

The Royal Air Force Servicing Commando and Tactical Supply Wing Association

Representing a Common Heritage

Newsletter - Winter 2013/14

Chairman's Introduction

Welcome to the Association Newsletter for Christmas 2013. We have a bumper edition again this year with variety and quality and I am sure you will find the contents interesting, stimulating and thought-provoking. Your Association has been involved in many activities, in many guises; but all carry our distinctive mark and the articles herein reflect that. Operationally, we go from the Far East 1945 to Afghanistan 2013; charitably, we go from Kenya to Orkney via the Levant, thankfully not all in one event! Many charities have benefitted from the efforts of Association members this year, but charity begins at home and after a successful year cementing our SC heritage (new Vice President SC, Duncan Grant, - the post is new, Duncan is not - new memorial bench and refurbished memorial plinth at the National Memorial Arboretum), it is time to turn our attention to TSW.

At the AGM in June, Bob McBey asked if the Association could examine a lasting memorial to TSW, in the way our predecessors have done for the Servicing Commandos at the National Memorial Arboretum. After debate in and out of Committee, we have identified an opportunity to create something special for TSW at the NMA which will complement the memorial plaque we installed at the RAF Church St Clement Danes in London last year. Details appear on page 10, but for the moment, all I will say is please ensure the Association itself features in your fund raising activities this year. Treasurer Tim Newstead is always willing to take money from you and if everybody makes some effort, your Association will have funds to ensure TSW continues to benefit not only practically for today, but also indelibly for the future.

Talking of legacy, on page 3 is an article from Sgt Jimmy Ramage on the TSW Community Outreach Programme in Kenya. TSW have supported the British Army Training Unit in Kenya for years and, in keeping with TSW's distinctive character, the team have carried out work to refurbish a local school on their own initiative. Sourcing local supplies and enlisting local support, the TSW detachment has made a real difference to the local community, improving the learning environment for local children. Your Association donated £400 from our funds and personal contributions to help purchase the supplies.

In the wake of British cycling success in the Tour de France and at the Olympics, Chris Markey and Neil Cromarty were separately encouraged to pump the pedals., Both in support of worthy causes and both grateful for the soothing lubricity of Vaseline. P 8 & 15.

Association stalwarts Bob McBey and David Packman have contributed accounts of their charitable efforts on foot. Bob undertook the TSW Bergathon for a record 84th successive year raising £450 (P7) and David commemorated the "Cockleshell Heroes" walking 100 miles along the Frankton Trail in south west France raising, in conjunction with others, over £3000 (P13).

There are contributors with wider impact, such as the Airman of the Year, SAC Sam Fell. On P11, you'll see an account of Sam's efforts which earned him the President's Award 2012. Another who had great effort recognized was Gp Capt Polly Perkins, firstly through



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her promotion and secondly by her challenging next appointment. On P6 you can see Gp Capt Perkins handing over to another whose talents have been recognized: that perennial TSW Officer, and new Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr Andy Males. We must also recognize the contribution of our Association liaison officer on the Wing, Sqn Ldr Sam Caldara, who has left for MOD. But it would be remiss of me not to offer special thanks to Alan Robinson. Alan has handed on to Duncan Grant a vibrant tradition in the SC cadre of our Association and we look forward to seeing Alan at future events (keeping a discrete eye on Duncan...). Finally on the thank you trail, you would not be reading any of these articles without the technical and administrative skill of our enthusiastic Newsletter editor, Tim Newstead.

It's interesting to note the similarities between TSW Operations in Afghanistan (P9) and Servicing Commando Operations in the Far East (P16): Both were called to operate at a moment's notice; both employed multiple trades and specialisations; both supported all aircraft types; both major on mobility and flexibility; and both trained, operated and played together. These were Airmen and women making a unique contribution across the years. And on that note, I will leave you to a great read, but ask that you pause on P18 to reflect on the lives and deeds of those who have died and to think about their friends and families at this special time of year. May I offer you all my best wishes for Christmas and I hope you all have a good New Year.

David Orr

A Message from Vice President (Servicing Commandos)

I am sure a few readers know who I am! I am privileged to have been invited to accept new responsibilities within the Association. So now it's twice I have succeeded Alan Robinson! What a stalwart he has been in representing the interests and values of former Servicing Commandos.

As Vice President with responsibility for our WWII heroes, I will ensure the heritage is sustained. In turn, your unique interests and welfare will continue to be looked after by David Orr and his Committee. Needless to say, if any Servicing Commando or family member wishes to contact me on any issue my "door is always open".

Contact details are:

Mob: 07803 908529

E Mail: dg.lts1@btinternet.com

Duncan Grant

PS: I was born a day after D Day!



Welfare

Personal welfare is something that, unless all of us are careful, may be taken for granted, but it is far too important for that. What is more, it concerns all serving and former members of the Armed Forces. This is why there is a wide range of organizations devoted to looking after the needs of all Service and ex-Service people and their dependants regardless of rank. In the case of the RAF the main ones are: The Royal Air Forces Association and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund, SSAFA and The Royal British Legion. They all work closely together to provide seamless support to those in need.

The services available are amazingly wide-ranging and are always completely confidential. At one end of the spectrum there is re-settlement and housing advice and, at the other, Voluntary Service Committees and Community Volunteers in Service stations both at home and abroad. In between these come: confidential help lines, residential care homes providing temporary accommodation for separated families, a full-time professional care service for families overseas, a family escort service to help families travelling to, from and within the United Kingdom, grants where money is short and many others. Access to all these facilities is usually via a trained welfare worker and referrals may be made by individuals who feel themselves in need of help, social workers or health professionals.

With the aim of easing access to assistance by all members of the RAF Servicing Commando and Tactical Supply Wing Association, the Association has its own welfare officer, Gp Capt David Packman. David has been a 'caseworker' with the Benevolent Fund, SSAFA and the Legion for more than 25 years and knows from personal experience the importance of giving timely help to those in need. Any member of the Association who either wants help or knows of someone who does he or she is invited to get in touch with David who can be contacted on packmanpacky@aol.com. If he personally cannot handle a case he knows where to go find out who can.



