

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

*Representing a Common Heritage*

## **Newsletter Spring 2017**

### **Chairman's Introduction**

This edition of the Association Newsletter provides you with a snapshot of the variety and geographic spread of your Association's activities. I hope you find the articles interesting and that you are encouraged to try your hand at contributing throughout the year. In particular in this issue we remember those Servicing Commandos who served in Burma and the Far East. They may have been a forgotten Army – but not by us! My piece on page 3 tells the tale of SC activity in that Theatre of Operations. Information has been sourced from "A History of the RAF Servicing Commandos" by JP Kellett & J Davies, published by Airline Publishing Ltd (ISBN: 1-85310-051-X). Kellett & Davies served in 3205 & 3232 SC respectively; but to their account has been added the recollections of the 8 surviving Servicing Commando Association members who served in the Far East. We are in their debt for many reasons, but most recently for their enthusiastic, entertaining and thought-provoking responses to my request for contributions. Their reminiscences set the scene for a TSW expedition to Burma in Nov 16 and CO TSW, Wg Cdr Tim Moss, tells the tale of Ex Far East Falcon on page 7. Thanks are due also to those Members who contributed financially to this endeavour. Your help was greatly appreciated.

You will read also of the departure of Wg Cdr Tim Moss after a most successful tenure as CO TSW. The Burma trip was a fitting finale to his efforts on behalf of our Association and we are grateful to him for his constant support, friendship and good humour. It would be all too easy to focus only on the day job – heaven knows, it's busy enough!! – but Wg Cdr Moss maintained and encouraged a very close relationship between the serving TSW Members of today and those of us who served previously on the Wing; and of course, with our Servicing Commando Members. He will hand over on 3 Mar 17 to Wg Cdr Jamie Miller.

The global flavour of this Newsletter is continued by Sgt Russ Watson who has found time to report on life at Edwards AFB in California; and by Cpl Dan Davidson of TSW Training, who recounts the staff ride by TSW personnel to Auschwitz. If all this travel has exhausted you, Member Donnie Cameron reminds us of the tranquillity of a holiday home in Kintyre, available to Members.

You can read of the continuing excellence of the personnel on the Wing in the awards to Cpl Chris Furlong of the Matthews Sword; and SAC Scott Exelby, the President's Award. Scott's wife Erin, an opera singer, treated us to post prandial performances twice in 2016 and the Dinners were enriched by her presence.



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A legacy of the TSW trip to Burma will be the commissioning of 2 memorials to commemorate the SC involvement in the Burma Campaign. TSW itself is also commemorated and on page 12 you can read the latest on the TSW Paviour at the National Memorial Arboretum; and a new initiative to include the TSW Crest in work by the RAF Heraldry Trust for publication in the Centenary year of the RAF.....more of which later!

The Annual Dinner, AGM, Open Day and reunion will take place on Friday 30 June and Saturday 1 July 2017. Details and application forms are included at the end of this Newsletter. It would be great to see a good turnout again and please book early. These are excellent weekends with a very special atmosphere, created in part by the camaraderie that exists across the generations of Association Members through our shared experiences and enduring good humour.

Sadly, some of our number have passed since our last edition and they are remembered here. But on a more positive note, you will be pleased to read of the latest chapter in the journey of Gp Capt John Craven-Griffiths, our Vice President TSW and founding father of the Wing.

My best wishes to you all, enjoy the Newsletter, let the Committee know what you think – and do please try to attend the Reunion Weekend where a warm welcome awaits.

## **Vice-President TSW, Gp Capt (Retd) John Craven-Griffiths**

Many of you will be aware that our Association's Vice-President TSW and founding father of the Wing, Gp Capt (Retd) John Craven-Griffiths, has been unwell for some time now. It was delightful to see him engaged, enthused and inquisitive at the dedication ceremony for the Barrack Block named in his honour at Stafford at the 2015 Reunion.

Unfortunately, his condition now means that he and his wife Barbara have had to move from Sussex to more manageable accommodation near Harrogate. However, his son Robin & partner in crime Eileen Christie and JC-G's 2 grandsons are now on the doorstep to lend support and we hope the whole family will be very happy in this latest chapter of their lives.

It is unlikely JC-G will be travelling far afield nowadays, so as part of his relocation trip, he and Barbara wanted a last night in the RAF Club in London. Your Association was able to buy pre-prandial drinks for them; and was represented by the current CO TSW, Wg Cdr Tim Moss, OC TSF Sqn Ldr Jon Smith and retired Gp Capts Alan Matthews and Chris Markey. We have received most grateful thanks from Robin & Eileen who reported that after the rendezvous, they had not seen JC-G look so well and cheerful in years! We wish him continuing cheer.

If any Association member wishes to send greetings to John, they should be sent via our Welfare Secretary, Gp Capt David Packman, who is happy to act as an intermediary; David's contact details are on Page 23.

## **Percy Lackey 3205 and 3209 SC (1918-2016)**

We record with great sadness the death of Percy Lackey on 28th September 2016 at the Elizabeth Knox Home and Hospital in Auckland, New Zealand; Percy was a member of 3205 and 3209 Servicing Commando. Many will remember Percy from his visit to the Annual Reunion in 2010 at the age of 92. Lisa Davis, the daughter of the late Derek Meredith (ex-3205 SC) who lives in New Zealand and visited Percy, writes "...So, with a sad heart I contemplate the loss of another of "The Great Generation". Percy was such a joy, and I know his time in service of the RAF was such a defining and meaningful part of his life. I know how much it meant to him to be able to meet with the Association a few years ago." Thanks to Lisa, Percy received his Legion d'Honneur medal just a few hours before he passed away.



## Old Boss — New Boss

CO TSW, Wg Cdr Tim Moss, was lunched out of the Mess at Stafford on 2nd March in some style after 26 months in charge of TSW.

Many well-known figures from the past enjoyed the splendid lunch presided over by WO Gary Barlow, TSW Wg WO. Mr Ian Dodds of Air & Ground presented a cast Puma on a plinth; and your Association, represented by Chairman David Orr (never far from a good lunch) thanked Wg Cdr Moss for his energetic support of the link between the Wing and Association. Donations (and fines!) raised a good sum for the RAF Benevolent Fund and Stafford Mountain Rescue.



Tim is succeeded by Wg Cdr Jamie Miller on his return to the Wing; we wish both Tim and Jamie well in their new appointments.

## Burma Revisited — The Road to Mandalay

**By David Orr**

About 2,400 personnel served in 15 Servicing Commando Units and 3 Servicing Parties at different times during the life of the Servicing Commando concept. Each comprised about 150 men (they were all men!) and 3 Officers; was equipped with (supposedly!) 15 three tonners, a jeep for the officers; and several motorcycles. On operations they slept under canvas or bivouacked and as today with TSW, moved frequently, quickly and efficiently. These men were in the vanguard at Operation Torch (the invasion of North Africa); Operation Bigot Husky (the invasion of Sicily); Operation Avalanche (the invasion of Italy); Operation Thursday (the invasion of Burma); Operation Overlord (the invasion of Northern France); and Operation Dragoon (the invasion of Southern France).

The Servicing Commando Association was formed in the early 1980s to commemorate the exploits of these airmen and to maintain the comradeship they shared. The subsequent union of the Servicing Commando Association and the Tactical Supply Wing Association marked a joining of kindred spirits and allowed shared experience, however and wherever gained, to flow across the generations. In autumn 2015 the RAF SC & TSW Association organised a memorial trip to the scene of some of the SC activity in Normandy in 1944, where a permanent memorial was unveiled at the site of the St Croix sur Mer Airfield (designated "B3" in the shorthand of military operations) in the presence of a splendid TSW honour guard under Wg Cdr Tim Moss, CO TSW, The mayor of St Croix sur Mer and mayors of surrounding towns and villages and a gathering of local townsfolk, some of whom had witnessed those precarious days of June 1944. The Association Committee was well-represented by its freeloading Chairman, David Orr; diligent & industrious Treasurer, Tim Newstead; legendary Vice President (SC) Duncan Grant; and enthusiastic historian & archivist Peter Berry. Mr Alan McQuillin (ex 3210 SC) added first-hand accounts of operations and daily living and added poignancy, dignity and humour to the events.

