

Loyalty

The Newsletter of the Association of Number 33 Squadron, RAF



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Flight Lieutenant Alan Scott



It was with great sadness that the Committee learned of the terrible accident in Afghanistan that claimed Association Member Alan Scott and 230 Sqn's Roly Roberts. You will have read all the wonderful tributes to both men and it is not necessary to repeat them here. Nevertheless, as one of the first one hundred members, Scotty became a Founder Member of the Association and his contribution was very much appreciated. As per the family's wishes, instead of flowers or a wreath, a donation was made to a nominated charity. A similar gesture was made on behalf of the Association to Roly's family's charity of choice. RIP Gentlemen.

Foreword from the Chairman (Outgoing)

As I approach the end of my tenure as Officer Commanding 33 Squadron I find myself wondering where the time went (as I was told I would!). If I allow myself a few moments to think about the past 2 years or so, it becomes clear why time seems to have accelerated. A Squadron with as much energy and drive as 33 demands constant attention and consumes you entirely. You live, breathe and sleep, 'Squadron'. The more you put in, the more the Squadron delivers and the more people demand - it doesn't let you kick-back for a minute! I wouldn't have wanted it to be any other way and I am extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to command such a fine outfit, particularly during the key moments in the development of Puma HC 2. The Squadron has seen Puma HC 2 in to service, through Initial Operating Capability, on to operations and beyond to imminent Full Operational Capability. Without doubt, the tempo has never been higher (although, as any ex-OC 33 will tell you, it's never been lower either!). I will take away many fantastic memories of my time in the chair, but the one over-riding theme is that of a fantastic team.

Sadly, as you will no doubt know, Flight Lieutenant Al 'Scotty' Scott (33 Squadron) and Flight Lieutenant Geraint 'Roly' Roberts (230 Squadron) paid the ultimate price in a tragic accident in Afghanistan last month. Additionally, Squadron Leader Phil Williams, my 2ic, remains in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. I have been absolutely amazed by the staggering progress he has been making with his extremely serious injuries. Although the road to full recovery for Phil is likely to be a long one, his spirit and determination have been an inspiration to all and not a day goes by without him reaching another milestone. Throughout this very testing time for the families, loved ones and the Squadron, 'The Team' ethos has shone through. Both Scotty and Roly were given the best of 'send-offs' (emotional and fitting funeral/life celebration services), including the torching of a couple of

pianos and a cracking fly-past! Additionally, much support is being provided from the wider RAF family and the squadrons. Working together is what we do best - it has been humbling to witness and to be a part of.

The 33 Squadron Association has become an integral part of 'The Team' over the past 2 years and as we approach our Centenary in January 2016, I look forward to the Association going from strength to strength. Events like those over the past few months, as tragic as they are, bring the unique nature and risks of what we do in to sharp focus. They also highlight the unifying bond we have as members and ex-members of 33 Squadron and how this bond is precious and should be preserved and used as a catalyst for growth and strength. It is not just something we should discover in our latter years; it is something that we should embrace now and I would encourage you all to continue to spread the word and encourage people to join the Association so that the 33 Squadron 'Team' continues to grow and flourish. I am pleased to say that Warrant Officer Rick Burke-Smith will take on the role of Association Chairman from the 12 January 2016 and I know that he is just the man for the job. I look forward to the continued success of the Association under his sage leadership and direction.

I sign off wishing 33 Squadron and the Association every success in the future.

*'Loyalty'
Biggers*

Foreword from the Chairman (Incoming)

I would like to thank OC 33 Squadron for pioneering the Chair of THE Association since its inception. During the past two years, he has furthered the cause of our cherished Association, fostering the close relationship that we all desire and hopefully benefit from. Needless to say I am absolutely delighted to be asked to continue the good work that he has given during his tenure, from the 12th January 2016.

Our Association committee is fortunately equipped with very talented Ex Sqn personnel who remain enthusiastically focused on maintaining and fostering the membership of one of the most passionate organisations in the world. They all give their time for our benefit, and I relish this opportunity to work alongside them all.

Very exciting, and very reflective times lie ahead, as we are about to celebrate our 100th Anniversary in true 33 Squadron style. Our Association is very keen to play an active part in the forthcoming events, and we will assist where we can to ensure 100 years of service are fully marked. Of course the celebrations will continue for the 12 months that follow the 12th January 2016, and we plan to announce one or two initiatives to acknowledge

this milestone, and in doing so, hopefully bolster the funds we hold to provide future assistance to the Squadron.

I look forward immensely to your continued support and seeing you all at the Lord Moon this Friday and at 33 Squadron on 12th January 2016. We are all bonded by unique experience, camaraderie, pride and of course Loyalty, as serving or having served on the best Squadron in the Royal Air Force.

Loyalty,

RW Burke-Smith

May Function Review

Saturday 6th June 2015 presented a VERY important day in the 33 Sqn Association calendar....the Secretary's 33rd year of being on this planet.....AND of course the 2nd Summer Function since the Association's formation. After an extremely successful families' event in 2014, we were keen this year for people to exercise their pink chits and get out in their own "free speaking" world. The Sgt's mess at RAF Benson was the venue and curry and rice was the booze food that welcomed 33 (coincidental) members of the Association to chew the fat and drink beer. The current OC 33 Sqn and Association chairman delivered a well-received brief on the successes and challenges that faced Puma 2 in its deployment back where it belongs on operations in support of Op TORAL. It has been a long operational break for Puma Force and the aircrew and technicians alike are relishing the opportunity that TORAL brings. I am not sure who the last man (or woman?!) standing was but the event was enjoyed by all.

What was key for the Association at this event was understanding the thoughts of the membership with regards to how they envisaged it developing. The following were the key take- aways that the Association is working on:

Crete. As funding within the MOD is being 'squeezed', the Sqn's annual visit to the Crete commemorations is becoming challenging, however there is clear passion within the membership to ensure that the 33 Sqn link to this event is not severed. As a result, the Association took away the task of investigating how we could support this event in the future for Association members. The Association is not cash rich as present but will explore novel ways that an Association link with Crete can be maintained. After some recent positive engagement with 22 Gp Trg by OC 33 Sqn on an AT trip, wheels are in motion for a larger 75th Crete event than originally envisaged - more to follow...

