

9th Triennial Halton Reunion

22nd September 2007

by

John Burgess, 98th Entry.

Contents

Saturday – Buckinghamshire	2
Officer Commanding RAF Halton	2
HAAA Chairman	2
Setting the Scene	3
Site Map	4
Drone Tuning	5
March On	5
Drum Major's	5
Halton Village	7
Cottage Garden	8
Brats in Mufti	8
Grand Union Canal	9
Halton Church	9
Fields for Sport	10
Academia	11
St. George's Church	12
Windows of Dedication	12
Service of Dedication	13
Parade of Entry's	16
Old Workshop Buildings	17
Marching to Henderson Groves	19
Passing 2 Wing	20
Parade Ground	20
Lord Trenchard	22
Trenchard Museum	24
Conclusion	25

September 22nd 2007

Saturday – Buckinghamshire

This was my main reason for taking a break from work in Eindhoven, to attend this event:

Officer Commanding RAF Halton

I am privileged and honoured to be the Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Halton and humbled by the responsibilities associated with this role. I was of course delighted to accept your kind invitation to become your President, and I will take a keen interest in the Halton Aircraft Apprentices Association (HAAA) matters. I take immense pride in being your President and, as someone with a great passion for the ethos and heritage of our Service, I am proud to be associated with distinguished HAAA colleagues associated with this incredible Station. It therefore gives me considerable pleasure to invite you back to your spiritual home - your alma mater - here at Royal Air Force Halton.

For those of us currently serving at RAF Halton, the handing on of our history, culture and ethos plays a crucial part in how we train our recruits and youngsters for the future. Every member of the Association enjoys a very special place in the history of Halton, and, indeed, in the history of our Service. You do so not only for the excellence of the training that you received at Halton, but also for the tremendous spirit and distinguished achievements that have long been a hall mark of our Service. It is a delight to see you all back here today, not least because of the essential links that doing so forges between our past, our present and our future. It is also a real pleasure to see the comradeship that exists between the members.

The Halton training squadrons and schools remain busy - 3000 new recruits should pass through our gates this year and we train some 20000 students in total per year. The Airfield is busier than for many years; in particular with the arrival of the Joint Service Gliding Centre. And, there are many RAF and Joint units clamoring to come here. More than enough to keep us busy for the foreseeable future!

Today is your day. I do hope that you enjoy an excellent reunion, in the company of friends and comrades and I very much look forward to meeting as many as possible of you and sharing your memories of this wonderful station.

Welcome back.

HAAA Chairman

Welcome to the 9th Triennial Reunion of the Halton Apprentices Association. I wish you all well and hope that you enjoy the day and that you all get the opportunity to meet up with friends and recall old times. You will all, I am sure, appreciate that the Reunion could not take place without the generous support we get from the Station, and our thanks go to Group Captain Richard Gammage, our president, and his staffs.

I am writing a few weeks before the event, so the final programme is still not finalised. Of course, the day will be based on traditional lines, but I know that 'the office team' has been working hard to ensure that we have an interesting and exciting day. During the morning the airfield activities include a range of static displays, including this year, the RAeS rotary wing 100th anniversary display. Also on show will be a range of classic cars and military vehicles, and the Chesham Model Aircraft Club have again agreed to fly their models. The Golden Oldies, who I have to say, go from strength to strength, will be on parade, and I must not forget lunch and the opportunity to have the odd beer or two.

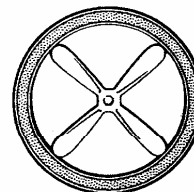
In the afternoon the senior RAF Halton Padre The Rev (Wg Cdr) Nick Heron together with The Rev (Group Captain) Richard Lee (Association Padre) will officiate at the church service during which there will be a dedication for a number of new windows. For those not attending the church service schools and workshops (Tea and Coffee available) will be open to give you a feel for the old days. The Reunion concludes with a sunset ceremony performed jointly with the Golden Oldies and the Halton Area Military Band and a flight of airmen/airwomen under the command of the warrant officer, Recruit Training Squadron.

As ever, success on the day depends on a great deal of hard work carried out by many people. One would think that the task would get easier as time goes by, but that is not the case, and my thanks go to Min Larkin and the office team for the tremendous effort put in over many months.

