

Extracts concerning Jim Nottingham from the book:

RAF College Cranwell
A Centenary Celebration
By Roger Annett
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p.36 During a raid by a Senior Entry Jim stood up to them:

Jim is one of three navigator trainees in the Entry, a tough Yorkie and an ex-Apprentice from No 1 Radio School.

'I blew my top – left them in no doubt that they should desist immediately, and go forth and multiply. There was none of this nonsense at Locking. Short of resorting to fisticuffs, there was nothing else they could do and they shortly left us in peace. We were expecting dire retribution but none came.'

p.46 Jim put his name down for the much expanded new 'A' stream course syllabus.

'I'm pleased to see English, Applied Maths and Physics on the menu.'

p.79 Jim didn't see much value in the introduction to map reading in the backward facing Valetta trips.

p.87 On 11th March 1960 Jim competed at Sandhurst in the college basketball team

p.90 ... Dining-in Night in the Junior Mess, a production in the Lecture Theatre of the 'Mikado' (in which Jim the Nav takes the title role to great acclaim and ...

p.109 Jim the Nav said about the Chipmunk experiment:

'I've had six flights – thoroughly enjoyed them all, not having previously controlled any flying machine. I found it satisfying to manage it in the Chippie. That was down mostly to my Instructor Master Pilot QFI who treated me as an adult, with none of the devious 'Blogg' and 'Sir' attitude we get on the ground.

'Evidently, I showed promise. After my last flight, my instructor suggested I might like to consider 'retreading' as a pilot. Now, I'd been asked that at Locking but had declined – I was fascinated by the whole art of navigation. Again, I said 'Thanks but no thanks.'

p.113 ... Sid's a keen member of the basketball squad and he's been joined by Jim the Nav who says been 'intent on avoiding rugby at all costs as it is almost did for me at school. Basketball's non-contact and all-year round. Suits me fine and shouldn't affect my hard-won medical category.

- p.134 Nigel has also become a Staff Member on the College Journal, along with Jim the Nav and Kiwi, for sports and articles respectively.
- p.154 ... January 1961 also sees the start of the Basic Course for the navigators. The two originals, Jim the Nav from Locking and his colleague from Lutterworth Grammar are joined by Anthony, a retread from 80 Entry. ...
- p.160 ... On Friday February 10th (1961), squash player Andy, together with Mark and Vernon in the Hockey XI, Sid and Jim in the basketball team, and Kiwi, Peter and 'D' Squadron Tim in the fencing squad, make their first visit to the Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth. ...
- p.169 ... the formal basic training course for the 81 Entry navigators has got under way, with just the theoretical classroom work so far. ... 'At last,' says Jim, we're getting to put the theoretical stuff into practice – not before time. Hands-on navigation and making good track.'
- p.178 On Wednesday 15th March (1961) the navigator group is off to London – to the Planetarium. It's billed as 'background study to position-finding astronomical devices'. The travelling party numbers four, the two 81st Entry originals, plus Anthony and another from 80 Entry, Johnny the Nav, who, having fallen behind in his course, joined the group at mid-term break,. Vernon stays in the College, for one-to-one tuition.
- p.183 (On Easter Monday) in the Longcroft Room there's the first of two evening performances of the *Pirates of Penzance*. The Journal reporter acclaims it as 'spirited' and enjoys the gusto brought into the role of Pirate King by Jim the Nav, in long black wig and Kinky boots.
- p.184 The three tyro navigators who started the term together also have mixed feelings about their first months of navigator training.

Jim reports, 'We've flown just seven sorties, all of some three hours or more. The routes span much of the UK and North Sea – one's been map-reading, two general plotting and four which concentrated on using GEE. We've alternated between first and second nav – when first nav, up front with the instructor, we navigate the aircraft while the other two monitor progress with the aid of GEE. It's a start.'

- p.206/7 The trainee navigators are making steady progress through their syllabus, 'Although', says Jim, 'at one sortie a week, it's still not good in the continuity department.'

Anthony reports, 'Most of our airborne work's now in the Varsity where we sit facing aft at a navigator's desk with access to a full range of instruments. As well as the GIVB magnetic compass we've moved on to the use of a radio compass for

bearings and the GEE display has been enhanced with Rebecca/Eureka also of last war vintage, to provide us with a radar range and bearing.

