



# The 'Never Again' News

A (very!) occasional newsletter for members of 225 Entry, RAF Halton, Nov 1971 – Oct 1973

**No 17 – August 2018**

## **LATE AGAIN?**

In the last edition I said that I would ‘not make any rash promises as to the likely publication date of the next edition’, so perhaps I’m not late with this one!

## **PAUL FARRALL 4 April 1954 – 22 May 2018**

I think all of you will have been aware via my emails or our Facebook page that Paul Farrall passed away in May.

I first met Paul when we were both Air Cadets in Sussex and attended events such as gliding weekends. Although we didn’t know it at that time we’d both applied to join the RAF as apprentices, and were suitably surprised when we arrived at Halton and found that we were in the same room; it was good to have a familiar face amongst all the ‘strangers’.

Once I had a car Paul would travel on leave with me down to Sussex, and on one such occasion helped me change the engine of my Ford Anglia Estate (some of you may recall the Yellow Peril) after acquiring a replacement from three-up on the pile at a local scrappy, with nothing more than a few spanners and a length of rope! No Elf n’Safety to worry about in those far off days.

We were both posted to Brize Norton from Halton and after I ‘upgraded’ to a (slightly) better car, Paul bought the Yellow Peril from me. There were a few issues, such as the tops of the wings rusting through above the headlights, but nothing that couldn’t be sorted by cutting off the corners of the wings complete with headlamps, going to a scrappy and cutting off slightly larger sections from a better condition car, stuffing them into the holes and securing them with a few pop-rivets; it was good to see that our expensive Halton training was being put to good use!

While at Brize Paul met Bridget, a PMRAF nurse, and apparently she had said that she wouldn’t go out with a bloke unless he had a car. Paul had a car (well he had the Yellow Peril, which counted..... just!) and Bridget soon discovered another problem as it had by this time acquired a bent steering arm which severely limited the ability to turn left!



Picture of 'apprentice shooting team' with Paul, top right. This picture also surfaced on our Facebook page back in 2014 and others from our entry are front row left, Steve Fryer and next to him Steve Hitchman. Others given tentative identification in ensuing Facebook discussion were Chris Fairburn, Chris Hill and Chris Desborough. If anyone can confirm that the latter are in the picture, or indeed can put any names to others that would be much appreciated.

Undaunted by her initial experiences, Bridget married Paul in 1975 and I had the honour of being best man. They later had two sons, James and George, and their first grandson was born earlier this year. I was posted away from Brize in the autumn of 1975, but we kept in touch and our paths soon crossed again when our respective tours of Germany overlapped in 1980 – 81, and I would often visit them at weekends in their hiring near Wegburg, and we also went on skiing trips together.

After returning from Germany, Paul was at Abingdon and spent many an hour in the company of Owl Hurst as they travelled up and down the M4 to Brawdy to fix bent Hunters.

He left the RAF after 12 years service and then worked at Filton on F111s, VC10s, and latterly on building structural sub-assemblies for the wings of the smaller Airbus aircraft.

Paul was a regular at the apprentice Triennials, and also attended our entry reunion in 2011.

Unfortunately he was diagnosed with brain tumours in February and after initial signs that treatment was working, he suddenly deteriorated. Bridget and family cared for him to the end, and he passed away at his home in Chepstow on 22 May.

Cheers Paul!  
Goodbye old friend.



Having known Paul since even before our Halton days I was determined to attend his funeral, so I made the long journey to South Wales. Owl Hurst, Tony Frost and John Lawson also attended, as did a very large number of friends and workmates from his post-RAF days; the eulogy was given by Dave Kenny, a 119 Entry Dental Tech, who has been friends with Paul and Bridget since the late 70s.

## **IDEAS FOR THE NEXT REUNION**

With Paul's passing that makes, to the best of my knowledge, eight members of the entry who have 'taken their final posting' - rather worrying to me is the fact that four of them have been from my room. The four of us at the funeral discussed having another entry reunion before too many more of us fall off the perch.

With the fate of Halton known, and the station being wound down beyond the point where it could host a Triennial (the next was due in September 2019), it has been decided that a final reunion will be held at the National Arboretum, on Thursday 10 September, 2020, which will mark the centenary of the apprentice scheme and also the end of the apprentice association in its current form.

So two options present themselves: -

1. There could be some merit in including the above event into a weekend reunion of our own, and Burton-Upon-Trent has been suggested as a suitable base by the leckies who have been there before. In this case those that wish to could attend the event at the National Arboretum on the Thursday, and then assemble with the rest on the Friday to begin a weekend entry reunion.
2. Some may, however, think it better to do our own thing in November 2021 to mark the 50th anniversary of our joining up, and that could certainly include a visit to the National Arboretum to see the Halton Grove and also the Armed Forces Memorial on which Dave Chitty and Steve Fryer are named; there is also the RAF Museum at Cosford within easy reach, plus there's a brewery to visit in Burton itself!

As we discovered in 2011 the cost of coach hire for the day isn't too exorbitant when spread across 50 or more people; indeed we could no doubt have two days out and about at reasonable cost per head.

