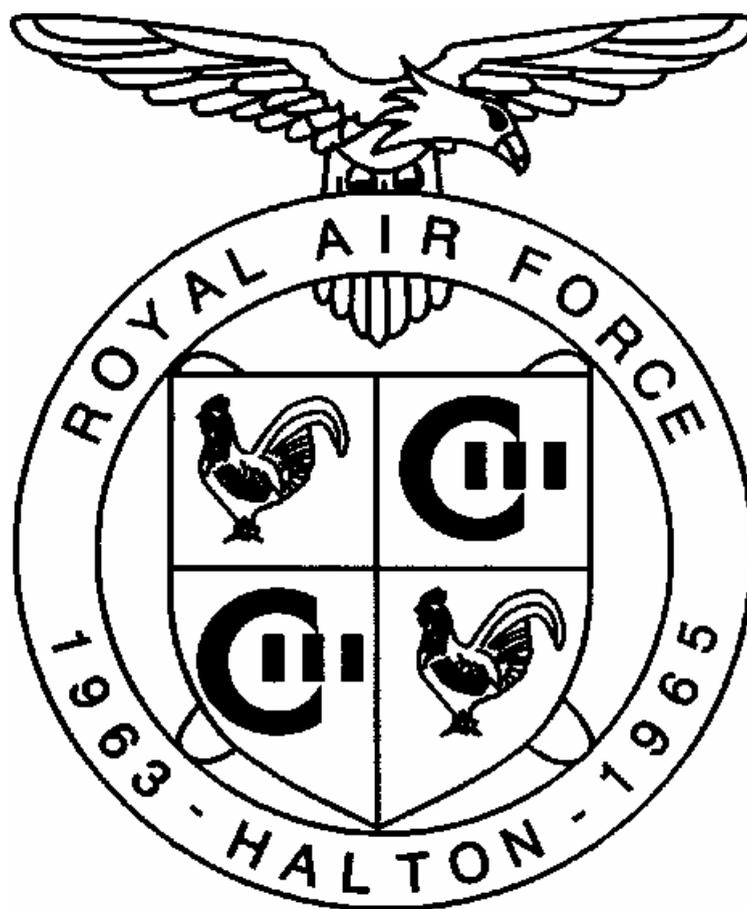


103rd Entry Association

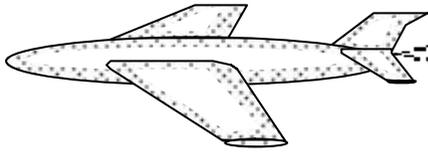
Newsletter



No. 7

February 1993

Editor: MHF Watts



Editorial

Let the debate commence. It is 2^{1/2} years since we gathered for our 25th Anniversary Reunion and it is time to look ahead to the 30th in 1995.

As you can read from the Committee Meeting notes, a decision has been made to hold our next Reunion on the 28th October 1995, but where? Glynn Hayes has been the first to argue a case for a venue away from the Halton area. Indeed, there may be merit in seeking a solution that attempts to satisfy those who do not live in the south. Is there anyone else with any ideas or thoughts on the matter, or should we resort to the pin-in-a-map trick?

Les Garden has once again put pen to paper with his Reflections, while Gerry Miller has provided an abridged auto-biography. I only hope that in the light of recent events at BAe, his future remains secure.

Over the past decade or so, I have made my regular pilgrimage to Dartmoor. Alan Stephens, manager of the successful Ten-Three Ten Tors Team and now Chief Scrutineer at the annual event, wrote an article for the Halton Magazine in July 1965. On the 25th anniversary of the event in 1985, he produced an extract of this article for a special Anniversary Booklet.

I realise that Dartmoor might be considered as a minority interest; however, some of you may wish to learn that Ten Tors is still being run, even though its long-term future may remain in some doubt. This year the event takes place over the weekend of the 15/16th May from Oakhampton. Fancy a weekend break with a difference? Why not take a take a Spring stroll over the moors and reflect, and hope it doesn't rain!

