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NEWSLETTER

Of the 103rd Entry Association

www.103rd-entry.org.uk

Reunion Edition 2015

This reunion was to celebrate 50 years since we graduated (well ok it is 6 months early, so what??), not that we really need an excuse all it takes is an invite, a central location and the promise of some alcohol and we can hardly restrain ourselves. Just one new face, but who is taking a roll call, it is just good to be around and capable of enjoying ourselves.

The venue chosen was The Mount Hotel in Wolverhampton and very nice too, no complaints as I heard and the staff were well aware of what might happen at these reunions and seemed to join in. The festivities started on the Friday evening and went on until Monday morning for some, not bad for a bunch of pensioners!! Members came from Australia, Cyprus and as close by as Birmingham and most other corners of the United Kingdom. Much chorusing of "I recognise you" and "How are you mate?" Names are a bit difficult sometimes so best left at that, all will be revealed in the fullness of time. Some have hardly changed, some have changed beyond recognition, one or two have even dared to get older, but all were undeniably from the 103rd Entry at RAF Halton.

Those who had arrived on the Friday enjoyed a pleasant evening of good food and good company with thoughts of those absent and those that might show up tomorrow, a good night all in all.

Saturday (13th June) saw the arrival of yet more members and their lady supervisors. Why is it that members automatically drift to the bar area??? Must be something to do with the training we received!!!

The evening of the Saturday brought the formal (?) buffet dinner, but before that a remembrance of those who had gone to their last posting, a few announcements, and an encouraged 'sale' of some original Entry ties that had recently been found in Nick Smith's loft. After dinner, a well subscribed "Auction" was conducted by Mick Woodhouse followed by a raffle. Items generously donated ranged from aviation books, Giles annuals, and paintings, to a holiday in Spain and a Thames River Trip, and bottles and chocolates for the raffle. The Entry done good and the income allowed us to feel a little better about monies in the "Entry Fund". A big thank you to all contributors and buyers and a special thank you to the Ladies for selling raffle tickets and looking pretty doing it, another welcome fund booster.

The festivities drifted into the night and eventually all turned in looking forward to the Cosford Air Show the following day. The morning of June 14th saw most up bright and early and with breakfast out of the way and farewells said to those not going to the Air Show the remainder wound their way to RAF Cosford for the Museum and Air Show.

We had arranged a hospitality enclosure with Marquee and viewing area with snacks and coffee and soon settled in to view the flying display in what can best be described as gentrified circumstances. (Well done Barry, much appreciated). At this juncture we were joined by a young 80 year old guest, John Perry, accompanied by his daughter Karen. Karen had wanted to do something special for her dad's 80th birthday as he had been a Boy Entrant (12th Entry, 1950) at Cosford, but had been unable to book

them into the other hospitality facilities. The organizers asked us if John and Karen could join us and, of course, we said 'yes' (why wouldn't we??). John really fitted in and in no time it felt that we had known him for years; he had served in Bahrain on 208 Sqn at the same time as Mick Woodhouse and Roger Flitter, but they had not crossed paths. The Committee has decided to invite John to become an Honorary Member of the Association and Karen to become a 'Friend'; we look forward to welcoming them both to our next Bash!!

Many of us (including myself) have been involved with the Vulcan Aircraft over the years and this was probably the last chance we had to see and hear the Big Bird put through its paces before being grounded at the end of this display season. End of an era RIP. May your "Howl" haunt those who don't have the moral fibre or interest in great things British to finance your rebuild no matter what the cost (Rant over!).

All the flying was excellent and interesting with very little waiting time between "Acts", a tribute to the organizers and the flyers involved in the displays. The dog fight between the Typhoon and Spitfire at the end was very impressive especially and then the slow fly-past with Typhoon at an unbelievable angle-of-attack aside the Spitfire.

As evening approached the members drifted away to their cars for their homeward journey, all agreeing that it "had been a good do" and needed to be repeated in a few years time. The real gluttons for punishment returned to The Mount for a further evening of Fun and Fellowship, finally departing after breakfast on the Monday.

