

FLASHBACK

MAGAZINE OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE PHOTOGRAPHERS ASSOCIATION No 93 WINTER 2025



SINGAPORE TOUR
Bob Strowbridge
CYPRUS IN THE 1960S
Barry Hughes
51 SQUADRON IN WWII
Phil Ward
2025 REUNION WEEKEND
Dave Ketcher





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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT



Well, another successful Reunion has now passed and grateful thanks to Tony Story, our Events organiser, for making our weekend at the Swan Hotel in Bedford such a success.

Our numbers were fewer this year, as expected, as we are all getting older, but it was a delight to see our Secretary, Gerry Linstead, make the superb effort to be there despite his health problems. We should also congratulate Gerry for his much-deserved award of the 'Jack Eggleston' trophy for 2025 for his outstanding work in keeping us all informed of the Association happenings, and our subscriptions data management over many years. Much appreciated.

As Chairman, I am well aware that other military associations and local clubs, such as Probuss and Rotary Clubs, are also suffering from declining membership. Many of you will be aware that the much larger RAF Apprentices Association disbanded last year due to a lack of support. This has prompted your committee to look to the future and, hence, move towards organising the 2026 Reunion at a different

location and time of year.

Taking note of the inputs at the AGM, your committee has decided to change the venue and the time of year, in the hope that a more centralised location and the attractions of RAF Cosford will encourage and make it easier for you to attend. Plans, yet to be finalised, are underway to secure a group booking rate at The Park House Hotel in Shifnal for a midweek event on 16/17 June 2026, and to arrange group visits to locations of interest in the local area. Hopefully, this will attract more members to attend and afford you the opportunity to debate the future of the Association. More details to follow.

In the AGM Minutes, you will note that, due to his failing health, Gerry reluctantly decided to stand down as the Secretary of our Association. This is an important position, and I am delighted to report that Dave Peel kindly agreed to manage the database and association records on our behalf. Well done Dave!

Flashback, under the expert guidance of Editor Phil Ward, continues to keep us well informed about all matters

related to RAF Photography. I am always amazed by how Phil finds those super photo shots that adorn our pages. Equally, the significant contribution by members in the recent editions of the magazine of time served in the trade is much appreciated; long may this trend continue.

Mal Moss, our Merchandising 'guru,' has completed a review of all our stock holdings and reported that we have a number of items that have not moved for several years. He has therefore proposed, and it was agreed, that these would be made available at the next reunion as 'give aways' to members. Now there's an incentive to join us next year at Cosford.

Since writing the above, I was deeply shocked to learn of Secretary Gerry's passing on the morning of 22 November. As we all know, he put up a brave fight against all odds to combat his failing health. As mentioned in my 'Chat', I recall with much admiration his personal effort in contributing to, and ultimately serving, the Association at our recent Reunion. Phil Ward informed me that his passing was very peaceful, and I know that the family were all present, which I am sure provided some comfort.

Gerry's friendship, cheerfulness, good humour and enthusiasm in all that he did will be sorely missed. He also leaves us with many memories over the years, his time in service and, for me personally, his valuable time with the Association reunions and beyond.

Well done, Gerry – a life well lived. The world is a much poorer place without you. Rest in peace, dear friend. I am sure that you will all join me in passing on condolences to Teresa Linstead and her family, and now also to Yvonne Leeds and her family, at this difficult time.

Finally, on behalf of the committee, may I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Yours sincerely,
John

OBITUARIES



GERRY LINSTEAD

Gerry started his RAF career in 1965 as a 303rd Entry Craft Apprentice at Cosford. Showing an early sign of his interest in music, he became Band Major for the passing out parades.

His first posting was RAF Chivenor. Eighteen months later, he was posted to 2 MFPU at Gutersloh. On leaving Germany in 1970, he was based at Cottesmore and returned to Cosford for an Air Camera Fitters course. Promoted to corporal, he was posted to Malta in October 1971 for a three-year tour.

After a couple of months, the then Maltese Prime Minister Dom Mintoff decided he didn't like the RAF and asked all British troops to leave. He was on 13 Squadron at the time when the Canberra PRGs were moved to Akrotiri. He spent a lot of time on detachments to such 'exotic' places like Masirah and Kuwait.

In 1974, he was posted to Kinloss, and in 1975, he moved to Wyton for his last tour of duty. While there, he went to Singapore for a month, to Norway many times and

completed a four-month tour in Northern Ireland. After leaving the RAF in 1978, having completed 12 years of service, he spent the next four or five years in the domestic electronic repair business.

He became a driving instructor with BSM and then started his own instruction business, which he successfully ran for the next 10 years. During this time, he also had a part-time job with Cambridge University as a college porter. This became a full-time position, and as it involved working shifts, it fitted in very well with the driving tuition. He became Head Porter and, no, he didn't carry any bags.



Gerry married twice. With his first wife, Isobel, he had two daughters, Hannah and Rachel. He remarried to Teresa in 1988 and has two sons, Thomas and James.

Gerry's funeral was in Kings Lynn on December 8th, and his extended family celebrated his rich life with many of his dear friends. **RIP. Phil Ward**



STAN LEEDS

I think many members will not know much about Stan and his time in the Service, so this is a personal view of him.

Stan joined as a member of the 30th entry in early 1957. During his time as a Boy Entrant, he rose to become the Flight Sergeant Boy of the entry and, in that position, would have taken the passing out parade, quite an honour.

I am not sure of his first posting, but we next met at RAF Innsworth in February 1960 en route to Singapore on SS Nevassa, a three-week journey, and it was during this time I got to know him as our backgrounds were similar before joining up.

On arrival, we found that Stan, Maurice Cooper and I would be joining 81 Squadron at Tengah. We moved into Gibson Block, where there were quite a few lads we knew, mainly ex-boys, so we were made welcome. The next morning was spent finding our way around the station, then making our way to the Photo Section. At that point, Maurice was told he would be working on the aircraft with Stan and me in the processing section.

During the next two and a half years, we all moved around between the two jobs at Tengah, plus two detachments to RAAF Butterworth to support the Valiants of 543 Squadron who were carrying out the Siam survey.

Our task was to process and print the films from the F49 cameras, and on each occasion, we put in many hours. Operating out of ancient MFPU trailers was quite an experience, and we did enjoy it. Stan was promoted during this time, but I'm not sure when.

One of our pastimes was skin diving, and we visited Blakamti

Island and the Sister Isles quite a few times. The visibility varied, so some trips were more interesting than others. We heard of an island off the Malayan coast that had been visited by a lad called Bill Reeves, and after pestering for some time, he agreed to take us there. I wrote a write-up about this some time ago for Flashback, so I will not go into detail about the time we spent there. This was the highlight of our tour, really and at a later date we took two more of our crowd, so it was something we often talked about.

When we returned to the UK, I visited Stan in Cardiff and met his family, then he came up to Liverpool to meet mine. During conversations at Tengah, we did talk about our folks, so it was nice to put faces to the names. After this, we lost touch for about 6-7 years, then met up at Cosford and picked up where we left off. This happened a few times over the years, but each time we did meet, it was just a natural thing to carry on.

