5131 (Bomb Disposal) Sqn
fulfill commitment by providing both IED destroy and IED neutralise teams in Afghanistan
RAF Wittering gets a new travel agency - with a twist

A new kind of travel agent has opened for business in Wittering, one where the emphasis is on personal service and that is open seven days a week, including evenings and weekends.

Wittering based Emma Savage has gained award winning company Travel Counsellors which is one of the top scoring companies in the world when it comes to customer service, having achieved a world beating score of over 90% in its customer satisfaction survey.

As part of one of the fastest growing travel companies in the UK, Emma can use the company’s award winning technology to search through hundreds of suppliers in a matter of minutes to find the best options for the customer. With over 18 years experience in the travel industry, Emma is able to tailor make trips to meet each individual’s travel needs, and because she works from home, she is more than happy to speak to customers in Wittering and Cotswolds at a time that suits them, even if it is outside normal working hours. Whether you are looking for a family holiday, romantic break or group skiing trip, Emma can make your dream holiday a reality at a competitive price.

Travel Counsellors has been voted Travel Agent of the Year for 4 years in a row in 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2010 by readers of the Guardian, Observer and Guardian Unlimited.

For more information or to book your next holiday contact your local Travel Counsellor
Emma Savage
0845 056 7564 or 07941 712951
emmasavage@travelcounsellors.co.uk
www.travelcounsellors.co.uk/emmasavage
So there I was, on a beautiful Saturday evening in early May, sitting having a beer in a historic square in Rome after a wonderful day’s sightseeing at the Queen’s expense, when I got the call: “Hi mate, it’s Rich Knighton. How’s the Royal College of Defence Studies going? You know we thought I got the call: “Hi mate, it’s Rich Knighton. How’s the Royal College of Defence Studies going? You know we thought I got the call: “Hi mate, it’s Rich Knighton. How’s the Royal College of Defence Studies going? You know we thought...
On Your Bike for Charity

Staff from the MDHU Peterborough took part in a 24-hour cycle in a bid to raise funds to build a new war memorial in Peterborough.

The mammoth task was completed on exercise bikes in the hospital’s main atrium and the overall target was to cover 880 miles - the distance between the six ‘military’ hospitals within the United Kingdom. But the ‘cyclists’ exceeded this figure much to the delight of participants and spectators who came to watch.

The ride was to raise money for the Peterborough branch of the Royal British Legion (RBL) and the campaign for a prominent new war memorial in the city. The RBL, alongside Peterborough City Council and the Peterborough Veterans’ Association are attempting to raise £45,000 last year.

Peterborough and Stamford Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executive, Nik Patten, and Commanding Officer for the MDHU Wing Commander Kevin Mackie, started the ride. They then handed over to six teams of six, who cycled in four-hour shifts on two bikes ensuring that cycling was continuous for the 24-hour period.

Wg Cdr Mackie said: “It was great fun to start off the ride and it was nice working with Nik. We thought it would be a great opportunity to show the MDHU is here and to support the community, while also keeping our guys’ skills up-to-date.

The event was a success and with a combination of sponsor money and generous donations from the public the total amount raised was about £20,000 - a significant amount towards the £45,000 target.

Organisers of the event, Cpl Kat Jones and Cpl Hayley Rogers, were extremely pleased with the efforts of all involved and were delighted with the amount of money raised.

By Cpl Hayley Rogers

RAF COTTESMORE CELEBRATE AWARD SUCCESS

A sunny weekend in Eastbourne saw a group of servicemen and women from RAF Cottesmore receive an award in recognition of their outstanding fundraising achievements in support of the Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA), raising just short of £20,000 last year.

The Sir John Bolker Trophy was awarded at the Association’s Annual National Conference, and recognised the Station for raising the second highest amount of any RAF Station for the Association’s Wings Appeal in 2011.

The award was received on behalf of the Station by the Officer Commanding RAF Cottesmore, Wg Cdr James Savage, accompanied by the Station’s RAF AF Liaison Officer (BRAFLO) Chief Technician David Caven and fellow RAFAFLO’s Corporal Tracey Wagener and Senior Aircraftsman Neil Smith.

Wg Cdr Savage said: “This is a truly amazing achievement against a backdrop of uncertain times for RAF Cottesmore and its personnel, and emphasises the heart and resilience of the men and women of the Station”.

Cpl Tracey Caven said: “The amount raised is also testament to the generosity and support of the local community for what is a truly worthwhile cause. The Association is dedicated to supporting serving and former RAF personnel and their families. Whether it’s an injured airman fighting to get back on his or her feet, a young daughter missing her parent away on overseas operations or a WWII veteran needing a shoulder to lean on, they are there to help.”

By Squadron Leader (Ret’d) A W Walsh Media & Communications Officer

RAF ROAD RELAY CHAMPIONSHIPS

B y kind permission of the Station Commander, Group Captain Richard MA FCILT RAF, the RAF Road Relay Championships took place at RAF Wittering on Thursday 4 Aug 11. A total of 11 male teams and 5 female teams attended the Championships hosted for the fourth time in succession at RAF Wittering. The male competition was over (4 x 5 km) and the Ladies (3 x 5 km).

The race was held in rainy and breezy conditions on an accurate 5 km route using the virtually traffic free Wittering airfield perimeter roads. The course followed an ‘out around a loop and back’ format taking in a circuit of Wigg Wood.