Thanks to all who attended any part of the reunion and we the committee look forward to seeing you all at the next one.

(The Editor and Committee)

The end of an era - Cosford Air Display 2015

More Photo's can be found on www.**103rd-entry**.org.uk

The editor has received the following observations of a new guest to the reunions and to the 103rd Entry. Her thoughts are probably more accurate and worthy than any we could make and very much appreciated. **Thank you Amanda.**

"It was with slight apprehension that I accepted the invitation to join my partner at the reunion of the 103rd Halton Entry. Was it going to be an evening of beer and reminiscing to the exclusion of all outsiders? I truly did not know.

However, on arrival at the Mount Hotel we were greeted by the receptionists with big smiles and directed to a very pleasant room, surely a good start to the evening. Returning to the bar area, we were both bemused to be met by a tsunami of wedding guests. Wall-to-wall lace, tottering heels, uncomfortable looking fellows in hired suits and a host of little people running through at knee height.

Believing we were perhaps in the wrong bar, we reversed and headed back to the reception only to be told to retrace our steps again as we had indeed found the correct place and that the wedding party would shortly be ushered into their main function room. Relieved, we found the bar and having ordered our drinks took stock of the surroundings over the rims of the glasses. It did not take long to find and start chatting to some of the other folk gathering for the reunion and the group seemed to increase in size steadily as the afternoon, and the rounds, wore on!

Having to be introduced to every new arrival barely interrupted the conversation which was both flowing and inclusive. My initial concern of sitting on the sidelines was soon dispelled and I found one of the best memories of the whole evening was the amount of genuine laughter which was liberally sprinkled throughout.

Dinner was a substantial buffet with minimum queuing but I would suggest that the "bar float" be used for a first drink in the dining room bar before the meal as a welcome for everyone on arrival and, with some judicious shopping beforehand to keep the costs down, a bottle of red and white wine put on every table.

So what do I think? Personally, that it is a brilliant way of keeping in touch with people with whom you have a common interest, to once again share the laughter and comradeship. That the committee should be congratulated on their efforts and also urged to consider holding it on a more regular basis, maybe in a lesser format to keep costs down thus enabling as many as possible to have the chance of attending and having such a positive experience. If held regularly they would have the option of choosing which they could get to depending on circumstances, health and in many cases distance. It would also help allay the comments of "oh, I didn't manage to catch up with....." Because there would always be the next year!

All in all, a very enjoyable evening, full of laughter, wine, good food and new friends. How good is that!

Thank you all...

Amanda Lothian-France (Guest of Dinga Bell)

In addition to Amanda's comments Barry Neal has also received the following comments from members of the Entry; some attended the reunion and some didn't. All are very positive and supportive. Thanks to all who made the effort.

Pete & Jen Slawson - Hi Everybody. Great to meet and greet all those that were there last night. Also many thanks to Barry and Committee for all their great organisation. Great place and lovely evening. There's a lot of time and effort that goes into these things and I'd certainly like to extend my thanks to all concerned.

Mike (Mick) Hodgson - Hello Barry, hope you are ok and thanks to you and the rest of the comittee for organising this year's re-union, even though I couldn't make it. I had planned to come but our dog developed diabetes and my wallet is still crying !!!!!!! My vote is for the next re-union to be in 2 years time.

Roger Evanson - Hi Barry. An email to thank you and the Committee for organising the re-union. I had a most enjoyable time and it was great to see all the old faces, even if some are more weathered than others. Looking forward to seeing you all again in the, not too distant, future.

Ian & Jenny Armitage - Barry, just wanted to say thank you for organising the reunion, we enjoyed it very much, hope everyone got to the Air show safely we saw the eight mile traffic queue on the M54!

Richard Hughes - Hi Barry, I just want to pass on my congratulations & thanks to you & the committee for a most enjoyable evening on Saturday. Please tell Roger (Flitter) the wife loves the painting.

Gwyn & Eileen Weallans - Barry, thank you very much for arranging the weekend, we really enjoyed it. Look forward to hearing from you, and a big thank you again.

