



**THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION
NORFOLK BRANCH**

NEWSLETTER NO.230 September 2018

President: Squadron Leader Paul Bruning (Rtd)
Chairman: Mr. Tony Leonard + Standard Bearer
Vice Chairman: Mr. Paul Rainbird + Programme Secretary
Secretary: David McEwen
Treasurer: Gill McEwen



DEAR MEMBER

JULY BRANCH MEETING

David welcomed Richard Mann to this month's meeting for his talk 'Up in the Air part 3'.

This was very informative about the early pioneers of flight, their disasters and successes which led to the aeroplanes we have today. It's amazing to think of all the ideas they tried, some of which worked and others that didn't.

Richard was thanked and we made a donation to The Mission of Aviation Fellowship.

Chairman's Report.

Tony had nothing to report.

Secretary's Report.

David told members about the procedure for a visit to Honington. This has now been amended. David informed members of a holiday break he and Gill had been on to the Kynren at Bishop Auckland.

AOB.

Paul reminded members of the August Branch Day Out at the 'Museum of the Broads'.

Laurie Rooke welcomed Colin back to the Meeting, we were all pleased to see him.

BRANCH MEETING 18TH SEPTEMBER 2018

We have the return of Mark Reynolds and Sally. They will present a 'Comedy and Art Workshop' Mark's art and impressions are always interesting and with plenty of humour.

BRANCH VISIT TO 'MUSEUM OF THE BROADS, STALHAM' 14TH AUGUST 2018

Thirty members and friends enjoyed a great day out at the Museum. We arrived at 11am and were made most welcome by the staff. After a cup of coffee we visited the Museum which is most interesting with all the boats and history.

Then we went outside to the marquee with the sides raised and tables where we enjoyed our picnic lunch.

We were sat next to the broads and the warm weather and gentle breeze made it the perfect spot to relax, and have a chat with

everyone, especially members we hadn't seen for a while as they are unable to attend meetings. So it was lovely to have this get together.

For those wishing to see more of the broads and the wildlife, there was a boat trip at a very reasonable £5.

This was a great day out, all facilities were on one level, car parking so easy and nearby.

Thanks to Paul Rainbird for organising the event, if we visit next year then do join us.

RAF REGIMENT ASSOCIATION 2018 AGM & REUNION. 12-14 OCTOBER 2018 - PARK INN HOTEL, NOTTINGHAM.

Organised by IoW Tours, the weekend programme includes the AGM, Gala Dinner, Entertainment & Dancing. and an optional coach trip to and guided tour of the Cold War Exhibition at Cosford Air Museum.

Please do not contact the hotel direct, as the full weekend offer is exclusive to the Association through IoW Tours.

For full details and booking form click on to www.rafregt.org.uk If you require further help with the booking please contact the National Secretary at natsec@rafregt.org.uk

The AGM will be held on Saturday 14th October 2018 at the Park Inn Hotel by Radisson, 296 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG5 2BT, commencing at 16:00 for the transaction of business as detailed in the Flash magazine, (issue No 26),

The Flash is due to be mailed out to members in late September 2018. Items for Any Other Business should be communicated to the National Secretary by Friday 5th October 2018, at the latest.

Attending members are required to bring their own copy of the Flash, which will include the AGM pack.

Frank Xavier,
Notional Secretary,
RAF Regiment Association.

RAF NEWS - REGIMENT UPDATE 2018

Regiment mission raises stakes against terror.

UK Forces' five year Africa training pledge to counter Boko Haram extremists.

RAF Regiment gunners are honing the combat skills of Nigerian soldiers fighting the Boko Haram terrorists.

Personnel from Lossiemouth's 5 Force Protection Wing are part of the British Military Advisory and Training Team in Africa on a five-year commitment to counter threats from Islamic extremism. More than 1250 Nigerian military personnel have so far benefitted from UK training, with several hundred more undergoing specialist military courses and exercises since early 2015.

The 40-strong team comprises 51 Squadron troops and RAF Police teaching students to provide security and Force Protection outside an air base.

