



# The 'Never Again' News

An occasional newsletter for members of 225 Entry, RAF Halton, Nov 1971 – Oct 1973

**No 10 – July 2012**

## **90<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE APPRENTICE SCHEME**

On May 12<sup>th</sup> the Halton Apprentices Association held a 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) near Tamworth. As I was planning on being 'down south' at around that time I decided to take in the event on my way back up to Scotland.

The apprentices' memorial at the NMA, known as the Halton Grove, has recently been refurbished and improved thanks to a group of ex-apprentice volunteers. At the entrance is a path with pavers telling the progression of the scheme that leads up to a large commemorative stone with a plaque. The main feature is a large apprentice 'wheel' laid out in white stones in a bed of coloured ones surrounded by a circular path of small pavers. Most of the inner ring of pavers is dedicated to individual entries, while those farther out can be dedicated to individuals from these entries deemed worthy of special commemoration. The whole area is contained within a low hedge and has some seats and small trees planted. As part of the improvements made to the grove and unveiled during the ceremony (and a first at the NMA) is an interactive display board.

A lone Hurricane opened proceedings by making several low passes over the 400 or so of us assembled at the grove. The guest of honour, Viscount Trenchard, gave a speech lauding the achievements of his grandfather's 'brats' before unveiling the display board. The senior ex-brat present was Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller, 210<sup>th</sup> Entry, who also gave a speech (I had known him from his days as CO at Lossiemouth and had the 'pleasure' of giving him engineering briefs when I was on morning shift).

The Queen's Colour of No.1 S of TT was paraded by trainees, along with a Guard of Honour, from Cosford. It seems that the question of an airman carrying the Colour caused some consternation at Cosford, however, the HAA managed to persuade them that as Her Majesty had granted the unique honour of a non-commissioned airman carrying the No.1 S of TT Colour in 1952 all would be well – and it was.

After the ceremony everyone formed up behind the Golden Oldies Pipe Band and marched off to a large marquee where lunch and refreshments were provided.

All in all it was a 'good do' and I was pleased to have made the effort and have the chance to not only see the Halton Grove but to also visit some of the other sites at the NMA.



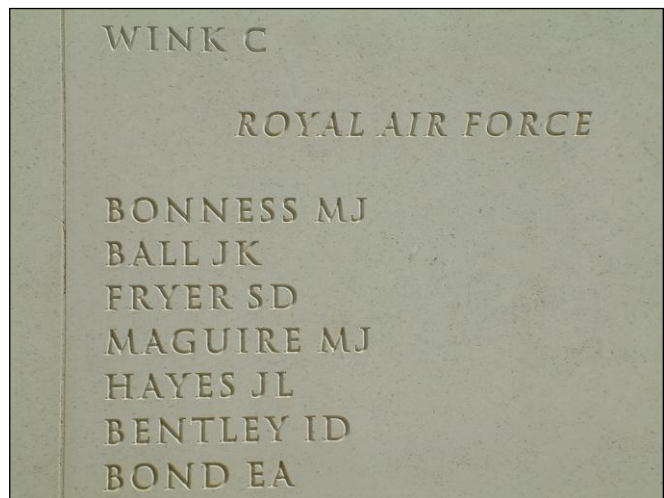
The Halton Grove at the National Memorial Arboretum - and our little piece of it.

## THE ARMED FORCES MEMORIAL

Also at the NMA is the Armed Forces Memorial that commemorates all servicemen and women who have died on duty since the Second World War.



As the names of two of our entry are carved on the memorial I went across to pay my respects.



We Will Remember Them - Dave Chitty died in a Chinook crash on the Falklands in February 1987 and Steve Fryer drowned on a sailing expedition to the Canary Islands in March 2001.

## **TWO MORE FOUND**

Since the last edition I can add Tom McOuat, who is residing in Spain these days, to the list. I've also just had an email from Tony 'Taff' Frost, which means that from my room / class all bar two have now been accounted for. Taff has returned to Wales and works for an aerospace company producing aircraft seats and fittings that, from the pictures on their website, won't be found in the cabins of the cheapskate airlines I normally use!

It's great that we are still finding more of the entry, so please keep up your efforts to track down the remainder so we can, perhaps, have an even larger gathering than the last at some time in the future.

## **HALTON APPRENTICES ASSOCIATION**

Did you know that 3,663 of us joined at Halton as Craft Apprentices? Nope, neither did I. Did you know that only 229 are members of the HAA? Well, the association has been looking at its membership and while the numbers of those from the earlier entries is slowly reducing due to the relentless efforts of the grim reaper it is apparent that the craft entries are very much under represented with only 6.25% joining the association. The 225s are a little above the average with 8 members out of the 80 odd in the entry, but it's still nothing to boast about. So, how about joining the HAA and doing your bit to help keep alive the memory of a unique group of youngsters that became the backbone of RAF aircraft engineering for the best part of the last 90 years? Details can be obtained from the website at [www.oldhaltonians.co.uk](http://www.oldhaltonians.co.uk)

The next HAA Triennial reunion is scheduled for 21 September 2013 and perhaps those of us who are members can get together for that and it'll be a good incentive to join the association if you haven't yet.

## **LAST MAN STANDING?**

Now that Dave Rouget has hung up his uniform (unless he's chickened out and gone for some more continuance service?!) it has struck me that, with very few coming behind us, he might well have been the last craft apprentice serving in the 'proper' air force, and I may have unwittingly become the last member to still be serving in a uniformed branch of the RAF. If someone knows differently I'd be pleased to hear from them.

## **FACEBOOK GROUP**

A reminder that there is an entry Facebook group (thanks to Owl Hurst) on which you can put photos, requests, information, stories or pretty much anything else. It's the 'RAF Halton 225<sup>th</sup> Entry 1971 – 1973' group and hopefully you can search, find it and then request to join it. Membership is limited to entry members so if you aren't a fan of the wider world of social media you can just use this little corner of cyberspace – he says, bandying the words around as if I know what I'm talking about!

## **FINALLY**

For the past 90 years Trenchard's Brats have done their duty in times of peace and war and a small number will continue to do so for a few more years. By my reckoning the last one might still, in theory, be serving up until about 2027 (or 2037 if they go down the Full Time Reservist route and serve until they are 65!) but I wouldn't be surprised if they'd all gone some years before then.

I wonder who will be the very last one to hang up his uniform? Will the wider RAF take note of the occasion? I hope to be around to find out!

*Dickie Bird*