In the late '70s, I became an instructor, and for once, we were at the same station for a couple of years. We have always been in touch since then, met at reunions over the years, and on my visits to UK since we moved to Spain. Since Sue started dialysis, it was difficult to travel, so it's been phone calls, and I spoke to Stan about 6-7 days before we lost him. Sue could hear him and was surprised how cheerful he sounded, as I had told her how ill he was. In all the recent chats, he has been full of life and never complained once. Quite a character, and I will miss him. **Ian Evans**



MEMORIES OF AN RAF PHOTOGRAPHER PT3

The final part of Bob Strowbridge's RAF career. Seletar 1966 to 1968



We're off to Singapore. We fly in the good old RAF Britannia turboprop aircraft, stopping at Bahrain and Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). At Colombo airport, we posted a couple of cards to our parents with an up-to-date message. These cards were posted in February 1966, and I'm still waiting for them to arrive.

We landed in Singapore in the early hours of the morning. It was warm and humid, with strange smells. An RAF coach took the families to hotels that had been booked from the UK, so we didn't have a clue where we were going. We were shattered, got to our hotel, into our room, into bed, and didn't wake up until about 4pm,

when there was a knock on the door. We were served with afternoon tea and sandwiches. Dinner followed later.

Our first experience of Singapore in daylight was that, in the afternoon, it absolutely poured with rain. It soon stopped, so we went for a short walk and passed Lee Kuan Yew's residence, Singapore's Prime Minister from 1959 to 1990.

The next day, I was collected by an RAF driver and taken to RAF Seletar. Barbara and the boys stayed in the hotel. I was posted to JARIC (FE) (formerly CPRU). On arrival, WO Meechan told me to take the rest of the day off and find some private accommodation. With the help of Cpl Dennis Willis, we found a

nice bungalow in Serangoon Garden Estate, which was very close to a Kampong (native village). It had a lovely big garden for the boys to play in. Both our neighbours were Chinese, one was a very nice family of Steven, his wife Daisy, two little girls and a baby called Kenneth. All were Chinese but with English names. Steven was Chief Inspector in the Singapore Police. Our other neighbours couldn't speak English.

I was at JARIC for just a couple of weeks when the CO, F/Lt Brown, informed me that I was to take over the Station Photo Section. Brilliant, things were getting even better. The Photo Section featured me and three local Chinese civilians employed by the local

government: Victor (Sim Chin Hee), Kim (Neo Swee Kim), and an elderly gent called Mr Wee. He was very quiet and hardly spoke any English. Victor told me that during the war and occupation by the Japanese, Mr Wee worked for the Japanese as an interpreter.

As I was on a 24/7 call, I was excused from all Station duties. RAF Seletar was in two parts, East Camp and West Camp, with the runway running through the centre. It was a large and busy camp. To get about to cover photographic duties, the Photo Section had its own means of transport, a push bike. It was a bit of a strange situation, as the Station Photo Section was part of a building within General Engineering Flight (GEF) of 390 MU. My immediate boss was F/Lt Brown, JARIC (FE) Admin Wing; my overall boss was Wing Commander OC Tech Wing.

The Photo Section ran very smoothly, and I was my own boss. On occasions F/Lt Brown would phone for an update. Mr Wee reached retirement age and left us, and Hugh Murphy from JARIC was promoted to Corporal to join me. Between us, we operated a private business photographing weddings, parties, etc. We called ourselves S&M Photos. I converted a



Left: Seletar Yacht Club, a former flying boat base. A Sunderland visited that was in transit from New Zealand to the UK. Photo John Barry



bedroom in my bungalow into a darkroom, and at first everything went well. Hugh pulled his weight but gradually lost interest. When we parted company, Brian Foster, in JARIC, joined me in my private venture, and we continued as partners until I returned to the UK in August 1968.

After finding accommodation, the next priority was to visit the local tailors in Jalan Kayu village, located just outside RAF Seletar camp, to be measured for lightweight KD to replace the RAF issue. I had three sets of working KD and one set of No. 1. I was measured up one day and collected the complete sets the next. All our civilian clothes were made to measure by the local tailors – trousers, shirts, coats, and suits I even had an overcoat made just before we returned to the UK.

Barbara didn't have to visit the tailors; she got her dresses from the 'egg lady'. Obviously, she sold eggs, but she also travelled to her customers on her bike, carrying a very thick dress catalogue. The ladies picked a dress of their choice, were measured, and a dress was made and delivered within a couple of days.

Singapore, and the Seletar Station Photo Section, was a dream posting. A few memorable occasions included the Leicester City football team's visit to Singapore (then in the 1st Division). They were invited to Seletar, shown around the village of Jalan Kayu, and then escorted around the camp. At lunch time, they were entertained in the Sgt's

Mess. I got talking to the team manager, and he said to me, "See that lad over there drinking orange squash, he'll play for England one day." It was Peter Shilton, at the time, he was just 16 years old.

On another occasion, 209 Squadron, with its Single and Twin Pioneers, was celebrating its 50th anniversary. As 209 Squadron were reputed to have shot down the Red Baron during the 1st World War, they (209) built a replica Red Fokker DR 1 plane for the anniversary. They invited Baron Manfred Von Richthofen's (Red Baron) great, great-grandson to the ceremony.

No. 103 SAR helicopter Squadron celebrated its 50th anniversary, and Prince Philip came to Seletar for the presentation. I was summoned to a meeting to discuss what would be involved with the

Prince's visit. I was told to be careful because Prince Philip hated press photographers. As military photographers, we didn't stick cameras in his face. I photographed the official event in the evening, then Barbara and I attended the night's entertainment as guests.

In the private photography business, I was not only making extra cash but also working on some very interesting venues and occasions. Brian and I photographed a wedding between an RAF lad and a local Chinese girl. The wedding ceremony was in the camp C-of-E church, followed by a small reception in their flat in Jalan Kayu, then that night to attend a banquet in Singapore City, all arranged by the bride's parents, a proper traditional Chinese celebration.

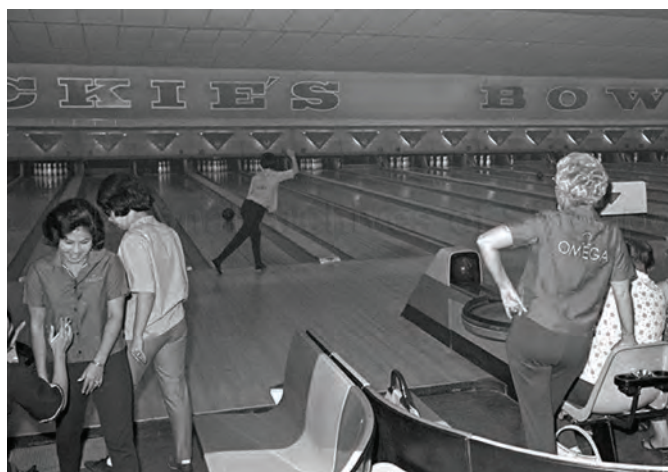
Another memorable

occasion, one of the squadrons was having their Christmas dinner and dance at the well-known Raffles Hotel. All the squadron personnel had to save up throughout the year to pay for the Xmas bash. I was asked to photograph their night's festivities. Barbara and I were invited, meals and drinks included, all free. The Raffles Hotel had a strict dress code, I had to have a suit made, and of course, Barbara said she needed a new dress.