Jim adds, 'At the same time, we've been introduced to the Mark Nine Bubble Sextant – a heavy affair which is designed to hang from the astrodome. That's to give us sightings on sun and stars to obtain position-lines and calculate fixes.

'Trouble is, being hooked to the airframe, the sextant jumps about when the aircraft does. So we spend time supporting the thing on the shoulder. What with that and hauling it and our astrological books around, we're candidates for early onset of what they call navigator's stoop. Jim also spends a lot of time with the optical drift sight. He's tickled pink by how easy it is to get an accurate wind velocity well out of sight of land. 'You ask the pilot to turn one way through sixty degrees and take a drift reading over one minute. Then turn the other way through 120 degrees and take a second one-minute reading. Turn back onto the original heading, and thus back onto track, for a third drift heading. Put those into the Dalton and you get a small cocked hat here the three lines cross. Together with a nice, accurate wind velocity. Simple and elegant.

Sufficient aircraft are used to give each student an equal share of first-nav time. The chaps are now working to a regular navigator's cycle, which consists of obtaining a regular position 'fix', or for second best a 'most probable position', with the frequency of fix depending on the work involved. GEE fixes, at some three minutes are more easily obtained than pure astro, which can take up to half an hour. Sorties now comprise a number of missions – ranging from using a variety of aids at medium level, including day/night astro, to hours of low-level and 'lumpy wave-hopping over the North Sea' with coastal techniques.

'Only thing is', says Jim, 'It seems as if what should be a seven-month course in the basics of navigation, is being expanded to three years. And everything else that's going on is there just to fill the time available.'

- p.213 No less risky has been the Basic Parachuting Course at RAF Abingdon, where twenty-five Flight Cadets, led by Jim the Nav and including Kraut and Robert, have survived a series of jumps from a balloon, and one from a Beverley transport. 'My logbook, reports Jim. 'now records one more take-off than landing. And if that ain't good enough, I've got the bruises to prove it!'
- P.218 The navigators too are concerned lest they've forgotten what they were doing pre-leave. Jim sees that his name's on the airborne roster for the second week of term, which will mean sixty-six days since his last trip. 'I'm down for four hours as first nav – half of that'll be just getting back on the blooming horse.'
- p.223 ... it's now just 'A' streamers who feature on the staff of the *College Journal* – Kiwi and Jim the Nav are Cadet Editors and Niger the Sub-Editor, Sports.

- p.225 Only one of the current Navigation group has been a volunteer member of the trade from the start, Jim the Nav.
- p.232 Jim confesses... 'I am quite honestly loathing this final year. I'm seriously contemplating a transfer to a Direct Entry course. I'll have a word with Annie Oakley and we'll see.'
- p.236 'A' Squadron excelled themselves in the Autumn Term, winning both the Knocks and the *Ferris* competition and thus are Sovereign's Squadron for the penultimate term. They'll have the centre sprig at Guest Nights and one of their UOs (Niger or Jim) will be carrying the Colour on ceremonial parades.

Note: UO stands for Under Officer

- p. 242 It takes Jim until the nineteenth to fly his first mission of the term fifty-three days since his last. By now, he's had his conversation with Flight Lieutenant Oakley, initiated as it happens by the instructor himself.

Again, Jim confides ...

I've decided to plod on, mostly through fear of being thrown out of the RAF and my ear. But now, our nice Phil Oakley has taken me to one side and explained that – very much to his own amazement – I've been boarded for suspension from the College!

I've had little routine feedback but as I know, there's no reason why I shouldn't be reckoned a 'fully-rounded' cadet. They've made me Under Officer for heaven's sake. From what Phil says, I reckon that it's my Economics and Military Studies results that are the problem. I've been shafted by tutors!

Phil's a friend anyway—he'll fight my corner.

- p.252 Jim the Nav has heard nothing more of the possible suspension proceedings—I put it down to Phil Oakley's efforts'—and something has at last been done about the continuity problem.

- p.252 ...*HMS Pinafore*... UO Jim works his magic as Musical Director...