MHFW

The Future of Halton

On current plans, No 1 School of Technical Training will have left Halton for Cosford by April 1995. As the technical training elements move out, other units will move in: Recruit training from Swinderby, Administrative training from Hereford and Police training from Newton among others. Our President, however~, is confident that space will always be found at Halton for an Association office and that the 1995 Triennial Reunion will be held there. A sub-committee of Council has been tasked to work with the Station to ensure that Aircraft Apprentice records and artefacts held by the Station and the Association are catalogued and preserved.

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RAF Halton Aircraft Apprentices Association - Thoughts for the future from the Chairman.

This is the fifth Reunion to be held at Halton, starting with the Diamond Jubilee Reunion in 1980 that launched the RAF Halton Aircraft Apprentices Association. The Association now has a membership of 3600 and funds invested to provide income to enable us to maintain contact between Apprentices of all ages, to preserve the traditions of No. 1 S of TT, and to relieve hardship experienced by past and present Halton Apprentices.

With the end of the Apprentice Scheme, the relevance of the Association may be questioned. However, I believe that the Association has to keep the spirit of Halton alive until, in a more enlightened time, the Royal Air Force recognises the contribution that Apprentices have made, and would make again, to the Service.

Accordingly, I ask all those who have come today, and are NOT members of the Association, to JOIN NOW. Only with the vigorous support of ALL those who enjoy these occasions can we hope to continue our Reunions at Halton when No 1 S of TT moves to Cosford.

I offer the thanks of you all to the stalwarts of the Association based at Halton, to the Station Commander, Group Captain Rod Brumpton, to all the staff, and to the last two entries of Apprentices, without whose work this reunion could not happen.

My good wishes to you all. Come again in 1995

Mike Evans (70th Entry)

Reflections

January 1963 - cold, miserable, being harassed from dawn till well past bedtime. Square bashing - having to dig our way onto the parade square, shouted at by Cpl Stewart - what a miserable bastard! Lining up at clothing stores - if it fitted you were deformed. Collar studs, hairy blue, bulling boots, pressing trousers and every other piece of clothing. No going to bed for the first kit inspection. Meanwhile the rest of Halton went about its way - a thousand or so apprentices went about their daily routine, workshops echoed to the sound of theory and practice of aircraft went on continuously. At schools classrooms were packed as the process of cramming in knowledge and the way of the air force went about its way. Would it ever end?

12 January 1993. As near as dammit 30 years since that day which has bound us all together I had to return to

Halton to return a couple VC10 fire extinguishers to Electrical Training Flight. Arrived at the guardroom - horrible memories of booking out in our uniform for limited freedom. A Cpl WRAF sits there, takes my details - says in all innocence, "Have you been here before?" Notice outside said: "Do not park on the road - staff will not serve you". Serve you -the snoops would normally do you!

Made my way down to electrical workshops - went in to be greeted by an air of desolation. The workshops have not changed much since we were there, now they are almost silent. Training in any form has almost come to an end, the last apprentice entry finishes in May/June of this year. Although the move to Cosford is not scheduled until 1995 a start has been made to turn Halton to its new role, airframe workshops is no more! It is now an indoor parade ground. All the rigger bits have moved into bay 1, 2, 3 of old workshops with the engine, electrical and safety equipers sharing the rest. Out the back of the workshops lie the remains of unwanted aircraft destined for the scrap heap, amongst the scrap I find the remains of the constant frequency and rectified AC training boards which we used. They have finally got something better.

The instructors manage a couple of classes a week.

So there it is, Halton has nearly gone. What do I think? The accountants and basket weavers have had their way; however, the Army and Navy haven't gone this way yet. It is interesting to note that an editorial in the MAIL ON SUNDAY advocated a return to the way of the apprenticeship as a method of instilling some values into the present generation. This was not written by any of the recognised establishment but by Melvin Bragg! I will leave you to come to your own conclusion.

Will the 'new' system work? Well you guys who are still in will have that to worry about!

Les Garden

A potted history from a 103 Rigger ! (19)

January 66 Posted to Lyneham Brit and Comet Line Servicing Sqn. Great place, but needed new Nikon camera, applied for overseas posting!