Now the Association and TSW current personnel remember those who served in Burma, by conducting an expedition to that Theatre of Operations in the company of local guides, knowledgeable historians and helpful British Embassy staff. A post-expedition report follows and makes interesting reading for those new to the subject; and to those refreshing memories! TSW secured significant public funding to subsidise the trip and personal contributions and generous donations from Association members helped get this ambitious project airborne.



During 1942 and most of 1943, the Japanese Army advanced throughout SE Asia, driving the Allies before them at great cost. Morale and health declined in tandem amongst the British, Indian and Gurkha troops driven out of Burma and back into India. General Wingate's Chindits harried Japanese supply lines, disrupting the Mandalay-Myitkyina railway and crucially for our tale, scouting sites along the river Irrawaddy where airstrips could be operated. In the summer of 1943 the smaller 3 Servicing Parties (1 Officer & 30 men) were assembled in Bombay for training and equipping. In early 1944, they deployed by Dakota from India to one of the airstrips (designated Broadway) and had it fully operational 24 hours later, receiving 3,000 troops and equipment for the slog north to link with General Stilwell's Chinese force advancing on Myitkyina and Imphal. A second airstrip at Cawnpore was operational 3 days later, contributing further numbers to the task force. General Wingate was killed in an aircraft crash during a reconnaissance mission near Broadway, which endured direct Japanese attacks, yet maintained Chindit resupply, reinforcement & casualty evacuation until the end of May '44, when No1 SP personnel were on the last Dakota out of Broadway. They operated from other areas of the Arakan (Ramu, Jennie); Imphal and "White City" supporting Dakotas, Stinson L1s and L5s, Horsa Gliders and Spitfires. They even robbed a serviceable engine from a crashed B25 to restore another aircraft elsewhere! This itinerant, first-in last-out, any job, any time atmosphere will resonate with TSW today.



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Although 3210 SC never entered Burma, they travelled to India in some style on board the Dutch Liner Johan Van Olden Barnevelt, an all RAF Trooper....4000 men & 400 WAAFs, complains Alan McQuillin! From Jan-Oct 45 they were based in Calcutta before continuing until 1946 in Java. The ending of war did not mean the ending of privation and danger. Disease continued and in Apr '46, 6 RAF Officers on War Crimes investigations were found in a canal in Batavia (Jakarta) with slit throats. They serviced Spitfires, Thunderbolts, Dakotas and Mosquitoes – these latter until the wooden airframes warped and they had to be burnt minus the engines. Alan further notes that the Indian Whisky available was terrible. War and its aftermath, is hell.

Dougie Blair (also ex 3210 SC) continues the theme of unfinished business post Aug '45, writing that he was sent from Calcutta to Kuala Lumpur to continue suppressing the revolt in Malaya and subsequently Java & Sumatra in the then Dutch East Indies, where local, Muslim sentiment railed against Dutch hegemony. In addition, 26,000 Japanese remained on the islands beside 120,000 allied soldiers in POW camps, continuing to endure disease, starvation, malnutrition and dreadful treatment, pending their negotiated release. In Dougie's 9 months in Theatre, the RAF lost 32 killed. Their Thunderbolts were subjected to routine ground fire and some were lost. Their airfield was attacked by Muslim fighters where one attack, coinciding with the funeral service of a dead RAF Regt gunner, resulted in the Sgt leading the pall bearers in a counter attack for which he was awarded the Military Medal. An interesting postscript is that at one point Dougie served under Gp Capt (later Air Chief Marshal) Sir David Lee, whose book, "...and we thought the war was over.." covers period & place in detail. Further serendipity attends the SC involvement in Indonesia, where the communist first President on Independence from the Netherlands, Sukarno, had one of the Cpls Dougie served with as his speech writer!





**Bill Neale with his Legion d'Honneur**

Bill Neale (ex 3205 SC) now resident in Ontario reinforces the dangers to the health of Europeans – often from unlikely coincidences: Cow dung was dried and used as a cooking fuel, meaning that that which was cooked had to be fertilised with human manure.... Bill explains that at one time in Chittagong (now Bangladesh) half of 3205 SC were hospitalised with Dysentery or Malaria and Bill himself was down with TB. His message to TSW today? Wash your hands and fruit!! The dangers at the cookhouse did not end there, scavenging Kites dive-bombed the mess tins, even when they were eating only dog biscuits (hard tack). Bully Beef, the other staple, was sometimes dished up 8 times per day. Travelling through Malaya by convoy, endless columns of Japanese trudged past en route to Singapore to surrender. Those of a certain vintage will be familiar with RAF Seletar & RAF Changi: at the former, Bill saw Japanese Kamikaze aircraft thankfully still in hangars and at Changi, Australian PoWs released as living skeletons. It was a source of great pride to Bill and 3205 when the Viceroy for India and founding father of the SCs, flew from Delhi to Akyab to personally thank them for their service. Now, 70 years later, on 6 Nov 2016, Bill was awarded the Legion d'Honneur by the French Consul in recognition of his service in the Normandy invasion.

The journey of these airmen to Theatre in 1944/5 was not as simple as that expected by TSW on their expedition. Thousands of men (yes Alan – and women) crammed onto Troopships make a tempting target and minesweepers attended the passage at key points such as emerging from the Suez Canal into the Red Sea, where depth charges cleared the way. Boredom was a significant enemy and I can only imagine how difficult it must have been to get a decent internet connection to check Facebook..... From Bombay across India by train took 2 weeks and transported more ants and cockroaches than it did troops, but did allow boredom to be countered by “ant racing”. The cook ferried 5 gallon dixies to the engine where the engineer would infuse the water with steam, allowing regular brew-ups en route to the Ganges Delta, where a triple decker paddle steamer moved masses of humanity, chunking downstream and then by narrow gauge railway to Chittagong. There, at an RAF strip known as Double Moorings, boredom was countered by chlorinating an old pond, chasing out the water snakes and starting a water polo league. As you do.

The roads were at best dirt tracks, often washed out by monsoon rains and so on one journey near to Maungdaw, the sea shore of packed sand made a preferable route, until storms marooned B Flight for 48 hours without potable water. At Akyab island one day, only 2 Spitfires “dropped in” one, without brakes overshooting the end of the runway and stopping unceremoniously nose down in the mud, the other badly damaged by gunfire in tail plane, elevators and rudder. 3205 men worked through the night cannibalising, removing tail assemblies, repairing, swapping, replacing. A serviceable Spitfire was ready for operations next day. Another visitor, a DC3, brought Chief of South East Asia Command and Viceroy of India Lord Louis Mountbatten who called the formal line up of 3205 ready for inspection to “Break Ranks and gather round, I can’t talk to men that way!”. Again, Mountbatten thanked the Servicing Commandos for what they had achieved.

Following a return to India for re-kitting, the Servicing Commandos embarked on 2 troopships for Malaya, those in A Flt travelling with an Indian Army Unit doubtless thanked the sandbar onto which the vessel sank when one of the tanks in the hold blew a hole in the side of the ship with a negligent discharge of the extreme variety. Before even reaching Malaya, they heard of the Japanese surrender, but that did not cover the minefield through which they were sailing. It did not cover the Japanese still at Kalanang airfield who sabotaged spitfires by pushing them into the swamp, only for 3205 to build a road into the swamp, pull them back out and make them serviceable. Later at RAF Seletar, once the Mosquitoes were grounded with wet rot, 3205 refilled the camp pool (recently scene of Japanese firing squad activity), arranged a swimming gala with the Parachute Regiment; and promptly beat them easily. Must have been all the practice!

