

103rd Entry RAF Halton

Newsletter



Issue 51
January 2021

Editors Comment

I had hoped that by now I could ask us all to rejoice in having come through the Coronavirus Restrictions and were getting on with our lives as we want to.

It saddens me to report that this isn't so, the restrictions continue to affect all we do. It amazes me to see people not wearing masks, washing their hands and still exceeding the numbers they are permitted in their "Bubbles". If this virus attacks them it's possible they will never see their friends again and that's a long time. Let us spread the word to the ignorant: -

STAY IN, DON'T BREAK THE RULES

DON'T FORGET

HANDS, FACE, SPACE

BOB MAWSON

It is with great sadness that the committee must report the passing of Bob Mawson. Probably one of the best known and recognised members of the Entry. He was an accomplished sportsman, a good listener and a friend to many. Bob was well known for his “Monkeying Around” and will be remembered by many for having that innocent look on his face when caught.

Bob served for 12 years with the Royal Air Force and after tours at Wittering, Akrotiri and Wyton he joined the Civil Service as an Aircraft Engineer rising through the ranks to be a Senior Engineer.

It could be said that Bob lived life to the full and retirement was no exception, he would send pictures of his trips to Thailand and anywhere else that had scuba diving facilities. He enjoyed the odd pint and admired good food cooked well. All in all, a Gentleman.

Contributions, mail or abuse about the
Newsletter to

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Entry website

<http://www.103rdentry.org.uk/>

Committee Members:

Les Shardlow, Les Garden, Chris Wales,

Barry Neal, Ken Bannister, Brian Lee.

Malcolm Watts, Mick Woodhouse,

You can also follow us on Facebook

Ton Threes

Our regular contributor Ken Bannister has sent in this article about the Nimrod (the Mighty Hunter)

Thanks Ken; wish more people would send in articles like you do.

THE HAWKER SIDDELEY NIMROD

In March 2010, the Hawker Siddeley Nimrod flew its last sortie for the Royal Air Force, after an impressive 40 years' service in the maritime role.

To meet Air Staff requirement 381 for a replacement for the ageing Avro Shackleton, Hawker Siddeley successfully put forward the HS801 based on the Comet 4C airliner, and it first flew in May 1967. An initial order for 38 Nimrod MR1s was made, with the first aircraft, XV230 entering service in October 1969.

Operating in the Anti-Submarine, Anti-Surface and Search and Rescue roles, the early MR1s were equipped with much of their mission avionics similar to the Shackletons' they replaced. In 1972, a further 8 MR1s were ordered, and the fleet received a steady flow of mission avionic upgrades, the most comprehensive starting in 1975 when 35 aircraft were upgraded to the MR2 standard.

During the Falklands conflict 2 MR1s and numerous MR2s deployed to Ascension Island flying over 100 sorties in support of the Task Force, Victor, Vulcan and Harrier operations. By the end of the conflict some MR2s had been modified for Air to Air Refuelling and some had underwing hard points capable of mounting Sidewinder missiles earning it the distinction of being the largest fighter aircraft in the world. Eventually all MR2s were Air to Air Refuelling capable.

In the first Gulf War the Nimrod deployed to Seeb in Oman, and returned there again between 2001 and 2009 for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. During these operations the aircraft were fitted with a Wescam, enabling it to perform yet another surveillance role. On 2 September 2006 the first aircraft to enter service, XV230 was tragically lost over Afghanistan due to design with the Air to Air Refuelling and Bleed Air systems, and this disaster heralded the end for the "Mighty Hunter".

With its last flight in 2010, and with no replacement on the cards, the Nimrod left a big gap in the services operational capability.

Six aircraft were flown to various locations around the country and the rest were scrapped unceremoniously. In 2011, one Nimrod R model was flown to East Midlands airport and the others were scrapped.

Fast forward ten years to the present day. Of the seven aircraft that were flown to various locations, two are static exhibits, three are beyond redemption and will probably be scrapped, one is in poor condition and the last two are in a reasonably serviceable condition in that they are capable of having the engines started and some of the systems operational.

The arrival of the Boeing P8 Poseidon aircraft and the standing up of 120 Squadron closely followed by 201 Squadron has gone some way to redressing the balance; however, due to consecutive cuts in defence spending, only 9 P8 Poseidon aircraft will be allocated to the two squadrons. Compare that with the 48 Nimrods that were initially in service in the 1970s and it seems like a drop in the ocean.

