

Tiger News No 55

Compiled by Bob Cossey

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Air Marshal Cliff Spink CB, CBE, FCMI, FRAeS  
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Nigel Champkin-Woods (Woody) and his wife Alison with Dick Northcote at RAF Northolt at the beginning of their Tiger's Lair drive, linking most of 74's UK bases, on 11<sup>th</sup> July. Full story inside. Woody's drive was part of a busy few months for our Association and the NATO Tiger Association.

If you currently receive your Tiger News by post and you have an e-mail address to which it could be sent instead - a far cheaper option for the Association - please e-mail it to me at [bob.cossey@ntlworld.com](mailto:bob.cossey@ntlworld.com). Then, from the next issue, you will receive the electronic version!

I thought the Association might like a photo of its Vice President next to the latest Tiger acquisition from Tibet!

Boz Robinson

[Good to see you looking so well Boz. Regards from us all.]



**Congratulations** to our President, Air Marshal Cliff Spink, who from March 2012 to March 2013 will be Master of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators. This year Cliff is Master Elect. A small group of commercial pilots founded the Guild in 1929 which from the beginning was modelled on the lines of the old City Guilds and Livery Companies and became a Livery Company of the City of London itself in 1956. This increased not only the influence of the Guild, the 81st Livery Company to be formed in 800 years, but of the entire profession of pilot and navigator in the United Kingdom and overseas. Its motto is *Per Caelum Via Nostra* (Our Way Is By The Heavens) and its objectives are:

- To establish and maintain the highest standards of air safety through the promotion of good airmanship among pilots and navigators.
- To maintain a liaison with all authorities connected with licensing, training and legislation affecting pilot or navigator whether private, professional, civil or military.
- To constitute a body of experienced airmen available for advice and consultation and to facilitate the exchange of information.
- To strive to enhance the status of air pilots and air navigators.
- To assist air pilots and air navigators in need through the Benevolent Fund.

## Farewells

**Alexander Maule** was not an Association member but he was a Tiger. In total he served for 38 years in the RAF, ending his career as a Warrant Officer. He died on June 8<sup>th</sup> aged 80. Pete Johnstone recalls that 'when I arrived on the squadron on the 7th July 1965 Alec was Sgt i/c first line. When the squadron left for Tengah Alec remained at Leuchars and went to 11 Squadron.' As the senior non-commissioned officer in charge of first-line servicing he devoted many hours to resolving problems concerning the aircraft's starter systems. He was awarded the BEM for this work, the citation stating that he had supervised and inspired others by 'his personal example to work efficiently and enthusiastically on complex aircraft, frequently in adverse conditions.'



**Sqn Ldr Peter Carr**, who was the Tiger's CO between 20<sup>th</sup> July 1959 and 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1960, has died aged 86. Peter will be familiar to many of us as, when he was able to, he attended reunions with his wife Edna. Particularly memorable was the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reunion when he joined fellow Tiger COs Graham Clarke, Dick Northcote, John Howe and Cliff Spink. In the photo below Peter is in the centre of the group holding the Malan Memorial Sword.



Peter was born in March 1925 in Twickenham, the youngest of three sons. A mischievous boy (mischievousness is something that never left him) he became a member of Hampton Court chapel choir and then, having passed his 11 plus, he attended Hampton Court Grammar School. At 16 he first met his future wife, Edna. By this time he was a member of the Air Training Corps after which he joined the RAF, soon gaining his pilot's Wings. He subsequently proved himself to be a fighter pilot of exceptional ability and considerable bravery. This, and his devotion to duty, was officially endorsed when he was awarded the Air Force Cross (although Peter always maintained he found the medal in a packet of cornflakes!). In 1954 he was posted to the USA as an exchange pilot where, amongst other types, he flew the F-86 Sabre and F-100 Super Sabre.