One day, S/Ldr Horrocks, Senior Education Officer, came into my office and told me the Station Commander had instructed him to write a book on the history of RAF Seletar, and the Station Photo Section was to offer all assistance, great, no problem. I got all excited, it looked like I was going to go to Japan with the S/Ldr to interview and photograph a gentleman who was the Seletar Japanese Camp Commander during the 2nd WW. It didn't happen. Most of my involvement with the book was to copy archive photos. The book got published. "Lion in the Sky" I'm thanked in the acknowledgements, but still had to pay for a copy.

Serangoon Garden Estate, a bit more than a village, had a market, a row of shops, a cinema, a café, a restaurant, a bar and a football pitch. A lot of service personnel lived there, the RAF, the Army and the Navy. I joined a football team called Serangoon Europeans United, managed by a Marine, Bill Fathers. We played in the Singapore league, playing





teams of different nationalities, Chinese, Indian and Malay, playing all over the island of Singapore. I later took over the team's operations when Bill left for England. I was also the Rep, organiser and captain of the JARIC football team. Social life was brilliant.

The boys both started infant schooling at RAF Seletar, and a coach took them to and from the camp. Barbara had 2 ½ years of being spoiled. We had an amah three days a week, and we had several during our stay. The best two were Anna, a Malay young lady, and later Mary, a Chinese young lady. The reason Anna left us was that she was married with a family, and her husband wanted her to return home full-time. Although we were paid an allowance to employ an amah for six days, we only needed them for three, so to ensure the amahs didn't lose out on pay, they worked for two families each week. When we went out at night to parties, etc, the amah would babysit

the boys, get them up in the mornings, give them breakfast and stay until either Barbara or I got up.

During the amah's three days, she would wash and iron clothes, clean the bungalow, and do general, easy chores.

Barbara had a lovely social life with other service wives, with Chinese cookery lessons, making handbags, and frequent coffee mornings.

After a house party, it was often down into Singapore City, to Bugis Street, where life

started from midnight onwards, or to Fatty's, a very well-known street food establishment in nearby George Street (photo far right).

Both Barbara and I played ten-pin bowling, both in a league, Barbara in the morning, I in the JARIC team at night. Every few weeks, a group of us, together with our wives, had an evening of ten-pin bowling at Jackie's Bowl in Katong – a good social evening.

During the good times, I remember family visits to Tiger Balm Gardens, also known as Haw Par Villa. It was built by two Burmese/Chinese brothers who had made their fortune with Tiger Balm products. There were the Botanical Gardens, where monkeys roamed free, and shopping in Raffles Square to the large Chinese Emporium. We had walks along the Padang, often with cricket matches being played. There were visits to the





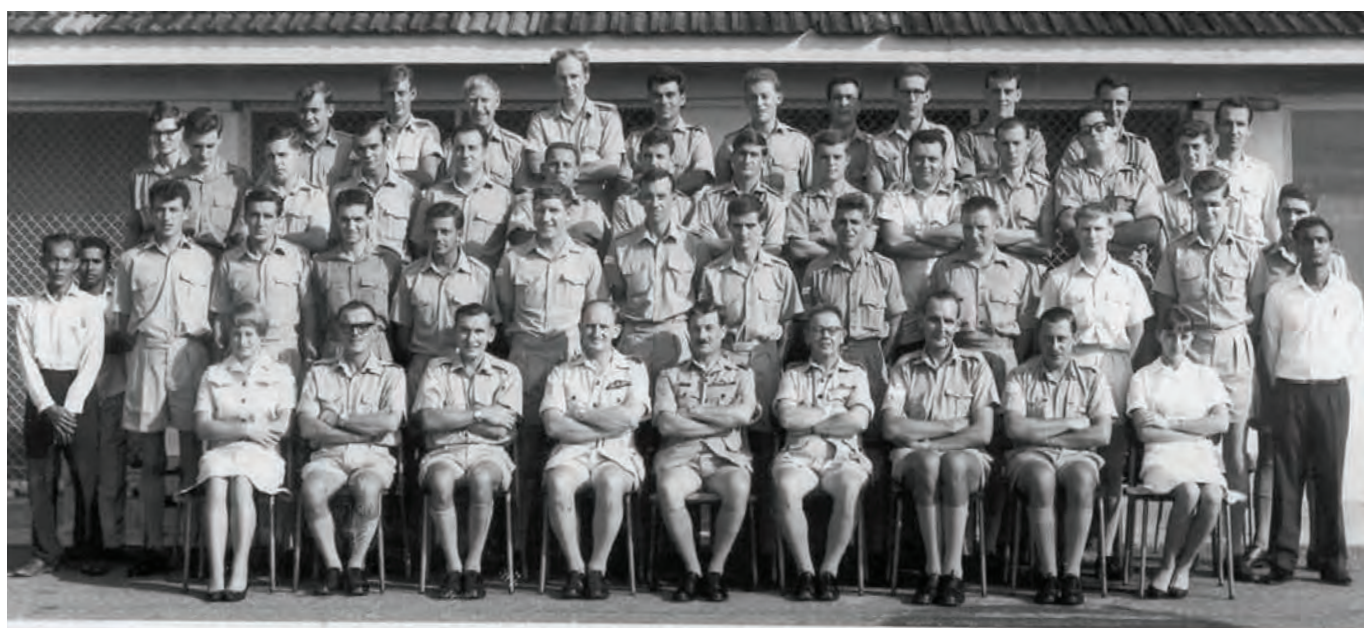
UJ Club (Union Jack), an old colonial building with a rich history. We enjoyed days at the new Britannia Club, which had an all-ranks swimming pool (where the boys learnt to swim). There were also weekly visits to the Amahs' Market, held at night in various villages, where rows of stalls lined the road, selling everything from food to clothing.

A very memorable occasion was when most of JARIC, and I of course, had an afternoon's visit to the Tiger Brewery. There was a quick walk round to see how the beer was produced, then into the brewery's own private bar for copious quantities of free Tiger

beer – a good non-sober time was had by all.

In August 1968, it was back to the UK, and once again I'm posted to RAF Lindholme. My disembarkation leave was cut short because there were no NCOs in the Station Photo Section. There were five or six photogs in the section, and the camp was running down, getting ready to close. I served my remaining few months at Lindholme up to April 1969.

I must have done something right during my tour of Singapore, because I was awarded the Air Commander's Commendation (FEAF) for Meritorious Service in the 1969 New Years Honours List.



J.A.R.I.C., F.E. PHOTOGRAPHY FLIGHT

MAY 1967.

BACK ROW: SAC WEIGHELL, SAC MCMURRAY, LAC DODDS, LAC DUNCOMBE, SAC GAY, SAC TULLOCH, SAC WHITE, SAC MOTT, SAC BUTCHER, SAC PYE, SAC PETTY.

