

FINAL EDITION



Airwaves



THE MAGAZINE OF ROYAL AIR FORCE LOCKING

March 1999



FOR SALE

255 acres in rural location. Includes buildings and all MOD cons. One owner from new. Best offer secures.



Marconi's ghost seen in 2(T) museum



Final handover before the close-down

From the Editor.....



This final issue of Airwaves brings to a close a long line of station magazine titles across the years. The Locking Scene, Locking Review, and Focus have all played their part in presenting the social side of the station to personnel at Locking. For many years the production of has been undertaken on the station and reproduced by the Station Printing Centre. Despite lacking the glossy appearance of other station magazines, I have tried concentrated on the content of each issue, aiming to provide information to personnel and their families, as well as highlighting the activities and good work going on around the station.

With no dedicated resources for the magazine, I have been indebted to sections around the unit for letting me compile my copy on their computers. I would also like to thank all personnel who have provided articles, photographs and ideas for publication over the years and especially Flt Lt Frank Wareham and the members of Supply Flt, who have contributed items for every issue. Finally, I would like to thank the ladies of the Printing Centre, Ann Daniell and Kay Bebb for their help with the reproduction and collation of the magazine.

Production

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Editor: | Chief Technician Dick Powell |
| Printing: | Mrs Ann Daniell & Mrs Kay Bebb |

Airwaves is the Station magazine of RAF locking and it is published by the kind permission of the Station Commander. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect official policy

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WG CDR JOHN MORGAN

By the time you read this, Christmas and New Year will be well behind us and the transfer of C-ETW to Cosford will be galloping towards us. My tenure as Station Commander will already be at least two months old which means that there is less than 6 months left before the station closes. I know that the people reading this will be a mixture of those going to Cosford and those remaining behind to close the station and thus my introduction is designed to give you some idea of the thrust of my plans during the short time we have left.

For those of you who are going to Cosford, I hope that RAF Locking will provide you with all the support you need to complete the move smoothly. For your part, all I ask is that you continue to think through all that is happening and draw to our attention, as soon as it becomes obvious, any shortcoming you identify. If you foresee a problem, don't keep it to yourself, make sure that everyone is aware and we can resolve it. From what I have seen of the C-ETB and the plans that CETW have for the move, it looks to be all set and all I really need to do is wish you all the very best in your new home.



For those of us left behind, the future is less clear. As I write this the Army have yet to declare their hand fully but are making all the right noises. They have already committed themselves to £400K to keep our central heating system serviceable and to delay the demolition of buildings which we would have to take down were we to close on time; it looks as though they mean business. So what are we going to do? In essence, even if the Army decide they will take the site, we will still have to prepare it for handover. The date for that may slip beyond 30 Sep 99 but only a very small team will remain beyond that date, primarily in the Property Management area. Whether the furniture is still in or taken out will be based on the Army's needs but the majority of our plans will need to press on regardless. In particular the personnel drawdown cannot stop. Everyone will leave on or around the date they have already been advised, indeed I hope that, by now, all those going by 1 Jun 99 will already have a posting and the remainder will get one soon.

For families this is a disturbing time. The Post Office and newsagents shop are both closed, the Hairdressers and Spar shop not far behind and so too the Library. These actions are all necessary if we are to be ready for closure. You will be aware that, since my last article in Airwaves, we have reconsidered the situation with regard to the Nursery School, which will now remain open to end of May and the HIVE which we will review monthly from 1 Apr 99 and close when the use diminishes. I am open to suggestions for anything else we can do to maintain your quality of life but must stress the need to close on time. You will be surprised by how quiet the station will be once C-ETW have gone and will understand then the need to close quickly. On the social scene,

the Sgt's Mess will close on 2 Apr with a combined Officers' and Sergeants' Mess operating from that day. The Roundel Club will remain until 30 Aug 99, on current plans, but we may have to go to a centralised club for all ranks before that date if the numbers cannot justify two venues. That is something we must play by ear when the time comes. All in all, the time between now and closure will be a busy one for everyone. As I said to those going to Cosford, do think about what is going on and, if you have concerns, raise them through the chain of command. I want your last few months at Locking to be happy ones even though the loss of RAF Locking will be a sad day for all of us.



Need to dispose of household goods, chaps and ladies?

Don't fall foul of the regulations, (like I did when I pretended to be the CO!).

IF YOU WANT TO DISPOSE OF FRIDGES, FREEZERS, WASHING MACHINES, OLD CAR PARTS, FURNITURE & MISCELLANEOUS USED OILS, PAINTS AND CHEMICALS. PLEASE DON'T FLY TIP.

CONTACT THE LOCAL COUNCIL ON 88888 WHO WILL EITHER COLLECT OR ADVISE YOU WHERE TO TAKE IT.

OR

RING SGT JOHN HODGESON IN SUPPLY ON 7424 FOR HELPFUL AND FRIENDLY ADVICE ON DISPOSAL

Mr James Richards - 40 years at Locking



Mr James Richards is Locking's longest-serving member of staff. He has worked in a variety of service messes during his time on the station. Starting his service in December 1959, he first took up a position in the old Apprentice Mess in 8 Area.