It was whilst in the States that he first met Donald Campbell who was to eventually to entice Peter out of the RAF in 1960 to be his Project Manager and Reserve Driver on the Bluebird Land Speed Record attempt. By now he was a Squadron Leader and CO of the Tigers. His decision to leave was one which he frequently questioned afterwards, particularly when he found that Campbell was not an easy man to work with, that it was evident that the opportunity to drive Bluebird was increasingly less likely and that the payment of wages was erratic. With a family to support Peter decided he had to move on. He had made contacts within BP whilst in the States and he was invited to join them for a short while on the sales promotion side. Then he made the acquaintance of Irish millionaire John Essay with whom he established an air charter company at Gatwick airport in the early 60s and with whom he had the pleasure of flying royalty, VIPs and pop stars all over Europe. The Company was called Sky Charters and Peter was Managing Director but unfortunately this

venture came to an end when Essay's financial support ceased to be available. He stayed in air charter work for a few more years as MD from 1965 - 68 of Endeavour Aviation, then moving to CSE Aviation as Sales Manager and Demonstration Pilot. It was at this point he decided on a new venture and from 1969 - 1972 became the UK Dealer Development Manager of Mercedes –Benz before moving to Audi NSU and then from 1972- 1988 to Barclays De Zoete Wedd as Admin Director. He stayed with BZW until his retirement, which he enjoyed for a busy 23 years.

Returning to Peter's RAF career (1943 - 1960), the milestones were:

1944: Pilot Training in Texas  
1947-50: 73 Squadron Malta. Flying Spitfires and Vampires  
1950: CGS Leconfield  
1950-52: 54 Squadron Odiham. Flying Vampires  
1952-54: FWS Leconfield as an instructor  
1954-56: Nellis AFB Nevada, Gunnery and Tactics instructor. Graduated USAF FWS  
1956-59: West Raynham AFDS CFE.  
1959-60: Commanding Officer 74 Squadron Coltishall

Peter's RAF Awards and Commendations were:

1943 - Letter from the Under Secretary of State for Meritorious Conduct in assisting fellow injured cadets in November 1942

1954 - Air Force Cross

1955 - Letter of Commendation from the Commander of the Combat Crew Training Squadron at Nellis AFB for outstanding devotion to duty, initiative and professional ability.

1957 - Green Endorsement in his log book for recovering a spin in a Hunter that was being tested for aero modifications. The spin lasted from 36,000 ft down to 10,000ft

During his career, both military and civilian, Peter flew many aircraft types and differing marks of aircraft as pilot and co-pilot. Amongst them were De Havilland Tiger Moth, Vampire, Venom, Rapide, Dove, Heron, HS125. DHC Chipmunk, Beaver. Handley Page Jetstream. Supermarine Spitfire, Swift. North American Harvard, F-86, F-100, Republic F-84, Hawker Hunter, EE P1B, Dassault Mystere, Super Mystere, Hunting Percival Jet Provost, Cessna 172, 177, 175, 210, 411, Skyranger. Piper Cub, Super Cub, TriPacer, Cherokee, Comanche, Twin Comanche, Apache, Aztec, Arrow, Navajo. Beechcraft Bonanza, Twin Bonanza, Baron, Travel Air, Queen Air, Musketeer. Beagle B206, Jodel Ambassador, Turbulent. Rockwell Aero Commander, Jet Commander. Wassmer WA51. Bell Jet Ranger. Brantly helicopter. Aerospatiale Alouette. Levier Cosmic Wind Ballerina. Avro Lancaster, Anson, York. Airspeed Oxford. Douglas Dakota. Bristol Beaufighter. Gloster Meteor. Lockheed T-33. Boeing PT-17 Stearman. Miles Gemini. Moravia L200. Scottish Aviation Twin Pioneer.



For Peter the F-100 Super Sabre vied with the Hunter as his all time favourite aircraft, which may explain why he shone at Nellis. That and his attention to detail. Here he listens attentively as his American counterpart explains a technicality.

Last flight. Peter strides in at Coltishall having completed his final flight with 74 Squadron - and with the RAF. From the RAF he went to the States to work on the Bluebird Land Speed Record project with Donald Campbell.



*With thanks to Peter's wife Edna and his sons Russell and Alan for their help in preparing this overview of Peter's life. Our thoughts are with them and their families.*

I have also recently learned of the death of **Louis Nixon** who served as a Tiger for 4 years - October 1941 to December 1945. He began his time on 74 as a corporal and ended it as a sergeant.