OC updates on current Sqn key events. The frank and honest brief from OC 33 on current matters was of great interest to those present and as a result we are keen to keep it a standing fixture on future events. Location of the event may cause issues with Op Sec in this area however we will work with future OCs to achieve whatever is possible.

Functions. It was clear that people were keen for functions to be a fixed date and rotate between stag and families events. Moving forwards, the FIRST SATURDAY of June will now be the date of the annual Association function , so like the Puma Reunion get it in the diary early! The Jun 16 function will be a families' function which the committee will begin to plan post the 12 January celebrations and further details will be promulgated via email and Facebook.

Newsletters. The newsletter, 'Loyalty', will be issued twice a year in between the Annual Function and Puma Reunion and distributed via email. You will see that this edition includes a reflection piece from both a ground crew and aircrew member of the Association which I hope you will find as enjoyable to read as we have. It is our intention that this will be a standing thread in future newsletters and we hope you embrace the challenge of writing one if approached.

The Committee have been on an upward learning curve since its formation and this function gave us both hope from the members and encouragement to deliver what you want. We are keen to develop what we have today and as a result the same committee, less the Chairman, are continuing in their roles to take forward what they have learnt. As Biggers departs 33 Sqn he will hand over the reigns of Association Chairman to RBS, who is currently mad keen in the starting blocks and itching to be 'released'. Looking forward, 2016 sees the Centenary celebrations which we see as a huge opportunity to offer people that don't already know of the Associations existence a chance to remain an integral part of 33 in the future.

We are always looking for contributions to the Newsletter. As you will see from this editions 'Reflections' it is great to read fellow members experiences on the Squadron. Submission to 33sqnassociation@gmail.com please.

Reflections - Dave Stewart



Tactical Air Meet at Kleine Brogel, Jun 1986

My arrival on the Sqn followed the standard ab-initio pattern for Airman (Aircrew) in the eighties: Recruit Training at Swinderby, Airman Aircrew Training at Finningley, Air Loadmaster training at Brize Norton – including parachute training - and helicopter conversion on the Wessex Mk2 at 2 (AFT) Sqn 2 FTS at Shawbury. My course lasted from August to November 1981, and after passing my Final Handling Test after 55hrs on type I fully expected to become part of the growing requirement to man the new Chinook force. However, for reasons unknown, but a decision I am eternally grateful for, I was held as a Staff Crewman at Shawbury for 6 months, under the watchful eye of Flt Lt John Donnelly, until a place was available on a Puma course at Odiham.

My Puma Mk1 conversion at 240 OCU lasted from 10 May until 13 September 1982 and for a crewmen the Puma was very different when compared to the venerable Wessex. We were expected to assist much more with the navigation of the aircraft, notably by learning how to use the Tactical Air Navigation System (TANS) computer, which provided 10 waypoints for route planning, and the Decca Navigator System. The latter was a hyperbolic radio navigation system originally designed to allow ships to determine their position by receiving radio signals from fixed navigational beacons consisting of a master station and 3 'red, green and purple' slave stations. The Royal Navy first deployed Decca during World War II when the Allied forces needed a system which could be used to achieve accurate landings. To the untrained eye the colourful maps that were used for air navigation

purposes looked complicated and appeared to have been drawn by a child using a spirograph; to the trained eye the maps showed lanes that were numbered 0 to 23 for red, 30 to 47 for green and 50 to 79 for purple, and zones labelled A to J, repeating after J. Range and accuracy varied greatly from day to night; since the need for an accurate position was less when a ship was further from land, the reduced accuracy at long ranges was not a great problem for mariners, but accuracy was a far greater concern for aviators. Consequently, great care was taken to synchronise the decometers during the initial set up and subsequent 15 minute cockpit checks. The Puma Mk1 also had a moving map display on the end of a long umbilical cord that plugged in behind the co-pilot's seat, a useful piece of navigation kit that required the crew to carefully cut out 10 inch squares of the UK and Europe in various scales. There is an example of this wonderful device over here at the MSHATF.

I was the only ab initio on my Puma course, which included old hands like Sqn Ldr Paul Luker (who later became the second COM JHC), Capt John Essery AAC (later Sqn Ldr Essery RAF and Chief Instructor MSHATF) and FS Dick Buxton (SH legend!!) . There were two navigators, Flt Lts Des Goff and Hugh Smart, plus two young pilots called Steve Underwood (later a Red Arrows manager) and Martin Magee (brother of Graham Magee of AMF fame). On completion of the course, and a memorable 'overseas trainer' flight across to Gutersloh, Gp Capt Sandy Hunter – the 'White Tornado' - presented me with my brevet in the WOs' and Sgts'

Mess at Odiham. I had just 59 hrs on type and a grand total of 259 hrs rotary flying under my belt. My memories of what followed that afternoon are cloudy, courtesy of MALM Brian Fitzpatrick and assorted crewmen cronies! My first day on 33 Sqn was 14 September 1982, and it was while nursing an awful hangover in a crewroom that looked like the front room of a 1930s suburban house, complete with fireplace, uckers board and the propeller blade of a World War II German fighter covered in kill markings, that I had my first encounter with another SH legend, MALM Graham Bearham – aka ‘The Bear’! The Sqn Cdr at that time was Wg Cdr Tim Jenner, and the Crewman Leader was Flt Lt Dave Bellis.