During the six-week deployment, Gunners put 370 Nigerian Air Force students through their paces, culminating in a three day exercise at Kaduna International Airport.

Wg Cdr Thomas Rees, Officer Commanding 5 Force Protection Wing, said: 'Sharing experiences and expertise with the Armed Forces of Nigeria builds capability and improves the combat effectiveness of both nations.'

The training being passed on includes infantry skills, civil-military affairs, media operations, command and leadership, and IED awareness.

The Gunners will also teach the value of engaging with village elders and religious leaders in communities caught up in conflicts learned from almost two decades of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

RAF Lossiemouth Station Commander Gp Capt Jim Walls DSO said: 'The RAF Regiment is passing on the wealth of experience they have gained over many years in high-threat global operations.'

Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster said: 'From expert operational guidance and medical mentoring in the North East of the country, to counter explosive device training across the country, the United Kingdom is leading the way in its commitment to supporting a safe and stable Nigeria.'

GUNNERS COMBAT NOVICHOK THREAT

Air Force chemical team brought in to contain deadly nerve agent.

A specialist team of RAF Gunners continue to work alongside emergency services to contain the threat from a deadly nerve agent believed to have been used in the attempted assassination of a former Russian agent and his daughter, in Salisbury.

The 22 strong team from the RAF Regiment's Defence Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Wing are supporting emergency services following the attack earlier this month.

Former Russian intelligence officer Sergei Skirpal and his daughter Yulia are still both in a critical condition following the incident.

Forces chemical teams including personnel from 20 Wing and 27 Squadron RAF Regiment have removed a number of vehicles from the affected area and carried out the decontamination of police and ambulance staff working at the crime scene.

Air Force chemical specialist Cpl Jules Plowman said: 'The team is intensively trained and well equipped to tackle this kind of problem and in this instance to support the civilian police service'.

Although this is a hazardous role, it is rewarding to know that we are making a critical contribution to protecting the British public and assisting the emergency services.'

Military chemical specialists were brought in by Wiltshire Police chiefs investigating the attack.

The Royal Air Force Regiment's CBRN team routinely train to support emergency services and respond to any bio-chemical or nuclear incidents.

They are also trained to carry out testing for deadly chemical agents and decontamination of areas where toxic substances may have been used.

GUNNERS' ASIA TRAINING MISSION

Military chiefs in Bangladesh have called in specialist RAF Gunners to train security teams who guard the country's main air bases.

Members of 15 Squadron RAF Regiment conducted combat drills with members of a recently formed force protection unit at Rajendrapur.

The commando style squadron was set up to protect the country's fleet of military aircraft including Chinese built F-7 interceptors, MiG fighters and Hercules transporters.

The RAF Regiment is deployed on all UK military training exercises and operations to secure air fields and guard air assets.

15 Squadron Operations Officer Flt Lt Thomas Abrahams said: 'Training our Bangladesh counterparts has been a uniquely and rewarding experience.'

'The training audience were enthusiastic and receptive to the lessons and progressed markedly throughout the package.'

It has been a real privilege for 15 Squadron RAF Regiment personnel to play a part in the formation of the Bangladesh Force Protection Unit and we look forward to continuing the training over the next couple of years.'

AND NOW - CULTURE CORNER THE RAF REGIMENT SONG

From O. Smith of Florida, USA. It is circa 1942 and he came across it in N. Africa.

Join the RAF Regiment and learn a Trade,
Adventure, travel and get paid.
They're the lies you are fed upon,
and like a sucker, you SIGN ON!

Then you're issued with your kit,
a uniform that does not fit.
Braces Left and Braces Right,
one holdall to be scrubbed white.
A belt with Brasses dull and Black,
one valise and one small pack.
Pouches basic, buckles 'D',
shirts of khaki issue three.
Boots, Ammunition, thick with grease,
'Ain't this ever going to cease?'

Ah! At last you think you're through,
you ask the Sergeant what to do.
He looks at you as if you're mad,
followed by another word,
the strangest one you've ever heard.

