

Tony Beard



Have read with much interest the experiences of many of you and your respective lives in and outside the Service so thought it was time that I monopolised the airwaves with my account.

Along with several others (I remember Len Hodby plus a couple of other ground radar types) I arrived at Henlow in August 1959 and spent 6 months in the "factory" learning how to really use a soldering iron and various other handtools!

I then moved to the radio fitting party squadron and after a quick manufacturer's course spent the next 12 months moving all around the UK to the major airfields to install the newly introduced CADF equipment. I completed around 25 installations in that year and then went off to Gan for a 12 month tour in HF radio.

My work companions here were Alec Gully and Wally Galea. I also seem to recall that Keith Crocker joined us there as well. The only good thing to say about Gan was the glorious weather and the 2 weeks leave in Singapore and Malaya.

Back in UK it was to Neatishead and the transmitter site for 16 months before heading off to Ayios Nikolaos in Cyprus and HF radio once again. I then moved to Akrotiri Lake transmitter site and completed my three and a half year tour in early 1967.

Posted to North Luffenham and the Radio Technical Publications Squadron where I managed a "screened" tour of nearly 4 years as I was selected for the Skynet programme



and wrote all the servicing manuals for that system. This was naturally followed by another tour to Gan but, this time to the offshore island of Hittadu where the Skynet ground station was located. No Singapore trip this time but I did get back to the UK for a week just to play basketball in the Command Championships - excellent jolly!!

Inevitably I returned to North Luffenham in 1972 (I had bought a house in Stamford in 1967) and RTPS again where this time I wrote manuals for crypto and other unspeakables for 3 years. Dick Cheeseman was also here at the time just before he went off to OCTU. I also recall Eric Jolliffe at Luffenham where he was undergoing language training.

1975 saw me off to Malta and back to HF radio again for 3 years. Had a really excellent tour and enjoyed Service life to the full as well as enjoying life on the island. Johnny Bench was also there - a crew chief on the Nimrod MR squadron and I also looked up Wally Galea who had left the Service and returned to his home in Gzira. Also met Tony Goodyear who was a Master Loadmaster on Sea Kings - can't remember what he was doing in Malta though!

Then followed 5 months at Henlow running the HF Fitting Party office before one final fling as an airman - I managed to organise myself onto a trip to Hong Kong for 6 weeks before returning to go to Cranwell for the commissioning course.

After graduation, I went to Boddington near Innsworth for 2 years as the engineering officer at a computerised message switching centre. Also at Innsworth was Brian (Stan) Drake - the desk officer for junior AEO officers. Together we both missed the golden opportunity during the time when he was the duty Personnel Management Centre officer of looking up the whereabouts and details of ex-84th members on the PMC computers but I sorry to say it never came off - much to my regret now.

I then enjoyed 3 years at HQ RAF Germany where I was involved with engineering aspects for Berlin and some other discreet/unobtrusive units in Germany.

Back in UK - where else but North Luffenham for 2 years this time in RTPS

as the editor for all the chief tech technical authors - talk about horses for courses! I managed several short trips to Gibraltar where on one occasion I met Dennis Hill who was there on a weekend trip from Finningley on Dominie training aircraft.

Having been at Luffenham 3 times I then made it 3 times at Henlow and spent 4 years all told in what was known then as RAFSEE (Signals Engineering Establishment) as a project officer on secure ADP comms. My final posting was to MOD as the engineering sponsor for HF radio - well, it had to be didn't it? Also in the Main Building in London at the time (1991) was one Air Commodore Mike Barnes, the Director of Recruiting no less [Editor's note! Could this have been Director of RAF Public Relations?] and also Keith Runacres and the "Colonel" (now Wing Cdr) Everitt.

I then had 10 years working for the Radio Communications Agency (now part of OFCOM) as the manager of an HF monitoring station in Hertfordshire. Here I enjoyed several trips to various European monitoring stations before finally retiring 7 years ago.

I have 2 children from my first marriage and 4 grandchildren from that and my second marriage and together they keep me (hopefully) young, happy and very busy.