103rd Entry Association

Newsletter

Issue 42

Editor's comments & Editorial

I don't know about everyone else, but since I turned 65 things seem to have changed considerably. As I sit and wonder about life generally it seems to me that the years are shorter, the youngsters bigger, policemen younger, cars smaller and gardens bigger with more weeds. Just my take on things sitting here in Ipswich, what do others think about becoming a "Senior" ?

Answers to me and then I can publish the results in the New Year edition.

In the meanwhile we have a few interesting articles from members of The Entry, first off is Roger Flitter, thank you for your article Roger, a good and interesting read. Once again Les Garden has contributed an article about the Trenchard Museum. Les and many others put in a lot of work on our behalf to ensure forthcoming generations can know what went on at Halton and the contribution Ex-Apprentices made not just to aviation but many walks of British and International life. Thanks Les, always appreciated. At our last Committee meeting it was decided that the newsletter would be published regularly twice a year in January and July. Also, a summary of the latest committee meeting would be included in each newsletter.

From Roger Flitter BEM

Well, here we all are approaching, and in some cases achieving, the ripe old age of 70! And there I was, 25 years old, just starting to behave responsibly at last and very shortly afterwards to reach 35 with my wife Lesley (AKA 'Matron' of which more later), two young sons and a mortgage. Then I blinked and I was 70! Where have all those years gone I hear you all say in unison?

I have now 'retired' three times; once from the Royal Air Force, once from running large IT Programmes for amongst others MoD and Rolls-Royce and lastly as Operations Director for the Passenger Boat Association, a national trade body representing the industry from the Isles of Scilly to Loch Ness and most places in between. Over the last ten years the Association has enjoyed great success through increased membership, varied successes and more importantly, raising the industry profile with the Regulators and Port sand Harbour Authorities. Of all the people I have worked with in this role, having a background in aircraft engineering and IT programmes, I am probably least qualified to do this job. However, speaking my mind on occasions a little more than perhaps I should and regularly exceeding my authority seems to have worked.

A recent invitation to an event marking the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations reminded me of three milestones in my own career(s) all of which came together on Saturday 11th June 2016. Of course, the only person aware of this was yours truly however, I would like to share this poignant and slightly proud little moment with you.

The invitation was to join the ex Port of London Authority Launch 'Havengore' which, together with the Queen's Royal Row Barge 'Gloriana', was at the head of the River Thames Pageant on 11th June. As I got settled on board I was reminded that during Winston Churchill's funeral we were in our third year at Halton. I didn't actually attend the funeral as I recall some of you did but I do recall seeing Havengore going up the

Thames bearing the great man's coffin and that memorable moment when all the dock cranes in the Pool of London lowered their jibs in formation. Of course all that has disappeared now to be replaced by million pound plus luxury apartments sold to anyone with the money to buy. However, Havengore has recently been fully restored and there is a large brass plate commemorating that historic event on the top of the saloon roof where the coffin rested.

As I mentioned above, we were accompanied on the pageant by 'Gloriana'. I was involved with this project shortly after the build began in a 'secret' location, a non-descript factory in Brentford. My responsibility was to produce a Safety Management System for the vessel and it's operation so that it met with Maritime and Coastguard Authority (MCA) safety requirements. Without this safety plan the vessel would not have been granted a Passenger Certificate and would not have been permitted to operate. It relates to the Certificate of Airworthiness that perhaps many of us are more familiar. 'It's only a tarted up rowing boat' I hear you all say (again in unison!) but alas not quite the case. It has considerable technology within its very traditional and historic design and demands high levels of safety. I recall having meetings with the MCA Chief Surveyor to discuss the approach to this work. We used to meet in a pub called the 'Hung, Drawn and Quartered' within a stone's throw of the Tower of London. We both remarked that if this all went badly we'd soon be back there!

The third piece of this personal jig saw was to see the RAF Fly Past framed perfectly through the arch of Tower Bridge. I have to admit I didn't recognise a few of the aircraft in the fly past however, the trusty Hercules on which I spent so many hours at Akrotiri and Lyneham in the 1970s was of course unmistakeable from a distance although I know the technology has been considerably updated. Of more significance was the fly past of the Red Arrows.

During my 10 years at RAF Swanton Morley I wrote the second line strip and rebuild manual for the Adour Engine which included of course the Mk151 fitted to the Hawk in general and the Red Arrows aircraft in particular. I also went on to become involved in computer software design and build for the second line engine testing software for the RB199 and all the Adour engines for which I was very proud to receive the British Empire Medal in HM Queen's Birthday Honours in 1986 - 30 years ago to the day on Havengore on the Thames.

As I stood before all of this on Havengore with the Thames Watermen stood at the bow and the Scottish pipers playing, a lady came up to me and said 'Are you alright Roger, you look as though you are about to shed a tear?' 'I'm fine I replied, just something in my eye.'

Roger is a Freeman of the City of London, a Freeman of the Honourable London Company of Watermen and Lightermen, and a holder of the British Empire Medal.

He stubbornly refuses to fully retire and continues to manage boat crew training on the River Thames. He also undertakes commissions for his boats, harbours and estuaries artwork in watercolours and pencil.

Roger has recently been given a clean bill of health following a year long process of surgery and radio therapy for prostate cancer. Without superb support from Lesley (AKA 'Matron') the outcome could have been very different. He asks that if any of you feel urgency for a 'brief visit' and then find the event low and slow - go and see your GP PDQ!

A final quote from Roger: 'Experience is something you get just after you need it!'