One good method of ensuring top class work from the Servicing Commandos was played out at Semarang, where 3 damaged DC3s were to be converted to one serviceable DC3. A damaged prop was changed and a wing was changed with 2 small bottle jacks balancing precariously on old railway sleepers for height, fighting off pilfering locals and the E York's CSM looking to conduct kit inspections and placing Cpl ic Bill Neale on open arrest for resisting....Next day, the newly repaired DC3 flew the Servicing Commandos out, flying like a new aircraft!

Len Metzner writes that he joined 3209 SC in Dec '44 when they returned from post D Day operations in France. Again, the trip to Theatre provided a Grand Tour for one who previously had seen the sea only from Margate. Biscay (seasickness), Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria, Suez, Bombay and kitting and training at Worli (including achieving the standard of swimming 50 yards in full kit). Then to Bombay, train to Calcutta, then Singarbil in Bengal where they lodged in bashas made from bamboo & leaves and serviced Spitfires and Hurricanes. Training continued for a seaborne assault on Rangoon, jungle warfare training by day & night but with the Japanese withdrawal from Rangoon, they were redeployed to service Catalinas at Korangi Creek, Karachi, where dysentery was chief amongst the enemies. But eventually, via work on US aircraft across India, they arrived in Rangoon in 2 Landing Ship Tanks in Sep '45. But after a brief stay were embarked for Saigon, where they participated in operations searching out terrorists and arms caches and operated as No 2 Staging Post, Saigon following the disbandment of 3209 SC late Nov 45. Boredom was impossible in Saigon, with local sights, girls, bars and eateries providing ample diversion; and Absinthe providing headaches!

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*Boredom was impossible in Saigon, with local sights, girls, bars and eateries providing ample diversion*

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Don Fisher, also a member of 3209, writes from his retirement in Miami about never coming face-to-face with the enemy, but strangely did stand with rearmed Japanese soldiers who helped defend the Airport at Saigon from the nightly terrorist attacks. The work of the SCs at Saigon enabled the 1st airline route from UK to Japan and the Christmas Menu Don provided from RAF Saigon, 1945, would be an enduring favourite today!

Ernie Deighton of 3207 SC endures the legacy of the beating, baking sun in Burma in the days of no sunblock. Ernie is being treated for skin cancer and we wish him well. He reminds us of an RAF skill still alive today, where those charged with the simplest of tasks will strive for a Rolls Royce solution. After months on rehydrated food without sight of fresh meat or vegetables, Cpls Dave Howard & Butch Verrall returned from a trip to collect the meagre rations from the Supply Depot with a fresh half carcass of Buffalo. Everybody ate like kings, even the sceptical adjutant who couldn't believe this huge slab of meat had just "come with the rations..."

Jim Aitken was also on 3207 SC as they entered Burma via Kohima & Imphal and the Manipur road into Nagaland. The TSW expedition may wish to check if this road still operates – it was built by the Army and local Naga tribesmen. 3207 were flown from Palel in the Manipur Estate to Onbawk airstrip near Schwebo in the central plain of Burma in Jan/Feb '45. The remote, bush airstrip was in a forward area, protected from Japanese patrols by the RAF Regiment and the men slept in bivouacs, on charpoys made of hessian, bamboo and old ammo boxes to keep them off the ground and away from ticks and vicious white ants. Other wildlife was more benign, spectacular in their calls and plumage and, one supposes, occasionally tasty. The camp burned in 113 degree heat as the men turned yellow from daily doses of mepacrine and struggled to wash clothes and selves in water from old fuel jerricans. Imagine Jim's surprise one night when dousing a camp fire



from one of these containers, to find it held the original contents. With the rest of the camp enjoying their one and only mobile film show nearby, it was to everyone's great fortune that when Jim hurtled the can away, it landed up-right. Don't assume. Check.

From Onbawk, they went to Ondaw where Jim was rescued from dysentery by sweet tea and was able to send a message home via the Army Film Unit. Where's Skype when you need it? Thence to Iwaddan and Meiktilla to be reunited with the rest of 3207 and participate in Gen Slim's drive against the Japanese 15th Army after the fall of Mandalay. The U-shaped airfield facilitated the great resupply push with Jim noting 300 Dakota and Commando aircraft resupply flights in one day. Where the additional duties of servicing Spitfires and fighting off the remnants of the Japanese Army allowed, they swam in Lake Meiktilla despite rumours of bodies seen floating in it. Jim accompanied the CO and a small party to Tennants Field near Tongoo where they looked after US Thunderbolts, being much impressed by the quality of the metal alloys used in manufacture. Privations continued with half rations which they supplemented by swapping clothes for eggs and fruit with locals, one teacher, fluent in English asking from his shattered home what would become of his country? It was here at Tongoo they heard of the German surrender, but it meant little given their present circumstances.

As they moved south through Burma, refusing uncut rubies from local elders and making the best of things in jungle and hardship, the sight of English suburbia as they entered Rangoon in May 45 was surreal. Grand houses and gardens but not for 3207 a billet in this luxury – they were sent to Insein jail, albeit in the warders' huts serviced by a most helpful Burmese houseboy who looked resplendent in his RAF kit & boots! Work was at Mingladon airfield servicing aircraft on the routes to China and on one day, they participated in a victory parade in sight of the great Swechdagon Golden Pagoda, marching in victory past Lord Mountbatten and General Slim. Later, in Singapore, Jim was on parade again to watch the Japanese Commander Itagaki walk with Mountbatten along the same street, up the same steps into the same building to sit at the same table and surrender as General Percival had been forced to do after the fall of Singapore.

As the months passed after the Japanese surrender, SCs continued to play a vital role in keeping the aircraft serviceable. There were PoWs to be supplied, sick and wounded for CASEVAC, insurgents, rebels, freedom fighters and pockets of Japanese soldiers to be controlled, insects, humidity, heat and hunger to be endured before life could move on. From late 45 to mid-46 the SC Units were gradually disbanded and the men absorbed into other units. For some, it was rather an anti-climax and others felt the disbandment should have been marked with greater significance. Be that as it may, the TSW Expedition in the footsteps of the Servicing Commandos, shows their efforts remain alive in the present with airmen of today, proud to wear the same uniform and perform similar roles. Proud to share an Association – The RAF SC & TSW Association.

*"By an old Moulmein Pagoda, looking eastward to the sea,  
There's a Burma girl a-sitting, and I know she thinks of me;  
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells they say:  
"Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay!"*

#### *Chorus*

*Come you back to Mandalay, where the old flotilla lay:  
Can't you hear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?  
On the road to Mandalay, where the flying fishes play,  
And the dawn comes up like thunder out of China 'cross the Bay!"*

Rudyard Kipling

## WANTED!

Tim Newstead and Martin Williams have declared their intention to stand down from their roles as Treasurer and Membership Secretary. We are looking for a couple of worthy successors!

If you have an interest in helping your Association and would like more information on what the roles involve, please contact David, Martin or Tim.



