103rd Entry Association

Newsletter

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Editor's comments & Editorial

The first half of 2017 has been a time of change and uncertainty for a lot of people, but then others are content and happy to coast along obeying Newton's 1st Law of motion, (come on wake up at the back don't you remember Mechanics at Schools?) Now we have had a General Election and know what the government is for the next 5 years unless external forces act. We are a lot better off than a lot of people in this world, but it won't stop us from complaining eh?? I would take a complaint about this newsletter as a compliment; it would demonstrate to me that at least someone has read it, something I sometimes doubt. That is just my way of saying more feedback and articles please.

Look forward to hearing from you.

BGL

This edition contains the second part of Dinga Bell's account of his canal adventure and an advertorial from Les Garden about the Trenchard Museum. Malcolm Watts has given his view on last years Halton Reunion. All are good reads and will keep us entertained and informed whilst sitting out on the veranda this summer sipping GT's or whatever.

Your attention is also drawn to the details of the next reunion to be held on 23rd/24th June 2018 at a hotel in Lincoln. Make a note in your diary and book early. Lots of interest in this already so it should be a good one not that we ever had a bad one!!!

GO TO PAGE 7 FOR ALL THE INFO

The second part of Dinga's adventure

Friday 8th

Left Hatton Locks at 08.30 and began a very slow return to base. Slow only because we had plenty of time and not because of the injury to this silly old git! Back through the Shrewley tunnel, and this time there was no other boat. I didn't say before but the tunnel leaked and looked as if stalactites were growing on the walls. The water positively poured in at places. Manda was doing very well at staying dry until I decided to make it otherwise and moved over to get her wet. It is just as well she has a reasonable sense of humour and she refrained from hitting me!

Getting to the Kingswood Junction we decided to explore and went past to continue along the Grand Union to a winding hole at the "Black Buoy Cruising Club".

Sounds extremely homosexual and annoyed me for being P.C. in that the pub opposite was the "Black Boy" and was approached via the "Black Boy Bridge".

Returning to Kingswood Junction (Manda nervous at the helm as we turned right and then through a very narrow passage past moored boats) onto the Stratford Canal.

Went through the top lock, as there was no mooring in the turning basin, and moored up for the night. Manda is getting very adept at jumping off the boat with the mooring rope. She is not, in any way, athletic but became very sure footed…like a gazelle.

Saturday 9th

This morning was a late start with the normal chores of tea and dog-walking. Breakfast was different; we had fish fingers on toast with baked beans! Along the canal we met a

husband and wife team (NZ) with the wife's father visiting who were extremely pleasant and friendly. They followed us down to the "Fleur de Lys" where we advised them of the Abbot ale. The father said that it was worth investigating. We had already moored up and left them to walk over the bridge to where our lunch beckoned. They came in about 20 minutes later; apparently they moored about half a mile away and asked if they could join us at our table. Seeing as how it was a "hoogey" (huge) great thing we invited them to sit. A good and happy lunch was had by all with the father praising the Abbot ale. After three pints or so, matched by Manda's gin, we decided to stay the night continuing towards base tomorrow!

Sunday 10th

We awoke up to a goodly frost with icicles dripping from the boat. Quick leap to the heating controls and back to bed until the place had become more habitable. We weighed anchor (? a nautical term apparently) at around 10.00 and had a leisurely cruise to a watering point and then onwards to the marina. Manda has really got the hang of the locks and ushered the boat through superbly. Whilst we were looking for somewhere to moor for lunch we ran aground. Oops! I wasn't going that fast, honest, but we were really stuck with boat listing to port. Drawer's open and crockery shifted but nought broken but my pride. Full throttle in reverse made no headway (backway?). Anyway, there was a friendly couple who were walking their dog and, with the help of the poles and full throttle, they helped Manda to get me off the sea bed. A little shamefaced I steered a further 100 yards up the cut to moor safely for lunch. *"Note to self"…pay attention to the bank substance!* It was on this stretch that we took stock of the animals that had fallen (?) into the canal and had subsequently drowned. Calling it canal kill we have seen up to date = one goat, one deer, and a couple of rabbits. Horrible deaths but life does go on. We find yet another canal kill; it is a sheep this time.

We passed base and a little further on found a winding hole. This is a place where you

can turn the boat around. Oops I nearly go aground again but Manda's use with a pole is more than good. We moored about a mile from base facing towards it. Tomorrow we will get to base and talk things over with the crew who run the place. Manda needs to be safe on Tuesday when I go under the knife.

