103rd Entry Association

Issue 39

NEWSLETTER

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS TO THE READER

50th Anniversary of Graduation Reunion

13th/14th June 2015, Cosford

To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of graduating from those hallowed workshops, blocks and parade squares we will be having a Reunion at Cosford over the weekend of 13th/14th June 2015. As I am sure you all know, No 1 School of Technical Training is now based at RAF Cosford with all the former traditions and disciplines of its former home.

There will be an informal get-together on the evening of Saturday 13th June, and for Sunday 14th June private hospitality facilities have been arranged at the 2015 Cosford Air Show. The Mount Hotel, Mount Road, Wolverhampton WV6 8PH, www.themount.co.uk, will be an ideal base for the weekend and similar arrangements have been made with the hotel as were in place last year in Burton on Trent.

Saturday 13th June 2015	7.00 for 7.30pm buffet; The Mount Hotel
Sunday 14th June 2015	from 10.30am meet at the Cosford Air Show Entry Hospitality Area
	TBD Air Display starts

RAF Cosford is approx 7 mls from the hotel, and these rates have been agreed with the hotel:

Double or Twin Room (2 guests)	£130.00/room/night
Single occupancy	£105.00/room/night
Rates include:	Bed, breakfast and dinner for 2, including our Saturday night buffet, and a 3 course evening meal on Friday and/or Sunday evening(s)

Accommodation should be booked directly with the Hotel on 01902-752055, quoting the "103rd Entry Reunion Stay" or "Group Reservation Number 175743". A deposit is not required, but a credit card is required to guarantee the reservation. For anyone coming for the Saturday evening but not staying at the hotel, a charge will be made for the buffet. The Association will be putting money behind the bar on the Saturday night and contributing to the cost of the hospitality area on the Sunday.

The Cosford Air Show is very popular and accommodation in the local area will fill up very quickly, so please book early; the hotel is holding 35 rooms for the weekend. Anyone wanting to stay elsewhere should also consider booking early. Please let me know if you are going to be staying elsewhere and plan to come to either the evening buffet and/or to Cosford. Also, if anyone is only going to come to Cosford, please let me know.

If you have any questions please let Barry Neal know on 01805-601715; or 07789-435477; *tupnce@aol.com*

Ironically, just as we were finalising this newsletter, Dick Horton e-mailed us with news of the impending Typhoon Hagupit aiming for the Philippines. The good news is that we have now heard from him again and all is well, apart from some flooding in the house from water coming through their sliding windows. That, he says, was the first mistake in re-building the house! We wish him, Gina and Mark all the very best, and a very Happy Xmas and New Year.

Continued from the last Newsletter

Broken homes … Haiyan 2013 *(Part 2)*

After Haiyan

The following morning we could hear hammering as our fishermen neighbours began to collect and replace the pieces of their lumber and corrugated iron built houses. It is an unwritten law here that if you find a piece of your neighbour's house after a typhoon you must return it to him. Bless them, our helpers Merly and Miguel turned up for work at 7 am as usual. Now that is dedication as their own houses must surely be wrecked. Gina and Merly collected and started to dry out our clothes and other possessions. With the assistance of Miguel and his bolo he cut me a path to get my motorcycle up to the main road. Fallen trees, wrecked fences and broken power lines barred our path. I wanted to see how much damage had been done to the town. (*Or did I really want to run away from my own situation for a while?*) Everyone seemed to have the same idea, to cut and clear the pathway to town in their particular area. We met a group of men cutting their way from the opposite direction. The journey into town felt strange as all the normal landmarks that our senses use in getting us from A to B were no longer there. Gone. Moved. Flattened. The experience was of somehow being lost in your own community. The situation in town was bad. Not a building unscathed. Hardly a light material house left standing. Trees, walls, pylons, telephone lines and electrical cables littered the roads making most roads impassable.

Back come those mental snapshots again. An old woman sitting vacantly by the side of the road. Her clothes dirty and slept in. Behind her a pile of wood that was once her home and small shop (Sari-Sari stall) which provided her simple living. A small child stands crying by himself. His mother away trying to borrow food from her neighbours. His father off looking for pieces of their old home. People fighting back tears as they stare at the place where their house once stood. Women retrieving clothes and other items from the roadside and from the remains of neighbouring trees. Others sort through wet possessions. Books, family photos, treasured items. Families by the roadside with "Please Help Us" written on pieces of cardboard. Tragic tearful stuff. My attorney's ancestral home in the centre of Medellin. Old Filipino style, timber built. The equivalent of a UK Listed Building I guess. The complete front of his house gone as in a dolls house, revealing each room and its contents. I weaved my way through power and telephone lines and fallen trees and decided to see if the road to Bogo city was open. *I guess that I was not ready to face my own home yet.* Bogo is a 15 km journey. Not one power line or telephone pylon left standing. Not one street light left unbent. Not one school left with a roof. Power cables, like huge black snakes crossing and re-crossing the roads. The fields of sugar cane and mango trees lay flat. No buses, no cars, no motorcycles, no traffic. Just small groups of people surveying the mess. I turn the bike round and headed back for home. We all waited for the national rescue effort to arrive from the south. And we waited. Eventually Mayor Ricky said, "*Looks like we are on our own*." He set in motion Medellin's own recovery plan. I think that it is generally accepted that the Philippine Government was so stunned by the total destruction of Tacloban City that they seemed to forget about the rest of us. Mayor Ricky apparently went on TV in Cebu City and delivered a scathing attack on the regional government. He was furious.