You look at him with quaking heart,
'but I don't know quite where to start'.
The Sergeant raves, and starts to swear,
'You see that # # # # kit over there?'
Well scrub it til it looks like new,
and then you can clean # # # # it too.
Then in the morning, on the dot,
I'll inspect the bloody lot

And so begins your new career,
in this unfriendly atmosphere.
You think of home, your comfy bed,
and wish like hell that you were dead!

The months roll by, you work, and how!
Folks walk by and see you now.
Drill parades and kit Inspection,
Brasses bulled to bright perfection,
'Squad Attention, Stand at Ease',
Obeying orders such as these.

'Then, in some dreary office job,
you count the days to your Demob.
How hopeless it appears to you,
you find that you've got years to do.
But then, one day, don't say I told y'er,
the blokes will say 'hello OLD Soldier'.

Then you, like me, will feel at peace,
because you've nearing your release.
And you can tell the younger lads,
about the smashing times you've had.
About the countries where you've been,
Then, you can say 'wipe off that frown,
don't let the Regiment get you down.
Keep your chin up Lad. Keep smiling through,
ME? I've only got one day to do!

MEMORIES by Greg Hicks.

I enjoyed on one occasion watching on television the Burghley Horse Trials, held near Stamford in the grounds of Lord Burghley's estate. This is not far from RAF Wittering. Seeing this estate brought back memories for me, because my Squadron 2812 was sent from our base at RAF Coltishall, near Norwich, to prepare ourselves for a Battle Course.

From a lovely barrack block we found ourselves under canvas in the middle of winter in this large estate, being told that from now on we were to act as if we were in 'enemy country'. It didn't take long for our corporal, namely Lofty Broadway, a cockney, to organise as if from nowhere plenty of fruit, several chickens and other things which were eatable - the only thing lacking was the mint sauce.

We eventually arrived at a valley which was the Battle Course, with live ammunition firing above ones head from all sides. One had to slide down, because it was impossible to run down in battle order, then cross boggy level ground and finally climbing up to the top, which seemed like the top of Snowdon.

The last phase of the Course was a damp cycle ride, during the night of 30 miles.

Yes, I did belong to the Cycle Flight of the Squadron, 'C Flight'. Many laugh about this, what with the rifle across the handlebar to the seat, ammunition pouches, small pack, gas cape and ground sheet. Did it rain worse than being in Manchester overnight.

Finally the bikes were taken off us, and we had to do a 12 mile march to Wittering Camp, marching in like guardsmen, with the Station Band leading us. The Station Commander took the salute and the rest of the camp cheering us as we entered. Incidentally the words of command on the Parade Ground were: Prepare to Mount. (Stop the tittering). Second command was 'Mount'. (If I have any more of that nonsense I'll keep you here all morning').

We did eventually learn, and I went on a Signallers Course at Compton Bassett, Wiltshire, shortly after.

AND 2 SQUADRON MEMORIES - From an Honorary Association Member.

When I first arrived at RAF Colerne in the late summer of 1965, to undergo initial aptitude tests before embarking and very strenuous pre -parachute course, the atmosphere on the Squadron was a little subdued for two reasons. Firstly, a Hastings Aircraft had recently crashed whilst engaged on parachute training at Abingdon, killing all the passengers and crew and secondly, the Squadron was preparing to go to Aden for just under six months on internal security duties at Khormaksar.

The aircraft of two Hastings Squadrons, which were then based at Colerne, all stood grounded on the tarmac without their tail planes, a somewhat bizarre sight.

After having successfully completed the pre para course, a much easier actual parachute training course followed at Abingdon, although when the Hastings aircraft returned to service during this period, I think most of the trainees experienced some loosening of the bowels!

With the training completed, I returned to my unit to 'clear' proudly bearing parachute wings, telling anyone who was interested that I had become a member of 2 Para Squadron (it was actually a Field Squadron at that time) as their medic and could therefore now be known as a paramedic!