Rod Brumpton (106th)

REUNION OF ROYAL AIR FORCE HALTON AIRCRAFT APPRENTICES

AT
ROYAL AIR FORCE HALTON
SATURDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2007



BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE STATION COMMANDER

September 22nd 2007

Setting the Scene

Shortly after arriving at RAF Halton in April of 1961 I joined the Brass Band and set about learning to play the Trombone. During those three years of Technical Training I trod the Parade Square between 1 and 2 Wings and blew the Trombone at six Pass Out Parades, including my own. I was a member of the 98th Entry. Now, 43 years later I find myself taking a photograph of the Barrack Block I lived in for two years:



Barrack Block (BB) 20 in 2007 (now called Tornado)



Ready for Parade in 1963



Pass Out Parade in May, 1924



Parade of Ex Halton Apprentices at the 9th Triennial Reunion in 2007.

September 22nd 2007

Site Map

I arrived at the Old Bakery Field car park at 10:15am to find some 30 cars already there. Figuring the best idea would be to walk down to the Airfield, I set off. Within a few minutes I'd caught up with another ex Brat. We talked and walked together. He had just arrived from his second home in Spain and was in the 65th Entry.

On crossing over the Grand Union Canal we passed a cottage where a team of people were standing by a table loaded with cups, saucers and snack food. We stopped and asked if we were too early to take refreshment. On spending the next ten minutes chatting to a lovely elderly lady we learned she had been married to an ex Brat who was at Halton in 1935.

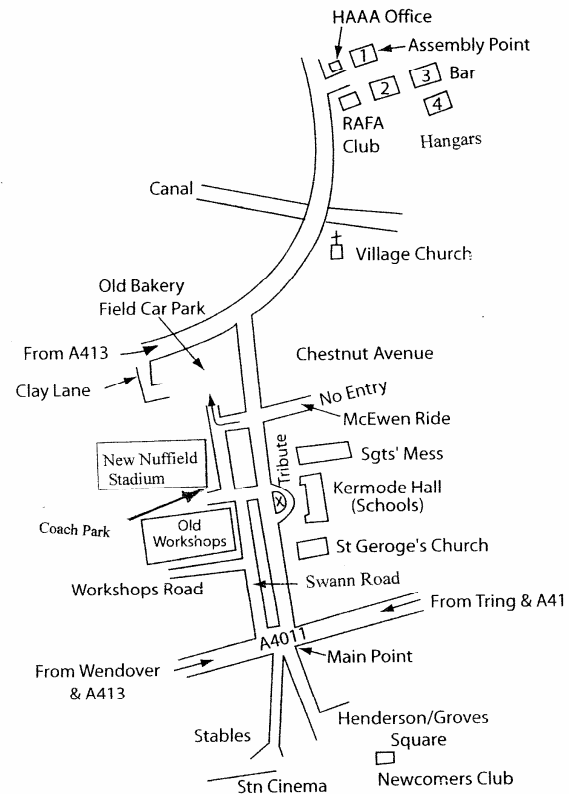
I observed a few men walking towards the Airfield so at 10:30ish we made our way to the entrance gate and paid our monies at the HAAA Office.



Aerodrome

PROGRAMME FOR HAAA TRIENNIAL REUNION - 22 SEP 07

- 0930 Car Park at Old Bakery Field opens
- 1030 Airfield open to HAAA members, Meet & Greet in No 1 Hangar
Displays open No 1 Hangar, Bar opens No 3 Hangar
Displays open on hard standing in front of 3 Hangar
- 1100 St George's church open to Wives/Partners/Friends
Museum opens, Model Aircraft Flying Display
Mini bus service from St George's / Museum / Halton House starts
- 1200 Internal bus service starts (Airfield/St George's/Henderson Groves)
Lunch commences in No 3 Hangar
Golden Oldies play
- 1300 Schools (Kermode Hall). Workshops (Supply Trg Sqn / Tea Bar / Supply Branch Museum)
Piano recital at St George's church
- 1400 Lunch ends
- 1415 Bar closes
- 1430 Parade at Airfield to march thro' Halton village to St George's church
- 1500 Church Service. Dedication of 85th, 155th, and Royal Celonese Air Force entry windows
- 1550 Parade by Entries in front of Old Workshops
- 1615 March to Henderson Groves
- 1630 Sunset Ceremony
- 1700 Bar opens in Newcomers Club (1 Wing Tank)
- 1845 Bar in Newcomers Club closes
- 1900 Everyone to be clear of the Station and Car Parks



Gordon Taylor, 65th Entry, taking Video.