Ladies 3 x 5km

The opening leg saw the ladies led home by Ruth Cark from High Wycombe recording 21 min 29 sec, unfortunately this was a solo run with no teammates available to make up a complete team. Cpl Sarah Perkins secured second place for Wittering, 22 min 30 sec, secured the lead and SAC Mark Peart 17 min 40 sec brought the team home to victory in 68 min 24 sec a new male team course record. Waddington “A” were second. Waddington “B” were third team across the line, but ineligible for the RAF Team bronze medal as Matt Bundan could only count for one team. Brampton Wyton Henlow “A” picked up the bronze medals with 74 min 16 sec. A total of ten runners broke the 18 min barrier and there was a promising run from a Junior runner under 20 - SAC Thompson (Cott/Wit) in 18 min 53 sec.

Men 4 x 5km

The opening leg saw Cpl Matt Bundan (Waddington) run 16 min 35 sec. Matt “Texas” from his Heckington 10, mile race victory the previous weekend, elected to run two relay legs, with his main effort being saved for Waddington “A”.

The second leg saw Cottam/Wittering moving into second – Cpl Pete Norris 17 min 19 sec, on the third leg Cpl Steve Robinson 16 min 32 sec, secured the lead and SAC Mark Peart 17 min 40 sec brought the team home to victory in 68 min 24 sec a new male team course record. Waddington “A” were second. Waddington “B” were third team across the line, but ineligible for the RAF Team bronze medal as Matt Bundan could only count for one team. Brampton Wyton Henlow “A” picked up the bronze medals with 74 min 16 sec. A total of ten runners broke the 18 min barrier and there was a promising run from a Junior runner under 20 - SAC Thompson (Cott/Wit) in 18 min 53 sec.

By Flt Lt Carl Thompson

In Brief

by Cpl Hayley Rogers

The event was a success and with a number of basic instructions that will help keep you safe on the road.

• Always wear a helmet that’s the right size for you and is fitted correctly. Don’t forget the chinstrap.

• Plan your journey with your parents and do your best to stick to cycle paths and quieter roads. If the road looks busy, get off and walk.

• Wear something bright or reflective to make sure everyone can see you coming!

• Ride your bike with reflectors and good strong lights if you’re going to be riding around dusk or dark.

• Park your bike with thought for other people, use a cycle stand and lock it to something secure.

• Be careful near animals. Give them plenty of room as you cycle past and don’t scare them with your bell.

• For the Car Driver. Don’t drive too close to the interaction with vehicular traffic. Be aware of any RAF Station for the Association’s Wings Appeal in 2011.

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By Flt Lt Carl Thompson
The 5th Cdr opened the event with a speech emphasising the importance he placed on Leadership and encouraging those present to fully embrace the day’s activities. OC TDF then went on to explain about the GETR and how individuals could use it as a template for their personal and professional developmental objectives.

They then had the chance to complete the GETC Air Power Questionnaire. The aim of the questionnaire is to gauge the knowledge of individuals at a given rank and experience level. The results are then analysed to ascertain if the current training and experience level are appropriate.

As part of the ongoing delivery of The Generic Education and Training Requirement (GETR), RAF Wittering held a Force Development (FD) Day targeted specifically at JNCOs from Wittering, Cottesmore and MdHu(P). The Training Objectives (TO) of the FD Day were to develop the capabilities of JNCOs so in the future they can operate at the next rank. Additionally, it was to explain about the GETR and how individuals can use it as a template for their personal and professional developmental objectives.

The main thrust of the FD Day saw 5th personnel and members of the FD Sqn organise and run 3 interactive Carousels linked to the following 8 Core-Competencies of FD and the GETR:

- Air Power
- Leadership
- Communication
- Ethics & Heritage
- Military Skills
- Force Protection
- Organisation

The first Carousel, hosted by the SwO, was centred on the activities of the WOs & Sgts’ Mess and was aimed at Ethics, Heritage, Care Values and Standards, and Verbal and Written Communication. Here individuals received a detailed introduction to The Mess and all the traditions and etiquette that go with being a Mess Member.

The second Carousel, hosted by the PEG Fit, involved individual teams rotating through different scenarios at the S131 (BD) Sign Trig Area. These scenarios tested Leadership, Management, Navigation Skills, Military Skills and Force Protection. The first scenario was to successfully deal with a Taliban defector (Cpls Wright and Aldred) who were offering information in exchange for money. Despite the language barrier (their Pashtu was rubbish) teams managed to successfully obtain the information needed to proceed to the next task – the casualty.

The realism of this next scenario cannot be emphasised enough and our thanks go to Ampthill in Action for kindly taking this scenario forward. This scenario tested individuals first-aid skills to the limits in dealing with his wounds and ensuring that they kept him alive ready for evacuation to specialist medical aid.

The last Carousel was a series of discussion periods that focussed on the RAE on Deployed Operations, the Morality of War and Welfare and were aimed at developing Personnel Management, Communication, Air Power and Ethics, Care Values and Standards.

The discussions on Deployed Operations were led by Fit Lt D’Aubyn, a Typhoon pilot from XI Sqn stationed at RAF Coningsby, Flt Lt Plant and Flt Lt(Rev) Dyer led on Military Skills, Fit Lt Fisher and Cpl Styles-Hudson gave an insightful account of a Medical Emergency Response Team on operations.

Fit Lt Plant and Fit Lt(Rev) Dyer led on the Morality of War with a hard hitting presentation that provoked much debate on the subject. Could you follow Orders without question or would you have the moral courage to be able to distinguish between right and wrong and do something about it.

Fit Lt Brandlow and her Team from PSF covered Welfare, stimulating discussions on how to deal with an individual who had issues in his personal life. Should he be counselled or disciplined. If so, how would that be carried out and what support agencies are available to assist JNCOs. The Team also made clear the distinction between Minor and Major Administrative Action and that of Disciplinary Action and the potential impact on the individual concerned.