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**The Battle of Britain: Portraits of the Few** is a tribute to the pilots that served with the Royal Air Force through one of the most critical periods of the Second World War. *Portraits of the Few* contains over 60 colour illustrations, capturing the images and character of the military aviators who were designated Churchill.

portraits, painted are action filled **Yeoman** whose the story of our



the 'Few' by Winston Accompanying the by artist **David Pritchard**, accounts written by **Chris** last book was *Tiger Cub*, own John Freeborn's time

with 74 Squadron. John features in this new book too. See the publisher's website, [www.fightinghigh.com](http://www.fightinghigh.com), for details. Whilst talking of John Freeborn, his daughter Julia has been in touch to say that his cremated remains have been buried (above) in the Liverpool Road Cemetery, Birkdale in Southport. So if you are passing and wish to pay your respects you can do so.

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## High Jinks

'I stumbled across your website whilst I was researching some bits and pieces about Horsham St. Faith (writes **Anthony Burke**) and recalled the following which you may wish to add to your history of 74 Squadron. Between mid 1960 and late 1961 I served on 56 Squadron at Wattisham. In early 1961 we were informed that we were to lose our beloved Hunter 6s. At some time, probably in early 1961, members of 56 and 111 Squadrons were 'posted' to 74 Squadron at Coltishall to 'learn all about E.E. Lightnings' because 74 had the Mk.1s. 56 and 111 were to get the first production batch of Mk.1As. (Not all Mk.1s were identical and all were different to Mk.1As - all of which which equals problems!)

'On our penultimate night at Coltishall, the whole squadron banded together and mounted a squadron flag which we had created on the flagpole of Norwich Castle. The local news the following night was intrigued by how it was done. We then went on to steal the missiles standing guard outside Station H.Q. and attached them to the wings of the Spitfire gate guardian (with rope I hasten to add).

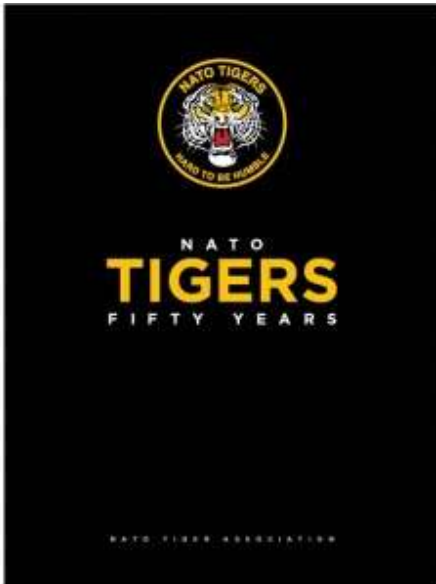
'Up to now everything was taken in good spirit by all. I still have the press cuttings, somewhere. Until the following and final night when Treble One decided to band together and carry off the gate guardian Spitfire in its entirety. They got about three yards when the entire lighting system on the camp was turned on. As I recall the whole squadron was charged and sanctions administered.'

## Sales Goods



See the new Association Sales Goods price list accompanying this issue of Tiger News which highlights new items for sale - including a smart new design of poloshirt available in black or white, baseball caps, good quality mugs with the squadron crest, stickers and embroidered patches (as shown here). All these items will be available at next year's reunion but can also be posted out to you at a small additional postage charge.

## NATO Tiger Association 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



It's been a busy year for the Tiger fraternity this anniversary year and although no longer operational 74 Squadron has been invited to attend the organised events. I would like to say a special thank you to the two gentlemen below, Col **Don Verhees** and Col '**Doc**' **Kauschmann**, both of the NTA, who made our participation possible. Don and Doc are pictured here at Fairford. Both were part of the team, along with Lt Col Ulrich Metternich, Gert Weckx and David Goovaerts, that was responsible for the production of the splendid anniversary book (left) which some of you have. There are copies remaining - log on to the NTA website ([www.natotigers.org](http://www.natotigers.org)) and click on Tiger Shop to order your copy if you don't already have one. You will not be disappointed