Right from the off as we were preparing for deployment to Kenya, one of our greatest priorities on our arrival in Nanyuki was to get involved in charity work, but with the full intention of doing it as the Royal Air Force, Tactical Supply Wing (TSW) Detachment and not swept up under the Batuk or Army banner as often a lot of our community work does in Kenya. With this at our forethought we made contact with the Nanyuki Children's Charitable Trust, who are an UK based charity with a lot of members spread worldwide, as well as locally in Nanyuki. Following several E-mails and phone calls, we finally got a meeting with two local members of the Nanyuki Ndio Home Group who took us on a guided tour of some of the poorest areas of Nanyuki. To an outsider the whole of Kenya looks poor, especially around the town areas where litter stacks high in every corner or blows freely in the wind until it ends up in a drainage ditch, at which point one of the locals will pile it up and set alight to it leaving a putrid smell of burning plastic, paper and rubber. You have the odd block built building in the centre of the towns but mostly houses are small and made of wood and wriggly tin. Once you have been here a while, you see that these belong to the working and middle class people here. On our particular tour we ventured deeper into the poverty area and it's here we found people with three wooden pallets with a sheet over the top as a house for a full family, these are the people collecting rubbish off the street and, in a desperate attempt to make some money to survive, make little trinkets or objects of very little use. As we walked a little further we found a pallet house a bit bigger than the rest with a handmade picket fence around it; our guide informed us that this was the neighbourhood hotel. Once we pass through this area and past the rubbish dump with a cow grazing on it, we end up at Ndruruli Primary School. This is where our project really starts.



Once we pass through this area and past the rubbish dump with a cow grazing on it, we end up at Ndruruli Primary School. This is where our project really starts.

With a management plan in place and a budget of 75,000Ksh (£600), we got quotes from three local hardware stores for the materials we were going to need to renovate the first two classrooms. In true RAF style we opted for the best value and promptly bought 150 litres of emulsion, 10 litres of gloss, 75 window panes, chipboard for the ceilings, cement, putty and enough tools required for up to 10 people to carry out the work at any one time.



The first day of the renovation saw the team of TSW personnel and some volunteers from the Nanyuki Ndio Home Group wash down the walls, chisel out the broken window panes and remove the metal panels that had been put in place to substitute for smashed windows. It was a full day of hard work however with visits from the teaching staff and the local people their gratitude for everything that we were doing to help make the facilities safer and more conducive for learning made it extremely rewarding for all.

School entrance (above) and classroom for 40 students (left)



View of classroom through a broken window (top), SAC Caplin chisels out glass fragments (right), walls washed (left)

Over the few days that we had been working our project, we had gathered some local media interest.

As the project progressed, the team had soon replaced 75 window panes (with one or two breakages!), had applied 2 coats of emulsion and a coat of gloss to each wall within the two classrooms and replaced the ceilings. Over the few days that we had been working our project, we had gathered some local media interest. On the afternoon of the third day we had a visit from *The Laikipian Online News Letter* team, then later by *The Laikipian County Times*. With local parents and children gathering daily to witness the gradual transformation, it wasn't long before word had reached the Nanyuki MP, Mr Mutahi, about what was happening. After a brief phone call from Mr Mutahi, he arranged to visit us on site to express his gratitude to TSW and to the Nanyuki Ndio Home Group.

Cpl Bradshaw assesses the work required on the ceiling (right)



On the morning of the visit from Mr Mutahi, the TSW team welcomed the unexpected assistance of Nanyuki Football Club (currently sitting 3rd in the Kenyan second division). They immediately got stuck in and began painting work on the ceilings of the classrooms. Working tirelessly to get the work done before the visit from the MP. This manpower bonus shaved several hours off our predicted timeline and it now looked as though both classrooms would be ready for the children's return to school the next day (following a teacher strike).



Nanyuki FC paint the ceiling in a classroom



With new windows in place of the metal sheets the light pours into the classroom creating a much better working environment.



Before



After



Tactical Supply Wing with Nanyuki MP Mr Mutahi who commended TSW for all their hard work and passed on his sincere thanks on behalf of his Nanyuki constituency.

The History of TSW

Avid readers of the Association website and last Winter's Newsletter will recall that in 2012 the History of TSW - "Support to Strike" - by Jim Coleman, was published on the Blurb.com website. The book is not currently available at Blurb.com, but we very much hope that Jim - with Chris Baker's help - will manage to resurrect it there, or on a similar site, for those that wish to buy a professionally presented and bound version of the book. Meanwhile, Jim and Chris have asked that the book be made available as a PDF file on the Association website.

Thus, it is now available for download through a link at www.tswscdoasn.co.uk/news

SUPPORT TO STRIKE



The History of
The Royal Air Force Tactical Supply Wing
by
James McMillan Coleman BEM

Please direct any questions or comments regarding "Support to Strike" to Jim Coleman.

New TSW Rugby Kit

An Association Committee meeting at HQ TSW at Stafford gave the opportunity for Association Chairman, David Orr, to hand over a new set of rugby kit purchased by the Association for the Wing team.



Out with the Old — In with the Old!

It is with great pleasure that we congratulate Gp Capt Polly Perkins on her promotion and challenging new job with 101 Log Brigade — especially in drawing down the logistics effort in Afghanistan. Sad as we are to see her go, we are cheered by the return of an old trooper as the new Commanding Officer of TSW: Wg Cdr Andy Males took over the post at the beginning of the year.

*Wg Cdr Andy Males
takes over command of
Tactical Supply Wing
from
Gp Capt Polly Perkins*



*The final few steps in
command*

RAFSCdo 70th Anniversary Remembered

Former Chairman Duncan Grant laid a wreath on behalf of the Association at the RAF Servicing Commando memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire to commemorate the 70th Anniversary year of the formation of the Servicing Commandos.



