

Mike Barnes



After Locking I spent three very happy years at Duxford and Waterbeach servicing Javelins, then to OCTU at South Cerney followed by AEO training at Topcliffe (where I was nicknamed 'broken-fingers' because my morse code was so bad!).

Then in 1964 to the Valiant OCU at Gaydon, where I happened to be in the one that 'broke' - the rear spar fractured at 20,000 ft - leading to the scrapping of the entire Valiant fleet.

[Editors Note: On the 6th of August 1964, the crew of WP217 of 232 OCU felt what appeared to be a large impact when flying a training mission. With multiple warnings indicated, the crew elected to try and land their stricken aircraft. Incredibly, with the starboard wing's rear spar seriously fractured (so much so that the wing was noticeably sagging), a successful landing was made.]

With no flying job to go to, I ended up in SHQ Marham - but quickly learned admin- speak and applied for pilot training, and within a year was posted to Acklington to train on the Jet Provost. In 1966 I 'had the honour to apply to get married' (still had to do that then!) to Alison (Ted Norman's sister).

After advanced flying training on Gnats at Valley I flew Canberras at Laarbruch, Cottesmore and St Mawgan (a mix of Canberra B2s, B(I)8s, T4s and TT18s) interspersed with instructor tours at Leeming and Ternhill. Then in 1978 to RAF Staff College at Bracknell, followed by two years as Personal Staff Officer to The Air Force Board Member for Personnel at MOD.



From 1980-82 I commanded an Andover squadron at Brize Norton, then 2 years as Senior Staff Officer to CinC Support Command, followed by Station Commander Northolt 1985-87 where I flew the HS125 and Gazelle helicopter.

And finally back to MOD - Policy & Operations Director Central & South America and the garrisons at Belize and Falklands; and a final tour as Director RAF Public Relations including the frantic period of Gulf War 1 (I still managed to escape from time to time to fly the Hawk at Brawdy!).

In 1992 I 'retired' early to join BAe, then Lockheed Martin, and currently work with a company developing a commercial air-to-air refuelling tanker aircraft (Omega Tanker). We have a very grown up son and daughter (early female RAF pilot) and 4 beautiful grandchildren. I'm a persistent (i.e. totally hopeless!) golfer - and increasingly told I'm developing a tendency to meander on and on and on ...

So I'll stop there, except to mention three particular heroes:

Pete Bonner - thanks Pete, without your help I'd never have grasped the mysteries of radio theory and escaped from Locking at all!

Roy O'Connell - inspirational 84th sportsman/personality

Dave Goodwin - saved us both from court martial by begging (literally!) a lift back after he and I 'escaped' to London during 1958 summer camp