This particular discussion period seemed to draw very favourable comment from the majority of those who took part. The ability to provide welfare support and disciplinary guidance were seen as fundamental attributes needed for JNCOs and the opportunity to discuss how to talk through and implement a particular strategy was welcomed.

During the de-briefing session, the DS commented on how everyone had really embraced each of the Carousels and hopefully they had gained something from it. This is Cpl Carol Fountain’s experience of the day.

“Nobody knew what to expect from the day, it had been kept really quiet. Water bottles, water proofs, note pad, pen and packed lunch ready for a day out of the office! The first brief gave us an insight into this day, exploring the reasons for Force Development and the 8 Force Development Resources (GETR), which was interesting as this is a new concept breaking down the 5 pillars even more.

“Taking ownership” seemed to be the phrase of the day, so we grabbed our lunch on the move over to S131 8 Sep for our next stop. The leadership exercise saw, (team effort), instructions in an envelope and some equipment by our fleet, communication was the key to achieving our aim. One central point and lots of grid references later the HLS was constructed. The debris was constructive, bringing out positive and negative points, not of the task, but about being a JNCO and being valued at this level from both subordinates and superiors, many of us feeling very undervalued by the RAF as a whole.”

Back to TDF for our last few briefs: Welfare and Discipline - Covering the responsibilities of a JNCO. It was interesting to find out how you can influence your subordinates in the way in which you conduct your daily duties, how you can help them out of difficult situations, either directly or indirectly by pointing them in the direction of appropriate help and advice. Advice was given on the discipline side, scenarios were given and it was interesting to see how different JNCO’s would deal with them, with there not always being just one right answer.

The Padre next… The Theory of War. A very interesting and humorous discussion about philosophers and there views on War. What an interesting concept to think that God doesn’t mind if you shoot somebody because of your job and ‘Card Alpha’ Rules of Engagement allow it!

Finally it was left to OC FP Fit to thank the FDS staff for all the hard work that had gone into putting on this event and stated that the Key Learning Points would be taken forward into putting on this event and stated that the Key Learning Points would be taken forward into the next FD Day on 8 Sep 11 aimed at the sgt, cht techs and FS.

By FS Ash Hall
Harley’s Diner was established in 2008 to provide their customers with “Great Food, Great Music”. Owner, Richard Swinscoe and his family are long time Harley Davidson fans and avid riders. They designed Harley’s Diner to combine their passion for motorcycles, great food and classic rock and roll music.

Harley’s Diner has taken inspiration from American diners and has developed something for everyone’s taste, making it both biker and family friendly. This unique theme has made it popular with people of all ages. In keeping with the “Great Food, Great Music” ethos the menu has taken classic American dishes and given them the Harley’s Diner twist with big and tasty breakfasts, burgers, steaks, fish and Creole chicken.

The Kool Kids menu is a hit with the younger customers and their parents as it provides value for money as well as a tasty meal and includes a drink and ice cream.

The Harley’s Diner crew themselves are friendly and a warm welcome awaits you on your visit. As well as being busy serving up the “Great Food!” they are also helping to support both local community and national charities. The 1st Harley Daze event in aid of the Afghan Hero’s Charity brought the local and biker communities together to raise £300. Richard is a member of the local HOG Riders Group which has supported the local children hospital with a toy run, the Annual Ride to the Wall at Lichfield in aid of the fallen and The Afghan Heroes Ride through Wootten Bassett. The Harley Diner Crew have also supported local events such as the Deeping Beer Festival, Deeping Tennis Club and the Deeping Rotary Club Raft Race and this recognises Harley’s Diner as increasingly at the heart of the Deeping community.

Harley’s Diner is visited by customers from Leeds to Birmingham to London. So next time you’re out and about near Deeping or Peterborough why not come down and become one of our “Diners and Dinettes” and see yourself on our website at www.harleysdiner.co.uk.
On 11 Jun 11, an initial 25 RAF Medical Reservists arrived at Queen Elizabeth Barracks, Strensall to begin their 15 days continuous training. At its peak, 65 personnel from the Medical Reserves Wing attended the exercise. Exercise SERPENT RISE was the first time both Medical Reserve Squadrons had come together under the same banner for collective training. The specialist and diverse skill sets from across the RAF Medical Reserves meant that a variety of roles had to be catered for; professionals included Flight Nursing Assistants, Paramedics, ITU nurses, A&E nurses, General nurses, Mental Health nurses, an Emergency Medicine Consultant and a Consultant Anaesthetist.

The training provided enhanced Force Protection military skills, medical role-specific training, clinical training, a specialist Medical Forum and culminating with a consolidation phase. The first week of the exercise focused on Force Protection training including marksmanship principles, navigation, camouflage and concealment techniques and an escape and evasion exercise. The first week also allowed Reservists to familiarise themselves with the HOSPEX facility, whilst gaining an appreciation of the patient journey through the various stages of the Aeromedical Evacuation pathway.

During the second weekend, additional RAF Medical Reservists arrived for a specialist Medical Forum. The Forum allowed the Reservists to receive up to date Intelligence and Operational aeromedical evacuate 75 personnel from a fictional but realistic nation.

Within the same scenario, the Surgical Support group were tasked to design an Aeromedical Staging Unit (ASU). In addition to helping personnel understand the capabilities provided by the RAF Medical Services, the exercise helped personnel gain an understanding of their role within the scenario. The scenario utilised for this planning would in fact be the scenario for the consolidation phase of the exercise, where personnel could put into practice what they had learnt so far.

