



**40/40 REUNION W/E 1st/2nd Dec 2001** by [Dave Stinson](#)

40/40 1961/2001



### **FRIDAY EVENING:**

The first scheduled event on the weekend programme was a get together, on Friday evening, at the Plough Public House in Wellington. This establishment is run by an X-RN man who saw battle at the Royal Tournament on 3 occasions as a member of the Davenport Gun Crew team. These days his only battle is getting the non-regulars out at closing time and ensuring his regulars are locked in for the night!

It was fully expected that only a few of the 40th would arrive for this social event as many had far to travel, and in anycase would not arrive until Saturday. What a surprise it was then to get a final gathering of about 20 of us. The ladies decided, quite wisely, to seat themselves in a group and leave the men at the bar to discuss ye olde times. The beer began to flow and so did the war and worn stories.

It was amusing to see how people greeted each other; was that Eric, or had he shrunk a bit? Surely Lloyd was bigger than that? Steve was never as quiet as this in Fulton Block? Dave P was thin last time I saw him? Dave still had all his hair, but not his Flt Sgt Boy chevrons! Taff looked odd without his holdall full of toast. Mike, so it was thought, was ginger headed last time he was seen; perhaps the USA does this to you? Surely, John had a stronger Kent accent last time? Bob still had that Perth brogue. Someone else, unidentified, produced a black and white photo showing someone else he was unable to identify! The name badges would prove their worth on Saturday Night.

The ladies had a wonderful time and bonded exceptionally well. It was not surprising, as many had a lot in common: children, grandchildren and husbands who often talked about their time in the Boys! One lady thought she was in Lincoln, but did wonder why it took so long to get here. Other ladies said they were glad they had chosen the one they had after inspecting others as they marched into the Pub - out of step! It was really wonderful to see the ladies getting on so well and swapping tales. It had been the right decision to invite the ladies, without them the 40/40 would not have been the great success it was.

The night went on nosily for some time, one Plough regular was identified as an ex Boy from a Sprog Entry at Cosford and he thought the best virtue was to sit at the corner of the bar and just listen to this superior senior entry. He did say, however, that within 30 seconds of the first arrivals he had identified us as being X-Brats. He was detailed by one of us to collect our glasses at the end of the night!

It was not until midnight that some decided to disappear back to their billets, Mike S had brought his own billet and was camped out on the Charlton Arms car park. Someone else said he had not heard lights out yet so would continue drinking until he did! The final stragglers left around 0100 hrs, some seeking food but mostly their bed.

One conclusion reached was that if you insisted now that your children be made to leave home at 15 and join the RAF the Social Services would take them into care and you into

court. The overriding conclusion was that times have changed, and along with this so had our appearance. Gravity, it was decided, had a lot to answer for; nothing to do with ageing; overeating; lack of exercise or good living. The ladies, of course, all looked wonderful.

### **SATURDAY AM:**

Saturday morning saw some of the previous night's arrivals making their weary way to Telford Town Centre and the nearby Ironbridge. Bob decided to take in the Aerospace tour, after Ironbridge, to ensure a quick ETD on Sunday. Late arrivals also decided to take up the Telford Town challenge and fight for car parking. Some souvenirs of the visit were purchased, and of course something for the grandchildren - but not for the weekend, Sir!

Those who went to Ironbridge agreed it was well worth the visit. After all, this was the first Ironbridge anywhere in the world. Some even said they would return for a more detailed visit of the whole area. A few hardy souls decided it was time to re-visit HMS Plough from the previous night, perhaps hoping to find the Sprog for shoe cleaning and suit pressing. By late Saturday afternoon a few wise ones decided upon getting some ZZZZs in before the Formal event.

A good decision, as the rest of us would find out!

### **SATURDAY PM:**

Early Saturday evening we all began to gather in the main bar at the Charlton Arms. Old faces began to appear, including John who would be the most senior member (Sqn Ldr, Retd) at the 40/40. Sadly, the most senior one (Wg Cdr, Retd) is now in New Zealand and was unable to be with us for this one, although he did kindly send us a video message. Name badges began to appear on 40th lads jackets and made things so much easier, apart from one who inadvertently put his on upside down. Seemingly, some of his kit inspection layouts had been the same way! At 1930 we all made our way into the Function room and assembled around the bar.

The room had already been set out with the disco ready to go. Next to the dance floor was a small display of Cosford drums (used in the past by the Boys bands) with 2 flags draped across them, both displaying the 2 S of TT emblem and the Cosford Oak tree. On this display were 5 berets with coloured discs, as worn by the Boys. On a nearby table memorabilia appeared from many sources and was scrutinised throughout the night. Just inside the door, on the table, was a celebration cake with the 40th Shield done in icing.

The RAF Cosford Station Commander, Grp Capt Les Burrell, along with Mrs Sue Burrell, arrived at 2015 and were met at the front entrance of the Hotel. On arrival, they were introduced by Steve Lister (Originator of 40/40) to the assembled 40/40 party. After looking around the memorabilia they took up their seating places. By this time everyone else had made a decision on his or her seating arrangements. John Emerson duly said Grace and the set menu was served. The meal was superb and the company never quiet. From nearby tables familiar names could be heard; Chiefy Hinds, Sgt Jolliffe and the Drill Instructor with the big nose!