Soon after I joined the Squadron at Colerne, we left for Aden. The tour whilst officially active service was no too hairy and certainly

had some good moments. We were able to continue parachute training by using a drop zone at Little Aden, and we had sufficient free time to be able to participate in sports and other relaxing activities, of which the Squadron was particularly fond.

Eighteen months later the Squadron returned to this troubled colony, where the internal security situation had greatly deteriorated. Leisure activities had been very much curtailed or non-existent on this tour. The Squadron helped to keep the air base at Khormaksar secure until the last 24 hours of British rule in the colony, when they handed over to the Royal Marine Commandos based on an off shore aircraft carrier.

In between the two Aden detachments, the Squadron was deployed to Zambia. British troops, mainly the RAF and RAF Regiment were then helping the Zambian government beat an oil embargo. This was probably the least arduous mission undertaken by any Regiment Squadron. The Squadron was based at three locations in Zambia, which at least gave the OC something to do, going around visiting the members of the Squadron based at Lusaka, Ndola and Livingston.

I was based at Lusaka in a small medical centre, which unbelievably hardly ever had anyone report sick. The Medical Officer was rarely seen as he had nothing to do and just remained 'on call'. I cannot remember what he looked like as I rarely saw him.

My working day, or to be exact half a day-I did not work in the afternoon, consisted of taking a Land Rover ambulance down town for minor errands to the hospital and refuel at the local army barracks.

When the decision was taken for the British troops to withdraw, an RAOC officer who was in charge of the NAAFI at Lusaka, decided that all remaining stocks of beer would be made available free of charge, as it was not worth the expense of transporting it out by air, and no other transport possibilities existed. So free beer was the order of the day. I hope the officer concerned rose to high rank in the Army!

Other diversions during my tour of duty were annual exercises in Libya, where the Squadron parachuted in the desert. Unfortunately during one of these exercises I sustained a badly injured back which brought a temporary halt to my parachuting

And an eventual end to my tour with the Squadron.

I later met up with several former members in Cyprus, who had managed to become part of a para rescue team known euphemistically as the 'Friday Morning Jump Club' due to the fact that membership usually involved nothing more than a weekly jump on the beach at Akrotiri, often without any equipment! As parachute pay was also available for this, it was much sought after by ex 2 Squadron members.

Like many of the 'penguin' members of the Squadron, I have remained proud of my association with the Regiment and attend reunions at the base, and also at Colerne, where I meet Cooks, MT Fitters, Radio Fitters and Clerks who were part of the Squadron in the 1960's.

Mick (aka Doc) Thompson.

We celebrate Saint George's day and fly the flag but do you know the history- read on.

THE REAL SAINT GEORGE By Alan Ridsdale

George was born at Lyddan the Vale of Sharon (Palestine) about 270AD. His parents were Christians but his father had found favour with the Emperor. George joined the Roman Army and because of his father's friendship his career was set fair. He rose He rose to the rank of Tribune of the Imperial Guard, a rank equivalent to that of our Colonel of the Regiment.

The Emperor, Diocletian, incited by his heir apparent, the Caesar Galerius, issued edicts against Christians. Galerius has been described in ancient texts as 'The wickedest man in the world, being given to drunkenness and debauchery'. It is little wonder that he saw Christianity as a rebuke to his life style and was determined to crush it.

The first decree ordered the burning of the Scriptures and liturgical books and the closing of churches. The second decree required everyone in the Imperial Service or in public employment to render divine honours to the Emperor by sprinkling a pinch of incense on a lamp before his statue. All who refused were put to death.

George was in the Imperial capital of Nicomedia when this decree was published. Boldly he tore it down and ripped it up. He was brought before the Emperor but instead of grovelling for pardon he pleaded for justice for his fellow Christians. Commanded to offer divine honours to the

Emperor, he courageously refused, declaring 'I believe in Jesus Christ, who is only both God and Lord'.