Remembers All
RAF Servicing Commandos
on the 70th Anniversary
of the year of their
formation.
Armistice Day 2012
from
The RAFSCdo & TSW ASSN.



You were not forgotten
Every Good Wish

Duncan Grant

TSW Bergathon 2013

It's starting to look a bit familiar - Bob McBey raises Association Team and leads them on the annual merry Bergathon and raises good money for the Wing's charity. Except, this year it was a little different! Clearly, most of Bob's past team stalwarts have either learnt their lesson or have not got the resilience or stubborn-ness of Bob! Thus, as reported below, without his own team to bully and cajole (and, possibly, a masochist at heart?!) Bob decided to join the local Search and Rescue team to give it just "one last go"!

Bob reports:

Once again, the Wing did itself proud with the organisation of the event. Due to the heavy tasking of many units, there were only 15 teams this year. No surprise that the Gurkhas from 22 Signals Regt won, with the TSW Para team a close second. This is the closest the Wing has been to winning for at least 10 years and it was down to the training which was lead by the new Training WO Mick Stokes. I must say, I found it easy going this year as the weather was just right and the new course was mainly flat or down hill though, sadly, the civilian teams were unable to fire weapons, which was a bit of a downer for the younger members of the team. As usual, it was not pain free - as you can see from the photos - but we put up a good show and came 12-15, so not bad for a bunch of civvies!



Left to Right, WO Mark Farrell, Steve Harris, Gav Fountain, Dan Tranter, Lucy Dean, Dean Mincher, Andy Mitchell, WO Mike Stokes, Sqn Ldr Dom Magenty and Bob McBey



Getting blisters dressed - over 30 people were treated for severe blisters

Very many thanks to all that gave sponsorship and support, Bob raised £445, a magnificent effort! The money will go to a worthy cause - The Donna Louise Children's Hospice.

Two Old Men to the Old Man of Stoer

West Highland Roller-Coaster — Chris Markey

I mentor two young entrepreneurs in the Levant, in Beirut and Jordan, and their enterprises are growing steadily. They are creating jobs, reducing poverty and giving purpose to others in their countries at a time when hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees are flooding into both of their local areas. Having spent decades in the RAF dealing with conflict that is fuelled in part by inequality and lack of opportunity in the Region, I hope in some small way to try and reduce this underlying stimulus to unrest by funding another couple of young entrepreneurs through the Mowgli Mentoring Experience.

I have an ambition to mentor two new entrepreneurs in the next year, funded with my target of £1000; however, the more I raise, the more mentees will get supported. This initial cost should cover the initial selection, training and 'matching' of mentor and mentees. My time and effort throughout the whole mentoring process is given freely. Although the formal mentoring programme runs for 12 months, I have continued to support my current mentees since 2010, and we still see benefit in the relationships.

My brother Peter (also ex-RAF, and turned 70 this year) and myself (in my 60th year) rode 230+ miles from Strathcarron around the mountainous Torridon loop, through Ullapool up to Lochinver via the Old Man of Stoer, and back across Scotland to Dingwall in nine days. Two old men past the Old Man of Stoer...

This is Chris's blog written during the ride and published on the Just Giving website at www.justgiving.com/Chris-Markey



30th September, and I am travelling up to Penrith on the train to start the ride. Beginning to think that it would have been a lot less painful to have simply donated the money it has cost me in train fares and B&B costs!

Taking the bikes on the train from Penrith to Strathcarron (start point) via Glasgow and Inverness tomorrow, includes biking across Glasgow between railway stations, so we will see how coordinated Scottish transport links are!

Second day of the ride after an easy 4 miles to Strathcarron yesterday. Started with a wheeze - my fitness significantly compromised on the first hill(!) by a chest cold picked up last week.

We covered 28 miles today at an average speed of 9.3mph and a maximum of 36.8mph, which gives an indication of the gradients we encountered! Finally reached the small hamlet of Alligin Shuas for the night and look back over Loch Torridon at the savage scenery we rode through.

A very wet 35 miles, average speed 10.3mph, max (downhill with wind in our faces) speed 27mph. Had to cycle a mile over a 1-in-4 hill and back to Gairloch village for supper. Dispiriting, but a hot bath cures many ills.

Dryer today with a few squalls to contend with. Very hilly, with some long uphill drags interspersed with exciting downhill slaloms (hence the speeds). 34 miles covered (despite arriving at our B&B 7 miles before we expected to - need better maps). Average speed 9.6mph, max 42mph!

Broken cloud, very windy and cold. Long 8 mile climb to start, but then largely downhill to Ullapool - great, but we have to climb back up on Tuesday... Ullapool Guitar Festival highlight of the evening - what do you mean you've never heard of it! Jan Akermann (Focus) headlining.

Day 5. Badbea to Ullapool, 31 miles, av speed 10.6mph, max 38.5mph. Loooong uphill start of over 8 miles, followed by long downhill to Ullapool that we have to climb back up on Tuesday...

Day 6. Hardest to date, climbed North out of Ullapool, then past Stack Polleidh to Lochinver (stop for the night). Pushed on to Stoer and the 'Old Man of Stoer' in the title of the ride. Obligatory Kodak moment with a friendly Dutch man, then back to Lochinver.

Wet, wild and windy today. Driving rain into our faces all day, and a body blow when the tea rooms at Elphic, the only one en route, was closed for the Winter. The day was a wet blur and very hard work. Covered 37 miles, avg 9.3 mph, max 34.3 mph - all into a gusting headwind.

Missed the Day 6 stats: we covered 42.1 miles at an average speed of 9.0 mph, and a maximum of 33.5 mph.

Last day - 0630 start, a quick 4 mile blast to the train in Dingwall, a farewell soaking from Scotland. Average speed 15.3mph, max 22.6mph, a good, if wet tailwind! Many thanks to all those who have, and are still, to support us.