## Ex Far East Falcon – TSW Staff Ride to Burma

by CO TSW, Wg Cdr Tim Moss

Some of you will know that I had an aspiration for TSW to send a team to Burma (now named Myanmar) so that we could retrace the footsteps of our forefathers the RAF SC (Servicing Commandos) who served there during the Second World War, from 1944 through to the end of the war. The visit would allow TSW personnel to learn about the Burma campaign by physically being on the ground and experiencing the environment that the RAF SC had to endure, whilst reflecting on how we would conduct operations in such conditions today. It would also allow us to pay our respects at some of the British and Commonwealth War Graves sites in honour of all those British and Commonwealth personnel who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

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*The resulting ensemble resembling something akin to 'Fred Karno's Army'!*

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After a significant amount of staff work from the then Ops O, Flt Lt Pete Burrows and Sgt 'Tweedy' Buckingham (the Ops Movements SNCO) and with the addition of some very generous donations from association members, as well as personal contributions from the selected team members, enough money was gathered to allow the week-long trip to take place. We then just needed the diplomatic clearances to go. Our plan of being able to wear uniform and meet with the Burmese military was quickly shelved and we were told to travel on tourist visas and keep a relatively low profile, but the trip was at least on! The team was selected from volunteers across the Wing and each member was allocated a topic relating to the Burma campaign to research and present on, whilst on the trip. So began some feverish trips to various libraries and internet sites, to gain the required information for our topics. There were also visits to the Station Medical Centre for numerous medical jabs for diseases that some of us had never heard of, let alone could pronounce! Plus, trips to outdoor clothing suppliers, in order to buy tropical shirts, trousers, boots and hats. The resulting ensemble resembling something akin to 'Fred Karno's Army'!



**The TSW Team at the Taukkyan War Cemetery,  
having planted a wreath at the Main Cross**

Eventually, on a cold and wet Monday morning on the 21 November the team of fifteen TSW personnel embarked from MOD Stafford on the 5,500 mile journey to the Far East. Travelling in much better conditions than our forebears had endured, the team flew in an A380 Airbus to Bangkok and then on to the former capital of Burma, Rangoon (renamed Yangon), arriving the next day.

Following an orientation briefing from our guide for the week Col (Retd) Mike Bradley, the team dined with the British Defence Attaché in Rangoon, who provided an insight into life in Burma and the political situation in the region. We were also informed that our planned trip to Meiktila airfield, which is still in use by the Burmese military, was no longer possible due to the worsening military situation. The Burmese authorities had launched a counter-insurgency campaign, the weekend before we arrived, against Islamist terrorists who had crossed over the border from Bangladesh. This was disappointing, as Meiktila had been one of our key places to visit. It was the scene of fierce fighting during WWII between the Japanese and British forces. The RAF Regt was tasked with holding the airfield against constant Japanese attacks and lost a significant number of men, including their commander, Wg Cdr Bob Lander. It was also the location for 3207 RAF SCU, who's personnel not only had to try to repair aircraft under constant fire from the Japanese, but often had to help the RAF Regt in clearing the airfield of Japanese troops to allow aircraft to land and take off!

Despite this disappointment the group travelled the next morning to the Taukkyan and Rangoon War Cemeteries, both of which are maintained by the British & Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Here I masqueraded as a padre and led a brief service of remembrance and wreath laying for all those British and Commonwealth personnel who died during the campaign in Burma, but particularly those from the RAF. Throughout the morning the team took the opportunity to individually pay their respects and reflect on the sacrifices made by the servicemen involved in the Burma campaign. This included locating and planting crosses at the grave of LAC Owen Swallow from 3205 RAF SCU who is buried in Taukkyan, as well as those RAF Regt gunners, including Wg Cdr Lander, who died at Meiktila.



**The grave of LAC Owen Swallow of 3205 RAFSC at Taukkyan War Cemetery.**

At the Rangoon Cemetery, Sgt Middleton from TSW Eng, had researched the incredible bravery of Flt Sgt Woodbridge GC, a wireless operator, who after escaping his downed Liberator aircraft, resisted interrogation and torture by his Japanese captors, steadfastly refusing to give up any information, even in the face of his eventual execution. Again, we laid a wreath and planted crosses in memory of those who had fallen and paused for reflection.

To lighten the mood a guided tour of colonial Rangoon followed, which gave us an insight into some of the local culture and an opportunity to see how many of the sights have remained from colonial times, including the bustling Scott's market. As the evening drew near we entered the stunning Schwedagon Pagoda, with its golden roofs and pinnacles glowing in the evening sunset, a truly remarkable sight.

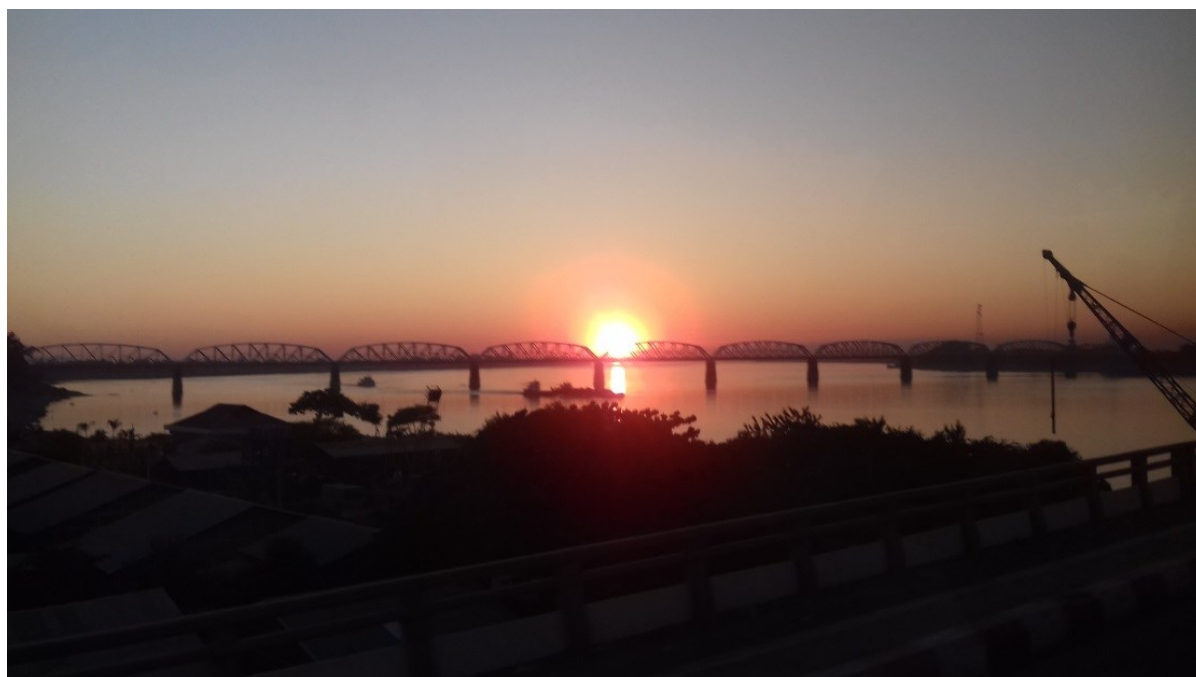




The morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> began with an hour long internal flight to Mandalay, from where the group visited Mandalay Hill, which was the site of the 4th/4th Gurkhas attack to clear the hill of Japanese troops, overlooking the city. It took the Gurkhas 4 days and nights to accomplish the task in very difficult terrain, with the Japanese in well concealed positions; unsurprisingly the casualties on both sides were high. This was followed by a walk around the grounds of Mandalay Palace, which was used as a supply depot by the Japanese during the war. We were also able to drive through the vast walled complex of Fort Dufferin, which is still used by the Burmese military today. The main road running through it has only recently been opened up to the public, although civilians are still not allowed to stop inside the fort walls. During the Burma campaign the walls were breached by a combination of artillery fire and RAF attacks, using P-47 Thunderbolts and Vultee Vengeance dive-bombers, which also bombed the bridge on the southern moat.