The addition of a company which specialises in providing Amputees for the military and film-making helped personnel into scenario and made the consolidation phase more realistic and challenging for the Reservists. The scenario was designed to use the whole Aeromedical Evacuation chain, with serials beginning at Point of Wounding, where casualties were met by the Medical Services, the exercise helped personnel understand their role and responsibilities. The scenario for the consolidation phase of the exercise was provided over 650 Man Training Days. Following a journey through the Role 3 MTF, patients, when fit to fly were transferred to the ASU which acts as a departure lounge for the sick, wounded and injured. At the ASU patients were cared for and prepared for Strategic Aeromedical Evacuation to the UK.

Overall Exercise SERPENT RISE proved a great success and in total the exercise provided over 650 Man Training Days Analysis of the internal validation and remarks from the Reservists means next years Exercise will likely be combined and larger in scale. It will always be a challenge to develop a training package for experienced individuals who span numerous skill sets; however, bringing the two squadrons and the HQ element of the Medical Reserves Wing together capitalises on the experiences, knowledge and enthusiasm to be part of the RAF Medical Services of the Reservists and their Directing Staff.
This year’s annual Countess of Wessex Cup was hosted by HMS Daring on Horsea Island on 6 July. The crew of the ship very kindly hosted teams and supporters from both RAF Wittering and 5 Rifles between 5–7 July. Accommodation was provided on board HMS Bristol and in addition to the main event, tours of HMS Excellent, HMS Victory and HMS Daring were organised.

RAF Wittering was the previous holder of the Cup following a win in its host town on home soil in the inaugural competition last year. This year we were ably represented by a 10-man team comprising personnel from 3 Sqn, Holding Wg, 42(E) Wg and 85 (B) Wg. Special thanks go to SAC’s Steeden-Smith Hignett for stepping in to fill the empty places in 3 Sqn, Holding Wg, 42(ES) Wg and 85 (EL) Wg; by a 10-man team comprising personnel from HMS Bristol and in addition to the main event, tours of kindly hosted teams and supporters from both RAF Wittering and 5 Rifles for being a sumo wrestler for a trim physique in 2 min flat!

As the day progressed and the Army and Navy teams compiled the Course we were treated with a BBQ, which was very nice indeed. Unfortunately, the sausages were extremely well done and the charcoals was lovely. Since our team ran the Course first they managed to sample some of the BBQ delights and join the red of us in some constructive banter with the other spectators. We were discussing what and whose team were going to win the cup this year (not a foregone conclusion.)

During this time the Senior Ranking personnel from each Service and HMH the Countess of Wessex were also in attendance and appeared to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. (For the ladies who are interested in fashion HMH was wearing an elegant pair of skinny jeans and a blue and white jumper, and furiously enough a HMS Daring gas mask jacket, with the footwear being a pair of beige platform sandals!) Following the main event team the event was an impromptu tug of War competition which was a resounding draw all told. Importantly though, HMS Daring beat HMS Bristol in all 3 tugs! thanks to 5 Rifles guys for helping to cheer us on! As the day drew to a close we all bagged together to get the final score and HMH presented the Wessex Cup to the winners, and lovely medals to competitors from all 3 teams. You guessed it. HMS Daring won the Cup this year! Let’s hope it’s given a safe home on board!”

The hopeful agenda for next year is for the team from RAF Wittering to travel down to Portsmouth by MT before joining the crew of HMS Daring to sail access to Germany by being hosted by 5 Rifles. So watch this space!”

By FLt LK Scott & E McIntosh

PADRES CORNER

It is a truism to say we all need a place to ‘anchor’ ourselves, be that in a location or through relationships, a space from which we draw strength to fulfill our tasks and potential.

Our people at Wittering, Colchester and HMNB Devonport know so well what it means to be an Expeditionary Air Force; we know all too well the need for a stable and supportive station, a place we call home when on deployment.

Our families too need that support when we are away, to soak up belonging and being valued. Chaplaincy is not immune to this expeditionary lifestyle; I have recently returned from Op Herrick and Padre Bissell is currently on Op Blindy. Chaplaincy has rightly prioritised its need to deploy, to be with the troops where they are serving. Consequently, Chaplains have returned from running local civilian Churches through fear of letting people down when we are on operations. However, experience has also taught us that in order to ensure there is adequate provision for warship, and the local community this builds, is detrimental to the well-being of an expeditionary force and its sense of home. With this in mind, in August the Padres began running Church Services and a Sunday School of All Saints Wittering. It was envisaged this will continue until a new Vicar of Wittering is appointed in the future.

Of course the Church is not the only place in which community is built. The Hive and various clubs around our stations exist for building community. Away from the sensationally heady and comical banter, the local Church continues to provide a safe haven for self exploration and searching questions while building community value and faith. Faith is not about leaving your brain at the door, but about letting our fears and frustrations go: faith is engaging our body, mind and soul in the building of community. In the case of All Saints Wittering, a community anchored in Jesus Christ.

Padre Dyer
One of the more unusual tasks to come 3 Sqn’s way this year was the provision of communications throughout the exercise, moving the capability of the Sqn to communicate at all levels efficiently forward.