Monday 11th

We decided to stay at the marina for the day. You can't really go far in one day! We got our loo pumped out and took on more water. We thought that it would be good to wander into the village of Wootton Wawen and we looked at a couple of churches. One was very small and looked as old as Hades, but it was one further down the road which is the oldest church in Warwickshire. It has been modified a few times but you can still see the old architecture. Funny old thing, we (I) saw a pub at the end of the road and decided to go and see what it was like. As it happens it was a very good pub both inside and out with great staff, so we (me) decided to stay for a beer. One became two coz the ambience was very good. On the way back to the boat we called into the village shop. This is a classic "Open all hours" shop with a great deal less attitude. Due to me having to report at 0730 for my surgery we did not do much except have dinner and go to bed.

The next and final episode of Dinga's story will be in the next edition and many thanks to him for taking the time and making the effort to produce such a well written piece. Thank you too Amanda for being with him and looking after him in his times of need.

Log in to Ton Threes on Facebook

Committee Meeting - 3rd June 2017

This time I made the meeting! There is still an active subscription for one of our deceased members; this has still to be followed up. Our account balance stands at £1570. The action to take on those who had not increased their DD to £10 or who had not paid the due subscription was again debated at length. I will be writing to those concerned to encourage them to bring their arrangements up-to-date. Details were finalised for our 2018 Reunion and the plan is shown elsewhere in this newsletter. It has been agreed that the newsletter would stop going to non-members after the 2018 reunion; newsletters in future will be available on the website only after the most recent newsletter has been published. The next meeting will be on the 2nd June 2018.

Sadly, we have lost 2 of our members - Jon Griffin and Jim Dartnall - and I will be writing to Jon's daughter and Jim's wife to offer our condolences and to invite them both to become Friends of the Association.

Barry Neal, Chairman

The Golden Oldies - a Short History.

The Golden Oldies Pipe Band can trace their lineage back to the RAF Apprentices Jubilee (50th) Anniversary Reunion at Halton on 1st August of 1970 when a group of ex-apprentices took over the instruments of the then current Pipe Band to give their own impromptu performance. It was a resounding success receiving loud applause from the assembled crowd of ex-apprentices.

But, it was not until 1989 that Keith (Clutch) Harris, (55th) actually planned for an ex-apprentice pipe band to perform at the Triennial. In spite of not having practised or rehearsed together, the band was again highly acclaimed. Bill 'Spike' Kelley MBE, (55th), Lead Tenor and then Halton Magazine Editor, referred to the band as 'The Golden Oldies '. The title has been retained ever since whilst Bill still regularly plays his Tenor Drum with the band.

The GO's continued to muster at the Triennial Reunions in 1992,1995 and 1998, but with virtually no performances in between, many pipers and drummers lost proficiency to play and the number of band members dwindled. For the 2001 Triennial a reasonable sized band could only be formed with the help of several 'guest pipers' courtesy of Keith Arnott, (89th), then Pipe Sergeant in the RAF Waddington Pipe Band.

The summer of 2003 saw a dramatic change in the fortunes of the Golden Oldies when Keith Youldon, (63rd) took over the running of the Golden Oldies both administratively and musically as Pipe Major. (This was to be the third Pipe Major Keith, after K I, Keith Harris and K II, Keith Arnott). To maintain competency in the band, K3 and the HAAA office manager, Min Larkin (63rd), arranged for the band to have regular engagements between Triennials. These include the HAA AGM, now held in the March of each year, the November Remembrance Service and individual Entry Reunions. In addition the band has accepted engagements by ex-apprentices for 'outside Do's' at Naphill, Wheathampstead and Odiham.

The band became a close-knit team but, inevitably, now suffers from age related losses with no possibility of recruiting new ex-apprentices. The drummers, under the leadership of Stan Full (49th) Eddie Bragg (56th) and later Paul Hardy (217) have been the strongest core of the band whilst the pipe section continues to rely heavily on the friendship of guest pipers from the Reading Scottish Pipe Band which over the years has included at least 10 ex-RAF Apprentices. In 2009, Sam Wright (97th) took over as Golden Oldie Band Secretary and following KIII's retirement from piping at the end of 2012, continues to run the band to this day. For 2013 KII, Keith Arnott has stepped up to take over Pipe Major duties once again.

Allied to the GO's are the Trumpeters who whilst not appearing with the Pipe Band on a regular basis do play at certain Association Events.

Sadly, since this article was written, Bill Kelley MBE (55th) entry recently went to his final posting.

Ken Bannister

Acknowledgements: Keith Youldon(63rd) and Paul Hardy (217th) for the content of the above article

The 2016 Halton Triennial - A Personal View

And so it was that an invitation went out for a gathering. This year wives, girlfriends or carers were included, albeit only one guest per RAFHAA member. It is thought that circa 1000 responded positively to the call.

Once again, organisation for the day was well executed. Men and youths in uniform welcomed everyone to car park (by the thankfully dry sports field), giving us all the opportunity to exercise our limbs up the hill to the Senior Wings. 'Schools' were open for the morning, but this option was declined by this writer.

Once past the old guardroom it was clear that the Trenchard Museum was a popular meeting point and the main focus of activity. Les Garden was obviously in his element and rightly so as the exhibits were attracting many positive responses, but with so much stuff on display it is clear that more space is needed if full justice is to be done.