The Golden Oldies warming up their Pipes.

September 22nd 2007
Drone Tuning



March On



Drum Major's



September 22nd 2007



 **EXETER CITY**
Videographer 

Gordon Taylor 

Tel:-01803/845808
gordon@appsair65.fsnet.co.uk
appsair@hotmail.com

 www.gcntproductions.biz
www.xhiltonbrat65.com
www.teignfilmmakersclub.co.uk 

September 22nd 2007

Halton Village

I couldn't face the inevitable long wait in 3 Hanger to use my Lunch ticket so I decided to head back to the 'Schools' building and St Georges Church. I stopped on the way at the Cottage for a snack:





Brats in Mufti

mufti[1,noun]
mufti[2,noun]

Main Entry: ²muf-ti 🗣️

Pronunciation: \ˈmʌf-tē\

Function: *noun*

Etymology: probably from ¹*mufti*

Date: 1816

:ordinary dress as distinguished from that denoting an occupation or station <a priest in *mufti*>; *especially* : civilian clothes when worn by a person in the armed forces





Halton Church
I was confirmed here in 1963.



September 22nd 2007

Fields for Sport

I stopped here and pondered the scene. In the foreground a solitary ex Brat is walking towards me. In the distant right, walking from the direction of Halton House, are two people. I walked towards the Gentleman. We talked for a few minutes about this wonderful place where on a Wednesday afternoon hundred's of Apprentices could be seen on these fields:



This wonderfully erect and fit looking elderly man was in the 35th Entry. That was in 1937, so I would think he is now well into his 80's. See page 20.



This younger man, I believe, was in the 106th Entry. I figure that now he must be about 60 years of age.

September 22nd 2007

Academia

Informally known as, 'Schools' by the Apprentice, now Kermode Hall, this building was where Mathematics, General Studies and Mechanical science subjects were taught:



This Tribute, located in front of Kermode Hall, was designed by David Howells of the 29th Entry and is executed in granite.

The text on the front face, left side, reads: This sculpture celebrates the Apprentice Scheme started by the Lord Trenchard at No. 1 School of Technical Training. Over 40,000 boys, many from Commonwealth and Foreign Air Forces and from the Royal Navy, all affectionately known as, Trenchard's Brats, graduated from Halton between 1922 and 1993.

The right side reads: This sculpture represents the brass cube test job undertaken by Apprentices during their training and incorporates the, Wheel Badge, that has been proudly worn by generations of Apprentices. On the reverse side appears the following: 1922 - 1997, No. 1 School of Technical Training R.A.F. Halton, This Tribute was unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 31 October 1997.

The programme indicated that at 13:00 there will be a Piano Recital at St.George's Church. It was now 13:16.

September 22nd 2007

St. George's Church

When I left Halton in 1964 this building was still under construction.

After a few minutes of listening and watching the pianist I began to wonder why he seemed to be so rigidly positioned at the grand piano. I then realised that he was blind. His playing was superb and he played an amazing variety of music, all of which, I thoroughly enjoyed. At one point when he played, "Pack of your Troubles", a wartime Gracie Fields number, I couldn't resist singing the words. The idea caught on and more of the audience joined in.



Windows of Dedication

Over the last 40 years, following the completion of building works and thus being open for worship, the clear window panes in the West End have slowly and steadily been replaced by stained glass. These small windows each belong, in perpetuity, to the memory of an Entry whose members have sponsored their own personal design of tribute to the No1 School of Technical Training.



David Kennedy

September 22nd 2007
 Service of Dedication

Three new windows were dedicated, being from: the 85th Entry, the 155th Entry and the Royal Celonese Air Force.