After the meal coffee and mints were served and it was at this point Steve Lister made a short speech and this was followed by the Station Commander's speech. His speech included the history of Boy Entrants and the charges that some Boys found themselves on. An example of this was marching with hands in pockets whilst wearing a ground sheet. The CO also stressed the good quality of the present day airmen and airwoman who are all volunteers. The CO covered certain aspects of the 40th Entries time at Cosford (First Ten Tors Expedition) and he felt sure our training stood us all in good stead for our chosen careers. His speech was well received and certainly well researched. A presentation of the official 40/40 tie was made to him and a display of flowers given to Mrs Burrell.

The Disco commenced with the No 1 hit at the time of our enlistment in May 1960 - Cathy's Clown/Everly Brothers. Other 60s music followed, although only one couple appeared to want to dance whilst the rest were happy to talk. It was expected that the Station Commander would retire early on but Mrs Sue Burrell had other ideas. After cutting the celebration 40/40

cake she went onto to serve it at tables. All agreed things had changed since the 60s. However, it was strongly suspected that we had an exceptional couple as our Guests of Honour.

A sale of Raffle tickets took place, prior to the departure of the Guests of Honour at just after 2300 hrs. The music played on and no one danced but instead talked about old long forgotten tales and former lost Boys. It was already thought a future reunion would need to be organised - but not tonight! People started to leave just after midnight, whilst a few others stopped on to see how the bar shutters operated at 0100 hrs.

It was only the thought of the early morning to come that ensured everyone left at a reasonable hour, otherwise who knows?

### **SUNDAY AM**

The plan was for everyone to Parade at RAF Cosford for 0900 hrs. Somehow the order got blurred and most of us arrived for 0930. It was a delightful surprise to see the Station Commander turn up at the Main Entrance at 0910 and inform us that he would be escorting us around his unit. AC Macdonald, from John o'Groates, piped us onto the station. All the highland gear, that goes with the occasion, was smartly worn.

Our first scheduled stop was the Airframe Training Squadron where a Flt Lt gave us a conducted tour with the assistance of a Corporal. This hangar was chosen as it was the hangar used in 1961 for the 40th Graduation Parade as the bad weather at the time prevented us from using the Main Station Parade Square. This Hangar later became the National indoor running track for quite some time. All agreed the presentation was first-class and informative. The next stop was the Weapons & Propulsion Sqn and this was overseen by a Keen Flying Officer, along with a Warrant Officer who accompanied us throughout the tour displaying good humour at all times. This hangar at one time trained Telegraphist and Radar Boy Entrants.

It seemed a long walk to Fulton Block, where many of us had been billeted. We took light refreshments, which was waiting for us and enjoyed this in the old Fulton Block Mess, which was in use by students arriving for lunch. This break was much needed, as outside was quite cold. It was after this that we had a group photo taken of us by a Station Photographer. The group consisted of all the former 40th Boys who had made it this far today, along with the Station Commander.

Once more on the move and down to the old Parade Square, now jokingly called the biggest car park in Europe by the Station Commander. It was a strange feeling for many to walk across the Parade Square and near to the old saluting Base (now moved) where we took our ITS Graduation Salute and wore out a lot of leather. Someone thought they heard Sgt Jolliffe shouting at us to get of his Parade Square!

We took the short stroll to the Gym and saw the old Station church, which many of us had tried to avoid at the compulsory weekly Sunday morning Church Parades. A walkabout of the Gym and what was the old Cinema took place with a running commentary by a WO PTI who really wanted to be on the stage. The old Cinema had been transformed into a keep fit gym with all the modern equipment that goes with a sports centre. It still seemed so sad to see it this way for many of us. The swimming pool was little changed, apart from the water and the cleanliness, which seemed of a higher standard.

We had thought, at this point, we had seen everything, but we were in for a surprise. On leaving the swimming pool, and so our tour of the station, the accompanying Warrant Officer formed us up in threes and detailed the senior man to march the 40th off camp, with the help of that smart Piper, AC Macdonald. It looked a shambles at first, but within a few strides it was back to the feeling of being in the Boys again. After reaching the visitors' car park the Flight was brought to a halt and so was our tour of RAF Cosford.

### SUNDAY PM

After the dismissal of the 40/40 Flight fond farewells were said and addresses exchanged for those making their way home. Others decided to visit the Aerospace Museum (Now Free Admission) and spend an enjoyable few hours before making their way home. Once again, fond farewells were said - a tearful one in one case.

The whole 40/40 reunion had been a wonderful time for all of us. The Charlton Arms turned out to be the right choice. The lovely Ladies who attended played a major part in the success of 40/40. Royal Air Force Cosford could not do enough for us and, of course, Group Captain and Mrs Burrell were inspiring. It is aimed to have a future reunion in May (the month of our Enlistment) 2003 at a venue to be decided by all. Hopefully, more 40th Boys will be located for the next one.

A letter of appreciation was sent to the Station Commander by the senior 40th Entry member present at 40/40 - John Emerson, Sqn Ldr, Retd.

HALT 40/40 - STOOD DOWN UNTIL 40/42