

CCXVI DONA FERENS '216 Bearing Gifts'



President: Air Cdre Paul Atherton
Ex-Officio: Wg Cdr Al Green



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Treasurer: Mr. Andy Maycock
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Grd Crew Rep: Sgt Jon Hoult

Newsletter Issue 01- August 2010

Hello and welcome from the Chair!

On behalf of the Committee may I welcome you all to the 216 Squadron Association and the first edition of the Association Newsletter. Although it has taken some time for us to get to this position I am delighted to say that the foundations are set and we can now move from strength to strength. That said the committee can not do it without the full support of the membership and we would welcome any feedback / input from the membership in order for us to deliver what the members want. You will have received your membership certificates and Association pin / lapel badges by now, hopefully this further demonstrates the progress made.

Our membership currently stands at 117 with more enquiries made each week, it is also great news that the membership includes personnel from Valletta, Dakota, Comet and Tristar era's – all very important milestones from the Squadron's chequered history, all of which has been captured and is on display within the Squadron Conference Room. We are actively seeking permission to enable Association members to view this fine collection, undoubtedly it will stir some fond memories – and generate some interesting stories, some taller than others!

I would like to extend our gratitude to our President, Air Commodore Atherton and Wg Cdr Al Green, OC 216, who have both provided their full support and encouragement during the early stages of the Association, I hope their participation will continue for many years to come.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow committee members for all their hard work in getting us to this position and of course you the membership for your support. Now let's get this show on the road.....

Forward by Ex-Officio Wg Cdr Al Green, OC 216

I would like to take the opportunity at the start of the first 216 Squadron Association Newsletter to say how delighted I am that the Association is finally up and running and gathering such support from 216 Squadron members, both old and new. It is down to the hard work of the Association Committee that so much progress has been made in a relatively short time and I extend my sincere thanks to them all and hope that the future of the Association and planned events are a great success.

216 Squadron continues to play a key role in Defence. At this time, the Squadron's major output is support to the Afghanistan Airbridge. For many who will remember the good old days of the South Atlantic, when 216 Sqn was the lifeline to the Falkland Islands, the current Squadron's task is effectively the same but to a slightly sandier destination. The one thing that has changed however is the scale of effort to the task. Whereas we used to fly only 2 trips a week to the South Atlantic, we now plan to fly daily to Afghanistan via Akrotiri each way. This is no mean feat with an aging aircraft with increasing serviceability problems and unfortunately means there is little room for other tasking. In short, operating the TriStar Force to meet today's task is a challenge but one that I am immensely proud to say that 216 Sqn continues to achieve and is absolutely vital to the UK Military Services.

May I wish you all the best and hope that you maintain your links with the Association. Last, I look forward to meeting many of you at the planned social functions where I am sure that seeing some old faces will recall many great times from the past.

A brief introduction to our President

AIR COMMODORE P A ATHERTON, OBE – ROYAL AIR FORCE



Air Commodore Paul Atherton was born in County Durham and joined the Royal Air Force in 1982. Following Initial Officer Training and pilot training on the Jet Provost and Jetstream, he was posted to No 10 Squadron at RAF Brize Norton where he operated the VC10 aircraft in the Air Transport and Air Refuelling roles. He completed tours as a co-pilot, captain and flight commander, undertaking VIP and training duties and was actively involved in operations during both the Gulf War and the conflict in the Balkans. He then undertook a policy appointment in HQ No 2 Group before being selected for the final RAF Staff Course at Bracknell in 1996.

Thereafter, he was posted to the Ministry of Defence and an appointment within the Directorate of Joint Warfare as a strategic exercise planner. He was promoted in situ to Wing Commander and his responsibilities changed to taking forward the wide-ranging joint initiatives resulting from the 1998 Strategic Defence Review. In 1999, he returned to RAF Brize Norton as Officer Commanding No 216 Sqn flying the TriStar aircraft. During his time in command, he and the Sqn operated from deployed locations in Italy, Oman and Bahrain in support of operations over Kosovo, Afghanistan and Southern Iraq. Following the events of 9/11, he was the UK Tanker Commander in Seeb, Oman as part of the UK's air-refuelling contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom. On completion of this tour, he was promoted to Group Captain and was appointed the senior military member of the Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft programme at the Defence Procurement Agency. He departed this post in November 2004 to command Basrah Air Station in Iraq for 6 months, for which he was awarded the OBE, prior to assuming command of RAF Lyneham and the UK Hercules Force where he flew both the C-130 K and J models. He attended both the Higher Command and Staff Course and the Royal College of Defence Studies throughout 2008 prior to promotion to Air Commodore and an appointment as the Assistant Chief of Staff, Strategy, Policy and Plans at HQ AIR. He is married to Jane; they have 2 teenage daughters, and a home in West Oxfordshire. His interests include the countryside, cooking and gardening. An ex Combined Services and RAF cricketer he also has a passionate interest in all sports.