**The Shwedagon Pagoda at dusk.**

A day trip down the Irrawaddy River by boat was enjoyed by the group on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> taking in the local scenery and WWII historical sites, such as the famous Ava Bridge, which the British blew up on their retreat in 1942, whilst members of the group presented their various research topics on the campaign. The trip ended with a wreath laying ceremony at a point in the river where British and Commonwealth troops crossed under fire from the enemy during their advance on Mandalay. This was an amazing feat with two Army Corps crossing one of the world's widest rivers in less than 5 weeks; it is thought that TSW is one of very few British military units to have visited this site, since the campaign and the team stopped to collect some stones from the river bank, at the point where the first units began their crossing.



**Sunset over the Ava Bridge spanning the Irrawaddy River.**



On the final day, the group travelled up the famous Burma Road to the colonial hill station town of Maymyo and site of the former British Jungle Warfare School. The road played a vital part in the war as a supply route from China and enabled the team to appreciate the challenges of such Lines of Communication, which navigated through mountainous jungle terrain. In the town, the team visited the Anglican Church and the Garrison Cemetery, where a number of commemorative military plaques are displayed, including one to the RAF Transport Aircraft and Air Despatch crews, on which we placed another of our TSW wreaths. The day ended with further research talks conducted in the beautiful surroundings of the National Kandawgyi Gardens.



**CO TSW 'casts' the RAF wreath into the Irrawaddy River at the site of the British crossing point in 1945.**

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*To commemorate the RAF SC role in the Burma Campaign, TSW are commissioning two memorials*

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**The Remembrance plaque for the RAF Air Transport and Despatchers, in the All Saints Church, Maymyo, with TSW wreath above.**

The long journey home provided the group with time to reflect on their experiences throughout what was a truly fantastic week (despite 12 out of 15 coming down with varying degrees of severity of Rangoon's own version of 'Delhi Belly'). The enormity of the challenges faced in this theatre and the outstanding levels of leadership, fortitude and bravery displayed by the men who fought in it, left a notable mark on everyone. Moreover, significant learning was conducted regarding how the campaign was fought, which left most with a mixture of pride for what was achieved and a sense of injustice that General Slim's 'Forgotten Army' and their achievements, in this remote and hostile place, are still little known by the majority of the UK population.

To this end and to commemorate the RAF SC role in the Burma Campaign TSW are commissioning two memorials. One will be a carved wooden plaque of the RAF Servicing Commandos crest with a brass inscription, detailing the RAF SC's involvement in the Burma Campaign. This will be taken to Burma by Col (Retd) Mike Bradley on his next trip there, later this year and placed in the All Saints Church at Maymyo Hill Station, next to those of the other units who fought in the campaign and are commemorated there. The other memorial will be constructed outside the TSW Headquarters building at MOD Stafford. This will consist of a mounted slate plaque of the RAF SC crest with a similar inscription and will be surrounded by stones that we collected from the banks of the Irrawaddy River. Hopefully these two memorials will serve as fitting tributes to the RAF SC who served in Burma and the Far East and ensure that their loyalty, devotion to duty and sacrifices are remembered by all who see them.

## The TSW Paviour in Heroes' Square

The new Remembrance Centre, Heroes' Square and Boyes Garden at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire, opened to the public on 21st October 2016 and is very impressive. Heroes' Square, in particular, is a very fitting setting for the Unit paviours - including the Tactical Supply Wing crest, to which so many members contributed. It felt at times over the past 3 years that it was a long time coming; it was worth the wait and it is good to see the Wing crest laid for posterity in that place of remembrance.



Heroes' Square



The TSW Paviour

## RAF Heraldry Trust

Associate member, David Powell, kindly alerted us to work being undertaken by the RAF Heraldry Trust to catalogue all (formally adopted) RAF Unit Badges and publish a book in time for the centenary celebrations of the RAF next year. For each the badge, two copies are being repainted on to goatskin parchment paper using gold leaf and gouache paints which have an excellent resistance to fading. One copy will be added to the collection held at College Hall library, RAF Cranwell on behalf of the Trust and one for the sponsor.

The Association is sponsoring the TSW badge for inclusion in the book, with the legend: "Dedicated to all associated with TSW. Providing crucial support to battlefield helicopters on worldwide operations, from Stafford to the front line and beyond."

Sadly the RAF Servicing Commando badge was never formally adopted.

## Welfare

Gp Capt David Packman remains in post as the RAF SC and TSW Association Welfare Officer and is always willing to hear from members who may need some form of support. His contact details are: E-mail: [welfare@tswscdoasn.co.uk](mailto:welfare@tswscdoasn.co.uk).



## 2016 AGM and Reunion Dinner



The 2016 Association Annual General Meeting and Reunion Dinner was held at Stafford on 10th and 11th June with a 'meet and greet' at the Tillington Hall Hotel on the Friday evening followed by the AGM - held in the spanking new Sergeants' Mess on the Saturday morning. As advertised previously, this year in a departure from the usual routine, there was a trial separation of the Reunion weekend from the TSW Families Day, but we were privileged to view exhibits of the Wing's equipment and chat to the many serving members of the Wing who had laid on the presentation for our benefit - which was greatly appreciated - as was the hospitality within Choppers, the TSW bar. The day was rounded off with a splendid Reunion dinner, again held in the Sergeants' Mess with over 60 members and guests sitting down to dine.

Despite the overall reduced numbers of members due, we believe, to the separation of the weekend from the Families Day, the AGM allowed good opportunity for discussion and we were grateful, once again, to Gabbi Walker and her staff in the Mess for their hospitality.

The main points arising from the AGM:

- The Chairman welcomed Members and passed on thanks to TSW for their support for the weekend's events.
- A moment of reflection for those members of TSW on active duty and Association Members who had passed away was given and invited Steve Turner to say a few words about Andy "Bart" Lawty to lead us in this reflection.
- CO TSW, Wg Cdr Tim Moss, delivered the report of TSW's year and the Chairman, David Orr, thanked CO TSW and placed on record special thanks from the Association for the continuing support and friendship of the Wing.
- The Treasurer reported on the Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2015. The funds remained in a healthy state and the Treasurer invited suggestions for worthy employment of the funds.
- Current paid-up Membership stood at 245, a small increase over the previous year.
- David Orr and David Packman were re-elected as Chairman and Welfare Member for a further 2 years. The Chairman reiterated the call for a successor to Tim Newstead in the role of Treasurer. Miss Pauline Luckett made a speech and presentation of a rose on behalf of the Servicing Commandos to illustrate their gratitude to Tim Newstead.
- 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.
- It was agreed that, for 2017 and until further notice, the annual dinner would be held on the Friday evening and the AGM would be held on the Saturday morning followed by lunch. Members would then be free to join the Families Day during the afternoon and the Hangar Bash in the evening.
- Russ Watson briefed the AGM on plans he and Jim Coleman had for the next instalment of a book on the history of TSW and called, in particular, for stories, anecdotes and memorabilia to be contributed by Members to assist the undertaking. An e-mail address had been created to facilitate the provision of such offerings: [tswbook@outlook.com](mailto:tswbook@outlook.com).
- The Chairman reported that mutual agreement had been reached with JCB to put our relationship in 'suspended animation' as it had become increasingly apparent that TSW & the Association offered little to JCB in terms of business, relevant publicity or opportunity. Equally, JCB had repositioned its military arm in USA. The AGM noted with gratitude its thanks for JCB support over the years.



- Following the AGM, Gp Capt David Packman generously offered to take up the sponsorship of the Airman of the Year Award for a period of 5 years, providing a Trophy to be engraved with winners' details, and to provide funds for a £100 cash award also to be made annually.
- At the dinner, SAC Scott Exelby was awarded with the President's Award Trophy, a framed certificate and a cheque; in return, we were royally entertained with a rendition sung beautifully by Scott's wife Erin - an amazingly talented opera singer. Scott's citation for his award is shown below.