RAF Team keeps rotors turning over Afghanistan

First published on www.gov.uk

An RAF team is providing pit-stop-style refuels at Camp Bastion to keep military helicopters in the air over Afghanistan. On front line operations in Afghanistan helicopters are in high demand. The 'rotary wing assets', in military language, are the lynch-pins of tactical mobility, able to operate at much lower heights and speeds than fixed-wing aircraft. In a theatre environment the quick turnaround of aircraft at the pumps is essential. The RAF Tactical Supply Wing (TSW) provides 24-hour aviation fuel support to both UK and visiting coalition helicopters from the flight line at Camp Bastion airfield.



Senior Aircraftwoman Joanna Tomsett refuelling an Army Lynx helicopter

At a moment's notice, the TSW personnel are ready at the Helmand base's aerial gas pumps, or 'bulk fuel installations', to carry out the specialised pit-stop-fast 'rotors turning refuels' (RTRs). Within a matter of minutes an aircraft can be ready to head off on its next flight. On average, the TSW refuels more than 300 aircraft a week, pumping over 300,000 litres of fuel in that time.

In addition to providing refuels from Camp Bastion, TSW personnel are also ready to assist in the recovery of unserviceable aircraft anywhere in the area of operations. Within 30 minutes they can be refuelling or defueling a stranded helicopter in order for it to be transported back to a main operating base.

The TSW comprises 19 personnel from supply, engineering or military transport backgrounds. From senior aircraftmen to officers commanding, all are trained primarily in RTRs, ensuring each team member is capable of delivering this fundamental service.



Thumbs up after a successful Chinook helicopter refuel
[Picture: Sergeant Dale Hunt RAF, Crown copyright]

Senior Aircraftwoman Joanna Tomsett is a supply specialist on her second deployment to Afghanistan; her first with the TSW:

- I am really enjoying TSW," she said. "There are lots of different parts to the job, and that keeps things interesting. Working with the rotary wing I feel a lot more involved in it all.
- We work as a close-knit team on TSW, train as a team in the UK, and then deploy together. The guys are great.!

Corporal Neil Sinclair, a military transport driver, is on his second deployment with the TSW. He said:

- The main job out here is delivering fuel to the aircraft and that takes priority over everything we do. The best thing about the job is actually putting the fuel into the aircraft.



Corporal Neil Sinclair refuelling an American Black Hawk helicopter [Picture: Sergeant Dale Hunt RAF, Crown copyright]

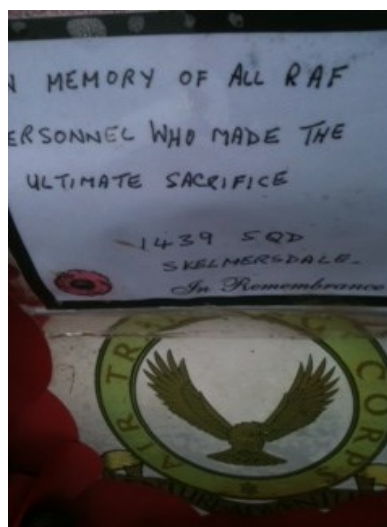
- A lot of people may actually question why they are here in Afghanistan, but you really get a feeling of worth doing this job. We refuel an aircraft and know that it is going back out on operations to support ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) or ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) troops. It really does give you a sense of achievement.

The Officer Commanding TSW Detachment, Supplier Warrant Officer Gaz Barlow, said:

- TSW is all about teamwork. We train together and work together. It is even more important as we deploy as a formed unit ... and it really does work.

1439 Sqn ATC Remembers RAF World War II Veterans

We were delighted to learn, by chance, from a visitor to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire, that a visiting Air Training Corps squadron — No 1439 (Skelmersdale) Squadron — had laid a wreath at the RAF Servicing Commando memorial plinth.



Sincere thanks to the Officer Commanding and all members of the Squadron for their thoughtful act of Remembrance.

Diary Dates

Don't forget to fill in the following dates in your new diaries and iPhones and Androids etc for 2014:

Friday 20th June 2014:

Meet and Greet

Saturday 21st June 2014:

Association AGM

TSW Families Day

Reunion Dinner

Hangar Bash

Further details will follow in the Spring; meanwhile, please note the dates!

TSW Paving Stone at the National Memorial Arboretum

At this year's AGM in June, Bob McBey raised the possibility of erecting a TSW memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA). The committee's investigations revealed that memorials are normally authorised only for sacrifices made in service; it was therefore very doubtful that such a unit memorial would be permitted. However, we were advised that the NMA was currently inviting military organisations and associations to purchase paving stones, engraved with their unit crest, as part of a project to rebuild the entrance to the Arboretum. The cost is £3,000 and would be on a first come-first served basis. The paving stones will be laid by the summer of 2015.

The committee therefore decided to pursue this idea with contributions from both the Association and the Wing. Thus, in order to secure a place for a TSW paving stone in the new Heroes' Square, the Association has already paid a deposit of £1,000.

We now need to raise funds to seal the project. Contributions — large or small — are therefore invited and should be sent by cheque, made payable to the RAFSC&TSW Association, to the Treasurer, Tim Newstead, at the address shown on the last page of this Newsletter. Donations can, of course, also be made on-line using PayPal — just use the Donate button at the Association's website at www.tswsdcoassn.co.uk and show "Paving Stone" as the purpose of donation.

Further information can be found on the NMA website at www.thenma.org.uk/about-us/vision-the-future/paving-stones/

The President's Award 2012

The presentation of the President's Award for the TSW Airman of the Year was made to SAC Sam Fell on 21st May 2013. The ceremony, which was attended by Sam's parents, sister and girlfriend, included presentations by David Orr, Chairman of the Association, and Michael Leeming, JCB's Director & General Manager of Defence Products.