There is Option 3 of course, which is to do nothing, and that just doesn't seem right.

Therefore I would appreciate feedback from you all regarding your preference for options 1 or 2, or even that you are NFI and are going for option 3! Any other ideas will also be welcomed.

My hope is that we can organise an even bigger reunion than the 2011 one, how about a target of 40 of us there, which will be 50% of the entry, and perhaps with adequate notice the 'tax exiles' living abroad could even join us for the weekend.

Notwithstanding the above mention of the association winding up in 2020, there is a group who are determined that the association should continue after that date and they are fighting a campaign to ensure that it does. The forthcoming AGM will no doubt be an 'interesting' one and hopefully a clearer picture of the future will emerge thereafter.

## **FUTURE OF APPRENTICE LEGACY AT HALTON**

Whilst the station is closing, and presumably the real estate etc. will be sold off for redevelopment (I bet they'll get a bit more than the £112,000 they paid for it in 1919!) there are parts that are 'difficult' to deal with. According to the latest edition of *The Haltonian* talks are ongoing with Buckinghamshire County Council with regards to the possibility of them taking charge of the 1 S of TT Archive with a view to it being made available as an 'accessible national public resource'.

The association also says: 'We have also written to English Heritage for listing our Tribute and Stained Glass Windows'. They have also contacted the Historic Branch of the Defence Infrastructure Organization 'to re-emphasise the determination to safeguard and retain these important hallmarks of our heritage'.

The association is looking at the possibility of handing over responsibility for upkeep of both The Tribute and the windows in St George's Church to the local council. Whilst the preference is for them to be retained in their current locations, if the other options do not materialise an alternative home for The Tribute at the Halton Grove in the National Arboretum has been agreed; obviously if the church isn't retained for any reason then the re-homing of the windows would be a significant problem. It has been agreed with St Clement Danes in London that the laying up of the Standard and the display of the Roll of Honour will take place in 2020 for which a dedication ceremony will be planned.

As with the future of the association, the future of the 1 S of TT heritage is also the subject of debate..... What this space, the stories of the association and the heritage have a long way to run yet!

## **ANY MORE OUT THERE?**

I think the only new member to contact me since the last edition is Malcolm Spicer. As always I'm always keen to hear of any others and if you stumble across them please pass on their details, or get them to contact me.

## **LECKIES AT IT AGAIN**

As it's such a long time since the last edition the Leckies have had a get together last September, and are just sorting out the final details for the next one next month! They are leading the way with the idea of meeting up regularly and since our entry reunion in 2011 they've met up each year. Chris Birch writes: -

The Electricians held their 2017 reunion in Beverley. It proved to be a good suggestion by Dave Baines as there was plenty to occupy us over the weekend. Dave and Pete Davies were posted to RAF Patrington from Halton and RAF Leconfield was their parent unit. Don't think any of us had heard of either of those units when the postings came out. Same for the four that went to Swanton Morley from Halton. The Friday evening and Saturday were spent exploring the attractions of Beverley with Dave as our guide. Unfortunately some of Dave's old haunts had closed, but the infamous Nellie's was still thriving.

On Sunday some of us caught the train into Hull and Rob Newton took over as our guide for the day. We had a walk around the marina and stopped for lunch at The Deep aquarium, and then in the afternoon visited the William Wiberforce Museum.

The only thing left was to arrange our next reunion which will be September 2018 in Cardiff.



The Leckies and their ladies at Beverly for their annual get-together in September 2017



Now that Chris Birch lives in Sussex he can nip up to London when the fancy takes him (if the trains are running!), and on this occasion it was for the RAF Centenary Parade and Flypast.

Was he thinking I'd rather be on the other side of the barrier in my best uniform carrying a rifle on this hot day..... probably not!

## NO 'CASH IN THE ATTIC'

It's amazing what you find when you dive into old boxes retrieved from your parent's loft....

Having been in 225 Squadron ATC, I was somewhat surprised to find myself in the 225 Entry just a few days later.

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**DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE**

Cadet Derek Anthony Bird has given satisfactory service throughout his membership of the Air Training Corps.

He is leaving the A.T.C. because his is joining the R.A.F. as an apprentice.

Date 2/1/71 For Release etc  
(Commanding Officer)

No. 225 (Brighton) Squadron

**225 SQUADRON**  
(BRIGHTON No. 1.)  
**AIR TRAINING CORPS.**  
**BRIGHTON.**

(Impress Squadron Stamp)

And more from the loft.....



*The Commandant and Officers  
No. 1. School of Technical Training Royal Air Force  
request the pleasure of the company of*

-----  
*at the Passing Out Parade of the  
119<sup>th</sup> Entry of Technician Apprentices  
225<sup>th</sup> Entry of Craft Apprentices  
on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October 1973 at 11-15 a.m.*

*The Reviewing Officer will be  
Air Vice Marshal C. B. Bellis, CBE, MA. RAF.  
Air Officer Commanding No. 24 Group.*

## AND FINALLY

I am always happy to include stories (non libelous!) from your careers in future newsletters, so feel free to send them to me and I'll see what I can fit in next time.

Dickie Bird