2400CU, 1982 Steve Underwood, Dick Buxton, Dave Stewart, Des Goff, Martin Magee, John Essery, Paul Luker, Hugh Smart

The pattern of life on 33 Sqn was revealed as soon as I arrived at ‘RAF Long Sutton’, courtesy of the ‘Wailing Wall’ in the Ops Room, and two days later I was part of the Sqn’s deployment to Tensbüttel in Northern Germany for Ex BOLD GUARD, a large two week NATO FTX exercising the German-Danish LANDJUT Korps in countering a Warsaw Pact armoured / amphibious landing scenario. I was given to ‘The Bear’ for moulding into a proper SH crewman and thanks to his tutelage I survived nightstops across the iso-dollar line and my first major exercise. I was awarded C/CR status on 21 January 1983 and served on 33 until August 1985, latterly as the AMF Crewman on Sqn Ldr Ian McCluskie’s AMF Flight. The highlights of my first tour were many and varied. I visited the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Norway, France, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Belize.



33 AMF Football Team

Courtesy of the Queen I had eaten chateaubriand ‘for two for one’ in Thessaloniki, reindeer steaks on the way from Bergen to Trondheim, moules frites in Biarritz, bratwurst in Gutersloh, weiss-

wurst in Landsberg, lobster, conch and gibnut in Belize. We had flown in the Belizean jungle, the mountains of southern Germany, the fjords and valleys of Norway, across barren wastes in Turkey and countless rolling hills and forests in Europe yet one of the most unforgettable sights was on 14 July 1983 - a 13-ship formation return to Odiham from Dering Lines after Hart’s Quest, the annual squadron exercise. The check in after a frequency change took quite a while! Unforgettable for another reason was a Battle Group South (BGS) task in Belize the following month where the payload statistics for the day consisted of 115 troops, 1000 kgs freight – and a snake, that had crawled into a bag of mail and decided to make an appearance while we were

flying south from Airport Camp to Rideau. In August 1985 I was posted to 230 Sqn and ‘Cold War’ duties at Gutersloh. The Sqn was commanded by Wg Cdr Bob Turner, whose son Andrew is currently AOC 22Gp, and the Crewman Leader was Flt Lt George Philp. Flying was focussed in the area between the Clutch stations and the Inner German Border, training constantly with 1 (BR) Corps’ units in preparation for the Warsaw Pact’s 3rd Shock Army’s push to the Channel, but there were breaks to Belize and

Northern Ireland. In February 1986 NVG were introduced to assist the black art of night flying; a month later I was on the detachment to Portugal where Flt Lt John Barber proved that a Puma could carry out a perfect run on landing after a double engine flame out. While in Germany I was accepted for commissioning, and after graduating

from RAFC Cranwell in December 1988 I was lucky enough to return to 33 Sqn as the Crewman Leader, taking over from the very popular Flt Lt Jeff Longmuir.

My second tour on 33 Sqn holds many great memories, one of which was the time spent displaying the Puma with Flt Lt Geoff Young, one of life's gentlemen and one of the most capable Puma pilots that I had the pleasure of flying with. It is a great shame that Geoff is one of many 'absent friends' no longer with us. Op ARMATURE was a frequent occurrence, which in those days meant moving Mrs Thatcher around the country. On 25 September 1989 that involved flying Maggie to the Royal Marines Barracks at Deal after the PIRA bombing 3 days earlier. Life settled into a steady routine of VIP rides, training with the Army around the country, Belize and Ireland stints and 'Crewman Leader' checks until Autumn 1990, when the Sqn began its work up for Op GRANBY. Throughout October 1990 the deploying crews carried out constant NVG, AR5, Fighter Affiliation and Air-to-Ground gunnery training - and received lots of inoculations - before we flew the first 3 of 15 'pink' Pumas across to Brize Norton and loaded them onto a USAF C5. On 1 November 1990 we flew to Al Jubail in Saudi Arabia, via Ramstein in Germany, and then rebuilt and flew the aircraft to the operating base at Ras-al-Ghar. Much like the new Puma Mk2s we were carrying IR jammers, DAS and enhanced navigation and communication equipment, much of which we learned to



Belize Lunch Stop

operate after we arrived in theatre. Our Chinook colleagues started to arrive in theatre from 24 November, by which time we were already well into a training and work up programme with 1st(British) Armoured Division. The Puma Force (Middle East) spent weeks doing casevac / medevac, NVG and Air-to-Ground training before deploying to King Khaled Military City on 23 January 1991, Op 'Desert Storm' having commenced on 17 January 1991. The old adage of 'train hard, fight easy' rang true, operating in AR5 equipment was arduous, tempers flared over the silliest of things, and it was hard to understand why drinking straws hadn't been added to the face-masks until rather late into the deployment when the rules stated that we had to drink gallons of water each day to avoid dehydration!

The ground offensive commenced at 24 0400L February and ceased 28 0300GMT February with SH Force elements following

the ground forces' flanking sweep from Saudi Arabia through Iraq into Kuwait. I was on duty with Lt Paul Shawcross RN in the Ops CP when the ceasefire announcement was passed over the net in the very dark hours. Despite the time we announced it over the tannoy and heard a few distant cheers! By that stage the Pumas had flown 382 sorties, the Chinooks 316 and the Sea Kings 339, and sorties continued after the ceasefire had been announced. Thankfully the only aircrew to suffer a serious injury was Sgt Tony Sullivan, who tripped over a football during a kickabout before the 'final push', was hospitalized with a broken ankle and had to be medevaced back to the UK.

We were all back in UK by mid-March, and in April 1991 I moved across to S&D Flt for my third Puma tour. Sadly my experiences on this wonderful Flight cannot be discussed in detail here, suffice to say that in 1994 Sqn Ldr John Cooke decided that I had

had enough fun and needed a staff tour. Two consecutive staff tours followed: ALM/Air Eng desk officer at RAF Innesworth (1994-96) and SO2 J3/2IC Support Helicopter Force Headquarters at Benson (1996-99). Thankfully both were flying related tours and I was able to maintain close contacts with the SH Force and 33 Sqn in particular, having

moved up from Odiham, and

especially during its missions in Ploce (Croatia) and the Congo. After extending in post to complete the Op AGRICOLA deployment to Macedonia and the move into Kosovo, I completed No 133 Puma Course, along with a very young, very capable Flt Lt by the name of Biggadike.

