

Welcome

Short and sweet

First I'd like to welcome everybody to our 2015 reunion. It's great to see so many people make the effort and it's a credit to Bob and Yvonne who coax us all with their emails to get us all together.

I'd particularly like to welcome Carl Reynolds and Mick Stelmach after so many years. I'd like us all to spare a thought for the lads that have been, and still are going through a rough time.

I'm afraid I'm not as eloquent as Ian so bare with me. At Halton I got Ian to write a scathing letter to my ex girlfriend because she started going out with my best mate a week after I had finished with her. He wrote the letter which was excellent, and very scathing. She wrote back asking me who had written the letter

Reunions

I'm not a great supporter of them I have to say. This one however is special. Every one of the guys in our entry took something away with them from Halton some didn't give the things back but that's another subject. Every one of us has memories of the place, some good some bad, but whatever we experienced there, carved our lives. The guys who made the grade there weren't necessarily the successful ones. Some guys went on to achieve great things in the RAF. Some in Civvy Street. I just plodded along as a JT for 9 years and vowed not to work on aircraft again. Well that was the plan. I then turned down Saudi because I didn't want to work in the desert on aircraft. Well at least I managed to put that off for thirty years. My point is that something must have stuck those 44 years in spite of things good or bad to bring us together every now and then for a chat and a pint. And it's a nice weekend away.

Just as I'd finished writing this on Thursday, Word packed up and I had to rewrite it. Forgot to save it.

When I went to Halton I'd just been turned down by the Navy.

I left school on the Friday after my last exam and joined the RAF on the Monday. I hated uniforms, discipline and school. So I joined the RAF. I wanted to be a Radar tech in the Navy. Two years later when we passed out I was still thick as a brick when it came to life.

I hated Halton. God I was young and I couldn't believe years later that there were people younger than me. It took me a year to realize I had to pass exams to finish. Then I had to retake them with bloody Sgt McAndless and go to school in the evenings.

We killed poor Mr. Varty off. He had heart attack after our session with him.

I remember Ian changing the words to "the boxer" to fit the apprentice scheme.

I am just a poor boy though my story's seldom told

I have squandered all my money on

NAAFI wagon cigarettes and porny books

I used to hitchhike up to Brum every weekend I could, taking someone with me when possible. I took Pete Dunn and Paddy Lynch at the same time, having no concept of catholic or protestant. They were just mates a long way from home. Dick and I got a lift one Sunday from the Mayor of Warleys driver in his official car. Eating the ham sandwiches in the back that my mother had made for the journey.

A few days ago Steffi asked me how I was getting on with my speech. I said I'm gonna wing it and she said don't embarrass me. How am I doing?

The first night I slept in my own bunk after being promoted on two wing was really strange, no banter, no noises weird. All that power and I vowed not to be a little Hitler like the one we had had previously. But we got him back with a steel bucket which Geordie accidentally let go of when we found him in the toilet on our entry night.

I remember coming back from our time camping in Wales and standing in the queue at the NAAFI on one wing with my mouth watering at the prospect of beans on toast.

Someone will remember this.

One night we went drinking in Wendover and on the way back we were very happy and I noticed someone behind us singing about 224. I lagged behind told him to keep his mouth shut and dropped the nut on him which believe me is not easy for someone my size. Well I caught up with the main bunch and made it back to the block for a kip. I woke up went to schools and my day got slightly worse as Mick Stelmach asked me what possessed me to drop the nut on a boxing champion from 224 entry. And oh by the way he's looking for you. Well I met him and explained to him that beating me up wouldn't take very long and I wasn't worth the trouble and I was extremely sorry for picking on the wrong guy.

Happy days

Talking of happy days I'll just leave you with a thought from my nine year old granddaughter who was listening to all the talk of new babies two weeks ago. She asked if babies were expensive. We all replied that yes they were. She said no are they expensive to buy? We asked her what she meant. She said well Lucy's baby was over 10 pounds and I was only 6 pounds six but Oliver was 6 pounds 8

Finally I would like to thank Bob and Yvonne for organizing this weekend it's always great to reminisce and thanks to all the ladies that have to put up with us while we are doing it.

Thank you.

Keith Godden