

# The Royal Air Force Servicing Commando and Tactical Supply Wing Association

*Representing a Common Heritage*

## Lockdown Newsletter 2020

### Chairman's Introduction

Welcome to your 2020 Newsletter and we have never released one in such circumstances. Our normal annual cycle of events has been disrupted by Coronavirus, but that is a minor inconvenience compared to the suffering and grief this pandemic is spreading throughout the world. Death, severe illness, unemployment, business collapse, bankruptcy and financial ruin headline the catastrophes facing millions; but down the scale, enforced separation from family and friends, social disruption and feelings of helplessness are equally widespread. 75 years ago this week, people across Europe emerged from the dark hell of war and its consequences, into a changed world of uncertainty; but with a new vision of what really mattered to them. Our Servicing Commandos, having given Hitler a kicking in Europe, were helping restore peace to the Far East. It would have been better to be at home, enjoying the VE celebrations, seeing friends, family, loved ones.....but a job remained and they completed the task. There are some spooky parallels with today, albeit at smaller scale: we've endured common privations, we've put our shoulders to the wheel and heaved together; but there's more to be done. Our Association maintains a foundation from which we can work together, help each other and help people less fortunate. Next time you're standing outside your house banging your Xylophone for the NHS, give your Association a couple of loud bangs. You're worth it.

After 8 years as Chairman of the Association, I'm handing the baton to Johnny Andrews and you can read his potted CV after this. Johnny is a TSW stalwart and a real fuels specialist, a breezy, diligent and good-humoured volunteer who will serve our Association well. He has more ullaige on the age front than I do too! Thank you Johnny – enjoy & cherish!

I write teetering on the precipice of indulgence. "Jump" says my ungracious self; "hightail it down the hubris highway". "Hold!" says my Scots core; "have humility, heaven help us". Either way my excuse would be the great privilege, education, fun and friends I've made as your Chairman. Friends too numerous to list. Reading through the submissions for inclusion in this Newsletter is a pretty good list of friends to the Association – and by default and happy coincidence, a great list of friends to me. Duncan Grant, my predecessor as Chairman and my first OC TSW as I probed the boundaries of legality and taste as a TRA Cdr, writes in sporting a mellow tartan trouser and quality PPE. Thank you Duncan, for the guiding hand at the start of my RAF career – and the guiding hand at the start of my civilian Chairmanship of our Association. I look forward to many more



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moments of over-indulgence and excessive enthusiasms. Alan Matthews, my second OC TSW as I kept the numbers up in the Monday morning bollocking queue outside his door (fancy meeting you here again Gaz Barlow!), writes in with a timely reminder that we won the Cold War; and that Field Supply played a full part in that from its beginnings with TacSF at RAF Wildenrath of blessed memory. In this, the 50th Anniversary year of TSW, remember TacSF predated the Wing by some months....Alan has maintained a long association with the Wing, sponsoring the annual JNCO award. He knew, as did we all who laboured to keep TSW in the Premier League, that it was the JNCOs who were the engine room of the Wing. He too, who started the formal link with the Servicing Commandos and with Pam`s eager help, charmed and chuffed all comers even to this day, 50 years on. In the Officers Vs SNCOs Rugby photo from 1985, you`ll see AP Matthews standing next to DJ Orr. Happy days!



Robin Springett balances the TacSF promotional literature with a piece about the founding of TSW. Robin again, is a man with long lasting links to the Wing & Association, but never more important than 50 years ago when, with his friend and foil John Craven-Griffiths, TSW was made using a new mould. Don`t accept the old way can`t be improved, don`t accept something can`t be done. Find the right people with the right attitude and crack on. It`s the same today and Tom Stevenson provides evidence from Exercise Rollover and from Whaley Bridge. You will all know that our serving brothers and sisters on the Wing are never far from the Coronavirus fight – but that`s a tale for another day.

David Packman, our most enduring and endearing OC TSW, sends good wishes and a literary recommendation. I send David special thanks, for his inspirational commitment to the Association – including his sponsorship of the AOTY award – and a reminder that being an officer and a gentleman need not be mutually exclusive traits; and neither were they invented as a combo by Tom Cruise!

Talking of Tom Cruise, Neil Cromarty, Vice President, continues to contribute to the Association and his piece on the “Memorial Initiative” lets you see where the Memberships generosity has taken us and all should be grateful to him and the sub-Committee driving this work for the energy and enthusiasm they bring to a difficult task. We are going to do this! Cromo also gives us some gardening tips FFS. Bit like me giving dieting advice.

It`s great to see contributions here too from long term supporters, Dave Griffiths, Donnie Cameron, Sam Alford , Stuart McGinlay (great garden effort!) and the exceptionally smart Steve Turner. I`d have made you despair Steve – I`m front left on the Wing Parade photo here from `85:



Andy Spinks writes news of a move to Cornwall from Norfolk; with wider work-related travel restricted. Dino Dash shows some pretty neat 2-wheeled projects (ask Dino if he would allow me the top bunk ever again after an exercise somewhere grim in 1984?). And Air Marshal Sir Archie Agamemnon Badminton-Squash (aka Tigger McTigue) gives us a couple of vids. They are splendid vids. Splendid Steve, splendid.

It's great to hear from Pauline Lockett and Rae Taylor, 2 Associate members whose dedication to our Association is humbling. Their SC fathers must have been great men indeed to foster such unstinting commitment. Enjoying their company and enthusiasm has been a highlight of my Chairmanship. Talking of highlights, I've saved 2 until last.

Were I to thank all who have helped our Association during my tenure, I wouldn't get past Ian Dodds of Air & Ground Aviation, whose generous support (Wessex gate guardian, free flights for Airman of the Year etc etc) is unmatched; or the long list of OCs and COs TSW who worked in office to promote the Association and post-Command to support the Association; or their steadfast Wg WOs, who drummed up support from the young serving airmen and forced them to do stuff for us (..if you can't take a joke.....), who divvied up tasks for the annual reunion week-end between SNCOs, Contract catering staff, Army camp infrastructure, kept the peace with the WOs & SNCOs Mess normal residents and still found time to share their joyful company with us. No, no time to thank them.

Time to thank a man who has done more to keep alive and special, the memory of the RAF Servicing Commandos than any other. Time to thank a man who has bridged the divide in eras (74 years & counting) and educated a successor group of RAF specialists. A man whose energy, loyalty, embrace of hard work, and integrity are an inspiration to behold. Alan McQuillin is not special because he's old. He's not special because he has a good memory and pithy turn of phrase and he's not special only because he fought in WWII as a Servicing Commando in 3210 SC. Alan has given us an example of the grit which drove these men and continues to drive him to spread their deeds and name and now, through our Association, to remember their names and deeds. Alan McQuillin is special because he embodies a spirit that cannot be crushed. Thank you for sharing that spirit with us Alan.



Time finally to thank the Committee for the energy and enthusiasm they have brought to bear on our Associations' works. DC for his innovative, professional secretaryship (have you voted in the e-EGM yet?!). Cliff & Geordie – a magnificent double act building the membership register and reaching out a welfare helping hand to old friends and colleagues in need. Libby for keeping on top of our accounts – goodness knows, we need a magic money tree now like never before! And of course Wayne.....Shelts is like a man possessed, never content with one coup such as the Cenotaph gathering, he instigates battlefield tours, representation at events, parades and parties (!), additional Annual Dinners to ensure all are served geographically, and he has been a driving force behind our most ambitious effort so far – the twin Memorials for TSW and the Servicing Commandos at the NMA. They are a great team and with Johnny Andrews in the Chair, will enjoy more biscuits than they did under my Chairmanship (they were just too slow...).

But my second special thanks, my 2nd highlight, is our Webmaster, Newsletter Editor and sometime Treasurer, sometime assistant Membership secretary, sometime events organiser and font of all knowledge and all round good egg, Tim Newstead. As OC Training Flight in 1984, Fg Off Newstead was a steadying influence across the Wing at a time when it was staffed by maniacs (step forward Gabriel Sexton, step back Scott Muir, step out Bob McKane RIP). I had the pleasure of benefitting from Tim's experience and assured leadership then and I have had the singular pleasure of finding him an even more helpful comrade and friend in my time as Chairman. I can't think of anybody who has given more to this Association over the years. Thank you Tim and It's my round.

That goes for all of you.

Within reason.....