Between Jan and Apr 2011 we switched focus towards Pre-Deployment Training (PDT) whilst continuing our General War training, in part because the Sqn remained at 5 days notice to move for contingency operations. Our focus was on the baseline standard in range qualifications and basic skills for PDT and also conducted FTX and Sqn exercises to ensure that the Bowman BCIP5.4 skills we had learned during the recent uplift were not lost. Of particular note was our Sqn FTX in early Apr at STANTA which provided us with an opportunity to conduct a variety of operations covering section patrolling skills and Live Firing in Woods and Forests (MAFW) and clearance ops in support of a national Tactical Landing Zone (TLZ) operation. The finale of the exercise was a 6 hr Sqn advance to contact/clearance (TLZ) operation. The Sqn was required to facilitate the training of 348 RAF personnel at RAF Wittering, including 120 raids, in the fundamentals of being a prison officer. The week long course covered the basics of prison procedures, prisoner welfare and most importantly, physical control and restraint. This aspect of the training was enjoyed by all personnel and aimed to provide those gunners who would be working on the prison wings, in direct contact with the prisoners, with an ability to safely deal with them in the event of disorder. Lessons included the use of holds, handcuffs, shields and batons - and one lesson ominously called ‘prisoner from rear’! These control and restraint skills were once commonplace on 3 Sqn, particularly during the Northern Ireland years, but have since lapsed throughout the Regt so this was an ideal opportunity to get to grips (pun intended) with a useful ‘less than lethal’ skill set. As this Wittering View goes to press 3 Sqn remain committed to this task.

The Sqn also found time to enter a team into a reinvigorated RAF Regt small-arms concentration and competition shoots conducted at Bisley during FAMSAM. This provided an opportunity to take a section of junior gunners away and provide them with quality coaching under the tutelage of Sgt Phil Parker, a renowned marksman within the Regt shooting fraternity. Furthermore, our snipers, under CPA sect cdr Cpl Rob Wilde, also participated in the sniper shoots coming a creditable 1st (Gp’s O'Brien and May) and 3rd of the RAF Regt teams. As we write CB and James May are competing against the very best of the Army and Marine snipers at Bisley; we wish them well.

April also saw the formation beginning of PDT for our forthcoming Op HERRICK 15 deployment. Theatre Orientation Week and Continuity Training Week were conducted by OPASS from RAF Honington with the minimum of fuss and these periods set the tone for our range camp at Hythe and Lydd in Jun. Hythe and Lydd saw the Sqn get to grips with all those ranges required to prepare for field firing later in the year and also allowed us to experience the new Close Quarter Assault (CQA) training and range serials. These range practices took the gunners a step further in their marksmanship trg, teaching them the fine of close quarters with rifle and Sig pistol, to transition between the 2 weapons, and to engage targets to the front and rear. These ranges, ran by Cpl Matt Snape, were thoroughly enjoyed by all the gunners and provided obvious benefit to later range serials. The 4 x rifle FTS also gained great benefit from a lengthy serial in the ‘defended house’ that saw them deal with sniper, indirect fire and small arms attack, casualties, casualty evacuation and ECAS as well as the raft of C3 (Command, Control and Communications) and 02 (Reports and Reporting) that goes with HERRICK tactical activities.

On 27 Jul the Sqn celebrates the 25 anniversary of its formation and a families BBQ will informally mark this milestone with a 3 Sqn formal dinner planned for Sept. Of course, as you read this the Sqn will also be continuing its preparations for deployment to Afghanistan and some of the guys may well have already deployed - but that will be for the next edition of the Wittering View.
Through the driving rain they came, a few hundred soaked marchers trudging and tripping their way down past the fields of bemused Llama on an epic journey involving compounded and high-energy bars. Yes, these first few hundred feet were every bit as emotional as they told us they would be on this, the 2011 Pathfinder March.

An elite unit, designed to lead the main bomber force to targets in occupied Europe during WW II, the Pathfinder Force (PFF) launched its missions from airfields at RAF Wyton and RAF Oakington, and satellite stations at Gravely and Watboys. Using such iconic aircraft as the Lancaster and Mosquito, the PFF sustained substantial losses but played an equally substantial part in degrading the enemy’s war effort thereby hastening the end of the war. Like their maritime and ground- enemy’s war effort thereby hastening the end of the war. Like their maritime and ground-
**Defence News**

Small RAF crew in Sicily support operations over Libya. A Military Operations news article 6 Jul 11

**The Sky is Still the Limit!**

With some 2000 vacancies this year, the RAF is still very much recruiting.

Following last year’s SDSR announcement that the RAF is to reduce in size to a force of 35500 by 2015, many people assumed that recruiting would stop. However, despite the drawdown, the RAF is still looking to recruit some 2000 people this year across a wide range of trades and branches – from ICT Technicians to medics to suppliers and doctors and nurses. Although this figure is lower than normal, it is still a challenging target.

With more than 50 different branch and trade choices, the RAF offers a varied and exciting career. Recruiting from all academic and community backgrounds, the RAF is a genuine equal opportunities employer. The Head of RAF Recruiting, Group Captain Ian Tofts said: "If you think you have what it takes to be in the RAF, then come and talk to us. With very few exceptions, the RAF is recruiting to most trades and branches this year. But with the drawdown of the RAF and a recent lack of advertising, many people think the RAF is closed for business. Nothing is further from the truth! I would encourage anyone that is interested in a career in the RAF to visit the RAF Careers website at www.raf.mod.uk/careers or find more information on Facebook.com/rafcareers or even follow us on Twitter @rafcareers."

Gp Capt Tofts added: "While it is RAF Recruiting's job to lead the charge in attracting and recruiting new members of the RAF, everyone has a role to play. It is everyone in the RAF and those associated with the RAF helped spread the message that the RAF is recruiting, public opinion would be changed. The message is simple – the RAF is recruiting now!"