My fourth tour on 33 Sqn started in April 2000, by May I was out in Kosovo for the first of several stints running the newly established JHC (Agricola) detachment. I soon discovered that life on 33 Sqn had not changed since the first day I encountered it back in 1982, Flights were still deploying all over Europe and even Africa now, the Sqn's efforts on Op BARWOOD in Mozambique in 2000 had received official recognition, and the ability of the air and ground crews to make the best of any detachment was very evident - Messrs Pattle, Webster, Brewster & Co made sure of that. I think Rick Burke-Smith summed this attitude up perfectly in his previous Reflections piece, "...bound by a camarade-

rie I had not seen elsewhere in the Service...the Sqn set about its business. There was no whinging, no whining, everybody set-to, did what they had to do, and quickly assumed the rhythm that the task demanded. Again faced with all the normal challenges of an SH det, infrastructure, spares, air worthiness challenges, we pulled together to achieve the task."

Unfortunately a medical condition grounded me in June 2002, and I would not get my flying cat back until 12 months later, but I happily ended my flying days as the 2IC and achieved a long held ambition to command the squadron, albeit briefly, while the CO, Wg Cdr Paul Lyall, deployed on Op TELIC to lead the Puma Force during the 2nd Gulf War. What was happening back at Benson while most 33 Sqn personnel were performing so admirably in the desert once again is not worthy of mention here, I am sure that a worthy Reflections piece will follow from someone who was in theatre at the time (Boggy?!). With the safe return of the aircraft and crews, my flying career and close association with 33 Sqn ended in September 2003. The Sqn Dining Out Night before I left was a very special occasion that will stay with my wife, Lorraine, and I forever and I always look back on that wonderful evening as my official Dining Out from the RAF.

After Dutch language training at Beaconsfield I completed two more staff tours before retiring from the RAF, first as UK PJHQ's Liaison Officer in the Dutch Ministry of Defence Crisis Management Centre in The Hague (2004-07) and finally as SO1 Aviation at NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps HQ at Rheinlanden in Germany / Imjin Barracks, Gloucester (2007-11). Both of these tours allowed me to conduct visits and staff training to one of the areas in Europe that 33 Sqn had operated in during World

War II – 'Walcheren' in the Netherlands – just one of the Honours borne proudly on its Standard. Just like meeting former Sqn veterans at the wonderful 'Crete Day' gatherings, men who had served in Egypt, Italy, Greece and Crete, it was a sobering experience to walk a battleground of the past with which we had a close link. No doubt, in years to come, there will be 33 Sqn staff rides to look at what the Sqn did in The Gulf, the Balkans and Afghanistan.

One incident that stands out for me is reuniting a former 33 Sqn airman with the Sqn after he wrote an article in a local newspaper recalling his time in the Western Desert with the Sqn during the war. He was on duty one evening and remembered a Spitfire landing on the airstrip and two pilots getting out of the single seat aircraft. Flying as a pair one aircraft had gone down, so the serviceable Spitfire landed alongside, the pilot threw away his parachute, sat his oppo on his lap and nursed the aircraft into the air and back to friendly lines. That story is recorded in the Sqn Records of the time, so I took the Log and photograph albums to his house, including pictures of the Greece, Italy and Crete campaign. The gentleman knew many of the people in the photographs and did not realise that the Sqn had been reformed after Crete or that it was still an active Sqn flying helicopters. He attended every Crete Day celebration after that and re-established contacts with people he had not seen for over 50 years.

Unfortunately I was not able to complete my service career at 33 Sqn but I managed to serve 12 of my 31 years of service with the Squadron at Odiham and Benson, I had the pleasure of operating the Puma in many countries and environments around the world, and made some lifelong friends along the way. I am extremely proud



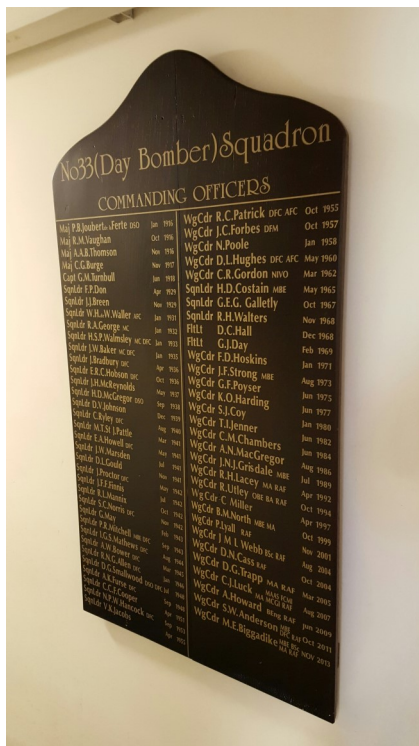
33 Sqn AMF Northern Norway Feb 1985, L->R: Mark Dennis, Dave Stewart, Mark Terry, Gary Roberts



33 Sqn S&D Flt Odiham May 1992

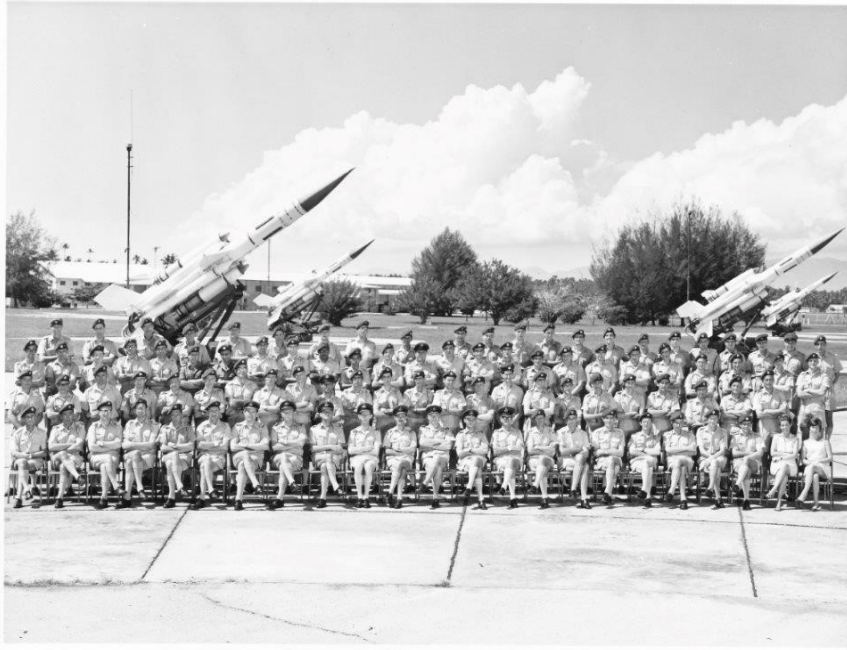
to be one of the 'Brothers in Arms' who congregate every year at the Puma Reunion in London, started by an 'absent friend' who also began his career as a Puma crewman, Sqn Ldr Richie Rees. There is a special bond between the people who have flown and served on 33 Sqn and many of the proudest moments of my RAF career were while I was serving with them.