Aye

David



## Squadron Leader John Andrews RAF (Retd)



Some of the Association members will already know me, but for those who don't, I thought I should introduce myself. Known as 'Johnny' by most people, I joined the RAF in Nov 1991 and spent the first 5 years in the flying training system. Once those in authority realised that I'd be safer on the ground, I joined the Supply Branch and it was at this point that my long association with TSW began. Having been suspended from rotary training at RAF Shawbury, I held at TSW until my supply course started. With this course successfully completed, I was posted to Northern Ireland as OC Fuels Flight, where I was responsible for the TSW Detachments supporting Op BANNER. I was then selected for the RLC Long Fuels Course and on completion 9 months later, I was posted to TSW as OC A Fit in 1999. Following a tour on Op PALATINE and various AMF recces and exercises, I moved upstairs as the Ops Officer. Tours at West Moors (Defence Fuels Group), RAF Odiham and Air Command (Fuels Role Office) followed before I found myself back at TSW as OC HQ Sqn in 2008. I was posted to Abbey Wood in 2010,

spending 2 years in the Specialist and Logistic Vehicle Project Team before my final tour as the Senior Logistics Officer in the Military Aviation Authority. I left the RAF in Sept 2014. I then worked as a consultant for 4 years before joining Oshkosh Defense (American spelling!) as the UK ILS Programme Manager supporting the Wheeled Tanker and Heavy Equipment Transporter fleets. I'm looking forward to working with the committee on the various upcoming events and projects. I want to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Chairman for all that he has done for the Association and look forward to a handover at some stage!

## The RAFSC & TSW Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum

Members will doubtless have noticed an increased level of committee activity over the past months. It's not because Wayne Shelton is bored within the Covid confines of his house but simply that a ground swell of feeling resulted in us taking positive action late last year to create a memorial to all those who have and are serving on TSW. This good idea rapidly began to attract other good ideas, limitations, time-windows, costs but also an underlying belief that this was simply the right thing to do. TSW was due to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2020 and the RAF Servicing Commando memorial, already positioned within the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) was, sadly, not standing up to the test of time and is in urgent need of restoration.

By way of a little background, the NMA at Alrewas, Staffordshire is a spiritually uplifting place that honours the fallen, recognises service and sacrifice, and fosters pride in our country. Since planting began in 1997, it has been a special place honouring those who have served, and continue to serve, the nation in many different ways, not just through military service. It's not a cemetery. It's a place of life, represented by the 30,000 trees planted here, where older and younger generations alike can wander and wonder.

We formed a small sub-committee in December last year and met at the Arboretum. As the then RAFSC Association created one of the early memorials back in 2000, they occupy a prime position within the grounds (see picture with the late "Bart" Lawty standing in the background). But due





to growing demand, the NMA officials stated that they could not guarantee keeping the space free from other memorials or indeed, moving the current memorial block to a less prominent position. This original brick covered concrete block with cast plaque is suffering from water, wind and ice damage and the NMA were keen that it be renovated. So, in discussion with the Estate Manager we decided that the best outcome would be for us to utilise the space occupied by the extant RAFSC memorial and copse. Furthermore, recognising the moral responsibility that the Association has to preserve the memory of the RAFSC, we decided that the TSW memorial should be collocated on this same site. We further developed some design principles, mainly that we should have 2 stones, one each for the RAFSC and TSW, so as to emphasise the very different eras in which they served, the complete independence between the units but, importantly, our shared heritage. The two granite stones will stand about 7 feet high, gently turned inwards on a shared stone base, with a small plinth tying us together through our shared heritage. Subsequent discussions with Nick Johnson, a highly respected stone mason who has designed and built numerous memorials at the NMA, led to the final design which will soon, hopefully, be put into production. An artist's drawing of the memorials, together with the words inscribed, is shown on the next page.

Fundraising was launched immediately and what a response! If ever there was a clear endorsement that what we were doing was the right thing then this was it; £1000 in the first 24 hours and over £11,000 to-date. These funds, together with a grant from the Association and one from TSW meant that we were going to be able to fund the memorial so we submitted our application just in time to enable the memorial to be built and dedicated within this, TSW's 50th year (let's just hope that the Covid pandemic doesn't scupper these plans). We were aware that the NMA required funding for memorial and grounds maintenance but had been assured that this was "manageable". What a shock when they told us that, to provide maintenance and insurance in perpetuity, they required £12K up front; the alternative could be 1/20th of this sum plus VAT and inflation payable annually for the next 20 years. So a more expensive solution!

Further discussions rapidly took place and we negotiated a rare dispensation that we could make 2 payments; one at the start of build the other within a year of this date and so avoid any VAT and future inflation.

The question now was how to raise £12K. The committee had already been talking of suggesting a rise in the subs and, after a little modelling, it became clear that a raise of £5 pa, with 80 people paying for 10 years up-front, would allow us to pay the NMA and, effectively continue Association business as normal. A number of the Committee have already paid so if you want 11 years membership for the price of 10 please contact Dave Christophi or Libby MacKinnon as soon as possible **[Please see Treasurer's Note on Page 27]**. We also managed to gain another concession from the NMA. The current policy disallows any individual names being recorded on memorials but the current RAFSC memorial has a plaque listing their dead from WWII. This plaque (see picture) will be refurbished and rightly attached to the new RAFSC stone – a fitting memorial.



Given the compressed timescales, this has been a challenging project but one that we believe is supported by the Association Membership as is, indeed, the right thing to do. We all hope that it will give current and past members of TSW somewhere to focus and reflect on the service they have given and the friends we have lost. And, it will forever put the names of Tactical Supply Wing and the RAF Servicing Commando in a prominent position within a place of national remembrance and importance.

# The RAFSC & TSW Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum



An artist's drawing of the memorials

## RAFSC (Front) – below the Unit badge:

Royal Air Force  
Servicing Commando  
1942 – 1946

In memory of  
all RAF Servicing Commandos

### RAFSC units:

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 3201 SC | 3208 SC |
| 3202 SC | 3209 SC |
| 3203 SC | 3210 SC |
| 3204 SC | 3225 SC |
| 3205 SC | 3226 SC |
| 3206 SC | 3230 SC |
| 3207 SC | 3231 SC |

3232 SC

No1 Servicing Party  
No2 Servicing Party  
No3 Servicing Party

Lest We Forget

## RAFSC (Rear) – below the RAF eagle and motto:

The RAFSC were World War II elite, commando trained units that serviced, maintained, re-armed and re-fuelled Allied aircraft operating from captured enemy or newly constructed airfields immediately behind the front line.

Below this the restored Roll of Honour plaque from the current RAFSC memorial will be attached to the stone.

## TSW (Front) – below the Unit badge:

This memorial  
was dedicated in November 2020  
to the men and women,  
past and present, of  
Tactical Supply Wing  
to celebrate the 50th anniversary  
of the Wing's formation.  
"Support to Strike"

## TSW (Rear) - below the RAF eagle and motto:

"The Tactical Supply Wing delivers fuel support to battlefield helicopters deployed at the front line and, if required, behind enemy lines.

It has served on all recent operations and through its work has significantly increased the reach of our helicopters.

Their contribution is normally unheralded but they are brave and skilful people without whom our helicopters, and hence our ground forces, could not do their job."

Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup KCB AFC ADC  
Chief of the Air Staff 2005

## Central plinth. The words on the small central plinth are:

RAFSC & TSW Association  
Two Units, two eras,  
representing a common heritage.  
Together We Remember





## First in the Field – RAF Germany Tactical Supply Flight

On March 1st 1970 Tactical Supply Flight (TacSF) was established at RAF Wildenrath, predating by some months the foundation of Tactical Supply Wing (TSW) in UK. In contrast to TSW, which was driven by the dynamic and vastly experienced Wing Commander John Craven-Griffiths, TacSF initially existed solely in the shape of Pilot Officer A P Matthews RAF, who arrived in Germany fresh from three years at the RAF College Cranwell, theoretically qualified in the essential disciplines of supply, fuels, explosives and air movements, in reality knowing very little about anything useful, but wearing well-polished shoes. A first tour posting to Germany was unusual, but had apparently been arranged by Sqn Ldr R C (Dickie) Allerton RAF, lately Chief Instructor for Equipment Studies at Cranwell, who was himself heading to HQ RAF Germany to be the staff officer responsible for Harrier Force logistics. How he arrived at the conclusion that Matthews was the man for the job was a mystery, but Dickie later became Director General of Supply as a two star so he must have got things right afterwards.