## RAFSC & TSW Association Reunion Dinner — 11th June 2016



## 2015 President's Award Winner — SAC Scott Exelby

Senior Aircraftsman Scott Exelby personifies professionalism, loyalty and dedication. Specifically selected ahead of his peers to work in the TSW Ops Room, he has contributed to the Wing's operational output to such a high degree that the successes TSW has enjoyed this year are directly attributable to the work he has undertaken. He sets an extremely high benchmark that other airmen and airwomen should aspire to match. In no sphere is this more directly demonstrated than in the estimate and planning processes that are undertaken pre-deployment as a key Operations Room function. On receipt of a sanctioned tasking from Headquarters Joint Helicopter Command for TSW deployed support, Exelby is the initial person to interrogate the request. He conducts a planning estimate and using his extensive subject matter



knowledge of all phases of a TSW deployment has excelled in the apportionment of both manpower and resources to the task. Such is his level of expertise in this process that no input has been required by his line management whom have total trust in his ability to always make the correct planning assumptions.

TSW was activated to deploy personnel and equipment in support of Operation LAYLAND following the devastating earthquake in Nepal. Exelby took the lead in organising, manifesting and loading the critical fuels equipment required. Driven by the very tight timeframes associated with the United Kingdom's contribution to the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Nepal, the work he undertook during this time involved co-ordinating MT and Engineering personnel, liaising closely with SNCO Movements, managing and leading the manpower tasked with the loading of the equipment, and producing very detailed equipment lists. This resulted in an extreme level of extra workload in addition to an already demanding primary role. The extended work days and levels of responsibility this entailed were easily absorbed by Exelby who flourished during this time and demonstrated unwavering dedication to the unit and abundant potential for a full and successful RAF career.

Exelby is a trusted 'go to' for many tasks outside the normal remit of a Senior Aircraftsman and his efforts have gone far beyond that expected of his rank. As the TSW representative at the Joint Helicopter Command monthly Battlefield Helicopters Allocation Meeting, he often finds himself as the only representative below the rank of Warrant Officer. Nevertheless he still commands respect and delivers thorough and precise briefings with regard to the levels of support TSW can offer for specified periods, seeks clarification on taskings, and conducts a cross check of all agreed support. Without his assured intelligence, meticulous attention to detail and proven leadership and management capabilities, the output from the Operations Room would be severely compromised.

As well as performing exceptionally in his primary duty, Exelby dedicates much of his time to wider Service engagement. He volunteered to organise the TSW display for the Air Combat Power Visit at RAF Coningsby. In addition to the standard planning associated with deploying manpower, vehicles and deployed fuels equipment, Exelby produced a point brief for inclusion in the events briefing programme. This point brief was of such an exceptional level that he received a laudatory letter of appreciation from the Senior Officer in charge of the event organising committee. He then took the lead in briefing a total of 400 visitors including senior officers of Air Rank and the students of the Advanced Command and Staff Course.

Further to all he achieves within his primary role, Exelby also excels outside of work with his extra curricular activities. He was instrumental in the planning of the TSW Families Day; as the event Publicity Member he produced an exceptional programme that would not have looked out of place at an event of a much larger scale. His desire to continually raise the profile of the RAF is also evident as he volunteers as a Service Instructor for the Stafford detachment of the Staffordshire Air Training Corps where, in the words of the Officer Commanding, he has made a 'massive impact on the unit in terms of skills and training'.

Exelby is the model TSW airman – immensely capable, hard-working and unreservedly devoted he absolutely represents what the unit has strove to instil from its very inception.



## TSW Force Development Staff Ride to Auschwitz

By Cpl Dan Davidson – TSW Training.

***In October 2016, a TSW contingent of 14, led by Wg WO, WO Gaz Barlow, and Cpl Chris Furlong visited Auschwitz. This is the story of the visit.***

**Day 1** – After an extremely early rise we congregated at TSW MT MOD Stafford to a quick brief and our boarding passes from Sgt Furlong. We then departed for Gatwick to catch a flight to Poland. We arrived at Krakow Airport and headed to the Ibis hotel in the centre of town, where we had a quick freshen up and ventured into town for some food and sightseeing.



**Day 2 (AM)** – Being collected by the tour guides, our party was shuttled from the hotel on a journey of 1hr out of town to Auschwitz's Camp 1, for a tour that would dampen the hearts of the strongest. The Auschwitz complexes are divided in three major camps, Auschwitz I - main camp or Stammlager, which was established on May 26th 1940. Auschwitz II - Birkenau, established on October 8th, 1941 as a 'Vernichtungslager' (extermination camp). Auschwitz III - Monowitz, established on May 31st 1942 as an 'Arbeitslager' or work camp. There were also several sub-camps around these three camps. The first Commandant of Auschwitz was Rudolf Hoess; he was the one who put the "Arbeit Macht Frei" sign over the gate into the main Auschwitz camp. Translated into English, the words mean "Work will set you free". As you walk into the camp through the main gate, just like the millions of its prisoners, you look up at the infamous sign - Arbeit macht frei. We all felt a deep sadness that was exacerbated by utter silence and respect that the visitors showed as each of them transited through the gates. Then after a few visits inside the buildings you venture back outside and you are presented with the Wall of Death. Many prisoners were executed by firing squad here.



**Day 2 (PM)** – After visiting Camp 1 and a quick lunch, we then travelled 15 Minutes to Camp 2 – Birkenau. As we walked towards the iconic rail entrance, following the now disused railway tracks, you are taken aback by the sheer size of the footprint that Camp 2 actually covers. Totally open and exposed to the elements, with only the sheds for shelter, it is surrounded by high fences and scattered guard towers. In this camp there were up to seven gas chambers, using Zyklon-B poison gas and three crematoriums. Auschwitz II included a camp for new arrivals and those to be sent on to labour elsewhere; a Gypsy camp; a family camp; a camp for holding and sorting plundered goods and a women's camp.





When Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz on 27 January 1945, they found survivors as well as 836,525 items of women's clothing, 348,820 items of men's clothing, 43,525 pairs of shoes and vast numbers of toothbrushes, glasses and other personal effects. They also found 460 artificial limbs and seven tons of human hair shaved from Jews before they were murdered. The human hairs were used by the company "Alex Zink" (located in Bavaria) for the manufacture of clothing. This company was paying 50 pfennig/kilo. This equates to about 55 Euros / £46.00 in today's monetary value.

Towards the end of the War, the order from the German High Command was given to destroy the gas chambers to hide the Genocide. The facts are that the estimated number of deaths is that 2.1 to 2.5 million people were killed in the gas chambers, of which about 2 million were Jews, and the rest were Poles, Gypsies and Soviet POWs. These facts will always haunt humanity.

This visit was sombre, educational, highly thought-provoking and a thoroughly worthwhile trip that made us all think about the atrocities committed during the Second World War.

## Island View Forces Respite Association Holiday Home

RAFSC&TSW Association member Donnie Cameron has kindly sent the following information regarding a holiday home, on the Kintyre peninsular in Scotland, that is available to service and ex-service personnel and their families. The home and Association is a Registered Charity that is run by Trustee Mr Philip Heard, an elderly ex-Coldstream Guardsman. There is no charge for the use of the property, but Mr Heard asks for a nominal fee of £25 per week to cover the cost of utilities. The house can accommodate up to nine people with two bedrooms on the first floor (each with 2 double beds) and a single bedroom on the ground floor. There is an upstairs family bathroom as well as a shower room on the ground floor, which can be accessed easily by anyone with mobility difficulties.