Consequently I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Davies and the Committee for setting up the 33 Sqn Association, something that was often discussed over the years but never followed through. Establishing and running the Association cannot have been an easy undertaking, especially in the climate that the Puma HC Mk2 has been brought into service. Quite rightly the focus of many of the Association's key players has been on air-crew and engineer conversion training, gaining IOC and the operational deployment to Afghanistan. Finding time to collect subscriptions, email members, publish Newsletters and arrange functions while carrying out normal duties can be no easy feat, and for the work undertaken to date the Committee should be heartily congratulated. Now that the Squadron's Centenary Celebrations and the 75th anniversary of Crete are approaching, it is up to the Association's membership to make every effort to spread the word among former colleagues, to support and assist the Committee in any way possible to ensure that this Association of ours grows stronger for the future. The latest chapter of 33 Sqn's long history is forecast to continue with Puma 2 until 2025-2030, let us ensure that our Association can achieve similar milestones and look back with pride at the continuing strength, participation and 'Loyalty' of its membership.



The Commanding Officers board located outside the current OC's office. A new name will be added in January with the departure of Wg Cdr Biggadike and the arrival of Wg Cdr Baron. Also listed is Sqn Ldr Galletly who features on the next page .

Membership Secretary



Taken in 1968 the Squadron are sat in front of the Bloodhound SAMs at RAAF Butterworth

In an effort to increase the Membership the committee placed an advert in 'Flypast' magazine in an attempt to attract ex members. Maybe even from the pre-Puma days. Initially the response was very disappointing. In fact not one person got in touch. That was until I received an email from Gordon Galletly introducing himself and asking for more information about the Association. It transpires that Gordon was a former OC of the Sqn. He writes "My connection with the Squadron is that I was the Squadron Commander when the Squadron was based at RAAF Base Butterworth, Malaysia, for about 18 months in 1967/68 when it was equipped with the Bloodhound SAM. When the British Government pulled the Squadron out of Butterworth I was posted to a staff appointment at HQ FEAF, RAF Changi, Singapore." A number of emails were then exchanged. I sent Gordon a photo board that lists ex OCs that sits on the wall outside the current OCs office. Gordon replied "I think a CO's board was exhibited in the Squadron in my time but cannot be sure. One aspect that still annoys me is the cock-up which resulted when the Squadron was in disbandment mode. You will see from the boards that after my time as CO there were 3 new CO's within a period of 3 months. I had asked HQ FEAF to ensure that, during the period the unit was running down, it should be commanded by a replacement from the UK. A contingency plan did exist to cover such an eventuality and there were missile-trained Squadron Leaders in the UK earmarked for such a post but HQ FEAF refused to take up my suggestion. I felt

so strongly on the matter that I took advantage of an RAF Inspector General's visit to us at Butterworth and complained to one of the Wing Commanders in his party. The only result was that I got a rocket from the Air Vice Marshal Chief of Staff at Singapore HQ for complaining! The outcome was, as one can see from the CO's Boards, a ridiculous number of short-term CO's before the Squadron was disbanded. I will rack my brain to see if I can come up with any news items of my days as CO which would be of interest. One that immediately comes to mind was that, shortly after my arrival at RAAF Base Butterworth racial riots broke out on Penang Island where many Australian and British airmen were accommodated and who used to commute daily on the Butterworth-to-Penang ferry (there is a bridge there now). Chinese Malaysians were fighting indigenous Malaysians. The Australian Group Captain Ops at Butterworth was one Ross Glassop DFC who was an old friend as he had been on my Staff College course at Bracknell back in 1956 and he was kept busy arranging for the Base helicopter to provide aid for any of our lads on Penang Island. I vividly remember sitting with him in the garden of his ocean-side Married Quarter sipping a drink and seeing the smoke columns rising from Penang across the water. "Gordon is a sprightly 93 years old and, unfortunately, not able to join us to celebrate the events in January but the Committee have plans to visit Gordon in the New Year.



AOC's annual inspection (possibly in 1968) Gordon is the on the left.

Reflections - Richard Brewster



Dickie on Ops in Iraq

As I sit here at Abbey Wood whilst working as part of the Chinook Safety team I am reflecting on the e-mail that I have just received from C.T Paul Davies, *'Apologies for the curve ball we are planning a regular feature where are they now which would briefly detail your time at 33 Squadron and what you are up to now with a picture from then and now' !!!*, Looking back on my forty years in the service, it feels on occasion that I was on 33 Squadron forever, when in fact on reflection I served three tours that amounted to just ten years in total, the rest of that time was spent on such eclectic aircraft as the Varsity, Vulcan, Buccaneer, C-130 and finally C-17 to name but a few.