Matthews pitched up armed only with a copy of a Flight Magazine article describing how this revolutionary new aircraft, the Harrier, would operate in the woods not far from the front line, taking off and landing vertically to deliver death and destruction on the massed ranks of the Warsaw Pact should they dare to step over the Inner German Border on their way to the Channel, where they were expected to arrive after a few days. Pending the appearance of real aeroplanes later in the year, the brief was to think through, establish and eventually crank up and deploy supply support for the Harrier Wing in the field. Er...umm....Compounding the intellectual challenges involved in this task were the distractions inherent in life as an unattached junior officer in Germany, not least the presence of numbers of British Forces Education Service teachers in the Officers' Mess, PMRAFNS nurses at the nearby Wegberg Hospital, and the prospect of eventually being able to buy a tax-free car and range across the Continent using subsidized petrol.



*OK, so how far can you fly after doing that?*

The operations people had really got their act together. The Harrier Wing would comprise three squadrons, Nos 3, 4 and 20, each with 12 aircraft. The plan was for the Wing to deploy in time of war – hopefully before the brown stuff started to fly – to dispersed sites some two hundred miles to the east of Wildenrath. The aircraft would operate from concealed sites where roads or grass strips were available for take-off and landing – it was already clear that vertical take-off and landing with operational loads was not practical and VSTOL (S for short) was the way to go. Each flying site would be supported for fuel and weapons by a Logistics Park a safe distance away. The squadrons would have their own operations and engineering staff of several hundred and be supported in the field by a full Signals Regiment, a squadron of Royal Engineers, an RAF Regiment Field Squadron, Police Dogs, Air Traffic controllers, armourers, drivers, medics, chaplains and, most importantly, caterers; after all, an air force flies on its stomach. Last, and very much least, came the blanket stackers. By then, what had once been the Stores Branch had become the Equipment Branch and then the Supply Branch. Despite the name changes, RAF suppliers were generally regarded as next to useless by superior brevet wearing beings and their technical cronies. Until, that is, the Falklands War graphically demonstrated what we had been telling them all along – that you can't fly without supply – something that the army had understood since Pontius was a pilot. In later years, reinvented as experts in logistics, a term popularized and publicized by the smart red and green trucks of Eddie Stobart, suppliers came to be seen as fairly useful, if rather boring.

I digress, but having got that off my chest, back to the business of Tactical Supply. To be fair, the equipment staff back in the Ministry of Doom had already had some ideas of their own and had worked out that the Harriers would need petrol, bombs and spare parts. However, given that the last time the RAF had deployed fixed wing fighting aircraft into the field was in World War 2, there was precious little corporate knowledge around about how to do it now. The RAF Servicing Commandos had been disbanded in 1946 and were not to get together again until their first reunion at RAF Stafford forty years later. Anyway, refuelling Harriers from jerry cans wasn't going to work and 60lb rockets had gone out with the Hunter, so lessons learned from operating Typhoons from FOBs would be interesting to listen to but of limited value in the high tech 70s – oh really?



*Impressive or what?*

The higher paid help had worked out that a flight of twelve good men and true plus an officer for show should be able to do the business, so TacSF was established as part of the RAF Wildenrath Supply Squadron and comprised one plt off, one FS, two sgts, four cpls and five SACs. How they came to this number was a mystery, but all had to be able to read and write, be suppliers and movers and qualify as HGV drivers. OC Supply, Sqn Ldr Brian Cardy, kindly lent TacSF two sheds in the old Air Stores Park, next door to the blankets and mattresses of Domestic Supply Flight, which was later to burn down rather spectacularly. Over the next few weeks Matthews, whose head was already

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*...so lessons learned from operating Typhoons from FOBs would be interesting to listen to but of limited value in the high tech 70s – oh really?*

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aching from the thinking bit, not to mention the alcohol-fuelled social whirl that was an RAF station in those days, was joined by people who knew stuff: FS Mick Broadbent, Sgts Dave Gutteridge and Vernon "Blue" Nuttall, Cpls Geoff Harvey, Bob Owen, "Scouse" Scott and Bernie Clarke, and SACs Ken Khan, Smokey Lavocah, Phil "Spud" Laker, Herbie Grant and Mick Hogarth. With its four black faces prominent, TacSF was, in those pre-PC days, quickly dubbed "The Coon Platoon" – a title it wore with good humour and genuine pride. Before long, its acquisitive skills earned it a further nickname – "Matthews Marauders", or "those thieving b.....ds".

The job was apparently quite straightforward and supposedly well within the compass of 12 men. At base they were to store, maintain and train with fuels equipment, fly away packs and field equipment for the Harrier Wing. In the field, deploy said equipment to support intensive war-fighting flying operations, plus transport and issue air weapons and fuel from railheads and NATO depots to flying sites. No problem – not! At around this time, C-G began to put his TSW dream into material form, assembling numbers of officers and men exceeding three figures to serve tea cups of aviation fuel to a few choppers – now that's what experience does for you.



Over the next few weeks the equipment and vehicles poured in: scores of 10,000 gallon pillow tanks, pumps, filters and miles of flexible and rigid piping; hundreds of tents, camp beds, elsan toilets, hessian and other supposedly essential items for living in the field; thousands of aircraft spares; shiny new 3-tonne Bedford RLs, some with HIAB cranes, and assorted MT, including 1000 and 3000 gallon bowsers and Eager Beaver rough terrain forklifts. It quickly became clear that the 12 men of TacSF would not be able to cope with these multiple and varied tasks at base, let alone in the field, so the fly away packs, once assembled, were handed over to the squadrons, who were happy to take them, presumably because they could pillage them when not deployed. However, the squadrons resolutely refused to take their allocations of field equipment, claiming lack of storage space and manpower, so for the moment TacSF was lumbered.



*Matthews Marauders*

Training was an additional burden – qualifying for HGV, HIAB and rough terrain forklift operations took time and this was exacerbated when the MT Establishment Team in its wisdom decided that it could save money by substituting 5-tonne trailers for prime movers. OC TacSF was reduced to tears of frustration when trying to argue that trailers were just a bloody nuisance for field operations, let alone a menace in the hands of part-time, newly-qualified HGV drivers. When TacSF's 12 Eager Beavers arrived no-one on the station knew how to work them, so the OC persuaded the RCT to take TacSF under its wing and teach them how. TacSF personnel were then required to instruct MT personnel who could then in turn certify TacSF as competent operators. In the interim, someone had stolen a Massey Ferguson tractor for some basic off-road training, but how to start it? "Don't worry sir" piped up Bob Owen "Give it here, I used to work on a farm...." It was about this time that the enthusiastic but generally useless pilot officer demonstrated his

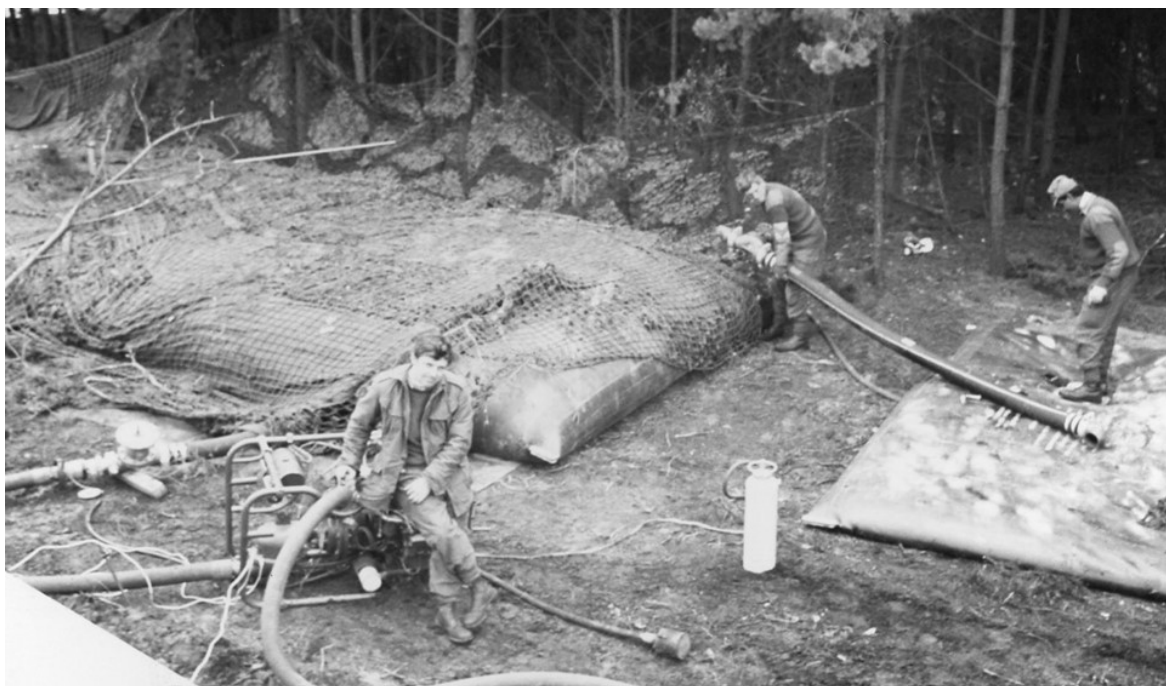
newly-found expertise in cross country forklift operation by dropping a steel pallet squarely on the head of SAC Grant Herbie (see picture below), god bless him, just shook his head, smiled and wandered off in a daze muttering. Shortly afterwards, the pilot officer, apparently undaunted by his failed attempt to assassinate Herbie, tried to drive the Massey Ferguson out the front of a C-130 from the inside and was only foiled by a couple of tie-down chains that the lads had whipped into place when they saw what and, more worryingly, who was coming up the ramp towards them. "Er.. I think the brakes are fading.." was the best excuse the officer could manage".