3RD ROW: SAC DAY, SAC MACCONNACHE, SAC SWEET, SAC FOSTER, CPL SHIPLEY, SAC PERKINS, SAC HILL, SAC MACKAY, CPL DODD, CPL SCOTHERN, SAC BAILEY, SAC SIMPSON, CPL SYMCOX.

2ND ROW: AWANG, MUTHIAH, SAC GRIFFIN, SAC GRIFFITHS, SAC VICKERY, CPL DEVEREUX, CPL ALLEN, CPL FEW, CPL GALLIMORE, CPL BARTLETT, CPL DUCKETT, SAC JOHNSON, SAC HUMBERSTONE, SAC DEAKIN, SUPPL.

FRONT ROW: LACW GOOCH, SGT. HODGSON, F.S. LEWIS, FLTY. WHP. BROWN, SOONLDR. MR. MONK, W.O. J.P. MEECHAN, F.S. TUWOOD, SGT. STOKES, SACW TANSEY.

MY LIFE AS AN RAF PHOTOGRAPHER 1960/69

Part 2 Cyprus by Barry Hughes



After disembarking in Famagusta, we wearily trooped onto a bus to be transported to RAF Akrotiri, which was to be home for the next two and a half years or so.

The billet consisted of a long wooden bungalow totalling about five/six rooms, each room having six beds. Ours included a bunk bed, which brought our number up to seven. The room was sparsely



furnished with iron-framed beds with mattresses which I swear must have been there since WWII, and uncomfortable to say the least. My whole life had to be stored in a tall locker and a small side cupboard. Everything, and I do mean everything, was always covered with a layer of sand.

Bed bugs moved in their thousands, marching to the beating of their feet as they went from bed to bed seeking their prey. We'd put tin lids filled with paraffin under each foot of the bed, which stopped them from climbing the bed legs. But though thwarted from this direction to our bodies, they would march up the wall, along the ceiling, dropping onto the bed to continue their feeding. Every month or so, we'd take the mattress outside,



cover it with paraffin and set it alight. This destroyed whatever beasts lurked in cracks and crevices without damaging the mattress itself. Sadly, the beast had no natural predators and thrived, often leaving notes of thanks for the clean bed.

Over the next two weeks, all the lads became bronze gods. I, on the other hand, was pure white. I even wrote to my mum complaining about my misfortune.

So the decision was made. After work, four of us went down to the beach. I lay down on my towel and was covered in olive oil and salt on the basis that's how chickens were browned off – or so we

thought. They went off for a swim.

After an hour, I turned over, and one more hour passed by. I suddenly felt very dry and sat up, and it was at that moment that the lads came back. They all stopped dead in their tracks. Apparently, I was glowing red raw like a cockerel's comb. I felt no pain, just a tightening of the skin, dismissing all attempts to have me down at the medical centre. Happily, the next day I was dark oak.

Initially, I worked in the Photographic Section, mainly because, being an LAC, I hadn't gone through the formal photographic training of RAF Cosford in the UK. The first half

of the day consisted of darkroom work, printing and processing films. I had to do this for about six months, passing out as SAC Hughes – only another ten years to corporal – can't wait.

Every day during the morning lessons, the corporal trainer would stop and look out of the window, just standing there. After about four weeks without knowing what he was looking at, he was called out to answer a phone call, so we shot to the window to have a look; we had to find out. A good-looking brunette with a beautiful blond walking by her side was both chatting away, without a care in the world. He returned before



we could get back to our seats and was caught red-handed, but now we understood the look on his face.

As a side note, I finished up being married to the blond for 28 years, but that's another story.

Constantly, we were put through rifle and Bren gun training; you have to remember that the troubles in Cyprus had only ceased in 1959 and were still just beneath the surface and raw.

Six hundred yards out to sea, just off the coast of Akrotiri, was a large rock formation that had once been part of the landmass. At that time, it was used for shooting practice with the Bren gun. When not being shot at, we enjoyed swimming out to it, because next to the rock was an intact village about 30 feet below the surface. You could swim down and collect different bits off the streets or houses, which were still intact, other than the roof.

On one occasion, a report was received that a white shark had been seen in shallow water in the Nicosia area. We used this information when teaching a friend to swim. After many weeks of splashing about and learning to doggy paddle, then a kind of breast stroke, we gave him a target of swimming to the rock to judge how far he'd progressed. Four of us swam with him for confidence. He'd almost reached the rock when someone shouted 'shark', you've never seen a faster front crawl style, which he was still doing as he shot up the beach. After the explanation, he calmed down, realising that he could swim after all.

As time passed, I became an old sea dog like the rest, settling into a life of working from seven in the morning until midday. It was too hot to work after that time, so swimming and sunbathing were the norm.

I did have a problem with regulation shorts and socks. When wearing regulation clothing, the only part of the leg to see the sun was the kneecap. I decided to change things by taking my shorts to a local tailor, as many had done before me. He removed the majority of material, and I have to admit that they did look a little like hot pants, and with my socks rolled down around my ankles, you can understand why I drew the attention of

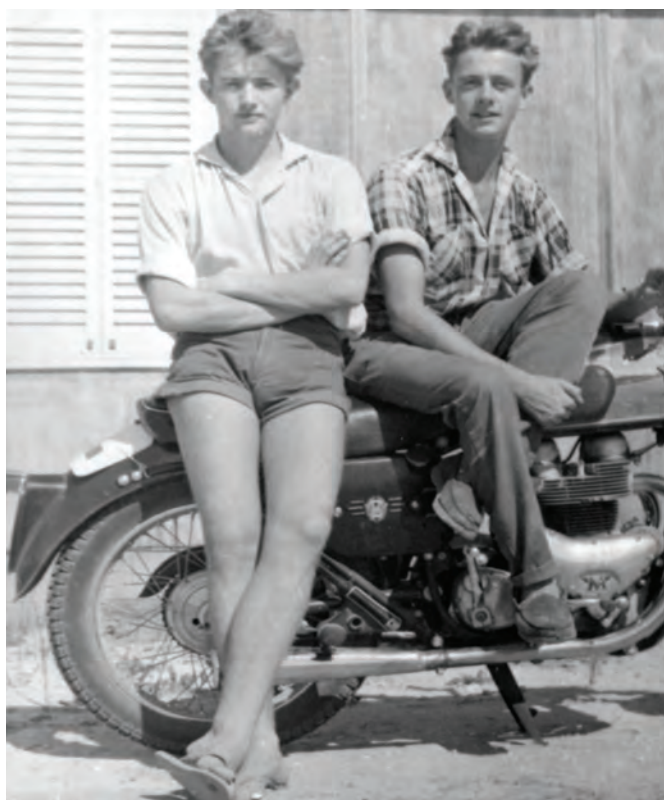
Sergeant (Dinty) Moore and others, but they got used to them.

I have to say there was a major benefit which I had not anticipated. We were on parade practising for some special occasion in a line standing to attention, the officer in charge walked down the line checking our kit. He came to me, and I thought he was going to choke. Looking me up and down, this person of rank obviously had additional skill levels as he was able to verbalise his discontent: "You are the scruffiest, most unkempt airman I have ever seen in my life. Leave my parade immediately and don't let me see you again." "Thank you, sir", smart salute, turn and away I went. He was definitely a nice man, one I could look up to.