Note from Ken. *The first six paragraphs were taken from the dinner menu produced by an Air Engineer who wrote it to celebrate 40 years of Nimrod in service. The dinner was held in the Regent Hotel in October 2015 organised by the Flight Engineer & Air Engineer Association. The last 3 paragraphs were added by me.*

Here are the details of our next reunion

The Forthcoming Entry Reunion (2021)

Your committee has agreed that The Woodland Manor Hotel at Clapham, two miles north of Bedford is the ideal place to hold our next reunion and have booked the hotels Autograph dining room for our next function on **Sat 3rd July 2021**. The building is an old Manor House and has a lovely atmosphere, large enough for any numbers we might amass, but small enough to retain the intimacy of the event.

The hotel has thirty four bedrooms, all very nice, spacious, and en suite. The bar is adjacent to the dining room and foyer, we would not have exclusive use of it, but with our expected numbers it is unlikely there would be many other guests. Parking is in the

grounds and free. We have reserved twenty five rooms at this year's rates which you can book with the hotel by quoting **103 Reunion** and giving a bank card number. You will not be charged until the day before the event and can cancel (unlikely) without cost until then. So far 18 of those rooms have been booked, so I recommend you book soon. Please let me know so that we have an idea of how many are coming. Refreshments will be available on the afternoon of arrival. We expect to have a hot buffet paid for from Association Funds.

The choice of area considered the ease of travel for most of our members and some entertainment for the following day. Bedford is

close to the M1, A1 and A6 and the station two miles away has lines connecting it to London, Sheffield, Brighton and presumably all points in between.

We hope to get enough of you interested in going to Old Warden on Sunday to be able to get party rates on what is a flying day for The Collection. Please look up their details on <https://www.shuttleworth.org>.

Also within fairly easy reach for any of you making a longer stay are The War Museum at Duxford, The Code Breakers Museum at Bletchley Park and the beautiful city of Cambridge (all recommendations of Mick Bossy & Jess Myers). There is a golf course beside the hotel which gives preferential rates for guests; if interested, does anybody fancy arranging a match?

**Hotel Details,
Woodland Manor Hotel
Green Lane**

Regards, **Mick 07811 401040** mickjwoodhouse1946@gmail.com

STOP PRESS

There are still rooms available at the hotel, if you are interested please call the hotel directly and let Mick Woodhouse know too so he can manage the hotels input to the occasion.

RAFHAA

Congratulations to our Chairman Barry Neal on being appointed to the RAFHAA Council as its Governance Member. In these uncertain times the RAFHAA needs support from us all; if you are not yet a member please contact the General Secretary Les Shardlow for details of how to join.

Clapham

Bedford MK41 6EP

Tel 01234 363281 (Ailish or Freya)

www.woodlandmanorhotel.co.uk

Room rates incl breakfast for two - Single £85, Double £95, Premium £105, Suite £135 per night.

If any of you attending on your own would you be willing to share a twin room? Let me know and I will try to put you in touch (we did used to share with fifteen others!).

We hope the numbers attending will make it as successful as the last reunion when we had about 70 attendees, and we know our ladies love these things. I look forward to hearing from you, with any questions or suggestions you may have. **And, finally, please let me and the hotel of any special dietary requirements that you may have.**

Notes of a Committee Meeting on 5th December 2020

The last time I reported on our committee meeting we were planning for the next one and our Xmas dinner at Watermead at Aylesbury, and I said that “Hopefully, human contact will have been restored by then - if not, it will be a virtual Xmas dinner!!” Alas, ‘twas ever thus, and a virtual experience it was!

The minutes of the June 2020 meeting were accepted, and discussions took place on our finances, next year’s Reunion, the Newsletter, the RAFHAA and its new look, the need for our website, and our member contact protocols. Details of the Reunion are elsewhere in this Newsletter and I encourage those of you who have not yet booked to make it your New Year’s Resolution to do so. Our finances are healthy and will remain so. Our next meeting is planned for the 5th June 2021 when we will dot i’s and cross t’s for the Reunion.

On a slightly more sombre note - the harsh reality is that we are all of advancing years. It would be useful if you could all make sure that your next-of-kin are aware of the Association, your membership and how to contact us, and the website, in the event that you become unable to manage things yourself.

Ruth and I hope that you all will be able to spend time with family this year, and wish you all a very Merry Xmas and Happy New Year. Let us all hope for renewed fortunes in 2021.

Barry Neal, Chairman