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH
 ROYAL AIR FORCE HALTON



Saturday 22 September 2007
 at 1500 hrs



A SERVICE of PRAISE
 and THANKSGIVING
 at the
 TRIENNIAL REUNION
 of HALTON APPRENTICES

ORDER OF SERVICE

The congregation are asked to stand as the clergy and the Halton Aircraft Apprentices' Standard enter. The congregation are asked to remain standing as the Queen's Colour for No 1 School of Technical Training enters to the RAF March Past and for the singing of the National Anthem.

National Anthem

God save our gracious Queen,
 Long live our noble Queen,
 God save the Queen.
 Send her victorious,
 Happy and glorious,
 Long to reign over us:
 God save the Queen.

Thy choicest gifts in store
 On her be pleased to pour,
 Long may she reign.
 May she defend our laws,
 And ever give us cause
 To sing with heart and voice,
 God save the Queen.

Anon

**Remain standing
 Hymn**

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
 To his feet thy tribute bring;
 Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
 Who like me his praise should sing?
 Alleluia, Alleluia,
 Praise the everlasting King.

Praise him for his grace and favour
 To our fathers in distress;
 Praise him still the same as ever,
 Slow to chide, and swift to bless:
 Alleluia, Alleluia,
 Glorious in his faithfulness.



The Gentleman in the wheelchair is George Kennedy. He arrived at Halton, 16 years of age, in August 1928, to join the 18th Entry as an Apprentice Fitter. In 1932 he was posted to RAF Cranwell as a Leading Aircraftsman and subsequently to Hinaidi in Iraq. In 1934 he was in Abu Sueir, Egypt, with No 4 FTS to be trained by Flying Officer/Instructor Thomas Pike; later to become Sir Thomas Geoffrey Pike, Marshal of the Royal Air Force.



David with his Father, George Kennedy.



In 1935 George was a Sergeant Pilot with 6 Squadron based in Ismailia and Ramleh in Egypt flying the Hawker Hart ...

.... George completed a distinguished service career of 31 years. He retired from active service as the Station Commander at Strike Command Headquarters High Wycombe, 1956 – 59.



Father-like, he tends and spares us,
Well our feeble frame he knows;
In his hands he gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Widely as his mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore him;
Ye behold him face to face;
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
Dwellers all in time and space:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Praise with us the God of grace.

H F Lyte (1793-1847) Psalm 103

Remain standing
The Exhortation

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are gathered here in the house of God to worship his name, to give thanks for all his gifts, and for all that we have shared in this place. We give thanks for the memory of things past: for the privilege of service within the Royal Air Force and for belonging to a distinguished Training School with fine traditions; for the delights of personal achievements; and for the deep and enduring friendships made here at No 1 School of Technical Training. We praise God for all that Royal Air Force Halton has meant to the life of our service and our nation and we pray for his continued blessing upon us as we re-dedicate ourselves to his service. But first, recalling those things that create a barrier between ourselves, our neighbours and our God, let us confess our sins to our heavenly Father:

All **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against thee, through our own fault,
in thought, word and deed,
and in what we have left undone.
We are heartily sorry, and repent of all our sins,
for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
forgive us all that is past;
and grant that we may serve thee in newness of life,
to the glory of thy name. Amen.**

The Absolution

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

All **Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Reading: Isaiah 40.28-31
*read by Air Commodore R Brumpton
106th Entry*

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Page 4 & 5

Song: Beech Leaves (An Old Boys' Song from "Flat Out")

*(The first two verses will be sung as a solo.
Please join in singing the choruses and the final verse.)*

Solo How green are the beeches that grow on the Chilterns,
At Halton, up Beacon, on Boddington crown,
But best I remember when beech leaves were falling
And painting the hillside a deep golden brown.

All When beech leaves are falling, are falling, are falling,
Wherever I'm stationed, where'er I may roam,
Old memories come calling, come calling, come calling,
Of youth's golden scenery, of Halton an home.

Solo How light were our steps as saluting the colours,
We passed with our bayonets a gleam in the sun,
As bright as their gleams were our hopes for the future,
Of things to achieve, of adventure to come.

All When beech leaves are falling...

All If, firm as the trees that stood out on the skyline,
We stick to our purpose, and never forget
Our grand Air Force motto; then leaves may come falling,
Unshadowed by sorrow, untinged with regret.
When beech leaves are falling...