## 50th Anniversary Tiger Meet. Cambrai. May 2011.

Photos by Bob Cossey



The NATO Tiger Association (NTA) celebrated its 50th anniversary during the 2011 Tiger Meet at BA103 Cambrai. Over sixty aircraft from fifteen nations deployed to the base for what could well be the largest military exercise in Europe this year. For the seventh and last time in their long history, Escadron de Chasse 01.012 'Cambrésis', the last of the actively participating founding squadrons (74 Squadron having disbanded in 2000 and the 79th Fighter Squadron having redeployed to the States in 1993) had the honour of organising the Meet before they themselves will be disbanded and Cambrai closed at the beginning of 2012. However the French tiger tradition will be kept alive. SPA162 'Tigre', the 90 years old tiger flight within the squadron, will be transferred to BA113 Saint-Dizier where it will join EC 1/7 'Provence'.

Even with NATO operations over Libya and severe budget cuts throughout the military forces of NATO, the NTA was able to inaugurate a new member. 6 ELT from the Polish Air Force flying the F-16C/D joined the Association as a probationary member and 335 Mira from the Hellenic Air Force returned with aircraft after a three-year transition from the A-7 Corsair II to the F-16C/D. Another newcomer was honorary member 1 Squadron from the Slovak Air Force, bringing two MiG-29's for a long weekend visit and some ACM training sorties. We were also pleased to host observers from 59/1 Squadron of the Hungarian Air Force, and 37 Bomb Squadron USAF.

*Lt Col Ulrich Metternich, GAF retired. Taken from the NATO Tigers website.*

**Participating squadrons.**

EC01.012	Mirage 2000C/B	France
ECE 05.330	Mirage 2000 RDI	France
221 Squadron	Mi24V Hind	Czechoslovakia
AG51	Tornado IDS	Germany
211 Squadron	JAS-39C/D Gripen	Czechoslovakia
21 Gruppo	AB-212ICO	Italy
1 JTS	Saab OE105	Austria
321 Squadron	Tornado ECR	Germany
192 Squadron	F-16C/D	Turkey
335 Mira	F-16C/D	Greece
6 ELT	F-16C/D	Poland
11 Staffel	F-18C Hornet	Switzerland
301 Squadron	F-16A/B	Portugal
31 Squadron	F-16A/B	Belgium
142 Squadron	Mirage F1	Spain
1 Squadron	MiG-29	Slovakia
Ala-15	F-18 Hornet	Spain
814 Squadron	EH-101	United Kingdom



**Photo Gallery - a selection of the painted jets at Cambrai.**







Don, Doc and the team are producing a book to record the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tiger Meet.



[See www.natotigers.org/tigershop](http://www.natotigers.org/tigershop) for details.

## Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford 16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> July 2011

RIAT extended an invitation to the NATO Tiger Association to attend this year's Air Tattoo as part of their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations. This was not an operational Tiger Meet but a gathering of squadron personnel and their jets. Unfortunately, operational commitments reduced the numbers attending but nevertheless Tigers who participated in Tiger 50 brought some welcome colour to a wet and grey weekend. Apart from the Tigers' jets



there were some other very interesting aircraft on display too so there was a lot for Association members to see - and there were some good bars around in which to celebrate as well!

As founder members, an invitation was extended to us and that being the case we decided that for the first time we would take a sales stand so that the public could buy some 74 Squadron memorabilia. This meant the buying in of some new stock. Have a look at the website for what is now on offer. (If you receive your Tiger News by post you'll find a list enclosed).

May I say a big thank you to all those of you who came to Fairford and helped on the stand or came and had a very good day out - my wife Angie, Julie Gibson and Dick Northcote (pictured on the previous page in the stand with Bob), Rhod Smart, Kev Wooff, Henryk Ploszek, John Crow, Jim Jolly - and Matt Ford who came and helped on both days. During the course of the weekend we met a large number of Tigers who are not Association members (yet) but who promised to join. These were from the Phantom and Lightning eras mainly and were all very pleased to see their old squadron represented. It was very good too to see Derek Morter (who served with 74 on Meteors at Horsham St Faith) who had travelled over from his home in France to come and see us. So all in all lots of 74's Tigers at Fairford.