SAC Sam Fell receives the President's Award from Chairman David Orr



Mr Michael Leeming, JCB, presents a memento to Sam Fell



The presentation party

The Citation

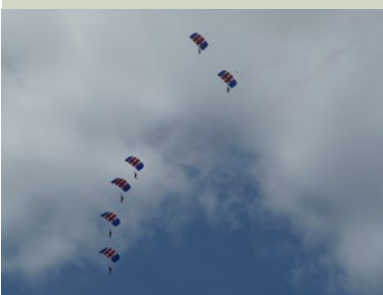
Senior Aircraftsman Fell has performed exceptionally throughout 2012 and his flare, drive and sheer professionalism have provided the continuity and focus for the TSW Operations Room during a period of re-organization and considerable upheaval. Having continually operated at a level far beyond his current substantive rank, Fell was awarded the rank of acting corporal in July 2012 as a result of a process review and a reallocation of tasks within the Operations Room. It was through outstanding leadership and steadfast determination from Fell that the new processes and changes were incorporated and taken forward. Always alive to the importance of his role in the effective delivery of TSW's capability and as the interlocutor between higher formations and the rest of the wing; his skills as a communicator and the quality of his staff work has significantly raised the profile of TSW across Joint Helicopter Command.

His primary role has been the receipt of Joint Helicopter Command tasking and the subsequent allocation of TSW's resources, by effective liaison with all relevant sections. The turnover of manpower within the Operations Room has made his job extremely demanding, requiring skilful management of resources and effective liaison between higher agencies and TSW management. Often having to work outside his remit to cover extended absences, he has been tactful yet forceful, and he has excelled within a high-tempo environment. He demonstrated phenomenal capacity when planning and allocating resources for TSW HERRICK Pre Deployment Training and de-conflicting resources with those allocated to current and planned Exercises, often without the direction of a senior non-commissioned officer. One responsibility he has relished has been to represent the wing at the monthly Battlefield Helicopter Allocation Meetings at Headquarters Joint Helicopter Command where his astute judgment, confidence and effective intelligence has allowed him to foster excellent working relationships and build upon TSW's credibility with Command planning staffs.

Senior Aircraftsman Fell epitomizes the ethos of 'Service-before-Self'...

Senior Aircraftsman Fell epitomizes the ethos of 'Service-before-Self' and notwithstanding his performance in his primary role, Fell has been outstanding in his dedication to his duties as the Deputy Air Cadet Liaison Officer, regularly giving up his free time to continue and develop this great TSW tradition. His character and leadership were specifically tested when he was required to personally take on the planning and delivery of the annual ATC Summer Camp. He accepted the challenge and drove the project through to fruition, delivering a hugely successful camp. He subsequently received plaudits from across the Unit and Staffordshire ATC Region, further contributing to cementing TSW's standing in the local community. Moreover, he is frequently the first to volunteer for tasks such as leading a TSW display team at Plymouth town show during National Armed Forces Day or leading a TSW visit to a local school to deliver a capability demonstration.

His performance has been an inspiration for his peers and seniors alike, he has shown exceptional leadership and has been an outstanding ambassador for TSW. Instrumental in delivering the Unit's continued success on Operations and Exercises, Senior Aircraftsman Fell is a deserving winner of the RAF Servicing Commando and TSW Association President's Award for 2012.



2013 AGM and Reunion Dinner

The 2013 Association Annual General Meeting and Reunion Dinner was held at Stafford on 31st May and 1st June with the now customary 'meet and greet' at the Tillington Hall Hotel on the Friday evening followed by the AGM on the Saturday morning, the TSW Families Day in the afternoon and the Reunion dinner, again held in the Sergeants' Mess, on the Saturday evening.

As we have come to expect, the weekend went extremely well and was very well attended with quite a few new old faces at the AGM and dinner. The Wing Families Day was undoubtedly helped by the good weather – bright sunshine, though a little chilly in the wind – and the unending enthusiasm of the Wing.

All the usual entertainments were available at the Families Day: Chinook rides for families, bouncy castles, the Wing's presentation stand, the dunker (which the Wg WO and Association Member, Mark Farrell particularly enjoyed!), vehicle displays and Sqn Ldr Dom Magenty (OC TFS and Association member) who sang his heart out! The Association enclosure did good business with free drinks on offer while Alan McQuillin and David Orr christened the RAF Servicing Commando bench destined for the NMA at Alrewas. Despite the blustery winds the RAF Falcons Parachute Display Team dropped in with a spellbinding display.

Once again this year the splendid Reunion dinner was taken in the Sergeants' Mess and gave the opportunity for friends old and new to chew over old times!

A huge thanks to the Wing for all their support and help in making the weekend such a great success - we're looking forward to doing it all again next year!

The main points arising from the AGM:

- Thought was given in a moment of reflection for those members of TSW on active duty and Association Members who had passed away.
- Sqn Ldr Dom Magenty, deputising for CO TSW, Wing Commander Andy Males, reported on the recent and ongoing commitments of the Wing.
- The Treasurer introduced the Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2012, which were currently being subjected to an independent check. The funds continued to be in a healthy state and proposals continue to be sought for the use of some of the Association funds. Bob McBey and his Bergathon team were congratulated on their magnificent fund-raising efforts of over £1,800 for the TSW nominated charity, Combat Stress.
- Current paid-up Membership stood at 250, a small increase over the previous year.
- Tim Newstead and Martin Williams were re-elected as Treasurer and Membership Secretary for a further 2 years.

- TSW had very kindly donated a new hard-wood bench, dedicated to the RAF Servicing Commandos, to be sited alongside the newly refurbished RAF Servicing Commando Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas.
- The Association had recently sponsored the replacement of the Wing's rugby team's kit.
- The 2012 President's Award, sponsored by JCB, had been presented to SAC Sam Fell. Chairman David Orr was initiating discussion on how the award might be voted for in future years.
- The Chairman made a plea for articles for this year's Association Newsletter.
- Members were asked to contact any of the Committee if they had any ideas for the 2014 Reunion.
- Vice President, Alan Robinson, previously Chairman of the RAF Servicing Commando Association, had decided to stand down. With the President's, Alan's and the Committee's approval, the Chairman had approached Duncan Grant to take on the role of Vice President Servicing Commandos. Duncan had agreed, and a unanimous vote of the members present sealed the proposal.
- Pauline Luckett passed on apologies from SC members, Ernie and Cynthia Deighton, and reported that they would be attending the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede the following day to lay a wreath commemorating the fallen RAF Servicing Commandos.