*Cpl Geoff Harvey and a few Pillow Tanks*



Then there was the fuels bit – no-one knew how to assemble or operate a pillow tank and the associated kit, let alone set up a fuel farm in the field. There were no field fuels courses or specialist qualifications in the RAF at the time, so everything was done by trial and error, but luckily some of us had been brought up on Meccano and Airfix kits. Early field trials with the tanks ended with fuel residue that couldn't be sucked out by the pumps being squeezed out and drained into surrounding environment – and then someone said "What about the Wasserschutzgebiet?". "What about the wazza what?" "You know – those road signs showing a tanker above some wavy lines; apparently you can be prosecuted for spilling more than five litres of fuel into the ground." "Bugger that for a game of soldiers – don't the Germans know we're here to protect them?" "Hang on, I'll talk to the army – they'll know what to do." "Yes mate, you need to put your tanks in a bund with a rubber liner." "What's a bund?" "It's an effing big 'ole – get the sappers to dig them for you, they like playing with their boys toys and stuff – but don't forget to mop them out when you've finished." "Thanks mate – is there anything else we should know?" "Er, have you heard of cladosporium resinae?" "No, the RAF doesn't do sexually transmitted diseases..."



*Wot, no bund? Cpl Geoff Harvey, Sgt Dave Gutteridge and SAC Ken Khan work it out*

"OK" said the Station Rock "what do you know about working and living in the field, and how many of you have fired a gun in the past three years?" Blank looks from the hundreds of men soon to be sent to within Kalashnikov range of the 3rd Shock Army, not to mention hugging distance of Spetsnaz and local sleepers. "Right then, you point this end at the enemy...." "Now, moving on, the subject is camouflage, so let's start with the vehicles. You deploy your camouflage nets on your trucks like this and when you get to the other end you spread them out like so – any questions?" "Yes Flight, we don't have any camouflage nets". "Don't get stroppy with me son, just use your initiative and hide behind a bush." "What about infrared, Flight?" "Oh dear, there's always one smart arse, isn't there sir!"

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*...then someone said "What about the Wasserschutzgebiet?"*

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"Right lads, I've just had the hot poop. Our first field deployment is in a couple of weeks and TacSF will be first in and last out. Hurrah!" "That's great sir. By the way, what do we wear?" "Waddayamean, what do we wear? What you're wearing now – hairy blue and SD hat, oh and your raincoat if the weather's bad." "Isn't there any combat kit or whatever it's called – you know, the green stuff that the pongoes wear?" "Ah, I see what you mean – leave it with me." In those days communication between formations was by signal and you had to write your message down on a signal pad and pass it to the Station Communications Centre. Message reads: **PRIORITY. From OC TacSF RAF Wildenrath to HQRAFG. This unit non-operational due to lack of suitable field clothing.** One hour later OC TacSF is standing in front

of OC Supply's desk for an interview without coffee. Brian Cardy was a gentleman and didn't often need to use colourful language, but he was able to explain in words of one syllable that pilot officers do not send unauthorized signals to higher formations and, surprisingly, do not have the power to declare NATO assigned flying units non-operational. "Right sir, I promise not to do it again." "Absolutely, or you'll have to send the next message by carrier pigeon from OC WAAF Knickers, RAF Saxa Vord". "Message received and understood, but...er...um...what about some combat kit?" "Oh that. Well there isn't any". "Winter clothing...?" "There isn't any!" "I can see you're in a hurry to go and play squash sir, so what do we wear?" "You're supposed to be an officer Matthews, you bloody well sort it out!!!" "Oh, and by the way, stop calling your airmen by their first names - it's bad for discipline and they'll just take advantage of you. Before you know it, they'll be calling you Boss or something equally inappropriate". "Righto Boss..er..sir."

Back to the Petersholz site with tail between legs. "What do we do now, Flight?" "I know, Boss, why don't you talk to the army, they're always keen to help?" "Good idea, Flight, where's my carrier pigeon?" "Hello there, you wouldn't have any spare combat kit would you?" "We'd love to help you boys in blue become the boys in green, what, but we can't I'm afraid. You should have called last week - we've just changed our old green stuff for this new DPM gear, and very smart it is too." "If you don't mind me asking, what have you done with the old green stuff?" "Oh, I think it's been sent to a disposals depot somewhere in the rear area...wait a mo, I'll ask the QM." Some days later, Plt Off Matthews, recent graduate of the Cranwell finishing school for officers destined for fame and glory is to be found, along with Cpl Bob Owen, in a rat infested semi-derelict warehouse somewhere in Germany, sifting through piles of cast-off clothing like a pair of gypsies. Eventually they return to Wildenrath with a 3-tonner load of rags in various shades of green from which they assemble a hundred or so sets of "combat clothing" and so they went to war dressed to kill.



*The first field deployment – TacSF takes the lead*

The first exercise was to be a shakedown in a secret location to help pilots find their aircraft and point them in the right direction. TacSF would outload some of its pillow tanks, bolt things together and pump fuel into them for the first time. There were no real disasters, other than polluting the ground with a few hundred gallons of aviation fuel. After two weeks we returned to base, overfed, unwashed and desperate for a beer or three. Striding into the Officers' Mess looking fetching in faded green, OC TacSF was spotted by his girlfriend and future wife. "There you are - where have you been - up near the front line?" "Nah..t'other side of the airfield. Give us a kiss." "Oh brilliant, now go away, you smell like a skunk!"

Gradually the Harrier Force came together and most of the pieces of the jigsaw were beginning to fit and where they didn't, we cheated. Matthews' Marauders could now be identified by their John Wayne-style yellow cravats manufactured by willing spouses. The OC went to a guest night wearing a yellow cummerbund and was promptly thrown out by the Station Commander. Eventually, the big day came and the Force was to deploy to the forward area on its first major field exercise and the TacSF convoy was to lead the charge. Scheduled to depart at 0600 hours, TacSF was missing its leader and was about to suffer major embarrassment, but OC Supply, there to wave them off, played a blinder. Racing up to the Mess, he discovered still in the land of nod, having set his brand new state-of-the-art digital clock-radio to wake him up at 0500 to the strains of BFBS, not realizing that BFBS opened up at 0700. TacSF were off chocks on the dot and OC Supply's parting gesture was a packet of biscuits thrown into OC TacSF's 3-tonner with a cheery "and there's your breakfast". That's leadership.



The deployment, the very first of its kind, took place in great secrecy and we were not allowed to tell our loved ones where we were going or how long we would be away. "Oh", said mine, "that'll be Paderborn then". "How on earth do you know that?" "Mrs Smith told me." The first convoy – ours - slipped stealthily out of Wildenrath and headed north-east up the autobahn. Somewhere near Dortmund a shiny black Zil limo drew alongside the OC's 3-tonner and the be-medaled Soviet officer in the back saluted smartly, smiled and sped away. We didn't know the Russian for "we know what you're doing", but presumably Soxmis (Soviet Military Mission) had been talking to Mrs Smith too.

This first deployment was a lot of fun and the TacSF lads gave it their best shot, not least with the camouflage business. A Wessex helicopter was put up to see if the ops staff could find the Logs Park – they couldn't, so the OC was called to HQ. "Why isn't the Logs Park where it's supposed to be?" "It is". "Oh no it isn't." "Oh yes it is." "OK, show us on the map – I suppose you can read a map, not being a pilot?" "It's right there, on the grid ref, and the Wessex tail no is....and you were wearing....as you hung out of the door." "OK, we'll take your word for it, but make sure we can see you next time!"