The Sermon: The Reverend Richard Lee QHC AKC FRSA RAF
Association Chaplain

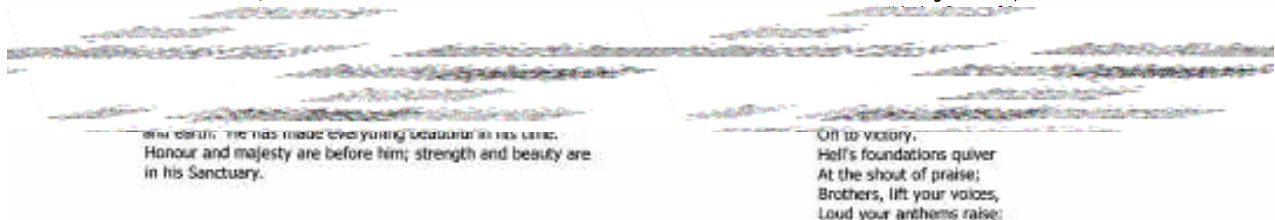
In the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ I dedicate this window to commemorate the 85th and 155th Entries and the Royal Ceylonese Air Force, to the glory and praise of God. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

All
Chaplain Let us pray:
Almighty God, to whose glory we celebrate the dedication of these windows: We praise you for the many blessings you have given to those who gave them; and we pray that all who seek you in this place may find you, and being filled with the Holy Spirit may become a living temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All **Amen.**

Hymn *(During which a collection will be taken.)*

Onward, Christian, soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the Cross of Jesus
Going on before.
Christ the royal Master
Leads against the foe;
Forward into battle,
See, his banners go:

Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,



We are not divided,
All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine,
One in charity:

Coming and throes may reach

We have Christ's own promise,
And that cannot fail:

Onward, then, ye people,
Join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices

S Baring-Gould (1834-1924)

endeavour, that they may be a safeguard to our Queen and a sure defence to our Country. Help them fulfil their several duties with honour, quietness and integrity, and grant that they may prove to be worthy successors of those who by their valour and sacrifice, have

us that peacemakers shall be called the children of God: bring now to the acceptance of this truth the people of the world, that seeing first thy kingdom and its righteousness, they may indeed inherit the earth; through the same thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

times which we have had, the skills which we have learned, the friendships which we have shared and the companionship which we have enjoyed. May all who have shared the apprenticeship of the "wheel" be mindful of the needs of one another, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Prayers

Chaplain For the Queen:
Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, bless our sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth, and all who are in authority under her, that they may order all things in wisdom and equity, righteousness and peace, to the honour of your name, and the good of your Church and people; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All Amen.

The General Thanksgiving

All Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving kindness to us all.

We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And we beseech thee, give us, that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

Teach us, good Lord to serve thee as thou deservest; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do thy will; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Laid me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs and praises
I will ever give to thee.

W Williams (1717-91), tr P and W Williams

Remain standing
The Blessing

Chaplain The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself, the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service, the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts; And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
All Amen.

The congregation remain standing as the Queen's Colour, Standard and clergy proceed to the back of the church.

Stand Hymn

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hands:
Bread of heaven,
Feed me now and ever more.

Open now the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fiery cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through;
Strong deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield.



September 22nd 2007

The singing in this building by these men was immensely inspiring.



Parade of Entry's

The Golden Oldies have played and marched from the Airfield to St George's Church. They are now waiting at the Workshop buildings to lead the attending entry members for the march up the hill to the Henderson Groves Parade Ground.



September 22nd 2007

Old Workshop Buildings

This is where General Engineering, E & I and Armament aircraft maintenance training took place. New Workshops, I believe, were built in the 50's for Engine, 'oilies' and the Airframe 'bashers'.



September 22nd 2007

In 1961 there were 3 Wings at Halton. At 3 Wing, the Apprentice spent one year before moving to 1 or 2 Wing, at the Henderson Grove site. Even number Entry's went to 1 Wing and odd number Entry's went to 2 Wing.