Life at Locking was very busy in those days. "Around one thousand apprentices were fed in the 8 area mess at that time" he recalls, "and there were other airmen's messes around the camp too". Messing itself was 'fairly basic' in those days, each airman was issued a set of 'irons', a knife, fork and spoon, which had to be looked after and brought to the mess to eat with. At the end of

each meal a communal water tank was used by the airmen to wash their irons and tea mugs. Tea was infused in a series of large urns, with the addition of a number of cans of evaporated milk. This, according to Mr Richards, was a surprisingly good brew, and aided the apprentices' character-building.

In the early 1960s, the wooden buildings in 8 Area were demolished and apprentices were then catered for in the new Quantock Mess. The Mendip Mess (Threepenny Bit) was built and provided messing for permanent staff and adult trainees. Mr Richards worked in both messes and saw the gradual improvement in airmen's' messing from the days of the old wooden buildings. He also noted the change from 'chips with everything' to more healthy choices at mealtimes.

Also, working hours and pay improved over the years too. In 1959 he was paid £8 for a 44-hour week, but now the working week consists of 37 hours. After working his first 25 years at Locking in the junior messes, Mr Richards has spent the last 13 years in the Sgt's Mess, looking after Gibson Block. He has enjoyed this period of his life on the station more than any other. He says that he has met some great people during his

time in the Mess, and he will miss station life when Locking closes".

Never needing to learn to drive, Mr Richards makes the 3-mile trip to work by cycle every day. He was only prevented from doing so during the severe winter of 1962 when the camp was almost cut off, and supplies of oil for the station nearly ran out.

Mr Richards' service ends on 15th August this year, when all the civilian catering staff are being made redundant. He hopes to work part-time for RAFA in Weston. "Years ago, there were many civilian employees working in all parts of the station, making RAF Locking a major employer in Weston", he recalls, "So even though there have been major reductions in civilian numbers on the station due to contractorisation, I think that the loss of Locking will be felt in the area".

CHILDREN'S OVERSEAS RELIEF FUND

by Cpl Peter Marchant Supply Flt



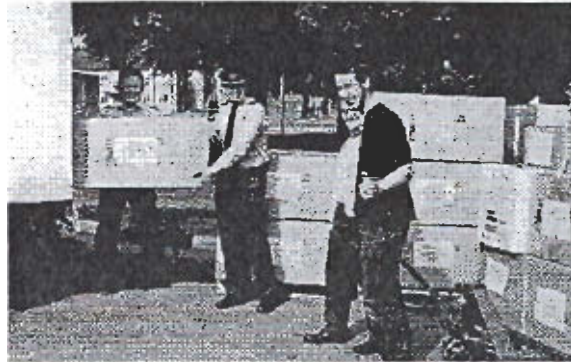
In January 1998 I was sitting at home one evening watching the news when I saw an appeal from a charity asking people to send them clothing, food, bedding and any other aid that might be useful to help mentally ill and physically disabled children who have been made orphans in Bulgaria. At the time my wife and I were thinking of having a clear out of our baby's wardrobe, so I thought what a fantastic idea, what better use could the clothes that no longer fitted our daughter be put to than to be given to a country where children are in desperate need of help.

After my wife phoning both the BBC and ITV local news programmes we managed to get the name and telephone number of the charity that made the appeal but at the time they said because of the fantastic response they had had to the appeal they didn't have the storage space to take any more aid in for the trip in March but would appreciate it if we could give them some help in raising funds and aid for their next planned trip in October 1998.

On the 15th March 1998 two 7.5 tonne lorries full of aid departed on a seven day, 3500 mile round trip to Bulgaria. One lorry took aid to a babies home in Bulgaria and the other went to an orphanage in Iskra. Everything went well on the trip with coverage of the journey and the distribution published in a local magazine. After many phone calls to the organizers of the charity to find out what they wanted and when they needed it by I approached the Stations charity board asking permission to put fliers through every door at RAF Locking asking for help.

With the help of the SAC Sally Morton, SAC Lloyd Cassidy, SAC Sean Bennett and Mr Peter Morgan we went to every married quarter on RAF Locking twice, once with the fliers and the second time to collect the many wonderful items

given to us by very generous people at RAF Locking. Once the many items that had been donated had been collected we sorted it and placed it in triwall boxes ready for transporting to the CORF storage depot in Bristol. The response was so fantastic from the people at RAF



Locking we managed to put together 27 large tri-wall boxes full of aid for the children in Bulgaria. On the 25th August 1998 Group Captain Rooms came down to Supply and help load and to see us off with the aid we were taking to the CORF sorting depot.

In October the Children's overseas relief fund made its second visit to Iskra in Bulgaria with the aid collected from RAF Locking and from many other caring people, although not as shocked as they were during their first visit when they found gloomy looking buildings with only bare light bulbs to illuminate the sparse and tired furnishings. The smell was overwhelming but not as bad as they had expected, the sight of beds and cots fifteen to a room though was grim. This time arriving in daylight the true extent of the deprivation was clear to see, the walls are cracked and crumbling and much of the building is constructed of asbestos material. The electric power points worked intermittently, if at all and some rooms are without power outlets. The paintwork was old and faded; the floors were cold and bare; the dormitories were overcrowded with soiled and worn-out mattresses. There were twenty four potties lining the corridor to augment the two single pedestal toilets that the home has for sixty children and staff.