The house boasts beautiful views of the sea and nearby islands. Kintyre is a very rural location with an abundance of beaches and woodland walks. Glenbarr is situated about 10 minutes' drive from Campbeltown which has supermarkets, pubs and cafes, a small hospital and a couple of distilleries. It also has a ferry service to the Ayrshire coast. In addition, there are ferry services to the Islands of Gigha, Islay (with even more distilleries!) and Arran.

If you wish to find out more, please contact Mr Heard via the webmaster at [treasurer@tswscdoasn.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@tswscdoasn.co.uk).





## MoD Stafford to Edwards AFB

By Sgt Russ Watson

Well, along with every other Sgt Supplier in Her Majesty's Royal Air Force, I received an email from our manning desk requesting volunteers for the position of Sqn Supplier for 17 (R) Sqn based at Edwards AFB, California, USA. Now, I love TSW but CALIFORNIA, I was intrigued...! Contact was made with the current incumbent, questions asked; was it really California? Was it an accompanied position? Could spouses work? Clearly I wanted to know if it really was in California and if I had to take my wife could I send her out to work...! Well, it is in California, yes I could take my wife and yes she could get a work visa. So an application was duly sent following confirmation from the Wing WO and my chain of command that they were content to release me.



I spoke to the manning desk and she said she would add my application to the multiple others she had received. I was not holding my breath. The criteria for fulfilling the position was in my favour though, I had 21 years time served and no overseas postings to my name, I had never done the whole Germany thing that the majority of people within my bracket had, this put me ahead of anyone who had been posted overseas previously in the pecking order to fulfill this position. Which was a point of high contention between my best mate Sgt Sid Mulholland, a fellow Wing warrior, and I. Sid has been back from Germany longer than I have been in the RAF but was still behind me in the pecking order due to me never being posted overseas before. What a shame. Dry those eyes Princess and bed in for the long run in the UK...!

Two weeks of waiting and wondering and hoping ensued. The Monday after the application list closed, I sat looking at my phone and was wondering when it would ring. Nothing all day, I was hoping the old saying of 'no news is good news' was correct and not hearing anything was a good omen. Manning desk Sgts are clearly sadists as she waited till 16:50 to ring me and inform me if I was still content to continue with my application then I was number one on the list. Was I happy to continue...?? When I pulled myself down from the ceiling and stopped celebrating like I had just scored the winning goal at Wembley I confirmed I was very happy to proceed.

Three phone calls ensued, firstly my wife, then our boy closely followed by Sid...!! Through grated teeth he graciously congratulated me, then dried his eyes...!!

90 extremely hectic days followed. Moving to the USA when you have a house in the UK you need to rent out, a





## MoD Stafford to Edwards AFB

dog you need to re-home, 2 cars you have to sell, a multitude of insurance policies, services, bank accounts and everything else involved with moving abroad that need cancelling along with applying for a USA visa and completing about a 1,000 forms is a tad stressful. I also had to continue working in the TSW Ops Rm and worry about handing that role over in a fit for purpose state. Sleep is over rated anyway.

Everything went to plan, multiple leaving do's were attended, emotional goodbyes conducted, our boy is a Squipper in the RAF based at RAF Brize Norton so his Mother didn't enjoy saying goodbye, I must be heartless as I just laughed at him having to stay in the UK as we flew off to California!

So California living is, in a word, AWESOME, followed by the obligatory...'DUDE'...! Everything is awesome and everyone is a dude!

Californian: 'Morning Sir'

Me: 'Morning mate'

Californian: 'Dude, your accent is awesome...!!'

And so on and so on...!!

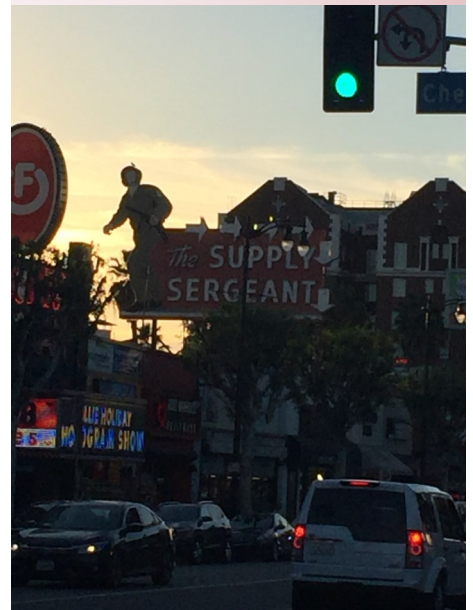
Edwards AFB is in the middle of the high desert in the Antelope Valley in Southern California and the sky is blue and cloudless and the sun shines over 320 of those days; it is in the middle of nowhere though and is enormous, from the 'Welcome to Edwards AFB' sign to the main gate is 10 miles on a 4 lane highway..!! A further 5 miles past the main gate and you get to work..!! As far as the eye can see is part of the base. Edwards has an awesome (you see, everything is awesome..!!) history in flight testing and some of the museum pieces and pictures are..well, you know, awesome!!

We are 2 hours from the LA beaches, and Venice beach is as crazy as everything you may have heard or seen!! Recreational pot is legal in California and the residents of Venice beach clearly enjoy said fact! Long beach down to Huntington Beach is gorgeous and the beautiful people of Beverly Hills and West Hollywood hang out at Santa Monica and Malibu Beaches.

San Diego is 3 hours away and is a great City, Vegas is 3 hours across the desert and San Francisco is about 5 hours away. California is home to some (awesome) state parks; Yosemite, Death Valley, Sequoia and the Redwoods State Park where the tallest trees in the world hang out.

All in all, the next few years should be an amazing experience, all thanks to Sid Mulholland going to Germany and good old manning regulations....!! I will keep you posted as to my Californication...dude!

After 13 years across 3 tours and 3 ranks, I'll always be a Wing Mong, but California Rocks Dude...!!



## The Matthews Sword 2016

The Matthews Sword is awarded annually to a TSW Corporal to recognise outstanding performance during the year. The Award comprises the equivalent of a day's pay and a miniature RAF officer's sword. It is presented by Group Captain Alan Matthews (OC TSW 1985-88), whose own ceremonial sword is held by the Wing. The 2016 winner was Cpl Chris Furlong who received the award at a presentation at Stafford on 9th February 2017.

Corporal Chris Furlong's contribution to Tactical Supply Wing during 2016 has been outstanding and in the finest traditions of the Unit. He has delivered to exceptional levels on exercise, operations and across a broad span of primary and secondary duties. His inspirational leadership, profound loyalty and unstinting professionalism have enabled him to stand out from his peers.



As one of the most experienced Corporals on Tactical Fuels Squadron, Furlong has been assigned a heavy exercise burden throughout the year. Of note, he was the TSW Detachment Commander for a demanding Combined Joint Expeditionary Force exercise with the French (Ex EAGLES AMARANTE) and played a pivotal role in TSW's support to Exercise DESERT ORYX in Oman.

Due to his consistently exceptional performance on such exercises, he was selected to plan, deploy and command TSW's initial deployment in support of Operation GASLOCK; a discrete deployment supporting helicopters in the Mediterranean. Faced with the notable challenges of minimal equipment and limited Host Nation Support, Furlong applied his significant talents and implemented an innovative yet effective refuelling solution, which delivered the required operational capability ahead of schedule. He then went on to add resilience, assuring uninterrupted operational support and setting the conditions for his successors.

Once back in the UK he was given no respite from the load put upon him and was immediately selected for acting Sergeant. He seamlessly assumed the additional duties of a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer and continued to perform to an outstanding level. Of note, he led a multi-trade Ops Team of 29 personnel on their major deployed re-validation exercise, which tests the team's ability to employ all of the Wing's capabilities, whilst in a full tactical environment. Despite the significant pressures of this role Furlong excelled, displaying impressive leadership and professional ability throughout.