- p.257 During a College liaison visit to the USA, some cadets are shown into the Aerial Nuclear War Command HQ, a multi-floor bunker Jim the Nav making notes for the *Journal* writes:

Two hours later, a visibly shaken group emerges from the abyss into the Nebraskan sunshine having been at the heart of the most powerful force ever created by man. An impression of incredible efficiency and organisation—nothing left to chance, everybody doing their job calmly and confidently.

P259-60 ... the faithful Britannia embarks the entire party at Petersen base for the trip back to the east. The runway stands at 7000 feet altitude and it's the hottest day of the year so far.

Jim the Reporter's pen goes into overdrive:

As we turn onto the runway, the navigator's hanging out of the back door! Funny, we think.

All is revealed when the pilot selects REVERSE on the props and very carefully edges backwards, with the navigator directing until the main gear is only a few feet from the start of the paved surface. Navigator shuts the door – resumes seat up front. Pilot selects GO FORWARD on all four engines – and performs certainly the longest take-any of us have ever experienced.

Not surprisingly there's a deathly hush and holding of breath in the rear cabin, but I'm here to tell you that we made it – just.

p.273 Jim the Nav confides, 'When I made that parachute exit from the Beverley all those months ago, the captain was a chap I'd been in the Air Cadets with as a teenager. Made me think - there he was, a captain, and here was I, four tears of training done and two yet to come, if lucky. Now, when it looks as if I am going to be graduating, I will still be fully qualified professionally. Makes me wonder – have I taken the right course?'

p. 281 By the end of the final week ... UO Jim is the popular winner of the two Navigator prizes ...

After Friday evening dinner, the Longcroft Room is packed, with well-refreshed Senior Mess members and Headquarters and College Wing Staff for the traditional Senior Entry Review.

Jim the Nav and pals have produced a flyer, announcing:

IT'S ALL BEEN CHANGED
...or 'The Assistant Commandant Regrets'
.....an entertainment by the Senior Entries

All forty-five graduating cadets take part, under the direction of Jim and Sid, the thespian stars of the entry. The sketches are many and varied, and everyone has a role

p.287 UO Jim the Nav is the Parade Adjutant on their passing out parade.

p.289 Tradition has it that as they pass through the doors, that's the moment they become RAF Officers.

UO Jim the Nav is the last but one in ... and onto the Atrium carpet. In a further traditional act, the new officers triumphantly fling their cadet hats as high as they

can into the air. It's a moment of joyous and utter relief. As the hats go up, away with them goes their cadet status and nine terms. They have the Queen's Commission!

p.294 The six-month Advance Navigation course on the Varsities at RAF Stradishall for the ex-81st Entry chaps began in September.

Jim the Nav recalls:

It was in many ways a breath of fresh air. We were there with the sole aim of building on the basic knowledge and skills already learned and practised at Cranwell. No bull, no crowing, no academic syllabus, no compulsory sports or other distractions. So in principle', we should have achieved a seamless progression.

Sadly, it soon became clear to the tutors and staff that we were just not up to speed with basic navigation skills, especially in the air. We weren't just a tad rusty from the long lay-off since our last flights in July, the basics just hadn't taken root. For that, the finger pointed at the lack of continuity arising from the 'experimental' academic syllabus at Cranwell.

In the event, the 'wheels' at Straddie decided we should be given a six-week refresher course in basic navigation, both in the classroom and in the air. This proved to be exactly what was needed. All of us regained the required basic standard, and we went on to undertake the advanced course.

p.298 ... the ex-81st Entry Navigators managed close on 170 Varsity hours in six months, only slightly less than the total they'd managed over two and a half years at Cranwell. The total of thirty-three flights (half at night) averaged one every four working days, four times the frequency during their time at the College.

'That continuity,' reckoned Pilot Officer Jim, 'was what did the trick, helped by a fifty/fifty mix as first and second navigator. We all passed out – albeit in March 1963, some weeks later than scheduled – and we all had respectable results.'

P352 Jim the Nav, having taken eight years to get onto the Vulcans of 617 Squadron (of dam-busting fame) went on to give the RAF full value for the investment in his training – joining Bae in 1979, he air-tested their Buccaneer and Phantom weapons systems up to 1987.