From the photographs you can see some children are physically handicapped but



there are a lot children that have both

physical and mental handicaps. They all have their hair cut short to prevent head lice, and their pale complexion is due to a poor diet and a lack of exercise. These children do have care but it is at the most basic level. The home's director has no resources to make any long term improvements as he struggles to keep it running on a weekly basis. This is not the only such home in Bulgaria, but it does not get much worse than this. The children are sick, yet there are no doctors or specialists in residence. The home is in a isolated location as are many other mental or physically disabled children's homes, out of sight and out of mind of not just the Bulgarians, but also to the rest of the world.

CORF welcomes donations to help with their work and is also keen to hear from any companies or individuals able to contribute medical supplies or equipment to a special consignment going to Bulgaria in 1999. For personnel not at RAF Locking please bare in mind when you offer aid to CORF delivering it directly to them would be greatly appreciated to keep their UK running costs to a minimum.

For further information contact CORF by telephone on 0117 965 2143, or write to CORF, 5, Bridges Court, Fishponds, Bristol, BSI 6 5BY. Financial donation can also be made payable to CORF c/o Fishpond Baptist Church, Downend Road, Downend, Bristol BS16. They will then forward the cheques to the CORF organisers Jenny Skinner & Gill Beer

I would like to thank Group Captain Rooms for allowing me to ask the people of RAF Locking for their help, the station charities board for the donation of a hundred pounds and my team of

helpers but the biggest Thank You goes to everyone at RAF Locking who contributed to the collection of aid that went out to Bulgaria in October 1998.

I have already started collecting items for CORF's next proposed visit to Bulgaria in March 1999 if you have any of the following items just give me, Cpl Peter Marchant a call in Supply on Ext 7340 and either myself or one of my many willing helpers will make arrangement to take your items off your hands. Here is a list of items that CORF are looking for, so if you can help please give as generously as you can.

The Children's Overseas relief Fund (CORF) has made a big difference but it would like to make an even bigger difference to this home, hopefully one day providing the home with a minibus to take the children to see the necessary specialists that they desperately need to see if they are to have any hope and also for taking the children on outings

Clothing & bedding

Clean Children's Clothing (0 - 18 yrs) Children's Shoes & Trainers (0 - 18 yrs)
Cot & Single Bedding. Nappies, Soap, Toothpaste. Toys, Mobiles & Games
Sports Equipment (Balls, Rackets etc) Curtains, Lampshades

Non Perishable Foods -Packets

Soups. Rice. Cereals (ie Cornflakes, Porridge etc) . Split Peas, Lentils
Custard Powder. Tomato Puree



IKATIA

One particularly touching story is that of 10 year old Ikatia. Born blind, possibly as a result of an attempted home abortion, she has only slight mental retardation. In a different environment, and with specialist help, these problems might be overcome as she is generally bright, perceptive and agile. But, at present, there seems to be little hope of her receiving such help.

With regard to possible adoption, there is also a problem. Her mothers details cannot be traced, and without parental permission, Ikatia cannot be considered for adoption. When she reaches seventeen, Ikatia will be transferred to a similar home for adults with severe mental retardation' and the director of the home in Iskra, Stoyanke Chanevia, fears that by that time, unless Ikatia can be found a more appropriate environment and specialist help, Ikatia's spirit will be crushed.

One has to ask the questions, when did this begin? Why is it so bad? Why is it not rapidly getting better?

It might seem reasonable to suspect that during Communist rule, those children born with mental or physical abnormalities may have been put into homes away from towns and cities, where they would not be seen or heard. After all, Britain had done as much earlier this century. Then with the collapse of Communist rule and the turmoil into which Eastern Europe was plunged, it is easy to imagine that these children in their isolated orphanages may have been continued to be overlooked. Even now, most people are struggling to support their families and times are still very hard. But there is democracy and freedom of information. It is possible that the Bulgarian people are unaware of the plight of these children, it might be that that it is accepted that this is the way things are done or it might be that people have turned a blind eye. Which of these is it likely to be?

One thing is certain, things must change, children of such misfortune cannot be left in utter hopelessness and despair.

The Children's Overseas Relief Fund (CORF) welcomes donations to help with its work and is also keen to hear from any companies or individuals able to contribute medical supplies or equipment to a special consignment going to Bulgaria in 1999. For further information contact CORF telephone 01 17 965 2143

“Yi-yi-yi, William is slashed !!” declares starlet

Some two years ago we renamed our electricity bill a “WILLIAM” because it was far too serious to call it a “BILL”. We embarked on a campaign to reduce our consumption from the £300,000 heights armed only with enthusiasm and the desire to make a difference. The plan of attack was simple.. Find out where, when and why we were consuming electricity, decide if the consumption was justified and, if not, act to reduce it. An audit to establish what was causing consumption after working hours was quickly followed by an audit of consumption during working hours. We soon realised that Locking suffered from a “*Turn on everything*” approach to the working day. Also, a mentality of “*leave it on all the time because it might not work again if we turn it off*”. A major change in attitude was clearly necessary to prevent our WILLIAM becoming SIR WILLIAM and education was the name of the game.