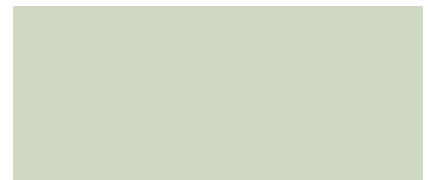
The Operation Frankton (Cockleshell Heroes) Commemorative Walk

In December 2012, David Packman (OC TSW 1975 to 1977) and a few friends walked the 'Frankton Trail' in south west France. They did this seventy years to the very days when the two surviving 'Cockleshell Heroes' started their evasion route after their canoe-borne attack on German ships in Bordeaux harbour.

In many ways, the high spots of the Operation Frankton commemorative walk occurred before it had even started and again at the very end. This was thanks to the close and kind interest taken by many French people in the Charente and Charente Maritime departments of France.

Two days before we started on our 100 mile cross country trek we were privileged to have a visit from M Francois Boisnier and M Guy Forget both of whom were very much involved with the Club Franco-Britannique known as 'Frankton Souvenir' which is devoted to keeping alive memories of the daring attack on Bordeaux docks that took place in December 1942. M Boisnier, a former member of the elite French Parachute Regiment, is the author of the definitive French book on the raid, while he and his colleague still have a very close relationship with our Royal Marines. Only since our walk have we found out that M Boisnier has been awarded a Commendation from the Commandant General of the Royal Marines and an honorary MBE in October 2011 in recognition of his work. More importantly, he and M Forget were both friends of Marine Bill Sparks (David had met him some years ago) who, together with Major 'Blondie' Hasler were the only survivors of the venture. The photograph albums they showed us were truly fascinating and their good wishes made all the difference as we set out for the 100 mile walk.

It was before dawn on 13 December that we assembled on the north bank of the Gironde estuary at St Genes de Blaye. We must have been within a few yards of where Hasler and Sparks came ashore seventy years earlier to the very day.



M Remi Dubreuille, son of the couple who hid Hasler and Sparks, showing the original escape map as used by them

The weather was chill and wet and it was only too easy to appreciate how they must have felt after their exhausting time paddling up the tidal estuary, the attack itself and starting to make good their escape through Vichy-governed France. As our day wore on and the rain became heavier we started to realise that supposedly waterproof clothes were not necessarily so! Towards the end of the day we noticed, for the first, but not the last, time that the more tired we became the more the tracks and lanes seemed to go up hill.

The next couple of days conformed to much the same pattern as the first – anything up to a 30 km walk, lots of rain and undulating countryside with many vineyards and few settlements worthy of the name. At the end of the third day, near the hamlet of Napres, we called in at one of the houses where the original escapees sought food and shelter. The then owner of the house was described by Hasler as 'The Fiery Woodman' on account of his initially suspicious and aggressive reaction to being asked for help. In the event, he and his family were very helpful; this is one of the reasons why there is a plaque on the side of the building recording the escape. It was touching to see that on the ground below the plaque were three fresh poppy wreaths.

On the fourth day, being a Sunday, we felt that we had to mark the occasion properly so, at mid-day, having just crossed the Charente river via the bridge at Vinade (where we spotted another commemorative plaque), we celebrated by enjoying a lunch consisting of the contents of modern, military ration packs kindly provided by the TSW Wing Warrant Officer. The overwhelming consensus was that military people nowadays are looked after much better than in the past. To complete the meal, a local bar owner who was most anxious to be helpful, arrived and handed round some extremely welcome glasses of first class cognac. That put a spring in most people's steps. However, after crossing the Charente flood plain, the countryside became more hilly. This was particularly noticeable the next day – as was the torrential rain.

The gods must have been in a good mood for our final day's walk and the weather was bright and clear. Our good fortune was complemented in wonderful style by the fact that we were joined by M Remi Dubreuille. His mother, who is still living, had risked her life and the lives of her family by sheltering Hasler and Sparks after they had linked into the official 'Marie-Claire' escape line at Ruffec. Not only did M Dubreuille accompany us for the final 15 kms of the walk but he had brought with him some items that had actually been used by the evaders. These were Bill's official-issue life jacket, the silk escape map issued to him and Blondie, and one of Blondie's dog tags (identity discs). We all found it more than a little difficult to express our feelings at actually touching these seventy-year-old reminders of two very brave and determined men.

We finished the walk at the same hotel in Ruffec where Hasler and Sparks met up with members of the Resistance (another site marked by a Frankton plaque). Like them we enjoyed a good meal, starting, as they did, with vegetable soup and, again like them, plenty of red wine accompanied by much reminiscing and a few toasts. The Entente Cordiale was certainly very much in evidence!!

Looking back over the six days, our main thoughts are of ever-increasing admiration for Blondie and Bill who so richly deserved the gallantry decorations - DSO and DSM respectively - they received when they eventually returned to England, and of our very warm gratitude to all those French people who helped them to evade capture. These feelings are tinged with more than a little sadness for their eight comrades who either died of hypothermia or were murdered by the Germans. We, seventy years on, had it easy. No one was trying to capture us; we had clean socks each day, and comfortable beds to sleep in at night.

Finally, thanks most go to all those who have so kindly and generously made donations to the Frankton Walk. The total raised was over £3000. This has been shared between SSAFA Forces Help in Herefordshire and France and Le Bleu et de France, the French veterans support organization.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about the Cockleshell heroes' raid, the book 'A Brilliant Little Operation' by Paddy Ashdown is strongly recommended.