*The first field deployment – TacSF takes the lead*

There were lots of Army people around in Germany then and most of them didn't have much to do until Winter, when they all went off to Bavaria for skiing – er, winter warfare training. So, the Queen's Regiment asked if they could attack us – just for fun, like. "OK troops, this is about the Rules of Engagement - this is what you do - if you see anyone you don't recognize you point your gun at them and shout "Halt, hands up – password." You do this three times and if they don't give you the password you call for the guard commander. Got it?" "Got it Mr Mainwaring." Some time later Mick Hogarth appears with a face like thunder. "What's up Mick?" "What's up, what's f...ing up? I just tried to stop some pongoes in one of those little tanks. 'Hands up - password' I said. 'F... off' they said and tried to run me over with their little tank. It's not fair."

This was clearly a major crisis of morale – something must be done. Later that night the OC leads a TacSF patrol out and finds the owners of the little tank in a nearby barracks, where they let the tyres down on all the vehicles they can find. Unfortunately, they are spotted and the yellow cravats are a dead give-away. Retribution is not long in coming – at first light in fact. It's a decent scrap and the Logs Park wins, two pongoes captured to one rifle lost. Finally, the young Queen's officer calls time and summons . "Righto old boy, let's call it honours even, but before we go, I have a complaint to make – your men shouldn't have let our tyres down – it's quite dangerous and a pain to pump them back up again. I want you to punish the culprit – we know who he is – a black man." Step forward the Coon Platoon. "Alright, you win" sighs Rupert.

It wasn't all fun and war games though. Sometimes TacSF found itself in the shit – literally. Part of the joy of being responsible for everybody else's field equipment was getting all the tents and stuff back at endex. This usually meant handling wet and dirty canvas, repairing broken frames and replacing missing accessories. The team usually bore this burden with customary fortitude but on one occasion it was just too much. Unloading a 4 Sqn truck after an exercise, one of the lads got a face full of the brown stuff when he lifted off the tailgate what turned out to be a full Elsan. Oh dear, another crisis of morale and leadership not covered in The Janet and John Book of Officer Training. As our American cousins would have it "No shit" - the problem was sorted by the offending Elsan being deposited outside OC 4 Sqn's office, who, to be fair, was only a little bit pissed off to start with and eventually took the point. This incident was the catalyst for a TacSF protest movement which ended happily with the sqns being obliged to take responsibility for their own field equipment - and shit.



As the Harrier Force cranked up towards declaration of operational readiness and the inevitable NATO Tactical Evaluation, deployments became more and more realistic and stressful. It was now time to trial the weapons outload master plan, which involved trains full of weapons travelling from the RAF stockpile at Bracht near the Dutch border to a railhead in the forward area. There, the 12 good men and true of TacSF would unload the trains using their shiny new Eager Beavers and HI-ABs and move the bombs and rockets into covert storage areas near the flying sites.

At the same time we were supposed to be setting up and operating the pillow tanks. This required a handful of MTDs to shuttle 3000g bowsers between the NATO pipeline terminal at Bramsche and the Logs Parks. Undaunted by the scale of the task, TacSF and friends got stuck in, but eventually the strain began to tell and it was an MTD who cracked first. SAC Driver to OC TacSF: "That's it – I've had enough of playing soldiers – I'm not doing any more runs." "Don't be like that – we still need a lot more fuel." "I'm too tired – I'm not doing any more." "Do another run – that's an order." "Right then, I'm putting my vehicle U/S." As the angry and rather irrational young officer drew back his fist to put the MTD U/S, as if from nowhere Blue Nuttall slipped between the two and said "You really don't want to do that, sir, do you? Why don't you let me handle this?", thereby saving faces and careers in one easy movement. That's leadership.



*SAC Herbie Grant – scourge of the Queens Regt – dressed to kill*



*Railhead offloading*

Meanwhile, the lads were busily shuttling bombs around and this operation continued into the night. "Boss – can we use our headlights?" "Fraid not – the Russians might see us." "OK, if you say so – ooops, there goes another tree." By endex, the EBs looked much the worse for wear – smashed light clusters, bent mudguards and interesting paint jobs – and the troops weren't much prettier. On return to Wildenrath they were taken to MTSS for servicing – the vehicles that is. Seconds later "Sir, phone call – it's the MTO – and he's not happy." The MTO was old school, where a scratch to a vehicle meant an FMT3 Accident Report and a unit enquiry. "You f---ing young idiot, what have you done to my shiny new EBs – you've trashed the lot – I'll have you court-martialled for this – you...you...you bloody wrecker!!!" Well eventually the MTO was persuaded to see the light and join TacSF on its next jolly, by which time he had generously conceded that it might be a good idea to manufacture some protective grilles for the lights and remove all the mudguards – and accept that the EBs were designed for messing about in the woods and not lining up in neat rows in the MT yard.



The RAF MT way of doing things contrasted starkly with that of the army. On one occasion, Ken Khan had the misfortune to see his pillow tank-laden Bedford RL slide off a forest track and land on its side in a ditch. "Oh dear, this means an FMT3 and disciplinary action – I might even lose my HGV licence and be sent back to SCAF – wait a minute, that's not a bad idea." A few minutes later, a big green Scammel wrecker rumbles past. " 'Allo mate, need a hand?" In a jiffy the RL is back on its feet, new battery and other bits and the REME trundle off, "Wait a minute, what about the paper work and stuff...?" "No worries mate, we don't bother with any of that bullshit – it's all part of the service." It must be said that the Army – signallers, sappers, loggies, REME and all – were always ready to help and not only did they fix our bent trucks, they let us drive their tanks sometimes (when we had told them that we had lots of big tanks of our own) and they took us skiing – er, gave us winter warfare training.



*Cpl Bernie Clarke – Eager Beaver wrecker*



*MTD at work*

By 1971 the Harrier Force was fully operational and proved it to the general satisfaction of the NATO Taceval Team, despite OC TacSF doing his best to ruin it for everyone. "You see that aircraft over there?" says the Taceval man. "Ah, you mean the Argosy on finals". "Yes, that one – well it's got a fine spray coming out behind it". "Oh, don't worry, it's probably just dumping fuel – the Argosies are a bit old and knackered". "No, you idiot, this is war and that's a Russian aircraft". "What?" "It's spraying chemicals!!" "Eh?.. Oh, I see what you mean...er...umm....ah, got it....GAS!GAS!GAS!" "Shouldn't you have put your respirator on first.....?"

Operational methods evolved, aircraft and equipment improved and the troops became better trained and more experienced and the Harriers – revolutionary in concept and unique in practice - showed their worth in Germany and ultimately around the world, not least in the Falklands War. We were far from perfect and, by the standards of later generations, had a long way to go to become a truly tactical war fighting force. It took a long time to persuade people that they didn't all have to have personal 12x12 tents, camp beds, electric lighting and all the comforts of home and even then, many never really relished the idea of getting cold and wet, suffering constipation and piles and smelling like a polecat.



The Harrier was brilliant, the concept novel and the cause worthwhile, but without the people it all meant nothing. They learned to become soldiers as well as airmen and gave the RAF, which had largely operated in the relative comfort of fixed bases since 1946, a core of men and women who were prepared to rough it and tough it out to get the job done. The tactical suppliers – Flight and Wing – went on to prove their worth through the Cold War and beyond. Many became addicted to the business and returned time and again to field operations and even the clueless young officer who arrived knowing nothing went on to command TSW, still knowing nothing.

At the time of writing, it is 50 years to the day that the Royal Air Force Germany Tactical Supply Flight was established; it no longer exists, neither do many of the fine people who made it tick, nor does the RAF Harrier, RAF Germany or RAF Wildenrath, where, ironically, a German company now tests the trains that operate on the Brighton line. If you stand on East Croydon station, they whistle through every couple of minutes and it is difficult not to think back with a little pride to that other station where it all began.



Pilot Officer A P Matthews RAF (Retd)

1 March 2020

## Rae Taylor

Hope you and those close to you are all well. I'm OK but already feeling pretty isolated, but there again living alone probably has its advantages in reducing the risks...

I have done more on piecing together my Dad's (Ben's) wartime story and put together a presentation (using PowerPoint) entitled "LAC 1694313 Taylor B, RAF Servicing Commandos – My Dad in WW2" which I gave to our local History Society, an educational group for older people in the village and to the Kirriemuir Probus Club. The presentation included a couple of sound clips from the recording of my Dad practising telling his own story of his part in the Normandy landings to his Rotary Club. The Probus Club meeting was particularly interesting as there were two RAF WW2 veterans in the audience. One was surprised that he had never heard of the SCs at all, and the other said he had come across them while he was in the Far East but had not heard of them before or since.