The appointment of quality energy wardens was the priority. Not just any Joe Soap with nothing better to do, we needed people who cared, who were interested and wanted to make a real difference. Boy were we ever lucky! We recruited outstanding individuals who were totally committed, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Once appointed, to look after specific working and domestic areas, we arranged formal training for some 58 wardens. We centred our campaign on a system affectionately known as “Traffic Lights”. Either a red, amber or green disk identified all light switches and power supplies following the basic criteria of:



- | | |
|---------|--|
| RED - | Leave it switched on for security or operational reasons. |
| AMBER - | Use it if you really must. |
| GREEN - | Only switch it on if you are using it now and switch it off when you finish. |

Posters appeared in every conceivable place all over the station and in some we had forgotten. We encouraged people to take responsibility for switching off lights and equipment by asking them not to leave it to Mr Somebody-Else. We included an energy brief in both induction and refreshers training days, used routine orders and the station magazine to make our point and recruited the assistance of children to audit their homes and attack mum and dad with “I’m an Energy Saver” stickers. Some unfortunate mums and dads got the message both at work and at home - An approach we called the double whammy!

Were we successful? Well two years down the road we can draw satisfaction from the fact that our WILLIAM has been reduced by £6,290. Moreover, our approach, policy and methods are currently being, or have been, introduced at numerous stations. **So to all who assumed the mantle of Energy Warden, a big, big thank you for a job well done.**

1995-1996 - £330,000

1997-1998 - £233,710

Carmen says “*I bought a new hat with the money I saved by SWITCHING OFF UNNECESSARY LIGHTS AND APPLIANCES*”

MEDAL AND AWARD PRESENTATIONS

Station personnel were presented with medals and awards by AVM Sloss at a recent ceremony at Locking



Rear row l-r SAC Price GSM (Iraq). Cpl Thomas LS&GCM. SAC Dalhaug NATO Medal. SAC Farrow NATO Medal. Sgt Sinclair LS&GCM. Cpl Vickers GSM (Iraq). Cpl Bright GSM (Iraq). SAC Harrison GSM (Iraq).

Front row l-r. Fg Off McGuinness LS&GCM. Mr Mead AOC TG Commendation. Mr Henry AOC TG Commendation. AVM Sloss. Stu Cdr. Mr Avery AOC in C Commendation. Sgt Morgan GSM (Iraq)

20 YEARS BETWEEN THE SHEETS



by our Man in Stores, Michael Mead

As my father was being sent to grass on his last tour of duty, RAF Locking was the appointed grazing zone, I arrived in 1978 with my family.

'Best get a job' was the repeated conversation topic from my father. I thought he was talking about himself, but unfortunately his comments were directed at me! So to show willing I took a trip to the job centre. Success, RAF Locking needed cleaning (well I suppose it had been open for some time and a clean was required). Anyway, I applied and was selected from a cast of one for immediate employment. Actually, the job was quite straight forward and I finished cleaning the unit relatively quickly. What now? "Supply needs young, energetic and intrepid staff" said my boss. "That will do for me", I thought, "I'll give it a try". So it came to pass that I started my Supply career in 1979.

Now Supply is different today, because in the old days we actually gave things out. Not so now, so we call ourselves Stores and just you try to get something issued! Mind you, in those days we had over 1000 students and the Unit was alive. My first post was helping in the bedding stores,

Sheets, Blankets and Pillows - a great job where I could easily catch up on my sleep. But then disaster struck, the post of store keeper in charge of bedding came up and I was in the frame. In charge of sleeping? , I can cope with that, I thought, so I put in for it and got it. So for 12 years that has been my main task, In Charge Of Sleeping, Oh! with the occasional inconvenience of being asked to help out in Barrack Stores.

I have seen the Blue Jobs come and go, some good some not so good, but all have been enthusiastic about changing sheets. Thankfully, none have suggested that we should stock duvets, but there is still time! The nice part has been to see some blue jobs come back to work as civilians. Our previous Station Warden, Mr Richards, was a shining example of a poacher turned gamekeeper and few, if any, were able to pull the woolly pully over his eyes.

Have I enjoyed my time at RAF Locking? a resounding YES, it has been great. As for the future? Well for me it's the golden hand-shake and a search for a new challenge. That said, if the Army do come in, I hope to be first in line for employment.

STATION INFORMATION CENTRE CLOSES

Fred's - the legendary place we all went to, not only to get our daily papers but also to get the latest Word-On-The-Street about what was happening at Locking. Fred often knew all about it almost before it had happened. Now it's all change for Fred and his family.



The News Shop at RAF Locking closed on 27th February, 1999, after several years of uncertainty as to the future of the Station. Over the years there have been many changes at Locking; from a thriving shopping complex with the NAAFI, Post Office, and News Shop, it has now almost vanished. The Post Office closed at the end of December, and the Spar shop has been greatly reduced in size.