My second tour on 33 Squadron which kicked off in August 1998 it was meant to be a break from the arduous work I had been undertaking for the previous six years in the Intelligence Corp, little did I know that the next four years would end up being some of the most intense for the Squadron and my RAF career, of which I would find myself at the centre of events surrounded by such characters as Dighton, Keats, Lovelock, Davies and Scarffe all of whom were sent on to this earth to keep me on my toes as so to speak. However, my involvement with 33 goes back much further in fact to November 1972 when in during my final Airfields Phase at RAF Halton a 33 Squadron Puma arrived to give us fledgling J/T's (remember them), flights, and my flight consisted of a flight from Halton to Benson, a refuel outside of what is now 33 Squadron which at the time was home to the Royal Flight, little did I realise what I now know today.

I first came to RAF Odiham home then of 33 Squadron (RAF Long Sutton as it was commonly called) in March of 1979 from Larbruch the home of the 'Mighty Buccaneer' and my memories of that first tour are still quite vivid, the Cold War, Northern Ireland and Belize were in full swing, and I remember that on my first day on the squadron an exercise was called, and 33 Squadron deployed to somewhere onto Salisbury Plain. I do remember there was a hell of a stink concerning GPMG mounts; nothing changes, all that said I had to remain behind, where that morning I would end up meeting an Airframe Chief Technician, a true 33 Squadron legend and of Support Helicopters, his name was 'Bob Larkin'. Bobs arrival back onto the squadron that morning had been preceded by a serious illness, which had hospitalised him for some time, and ironically he should not have been on the squadron or even the air force at that time as he was in throws of leaving the service when he was taken seriously ill. That's why when I first set eyes on him he was wearing plimsolls, combat trousers and a blue woolly pully and shirt to which he apologised as he had already handed in his uniform some time previous; the next three years I would find myself serving alongside Bob Larkin he proved to be a fantastic mentor and good friend to myself a newly promoted SNCO and along with other, '33 Squadron legends' such as a certain Flight Sergeant Laurie Hayes and a Pilot Officer Warwick Creighton, and Chris Cutting I was able to experience such exotic locations as Northern Ireland, Belize, Salisbury Plain and Germany to name but a few.

Back in those days Support Helicopters (SH) you must remember in the 70's RAF unlike today was very much viewed as the 'Country Cousin' of the Service as so to speak, and additionally SH was seen as a punishment posting, and used as such in regards to individuals that had transgressed; that's why we always had a wonderful selection of characters or as a certain now Flight Sergeant Jono Hummel has heard me remark on occasion 'Dysfunctional Individuals'!!!. Additionally, in

those days if you fell afoul of your 'Chief' or 'Flight Sergeant' retribution would and was swiftly meted out unlike today, and in respect to one Chief who I served with, he took great pleasure in punching you at the top of your arm regardless of your transgression, his name was 'Bruno Harvey' and he took no prisoners, and that included aircrew and one morning whilst serving in Belize he clattered a certain crewman all because he said those immortal words 'Good Morning Bruno' as he was passing whilst we were towing a Puma up to the Pan, and when I asked him why, he simply said 'I hate that -unt'!!! Yes, 'Bruno' was quite a character as Chris Cutting and other 33 Sqn die hards from that time will testify by thought, word and bruises. Another notable character at that time was a, 'Brian Randal' a fellow SNCO. Brian was one of those soon to be extinct trades back then, he was a 'Super Tech' and Brian was not only a superb technician, and all-round nice guy but a good friend who could not only keep 'Bruno' in a good mood and at bay as so to speak but when he teamed up with 'Bob Larkin' they were an unstoppable force for good during many an arduous Northern Ireland and Norway detachment to which there were many.

Back then we could expect to be detached for an average of 8-9 months away from home, and of course there was no e-mails, phone calls, Skype etc. in fact during a Belize detachment apart from writing the ubiquitous 'Blueys' that's letters to the initiated, you were allowed one yes, one ten minute telephone call home!! Yes, it was a lot different then and of course we did lose sadly a number not to be forgotten characters in Norway, Zimbabwe and Belize along the way during that period that said of course, we



'Are you sure you have nothing to tell me?' The PM gets a grilling from Dickie

had equally some fantastic times made memorable of course by those you were serving with. I can of course remember lots of funny stories / happenings from those days concerning for example a certain single Nav Inst J/T who whilst waiting to board a VC10 at RAF Brize Norton to Belize decided to throw a pretend fit in the lounge – unknown to us

boarding (he was carted off to the Mental Wing of RAF Wroughton for six weeks) just as we were about to board so not to meet a certain lady in Belize, to the Chief of the Air Staff's hand being bitten by a newly arrived Police Dog in Belize, to two 'Squaddies' who were rushed out to a Puma on start whilst on exercise in Germany by Bob Larkin that was undertaking a 'Round Robin' flight picking up spares etc. in the belief that the two individuals had been sent down to the, 'Flight Line' as deserving causes by a certain RSM, who had provided the squadron with hospitality the night before, only for the RSM to swing by later to apologise to Bob, at not being able to send anyone that day, Bobs face and mine must have looked a picture!! To a certain J/T who was ordered not to throw a 'Javelin' from a hovering Puma by the infamous Sqn Ldr Bob Burke ably assisted by a Flt Lt Lex Brown on Easter Monday 1981 over the 'Falls Road' my list is endless.

Well all good things come to pass as they say and in 1982 I departed 33 Squadron for Kuwait and a loan service tour running Puma Second Line at Ali Al Salem airbase, little did I realise what I was getting myself into. It was a most memorable tour; it's where I honed my 'Man Management' techniques no, 'Leadership Courses' in those days believe it or not!! And being in charge of fifteen menopausal Pakistani Air force JNCO's / SNCO's and four Kuwaitis who sometimes turned up for work taught me a whole new skill set in motivating non-RAF personnel. Workwise it could be tough at times dealing with the day to day politics, and religious going's, spares and the like. The Kuwaiti Puma's were essentially same as then RAF's except that they all had sponson