St Ambrose of Milan, whose account of St George's martyrdom is one of the most trustworthy, tells us: 'George, the most faithful soldier of Jesus Christ, when religion was by others concealed, alone adventured to confess the Name of God, whose heavenly grace infused such constancy into him that he not only warned the tyrants, but was contemptuous of their tortures.'

That George was tortured to persuade him to apostatize by sprinkling the incense, all the texts agree. Steadfast in his Christian faith, George was finally judged obdurate and condemned to death. He was beheaded on 23 April 303 AD and this date has ever since been kept as his birthday in Heaven.

George yielded neither to bribes nor torture, and his example saved the Church. Those who were wavering became resolute and the persecution failed. Within a few years of George's martyrdom, Galerius and Diocletian were dead. Constantine was Emperor, the indefatigable St Helen was building the churches on the Mount of Olives and in Bethlehem (and finding, many believe, the true cross). Christianity was the official religion of the Empire and persecution ceased.

It is for this reason that the Greek Church honours St George under the title of 'Captain of the Noble Army of Martyrs'. The Coptic Church hails him as 'The Trophy Bearer'. In the West he is named as Champion of Christendom'. In his native Palestine he is Patron of Healing, especially of lunacy and is honoured as such even by Muslims. Because his name means 'husbandman' (Geo=Earth; Ergos=worker) he is the patron saint of agriculture. He was a soldier and so is the patron saint of soldiers, particularly of cavalry.

According to tradition, St George was posted to York, the headquarters of Constantius Chlorus Caesar. The tradition is specific: George landed at Porta Sisuntorium, the modern Lancaster, the nearest post of the west coast to York. This is an important detail which supports the legend, for as we have seen, Porta Sisuntartium was founded by Carausius and it was only after the restoration of Imperial rule that Constantius established himself at York, which makes the date of George's arrival accurate.

At York, George and Constantine renewed their friendship and the legend has it, visited Glastonbury and the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Finally George received a second posting to Caerleon-on-Usk, the headquarters of all the 11 Augusta, before being recalled to Nicomedia in time to tear down the edicts against Christians.

In 1220 AD, Henry 111 ordered the Feast of St George, 23 April to be placed in the national calendar. In 1222 AD the Synod of Bishops, meeting at Oxford, decreed that St George's Day should become a lesser holiday.

It was at the siege of Harfleur that Henry V rallied his soldiers with the great battle cry immortalized by Shakespeare:
'God for Harry, England and St George!'

CORRESPONDENCE

That good ole Suffolk boy, Laurie, has writ to me agin. He tell a good tale. This is aboot that new technology, they seem to know all about yu. Rum ole do! Hear it be.

Hello, is that Gordon's Pizza?
Hello....is that Gordon's Pizza?
No sir, it's Google Pizza.

I must have dialled the wrong number. Sorry.
No sir, Google bought Gordon's Pizza last month.

OK. I would like to order a pizza.
Do you want your usual sir?
My usual? You know me?

According to our caller ID data sheet, the last 12 times you called you ordered an extra-large pizza with three cheeses, sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms and meat balls on a thick crust.
OK! That's what I want..

May I suggest that this time you order a pizza with ricotta, arugula, sun-dried tomatoes and olives on a whole wheat gluten free thin crust?
What? I detest vegetables.
Your cholesterol is not good, sir.

How the hell do you know?
Well we crossed referenced your home phone number with your medical record. We have the result of your blood tests for the last 7 years.
Okay, but I don't want your rotten vegetable pizza! I already take medication for my cholesterol.

Excuse me sir, but you have not taken your medication regularly. According to our database, you only purchased a box of 30 cholesterol tablets once, at Drug Sale

Network, 4 months ago.

I bought more from another drug store.
That doesn't show on your credit card statement.
I paid in cash.

But you did not withdraw enough cash according to your bank statement.

I have other sources of cash.

That doesn't show on your last tax return unless you bought them using an undeclared income source, which is against the law.

WHAT THE HELL?

I'm sorry sir, we use such information only with the intention of helping you.

Enough already! I'm sick to death of Google, Facebook, Twitter, What's App and all the others. I'm going to an island without internet, cable TV, where there is no cell phone service and no one to watch or spy on me.