Left to right: Peter Holman, David Lea , Ken Edmonds, Anne Davies, Peter Varko with David Packman kneeling in the front (about all I was capable of doing at that stage!)

Cromo's at it Again!

Neil Cromarty – OC TSW 1997-99

I am now over "official" RAF retirement age, having passed my 55th birthday but, given the ongoing Bergathon antics of Bob McBey, I'm not looking for a sympathy vote ...well, perhaps a little bit! Ten years in civvy street now, living in a lovely Dorset market town with lots of pubs....I have to do something to keep the weight in check. But I'm weak willed, without a target to aim for I rapidly become a couch tatty. So one day, while lying in the bath, I decided that I needed to do a cycle trip to keep fit...better than running, as it saves knacker the joints! Land's End to John O'Groats...boring I thought, everyone does that and, with my family coming from the Orkney Islands, I just couldn't stop at JOG. So, Orkney to Land's End....nah, how about the Northern Isles (Orkney) to a Southern Isle...the Isle of White...boring. OK, Orkney to Gibraltar...but Gib's not an island. OK, Orkney to Sicily...that's it...sorted! What a sad way my mind works!

My next task was to persuade some friends to retire with me and spend a leisurely 3 months cycling through Europe, getting the wives to fly out on EasyJet for visits as we passed through or close to the continent's major cities....this was a good plan and there were soon 3 of us! But age, health, pensions all seemed to be pushing retirement to the right so we decided we'd better go for it but in 3 x 2 week chunks.

In 2010 we flew to Orkney to begin our epic trip: 1 Scotsman, 1 Englishman and 1 Welshman. We did it North to South, so the wind was in our faces and we all wanted to conquer our own nation's mountains; the Cairngorms, the Pennines and the Black Mountains - what joy. We averaged 75 miles a day for 13 days, got very wet around Manchester (no surprises there then) and ended at Portland Bill in the pouring rain.....but very, very happy! They say that preparation and nutrition are everything; a couple of lessons. If a landlady in the Scottish Highlands asks if you want a "special" porridge for your breakfast - say yes. Mine was awash with Whisky - the 600 foot climb out of Altnaharra was, for me, a blur! And, Jelly Babies and Vaseline - that's all you really need but just remember which hand you used! Our efforts helped us to raise £6,000 for Multiple Sclerosis and some small donations to our local (Sherborne) Rugby Club and Skate Park.

The next leg is Sherborne to Turin...over the Alps. We trained hard all through the miserably cold winter of 2012/13 but then had to scrub the trip just a few weeks before departure due to the work commitments of one of my colleagues. Pumped up, I instead agreed to join some of my MoD and Industry colleagues in cycling from Yeovilton to Lymmington - a lovely day and £7,000 collected for a local kids mental health charity. The training for the Turin trip started last week....just cross your fingers the weather is better this winter. And don't worry, I'll be back asking for your money; just a few pounds from many people can go a long way to those who need it - so please keep supporting my middle aged madness.



A Welshman, an Englishman and a Scotsman...



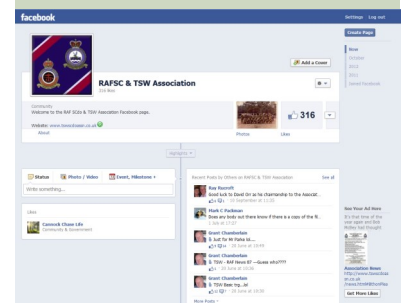
www.tswscoassn.co.uk

Don't forget the Association website which gives all the latest Association news.

The site lists all the current mem-



bers and has links to the Guest Book as well as to other associated sites such as PayPal and the Association's Facebook page.



TSF Germany History

During the Wing's Families' Day and evening, I found myself speaking to members or ex members of TSF Germany. I myself have never had any dealings with them; however, I do know one or two members who were also Tac Suppliers in Germany. Having listened to them speak about their time on TSF, it came to me that this was something of importance that should not be lost - it is part of the overall history of the tactical supplying story.

All of us have a story to tell - if you would like it to be part of our history, please send it to me (Jim Coleman); if possible, with copies of any photographs that you can come up with. If we do not write the stories down now they will be lost forever. I hope to get a good response from as many people as possible. Just as TSW was said to be unsung and unheralded, so too is TSF and I, for one, want to see their story told.

Jim Coleman

RAF Servicing Commando and the Fall of Singapore 1945

Chairman, David Orr, writes:

A few months ago I was contacted by Dr Shirley Wittering, archivist with the Thriplow Historical Society, Cambridge. Out of the blue come gems from the past: she wondered if we would be interested in an account of the fall of Singapore written by a local Servicing Commando. Following technical and administrative interventions by our own historical member, Pete Berry, I was presented with a dozen pages of recollections by the late Mr George Sheldrick, a Servicing Commando who served with 3207 SCU in the far East. Mr Sheldrick is pictured below laying the Burma Star wreath at Thriplow War Memorial in 1995. George Sheldrick died in Feb 2012 aged 89, so I have extracted passages from Mr Sheldrick's account and edited slightly – I hope I have done justice to his intent.



The Liberation of Singapore, 5 September 1945 By Mr George Sheldrick

"We arrived in Burma on Christmas Day 1944 after a journey across India by train, paddle steamer and lorry. In 3 weeks, we started to move south. The Unit was divided into 2 sections of 70 men, each quite capable of running an airfield. The Army would take an airfield then we moved in to operate and defend it, refuelling, rearming and servicing any aircraft that came in. At night they flew back to their bases. When we were ordered to move on, permanent RAF personnel took over from us and this was repeated until we arrived in Rangoon."

..."Our next move was the airfield at Meiktila. This was the main supply route to north Burma for the Japs. The day before we were due to move, I slipped and fell and was injured, so was unable to move out with my mates. Arriving in Meiktila, they found it a shambles, but carried on as best they could under the circumstances. Two days later, the Japs surrounded Meiktila but the Allied Forces held on to the important airfield at Thabukton. This was the only source of supply and was contested with unabating ferocity. The siege lasted 3 weeks and when the Japs retreated I was able to re-join my Unit. The town was in ruins, dead Japs lay everywhere – my mates had done a good job."

