



The 'Never Again' News

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

No 16 – January 2017

DÉJÀ VU – ANOTHER APOLOGY

At the beginning of the last edition (December 2015) I started with an apology as it had taken me a year to get round to compiling another edition of *The Never Again News*, and I said I must try harder. Unfortunately, even though I set myself a low standard, I have still failed to achieve it! My only excuse is that this retirement lark is very busy, but bearing in mind I was away travelling for about 12 weeks of 2015, there is the element of truth in it.

This time I will not make any rash promises as to the likely publication date of the next edition!

HALTON TO CLOSE

It appears that in the recent review of defence estates Halton is due for closure by 2022. It will be carried out in phases, with the airfield closing first. I presume that there will be a Triennial in 2019, but that might well be the last one there, although depending on the future ownership / use it might still be possible to continue to hold them at Halton in some format thereafter. I wonder where the likes of the Trenchard Museum will end up – perhaps Cranwell where it looks like the recruit training will go to?

No doubt someone will buy up the place and make a fortune out of redeveloping it – anyone for a flat on the top floor of an 'elegant' three-story brick-built 1920s building, with a very large car park nearby?! Although the thought does cross my mind that some of the buildings might be listed, so that might cause a bit of a headache to any potential property tycoons.

Certainly by the time of our 50th anniversary the place will no doubt be well on the road to closure so, if we are thinking of having a big reunion, it might have to be elsewhere. If that is the case then perhaps near the modern home of No. 1 S of TT at Cosford would fit the bill? That would have the benefit of being fairly central; we might be able to arrange a visit to their facilities / workshops, and there is the RAF Museum on site to look round as well. Let me know what you think, but wherever we ended up having it I'd be looking for some help with the organization from those of you who live reasonably close to the chosen location. All volunteers take one step forwards.

ANY MORE OUT THERE?

I have been scratching my head to remember whether we have made contact with any more of the guys since the last edition, but I cannot think of any. I did have brief communication via Facebook from Malcolm Spicer's wife, however, she has not responded since. If I have forgotten your recent 'arrival' please accept my apologies for my incompetence.

There are still nearly 30 of the entry unaccounted for, but if you have any ideas whatsoever as to the where they might be then please try to chase them up and see if we can bring them on board.

Once again, to the best of my knowledge, none of our number has received their 'final posting', which is a relief.

HALTON TRIENNIEL & LECKIES ANNUAL REUNION – 24 September 2016

This year we managed to combine what has now become an annual leckies' reunion with the Triennial at Halton, and 15 of us (and some better halves) met up at Beaconsfield, the majority staying for two nights. Amongst the leckies was Dave Phillips for his first reunion; many of us had not seen since him since October 1973.

After everyone who was due to arrive on the Friday had settled into the delights of the Beaconsfield Travelodge they gravitated the 30 yards or so to the nearest pub. That was an eye opener for those of us not used to 'genteel' Buckinghamshire with the price of the drinks, and the fact that it shut at 11 p.m. on both nights – what is that all about? Nevertheless, a pleasant evening followed as acquaintances were renewed, a few sandbags were pulled up and a number of lights were swung, while partaking of the odd beer or two – and that was only the wives!

On the Saturday morning the group split up with some going to see various local places of interest and ten of us (five leckies and five riggers) heading off to Halton. There was a good turnout again at the Triennial and I heard mention of 900 + in attendance, but time will only reduce the numbers - it will be interesting to see what happens when Halton closes.

As well as wandering around the Trenchard Museum and the James McCudden Flight Heritage Centre, bumping into a few familiar faces from our various postings along the way, there was time for a quick photo shoot outside Oxford Flight (appropriately Spitfire Flight today). Then it was time for lunch, before forming up on the road at the top of the square and marching on for the obligatory speeches and the sunset ceremony.



Forming up for the march past – there was little evidence of the drill skills we learnt 45 years ago!

Then we marched off the square behind the Golden Oldies Pipe Band performing at what is possibly their last major event as they are probably going to have to disband due to falling numbers and old age. Down the hill we ambled before enjoying the sight of the traffic being held up at Main Point, and continued on to the old workshops where the parade was dismissed.



A happy bunch outside the old Oxford Flight.

Rear L to R: Paul Farrall, Dave Baines, Chris Birch, Dave Moore, Paddy Minister.
Front L to R: Tony Killick, Dickie Bird, Owl Hurst, Bob Newton, Derek Webster.

Thanks to Bob Newton for the photos.

Then it was back to Beaconsfield where a meal in a local Indian restaurant had been arranged for everyone. Needless to say there were two awkward ones who didn't fancy the spicy fare on offer and had to persuade the staff to rustle up a couple of omelettes (Paddy - you and I know who that was!) but, that apart, all went very well and an enjoyable evening followed. After retiring back to the White Hart we managed to get a couple more drinks in before the Beaconsfield curfew struck at 11 p.m.

BRING YOUR MUM AND DAD!

Chris Birch has uncovered these joining instructions for modern day trainees arriving at Halton.

Arrivals

The first days on the Recruit Training Squadron are extremely busy for both recruits and instructional staff. Recruits should aim to arrive between 0900hrs and 1000hrs on Day One, in accordance with the information contained in the Arrival Pack they have been sent. Their flight staff will meet them and the arrivals process will begin. This includes haircuts for the gents (cost £4), arrival administration and attestation. This is a very proud moment for new recruits, as this is where they swear to protect Queen and Country and from this point on, they are officially members of the Royal Air Force. There are also some forms that require to be completed; in order to make this process as easy as possible, recruits need to make sure they have brought along their most recent P45 (if applicable), bank details, all AFCO documentation, cash for a haircut (males only) and at least one pen. The various administrative procedures continue on into the second day, with more briefings and personal administration.

Parents Day - If a candidate has been successful in his/her application to join the Royal Air Force, they will receive an acceptance letter from the local AFCO. Shortly thereafter, the relevant family member, as indicated by the recruit, will be sent an invitation letter to attend the Parents Day at RAF Halton. This runs in conjunction with the first day of the course and is to give parents an insight into what the recruits will be going through over the next 10 weeks, and in order to answer as many questions that parents may have with regards to Recruit Training Squadron. The day also includes a talk with the Squadron Commander or Deputy Squadron Commander, as well as a tour of the facilities available on site; they can then witness the formal attestation, which is a very proud moment for the recruits and their families. It is an informative and interesting day and other guardians or partners are welcome to come along if this is more appropriate to the family situation. The first brief of the day commences at 1000hrs; therefore, if parents or guardians wish to attend, they should aim to arrive prior to 0945hrs.

I have no recollection of any of our parents turning up on 'Day One', although it is possible that those who lived quite close to Halton arrived in the family car. I remember being taken to my local railway station and being put on a train – I think the next time we got the chance to escape and see our parents was the Christmas leave period, six weeks or so later. That reminds me of the special leave train from Wendover, with the doors flying open halfway down the platform and the subsequent mad charge for the underground at Marylebone by about 2,000 apprentices!

Some things, however, don't change and an early haircut is still part of the ritual, whether you need it or not, and that brings back memories of the late Scouse Fryer and his luxuriant sideburns, which he was allowed to keep after the barber had shaved them off!

AND FINALLY

I hope that everyone has a good and healthy 2017. If anyone would like to submit an article for the next edition please send it to me whenever you like.

Dickie Bird