Paul Collins - Barry, once again I would like to express my appreciation (and I'm sure many other will concur) for the efforts you and the committee put in for us all. I would be happy for the next reunion to be in 2 yrs time, and as far as the venue is concerned anywhere near the big airports would suit me. I just hope that some of those that didn't attend would realise that they would not be intimidated by anyone if they did. It's sad as the camaraderie is so fulfilling and they are really missing out on a 'feel good' weekend. Best wishes.

Les Garden - yes, Malcolm, it was a very good night!

Ken Bannister - a very successful reunion.

Bob Mawson - Many thanks to you, other committee members and all who came along for a most enjoyable Saturday and Sunday morning (in my case). 50 years may have passed but we still know how to have a good time! I thought the breakfast was pretty good too. I, too, sounded out various people about the timing of our next gathering. Like you, the most common response was for 2 or 3 years. No one wanted to wait 5 and one member wanted it annually. My personal preference would be 2 years. Best wishes to all and have a good summer.

Jeff & Jeannette Lloyd - Hi Barry, we are back home in Cyprus now, and back 'on line'. Thanks very much to you and all the committee members for a thoroughly enjoyable reunion. As always it was good to catch up with the lads. I'm sorry we didn't get the chance to thank you personally at the end of the Air show day .... I think you had gone walkabout. We left about 4:30 just as it was starting to rain, but as we were in a car park jam we were able to watch the final WW2 re-enactment from the comfort and dryness of the car. Our daughter had messaged us to meet the family at her local for Sunday lunch (she was paying!!) so we couldn't disappoint her could we? I have seen Bob Mawson's comments re the next reunion; we are relaxed about the frequency of the occasion and the venue. We can't 100% promise to be there, that will depend on circumstances. We usually only get over to the UK once or twice a year. Once again thank you. Kind regards.

And what of the future??

A note from our Chairman

Reflecting on a great weekend, we have to now look ahead for the next few years. It is something that the Committee has discussed before but we now need to be sure of where we are going. The committee is happy to keep everything going as long as we can - God willing!! - and as long as you want us to keep the Association in being. There were lots of happy people at the reunion and many requests to do it again in 3 and even 2 years time. We had thought that the next one should be in 5 years; but clearly, the mood is for 3!! Any shorter time than that and our funds would not allow us to do justice to a get-together. Eynsham Hall, near Witney, has been suggested as a possible venue. It's lovely, suitable and comparable to the Mount Hotel price-wise but probably not best geographically located. With a lot of our members living further north somewhere closer to the A1 might be more appropriate. Perhaps members in that area could do some recce?? We will be discussing this at our committee meeting in December; so please let us have any thoughts over the next few months. One day, 2 days, location, something to do on the Sunday, etc??

But - and perhaps more important - there are quite a few people who have never attended a reunion. What can we do to get you to come?? As you can see from Amanda's notes the reunions are pretty successful and all-inclusive. So, please, let us know what we can do.

Meanwhile, take care and look after yourselves.

Regards, Barry

Editor's Notes

Ideas and suggestions would really be appreciated, after all it is a combined effort and it is the members who the Committee serve not just themselves. Nothing is too trivial or ignored. Just as in our training years we achieve more when we all pitch in. Look forward to hearing from you … BGL

Ten TorS 2015

Somebody, I think that it was Dave (Eddie) Cochran, realised that 2015 would signal 50 years since the Ton Threes put up the team of 6 that was successful in being one of the first to complete the senior 60 mile Ten Tors challenge on Dartmoor; an idea that soon filtered down to the Association Committee. Being the only individual on the Committee who was part of that team, yours truly was volunteered to do something to commemorate it. You will have seen my various attempts to re-generate a team to re-run the challenge. My efforts were rewarded by 4 volunteers from the original 1965 team, plus Peter Callus and Mick Bossy, who I later discovered was a reserve walker in '65. So our 2015 team consisted of Dave (Eddie) Cochran, Ron Dent, Mike Lewry, Peter Callus, Mick Bossy and me. In addition, we had the support from Julie Dent, Catherine Bossy, Ingrid plus Ernie Fox, who was Oi/c the original 103rd TT project.