***Addendum**: It is well known that the mayor keeps an eye on his beloved Medellin coastline from his jet ski, as he rides to and from his private island Gibitnil (known locally as Funtastic Island.) His speed through the water is said to be a good barometer of his mood on the day. Slow and calm, all the way up to fast and furious. Having just lost the complete roof of his own home and been ignored by the regional government I can attest to it. On that particular day when Ricky came past … he was really motoring!*

At night from our coastal position we watched the powerful lights of the Cebeco maintenance crews moving ever closer towards Medellin. Slowly. Painfully slowly. After a week we had seen just one "outsider." A Cessna light aircraft. It flew up and down Hagnaya Bay and circled our house for a few times. We stood in the garden and waved. Then it was gone. Mobile texting was re-established fairly quickly and I was able to communicate with the British Consul in Manila via text message about the health of Brits in Medellin. I had also been taking photos of the destruction in Medellin on my mobile phone but, with no internet or MMS available there was nothing that I could do with them.

I guess that at that point my brain started to recover from the trauma. I started to think. We needed cash for repairs, tarpaulins to keep dry and a generator. With no banks open or ATM working, the nearest place I could get money was Cebu City. I was also to be honest in need of an emotional break. Filipinos may be used to dealing with major disasters. I however am not. The main coastal highway to the city had been cleared of trees and fallen transmission lines and the buses were now running so off we went. As we approached Cebu City, Gina and I experienced overwhelming feelings of anger. What the hell was that all about? We believe that it was the sight of the thousands of city dwellers laughing, playing and going normally about their business whilst only 100 km north, their fellow Cebuano's were sitting homeless by the roadside waiting for their help. We checked into our favourite hotel. Wonderful. Dry beds, lights, hot water, hot food and of course access to the Internet. The hotel staff were keen to know how we were doing up north. Stories of the devastation were starting to filter south. When I got to our room I fired off a very blunt e-mail to the British Consul. Not so much a polite nudge, more a full blown shove and received a politically correct reply in return. Not satisfied with this reply my follow up e-mail to him included the photos I had taken of the devastation in Medellin. Maybe it worked although I'm certainly not claiming that it did, but I was told that the Consul took the photos directly into a meeting with the British Ambassador and in the following days the first signs of help started to arrive in Medellin, albeit mostly from the international community and private sector. It had taken over a week for anyone to take any notice of the disaster on their own doorstep. We are a fishing community. The typhoon had destroyed all the fishing boats. The fishermen could not fish ... so their families could not eat. We had plenty of rice to help out our fishermen neighbours, but many others were not so fortunate. Families by the roadside with "*Please Help Us*" signs. Groups of young children with "*We Need Food and Water*" scrawled on pieces of cardboard. It was all there to see if the good and the great chose to look at it.

The Israelis arrived first with a self-contained mobile army hospital unit and set up in the grounds of Bogo City hospital. The Israelis scored lots of brownie points here. They were efficient, organised, highly visible and above all useful. After the Israelis came the Red Cross and Cebu Rotary Club convoys with bottled water, tins of sardines and rice. Cebu City set up a Crisis Management Centre at our dockside. Sky Communications brought in and installed a satellite communication system for the mayor and his immediate staff. Eventually a small group from the British Embassy in Manila arrived with their cameras and yet more bottled water. We understand that money came flooding in from the international community (although you will appreciate we had no TV.) Whilst always useful, money so easily gets held up in the bureaucratic process and is also open to corruption, especially in 3rd world countries. What is needed is a coordinated international response group. Yea! Like that will happen. However, Medellin's recovery had spluttered into life. Now we have more bottled water, tins of sardines and rice than we know what to do with. The Municipal offices and corridors are piled to the ceiling with the stuff. Mayor Ricky's Jet Ski travels up and down the coast at a much more dignified speed. The roadside signs painted on pieces of cardboard now say, "*Thank You*."

It will take years for Medellin to recover its charm. Some things will have been lost forever. The emergency is not over for us. Hundreds of families are still homeless. The town is still in a mess. Of course, you probably won't ever hear about it. The politicians have finished televising their prepared speeches and the media has moved on to yet newer stories. Their readers are now bored with Haiyan. That's life.