As lunch approached, the 'tank' closed and people started to make their way towards the 'new' feeder behind the old #1 Wing Mess. Two sittings were scheduled with a pause between the two. Somehow this didn't quite happen when everyone decided that there was a distinct possibility that the food might run out. Spaces to sit and eat became a challenge, but at least the options were an improvement on the packed lunches which used to be served up in a draughty hanger down at the airfield. Despite the chaos, the catering staff rose to the occasion magnificently.

Afternoon activities included A Parade, A March and A Church Service. Men with shiny shoes, sticks and shouty voices appeared from nowhere. I doubt that either of them had a degree in herding cats since the response they were getting from the unassembled throng was less than enthusiastic. Eventually, most manoeuvred themselves into Entry order before filing onto the parade square to form a hollow square,

ably assisted by the Golden Oldies band. It was clear that some folk were taking this parade seriously when the Colour Party marched on. Cliff Spink spoke the party line, all quietly observed by the wives, girlfriends and carers seated either side of the dais. Then it was time to 'march past', off and down the hill. Once again the Golden Oldies did a sterling job at the head of the snake while Les Shardlow stopped the traffic as we ambled across Main Point. Once past the old workshops, the ambling ceased by a self imposed dismissal. Those who wanted to attend the Church Service headed for St George's, allowing the rest to disperse, find their transport and reflect on another successful event.

There was a rumour that OC Halton had been less than enthusiastic about so many people descending on the Station. While security may have been a concern, there was little sign that the burden that the RAFHAA placed upon the station staff was met with anything other than in the spirit of friendship and good humour. However, another rumour suggests that the last Halton Triennial will be in 2019! The two Les's may be able to confirm, and Ken Bannister may also be able to provide an update on the rumoured demise of the Golden Oldies Band.

mhfw

OBITUARY

Jon Griffin was born in Bradford on 2nd May 1946. His father was in the RAF so he moved around a lot and was educated at various schools. In Jan 1963 he joined the RAF himself as an apprentice Navigational Instrument Fitter with the 103rd Entry at Halton. Graduating in Dec 1965 he quickly married and became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He served at Finningley and Gutersloh before leaving the RAF in 1974. Jon then pursued a career in education following training at Newcastle University. He taught in Southend and Reading before teaching teachers in Brentwood. During this time he studied and gained a Doctorate in the use of computers in the classroom. Jon married four times and has five children. He was a keen gardener and had three aquariums in his home. Sadly he had a succession of serious illnesses in the last twenty years and had to use a wheelchair. He was almost housebound and moved to Doncaster about ten years ago to be near his family. Jon died on 17th May, and a small family and friend's funeral took place in Sheffield on 30th May. He is survived by his five children and five grandchildren. His daughter, Wendy Gore, will be invited to become a Friend of the 103rd Association, and a cheque has been sent to The British Heart Foundation in his memory.

Committee Members:

Les Shardlow, Les Garden, Chris Wales,

Barry Neal, Ken Bannister, Dave Post,

Malcolm Watts, Mick Woodhouse, Brian Lee

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53rd Anniversary of Graduation Reunion

23rd/24th June 2018

By popular request, we will be having a Reunion at Lincoln over the weekend of 23rd/24th June 2018 at Lincoln. There will be an informal get-together on the Saturday evening, and for the Sunday we have secured the services of our very own Mick Bath for a tour of the Upper City & the Castle.

The Lincoln Hotel, Eastgate, Lincoln LN2 1PN, 01522-520348, *www.thelincolnhotel.com*, will be an ideal base for the weekend and similar arrangements have been made with the hotel as were in place for our last reunion in Wolverhampton.

Saturday 23rd June 2018 - 7.00 for 7.30pm buffet; The Lincoln Room, Lincoln Hotel

Sunday 24th June 2018 - tour starts at 10.30am from the hotel and should last about 1½hrs. Good walking shoes and bad weather clothing would be a good idea! And the tour will be at a slow place given everyone's advancing years!

These rates have been agreed with the hotel:

Double or Twin Room (2 guests)	£92.00/room/night/B&B
Single occupancy	£81.00/room/night/B&B

Accommodation should be booked directly with the Hotel quoting the "103rd Association". A deposit is not required, but a credit card is required to guarantee the reservation. The Association will be paying for the Saturday buffet, and there will not be charge for the tour on the Sunday.

Non-members are especially welcome to join us, but there will be a charge of either, joining the Association for a minimum of 3 years, or £30 per person for the Saturday night.

Please book your accommodation early; the hotel is holding 25 rooms for us for the weekend. Anyone wanting to stay elsewhere should also consider booking early.

If you have any questions please let Ken Bannister know on 01476-593120; 07704-403931; *kbannister8546@outlook.com*.