**Tigers of other nationalities gathered in the Crew Club**

Despite the best efforts of the weather there was some good flying at RIAT as this selection by **Simon 'Boris' McLaughlin** on this page and the next shows.





Hunter formation.

## Squadron Patches



I am a collector of Royal Air Force patches from all periods (writes **Asif Shamim**) and I have been trying to find items from 74 Squadron for a lengthy period but with limited success. I am particularly looking for one patch (illustrated) which was manufactured by Hobson & Son of London. Can anybody help?

Also, is there a chance that any of your Association members may have patches for either airmen or groundcrew from the late '40s through to the mid '90s that they are willing to part with?

Over to you Tigers! Asif can be contacted at [asifshamim7@hotmail.com](mailto:asifshamim7@hotmail.com)

## Tiger's Lair Drive

**Nigel Champkin-Woods reports on his epic drive linking 74's mainland bases to raise funds for the squadron museum.**

Well, will we do it or no? In fact will we start it or no? Three weeks before we were due to do so we had an accident in the MG in France which left us with a badly damaged car. Would we get it ready in time? Yes! With the help of Peter Best, Ecclesiastical Insurance and Bucks Sports and Classic Centre we had the MGB back on the road with a few days to spare with a full service having been carried out as well.

**Monday 11/07/11** We arrived at Northolt at 08.50 as requested by their PR People and things did not bode well when we found that our Chairman, Dick Northcote, who was there



to verify the speedo setting at the start of our drive, was at another gate! Still we got things sorted and set off on our Epic Circum-navigation (Dick's words!)

We fought our way out to the M25 and the traffic around Heathrow as we headed south towards Tangmere. The scenery was much better as we

headed down through Surrey with the hood down and the wind in our hair, well in Alison's at least! We arrived at Tangmere at 11.15 and the couple of pictures below confirm we got there. The Museum staff were very kind and let us use the toilet without charge!





Next stop was Selsey where we were told there was a plaque with details of the airfield but despite following instructions we could not find it so we had to make do with the village sign which we arrived at at 11.42. We then had the long haul towards Colerne near Bath. This was a really good bit of the day as we were taken right over Salisbury Plain with some fantastic views, one in particular of the White Horse. The car was going well and the weather was still very good. We stopped for lunch at a Burger King as they do chicken bits, which is good because Alison has a wheat intolerance which means burgers are a forbidden fruit. The miles seemed to be going well but I couldn't relax as I had to keep an eye on temperatures and pressures just in case.

We had passed into Wiltshire and were still on target (we thought)! We got a bit lost heading towards Colerne but arrived in the village at 14.50 which was just about on time. Initially we could not find the airfield so took a picture of the post office to prove we had been there and set off for Atcham in Shropshire. We found the airfield on the way out of the village.



We then hit our first snag. There was an accident on the M4 with an hour's delay between Atcham and us. Luckily Lilly (Garmin) told us about this and offered us an alternative route to avoid it but, although this was on A & B roads so would be slower, we had little alternative. Our target for Atcham was 16.30 but that wasn't going to happen. Still we were soon on to the M5 and heading north at 70 - 80mph (keeping an eye on the gauges). Soon we were driving through Worcestershire and around Bridgnorth, eating up the miles towards Shrewsbury and Atcham. We got a great view of the Wrekin (left) taking me back to my days at the Wrekin Gliding club at RAF Cosford in the 1960s.



We eventually arrived at Atcham and again there is no sign of the airfield today but in 1942 when 74 was there it was a two squadron fighter station, the other inhabitants being No 350 Belgian Squadron. It was then handed over to the Americans.

We arrived tired but full of memories of a wonderful day at 17.45. Luckily Alison's school friend Cheryl and her husband David live only two miles away so we were soon putting the hood up for the night ably assisted by Noah and his mum Tosh, two quite boisterous Golden Retrievers. David wanted a widescreen telly and Cheryl wanted a dog. Guess who won? Tosh's real name is Toshiba! We probably sat up putting the world to rights for too long and got to bed at 12.30.