Looking Ahead

We think that, if things go well we have just about enough savings left to repair the damage to our property. It will take more than 6 months, probably up to one year as the queue for materials and manpower is the delaying factor. We are only a fishing and sugar based community. Builders are working hard in the Medellin area but we are only one customer among thousands. Oh how we would exchange a corridor full of bottled water, tinned sardines and

rice for a few extra qualified builders! We just have to wait our turn for each phase of the repair. At the moment we are replacing the bent and broken purlins and welding stronger angle bars in their place. The house is still without a roof but we have placed an order for one in Cebu City. I think that the fitting of the roof will be a major morale boost for us all.

Addendum: *Some of you will remember from previous e-mails that it is traditional in the Philippines to sacrifice a farm animal during house construction for good luck. For our house it was a pig which we then ate with our builders. I think it is safe to say now, that the pig failed to do what it was supposed to! (It did taste good though.) Last week the welders killed a chicken. Gina vetoed the suggested goat. I hope this time, that the unfortunate chicken works better than the pig ever did!*

Currently we are living in a house nearby. It is the retirement home of a Filipino ship's captain who lives in his Cebu City house and generously made us this offer. His house is flat roofed because he has not got around to building the upstairs level yet. In general, flat roofed properties seem to have suffered less damage than other types. Unfortunately because of the design of our house, a flat roof is not an option.

Since Super Typhoon Haiyan hit Medellin 6 weeks ago, Cebeco, the Cebu Electric Company has replaced nearly 12, 000 power pylons working 24 hours a day in shifts. Their colleagues from the mid and south Cebu areas came up to help them. Medellin now has electrical power, but still no internet or TV. During the 6 week power blackout, our local police station reported no appreciable increase in crime. The Medellin Pharmacy, also heavily damaged by the typhoon, has remained open every day since the typhoon left. Historically, typhoons like Haiyan come round once every one hundred years. We shall see if history continues to repeat itself. If so, I plan to miss the next one.

Can we take any positives from this experience? Yes I think so, if we look hard enough. First and most obvious, we are all still alive. Secondly the typhoon damage has revealed some '*cost cutting*' in the roof support on the part of our previous builder. This has been identified and rectified. We will have a stronger roof as a result. Third the walls and foundations of the house and the sea walls surrounding the property have been tested in 200+ mph winds and not found wanting. They are very sound. And the Tamarind tree near the south wall of the house has proved to be as solid as a rock.

And what of the Filipino? These provincial and comparatively uneducated people can still teach me a thing or two. Their kindness and generosity. Their tolerance and politeness. Their acceptance of the way life is. Their cheerful smiles and shy laughter behind cupped hands as they share some joke or other. We greet each other in town. "*How is your family?*" I ask politely. "*They are well thank you,*" comes the equally polite reply. "*And your home?"* I enquire*. "Ah my home …"* He smiles. *"My home is broken*."

2014: Onwards and Upwards

It is now May 2014; 6 months after record busting Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) munched its way across the Central Philippines. The wet season has ended and the dry season has just started. We get just two seasons here. The stories of people seeing cats, dogs and even goats flying through the air have been relegated to chatter in the local bars. Normality is returning. Tawagan fishermen are back out to sea in their newly constructed and brightly painted boats. The crickets chirp and the seas lap. Memories fade. But they do not die.

Two weeks ago we moved back into our home. This was the latest morale boost for our family, the first being the fitting of a new roof to our house. (Try to imagine going in to mop out the floors nearly every morning for the previous 4 months whilst watching your fitted units disintegrating in the rain.) But it feels like now we have moved up a level. Our mood has lifted and to use that well worn expression, "*someone switched the light on at the end of the tunnel*." We have moved on from a damage limitation period to one of revival. It makes one hell of a difference to how we feel in the mornings. The dogs of course were pleased to see our return. They have been great for the last 6 months, intelligently accepting their new role as sole property guardians. It is interesting to watch the alpha male Whisky now as he still goes through his ritual of walking the property before settling down for the night in front of the main doors. Abby takes up her position at the patio door to the rear of the house.