Our challenge required a plan and the best way to pull a plan together was to formulate one at the pub. So it was that we all pitched up at The Tors public house in Belstone, only to find Alan Stephens, who 50 years ago was on the Admin HQ staff at Halton and the Halton team manager - a good start. However, your Committee, having voted a large subsidy for the bigger Cosford reunion, had to dig deep to find some crumbs to oil our planning process. Taking our 'advancing' years into account, a plan was finally agreed. We arrived the following morning, all booted and spurred for the arduous trek to Oakhampton Camp and the Ten Tors Finish. We had a team of 5, fully intending to collect Dave Cochran en- route to bring our number up to 6. Ernie elected to meet him and was left to organise the big welcome at Oakhampton.

So the Famous Five with their support team set off with Ron and I leading the way. We hadn't gone 200 yards before we realised that we had set off on the wrong path. At this moment jokes about following a navigator were not welcome! Meanwhile, Dave was pre-positioning his car at Oakhampton Camp just in case any of the OAPs overdid it and needed a lift back to the start. What else could go wrong!?

The Famous Five walked north-east and Dave walked south-east to meet us, or so he says! Somehow the plan failed and the big team reunion didn't materialise. The Famous Five even took an extended comfort break and hung around some convenient porta-loos, (on Dartmoor!!) until the clock and strange glances from Joe Public forced us to move on. Thankfully it was all down hill to the Finish. Ernie met us for the final 'run' in which took us past the mass of mums, dads and well-wishers waiting for their own little darlings to arrive. We got some strange looks and some even stranger comments! Nevertheless, we were welcomed by the local press and the Army 'top brass' who had been pre-warned that this motley team of ex-Brats would be celebrating their 50 year success.

And so the plan was realised -ish, but where was Dave? While we were celebrating our achievement with a customary cup of warm tea from a mobile van, Dave arrived. And there, dear readers, is where we leave the story. Five became 6, job done ..... MHFW

Malcolm Watts, Ron Dent, Mick Bossy, Peter Callus, Mike Lewry & Ernie Fox at the finish.

Ernie Fox & Alan Stephens

Malcolm Watts, Dave (Eddie) Cochran, Mike Lewry & Ron Dent - 4 from the original '65 team of 6.

George Hope *(December 1945 to March 2015)*

The morning of 25th March 2015 saw Yvonne and I heading north from our home in Florida en route to Green Cove Springs between Jacksonville and St Augustine. Normally this would be a trip for pleasure, but this time it was different. Bob Mawson had contacted me the week before with the news that George Hope was ill with leukaemia and the prognosis wasn't the best, so this trip to say goodbye to George wasn't a surprise.

George and Dianne spent long periods at their home in Green Cove Springs and were well known amongst the golfing community in which they lived. George had been taken ill about 6 weeks previously and had been receiving treatment at a local hospital and hospice.

A well attended "Commemoration of his Life" service for George was held at the Episcopalian Church in Green Cove Springs at 2 pm on the 25th March; the service was conducted by a neighbour. Three of George's friends spoke about how they fitted into George's life and had some very amusing tales to tell. A piper played at appropriate times and of course "The Bear" was one of the pieces.

Following the service we all adjourned to the golf club house for a buffet, disco and of course a "Few tubes of Fosters". George was well known at the club and the stories of his exploits flowed well into the night and are probably still flowing. A death is never a good event, but George had a good send off from good friends in a beautiful setting. RIP George you were a Gentleman and a Scholar.

(The Editor)

Pete and Jen Slawson have an apartment in Spain and offer reduced rates for Entry Members. Have a look on their website and contact them if you are interested.

http://www.spanish-apartment-alcossebre.com/

Don't forget that Mick Woodhouse still organises very enjoyable cruises in the Greek Islands and other places and has details of his 2015 & 2016 adventures available now. You can contact Mick on **01865 340535**

The next Issue of the 103 Newsletter will be during December 2015,

Deadline for contributions is 1st December 2015

Committee Members:

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