Fred and Pat Coombe purchased the News Shop in November, 1982. As an Airframe Technician Fred was posted into RAF Locking to run the Glider Servicing Party, which was responsible for all the Gliding Schools and ancient aircraft at numerous Public Schools, in the South West. Quite a contrast from noisy aircraft to 'elastic bands'. Oh his retirement, in 1983, after 23 years service, he joined Pat in the shop. By this time it had become extremely busy, often resembling a small community centre. Mothers would meet up on their return from a school run, and small children would enjoy demolishing the toy displays on the shelves and in the windows, keeping everyone on their toes.

In those days, Fred went to the Airmens Mess for an hour each morning, to ensure the trainees had the opportunity to have page three with their breakfast, whilst he spot-checked the sausages for pork substitute. Pat remained at the shop to send out five delivery boys and girls, and to listen to various weather reports from early risers.

Their daughter Julie joined them on a casual basis making it a Family business, to enable Fred to take part in his favourite past-time - Golf. Unfortunately, in July, 1993, just as he was setting out for a Weston Mercury Competition, Pat

telephoned him to say Julie had been rushed into hospital with meningococcal meningitis. Then three days later, whilst baby-sitting for their grandchildren, Dean and Kimberley, Pat's left femur fractured and she was admitted to the same hospital. Thankfully, Julie made a full recovery and today works as a Manager with Tesco. Pat has had 5 operations on the femur and also suffered 5 collapsed vertebrae. Consequently, she is largely confined to a wheelchair, and gives business advice to Julie and Fred from home.

Fred has run the shop for the past 5 years with the help of Julie and casual staff but will take on a new role when the shop door closes for the last time. He will join their son Graham Coombe, golf Professional at the Isle of Wedmore Golf Club, where he has a very successful business.

During their time at the News Shop, past and present customers have been extremely loyal, some even keeping their newspaper and magazine orders with them after they have moved into their own houses in Weston, Worle and Locking village. Fred, Pat and Julie would like to thank everyone for their support and friendship over the years, and wish them good luck, good health and every happiness for the future.

Cpl Eddie Davies BSc

Eddie Davies has graduated with a BSc from the Open University. Now that his arduous studies are over, Eddie, who works as an instructor in 2(T) Block, has more time to prepare for his resettlement later this year. Having taken technology courses with the OU, he is currently attending an engineering management course at Greenwich College.

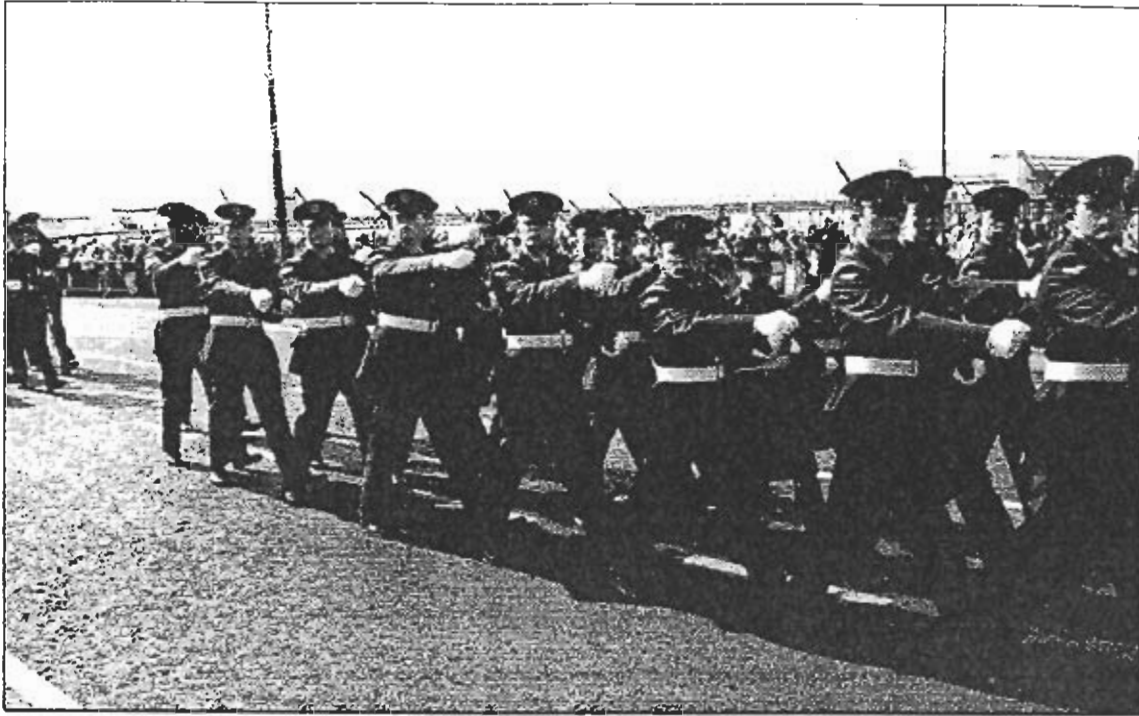


The Final Freedom-of-Weston Parade



The sun shone on the crowds along Weston seafront as they waited to say their goodbyes to the RAF. Obliging, the tide was in and the sea calm to add a marine backdrop to a special occasion. Unusually, the whole of the area from the pier to Knightstone was completely clear of vehicles along which the parade would make its way. Just before 11am the three Flights from Locking marched off from Knightstone Pier led by the Western Band of the RAF. Awaiting their arrival was a second Squadron of ex-servicemen already formed up opposite the Winter Gardens.