The majority of lads had motorbikes, so I bought myself a black 350cc Norton Navigator. We all enjoyed many days riding all over the island. It was very dusty because roads covered in Tarmac were at a premium, so most riding was done on dust tracks. Whenever the bike had a fault, Alan Polley and the others would take it apart, strip it into nuts and bolts, and then put it back together. In two years, I never got my hands dirty.

Billy Eslop, for whatever reason, couldn't afford a bike, so the lads found him an old Velocette 125 and rebuilt it to be a smashing little bomber.

On one occasion, Alan, who had a Matchless 500cc, and I





were racing through the Sovereign Base Area (that's the area under British jurisdiction). We were going round a sharp bend quite fast, too fast, I suppose, and I was leaning over at almost forty-five degrees. The front tyre hit a stone, and both I and the bike went off into a field of long grass. It was a good thing I was slightly behind Alan, who was so intent on beating me to our destination that he never realised what had happened until he was some distance away. He rode back looking for me, but was going too fast to see me in the long grass. I lay in

the field for a while, picking my bike up I realised the petrol tank had been punctured, so there was nothing I could do, so I pushed it to the roadside, then started pushing it back to camp. To my shame, a young corporal on a Lambretta scooter stopped, and for whatever reason, he had a small rope with him. He kindly towed me back to the block. I never lived that down; the opinion was that I should have refused and pushed it back the four miles. I took some stick for a few weeks, but then it was forgotten.

This may have been when I



started to question the validity of the legal system. I was ordered to court by who knows who because no one appeared at the time of the accident, and no one knew that the accident had happened, or so I thought. Anyway, the judge read out the charge: 'driving around a bend too fast', 'I don't understand, I'm unaware that such a charge exists because who knew what speed I was doing, my Lord.' Judge: "Don't be impudent, fined 15 pounds, and any more of that and I'll double the amount". Silence from me, 15 pounds was a lot of money.

I enjoyed playing football and

was a centre half for our squadron team. In 1961, we won our league cup, and I was approached by the officer managing the Flying Wing team. This was beyond my wildest dreams. In 1959, many professional players were conscripted into the RAF, and a match between, say, Communication Wing and Flying Wing was like going to a first division match. To be asked to play at that level was out of this world. Stanley Matthews, eat your heart out.

I arrived at the match and changed into my kit. I forget who instructed me, but it went something like this. Trainer: "You'll be playing at right back, now. This is what I want you to do. See the stocky little bloke over there, fetch him off the field." Me: "How much pain should he go through?" Trainer: "Whatever fetches him off, we've watched you, you're fast and rough." Was that a compliment? I'm not sure. Forty-five minutes later, I was lying on the ground, unable to breathe. The guy had run circles around me and scored three goals. During the match, he stopped to talk: "What have they told you to do?" I told him, he said: "I thought as much". Then he gave me tips on how



to be a better fullback, for which I was grateful. I was later told that he was an ex-Newcastle United centre forward. Now they tell me!

You can judge the quality of football played. Flying Wing drew 1/1 with Manchester United in a friendly in that year. Happily, I accepted my abilities and that I was never going to be asked to play for them again.

Besides football and running, I enjoyed going up into the Kyrenia Mountains, where a number of us used to go potholing. Having been down the mines, the darkness felt like a friend. I say potholing, but when you look at the definition of potholing and caving in caving, the passageways are mainly horizontal, and in potholing, they are mainly vertical. So when I think back now, we went caving because there was only one vertical shaft we had to climb down.

We couldn't go spectacularly deep, but we went as far as possible, the fun part. There was a story that Eoka (Greek Cypriots wanting Greek autonomy on the island) had a tunnel from Kyrenia harbour up into the mountains. Apparently, they used it as a getaway for escaped prisoners being held by the British in Kyrenia Castle during the problem years. We searched every crack and cranny for a full two years but never found a scrap of evidence of it. However, on one occasion, we found a large crack (fissure) about a foot wide, but without being able to see how far up or down the crack went. We considered it to be about 40 feet above a very large cave that we called the Cathedral.

I think it was Alan Polly and I who decided to see where it went. Supporting ourselves by ramming toes on one side and our backs to the other, we traversed along. Alan had a 50-foot length of climbing rope over his shoulder, and after about 50 yards, we were slowing because the crack was narrowing when Alan became jammed. He calmly unwound the rope and let it drop. We decided at this point that it wasn't safe to continue. On arriving at the Cathedral, the others pointed out that our rope appeared suspended from the ceiling some 40 feet above them. I think it was a good decision to stop when we did.
To be continued.

NOTICE OF RETURN	
In solemn warning to all relatives and friends of	<u>SAC. TELFORD F.C.</u>
who is due home on (or about) the	<u>22nd</u> day of <u>MARCH</u> in the year <u>1961</u>
Take heed, and observe well the information set forth in this notice, if you wish	
....FRED. to fully readjust to a normal, healthy, civilised way of life. Please bear in mind at all times, that for the past <u>4</u> months, he has been cut off from all the aspects of the good life which you have come to regard as a normal person's right, and consequently has become both mentally demoralised and physically dehydrated. He has forgotten what it is like to be treated as a human being and has <u>lost</u> all sense of values.	
<u>(He is, by the way, a member of the U.S.A., Cyprus.)</u>	
PART A. In making joyous preparations to welcome him back into your midst, you must remember and allow for, the crude environment that he has had to endure for some time. He will tend to be a little Eastern in his habits, and will probably be suffering from having too much sun. Try not to be alarmed if he:	
a) Prefers to squat on his haunches, rather than to sit on a chair.	
b) Insists upon taking his shoes off when entering a house.	
*c) Searches all unknown persons entering the house. (Try to dissuade him from this, as it could be embarrassing to all concerned. But, be very careful how you go about it.)	
d) Pours custard on kippers; mixes grapes with mashed potatoes; asks for, and drinks, 2 or 3 pints of tea or lemonade with his meal; eventually taking his eating utensils away from the table, washing them and walking off with them in his pocket.	
e) Answers the telephone as if he is raving, with indeterminate utterings which sound like 'Gaily Mirror', 'Gaily ticked her', and so on. (Bear with him. He'll adapt; eventually.)	
f) Insists on sleeping naked, usually on a mattress placed on the floor.	
g) Occasionally throws his bed out of the window, pours petrol on it and sets it alight.	
*h) Refuses to leave the house unless in a group of three or more, and then, rarely after dark. (Be very tolerant, and explain that this is now unnecessary.)	
i) Dives into the nearest doorway whenever a car backfires.	
j) Awakens extremely early, sleeps during the afternoon, comes to life again late in the evening and catches the last bus into town, to late night shows and entertainment. (Do not be too upset by his constant desire to spend most of his time in bed.)	
PART B. The above you will gain some idea of the habits he has formed during his stay. The following suggestions will help you to speed his readjustment with the minimum of upset and trouble to all parties.	
a) Do not let him see you are embarrassed in his company if he:	
i) wears numerous layers of clothing at all seasons.	
ii) shows his vehement dislike of the British climate, and of the orderly crowds of people going about their business in a sane fashion.	
iii) keeps making off after any female between the ages of 13 and 40.	
* iv) makes a scene in a restaurant if he cannot have a corner table facing the door.	
b) Any hints about him leasing a small island in the Mediterranean, or other signs of Cyprus Sickness, should not be taken too seriously. The psychologically rehabilitative reply should include allusions to dust, thirst, flies, Coca-Cola kiosks, Keo, over-ripe grapes/oranges/water melons/carrots, shady nightclubs and Turkish coffee.	
c) Do not introduce rich foods and sweet tea into his diet too quickly, otherwise you are likely to upset his stomach to an irreparable extent.	
*d) Never approach him from behind without warning, because he will probably defend himself viciously, before realising that you mean him no harm.	
e) For the first few months, until he is housebroken, be especially careful when he is in the company of women, particularly young and beautiful women. For, after seeing females wooed on the screen, solidly, for the past <u>4</u> months, he thinks himself a master of the art. His intentions will be sincere, albeit dishonourable.	
TO CONCLUDE. Bear it in mind that beneath his tanned and rugged exterior, there beats a heart of gold. At all times treat him with kindness, forbearance and understanding. Note also, that an occasional quart of liquor will contribute greatly to his sense of well-being. By applying the above with tact and common sense, you will go a long way to restoring the shattered shell of the man you once knew, to his rightful place in life.	