During our 3 month occupancy at Tawagan before the typhoon, Gina and I learned a lot about the mistakes that we had made. Typhoon Haiyan gave us the opportunity to correct them. We will be ready in our newer, tougher home by the end of the year. That said, only good fortune saves any property from a Super Typhoon; the forces involved are simply 'off the scale.' After the new roof was fitted onto stronger rafters, the house electrical system has been rewired. Gutters and downpipes have been renewed. Storm drains cleared of debris. The ceilings are in the process of being completed, along with the lighting. Our own choice of lighting this time, not the builders. We have not bothered to replace most of the ceiling fans. Nature already provides a cooling airflow through the houses of

Tawagan. The outside spandrels are about 75% complete hiding the gutter downpipes. The paintwork inside and out will eventually need redoing as sand blasting plus hundreds of flying object hits during the typhoon have left their marks on the house. Bedroom air conditioning units have been serviced and refitted along with the TV's, although we have not been switched back on to the satellite yet as we wait for the decoder boxes to be serviced. The internet is back online. Furniture has been removed from our hastily constructed store room, inspected and brought back indoors. In the garden are the growing shoots of avocado, guava, pomello, chillies and coconut, most of them donated to us by kindly neighbours. They have taken their place, planted next to Gina's collection of exotic and ornamental palms. Near Bogo City a new village has arisen. Called Yolanda Village, it houses some of those made homeless by typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) and was built with donations on to donated land. The French have rebuilt around 150 new homes in neighbouring Da'anlungsod. Many companies are offering a Yolanda Discount of as much as 50% to those in the affected areas. Samsung has locally extended its warranty to include typhoon damage when confirmed by an Authorised Samsung Technician. (Huge Respect Samsung!) Rover Technologies is servicing its Yolanda damaged CCTV security equipment for free. The generosity and community spirit of the Filipino is shining through.

Addendum: *Despite my ignoring every increasing monthly bill from our satellite TV company for the last 6 months, (the satellite equipment I believe being somewhere at the bottom of the Philippine Sea,) our latest bill shows that remarkably we are now in credit with them. We were not in credit before typhoon Haiyan arrived. Abundant generosity or abysmal accounting? You decide. As they say here, "Only in the Philippines .....!"*

Our son Mark appears to have dealt with making sense of that fateful day. He is a happy, less serious child again. However, like over half the population of Medellin I'm told, he still gets quite nervous when a Low Pressure Area approaches the island. He has no more nightmares; sleeps long and recently won a couple of awards for his school work which are all positive signs of recovery. Several children that we know have experienced problems with their schoolwork since Haiyan. Gina and I still remember the feelings of utter helplessness that we felt during the typhoon. We try not to deny our feelings at that time with Mark. I hope that super typhoon Haiyan will take its rightful place as just one of Marks' life experiences, though not as a life changing one. When Gina and her 3 sisters first surveyed the damage last November, they stood together in the garden and wept. It had taken nearly six years. Six years of planning, form filling, permit gathering, court appearances and finally building to realise our dream. That dream blew apart in less than six hours. Since then they have worked tirelessly, at first limiting further weather damage to the house and more recently orchestrating its recovery. Filipino families stick together. I personally have been shown one meaning of the term '*character building stuff*.' To get 'stuck in' even when a strong argument from an ageing brain says that you should quit. To keep going even when you can see no improvement or evidence of progress. To stay and fight even when you feel like throwing in the towel and going home. This has been my gift from the beautiful and sometimes crazy people of the Philippines.

The Philippine government official accountable for their response to National Disasters has now resigned. He has paid a high price for those initial lonely days after Haiyan. An International Red Cross spokesperson wrote recently to, *forget the 6-12 month redevelopment period, it will be more like 3-5 years to get the islands of Leyte and northern Cebu back to how they were*. And for me? I hope that 2015 will be the year when I finally get around to buying that hammock that I have always wanted. So that is where we are at this moment.

I started to write Broken Homes as a therapeutic exercise over Christmas. Initially it was just for me, to be forced to revisit my own 'demons' but I realised that it might also be of interest to others. Barry Neal confirmed this and suggested that it was put in the newsletter. Brian Lee agreed. Gina and I hope that you found it an interesting read. Big thanks to all our friends whose inquiries, text messages and supportive e-mails gave us the will to continue. Super Typhoon Haiyan with its shattered lives and *'Broken Homes'*, moves slowly into the history books.

Announcement

Malcolm Watts is still trying to get a team of the "Old and Bold" together for the next Ten Tors event in 2015. So far he has a team of FOUR walkers, SIX are needed for the anniversary walk on the 9/10th May. At present, volunteers are: Ed Cochran, Mick Bossy, Mick Lewry and Ron Dent if Ed is buying the beer. TWO more able-bodied persons are needed to complete the team.

Contact Malcolm on 01903-784323 or 07910-406007

The next Issue of the 103 Newsletter will be after next year's reunion,

Deadline for contributions is 1st June 2015

The next Committee Meeting will be on 18th April 2015

at the 4 Pillars Hotel, Witney

Committee Members:

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

Contributions, mail or abuse about the Newsletter to The Editor
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http://www.103rd entry.org.uk/

Stop Press

50th Anniversary of Graduation Reunion

13th/14th June 2015, Cosford

As of a few days ago, 21 of the 35 rooms held at the hotel have been booked. So get on the phone or send that e-mail if you want to stay at the Mount Hotel.