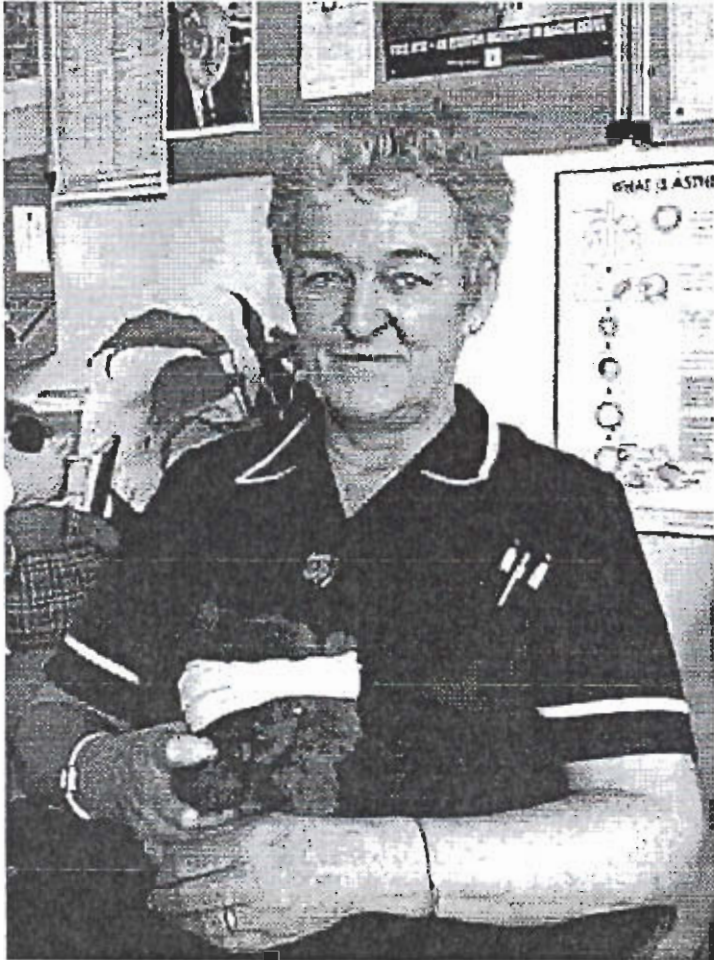




HRH the Duke of Gloucester took the Royal Salute as a Spitfire came in from over the sea and made two passes over the parade. During the inspection the Duke chatted to many in the ranks of both Squadrons.

The warmth of the affection felt for the station was demonstrated as the assembled crowds applauded and cheered as the parade made its way back along the front. The most popular member of the parade was undoubtedly Sparky, the Station Mascot, who received much attention on his last official engagement for RAF Locking.





Jayne's Medical Notes

With a cuddly toy and a big hypodermic, Nurse Jayne Anderson looks back at her time at Locking.

RAF Locking in 1974 was quite different from how it is now, for one thing there was that glorious Spitfire on the plinth inside the gate. Even the Guat which replaced it some years later was just not the same. Health and Safety and COSSH assessments had never been thought of in those days and we worked in an old wooden hutted building, which in fact was condemned, because of the fire risk. It comes as no surprise to reflect that we were there for five years, along with the rabbits who lived underneath and the occasional hedgehog. Airmen's shirts fitted them, instead of being too tight everywhere and hairy battledress jackets and chip hats could be seen

often, at least allowing some individual expression. How can anyone be expected to wear black socks for the rest of his life?

Although the Empire was larger then, there were far less overseas tours and detachments seemed few and far between, with the exception of Gan, but then at least the weather was wonderful, but no women! The Falklands war was yet to come and perhaps the farthest anyone went was to Singapore, Hong Kong, Salalah and Muharaq. In the late seventies we had many foreign airmen studying, very far from home.

There were Nigerians who were always cold and one man in particular used to slip in to the waiting room for a warm and be found asleep in the corner, behind the door. He rejoiced in the delightful name of Hyacinth Egbele! Their Embassy paid them a whole years pay in one month, which was spent just as quickly, causing all sorts of problems for families at home. There were also several courses of Iranians, who reported sick hand-in-hand and we had an

alarming number of human bites to treat, sometimes in very personal places!

In 1979 we moved into the Medical Centre we work in now, much better facilities but whose idea was it to place the ward and beds up all those stairs, the fire escape at that time was a vertical ladder down the side of the wall! Life changed a lot after that, I no longer had to give Smallpox immunizations, it had been eliminated world wide, but the Falklands war was brewing and I have never given so many injections at one time, as we struggled to get everyone 'jabbed-up' in case they were called forward.