Above: Standard tour-ex letter to parents advising of anticipated psychological issues
Below: Kyrenia Castle reputed to have secret underground tunnels



RAF SNAITH – HISTORY ON MY DOORSTEP

The Editor discovers the story behind wartime operations at a local airfield



In 1950, I was brought up in a small village in East Yorkshire between Pontefract and Goole. Our nearest town was Snaith, where I went to school.

Just one mile away at Pollington was a former wartime airfield. Opened in 1943, it closed in 1947 and was placed on care and maintenance. I assumed the base was called RAF Pollington, but I was to find out in 1964, following a conversation with F/L Smith, OC in the 'Factory' at Wyton, that it was actually called RAF Snaith. The reason being that there was also an RAF Pocklington in Yorkshire, and Snaith was chosen to avoid confusion.

My excuse for writing this story is that Snaith was home to 51 Squadron that flew Halifaxes. My association with 51 was that while I was on 58 Squadron at Wyton in the 1960s, 51 was a 'sneaky beak' outfit with Canberras and a Comet 4C.

And yes, 51 Squadron did have cameras because fellow 49th Boy Entrant Mick Squire went on an Fg6 course and, upon return, went to 51. This is me joining up the dots because Mick was quite rightly tight-

lipped about his activities.

Moving forward several decades, I became Chair of the Civilian committee for my local ATC Squadron. Among the RAF stations that we have visited was Waddington, where 51 is currently operating RC-135W Rivet Joint.

During the mid-1950s, RAF Snaith gradually became accessible. The Army camp was taken over as a Borstal facility for young offenders, and my father was a member of the security staff. One of the 'pans' was used for the annual Bonfire Night, and together with my friends, we would cycle down the main railway line for trainspotting on the East Coast Mainline at Heck (below left). We would explore the abandoned Bomb Dump.

The station site was off-limits, as it was reportedly patrolled by security staff, although we never saw anyone. We did pluck up the courage to peek through the joint in the hangar doors. The inside was full of unused mobile civil defence equipment. We gained access to the control tower; the door was unlocked. The

state board was still intact, and the final recorded flight operations were in 1945. What a trophy that would have been.

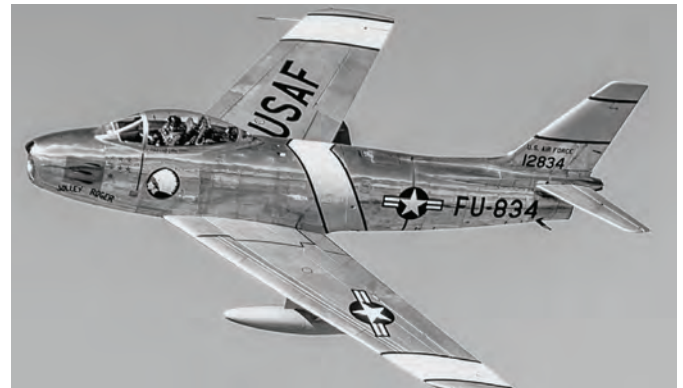
The runway was sometimes used by learner drivers, including myself, when my uncle allowed me to drive his Mk2 Ford Zephyr, the first time I had been behind the wheel. My

the airfield just in time to see a USAF F86 Sabre take off on the east main runway. Wow!

Despite ongoing research, the reason for its presence remains a mystery. The popular theory was that it had run out of fuel and force landed.

As children, we knew very little about RAF Snaith's operations, other than there had been a massive bomb dump explosion. Moving forward to this year, when my family's magazine (Auto Italia) held an event at Carlton Towers, which is near Snaith. We booked an Airbnb, which just happened to be on the site of the wartime WAAF accommodation near the airfield. Among the reading material in the house was a copy of 'Snaith Days – Life with 51 Squadron 1942-45'. It was a revelation and a gold mine of information.

The book was written (and signed) by Keith S Ford, a serving member of 51 Squadron



brother once came home with a runway light that he had removed, and when inverted, it was repurposed as an ashtray.

One day, the word spread around the school that there was an aircraft on the airfield. After school, I raced home on my bicycle and went straight to

in the period, and describes events at RAF Snaith in astonishing detail. It also records every aircraft, aircrew, and groundcrew losses, which amounted to 729 servicemen. This story has extracts from the book, copies of which can still be found on eBay.



Bombing Photography

The use of bombing photography became so important for assessing the efficiency of operations that the Halifax was fitted with an F24 aerial camera (right).

When the squadron aircraft were being prepared for an operation, the photographers would load the camera with a magazine containing a fresh batch of film and ensure that the correct fuse capsule was set on the photoflash and the camera control was set to the bombing height.

In the F24s used for night photography, the focal plane shutter was modified so that the shutter was open and the film continuously exposed when the camera was set. The shutter was closed when the new frame was wound over and the capping blind operated. The exposure restarted when the capping blind operated. The camera was capable of taking 125 exposures, but normally only six frames were used for the bombing photos. The actual target exposure illuminated by a high candlepower flash was called the Bombing Frame. The other photos taken over the target zone were useful in that they recorded information which could be useful for assessment by the Operations staff.

The information obtained could include searchlights, gun flashes, and decoy targets. Evading action by the pilot and roving searchlights could affect the results (right). Later, a master and slave system improved imagery.

Subsequent versions of the F24 (right) and F52 had a disc fitted to the gearbox cover plate to prevent the connectors from vibrating loose. Conspiracy theorists suggest other reasons for the plug coming loose.