I now intend using my enforced isolation to incorporate all of my commentary as sound clips into the PowerPoint presentation so that I can make a DVD that is then complete in itself and can then be more widely distributed - I'll keep you posted on that.



## The 2019 TSW Families Day

On 29th June 2019 Tactical Supply Wing held their annual Families Day event. Throughout the day there was a range of activities in order to raise awareness and money for local and military charities that TSW support. The total amount raised was £1,120.44. As a result of the activities on the day a total of £200 was donated to the RAF Benevolent Fund which supports a wide range of serving and veteran RAF personnel. The Staffordshire Search and Rescue Team received £250 and the remaining £670.44 was donated to Katherine House Hospice in Stafford, who have a highly skilled team of dedicated volunteers and specialist care workers that provide end-of-life care to residents from within the local community. Overall, the day was a resounding success and enjoyed by all who attended.



**Presentation of the cheque to Katherine House Hospice**

## Dino Dash

Trying times which we find ourselves in and, fortunately, I'm still working due to my role as I have 60 drivers to watch over around the UK & Europe. I'm also busy in the garage looking after my toys, including an 8 year restoration on the red one.

Hope all Wing members present and past are keeping safe.



## Andy Spinks

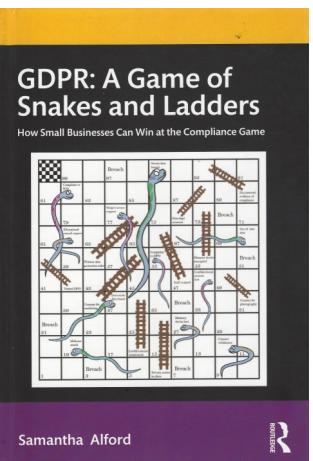


Penelope and I are thankfully healthy at present and we hope that that continues. We are now in our 'new' home in Cornwall (although some of you will understand that moving from Norfolk may not have been my first choice!) but we are fortunate to have some space in which to keep social distance during the lockdown. A fairly recent photo is attached, showing how much greyer my hair has become. I am no longer working in the Middle East but have set up a consultancy firm to help a couple of former colleagues when they need some assistance. Sadly the travel element of this has stopped for now but I hope to get back to occasional work overseas when the situation allows. I continually think about – and admire - what the Forces are doing, although it is frustrating to see RAF people at work on the News but described as 'Army'! No doubt the Wing is very busy assisting JHF in the background or perhaps directly providing support in the Stafford area. I wish all those deployed or working with the NHS, emergency workers and essential workers all the best – Penelope and I greatly appreciate everything they are doing.

## Sam Alford

Sam Alford (Tricker) had her first solo book "GDPR: A Game of Snakes and Ladders" published just before the lock down. She is keeping busy writing a weekly blog on Cyber Matters, leading webinars (keeping data safe in lockdown) and helping the local Chamber of Commerce keep businesses in the local area supported at this difficult time. Many on TSW know my other half Tom as well from his time at Lipa and 24 Air Mobile and of course MQs at Stafford and our son Ken is a "TSW baby". Tom is busy working from home in his garden office and Ken (now 19) has moved in with Granny to keep her company while she isolates.

I know GDPR can be a dull subject but it is topical and even got into the Downing Street briefing last week! I don't want to teach grandma to suck eggs but some of our members are probably in the "too trusting" category and therefore most at risk from scammers.



## Alan "Mac" McQuillin

Many members will remember Mac McQuillin – ex 3210 Servicing Commando and now aged 96 – for his dedicated support for the Association and his annual visits to the Reunion at Stafford. He writes:

Much like many others on lockdown, I make one trip to my local town (Cirencester) weekly, otherwise visits to our very good local shop. I have been re-reading the Servicing Commando books and Tim's paper to the RAF Historical Society (2011). There have also been several interesting programmes on TV of World War One and Two, the Vietnam war and other historical programmes. Most days I manage to get outside into the garden; my excellent neighbour cuts the grass.

Away from lockdown, I had three cards last Christmas from three pupils at the College de St Louis at Carbourg, France. They are sending cards to all World War 2 allied veterans. And now a quote, from the book "Spitfire" by Patrick Bishop: Flight Lt Farish, engineering officer of 72 Sqn, at Souk-EI-Arba airstrip, North Africa: "I came across these RAF Commandos, rugged mechanics who kept airstrips running before the squadrons' own arrived. These men are different from the average RAF airmen, much more independent and "don't give a damn" attitude. They are tough too and I like working with them!



## 2019 AGM



The 2019 Reunion Dinner and AGM was held at Stafford on 28th and 29th June. The events were very well attended, with 80+ members and friends sitting down to dine in the Sergeants' Mess on the Friday evening. The main points arising from the AGM were as follows:

- The Chairman welcomed Members and passed on thanks to TSW for their support for the weekend's events.
- Thought was given in a moment of reflection for those members of TSW on active duty and Association Members who had passed away.
- CO TSW, Wing Commander Tom Stevenson, reported on the recent and ongoing commitments of the Wing.
- The Treasurer introduced the Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2018. It was agreed that the Newsletter would be the main vehicle in future for the dissemination of the Association's financial report. Thanks were offered to Libby MacKinnon for her work and commitment in taking on the role of Association Treasurer.
- Current paid-up Membership stood at 277 with further applications pending.
- The newly appointed Events Secretary, Wayne Shelton, gave a comprehensive overview of past and future events. Thanks were given to Wayne for his tremendous efforts in organising all the events for Association members.
- David Packman had decided to stand down as Welfare Secretary; thanks were given to David for his continued effort and support over a number of years. This role would be taken over by Geordie Lumsden.
- Duncan Grant would be standing down as Vice President and Neil Cromarty had agreed to replace take on this role. Chairman David thanked Duncan for his valuable contribution and commitment to the role and also to Neil for agreeing to continue in the role.
- It was agreed that Sarah Bosworth and Chris Ryan would join the committee as female representative and Merchandise Member respectively.
- Chairman David spoke of the good relationship and links that the Association had with TSW and thanked them for their continued support and enthusiasm.
- Pauline Lockett, on behalf of the Servicing Commandos, thanked Duncan Grant for everything he had done in support of the Servicing Commandos and the Association.
- Wg WO, Gaz Barlow, thanked the Association for its continual support to the Wing.
- It was agreed that a link would be established from the Association website whereby members could submit stories of events that had occurred during their time on the Wing. This would provide a repository of material to assist in the continuing production of the book on the History of TSW by Jim Coleman.
- All those present were thanked for their attendance at the AGM

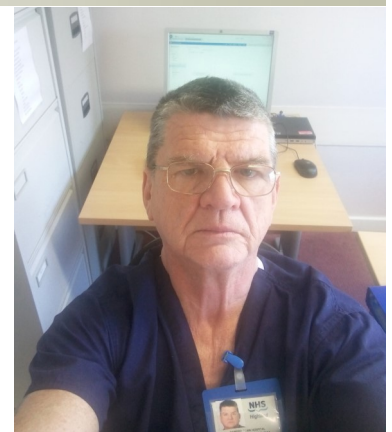


## 2019 Reunion Dinner



## Donnie Cameron

Out of retirement and back at work. Avoided the clap in Belize so do not give it to me now. Save it for all those essential workers driving trucks, serving in supermarkets and working in care homes. Anyway we have so far gotten of very light compared to the guys in the south.





## Exercise ROLLOVER — December 2019

MOD Stafford was the location of Exercise ROLLOVER which would involve not only personnel from TSW, but also all branches of the local Emergency Services. This included the Police Service, Fire brigade, Paramedics and Air Ambulance. The Exercise was used to test the ability of TSW personnel to respond in an emergency and allow the Emergency Services to exercise and meet their training objectives.

The scenario was that a Tactical Bowser vehicle carrying armed military personnel had overturned leaving casualties trapped inside, and an aviation fuel spill from the tanker. The exercise was then split down into three phases. This allowed each organisation to take control, and deal with their area of expertise whilst maintaining communication and co-operating with all other Services involved. For many personnel from



TSW, this was the first time they had worked alongside members of the Emergency Services, giving a valuable insight into how each Service operates in a situation of such magnitude.

TSW's role in this scenario was as SMEs in dealing with the fuel spillage from the rollover. This involved military personnel deploying major spill kits, closing Pen-Stock valves (to protect the water in nearby water courses) and creating a cordon to prevent any danger to other personnel. We were also able to assist the Emergency Services in matters of first aid and, where directed, assist in any other capacity needed.