The following article was received from Maureen Ferrier some time back (My apologies to her for not using it before now. Ed) It is an interesting story and well worth waiting for. For those of us who entered the Royal Air Force via 103rd Entry A Flight some of the facts may come as a surprise. Interestingly Maureen trawled the net and came across our website, and Chris Wales passed it on to me.

"Just a little bit about Dad - he joined the RAF after National Service (he was an MP) and a period in the old City of Edinburgh Police Force. I don't know two much about what he did in the RAF, but he finished his service at RAF Leuchars in about 1973. He had spent a lot of his spare time working with youngsters in Leven where we lived, and after leaving the service he set about taking up community work as a career. Unfortunately, he became ill in his late-50s and was forced to retire early, eventually retiring with Mum (who you may recall was also called Maureen) back

to Fife where he indulged his love of creating things - watercolour paintings, building a garden out of nothing in their new home, decorating, woodcraft ....

He sadly died about 14 years ago and was hugely missed by Mum and me - I miss both of them enormously now.. He was a really clever, kind gentleman in the truest sense of the word. Firm but fair, as I hope you found. We loved having you 'boys' round at the weekend and I will never forget Joe Surin shouting across Woolworths (or somewhere) in Aylesbury 'Mum! Mum!' at Maureen snr !"

Ed. One of my lasting memories of Cpl Ferrier was during our initial 3 weeks he showed my room how to press our trousers (certainly I needed instruction on this subject). When he had finished he asked if we had any questions to which one of our number held his trousers up and enquired when they would be ready for collection from the Cpl. There was no reply, I think Cpl Ferrier's face said it all, and he left the AA in no doubt that he didn't do laundry things.

Do you have an amusing or poignant anecdote about Charlie Ferrier or any of the other characters at Halton who helped to make us what we are today and you would like to share with us? Should you want to share such a story please forward them to BGL.

What's Happening at the Trenchard Museum

This year has been very busy with 5000 approx visitors already.

We also have two large events in September where we will see some 1500 visitors in 2 separate days. Heritage Open Day (11th) in conjunction with Halton House and the WW1 training trenches and a fortnight later, the HAA Triennial on the 26th.

The space formerly occupied by the Archives is being redeveloped with a bigger apprentice layout and additions to the engine display. Our WW1 display, although small, is based round trench/ airfield artefacts plus WW1 aircraft spark radio (which the brat who donated it assured us still worked!) and a ground morse key.

Across the square in our James McCudden Flight Heritage Centre, it has been all change with the acquisition of a Link Trainer from Aylesbury ATC Sqn and another 2 sourced from a museum in Holland. These are now being restored to full working order which is expected in the next few months. One of these is serial number 001, the very first produced in Aylesbury. The movement from Holland to Halton was carried out as a training exercise for new 2MT drivers arranged by one of our ex Cosford brats. Along with our state of the art 2D Chipmunk simulator, we now have a facility which is second to none. We get ATC camps plus local school children on the RAES Cool Aeronautics engineering awareness programme where we familiarise them with the principles of flight in our wind tunnel, a flight in one of the sims and instruction on our Gnat and engines. Hard work as dealing with up to 60 10 year olds is hard but rewarding seeing the pleasure that they get out of it.

Restoration work is also being carried out on a Hunter cockpit which we acquired from an ATC Sqn but it has had some rough treatment. We are missing loads of cockpit items - switches, dolls eyes, etc, so if you have any spare a/c bits lurking in your shed/ garage then please donate to a worthy cause.

We also give recruits and their families an introduction to the history of Halton at the fortnightly pass out parades.

For those of you who have not visited, we are in the old boxing Gym on 2 Wing square and the JMFHC is the ground floor of 2 Wing mess. We are open officially on a Tuesday but you can ring up (01296 656841) to make an appointment to visit more or less anytime. You will need some form of photo ID. So hope to see some of you in the near future, it's a good place to take your grandchildren as you can show them what you did during your apprenticeship. There is a small amount of Entry memorabilia as well. We do have a policy of letting the public handle most of the exhibits with a few exceptions. We also have a large archive of aviation material relating to Halton and apprentice training.

Les Garden

Committee Meeting – 11th June 2016

Les Shardlow reported that the take-up for the Triennial by our members had been poor, so it was decided to re-advertise the weekend (***see below***). Following the introduction of the increased subs some 25 members had not changed their SO mandate, and another 4 had not paid (*Mick Woodhouse would contact them*); our honourary Boy Entrant member had also paid (*BRN would write to his daughter to explain that was not necessary*). The SO mandate had been reviewed to ensure that it is current. We have £1213.77 in the account, which will increase by approx £145 once all outstanding SOs are updated. Recent expenses had been £30 for Help for Heroes and £39 for Newsletter costs. There had been very little input from members about the 2018 Reunion. Options for the Sunday of the weekend are the Vulcan Aviation Academy & Heritage Centre at Robin Hood Airport, the Scampton Heritage Centre, or Lincoln Castle/Cathedral/Shopping. The Sunday venue will dictate where we stay on the Saturday night; arrangements to be finalized at the December committee meeting. Brian Lee has had little input from members for the newsletter. Malcolm Watts had toured the North of Scotland and had visited Jim Dartnall. The next meeting would be on the 3rd December, 4.00pm, at Watermead, Aylesbury.

The next Issue of the newsletter will be during January 2017; deadline for contributions is 1st November 2016

Royal Air Force Halton Apprentices Association
Triennial Reunion 2016

September 24th 2016 is the next Triennial Reunion to be held at RAF Halton and is a good oppurtunity to catch up with old friends and entry members. The Entry Committee look forward to meeting up with you and sharing the day with you. This year for the first time members may be accompanied by a partner or other guest.

Details may be found at http://www.oldhaltonians.co.uk

Committee Members

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

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