When the Bomb Aimer pressed the bomb release switch, it released the photoflash along with the bombs and also initiated the operation of the camera controller [T35], which controlled the camera. Two frames were wound over before the photoflash ignited in order to ensure clearance of fogged film. The bombing frame exposure was made when the high-candlepower flash exploded. The photoflash was designed to fall slower than the bombs and explode behind the

aircraft, illuminating the ground for approximately 1/30 of a second without impinging on the photo frame in the camera. Approximately four seconds after the exposure was made, the controller wound on two more frames. There was a possible exposure by frame six of the bomb bursts. To conserve the frame without fogging it, the Bomb Aimer needed to press the bomb tit again to repeat the film cycle, which meant that the frame would be wound on.

When daylight operations began, a modification was made to the camera cycle to allow for taking an additional picture coincident with the bomb release. The reason for this was that the normal single bombing frame in daylight was not reliable enough to give an indication of where the bombs were likely to hit.

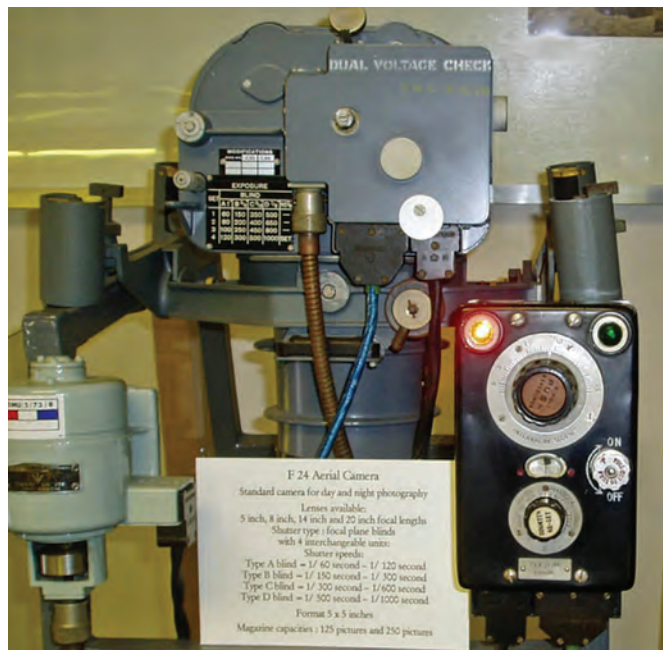
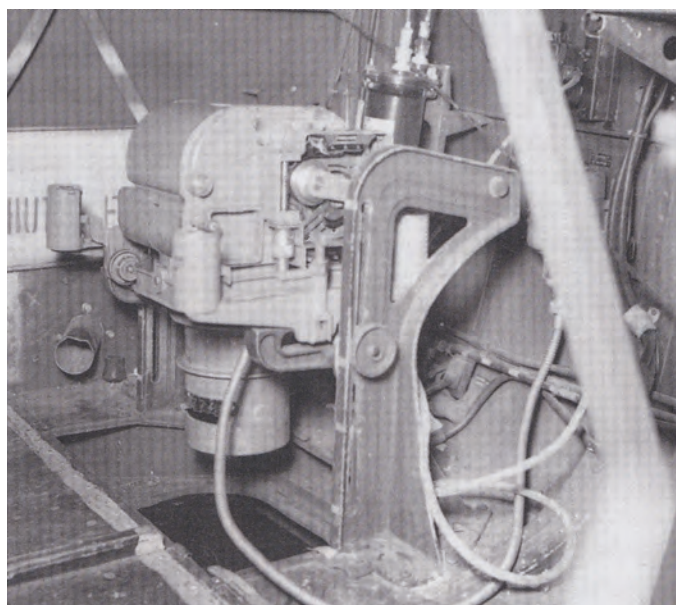
After an operation, the Photographic Section had to work fast to have the raid photographs ready for assessment by the PI Section.

'Bug' in Bomb Selector

On 13 February 1943, the aircraft were bombed up and ready for an operation against Lorient and over on 'B' Flight, the various aircrew were standing round their aircraft having a last-minute chat. The Bomb Aimer of Sgt Rawcliffe's crew told his skipper he was going to make a final check of the bomb circuitry and nipped into their aircraft, DT722, MH-M. After his checks, he came out and stood with his crew, who were talking to the crew from MH-V parked on the next dispersal. At approximately 17.30, blue smoke was observed emerging from the bomb bay, so the Bomb Aimer re-entered the aircraft to rescue the two pigeons and shouted to everyone to take cover since an explosion was likely as the fire was in the bomb bay.

There were a couple of 'Erks' working on the wings of the aircraft who, realising the danger they were in, took running jumps off the wings at about 10ft from the deck and fled for cover. The aircrews, having decided discretion was the better part of valour, headed for a nearby wooded area and lay flat on the ground.

The Fire Crash Tender and an Ambulance sped across the airfield. The fire raged out of





control, and an explosion occurred. The burnt-out aircraft eventually collapsed in the middle.

At approximately 18.00, a similar incident occurred on the other side of the airfield. Over on 'A' Flight, the Bomb Aimer had checked his equipment on MH-H, DT724, a fairly new aircraft, Captained by P/O Rawlings, which was standing on the dispersal with its bomb doors open. Then, upon connecting the batteries, a pile of incendiaries suddenly fell onto the hard standing. Being nose-heavy, these incendiaries fell so that the nose hit the floor and ignited immediately. At first, the Armourers tried to kick them out of the way, but had to stop because they contained a percentage of 'X' type explosive incendiaries.

Appreciating the danger of the situation, Cpl Simms, the

Armourer in charge of the team, warned everyone to evacuate. The Armourers ran about 60 yards and then threw themselves into the nearest dugout. The aircraft's bomb load consisted of 3 x 1000lb HEs plus incendiaries, and one of the HE bombs detonated, scattering the remainder of the load onto the airfield. The five armourers hid in the dugout, peering out at the burning aircraft until the bomb exploded.

The aircraft continued to burn, eventually collapsing in the middle. A tail unit from the bomb, which exploded, went through the roof of an unoccupied bunk in one of the barrack huts and a large hole was blown in the dispersal. The squadron's operations were cancelled for that night. The nearby Army unit hearing the explosion was fully alerted,

thinking that a Luftwaffe air raid was in progress.

The Squadron Electrical Engineering Officer was obviously very concerned about these mishaps and instructed the Electrical Section to conduct a thorough investigation. The aircraft involved were newly arrived on the Squadron and fitted with some American-manufactured bomb controls which were found to contain drilling swarf produced during the manufacturing process. The effect of the swarf was to cause a short circuit in the Selector Unit, so that when set on 'safe', it released the bombs prematurely. To overcome this, all units on the Bomb Control panels of new aircraft were examined for the possibility of short-circuiting due to swarf, and no further incidents occurred.

The Bomb Dump Explosion

At about 10.30 on Saturday morning, 19 June 1943, the NCO in charge of the bomb dump received information on the bomb load required for the night's operation. This had to be prepared and delivered to the aircraft at their dispersals. The total bomb load consisted of 3 x 1000lb GP HE bombs, fused for long delay, 3 x 1000lb MC HE bombs, and 114 x 500lb MC HE bombs.

The Station Armourers working in the Bomb Dump began preparing these bombs, while the Squadron Armourers on the Flights carried out their daily inspections and prepared the aircraft to receive their bomb loads.