April 67 Posted to 390 MU Seletar Singapore, got a new camera. Didn't like MU work and managed to wangle internal transfer to 52 Sqn Andovers and had a great time travelling the Far East. On run down of Seletar, transferred to Changi and had Tour extended to 3 years. Met Tom Reay who was looking after the VIP 748's and 'Spud' Spalding who called in with the Flight Checker Argosy (still an SAC), got promoted to Cal, lots more dosh, bought a new Rifle and started to shoot seriously.

February 70 Posted to Brize Norton VC10 Line Servicing Sqn, Built Indoor rifle range so I could pursue my shooting. Got married, bought house in Cheltenham, then two children, one of each - now poor. Got promoted to Sgt now more dosh . Met many ex 103's Ken Bannister, Kev Murnan to name but two.

January 76 Winds of change blowing through RAF posted to Structures Sqn CSDE Swanton Morley. Ten years of large aircraft experience down the drain, made responsible for Phantom and Harrier structure! Took advantage of sleepy hollow attitude, went to college and got an HNC, now taking shooting real seriously. Spent eight years dabbling in all sorts of projects like Tornado and nebulous NDT techniques. Got my Chief and a bit more dosh. On the whole had a great time.

April 83 Now, the nadir of my professional RAF career - Posted to West Raynham, Rigger Chief Bloodhound missile overhaul. A posting to stretch one's technical abilities to the full! Found local Shooting club with Outdoor rifle range. Advised Flight Cmdr that I was now Captain of Norfolk County and if I couldn't be found in my office I was probably on the range practising and would call in later should he wish to discuss anything with me. Seemed to go down okay and got on with the task of preparing myself for Bisley and Civvy Street.

June 86 Left RAF and became a pensioner. Got Lucky, joined big bad British Aerospace and went to Saudi Arabia as a Chief Engineer in their HQ in Riyadh - the two things I swore I would never do. Had to give up Shooting, they cut things of one's person for having firearms in Saudi! Dosh mountain now diminishing - kids still at boarding school! Set up VIP flight for company operating BAe 125's for the Saudi Airforce. Took up Scuba diving, new horizons opened up in the form of weekend trips to Jeddah. Wife didn't like Saudi - Left Saudi. Note for Mick Woodhouse - I last saw Derek Palmer in Riyadh working for BAe.

August 89 Returned to UK and started work for BAe Commercial Aircraft as a Senior Executive ! ! ! marketing and projects concentrating mainly on presenting to potential customers logistical support for the BAe 125 series aircraft. In the November began marketing project in Japan for special variant version of aircraft. Life now alternates between Sushi Japan and wife's vegetarian diet in UK! I'm now a much slimmer rigger.

May 91 On the formation of a new BAe subsidiary company - Corporate jets, I transferred from Commercial a/c and became Special Projects Manager for their Customer Support Department. Business life now revolves around Japan - Washington - Florida - UK - Japan. Life's a bitch but the old frequent flier programme keeps growing!

Now looking for part time job in the Caribbean counting coconuts - any offers?

Unfortunately I am unable to attend the forthcoming reunion as once again I will be living the clean life in Tokyo on the 26th. However my thoughts will be with everyone, have a great time.

Gerry Miller



A Letter to the Editor

A very enjoyable day was spent at RAF Halton on September 26th, even if it was a long time by the time I got home again.

As you are requesting suggestions for somewhere to hold our next 103 Association Re-union, I am putting pen to paper.

Just before I went to Germany for a week, I arranged for details of the Army Museum of Transport to be sent to Nick Smith. This museum is BIG, complete with tanks, guns, trucks, cars etc and has a railway section. There is even an aircraft section and a Blackburn Beverley standing outside.

The staff here, have a dining suite, where meals of any type may be served and of course(!), bar included. A trip around the museum is included where the 'big boys' can 'play with' and climb over exhibits. A quiet 'wander' round the museum with my nephew some years ago lasted some 2-3 hours.

Beverley is a very beautiful old market town, complete with Beverly Minster, St Mary's church, scenic old town, old shops (but new goods), Westwood Common Land, Racecourse and many attractive villages nearby including Walkington, Skidby (with it's mill), and Bishop Burton.

The coast is only a few miles away and we are easily reached by motorway. Hull is close by, complete with the Humber Bridge and old city.