I understand sire, but you need to renew your passport first, it expired 6 weeks ago.

Editor: Thank you Laurie, brilliant and how true.

TIME FOR A LAUGH

A woman goes into the butcher's shop just before closing. She says: Thank heavens I've made it in time! Do you have any chickens left! The butcher opens the fridge door and takes out his one and only chicken, and plops it on the scales. It weighs two and a half pounds. 'Oh dear, it's a bit on the small size really; do you have anything bigger?' The woman enquires.

The butcher returns the chicken to the fridge, takes it straight again, and plops it onto the scales, only this time he craftily keeps one finger pressed down on the chicken. The scales show three-and-a-quarter pounds. 'Wonderful!' says the woman 'I'll take them both, please.'

I used to be addicted to the hokey-cokey. But I've turned myself around - and that's what it's all about.

An apple a day doesn't keep the doctor away. It's just one of Granny's myths.

How I did I get out or Iraq? Iran.

What's your father's occupation? Asked the school secretary on the first day of the new academic year.

He's a conjuror, Ma'am, said the new boy.

How interesting. What's his favourite trick?

'He saws people in half.'
'Gosh! Now next question: any brother brothers and sisters?'
'One half-brother and two half-sisters.'

DID YOU KNOW

Q. Where does the saying 'throw your hat into the ring' come from?

This term originates in the world of prize-fighting and boxing, and dates back to at least 1805. Boxig rings were once circular, made up of a ring of people who had come to watch, rather than the squared, roped off raised platforms of today.

Prize fighters would turn up in a town or village and offer to take on anyone for a modest purse put up by the promoter, usually the fighter's manager.

The promoter made his money from people foolish enough to bet against his fighter. Any local who fancied his chances would throw his hat into the ring.

The earliest citation of the use of this saying comes from *The Sporting Magazine* (or *Monthly Calendar Of The Transactions Of The Turf, The Chase And Every Other Diversion Interesting To The Man Of Pleasure, Enterprise And Spirit*), published in 1805.

Nowadays, the term means willing to participate in any contest and has often been used in elections. Also stemming from prize fights are the terms 'to step up to the mark' and 'up to scratch'.

Stepping up to the mark meant standing on the ground in the centre of the ring, indicating they were ready for the fight. This has translated into the world of baseball as stepping up to the plate and generally means to take responsibility for something.

Being up to scratch meant being fit to continue a fight. The boxer had to get up and stand at the line scratched in the ground to continue. Not being up to scratch means being unable to fight on.

Bob Cubitt.

Q. Where does the phrase 'a little bird told me' come from?

This 'little bird' implies a secret or private source of knowledge. It is thought that the idea behind the phrase is in the noiseless flight of a bird, backed by a passage from the Bible found in Ecclesiastes 10:20:

'Curse not the king, not in thy thought, and curse not the rich in thy bed chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.'

The earliest modern reference comes from 1583, in Brian Melbancke's novel *Phiilotimus*: 'I had a little bird, that brought me news of it.'

In *Letter To Stella*, 1711, Jonathan Swift came close to the current version: 'I heard a little bird say so.' Frederick Marryat, in *Peter Simple*, 1833, had: 'A little bird has whispered a secret to me.'

Rev. J. Wall.

Q. Why are soap operas so called? What was the first?

The first soap operas were radio serials from the early thirties called washboard weepies - short entertainments that housewives could enjoy.

Among the first major sponsors of these serials were Proctor & Gamble (P&G), Colgate - Palmolive and Lever Brothers. Because so many of these sponsors were soap manufacturers, they earned the nickname 'soap operas'.

Jayne Barron.

Q. The phrase Frog in the throat.

Used of anyone with a croaking or hoarse voice. It derives from the Middle Ages when the head of a live frog was placed into throats to cure infections, such as fungus growth; as it breathed, it was said to draw the disease into itself.

Q. What was the worlds shortest war?

On 27 August 1896, the world's shortest war ever recorded started and finished when Britain defeated Zanzibar after 38 minutes.