However, at 13.20, these preparations were suddenly interrupted by a serious explosion in the Bomb Dump, which was situated on the west side of the airfield. Halifax JD244 MH-K, a new aircraft piloted by Sgt Fred Heathfield, which had just reached a dispersal after carrying out its first air test, was knocked sideways by the explosion. At the same time, Halifax MH-D had just landed on runway 213 and was taxiing along the peri track when it was also knocked sideways by the explosion. A third aircraft, just starting to land when the explosion occurred, decided to overshoot and landed at Burn. A couple of ground crew tradesmen cycling to lunch along the peri track were blown off their bikes.

Fire broke out in the area where the incendiaries were being stored, and further explosions occurred at intervals, the last one some twelve hours after the initial explosion, which could possibly have been caused by the delayed-action bombs.

Despite the loss of the Bomb Dump facilities, the squadron was still required to carry out operations, so it was necessary to bring in bombs from other Stations. RAF Riccall, the home of 1658 HCU, was willing to supply bombs and Armourers, so all the Armourers on that Station were alerted to transport bombs to Snaith and



Right: Stills from a PR film was made at RAF Snaith to record operations. It is thought that it was never shown as so few aircraft returned from the raid

help in fusing them. In view of the urgency, some bombs were prepared by the armourers on the low loader vehicles during transportation to Snaith.

The next day at 09:00 hours, a recce of the Bomb Dump was carried out by an Air Ministry officer, the C/O of 5131 Bomb Disposal Squadron, stationed at Snaith. They reported that on the east side of the Bomb Dump, there were 22 x 1000lb bombs in a fused condition.

These could have been affected by the fires and explosions, which may have rendered them unsafe. Some of the bombs contained Number 37 pistols, with a long delay time of anything up to a week, so on the advice of the Bomb Disposal, an area around the Bomb Dump was placed out of bounds to all RAF personnel and civilians.

The railway authorities (LNER) were also warned to close the main line to the North, which ran alongside the Bomb Dump. The CO took off in a Tiger Moth aircraft to examine the Bomb Dump from the air and reported that there were a number of bodies lying flat on the ground.

The ammunition in the Bomb Dump was disposed of, and in some cases, this was quite difficult since the concrete roof of the bomb shelter had been blown on top of it. This required jacking up in order to reach underneath the concrete for the ammunition and some of the bodies. There was a large crater in the middle of the Tarmac area with ammunition at the base of it, so the Armourers involved in removing



the ammunition had to scramble up the sides of the crater, carrying the explosives.

On 29 June, a further examination of the Bomb Dump was carried out, but no further bodies were discovered, and the LNER was informed that the railway line was now safe. The funeral of the ten Victims took place at Selby Abbey on 30 June 1943.

Air Chief Marshal Harris

One of the highlights for the station was the visit of the great Air Chief Marshal Harris, who came to inspect the Squadron. He attended the briefing for the Mont Lucon operation on 15 September 1943 to give a pep talk to the aircrew whom he affectionately referred to as his 'old lags'. The book records an interesting anecdote about a dog called 'Butch', which was also the nickname given to Harris.

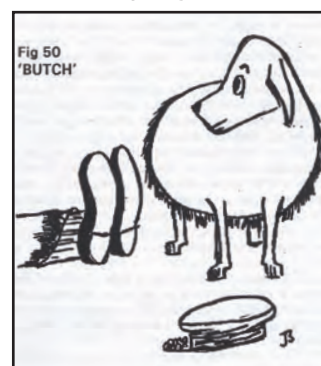
"The dog was their self-appointed mascot, an evil-smelling ragbag of a dog, nearer to a sheepdog than

anything else, but he could do no wrong. The tastiest scraps from every Mess found their way into his ever-open mouth, and he always claimed a place on the most crowded crew-wagon going out to dispersal (above). After Ops, he was there to welcome those who returned – and to share in the early morning bacon and eggs.

"Butch never missed a briefing; his attendance was as essential as that of the Met Officer or of the Group Captain himself. He was good for morale and part of the intangible spirit of the Squadron.

"On one well-remembered occasion when Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris came to give the crews a briefing, the dog's casual unconcern for all authority ensured his place in squadron history. As the great man entered the expectant Briefing Room and advanced towards the dais, Butch preceded him solemnly. Then, with superb timing, he lay down in his path and began to scratch himself with relish. Sir Arthur

was forced to halt and, at some risk, to step over him. In the eyes of the squadron, this was Butch's finest hour. He has no monument; he was not the kind of dog many people would have been proud (or even willing) to own. But he was part of the wartime squadron experience, which those who lived through will not easily forget."



The RAF Snaith Museum, located in nearby Pollington, is run by volunteers and features many artifacts from World War II. It's well worth a visit.

rafsnaithmuseum.co.uk



RAFPA REUNION 2026



PARK HOUSE HOTEL SHIFNAL

The Royal Air Force Photographers Association visits the Cosford area for its annual reunion. Monday 15th June until Wednesday 17th June. Planned visits to the RAF Cosford Defence School of Photography and the RAF Museum Midlands.



TRIUMPH TR4 AT AKROTIRI

When I was stationed at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus in the late '60s the CO of 103MU was returning to the UK and his staff decided to completely 'do up' his car as an RAF vehicle. The Photo Section was tasked with the job of photographing it. All good fun but the strangest thing happened a few years ago.

I have collected 1:76 scale models for some time, partly connected with building a model railway. One of the manufacturers of these tiny vehicles is called Oxford Diecast based in Swansea South Wales. One day I noticed in their military

collection was a Triumph TR4, and sure enough it was the same vehicle that had been mocked up as a spoof!

I got in touch with the manufacturers, sending them a photo of the real car. Somehow they had got hold of this event, with I presume by being in touch with historians. I put them straight that this was actually done for the CO's return to the UK. They were somewhat surprised needless to say but were still happy to promote it as one of their military historic vehicles. At least the car has been remembered for posterity.

Chris Pettman



RAFPA PHOTO COMPETITION

The subject for the 2026 competition is: "Our Engineering Heritage". Photographs of any subject that highlights or delineates our BRITISH engineering journey or achievements. The subject is open to your interpretation. Prints can be either 7 x 5, or 10 x 8, or metric equivalent.

Please send in your finished prints to the following address:

RAFPA Photographic Competition, 50 Hanson Avenue, Shipston on Stour, Warwickshire, CV36 4HS

Cut off date, for receipt of entries: May 1st. Do not write anything on the print(s), but do include your name, on a separate note, in the envelope.

David Beeton
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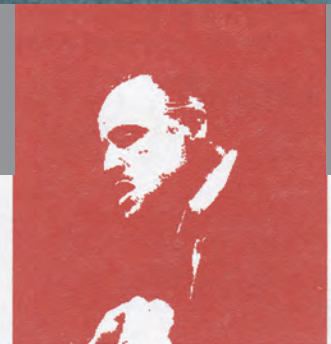


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RAFPA REUNION 2025

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Tony Holland receives his award for sterling work as RAFPA Treasurer



RAF Photographic Competition 2024 credits
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