Just a few brief words. If any help is needed in any way, then the Beverley RAFHAAA is very willing to come to our aid. In addition, we have quite a few suitable venues nearby.

Glynn R Hayes

Ten Tors 1965 A Success Story - An article by Wg Cdr Alan Stephens (retd)

In 1965 the writer of this article assisted in the training of the teams from RAF Halton. It was a particularly successful entry, and the following is an extract from the article which he subsequently wrote for the Halton Magazine in July 1965.

Denbury, on our arrival, looked more like Butlin's than an Army training camp. 'There was a holiday atmosphere everywhere as the hundreds of participants emerged from their coaches, mini-buses and cars. Their gay assortment of dress matched the colourful flags which bedecked the camp entrance. In the reception room we were encouraged to buy souvenir booklets, postcards, badges, pennants and other mementos. In an atmosphere like this, it was easy to take things for granted and to forget that what we saw was the culmination of many hard months of planning and preparation by the Junior Leaders Regiment.

The planning for Ten Tors 1965 had in fact commenced as soon as the 1964 Expedition had taken place. The annual booklet had been the first item on a predetermined schedule and this had to be passed to the printers at least six months before the Expedition. The routes had to be worked out and checked on the ground. Clearance had to be obtained from landowners and other authorities. Stores, tentage, transport and rations had to be obtained. Route cards had to be printed, rubber stamps for checkpoints prepared, and medals ordered. The reporting and casualty plot had to be worked out and the communications network fitted into the overall plan. In the two days of the Expedition, nearly fifty field radio sets would have to be deployed for control purposes and approximately 5,000 messages would pass between the check points on the Moor and Control Head quarters at Willsworthy Camp.

For us, the first essential on arrival was to establish base camp in the field allocated behind the main camp. For

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this we used 160 pound tents and these were erected in the minimum of time. Meals were cooked, of final briefings attended and a replacement found for our sick absentee - fortunately we obtained a most enthusiastic Army Junior Leader. We were then able to relax and meet up with other RAF contingents from Cranwell, Cosford, Hereford and St Athan. Sqn Ldr De'Ath, who had been associated with Ten Tors from the start, gave a few last words of advice and the whole party retired to bed early. The silence which reigned in the Halton lines by nine o'clock was a clear indication of the determination of our boys to do well and was an absolute contrast to the din which came from almost every other part of the camp. When the NAAFI closed the noise level rose even higher. Songs were sung, fireworks exploded and many gave no thought for the morrow.

Reveille was at 4am and the Halton patrols rose refreshed from a good night's sleep despite the noisy distractions. Breakfast was cooked, rucksacks packed and by 5.30am the patrols were boarding our buses to make the half hour journey to the start of Haytor Rocks. At 7am a blast of trumpets announced the beginning of the opening ceremony. A speech, a prayer and the patrols collected their route cards, selected their route and booked out. A last fleeting word of encouragement from us and they were on their own.

Team managers are not allowed to enter the Moor to offer assistance during the Expedition. There is nothing, however, to prevent them stopping on the road side where routes cross and offering verbal encouragement. The mere sight of a blue van and a familiar face do tremendous good as I well remember from the training walks in Buckinghamshire and Wales. Four times on the first day we were able to see some of the patrols in this way and we like to think that the effort helped. Almost all the patrols seen were in the lead on their particular route and all seemed to be doing well despite admissions by some individuals that they had had bad spells. Fortunately no accidents had occurred, but these were early times yet and anything could happen. I recall seeing an Army lad brought in on a stretcher suffering from Moorland water poisoning; we heard also of a boy bitten by an adder and then incredibly left in the Moor by his patrol! But that night as we sipped beer on our return to base camp, we were full of hope for the next day. We rose late on the second day. We were thankful for what had been a good night's sleep - free from the noise of the previous night and free from the discomfort endured by many of the participants on the Moor. We break fasted and drove quickly the twenty-five or so miles to the finish at Willsworthy on the western fringe of the Moor. We were anticipating an early finish by the Halton boys' patrol and naturally did not wish to miss this.