The exercise was highly successful in what it set out to achieve. From a road safety point of view, it highlighted to TSW personnel the implications and dangers that could arise from driving recklessly in a Bulk Fuel Carrying Vehicle (BFCV) and how to react in an emergency. It also strengthened the working relationship between TSW and the local authorities, giving all a valuable insight into each other's working practices.

*...then someone said "What about the Wasserschutzgebiet?????!"*



In conjunction with this exercise and the aim of highlighting the consequences of a BFCV rollover, MT personnel have been enrolled onto an Anti-Tank Rollover course provided by the International Road Safety Training team. The course gives personnel a valuable insight into how easily a BFCV can be rolled and the skills on how to avoid a potential rollover.



Looking forward to Road Safety initiatives for next year, it can only be beneficial to work closely again with the local authorities in exercises such as Ex ROLLOVER.



## Neil Cromarty



Checking over the Horse Chestnut I planted when at Stafford - so about 20 years ago . I've kept it in a pot a trimmed the roots ever few years - and I love it...see photo. And the second is my first venture into vertical gardening - a piece of old drain pipe with the end blocked with cut down plant pots and held on a trellis with coat hangers. Hopefully, I'll get a few slug free strawberries off these.



Hey ho - back to polishing blades of grass.

Always happy to swap tales of activities in the lockdown times - I could go into the work I'm doing in my recently acquired 1973 VW T2 Camper Van but I'll keep that for another day.

Keep smiling and stay safe.

Cheers

Cromo



## Op Garden Rescue - Stuart McGinlay

My next door neighbour has been unable to work in his back garden due to various reasons. So while on furlough over 3 days, 14 hours ish, I did it for him. I needed a project, no charge, and he's chuffed to bits!

Regards, Stuart McGinlay



Before...



...After

## Duncan Grant

### Another Type of PPE ?!

DIY tree pruning thanks to COVID-19! Danger is still a candidate for A and E!

Who's the man behind the mask?!

A man from the 80s!

The hi-tech approach to tree pruning...!

Smart safety boots too!

Hope you are all keeping well.



## Tim Newstead

All is well here. We are actually quite enjoying the lockdown, despite its limitations (we consider ourselves very fortunate – many are finding it tough); we are keeping our heads well down, being required to rely on shopping coming to us rather than us queuing at the supermarkets.

The garden has never looked so good and the car never so sparkingly clean! Other standard lockdown chores completed include garage clearing & tidying and drive & patio pressure-washing! Plus, of course, Newsletter editing!

To continue the recurring gardening theme (thanks Neil, Stuart and Duncan!), herewith yours truly tackling tree pruning the low-tech way! Guess who used to be a trained Health & Safety Officer!

Best wishes to all.

Stay safe.



## TSW Support of Toddbrook Dam at Whaley Bridge

At 2145 hrs on the night of the 1 Aug 19, TSW personnel were warned off to deploy with two Chinooks from 27 Squadron at RAF Odiham in the shoring up of a damaged dam at Whaley Bridge in Derbyshire. Initially the 3-man TSW team held at 4hrs notice to move was activated in order to carry out Rotors Turning Refuels at MOD Stafford Helicopter Landing Site (HLS) for both aircraft on route to the dam. Once this task was complete, they promptly deployed to Whaley Bridge in a Tactical Aircraft Refueller (TAR) Bulk Fuel Carrying Vehicle to support the ongoing operation, which greatly increased the time the aircraft could remain on task.

Once on site at Toddbrook Dam, the TAR was deployed to provide Rotors Turning Refuels from a closed public highway. In total, TSW issued 38,870 litres of aviation fuel on site and 6,575 litres of aviation from the HLS at MOD Stafford. Throughout the deployment, TSW also assisted Joint Helicopter Support Squadron from RAF Benson in underslinging the 400 tonnes of aggregate used to shore up the dam.



## Steve "Tigger" McTigue

Hope this finds you well.

I don't know if these videos would be of any interest to you for the Newsletter. I was asked to produce them to bring a little humour into these dark days!

Keep Safe and Keep Well.

Tigger

<https://youtu.be/4EK4f32ORRc>

<https://youtu.be/T9xNxaDfxKU>



## Robin Springett

### Eulogy to Gp Capt John Craven-Griffiths (C-G).

Delivered at his Funeral Service on Friday 1st September 2017 by Gp Capt Robin Springett

Published to mark the 50th year of Tactical Supply Wing

In 1969, I was completing my second year in Singapore, as an Acting Flight Lieutenant serving on an "integrated post" with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in a post called "Single Manager for Accommodation Stores". I was stationed at the Army HQ in Tanglin (near the Botanic Gardens) in the Ordnance Directorate. My job was beginning to transition from supplying accommodation stores, to closing units and disposing of stock. I give this introduction as a way of explaining how and why I got involved with John C-G.

He was serving as one of 3 Sqn Ldr Desk Officers in E-Plans in MOD, working I think for Air Cdre Charles Clarke. There was an exercise to be held in early 1969/70 which was designed to show that the UK could re-inforce Singapore and Malaysia and maintain its treaty obligations after the UK pulled out of the Far East a couple of years hence, that appeared ideal to test out the E-Plans concept of Second Level Supply Support. The exercise had been in the planning for a couple of years and was to be called "Bersatu Padu", which is Malay for "United". It involved the "Five Power Agreement" nations, UK, Australia, NZ, Malaysia and Singapore and was a huge exercise, especially for the UK, which was allegedly bringing everything from home by air! Well, they cheated, as 3 Base Ordnance Depot RAOC in Singapore still had a huge stockpile of accommodation stores for re-inforcing troops, including tentage, cooking and lighting sets and everything needed for setting up camps. Amazingly, this stockpile came under the auspices of me and my small staff of an Army WO, Staff Sgt and Locally Employed Civilian EO and we had been instructed to delay its sale and disposal. Well, using "my" stockpile, the RAF set up a huge tented camp at RAF Seletar, which, by that time, was virtually closed. The RAF Equipment Officer in charge was one Sqn Ldr John Craven-Griffiths, whom I met several times in the build-up, main exercise and run-down phases of Bersatu Padu; indeed, that tall skinny Flt Lt spent rather more time helping C-G than doing his "day job"! (He was always "C-G" to us on the Wing, rarely Sir, unless "outsiders" were present).

The Logistics Section of the Exercise Report (I still have a copy of the Report) was written by the same Sqn Ldr John Craven-Griffiths, so one might safely assume that it proved beyond any reasonable doubt that Equipment (Supply) needed a Second Level Support Unit to sit alongside the likes of MAMS and TCW. The findings of the report were endorsed by the Air Force Board and the 50 year TSW adventure began! With the end date of my job in Singapore approaching, I had received a posting as OC SCAF at RAF Tengah effective early 1971, but I must have been far too helpful to C-G, as towards the end of 1970, at very short notice, it was cancelled and I found myself heading home on a VC-10 to 16MU to a "new appointment" as yet unspecified.

I won't go into the kerfuffle needed to return with a young family from Singapore at fairly short notice, but my posting date was 15th December, and my new boss welcomed me by saying "find housing, as there are no OMQs or hirings available, have Christmas and New Year, buy a car and report after that. As far as taking 6 weeks disembarkation leave, (to which I was entitled), forget it, there is a job to do!!! (For the record, I never got my disembarkation leave, we were just too busy!)

I arrived on the top floor of Nicolson Block, to find a very small group. C-G, by now a Wg Cdr, Fg Off Brett Morrell and 6 airmen; Cpl (Admin) Harrison C-G's PA, and another Cpl and 4 airmen of TG 18, one of whom was Jim Coleman of course. We were to create a new unit called Tactical Supply Wing. It had few people, no offices to speak of, no buildings at Stafford, no vehicles, no equipment scales, no Statement of Unit Policy, no clothing, nothing, it was just a glimmer in C-G's eye. We were the lucky ones to implement it! Almost as soon as I arrived, so did WO Taff Duncan, Flt Sgt Tony McCann, Sgt Keith Rogers and one or two others, all from the Depot. We did have a hangar at RAF Colerne in Wiltshire, then a flying unit still with some of the last Hastings C-Mk1 aircraft flying, whilst the C-130 fleet built up at Lyneham. The hangar housed the Mobile Fuels Handling Squadron (MFHS) with Flt Lt Roger Cresswell, Sgt Humphries (I think) and some airmen and precious little else. C-G of course wanted MFHS at Stafford, but the depot was so full of kit being returned from units closing all over the world, that there was no space (so we were

told). We were never made to feel welcome in those first months and maybe a couple of years by some or most in authority at 16 MU. For sure the Stn Cdr didn't want us, but we had important top cover; Air Cdre Charles Clarke, that decorated war hero, was by then SESO (Senior Equipment Staff Officer) at Maintenance Command, Andover, and the concept of Second Level Support was as much his baby as C-G's; so we were unlikely to fail I felt!