**Tuesday 12/07/11** We were woken up at 06.45 by a bizarre phone call from the lost property office at Walthamstow Tube Station who had found a folder with a guesses form in it! Bob Cossey has tried to find out who it may have belonged to but to no avail.



Having checked the car's water and oil we were on the road for North Wales at just after 8am, again a lovely day so the hood was down. We meandered around Shrewsbury with wonderful views of the Welsh Hills in front of us. I hoped we would go around them and not over them as they are pretty big. Bit of a discussion as to which Llanbedr we need as there are two but we sorted that out and off we went again, arriving there at 11.00. Beautiful coast road with superb views of Snowdon with clouds on the summit. I've never seen it without them.



We headed further north and we were both feeling the need for a toilet break when I spotted a National Trust loo! I didn't know they did that sort of thing but it was as welcome as any stately home and just in time, for as we parked a Hawk from Valley went up the road with nothing on the clock but the maker's name and we both damn near filled our nappies. God they're loud that low! Anyway over the Britannia Bridge and on to the Island of Anglesey. We got it a bit wrong and ended up the wrong side of the airfield and had to backtrack to the proper side arriving at bang on 13.00, slightly behind schedule



No time for admiring the view as we needed to try to pick up time again so off we went heading for Scotland and Dumfries. Sat Nav took us on a different journey to Runcorn and over the Silver Jubilee Bridge across the Manchester Ship Canal and the River Mersey to Widnes, Warrington and the M6 at Haydock. Now we put the MG under pressure, driving for 160 odd miles at 70-75mph up the M6 and A74 to Moffat in Dumfries and Galloway. When we got there we discovered it was Moffat Gala Week and the main road was closed. We went one way and were turned back by stewards, so we went back to the beginning and were told to 'follow the bus' which we did until he couldn't get round a junction and started to reverse into us! The problem was we had a lorry up our rear end! Lots of blowing of horns and gesticulating and we were back on the A702 and heading towards Edinburgh. It was a gorgeous evening so we kept going.



We were looking for a hotel and admiring the wonderful scenery (left). It was no problem though as Lily the Sat Nav had identified a hotel on the A702. Problem however! When we got there it was boarded up. Still, it was only 7-ish and if push came to shove we could stay somewhere in Edinburgh. We came into Carlop and saw a sign to say that the Allan Ramsay Hotel is under new ownership with a new menu.

It looked a bit run down but we only need a bed and something to eat so we gave it a whirl. We were really pleasantly surprised when we went in: we were warmly welcomed and yes, they had a double room at a reasonable price so we decided we had had enough and booked in. The room was small but spotless so we dumped the bags and went down for a pint of good Scottish Ale - well I did, Alison had red wine. We had a fantastic meal - the meat pie made with locally sourced beef was good. We sat in the bar and ear-wiggled at the local Ladies 'Stitch & Bitch' meeting - they obviously have similar problems with teenagers in the wilds of Scotland as anywhere else!



We were up for breakfast which Alison ordered while I checked the oil & water - again none needed! I've never had a breakfast like it: wonderful sausage, great bacon, eggs and haggis. We had a quick chat with Gareth mine host. I know I queried 'Gareth' but as he said in a lovely Scottish accent 'I dinna choose it.' He and his young family have had the hotel for just three months and are turning it round. They're doing a great job and it will be superb if they keep up the standards.

**Wednesday 13/07/11** We dropped the hood and set off at about 8 for Edinburgh and Leuchars in Fife. Again the sun was shining as we headed around the busy Edinburgh ring road. The Forth Road Bridge loomed into view as we got stuck behind the biggest motor home I have ever seen in my life. It was based on an articulated lorry and doing about 25 mph! As we approached Leuchars we saw signs protesting about the RAF leaving Leuchars, something which came to fruition after we got home. Leuchars will go to the Army like so many others. We got there at 09.40, well ahead of schedule.



