

REUNION REPORT 40/62 - 26 May Nr CARDINGTON

Thursday:

Rose & Myself were first to arrive at the Hotel. The Hotel was undergoing refurbishment work as a result of a flood 2 years ago, along with the decision to re-brand it into a Gastro Pub (The Kingfisher) with accommodation. This meant we dined in a Conference suite as the Restaurant and Bar area was still undergoing extensive refurbishment work.

Soon after we arrival, everyone else appeared – apart from Chris & Yo Hok Sim, who arrived the next day.

We assembled in the Reception Foyer, ordering drinks naturally. The evening meal saw us dining together at 1900 hrs, with plenty of drinks consumed and reflecting on Covid and commenting on the current Monkey pox outbreak – not forgetting those who sadly could no longer be with us. Unlike previous Reunions, we all retired early at 2230 hrs.

Friday:

After breakfast, we departed for former (nearby) RAF Cardington, which is now a large (growing) housing estate, apart from the 2 Airship Hangars. It was a challenge to find access to the Hangars, with us going around in circles for a time! We took several group photos outside the Hangars after clearing it with the Security Guard assigned to Hangar 2, which is now a film studio. Incidentally, the Guard turned out to be a former RAF Policeman; this recalled the Torquay Reunion, when visiting Dartmoor, to find the Ice Cream Van Vendor a former Boy Entrant!

Following on, we visited the local pub (Kings Arms) in Cardington Village, making a group booking for the evening meal – drinks were to be had, too! Before leaving the Village, we visited the nearby Church and sighted the RAF Cardington Ensign that had been laid up when the Station closed, along with a memorial to the R101 Cardington Airship disaster.

After returning to the Hotel, we sat by the river (The Great Ouse), which runs behind the Hotel, before readying ourselves for the evening meal.

The evening meal saw us all sitting together as a group and the talk was of medical operations we had endured, along with past reunions. After returning to the Hotel for a nightcap, it would be lights out - once again, early - at 2330 hrs.

Saturday:

We left after breakfast for RAF Henlow to visit the Signals Museum, now housed in the former RC Church. It was strange to see Civilian guards looking after the Guard Room and main gate – I recall my time there, when having to undertake the duties of Orderly Sergeant in that Guard Room. The Museum had many interesting exhibits, mainly donated by former RAF Locking's Museum when it closed in 1999. RAF Henlow has been under threat of closure (more housing?) for a while, with the latest date as 2025. The future of the Signals Museum is undetermined, Cosford was mentioned as an option! The voluntary Museum Staff, all RAF Vets, are doing an outstanding job in keeping the Signals heritage alive.

On the way back we called in at one pub recommended by Chris from 'back in his day', but we did not receive the welcome expected as it had now morphed into a upmarket Restaurant. We found our way back to the King's Arms in Cardington, taking the opportunity to book the group evening meal for Sunday night, before turning to our Hotel, slightly merrier!

The evening meal saw us keeping the tradition of making it formal with DJs and the ladies dressed elegantly. We made a toast to absent friends. As it was Carol and Des Haines Anniversary we made a special effort in ensuring it was celebrated by providing 2 bottles of Champagne and presenting them with a 24 hour MOD Combat Ration Pack.

Sunday:

Sadly, Chris & Yo Hok Sim had to depart for a family lunch, they did express they hoped to be with us next year, travelling back from their home in Malaysia.

We made the decision to visit Wardown House close to Luton. The home, once used as a military hospital in WW2, is the former home of the Scargill family (not Arthur!) and now a museum and gallery. Part of the house is dedicated to the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment Museum with many fine exhibits. Before departing, we made use of the Cafe housed in the fine Victorian dining room.

Following on, we made a detour to Henlow village to visit an old haunt (The Crown) of Des Haines, enjoying a couple of drinks before making our way back to the Hotel.

The evening saw us dining together once again at the Kings Arms, Cardington Village. We reflected on those at former RAF Cardington perhaps struggling back to the camp on a Sunday night after a 48 hr Pass.

On returning to the Hotel, it was a brief nightcap before lights out before midnight.

Monday:

Departure, after breakfast, quickly came with our fond farewells to each other with the reinforcement of continuing the reunions as long as possible, so keeping the spirit of the 40th Entry alive, - although it seems a bit of a struggle with the numbers wishing to take part in our recent planned Reunions, so fingers crossed for Ilfracombe.

N.B. The Hotel staff could not do enough for us, meeting all our requests with a smile; this despite having to deal with Weddings Parties on each day of our stay.

Dave