In 1961, the functionality inside these buildings provided training for:

Electrical Fitters

Instrument Fitters

Armament Fitters

In here was a Swimming Pool



September 22nd 2007

Marching to Henderson Groves

This is the route to 1 and 2 Wings, so called in the 60's, the Senior Wings. The march up and down to either Workshops or Schools was performed twice each day. Wednesday afternoon was reserved for Sport. In the long, hard winter of 1963, it was not possible to march – too much snow and ice – those weeks in February and March were great fun!



September 22nd 2007
Passing 2 Wing



Parade Ground

The Station Commander, Group Captain Richard Gammage, takes the Salute:



September 22nd 2007



September 22nd 2007

Lord Trenchard

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Hugh Montague Trenchard, 1st Viscount Trenchard GCB OM GCVO DSO (3rd February 1873 – 10th February 1956) was the British Chief of the Air Staff during World War I. He was instrumental in establishing the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Trenchard Aircraft Apprentice scheme.



In 1964 this building was a redundant Gymnasium. A new Gym was in use on the 3 Wing site.

On the 1st April 1918, when the RAF was formed, Trenchard was the natural choice as its first Chief of the Air Staff (CAS). Over the next ten years he presided over the fortunes of the RAF and imprinted his own personality upon it. During his tenure as CAS a number of great training institutions of the RAF were founded, notably the Cadet College at Cranwell, the Apprentice School at Halton and the Staff College at Andover. His initiative led to the formation of the Auxiliary Air Force later to become the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAAF) and he also introduced the concept of University Air Squadrons. For most of his time as CAS, particularly the early years, Lord Trenchard fought a series of Whitehall battles to preserve the RAF as a whole. Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Harris, when paying tribute to Lord Trenchard's contribution as CAS, said, "For nearly 20 years I watched the Army and the Navy.....engineer one deliberate attempt after another to destroy the RAF.....time after time Trenchard, and Trenchard alone, saved us." It is no wonder that Lord Trenchard became known as "The father of the Royal Air Force." This was a title he never felt he deserved but his special quality was that he could take an idea - the RAF - and put that idea into practice, often beyond the expectations of those who served under him. Above all, he gave the RAF an enduring sense of pride.

September 22nd 2007

But getting back to 2007, here is an event that has a flavour I like. I have just left 1 Wing Mess:



Dining Hall



Cooking Area

I'd been looking at the Dining Hall that I used for two years, having been invited inside by a very thoughtful Polish Cook who saw me rattling the locked front door. I was on the grass bank in front of the Mess. I was asked if I'd just come from the Mess by this man.



I am unable to recall exactly how the conversation flowed but I discovered that he was in the 100th Entry.

I must have said that I used to play the Trombone because at that point his face lit up and he said to his pal, who was walking towards us, "Hey Keith, this guy was in the Brass Band".

At that point I asked the white haired man what his name was. The reply was, "Keith Watts".

When I heard that name the memories came flooding back.

Keith then produced some photographs of himself. In 1963 and 1964 Keith played the Euphonium and I can remember him very well as an amiable and cheerful person.

Note: this is cropped from a picture I took down at the Airfield. See page [5, March On](#) At that time I was unaware that some four hours later I would meet and talk with them.

Keith Watts and Friend: they both live in Plymouth.

Reunited after 43 years, we three then walked across the square and entered the Trenchard Museum.

September 22nd 2007
Trenchard Museum

During my 2001 visit to Halton I met Francis Hanford in one of the Workshop buildings, where the Museum was located at that time, and was informed that he hoped to be moving the exhibits to the Henderson Grove Gymnasium.



The 1960's style of Working Dress

Keith Watts is standing next to the guy explaining how the T4 Bombsight Rig works. Seemingly this man was also in the 100th Entry but subsequently purchased his discharge from the RAF.



I knew from my last visit that the Museum had a Sperry Mk10 Autopilot Gyro Unit, and here it is



Francis Hanford

Conclusion

Note: The 210th Entry passed through Halton three years after my Entry, the 98th. I analyse the numbering used: 210 could mean, but I am not sure, 2 = a two year training and 10 = ten entries after the 100th Entry. I think the 210th were the Technician Apprentices, the intended 'diagnostician' substantive Corporal; the assessment at that time given to the Air Ministry of the skill set that was needed to maintain the new TSR2 aircraft. In the event that TSR2 was cancelled, I presume the 2 Year Training concept was also cancelled, but I am not sure.