Time then to start to head for home! So it was back over the Forth Road Bridge and south towards Acklington. Alison tried to get a picture of the Forth Rail Bridge but the MGB is so low compared to the bridge railings that it was no good. The car was still going like a dream and what was surprising us is how comfortable it was. We were not getting out and feeling aches & pains - far from it: we were thoroughly enjoying the whole experience.



The views as we drive down the Northumberland coast road towards Alnwick were magnificent. We reached the village of Acklington at 1.00pm. RAF Acklington is now a prison, yet another Tiger Base closed down. Three open six closed is the tally so far and that will be two - seven soon as Leuchars is handed over to the Army.

I'm thinking 'The Great North Road' is far

more romantic, but there you go. The MG was really on song this morning: all levels were fine and gauges were normal so it's 70 - 80 heading towards Newcastle and the next destination. We slow down around Newcastle and Gateshead and the Angel of the North which we got a good view of.



Onwards now to Leconfield where we arrived at a few minutes before 5pm. Yet another base handed over to the Army, it is now Normandy Barracks and home of The Defence School of Transport and has recently featured on a television programme.





We now headed off down to Kirton in Lindsey for our last port of call today. I managed to ignore the two women in my life on this trip, Lilly in the Sat Nav and Alison with the map and we headed towards Hull instead of over the Humber Bridge. They both give me a bollocking and I was soon back on the right road and we arrived at Kirton at 6pm. Kirton is still open and is currently No.1 Air Control Centre (1 ACC), the RAF's only deployable ground-based early warning and air control radar unit.

We had booked into The Premier Inn at Lincoln and arrived there at about 6.45, tired but pleased with our progress. Again we were ahead of schedule as we were actually due to stay in Yorkshire. I was taken back to my early days in the RAF as we were close to RAF Waddington where I was stationed in the early days when Vulcans were the Great Nuclear Detergent!



**Thursday 14/0711** We had a good night's sleep and were up early and on the road again at about 08.00 with the hood down and no need to add oil or water. We found it difficult to find our way to the main gate at Wittering due to the way they have laid out the A1 now so we arrived at the village at about 09.30

Our next destination was Coltishall, way across in Norfolk and not on the best of roads. We got to the outskirts of King's Lynn and it started to spit with rain which is OK if you keep above 40 as it just goes over the top. As we left Kings Lynn though it started to get a bit heavier so we decided to put the hood up. Just as well as by the time we got to Swaffham it was pouring down and it looked like my sealing on the windscreen had not been a total success and Alison was trying to stop the flood with paper

handkerchiefs! It eased a bit as we headed north of Norwich to arrive at Coltishall at about 12.00. Once again this base is closed and is being turned into a housing estate.



It was now just a short drive to Horsham St Faith and the City of Norwich Aviation Museum, hopefully the home of the 74 Squadron Museum in due course. We arrived at 12.22, had a quick chat with the new administrator and used the facilities before setting off towards Ipswich and Wattisham. Once again this is another base which has been handed



over to the Army who use it for Apache helicopters. RAF Search & Rescue is also based there so at least we still have a presence. We arrived at Wattisham Station as it is now known at 2.15 and decided not to stay with my brother at Walton on Naze in Essex but try to keep going and get to Biggin Hill, south of the Thames tonight. So it was onwards to Goldhanger, passing through the small town of Tiptree which many of you may have heard of if you have eaten any Wilkins jams or marmalade. The

distinct smell of strawberries drifted across our nostrils as we passed by the factory and on to the Essex marshes and to Goldhanger which we arrived at at 3.20, again well ahead of schedule. There is no sign of the base here at all so we headed off towards Southend On Sea. Getting on the A127 we hit the first real traffic of the whole trip and had a slow slog into Southend before heading a little north towards the airport (once RAF Rochford). We couldn't get very close due to roadworks so decided to go around the back way to find something to prove we had been there. Having done so we decided that as it was only a quarter past four we would certainly get across the river and hopefully to Biggin Hill and then on towards Lymnpe. We stopped for coffee at yet another bridge, this time the QEII at Dartford.