Willsworthy was crowded with parents and friends, schoolmasters and team managers. All were caught up in the general excitement as the indicator board showed the progress of the patrols. For some, there was the disappointment of discovering that their patrol had

withdrawn or would not be able to complete the course in time. For others, the tense wait as they knew their patrol had only one more tor before completion. It was a relief to us to see that all Halton patrols were still apparently going strong. All were ahead of the schedule required to complete in time, but most were as yet some distance from the finish.

Already the 14-16 year old patrols were finishing and we were somewhat surprised and disappointed that the Halton team were still an hour away. It seemed a long wait, but eventually we had the answer to our questions. Over the ridge came the team side by side with a girls' team, which they had accompanied from early on the first day. Singing and shouting their way to the finish, they made a wonderful impression on the waiting crowd and received a great reception. The name of Halton was immediately on the lips of many of the spectators and the impression already created was deepened with the arrival later of the youths' patrols. Three of the five patrols came in side by side, having met up at the last tor, and their sprint over the last hundred yards was almost a sensation. The remaining arrived together with the name of Halton held aloft.

We were overjoyed by the results to that moment and all we required now was for the young men's patrols (60 milers) from the 103rd and 104th Entries to complete and so become the first RAF teams in this age group ever to do so. The tension was great. Less than two hours remained; the indicator showed both patrols one tor from home.

They had the time and, barring accidents, they must do it. I recall talking to a junior patrol while we waited. I looked round and saw, sitting on the grass, some of the 104th Entry patrol. It was too soon; they could not have done it; they must have dropped out for some reason or other; I hated to think what might have happened. "We've done it, Sir", said Spink, their leader, "We're the first senior RAF team to complete". I am not normally emotional, but such is the atmosphere at Willsworthy on the second day of Ten Tors that I must admit I was affected then. When the 103rd Entry patrol came in shortly after to the rousing applause of all the Halton contingent who were present, our success and joy were complete. We had done it: we had entered eight patrols and they had all succeeded - the largest one hundred per cent successful entry ever.

This result has never been bettered - and never will be since the number of entries from one organisation is now limited.

Notes of Committee Meeting, held at Procon Electronics 5th September 1992 @ 1100hrs

Present: L Shardlow, B Neal, MHF Watts, N Smith, J Bromley, L Garden, J Dillon

1. The Treasurer stated that bank balance was £673 with still a few members to renew their subscription.
2. It was proposed by the Treasurer that we investigate the possibility of opening a saving account so that approx £500 can be invested. Annual running costs of the Association are small, mainly postage. Treasurer to action.
3. MW stated that next newsletter would be produced for Feb 93. LS and BN to note for contribution.
4. Next meeting Saturday 5 December 1992 at 11.00 am.

Les Garden, Secretary

Notes of Committee Meeting, held at Procon Electronics 5th December 1992 @ 1100hrs

Present: L Shardlow, MHF Watts, N Smith, J Bromley, L Garden, J Dillon

Apologies received from C Wales and B Neal.

1. RAFHAA Reunion '92. The Treasurer reported that £34 had been spent on refreshments for members attending the Reunion. As per the resolution at the last meeting, £66 had been returned to the bank.
2. Financial Report. £500 has been placed in a deposit account by the Treasurer. This leaves approximately £100 in the day to day account. The bank have also advised that we will not be subject to bank charges on the account for the foreseeable future.
3. Membership. The Treasurer reported that over the last 2 years 13 members had allowed their subscriptions to elapse. Current membership stands at 48.
4. 30th Anniversary Reunion 1995. It was decided that a 30th Anniversary Reunion of leaving Halton should take place on Saturday 28 October 1995. The following actions would be taken:

- a. Advise all members of this date so that there are no excuses - Action MW via newsletter.

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- b. Members to advise of suitable locations where we can accommodate 100+ people - Action MW via newsletter.
 - c. RAFHAAA to be contacted about their database on reunion venues - Action LG.
 - d. Reunion will take similar format to Reunion '90 and costs will be similar (allowing for inflation). The objective will be to get value for money!
5. Next meeting 6 March 1993 at Procon Electronics.

Les Garden, Secretary

And Finally...

Please don't forget to send your newsletter contribution to the editor:

MHF Watts, 122 Greenwood, Walters Ash, High Wycombe, Bucks HP14 4XD or fax 0494-496685.

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