I would like to present some 7 paragraphs from a 'Haul Down' document written by Dusty Miller of the 210th Entry (1967). I do not use the first two paragraphs, nor the last six and I omit the last sentence in the 10th paragraph.

In his opening paragraph Dusty says, quote: "...it is the inevitability of the whole process of coming to the end of my time in the Royal Air Force that fills me, frankly, with dread".

The coming to an end of my service in the RAF was not one of dread but a time of excitement, albeit with considerable apprehension and trepidation, on my departure from cocooned military life. I was looking forward to the adventure of living and surviving in the real world. I will say however, that the option to enter the real world was 'fate acompli' (an accomplished fact) in my case because at a pre-release interview in 1974 I was told that to extend my contract with the RAF was not possible. However, I'd decided well before 1974 that I did not wish to stay in the RAF. An option available to me at the time was that if one was serving a 12 year engagement one could apply for an extension of up to one year provided the circumstances were acceptable. I'd gained a place at Warwick University so I applied for a six month extension and this was granted. That was the biggest piece of luck in the whole of my RAF career because it was announced in the budget of April 1975 that 12 year engagements would qualify for 12/22 of the full 22 year pension, deferred to age 60 and index linked from the age of 16. So, in my case I now receive the sum of £14.5/22 of the full pension.

I like very much the sentiment Dusty wrote for the Summer 2007 issue of the Haltonian:

1. My hair is measurably thinner and greyer now than it was in 1967 and my uniform bears substantially more embellishments, deserved and otherwise, than was the case when I first trod the hallowed parade ground at Halton, but the kid inside me has changed little since those first 2 years of moulding in the hands of Sergeants Maxwell and Thomas and Corporal Aitken, and a good many others in Workshops, Schools and at the Airfield.
2. My trade skills continue to come in very handy (my family might well disagree) but the serious business of Halton was to form the essential character that has continued to develop with experience but has not changed significantly in nature since those early days. So what did I take away with me that enabled me make the most of the past 40 years?
3. I should start by being quite clear that I arrived at Halton just 2 months short of my 16th birthday possessing 4 GCE O levels which narrowly qualified as passes, a cheap suitcase containing next to nothing, a five pound note in my pocket, and more naivety about the real world than I am prepared to admit in anything other than The Haltonian (I do so here because I know that very many arrived at Halton in a similar state of vacant expectation). I cannot recall what my aims were and suspect that I did not really have any other than to make the five pound note last as long as possible and to satisfy the fondest hope of my Mother that the experience would make a man of me.
4. I shall avoid the temptation of indulging in brat speak about bed spaces, bed packs, room jobs, centre decks, bull nights, floor bumpers, haircuts and mass inoculations and will try to concentrate on the qualities Halton kindled in me, although I can almost detect the faint whiff of red cardinal polish, along with that curious smell of recently polished brass.
5. Qualities or coping strategies? I am not altogether sure but they are most likely a bit of both.
6. The first thing that struck me was how different we all were. Our ages ranged around the 16-17 mark but amongst the recently-post-puberty pack (we shaved daily only because we were told to, not that failure to do so was in any way detectable) were a number of far more mature and hairy brutes who, or so they told us, had already seen more of life than many of us would do for at least the next couple of years. And we spoke differently, not just the accents but also the words, although we quickly took up a new common language that we all understood, albeit when I tried it at home on my first leave my family looked at me as though I had just arrived from outer space.
7. I learned to stand on my own 2 feet. I will admit that they are still a bit wobbly from time to time but I soon learned to be responsible for myself and quickly got out of the habit of blaming somebody else for my misfortunes. I also learned about luck from the number of times I survived an inspection simply because the inspecting officer did not look at the bit I knew I had not done properly. More importantly, from the times it did not work out so well I learned that luck does not always go your way unless you intervene, hence one of my guiding principles is that the harder I work, the luckier I seem to get. I have also become aware that opportunities abound if you can be bothered to look for them, but they will not wait around until you are ready, so you must seize them and make the most of every moment.

I presume Dusty has now retired. However, I'll wager that he is as busy as-ever-he-was when serving the United Kingdom as Air Marshall Sir Dusty Miller KBE RAF (210th).