Outside of the workplace, Furlong's dedication and support to the local community is unrivalled. As Deputy Chairman of the TSW Voluntary Services Committee he has instigated and built a lasting relationship with the Donna Louise Trust. This local charity provides palliative care for children with life changing illnesses. Furlong has committed many hours of his own time to lead work-parties in the grounds of the Hospice and has raised and donated over £60,000. Such has been his contribution that the charity has bestowed the great honour of making him an ambassador for their organisation.

In addition to the plethora of charity work he does for the Donna Louise Trust he continues to prove his dedication to the Service as a RAFA Regional Welfare Officer. In this role he has provided much needed help and guidance to veterans and members of the RAF, having successfully dealt with 8 welfare cases. Moreover, since taking on this role he has successfully recruited 6 sub-regional Welfare Officers from the ranks of TSW, who have all completed at least 1 case to a successful outcome.

In summary, Corporal Furlong's infectious enthusiasm and captivating sense of duty, coupled with his outstanding performance and inspirational leadership, have been unsurpassed within the Junior Non-Commissioned Officer Cadre throughout 2016. Extraordinarily selfless, he clearly symbolises everything that Tactical Supply Wing represents and continually promotes the ethos, camaraderie and core values of the organisation to a wide ranging audience. As a result, Corporal Christopher Furlong is duly recognised at the TSW Junior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year and is a worthy recipient of the Matthews Sword for 2016.



## CO TSW Farewell

By Wg Cdr Tim Moss

Unfortunately there comes a time when everyone has to move on from a position they love and for the CO of TSW this comes around all too often, as we are rarely permitted to remain in post for more than two years. Sadly, for me that time has come, having completed my two years this January. I've had a slight reprieve, in so far as I will be remaining in post until the 3 March, when my replacement Wg Cdr Jamie Miller takes over the reins.

To say it has been a 'blast' is an understatement. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the Wing. The people, as always, have made it for me. I've had the pleasure and honour to have worked with some of the best people you could ever meet, who are at the 'top of their game' and achieving great things on an almost daily basis.

The Wing has inevitably moved on over the last two years, as we transitioned from the campaigning period in Afghanistan to a contingent operations posture, not knowing quite where, or when we would need to deploy on an operation. Indeed not knowing what type of operation it could be, humanitarian, counter-terrorist/counter-insurgency, or a state on state against a peer, or near peer, opponent. We have done a few small bespoke ops, such as supporting humanitarian relief in Sierra Leone, during the Ebola outbreak, and standing by (in India) to assist in the relief effort following the Nepal earthquake disaster. We have also been engaged in supporting Op SHADER, with personnel now permanently deployed in Cyprus, supporting operations against Daesh in the Middle East and we have increased our presence in the Falkland Islands. However, by far the biggest challenge has been the increase in Exercises, in order to prepare us for a variety of contingent operations. These exercises have been both in the UK and in various locations around the world, including Europe, an area for many years we had not been greatly involved with.

All of these activities have put a strain on our manpower and resources and every section in both of the Squadrons have had to do their bit. Failure in any section of the Wing can lead to a failure to meet our mission and this means that everyone on the Wing has had to do their utmost to ensure success. I'm glad to say that in my time I have seen everyone rise to the challenge and excel. Teamwork is key and the Wing has pulled together to achieve a constant stream of successes. This is well recognised within Joint Helicopter Command and I'm glad to say that there have been a significant number of individuals from TSW who have received Individual and Team Commendations, in both the Queen's Birthday and New Year's Honours lists, over the last few years.

Personally, for me, one of the great pleasures has been the close relationship the Wing enjoys with the RAF SC & TSW Association. I think we have a rare and very special relationship and I feel deeply honoured that I have got to know some of the veterans of the RAF Servicing Commandos and their families. I have been particularly pleased that the Wing has been able to visit Normandy and now Burma, in order to learn more and honour the memories of those who took part in these momentous campaigns. I hope that these activities will continue after I've left, I know another trip to Normandy is being planned for later this year and I would encourage the Wing to visit Sicily and Italy, where the RAF SC were also present. The Association has also allowed me to rekindle old friendships with some of the ex-TSW members, as well as making new friends. I have enjoyed immensely the reunion dinners and I am deeply grateful for all the support that I have received from the Association and its members over the last two years.

Commanding TSW has been a great privilege and honour and I thank everyone who has made my time here so enjoyable. As I prepare to leave to go on a 6-month deployment to the Middle East I will be thinking of you and I look forward to being able to return and enjoy everyone's company again at future Association dinners and gatherings, as a former CO of one of the best units in the Royal Air Force.



### Diary Dates

Don't forget to fill in the following dates in your new diaries and iPhones and Androids etc for 2017:

**Friday 30th June 2017:**

Reunion Dinner

**Saturday 1st July 2017:**

Association AGM

TSW Families Day

Hangar Bash

## In Remembrance

We record with sadness the passing of the following members:

3231 SC	<b>Mr Albert Hayes</b>	Died 9th April 2016
3210 SC	<b>Mrs Betty Forde</b>	Died March 2016
3202 SC	<b>Mr John Burt</b>	Died 9th May 2016
3208 SC	<b>Mr W Risley</b>	Died 25th October 2003
1SP	<b>Mr Stan Swalwell</b>	Died October 2015
3210 SC	<b>Mr Doug Went</b>	Died 24 Aug 2016
3209 SC	<b>Mr Percy Lackey</b>	Died 24 Aug 2016
3210 SC	<b>Mr Bob Breeze</b>	Died 1st January 2017
3210 SC	<b>Mr Dougie Blair</b>	Died 14th February 2017
TSW	<b>Dave "Taff" Collier</b>	Died January 2017

## Your Committee

<b>Chairman:</b>	David Orr,	Tel: 07725 311115	E-mail: <a href="mailto:chairman@tswscdoassn.co.uk">chairman@tswscdoassn.co.uk</a>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Tim Newstead,	Tel: 07849 823551	E-mail: <a href="mailto:treasurer@tswscdoassn.co.uk">treasurer@tswscdoassn.co.uk</a>
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Martin Williams,	Tel: 01785 245053	E-mail: <a href="mailto:membership@tswscdoassn.co.uk">membership@tswscdoassn.co.uk</a>
<b>Welfare &amp; Publicity</b>	David Packman,	Tel: 01531 248294	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:welfare@tswscdoassn.co.uk">welfare@tswscdoassn.co.uk</a>

## A Final Plea

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

Thank you!



## AGENDA FOR THE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD IN THE SERGEANTS' MESS MoD STAFFORD AT 1100 ON 1st JULY 2017

1. Introduction and Reflections
2. Matters Arising from 2016 AGM
3. Tactical Supply Wing Report
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Membership Update
6. Election of Committee Members (Treasurer and Membership Sec)
7. Arrangements for 2018 including RAF Centenary involvement
8. AOB

## STOP PRESS... STOP PRESS... STOP PRESS...

### Association Partnership with Air & Ground Aviation

You will remember our long and happy association with JCB was put in suspended animation last year as a result of changing circumstances in their military business activities; and MOD's changing posture. The Chairman undertook at the 2016 AGM, to explore alternative industrial sponsors.

Your Committee is delighted to advise that discussions are continuing with Air & Ground Limited to establish a mutually beneficial link. Mr Ian Dodds, CEO of Air & Ground Ltd, is already a keen supporter of TSW and is willing to offer your Association some interesting opportunities (including Farnborough Airshow Tickets!) and your Committee will endeavour to formalise the connection in time to report at the 2017 AGM.

Air & Ground Ltd is a major supply and distribution company, serving a wide range of military and civilian customers