



Llandudno Reunion 2005 (40-05)

Friday

On arrival at the hotel the receptionist quickly volunteered that most of the group had already arrived and ventured an opinion that they were going to be a lively lot; certainly more alive than many of the guests that had been staying lately! The hotel was mainly a stopping point for coach trips by more sedate visitors!

As usual, Brian Peacock ended up on point duty on the hotel steps meeting and greeting all those who arrived for the 40th Reunion, along with others who were not! Ivor and Linda Prosser were soon easily sighted when parking their PROSSER personalised number plated car outside the hotel. Parking was more restricted than first thought as a result of the Bank holiday weekend - although quite a few managed to squeeze into the rear hotel car park.

The barman replied, when asked what time the bar opened: 'Right now. Have you seen the RAF crowd who have been arriving? They will be supping early and well into the night, too.' I proudly told him I was part of the group and then ordered, in a quite whisper, 2 orange juices!

Some of us wandered down the Prom, whilst others took advantage of the early bar opening. The weather was really kind and for many of us just getting a breath of sea air was a tonic after journeying. Elaine Justice had already hit the shops in the town. Elaine's fame as a shopper is becoming well known amongst us. Paul, her husband, said that those in his local back home call her the bag lady for good reason!

The evening meal proved to be of good quality, although the waiting staff appeared to have come from a different era. It was suggested that they had already retired a couple of times before taking this task up. At this time, four of our party had still not arrived. It partly explained itself when they turned out to be Southwesterners: Dave & Shirley Lowe from Bristol and Lloyd & Ann Rosentall from Western-Super-Mare. Sandwiches had been arranged for them but they had already made on-route catering arrangements of their own.

After dinner, the evening entertainer was seen being helped out of a car and making his way on a walking frame to the hotel entrance! So it proved, the first night's entertainment was rather dated, relying on the good spirits of those of in in the lounge. Nevertheless, quite a bit of dancing, or was it marching, took place. Bob Killey lead the way by trying to dance with as many ladies as possible. It was not too long before Eric May was heard above the dim and lively chatter. Eric has now become very much part of our reunions, and may that long continue. Eric did say, at one point, if we ended up like this every night in Cyprus we could be in trouble. Someone responded in the background saying: 'What is this 'we' business?'

Sadly, we were not too well organised as regards the seating arrangement in the lounge and we ended up slightly splintered; although that was put right the following night.

In the meantime, the singer, who had gone from bad to worse, so it seemed, along with makeup that was now running, did get slightly vexed when asked if we could make a formal presentation. He thought that his Eurovision act was being hijacked, even when he was told the presentation would only take 2 minutes.

Ian and Wendy Waterhouse were presented with a card and a bottle of champagne to celebrate their 38th Wedding anniversary, it was then that the singer got into the act by asking them to dance. This was the first reunion for Ian and Wendy and they certainly entered into the spirit of the whole thing right from the very start. Congratulations again to Ian and Wendy on this 38th milestone from us all and come back real soon.

Along with this, a collection was made for Joyce Cutbush, who had recently undergone a hip operation. It was agreed that flowers would be a most appropriate gift so Vern and Pat Phillips kindly made the arrangements for this. The flowers were duly delivered to Joyce on the Saturday, so we are hoping for her speedy recovery so they can once again join us in future reunions.

The evening went well with photos and other memorabilia being passed around. It was not until I saw an old photo of Tony Sharrat, with his distinctive haircut, that I fully recognised him from boys. I think even his wife Susie was impressed with that long-ago hairstyle! The evening was a great success and ended early as we had a packed day ahead and we had some weary travellers amongst us. Already, old acquaintances had been revived and new ones quickly made - a really good omen for the future of our reunions.

Saturday

Breakfast was at 0815 (still a parade, which can't be missed!) and one of the waiting staff, without mercy, reprimanded anyone who was late - this evoked memories of spending jankers in the tin room. This customer care would reflect later in the tips not left for the waiting staff and the observation made to the hotel about the forgotten maxim that the customer is always right - the hotel did promise that they would address this with the well known 'individual' who had previous form for this behaviour.

Much to our surprise, Tom & Wendy Davis left the reunion venue. It was later found that their house minders, come cat sitter, had sadly let them down. It did result in a discussion regarding the way we should make new faces feel more welcome at future reunions. We came to the conclusion that we would use a sponsorship system approach next time to ensure new faces are met, introduced and shown the ropes. The emphasis would be on making them feel instantly welcomed; perhaps one of our little failings in the past?

After breakfast, transport arrangements were made for those who would be visiting the nearby Conwy Castle. Some shared cars, others took the bus or taxi. Only a few declined and made their own alternative itinerary for the day. Some of us took advantage of the over 60s discount offered on the entrance fee to the Castle - although Sylvia Menzies, who did not quite qualify, was given it freely.

The visit to the Castle was well worthwhile for the stunning views of Conwy bay. Bob Killey was heard to say it is a pity that they had allowed the Castle to go to ruin, having been built in 12 something or other. One couple, who were overheard, from the top of the battlements, seemed intent on looking for the torture chamber for ideas for their errant child who was now going through adolescence for the second time - suspect it could apply to some of us! Another couple (was it the Sharrats?) were doing a Romeo and Juliet scene using one of the large battlement towers!