Dickie was always well respected on the Squadron. Ex Clockwork

tank's so it was nothing I was not used too. Thank god through it did have its funnier moments for example; I expanded the English vocabulary on occasion of a certain number of my fellow Pakistani technicians. On this occasion I had been paid a visit by a certain Kuwaiti Air Force Officer called 'Hadi' something of a megalomaniac who observed that the aircraft were not earthed whilst in the hangar, the reason being they had omitted to provide any earth points to which I drew his attention to – he threw a fit at me and then strode off. I then used the word 'Wanker' under my breath to which one of my JNCO's called 'Saffdir' who had come up quietly behind me said who is this 'Winker' Mr Dick, I duly explained the meaning of this ancient Anglo Saxon word, and he left red faced. Months later Hadi appeared again said his piece and left, unbeknown to me 'Saffdir' had come up behind me again, he then uttered those immortal words, 'I see the Winker is back'!!! My time at work was made tolerable as not on my team but working in other areas such as the Hydraulic, Electric Bay and 32 Squadron such notable individual's as Harry the 'Barstard' Baker (a former Puma WO), Sgt Derek Wild and C.T Barry Barnes all from formerly 33 / 230 Squadron and a most wonderful Irish MaLM called Frank Hughes, sadly no longer with us. Frank was in charge of the training of all abinitio crewmen on 32 Squadron can you imagine it, an Irishman teaching Kuwaiti's Desert Survival however, it did result in one of the funniest things I have ever witnessed with Frank, which involved a brand new Cadillac, a rare poisonous desert snake, a fire

lit in the boot of the said Cadillac, needless to say Frank and I were in tears, oh and the car survived unlike the snake!!!

Well in late 1984 I departed the Puma for what I thought was for a final time for C-130 shores, little did I realize that in the intervening years I would find myself taken hostage, undertake in assisting of the breaking of the 'Peter Head' Jail riot with 22 SAS, be struck down with Malaria twice whilst serving with 'Andy Mac Nab' in the Cameroon whilst, traveling the world as a C-130 Ground Engineer and that I would find myself as an instructor in the C-130 Ground School, which in turn bizarrely would lead to me volunteering to go into the Intelligence Corp for roughly six years. That tour was both arduous and challenging in all respects however, it did give me a greater understanding in what made people tick as so to speak, and

little did I know that the individuals that I had run into during that tour would quickly come back into the fore as so to speak, when I found myself in February 1999 pacing out a deserted grass civilian airfield abutting the Kosovo Border in Macedonia with an outstanding Chief and friend called Pete Williams.

Just a few weeks previous to this there had been a visit paid to 33 Squadron by a senior officer who had been asked during a Q and A if we were going to deploy to Kosovo to which he said 'I can assure you that you will not be going to Kosovo' I then remember all us seniors looking sideways at each other, and silently acknowledging we would be going. Even up to 72 hours prior to



Ex Jebel Sahara. Taking the rare opportunity for some shut eye!

the squadrons deployment it was still being denied however, flash went to bang, and with Major Jones, Flt Lt Richie Reece, Flt Lt Shepard and the usual cast of suspects 'George Foreman', 'Topsy' Turner, Jim Ramsdan, Archie and the like plus assorted, Ops staff, Chefs and a platoon of RAF regiment found ourselves at this deserted airfield abutting the Serbian Border with the ominous sounds of automatic fire in the distance.

Pete Williams and I had arrived at the airfield first by Land rover at just after first light and whilst walking the ground as so to speak turned to find that we were being advanced upon by three senior army officers. The most senior was a Lt Colonel i/c of a MASH unit who we were to support, we spoke but I quickly realised that one of the other officers was from 23 SAS who I had last met him several years previous however, I was aware that he recognised me but could not place me, I then reminded him of how we met this gave me instant kudos as so to speak with the Lt Colonel, and twenty four hours later after we had had to depart the deserted airfield when an army runner arrived telling us to get out, as the Serbs had come over the border - we were without weapons and May, but it ammunition, I found myself with said Lt Colonel inspecting a deserted brothel 24 hours later south of the Macedonian capital which he then subsequently requisitioned which was to be his MASH Units home for the next four months, and we were to have a FOB with a Puma in support. That day was rounded off with me getting picked up by 33 Squadrons convoy and the squadron redeployment to a former Yugoslavian army base at a place called Prelip where 33 Squadron was to remain until was on my arrival at Prelip that again my past surfaced, when as I jumped out of the lead wagon a voice said, 'Hello Dicky can you give me and the boys a brief' it was a guy called Chris Laycock of 22 SAS. The next few months proved both interesting and challenging for both me and the detachment. I ended up with an interpreter called 'Goldie' after the British army departed Prelip who then assisted me in my day to day dealings with the Macedonian base Commander and the local trades people who needed to be reimbursed after the Army had left without paying them. I eventually departed Kosovo in late April only to return in October of that year by which time the 33 Squadron Detachment was located adjacent to a taxiway on Pristina airfield and two hundred meters from a large detachment of Russian Paratroopers which we had to drive through daily to get to the main RAF site which was also tented to get fed and occasionally I used to drop the odd individual off in when they happened to break foul smelling farts in the Land rover when travelling backwards and forwards to meals!!! Funny old thing it did cure the offending individual.

This period up to Christmas of that year proved to be most challenging as we acquired a temporary hangar, the weather turned dire and coupled with that the day to day running of the site was at times proving challenging as the weather worsened which im-

pacted on tasking however, as usual 33 Squadron and 21 Signals have a habit of bringing together the most unlikely characters which in turn have the habit of producing, 'Gold Dust' figuratively speaking. It was during this period that the efforts of the likes of such individuals, such as Nigel 'Glitter Ball' Scarfey, Jacko Jackson, 'Topsy' Turner, Martin Jones, Ronny Sell, Jim Ramsden and many others came into their own ensuring that we had not only hot showers, but warm shower block, we had entertainment the envy of Kosovo and we had superb morale, and coupled with all that we did we have a laugh or two under the ever watchful eye of our superb detachment Commander Sqn Ldr Steve Smith, even though the odd drunken Russian soldier used to take the odd pot shot at us!!