The eighties started well enough but then in 1985 came the news of the Rheindahlen Band bus accident in Germany and we waited to find out how badly friends and patients had been injured. So many of those who died had been stationed at Locking before and so came the sad

realisation that life for so many people would never be the same again.



Meeting the AOC

With the Gulf war came preparations to receive casualties that thankfully never materialised. The full implications of war were brought home to me when I was asked if I would be executrix for a colleague's will. I had never seen Napps tablets, but with discussions about how quickly you should get into an NBC suit, I suddenly realized how awful it could all be.

For seven years we have lived with the possibility of Locking closing, now of course a reality and time is galloping away. Sadly, I will never now realise my ambition of finding a Flight Sergeant's medical notes, with my writing inside from when he was here as an AC. The highest rank to date is Chief Technician.

Being a civil servant all these years has not always been joyful, however being a nurse has been great. I treasure the friends that I have made and kept, despite the injections and the other painful stuff. It is the people that make a Station and I can truthfully say that mostly it has been fun. I hope that those of you, anxious to shake the dust of Locking and get on with the next stage in your careers, will spare a thought for civilians like me who have spent years here and will, lets be honest, however trying things can get and they do get very trying on a wet Monday morning, be sad to see the back of you all. The only thing I will not miss is having my blasted car searched every working day, rain or shine! I was only going to stay for couple of years too.

Manager remembers the golden days of the NAAFI queue.

Students and staff come and go in the Roundel Club but for the past 19 years the Manager, Ann Boulton-Pratt, has remained. She arrived at Locking as a dependant, and just stayed on. Ann has enjoyed providing a service for scores of customers over the years, and has always seen her position as more than just a job of managing staff.

“For many of the youngsters, coming to Locking is their first real time away from the comforts of home” she muses, “and I have always tried to cast a motherly eye over them”. This idea of trying to make a NAAFI much more than a place to get a snack or drink has been foremost to Ann’s management policy at Locking.

Although she has tried to make the premises comfortable for her customers, she has never shied away from another ‘motherly’ role, that of speaking sternly to those who have obviously needed some sort of guidance in, um, the area of discipline. “Most have been well-behaved, but occasionally I have had to have some quiet words in ears”. She and her staff have also administered countless sticking-plasters, aspirins and TLC in response to physical and emotional emergencies.



Like Locking in general over the past few years, Ann has seen business ebb and flow. She can remember (*and me - Ed.*) when Locking was a vibrant place and places in the NAAFI sticky-bun queue were hard to come by. Even so, in recent times business has slowed in line with the overall reduction in station numbers. Ann has preferred not to manage from her office and has always enjoyed meeting her customers. “Locking has always had a unique atmosphere, and that is all to do with the special people that come here” she says. She has worked with other services but admits a clear preference for the RAF. During times in the last few years when Roundel Club resources were stretched, Ann regularly paid for functions from NAAFI funds to ensure members had regular entertainment in the club.

Her staff will be given redundancy later in the year and Ann will learn shortly what NAAFI has in store for her as the Roundel Club closes down. With her vast experience she might be tempted into a variety of professions, from social worker, nurse, accountant, or, even a SWO if they ever civilianise them!

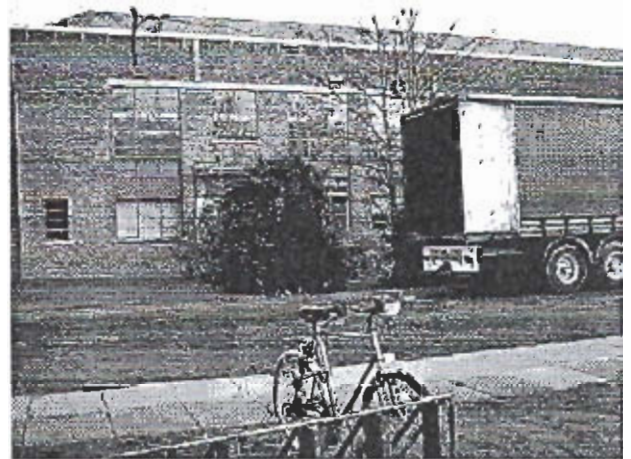
1(T) CLOSES



Marconi

Some of the other equipment from the block has already been installed at Cosford, including the high-powered HF transmitters and other communications systems. The rest of the equipment has been transferred to industry under the Defence Fixed Telephone System (DFTS) contract. Equipment such as the MX-1 telephone exchange have been handed over to a private consortium of companies who will assume the maintenance and training roles formerly undertaken by Locking.

As the closure of training facilities gathers momentum across the station, and individual buildings are either pulled down or shut down, another chapter in the life of the station comes to an end. 1(T) Block, or Marconi Block, was the home of RAF ground telecommunications training. The last equipment to be operated in the block, the Radio Control Sub System (RCSS) has been disconnected and awaits removal by the contractors from Marconi Ltd.