FOR FOOTBALL FANS.

You may not know that highlights of the Football Championship and Leagues 1 and 2 (EFL) are now shown on Saturday nights at 9pm - 10.30pm on the TV Channel QUEST. To tune in go to Freeview 37, Freesat167, Sky 144 or Virgin 172.

The programme is repeated on Sunday morning at 10am

During Wimbledon tennis fortnight they take on 6,000 extra staff and some 53,000 tennis balls are used..

Long gone and mostly forgotten, it is 70 years since the Berlin Airlift - the largest Relief Operation ever undertaken. Here is a report written in 1999 by Dennis King

I would like to correct an impression given that the RAF Regiment did not play an active part in the Berlin Airlift..

Can I recount the experiences of myself and some other members of 54 Squadron RAF Regiment at Gatow. I and a number of other drivers were flown to Gatow via Buckeburg, specifically to work on the airlift within days of the start of this massive operation.

After a quick recce of the airfield we were immediately put to work. Our job was to reload some of the emptied aircraft with parcels and packages that were considered important enough to be sent to the free Western Zone. Each of our lorries had a crew of five or six German civilian workers for the reloading. They loaded our vehicles; from a huge pile in a hanger that never seemed to dwindle.

As soon as unloading was completed we then drew up and reloaded, obviously speed of operation was essential and in most cases this was completed before the crew returned to the plane.

There were always two lorries or more on this duty working virtually 24 hour shifts, and so we witnessed practically all the incidents, crashes and aborted landings by day and night.

The variety of aircraft used on the airlift was amazing, from converted warplanes to civil airline operators. We saw the arrival of the C54 Skymaster Squadron that was diverted from duties in Alaska. Night landings by the Skymasters were notable, as you could see their spotlight flick on from half a mile away and its pencil like beam would hit the runway.

Occasionally, an aircraft landing would be too close to another taking off, the Verrey pistol would be fired and the C54 would climb away again, throttles wide open. It was difficult to see in the darkness but the note of the engines changed and the glow of the exhaust stubs was unmistakable.

I remember, too, having to do a spell of duty on Schwanen Island on Havel Lake, arriving there by a small motor boat from the Gatow side boathouse. This was when the Short Sunderlands flew supplies in - what a sight that was.

I suppose like many others the memories came flooding back when the 50th Anniversary arrived. I was fortunate to be able to revisit Gatow along with other veterans, both aircrew and ground staff, and to see the unveiling of the Memorial Plaque and the RAAF Dakota which will be on permanent display.

All this ceremony happened within just a few paces from where 54 Squadron RAF Regiment had been billeted so many years ago. Fittingly the commemoration finished with a Dakota flyover, what could be more appropriate.

All this is history now, but all those who were involved can say proudly we were there and I completely agree, the experiences of those days will live with me forever.

AND from Wg Cdr (ret's) C. S. MacDonald.

No 5 Armoured Car Squadron, which was stationed at Gato, provided aircraft marshallers to augment Gatow's station flight and other 'volunteers', at least in the early months of the airlift. Just like the aircrews, these chaps did a first class job which entailed guiding an aircraft from the runway to its parking 'spot' for unloading

More often than not, the 'spot', would be a matter of a few feet behind the preceding aircraft. The main exception was the space at the rear of a York carrying sheet steel, otherwise its longer unloading time would obstruct arrivals on departure, it was a continuous task day and night with no communications other than bats, wands, torches and a telephone (used by everybody in the Malcolm Club canteen on side of the main strip).

Needles to say, all kinds of weather had a part to play. The noise of aircraft engines was always present and the coal dust blown about by propeller slipstreams made the rain almost welcome at times. And for good measure, lorries were constantly proceeding to and from the aircraft as well as people on foot such as RAF and USAF air and ground crews and the German teams unloading aircraft and loading the lorries.

That's all for now folks! I look forward to the pleasure of your company at the Branch Meetings.

Best wishes

Colin.