We continued around the south of London and arrived at Biggin Hill at just after 6pm. With photos taken it was time to find a hotel on the way to Lymnpe. Travelodge could only give us Gatwick, too far in the opposite direction and Premier Inn had nothing. What the hell is going on? No hotels anywhere! Tried the Railway Hotel at somewhere but it's not a hotel! Finally found one with a double room but it's £180 per night and breakfast extra - a bit rich for our blood. However we did find the reason for the lack of hotels in Kent. It was the Golf Open at Sandwich and also the Kent County Show at Detling, yet another closed RAF station. We decided to head towards Lymnpe and see what we could find. If nothing was available we would have to sleep in the car - not a preferred option with the Memsahib I can tell you! We tried Tonbridge Wells and one hotel had two singles at £80.00 each, so

we went on to Tonbridge with the night in the car looking more likely all the time. We tried two more in Tonbridge but no good. They did suggest the Langley in Tonbridge however and thank God they had a twin at £60.00 plus £5.00 each for breakfast. We put the car to bed and headed for our room. Alison pulled the bedclothes back to put our nightclothes out only to find there was no top sheet on one of the beds! At least it was very clean. We got a sheet from reception, made the bed and retired to the garden for a beer which tasted wonderful I can tell you. Dinner left a little to be desired but we were beyond caring by then.



**Friday 15/07/11** Surprisingly we had a very good breakfast and the MG's oil & water were still fine, so we dropped the hood and set off on the last leg at about 8.am with the sun shining. There was very little traffic so we arrived at Lymnpe at 09.15. Again the airfield has disappeared and is now an industrial estate. We needed to get to Manston.....and what is between us and Manston? You guessed it - Sandwich and the bloody golf! We took a look at

the map and decided the best route was to head to Canterbury then Margate and Manston. This would take us longer but better than getting embroiled in jams around Sandwich. We arrived at Manston at 10.30 and made the obligatory museum toilet stop!



As you can see Manston is still in use as Kent International Airport.

We were really on to the home stretch now and heading north to our last two stops. The traffic was good and we made good time to the Dartford crossing where it was a little sticky but we were soon emerging out of the tunnel and into the Essex sunshine. It was getting sticky on the M25 too but we soon hit the M11 and headed up one junction to North Weald where we arrived at 13.00. Some small aircraft are still operating from here. Then it was a quick dash to London Colney which we get to at ten to one





It was now time to ring Dick and tell him we should be at Northolt at quarter to three and also let Paddy Gallagher, our contact there, know as well. The M25 was hopeless so we cut in and used our memory of roads when we lived at Ickenham 25 years ago and arrived bang on time where Dick verified we had travelled 1,725 miles since we left on Monday, Dick had to return to work but Paddy escorted us back to the Polish Spitfire where we

started from. We were delighted to find that Wg Cdr Chris Platt, Deputy Station Commander, wanted to welcome us back which we really appreciated. Even more appreciated was when Cadet Corporal Tim Evans and Cadet Milly Eckrill from 267 (Twickenham) Sqn ATC appeared with some glasses and a chilled bottle of Pink Fizz. What a welcome and that fizz tasted the best ever!



Well, we did it! We had no problems with the car, saw some wonderful scenery, got a very healthy tan and met some wonderful people on the way and raised some money for the museum. And the winner? It was Beryl Kew from Thame who entered on the Sunday before we left when we did a trip on the river with the Thame Classic Motor Club. Her guess was 1,723 - only two miles out. Woody is seen here congratulating her.

Would we do it again? Definitely, but in the Honda with the caravan so we can take our time and really see the fantastic scenery.

Thanks Woody. Congratulations to you both from us all. And our thanks too for the £663 you raised for the museum fund and for your generosity in donating the £100 winning prize. For those of you who aren't aware, the idea was to raise the money by guessing, at £1 a go, the total distance Woody and Alison would drive, hence Dick's verification of the start and finish mileage. Thanks also to Dick who provided the decals you can see on the MG and which meant everybody was aware of the purpose of the drive. (Woody says that all the signs came off with no damage to the MGB. However what took Dick and his team less than an hour to put on took Woody 3½ hours to take off!).

We must thank Dick as well for the banner and pop-ups which he provided for the Association sales stand and which you will see at the 2012 Reunion.