To help re-launch the RAF's recruiting campaign – Be Part of the Story – Director of Recruiting and Initial Training, Air Commodore Paul Oborn, joined Gp Capt Tofts at the RAF College Cranwell. Holding a Be Part of the Story banner, Air Commodore Oborn emphasised that the RAF is open for business and said: "The RAF has a constant need for new recruits – year in, year out. The sky is still the limit."

**In the Hot Seat**

Name: Mark Davis.
Role: Community Development Officer – Youth & Community Provision for RAF personnel and their families.
Age: 51
Marital Status: Married

1. What part of your job gives you the most satisfaction? When a project (big or small) finally comes together and is delivered.
2. And the least? When advice is given and ignored.
3. What is the best advice you have ever received? Sometimes you just have to give it a go!
4. Describe yourself in six words? Caring, committed, happy, organised, energetic and pragmatic.
5. What career would you have followed if the RAF was not an option? Secretary.
6. Is there one piece of criticism that sticks in your mind? Too many to mention!
7. How would you change the MOD? Centralise all three services into one.
9. Name your desert island essentials? My Kindle, MP3 Player, beach towel, sunscreen, umbrella, loads to drink and access to Radio 5 to listen to the football results.
10. What food would you choose for your last supper? Scampi, chips and mushy peas, washed down with Ginger Beer.
12. Name four people you would like as a dinner guest – and why? Peter Kay to add humour, Brian Clough to talk about football (I assume I would listen more than I would talk), Tommy Cooper to add more entertainment value and Mariah Carey (for her singing of course).
13. What one piece of music would you like played at your funeral? "Beautiful and Bright".
14. How would you like to be remembered? Someone that helped individuals to improve their quality of life.
As a Civil Servant working in the Admin Office of 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron (2 MT Sqn), part of my daily work routine is to have face to face contact with MT drivers. In particular I assist with any problems that they may encounter relating to their daily business of driving a multitude of vehicles, both in the United Kingdom and Europe.

However, I have never actually contemplated just what an MT driver does, so maybe it was time for me to find out! So given the opportunity to participate in a road move of the biggest equipment 2 MT Sqn possesses, I jumped at the chance.

So to the trials and tribulations of the MT Driver on just one of the many varied 2 MT Sqn tasks that depart Wittering every day. Some people may think it’s about getting in a truck and just driving (how many times have I heard that!) Having been on the Sqn for over three years now, I thought I would put the theory to the test and see how the "lads and lassies" that I work alongside earn their wages….and believe me when I say it is not as easy as it seems!

So, is being a 2 MT Sqn driver easy? Well if any of you out there want to find out just give them a ring. These 'guys' should get loads of credit for the way they achieve results and get the job done. Give me a desk and JPA any day. Would I do it again, well yes I would as it was certainly an experience.

Written by Gill Wilmot, Civil Servant and Sqn Administrator

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As without everyone pulling together taskings is a simple one - "TEAMWORK!"

The answer to the success of 2 MT Sqn’s taskings is a simple one - TEAMWORK! As without everyone pulling together the outcome to any tasking could be disastrous. This is what made my trip even more impressive as I was told that the particular team put together for this task had not worked as a HLT team before. There were four personnel in total: Cpl Barry "Baz" Watson (OIC task), Cpl "Red" Adair, SAC Holly Ranagan (nee Peake) and SAC John Smart.

The task was due to set off from RAF Wittering at 0630, with the team meeting up in the Sqn Crew Room at 0600. Upon arriving, we were all informed that Cambridgeshire Police had contacted the main guardroom at 0300 to bring forward the proposed rolling roadblock to 0530 - the result was that the outward journey was delayed by an hour, with the temporary stoppage of traffic on the A1 to allow the trailer to depart the main gate at RAF Wittering at 0730. I accompanied Cpl Watson in the HLT on the outbound drive to Leconfield. It was my first time ever in a truck and I soon began to realise that it isn’t easy to drive, especially when you have cars trying to cut around them is no easy task – hats off to the troops for that one. Running three hours later than the original schedule we also needed to contact Cambridgeshire Police to re-book the required "rolling roadblock" on the northbound A1 at Wisbech. This was to ensure that the trailer could enter RAF Wittering through the main gate, as it would need both lanes to make the manoeuvre back into camp.

The whole task lasted 13 hours and by the end of it I was totally shattered. I could hardly keep my eyes open and all I wanted to do when I got back to the comfort of my own home was to sleep.

At the end of this eventful day Cpl Watson said "It is a pity that the trip didn't go to plan but we overcame everything really well with everyone working as a team even though we hadn't worked together before", Sentiments that I would fully endorse.

So, is being a 2 MT Sqn driver easy? Well if any of you out there want to find out just give them a ring. These 'guys' should get loads of credit for the way they achieve results and get the job done. Give me a desk and JPA any day. Would I do it again, well yes as it was certainly an experience.

This feature is dedicated to the memory of SAC JJ “Smarty” Smart.

Peterborough Doula Network
Working together to support parents
During this time Lincolnshire was dotted with airfields, so much so that their runways would, on one or two examples, nearly touch each other. It was 5 Group, Bomber Command, led by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur ‘Bomber’ Harris that operated from these airfields to devastating effect on the German war machine.