Due to a strange set of circumstances all of which I had no control of I returned to Kosovo a number of times due in main to Mozambique kicking off and Norway being cancelled whilst we were in Norway which proved interesting logistically. It was during these subsequent tours that the detachment relocated from the side of the taxiway to a more semi-permanent detachment at what was to be referred to as, 'Trenchard Lines'. Prior to this final move the Belgique air force joined us some time earlier with their helicopters whom we ably supported when they had not been long in country a few days when a detachment of Russian paratroopers out for some early morning PT, bombursted into their site early one morning, and made off with anything of value!!! This resulted in Sqn Ldr Steve Smith a Russian and German general with an interpreter having a meeting on the taxiway with the Russian general stating that we should have shot the intruders!!! It did of course as usual have its lighter moments of course, the stand out one being the legendary Dighton, Keats moment which some 33 Squadron dire hards will remember who witnessed it, where Dighton dropped his trousers by the side of Keats, the remainder of what happened has now passed into the 'Annals' of 33 Squadron history!!!

Kosovo continued to evolve as all detachments do eventually, and it eventually came to a close not before another superb bunch of characters had put their stamp on the detachment such as Will Lovelock, Myra, Ally Fisher, Paul Davies and the inimitable Dighton again - who I wonder can remember the tackiest room faceoff between Ally and Howie? So in Squadron terms nothing changes between then and now just the names and places that's all. Again all this is tempered yet again with the loss of friends namely Capt Andy Couss and Dave Magoo. I left 33 Squadron in September 2002 on promotion not before undertaking a couple of detachments that year in Norway, Leuchars and at Wattisham. Norway proved eventful as ever and all those who attended will remember the now infamous 'Dagli' detachment and what we all went through, me being reversed into the flag pole in my four tonner!!! By a now Officer i/c Puma EDIT, Leuchars I remember for the Viagra incident where a certain single J/T who shall remain nameless, overdosed I seem to remember, and let's just

say he suffered for a number of days, so much so, he could not climb up on the Flat Top Rover. The detachment at Wattisham where I managed to play an essential role in in the entertainment stakes, when a certain SAC Curt Lee lulled me into a false sense of security which resulted in me driving a detachment mini bus into the canopy outside the Holiday Inn Ipswich which resulted in said vehicle's roof being holed. The list of 33 Squadrons goes on then as now are legendary as `Laurie Mullen` a former WO of 33 Squadron used to phone me when I was in the `Chair` as so to speak and say I have just heard so and so to which I used to say the Laurie the `Camera is on and running` yes who can forget the `Bognor Four` incident.

Finally, in August 2003 I returned from a brief posting to RAF Cosford, the squadron had just undertaken Gulf War 2 earlier that year, and returned however, we were soon to return and I was fortunate to lead the squadron back out to Iraq. Once again a most challenging detachment made bearable with those who deployed with me with the likes of C.T Steve Pengelly, Sgt Jock Service, a then Cpl Micky Conlon, who had ably supported me, and the squadron both through Kosovo, Iraq and numerous detachments as others now who have taken their place and continue to support 33 Squadron wherever they are deployed; the baton is passed on from one generation to the next.

I finally departed 33 Squadron in December 2004 to undertake my final RAF tour at Wright Patterson Air force Base Ohio as the

deputy Engineering Manager C-17, and even then 33 Squadron soon joined me in the guise of Sqn Ldr Jim Thorley former JEnGO 33 Squadron there was no getting away and even in the final throws of my RAF career at Wright Patterson I found myself in a conversation with a Sqn Ldr Simon Broadie again a former 33 Squadron JEnGO, it was from that conversation that I now find myself here at Abbey Wood where I have been gainfully employed since November 2008 and where for the last six years I have been seeing the introduction of the Chinook Mk 6 into service, and where now I currently work in the Chinook Safety team, and even now I cannot escape 33 Squadrons clutches the former SAC Lee from Wattisham is now C.T Lee and working just a few feet from me as part of the Chinook AV EA, so there is no respite from 33 Squadron. I consistently get asked why I do it well for the challenge and additionally simply for the fact that I am actually still learning something new every day whilst at the same time able on occasion I am able to apply former lessons learnt to head off issues and to stop the wheel being re-invented.

My final hours in the RAF in February 2009 were celebrated again on 33 Squadron when WO Rick Burke-Smith (RBS) thoughtfully arranged an informal leaving do for me which finished in the 33 Squadrons Bar, that final walk across the hangar and the presentation to me in the Line before I left that evening will remain with me forever.

Per Ardua Ad Astra

33 Squadron Centenary Function

Places are still available for the Centenary Function to be held in 33 Squadron Hangar at RAF Benson on the 12th January, 2016. An afternoon parade and Remembrance Service in the afternoon will be followed by an evening dinner. Dinner includes a 3 course meal and wine. Tickets are £45 for serving personnel, £55 for non-serving. There will be a cash bar after dinner. Please be aware that due to the nature of the event invited parties will be unable to bring guests. In order to secure your place, full payment is to be paid using the details below with an email sent to Ben-33SqnCentenary@mod.uk

A Centenary Wine, a 2010 Lalande de Pomerol specially selected by Maison Sichel (Bordeaux), has been produced to mark the occasion. Limited number of bottles are available at a cost of £15 per bottle or £180 per case. Collection is being made in early December. If you would like to place an order please send a payment to the details below and send an email to Ben-33SqnCentenary@mod.uk with the details.

Payment details:

Acct name: Service Funds RAF Benson

Acct number: 0009 3332

Sort code: 30-99-03

Ref: 203071/Surname/dinner (or 203071/surname/wine)

Note 1. When making a BACS payment, it is important you include the reference number above as it will ensure funds go to the correct military account.

Note 2. BACS is the preferred method of payment, but you can also pay by cheque. Cheque to be made out to 'Service Funds RAF Benson' and sent to 33 Sqn Centenary Treasurer, 33 Sqn, RAF Benson OX10 6AA or handed to one of the committee members.

Please make your payment and send an e-mail confirmation to Sgt Pippa Wright Ben-33SqnCentenary@mod.uk with your name, e-mail and address along with your order so we can send you the full details of the event.



The original home of 33 Squadron. Filton circa 1920.

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