The back of the lorry awaits

In its former glory days as Telecommunications Squadron, many thousands of technicians were trained in the practical and theory aspects of a wide range of communications systems. The station reorganisation of 1992 saw the block lose its status as a separate entity, becoming part of a squadron with its headquarters elsewhere on the station. The atmosphere of 1(T) has often been described by those who have worked there as rather special and unique. Despite the fact that actual conditions inside could range from near freezing in Winter to stiflingly hot in the Summer, staff had, and continue to have a special loyalty towards the block.

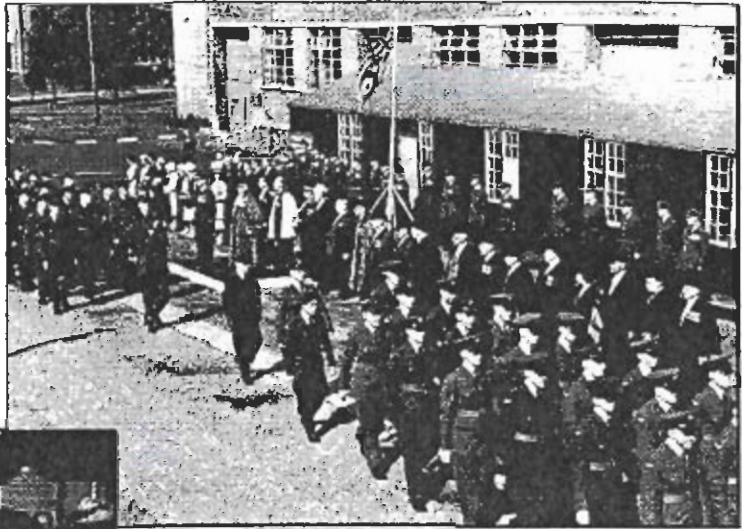


RCSS packed and ready to go.

The block also was home to other agencies such as Satellite Training Flight and Training Aids Workshops. TAW joined the block after leaving 4(T) last year and have now moved on to 5(T).

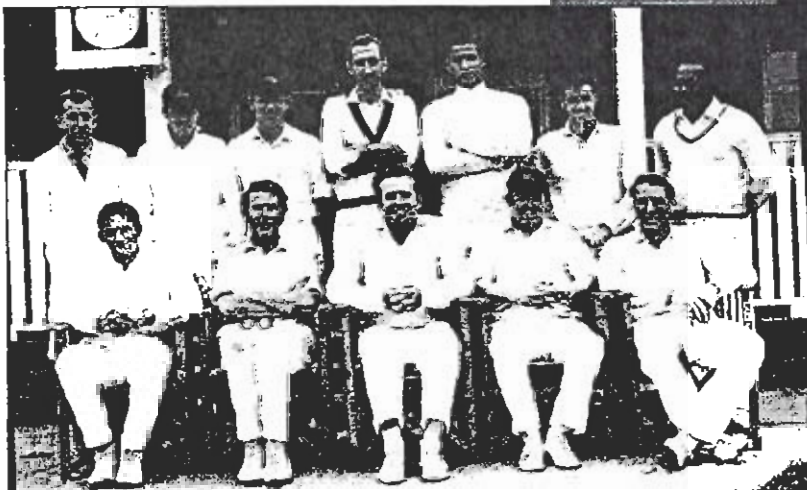
From the archives....

1962 Battle of Britain Parade at the South of the Supply hangar



Antiques Roadshow and the Enigma

Diana, Princess of Wales visits RAF Locking

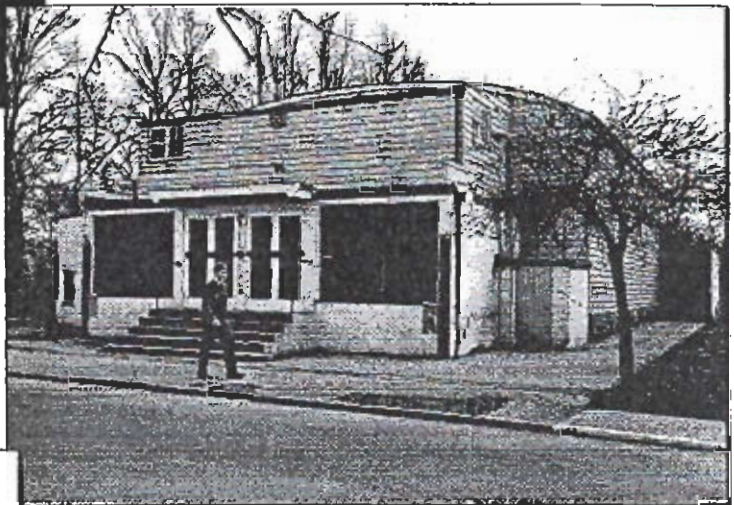


Locking first XI 1962 with guest player Leslie Crowther



Lord Cranbourne receiving a 16,000 signature petition to keep RAF Locking open.

The Astra cinema, just before its demolition in 1970



RAF Police NCOs Martin Hill & Max Tate raising funds on Weston beach for Comic Relief

Flowerdown Bridge naming ceremony



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