Firstly the sterling work of Flt Lt Clarke, FS Davison and SAC Oakton on the logistics of the average Bomber Station during WWII. Dr Howard Tuck would interject at key points to offer his insight and to also challenge our thinking on the mentioned topics. From there we pitched into Thorpe Camp via MT and turned a recently built shelter into our home for the next couple of days and nights. Thorpe Camp also houses a museum so after a good look around and once back in the shelter, myself and AET Faulkner presented to the group, a look at ACM Sir ‘Bomber’ Harris and a discussion on Effective ‘Mission Command’. The day was rounded off with a hot meal from the local chip shop, a showing of the 1955 film ‘The Dam Busters’ and a welcomed beer kindly put on by the landlord of The Petwood Hotel.

In 1933 the Petwood Hotel opened and was requisitioned by the Royal Air Force in 1943 as an Officers’ Mess for 617 Squadron – the famous ‘Dambusters’ who flew from nearby RAF Woodhall Spa. To this day, the hotel still flies the RAF Ensign as a mark of respect.

Bomber Command, or a failure were held. From here we started the short walk of 3.9 miles to the town of Woodhall Spa where we were then picked up by the MT component of our Staff Ride and taken to the gymnasium at RAF Coningsby for a hot shower and to refresh us being presented with a look on the Ethos and Heritage of the RAF by Cpl Tiley and SAC Livesey. There was another stand was presented by Flt Lt Waskett-Booth and SAC Johnson on the ‘Special Relationship’ between ourselves and the United States Army Air Force at that time and also of today in Afghanistan. We then continued on our way towards the BBMF.

Once we arrived, we had approx 30 minutes to wolf down what food we could and also do a quick blister check on our (by now) hot feet. We were pleasantly humoured by the staff of the BBMF for an interesting tour of the hangar although we unfortunately could not climb on-board the Lancaster as it was in final preparations for (at the time) the forthcoming wedding of the new Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. Another stand saw us being presented with a look on the Ethos and Heritage of the RAF by Cpl Tiley and SAC Livesey.

By Jnr Tech Slater
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The day finished with one of the longest off piste mogul fields that any of the group had ever done!

Day 3: Kleiner Matterhorn to Breithorn Summit (4164m)

A couple of hours later and we were back at our hut. It was time to make the move to the top of the Breithorn, a classic 4000m alpine peak. The route from the hut was straightforward and we were able to start making for Cima di Jazzi (3806m) but our rucksacks were too heavy and variable on a 45 degree slope. Fortunately for us we'd brought bags with us which combined with the exposure and the number of people there, made it a rather exhilarating spot. The ski off the top was again challenging with warm air making the snow soft, slushy and variable on a 45 degree slope. Fortunately for us we'd brought bags with us which combined with the excursion to the Teodulo Refuge – our first mountain hut. We had the hut to ourselves but unfortunately our hut guardian only spoke Italian. Harry claimed the position of translator but in an attempt to thank the guard for his good food, he informed him that pasta was banned in the UK! Harry then confessed he hadn’t spoken the language for 17 years.

Day 4: Gommergiescher to Monte Rosa hut

Our first early start led to good skiing conditions. The best so far! Al announced that powder runs should be attempted to the best of Nilsy’s elephant (unsuccessfully adapted Firework by Katy Perry)! Dufourspitz summit was on! indicating an approaching front – the race for the Dufourspitz summit was on!

Day 5: Dufourspitz Summit (4654m) - Monte Rosa Hut

Our biggest day of the Exped was an attempt on the summit of the Dufourspitz, so it was an early start to be on the mountain and some very warm temperatures meant that the skin was very soft, making it difficult to conditions and slow progress. The warm end to the ski season had resulted in various aspects of slope being unstable and particularly susceptible to avalanche – the guide was going to earn his money this week!

Our initial route appeared dubious due to a lack of other ski tracks and it was a grade 1 climb but later map work indicated we were on the right route! Dufourspitz Summit (4654m) – Photos.

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In the centenary year of Captain Scott’s fateful expedition to the South Pole, I will be joining 23 others from across the Services to mount the British Services Antarctic Expedition 2012 (BSAE 2012).

In late December 2011, expedition members will depart from Cape Horn in South America and sail across Drake’s Passage to carry out mountaineering, crevasse and avalanche training and will depart from Cape Horn in South America and sail across Drake’s Passage to carry out mountaineering, crevasse and avalanche training. Additionally, the BSAE team will carry out a number of important scientific research projects aimed at expanding our knowledge of climate change in an area that is warming 10 times faster than the rest of the world. These projects will vary from ice core temperature samples to UV exposure measurements and more information is available on the expedition website (www.bsa2012.co.uk). The team is also raising money for Help for Heroes through donations (www.chemlabasso2012.com) and the sale of limited edition exclusive expedition whisky.

Order a bottle of the 16 year old expedition whisky, please contact Flt Lt Toby Stedham on 09533 7302. Before being declared fit to deploy to the ice, the team has to undergo a wide range of training and development activities to ensure that we have the skills we need to survive. Training and selection began in October 2011 and has included areas such as snow touring, mountaineering, crevasse and avalanche rescue and boat handling skills. A major milestone in team development took place in the Swiss Alps during the second half of July 2011 when expedition members were trained and tested whilst dealing with tough conditions and exhaustion. This training period saw some of the toughest and most emotional days I have ever had on a mountain.