C-G wrote our SUP and the rest of us wrote our scales of equipment and began writing the TSW Training Course. TSW was to be set up on the "non-cadre" principle, bit like modern day Reserves. We had agreement for a dozen people and outline agreement for 128 non-cadre. We fairly quickly got approval for 38 full time staff and another 102 non-cadre, who all had their full-time jobs in 16MU. At that time, Supply Wing was fully TG 18 manned and Support Wing roughly 50/50 service and civilian. We therefore had a lot of choice, but initially precious few volunteers; after all, who would swap a nice warm job in an office for a cold and wet work place in a tent somewhere! That all changed of course, but it took time.

C-G was aware that the future would probably rest with the fuels handling element of TSW, as there was a serious gap in capability for mobile fuels handling. There was also a conflict as to which Trade Group could refuel an aircraft, in 1971, that definitely wasn't TG 18, and we would all have to become TG 1!!!! C-G in characteristic fashion, went into battle with the Engineers and eventually won, as Suppliers were a lot cheaper than Engineering tradesmen! C-G had already begun a trawl across the Air Force for fuels handling equipment, and odd bits and pieces started to appear, notably the Coventry Victor 150 gpm pumps and APFCs, which were to be the backbone of TSW operations for some time; all, of course going to Colerne.

We all contributed, and with my RAOC connections, I got vehicles and green uniforms from the Army, and we started walking around the Depot wearing green, with the RAF stable belt outside our pullovers; must have looked awful, but C-G was intent on creating a unit with it's own identity and esprit de corps in the shortest time possible. Wives and girlfriends weren't left out and John's wife Barbara created the weekly Wives Club coffee mornings in the crew room of Nicolson Block. It was all C-G's vision of course, and we younger and junior ones more or less worshipped him. As we moved from just training to becoming fully operational on 1st April 1972, doors across the Depot, Maintenance Command and the Air Force as a whole, which had been firmly barricaded against us, began to open. By the time C-G moved on, his successor took over a fully functioning unit, well equipped, well trained and with a solid reputation and "can do" attitude, epitomised by the establishment of TSW refuelling units in Northern Ireland, which would last the duration of the emergency there.

But no one should make any mistake, whatever others did subsequently to take TSW forward, it was C-G's vision, his tenacity, strength of will, his questioning of authority and being unafraid to make himself unpopular, but most of all his personality and drive which created the unit of which we are all proud. He set the tone for a generation, and for me personally, the direction of my Air Force career. John C-G, old friend, colleague and visionary, we salute you and your long-lasting achievement. We all admired you. You will not be forgotten.

## Steve Turner

I hope this finds you and yours well.

I have a few photos etc just to show how my involvement with the cadets has changed during lockdown. Just before Lockdown we Graduated our latest Training Flt that has run from Sept-Feb. Since then we have had to do all our parade nights virtually over Microsoft Teams. This has meant that my Drill instruction has had to become Virtual, by recording lessons by means of Video links, trying to Mirror the AP 818. Also the cadets have been out most Thursday evenings Clapping for Carers, NHS & other Key workers. Last night (30/04/2020) we had the Salute for Hon Col (Capt) Tom Moore.

Not sure if this will all be of interest in the Newsletter, but would like to think there is an ex TSW member out there guiding our next generation.





## Events Update — Wayne Shelton

### Remembrance Sunday 2020 — SECOND TRAWL FOR ATTENDEES

The Royal British Legion have once again invited the Association to provide a contingent for the Cenotaph Parade on Remembrance Sunday, this year falling on Sunday 8th November.

To avoid the problems of non-attendance on the day that we had last year, and the Association not filling it's allocated number of tickets, this year we'll be applying for a number of tickets for the members that respond saying they wish to attend.

The government have informed the RBL to go ahead with preparation for Remembrance Sunday, however should the Covid-19 situation continue that far ahead, things may change.

If you wish to apply for a ticket to attend the parade, please get in touch with Events Secretary, Wayne, at [events@tswscdoassn.co.uk](mailto:events@tswscdoassn.co.uk) prior to 15th May 2020, and ensure your membership is up to date. 😊

### TSW 50th Anniversary Celebrations

Clearly, Covid-19 restrictions are making the planning of dates etc for events to mark the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Wing very difficult. As soon as we are able to firm up plans, we will be in touch — keep an eye on your in-boxes and the website!

Cheers

Wayne

## Association On-line Clothing Range

Chris Ryan has now completed the start-up for the Association online shop. We have chosen a core range of quality apparel sticking with the classics - starting with Hoodies, Sweats, Tee's and Polo's for now, with a greater range to follow.

The garments are good quality and we offer an extensive size range so there is something for everyone.

The ensigns used on our apparel are heat-applied digital transfer, this is the best way to ensure we have the detail we need.

We hope you will be happy with your purchases, wear your apparel with pride.

All profits raised from the sale of garments will be put back into the funds for use in welfare of members, or to subsidise future events.

### "Representing a Common Heritage"



Hoodies: both half and full zipped



Sweatshirts



Long & short sleeved Tees  
and Polos

<http://www.tswscdoassn.co.uk/news.html#WebShop>

## Belize Memories — David Griffiths



Memory? After nearly 50 years? Not good! Perhaps if they were posted, former members of TSW may recognise their own photos? I also have photos taken during an exercise at Otterburn Ranges when the TSW detachment set up just off the ranges near a village called Elsdon, and some from the detachment to Castle Dillon just outside Armagh. I was there with Patrick O'Hanlon and 'Trouper' (?) all around the same time - late 70s.

Regards Dave Griffiths

### Note from the Treasurer

We are pleased to offer you choice of payment systems for your membership subscription, both PayPal and bank transfer/standing order – but please note that each £10 PayPal subscription costs the Association 57p! If you have the time and inclination, then we'd be very grateful if you could consider changing your recurring PayPal subscription to a Standing Order, meaning that the Association gets the **full** benefit from your monies! If you need any help with this, such as understanding when your recurring payment is taken, how to cancel recurring payments in PayPal or how to set up a Standing Order – either online or via a form which you can take into your bank – then please get in touch with me.

Finally, if you wish to take advantage of the up-front payment of your subscriptions of 11 years membership for the price of 10, please do get in touch - note that payments of these advanced subs will go into a different account than the usual one - details of this will be forwarded in due course.

Many thanks.

Libby MacKinnon (nee Taylor)

Treasurer

[mackinnonelisabeth@gmail.com](mailto:mackinnonelisabeth@gmail.com)



## In Remembrance

We record with sadness the passing of the following members:

|         |                       |                         |
|---------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 3209 SC | <b>Mr Don Fisher</b>  | Died 15th February 2020 |
| 3210 SC | <b>Mr John Wright</b> | Died 24th February 2020 |
| TSW     | <b>Andy Thomas</b>    | Died 18th April 2020    |

## Your Committee

|                               |                 |                   |  |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| <b>Chairman:</b>              | David Orr,      | Tel: 07725 311115 | E-mail: <a href="mailto:chairman@tswscdoasn.co.uk">chairman@tswscdoasn.co.uk</a>     |
| <b>Treasurer:</b>             | Libby MacKinnon | Tel: 07792 246243 | E-mail: <a href="mailto:treasurer@tswscdoasn.co.uk">treasurer@tswscdoasn.co.uk</a>   |
| <b>Membership Secretaries</b> | Cliff Whiteley  | Tel: 07714 461545 | E-mail: <a href="mailto:membership@tswscdoasn.co.uk">membership@tswscdoasn.co.uk</a> |
|                               | Geordie Lumsden | Tel: 07964 536433 | E-mail: <a href="mailto:membership@tswscdoasn.co.uk">membership@tswscdoasn.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Welfare</b>                | Geordie Lumsden | Tel: 07964 536433 | E-Mail: <a href="mailto:welfare@tswscdoasn.co.uk">welfare@tswscdoasn.co.uk</a>       |
| <b>Secretary:</b>             | Dave Christophi | Tel: 07725 819614 | E-mail: <a href="mailto:secretary@tswscdoasn.co.uk">secretary@tswscdoasn.co.uk</a>   |
| <b>Events Secretary</b>       | Wayne Shelton   | Tel: 07905 662246 | E-Mail: <a href="mailto:events@tswscdoasn.co.uk">events@tswscdoasn.co.uk</a>         |

Newsletter edited by Tim Newstead

## A Final Plea

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

Thank you!