine-sweepers as warships; and the RAF and the army are in the same boat? OMG!

Don't get me wrong ... I have thoroughly enjoyed my time and the people I have met both in and out of uniform; both good and bad; the good being the vast majority. But my time has come before I drop myself in the proverbial by arguing with someone that has (or thinks that he has) total control over my life.

I have never, knowingly, allowed any aircraft to fly in an unsafe condition. Ok, wheels, tires and occasional hydraulic leaks that would "do a trip" ...but never unsafe! The laws that govern flight safety in today's services are almost suffocating. Even supervisors need supervision. Since the Hadden Report, this incidentally was a good, and 99% factual, piece of writing; most of the grown-ups are scared to breathe without asking for permission. Allow me a teeny-weeny weeny bit of exaggeration.

We have in charge of the armed forces a bunch of cretins (Red/Blue and Yellow) who are only prepared to listen to;

1. The bean counters and
2. The really, really big grown-ups in government.

I know that it has ever been thus but now it is out of control. Hence we get rid of the carrier group, along with one of the great British aircraft (to me nothing can beat the Hunter). We continue to build the two carriers that have been ordered, but we have no aircraft to go on board. Oh Wow!

And then we go to war with Libya where our aircraft have to fly 550 miles to do their business and return the same way.

Ok! This allows, at great expense, our refuellers to have a reasonably good summer in Cyprus. I do know that I'm not the brightest light in the box, but a

carrier twenty miles of the coast...? And we keep our £34 billion nuclear deterrent ... which, incidentally we are not allowed to let off without the prior permission of the war-mongers in the Pentagon/White-House. They are their rockets.

We have troops in Afghanistan, and possibly Libya, and they decide that we need to cut the numbers of soldiers,

airmen and sailors. Not the officers ... they are moved sideways to another

post. We have, in uniform, three fine upstanding leaders of our armed forces who look magnificent when they're all dolled up in their respective finery, but who wait until they are civilians and drawing their pension, before they criticize the decisions made by these aforementioned cretins.

I think that it is time I bowed out of the work force and allowed it to go on without me. I was probably holding it up anyway!

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## **Announcements**

### **Membership -**

***Forget Facebook, there is a social networking site just for Old Haltonians. It can be found on <http://oldhaltonian.ning.com/>***

### **Dates for your Diary**

#### ***Next Committee Meeting:-***

*1<sup>st</sup> December 2012 at Watermead Aylesbury*

#### ***Next Entry Reunion:***

*22<sup>nd</sup> June 2013 at the Three Queens Hotel, Wetmore Road, Burton on Trent DE14 1SY*

*23<sup>rd</sup> June 2013 at the National Memorial Arboretum, Croxall Road, Alrewas, Staffs DE13 7AR*

**The next Issue of the newsletter will be during December 2012,**

**Deadline for contributions is 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012**

Contributions, mail or abuse about the Newsletter to

The Editor  
Brian Lee  
Omaha House  
London Road  
Ipswich  
IP2 0SS

Or e-mail: [steam707@hotmail.com](mailto:steam707@hotmail.com)

#### **Committee Members:**

*Les Shardlow, Les Garden,  
Chris Wales, Barry Neal, Brian Lee,  
Ken Bannister, Dave Post,  
Malcolm Watts, Mick Woodhouse*