Day 1: Following a 0500 wake up call, I hit the mountain with Paul, my climbing partner for the week. He is the Chief Instructor at the Joint Service Alpine Training Centre and is an alpinist with a background. From a para that has solo climbed the Matterhorn and was lead climber on the Army Everest Expedition 2006. Accustomed to the altitude, he rocketed up the first ridge line of the day. I managed to maintain conversation for the first hour, but after that my sole focus was on breathing. By 0800, we were on to the second ridge line of the day, slightly easier but the pace was unrelenting. By 0900, we had climbed several hundred metres and were descending rapidly across a glacier, ever watchful for crevasses. Once again, conversation was limited and my efforts were concentrated solely on breathing and making my way up the highly exposed and near vertical ridge line. Before long, my hands were shredded from the hard, sharp granite and my shins and knees looked like a colander. I left blood everywhere I touched the hard, wet, slippy rock. I regularly had to clear the coursework from the ice axe. By 1330 we were off the rock and had reached the stage of death fall during the descent and we took a minute to re-focus. By 1300 we were off the rock and at the top of a steep snowfield. I drained my water supply and reached the stage of

Day 3: Bad weather put a stop to the challenging day we had planned for day 2, and instead we took the opportunity to spend the morning rehearsing our crevasse rescue skills. No such luck on day 3, and once again I found myself pushed to my limit. Having crossed a snow covered glacier, complete with the odd leg slipping through into hidden crevasses, I had to lead a group up a deep snow gully. My winter climbing experience was limited and having never lived on this terrain. I now had to climb it one-handed with no protection whilst using the other hand to prevent the others below me from falling. Teleworking on the balance between stretch and panic, a gust of wind blew slapdash off the gully instantly freezing my sunglasses and rendering me practically blind. After reaching the top of the gully, the terrain became more moderate, but the pace did not relax and flaper glasses rapidly turn to drilled glasses that provided equally poor vision. We eventually reached the summit and the cloud cleared briefly as we took our 5 minute red break prior to the descent.

Day 4: After walking into another mountain hut, followed by some short climbing and descending over wet grass avalanche slopes, we prepared ourselves for a big objective – the East Ridge of the Saalbichen. The weather over the past two days had been appalling, and we found ourselves climbing in rain, snow and sleet on cold, hard, wet, slippy rock. I regularly had to clear snow from handholds and my fingers were frozen. Today I not only had Paul pushing an unforbearing pace, I also had another rope team following me up, led by Tim, a British Mountain Guide and offensively good climber. Once again, conversation was limited and my efforts were concentrated solely on breathing and making my way up the highly exposed and near vertical ridge line. Before long, my hands were shredded from the hard, sharp granite and my shins and knees looked like a colander. I left blood everywhere I touched the mountain, but I was too exhausted to care. When I fell, hitting Tim on the way down, he aggressively enquired why I fell off, as if this had been intentional. He equally aggressively suggested that I get back on the rock and he up the mountain. The members of my rope team let off a number of expletives at him during the day. I managed to resist, largely because it would involve using energy that I simply couldn’t afford to waste. After endless hours, we made the summit and begin a 2000m descent, during which a member of the team was almost crushed by a giant boulder. Other than that there was simply the ache of sore knees and the realisation at the bottom that my ankles were leading blood and puss. But the first week was over and I had a rest day to look forward to.

Day 5: Following the gruelling first week, I gladly chied Paul from the other end of my rope and focussed on skill development. All topics necessary for alpine mountaineering and ski travel were covered, including crevasse and avalanche rescue, emergency medical care, mountaineering skills and operating with pulks (gadgets which will contain all of our kit). There was also an ITN crew filming the training and conducting interviews as part of the expedition media plan. The week culminated with a test exercise involving a rescue scenario. We split into teams that we would be operating in when deployed on the ice and set out to isolate the casualties. They were eventually located having taken down a crevasse with severe injuries and the team set about working to hoist the casualties out before administering medical care and extracting. The exercise was a success and showed us that we were capable of operating in a self sufficient manner. However, it also highlighted that we have a lot more training to complete before we fully trusty support ourselves on the ice.

By Flt Lt Toby Stedham, OC Ops Co, 0135 (BD) sqn

EXERCISE WESTERN DROUGHT was a ‘well fuels exercise’ which was undertaken by the Fuel Support Team (FST). The exercise involved a dusky and rugged landscape – high woods, and in force with an 8 man team. The aim of the week was to practice the provision of a deployed fuel capability which would meet our fuel in any operational theatre. Examples of this convey depending on which role is required. The capabilities FST provides are:

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On and the scene was set. To enable us to achieve the task we had been given – the building and commissioning of a functional DPR - working as a team was paramount. In order to be as efficient as possible we set up as a close knit unit. As with any exercise things didn’t always go as we wanted them to. On one day when all was well, our problems came in many forms, from the cold leaky connection to our 150 Gpm Pump not wanting to pump. As members of a specialist organisation, we were undeterred by this and persevered, using tools and the occasional boot until we got things working as they should.

To test our expedition status, we were accommodated in the most luxurious of tents complete with Camp Cot and en suite woodlands. After all fuels activities had ceased for the day, our training moved onto the basics of camp craft. For sustenance the new packs were made available for us and we were grateful to discover that they now contain more than just beef stew and mashed potato!

All the team gained a lot of experience from this exercise and, although it was hard work, we all had fun at the same time.
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SUPPORTING THE WHOLE RAF FAMILY

The RAF family is made up of those who are serving, or have previously served, and their partners and dependants too. Being part of a family means that there is always someone to turn to whenever we fall on hard times.

That’s where the RAF Benevolent Fund comes in. We’re here for anyone in the RAF family who may find themselves in need of help – whether it be through sickness, disability, an accident, or those other unforeseen problems that life can sometimes throw at us.

If you’re a member of the RAF family and are in need of help, why not call us to find out more.
Or if you know someone who might be eligible, please let them know.

It’s a family matter.

0800 169 2942
www.rafbf.org

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