..."We finally reached Singapore on 5th September 1945, docked and started to unload. A Brigadier who was in charge of the dock area spoke to us, saying, 'I know what you fellows think of the Japs; but do not do anything to antagonize them as we are outnumbered 100 to 1'.For the first 4 or 5 weeks we were cheered everywhere we went, people were waving and seemed very happy to see us. All entertainment was free, but eventually they said we shall have to start making a living and we had to start paying our way. Singapore started to come alive, Raffles Hotel had a Palm Court Orchestra and dancing every evening. The Lido Swimming Club began to operate and the World's Entertainment Centres: the New, the Old and the Happy World. These competed against each other with various forms of entertainment. The shops were filling up with goods and there was no rationing here and prices were very reasonable. The dances in Singapore run differently from at home. There is no entrance fee and the girls are all employed as dancing partners – they are trained in dancing and must dance with anybody who asked them, but before

you can dance with them you have to buy tickets at the booth, 2 shillings each.”


...”The weeks went by until Christmas day 1945 and a comic football match was staged between Officers, NCOs and Airmen, the teams dressing up for the event. Christmas dinner was a credit to the cookhouse staff, souvenir menus were printed and we had a busy time signing each others’. After dinner the CO made a speech, during which he told us that the Unit was to be split up as there was no further need for the Servicing Commandos. It was rather sad news, after nearly 3 years since we had started training together and most had taken part in the invasion of Normandy. We were absorbed into 67 Staging Post at Kallang on similar work as before. During the Jap occupation they had started to build a new airfield at Changi with the help of POWs (who slowed the work down when possible) so it was only half finished when we arrived. It became operational in early 1946 and so we helped create a new airport which continues to be probably one of the best in the world.”

The RAF Servicing Commandos Remembered



Members who attended the Reunion this year will recall that TSW had very kindly donated a new hard-wood bench, dedicated to the RAF Servicing Commandos, to be sited alongside the RAF Servicing Commando Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas. The bench was installed during October.

The memorial itself was also refurbished earlier this year and the Association funded a replacement plaque which sits atop the memorial. The plaque gives a brief history of the RAF Servicing Commandos from 1942 to 1946 as shown below:



THE R.A.F. SERVICING COMMANDOS

On the 22nd January 1942, Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma, when he was Comdore Combined operations, recommended that a number of Servicing Commandos be created within the R.A.F. In due course, 12 units were formed in the United Kingdom, together with a further 3 units in Middle East Command. They comprised 2,400 Officers, N.C.O.'s and other ranks, mostly volunteers, and all of them skilled tradesmen capable of working on all types of aircraft to keep them flying under all kinds of conditions.

These Commando Units were trained on similar lines to the Army and Royal Marine Commandos. Their prime purpose was to accompany the invasion forces, either to make enemy airfields serviceable, or to make operational the new airstrips built by the Army Airfield Construction Units. On occasion, three or four squadrons of aircraft were kept serviceable until their own ground crews arrived to take over.

R.A.F. Servicing Commando Units: 1942 - 1946
Formed in the United Kingdom
 Numbers - 3201, 3202, 3203, 3204, 3205, 3206, 3207, 3208, 3209, 3210, 3225, 3226.

Formed in Middle East Command
 Numbers 3230, 3231, 3232.

A Servicing Commando Unit comprised between 150 and 170 other ranks with two or three Technical Officers, one appointed as Commanding Officer. It would normally be equipped with about 15 three ton trucks, a jeep for the officers and two or more motorcycles. Most of the time the men lived like nomads, sleeping in tents or their own bivouacs, moving often at short notice. Mobility was the order of the day. Units were involved in the major invasion landings, either going in with the initial invasion forces or giving active support in other ways to keep the aircraft flying.

Three small units were also formed in India and trained on Commando lines: these were called Servicing Parties and each comprised one Technical Officer and 30 aircraft tradesmen. These units were part of the R.A.F. Support Group assigned to help Major-General Wingate's Chindit forces involved in Operation Thursday where landing strips were constructed behind Japanese front line troops in Burma to service Allied and U.S.A.A.F. Fighter and transport aircraft. After the surrender of the Japanese Forces in August 1945, units took over Japanese held airfields, assisted in the evacuation of Allied prisoners of war and undertook other peace keeping duties in Java, Thailand and French Indo-China.

R.A.F. Servicing Parties: 1943 - 1944
Formed in India
 Numbers 1, 2, 3

Countries of Service
 North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Normandy, Southern France, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Thailand, Indo-China

Association Vice-President (Servicing Commandos), Duncan Grant, kindly laid a wreath on behalf of the Association at The Servicing Commando memorial during the Armistice Day commemorations on 11th November 2013.



Diary Dates

Don't forget to fill in the following dates in your new diaries and iPhones and Androids etc for 2014:

Friday 20th June 2014:

Meet and Greet

Saturday 21st June 2014:

Association AGM

TSW Families Day

Reunion Dinner

Hangar Bash

Further details will follow in the Spring; meanwhile, please note the dates!

In Remembrance

We record with sadness the passing of the following members:

3201 SC	Mr George Wride	Died August 2013
3207 SC	Mr George Sheldrick	Died 24th February 2012
3208 SC	Mr Ken Duncan	Died 2012
3209 SC	Mr Arnold "Micky" Finn	Died 1st April 2013
3231 SC	Mr Alec Sharp	Died 17th July 2013
3232 SC	Mr Horace Lawton	Died 22nd June 2013
TSW	Mr Alan Lyon	Died 15th November 2013

Your Committee

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Welfare & Publicity	David Packman,	Tel: 01531-248294	E-Mail: packmanpacky@aol.com

A Final Plea

If you change address—or e-mail address—please do let one of the Committee members above know.

Thank you!