Some of us decided to visit the nearby preserved Elizabethan House in the local town. This turned out to be most interesting with helpful guides, apart from one surly female who ordered us to go in a certain direction only. Memories came flooding back of a certain 40th Cpl Boy Entrant Dave Winder, who we are still trying to locate. It was rather strange to see inside loos and even an en-suite in such an old house. The roof structure proved of great interest to Bob Menzies - perhaps it has given him some ideas for his new park home?

After the Castle, most of us made our way back one way or another to Llandudno and the tram station at the foot of the Great Orme. It proved to be a spectacular view going up in the tram to the summit, although gusty winds awaited us at the top and this really curtailed our ambitions of looking around this lovely area. Most of us ended up in the summit café, part of a house once owned by former World Boxing Champion Randolph Turpin. Seemingly, only the previous day there had been a small reunion of former RAF Radar Technicians/Operators who had served at the Radar Station, which at one time was housed in the summit complex. A great pit we missed them as that would have been a wonderful encounter.

The food offered in the summit complex was good although, as expected, a bit pricey. Some hardy souls ventured out onto the nearby slopes, bracing themselves against the gusting wind, to look at the spectacular views. A lot of us said we would return once again as it was such a fascinating place. My dear wife, Rose, wished to return and perhaps stay a night in the B&B which was said to be perched precariously on the edge of the Great Orme itself.

Despite the gusting wind, some brave souls decided to walk down rather than go back on the tram, what with its open windows and having to change trams just above halfway. I do believe they got to the bottom of the Orme well before a party of us on the tram - having both started at the same time!

Those walking along the prom soon found a large RAF recruiting display and spent time strolling around. Bob Killey even tried to re-enlist but was soon seen as a fraud when they spotted him wearing a demob blazer! Most surprising of all, was the appearance of the 'Red Arrows' shortly after 1600 hrs doing a 40 minute display over the seafront. As usual, they gave a superb display, this despite the gusting wind conditions, which had sadly ensured the cancellation of other aircraft taking part in the display.

After the evening meal no time was wasted in securing nearly half of the lounge in preparation for the evenings entertainment. The singer turned out to be an improvement on Eurovision man from the previous night. Couples were soon up dancing, that is if they could get on the floor as the singer had crowded out the dance floor with his own family members - we soon changed that!

What a wonderful surprise we had early in the evening when Ron Sear (Radar man) turned up unexpectedly. Seemingly, he had been yachting in the area and, in anycase lived in nearby Liverpool, so thought he would drop in. Ron found out about our Web Site just a short time ago; this all goes to prove that we still have many out there from the 40th who are unaware of our Reunions. However, we do know that the Squadron Researchers do a wonderful job trying to contact former lads and have been quite successful. Back to Ron, he seemed to be transfixed with a Cheshire cat grin all night - we were all rather pleased, too.

A raffle was organised with the prizes mainly originating from RAF Cosford's gift shop. Elaine Justice did a brilliant job selling tickets - not only to our group but also the barman, along with the reception staff. Enough money was made to cover postage costs for this function along with a reserve for the 2006 Reunion. We even had some left over, which has since been donated to the Cosford Air Ambulance Service.

Must not forget Bob Killey kind donation of a jumper to the raffle that he had run up himself with the Cosford logo on along with Reunion 2005 details. This was won by Dusty Millar, who thought the coat hanger it was hung on was the first prize! Dusty proudly wore it the next morning (not the coat hanger!), and why not.

The evening went really well, apart from poor Peter Lyver having to dash out and get his shoulder clicked back into place by his dear wife Mavis. Peter soon returned, determined not to be beaten. Memorabilia was still being passed around with firm promises from some to trace more of the lost 40th Boys. The ladies had by now really gelled with each other looking more and more as if they were the reason for the reunion rather than the men! The last two persons seen standing (just about) at the bar were Eric and Steve; as a consequence of this they were a bit adrift at the breakfast parade next morning. We have now found out who this 'we' is that Eric mentioned earlier!

Sunday

Rooms were quickly vacated and cars packed even before breakfast, some had a long way to go. Final farewells were made with firm promises of stopping in contact, Others, had already declared an interest in the 2006 Cyprus Reunion. It was suggested that we approach the 41st Entry Web Master (Steve volunteered to do this) and see if they would declare any interest in

joining us in Cyprus so ensuring we get a bigger contingent. Someone, thought to be Dave Pottage, suggested we could with the 41st to clean our rooms and carry out other duties for us!

Apologies (e-mail) and good wishes were received from Pat Stenning, who sadly could not make it. Pete had been hospitalised and was still slowly recovering. We wish him well and hope to see them both at future reunions.

Summary

All in all, the feedback from the weekend was positive with just a few minor problems: the stropky waiter, the blustery winds on Saturday and perhaps the standard of the entertainment. On the bonus side, we had the appearance of the 'Red Arrows' and, more importantly, Ron Sear.

It is always difficult to get everything right, but we will keep trying as long as we continue getting the wonderful support we have since our very first reunion. Some forward planning came out of a group conversation resulting in the firm intention that we now hold a reunion at Cosford in May 2010 to celebrate the passing of 50 years since we first arrived there as young boys.

Luckily enough, most of us seem to be in good health - especially true of the lovely ladies who support us. Someone was overheard saying that Dave Lowe had not changed a bit since boys - obviously, with a little help from his dear wife Shirley and a good set of genes!

Thanks to everyone for the continued support - See you in Cyprus, for those who can make it, otherwise please come back in 2007 to keep the spirit of the 40th going.

Dave Stinson