The Committee

As many of you may well recall from your time in the service, or who are currently still in the service, you are normally volunteered for jobs when you are actually not there, by people you normally call friends - this is basically how the Committee was formed! Our Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer were put forward whilst not actually being present, and as a result were unanimously voted in. I would like to extend their thanks to those people.....revenge is sweet!!! Seriously though, the appointments that have been made will without question only benefit the Association, especially as the passion that was felt by those elected whilst on the squadron, is now the driving force to making this a success.

The Committee is currently meeting every eight weeks and as you can imagine the ideas for functions are endless. What we obviously want to avoid is every function being the same i.e. stood by the bar for most of the night!

It has been decided that each April from now on, around the Squadron's anniversary, we will hold the Association's Official Formal Function and AGM. This will be a full black tie, sit down, 3 course meal, including wine and port, but numbers will obviously have to be limited and the price will reflect this type of function. This will be a member's only function so please keep your eyes peeled on the website for the date. We will hold the AGM prior to the function.

Listed on page 1 is the Committee as it currently stands, there are still positions to fill and if you go to the Association website you will be able to see the vacancies available. Please feel free to apply to the secretary, Dave Maloney if you are interested. Dave's details are again available through the website along with all other committee members. For those of you without web access you can contact Dave on 01249 658699

Membership

As of the 26th July '10, we have 117 paid up members but we are hoping this will increase greatly over the next few months. The three current serving squadron members on the committee are rallying around encouraging people to join in addition as part of the arrivals and clearing package for squadron, details of how to join the Association will be handed out.

We had such a great turn out at last years reunion that we're hoping a lot more are still to join, so if you know someone that was there, or anyone that might not know about the Association that has been on the squadron, give them a nudge and get them to sign up.

The Membership Certificates and pin / lapel badges are enclosed with this newsletter (for those who were not at the 10 April '10 function). Thanks for your patience.

Don't forget, you can set up a standing order through your bank to pay your membership each year, again, details are on the Association website.

The Website

This is still very much in its infancy, but I think you would agree it is still an excellent, easy to use site thanks to the extremely hard work of Dave Maloney over the Christmas period. Unfortunately our web designer had important family issues to attend to so Dave took over and spent a great deal of his time designing and laying the foundations of a great website. The only unfortunate thing is that as all of us have other commitments so sometimes there can be a slight delay in updating the website, apologies in advance for this.

What we do need however is your stories and pictures from your time on the Squadron. So, if you are happy for them to be published on the site, please forward them to anyone on the Committee.

Functions

You maybe aware, but the Association held its first function in April. This was not quite the success we were hopping for but out of the 85 members at that time, approximately 55 attended. Fortunately, this meant that we just broke even and could have made a profit if we had forfeited the disco. However, we had to cater for the possibility of larger numbers and were unable to cancel the disco without paying full price at such short notice. This was a good 'barometer' though and perhaps with hindsight we could have left it longer before organizing our first function. As the intention is to hold the 'Formal Association Dinner' in April of each year we decided we should launch our first function at the time we did.

As mentioned previously, next years function will be the Official Annual Reunion and will be held on or around the Squadrons Anniversary in April. This will be a black tie function with a sit down, 3 course meal with wine and port included. The price will obviously have to reflect this but we still feel that the estimate from the mess will still be excellent value. Numbers will also have to be limited,

approx 160, and will be for members only so please keep your eyes peeled on the website for confirmation of the date and costs.

Plans are now well advanced for our next function which is going to be on Friday 8th October 2010 – tickets are now available and information regarding this function has been circulated and is also available on the website. We had originally planned for the 25th September and this was also advertised, however, The Battle of Britain Anniversary is at the beginning of September and with the summer holidays only just over, we decided to move the date so apologies if you have already starting planning.

We are very conscious of trying not to make every function the same and trying to give some kind of theme to each one to hopefully make things more varied for you, the members.

The function in October will include a charity raffle, raising money for 216 Squadron's 'Beer For The Boys' Campaign. For those that are unaware of the 'Beer For The Boy's' Campaign' - this is a way in which the public can show their appreciation to the Troops returning from Afghanistan by basically buying them a beer. On every returning flight, each passenger is given a cold beer as a way of saying thanks. A large quantity of this beer has been kindly donated by many breweries but a lot is also cash donations to purchase beer which is what we will aim to do as a result of our charity night. Full details of 'Beer for Boys' can be found on the web at www.216squadron.com. To that end we are looking for donations of prizes for the raffle that will be held that night. We have already kindly been offered a tour of the Renault F1 factory at Enstone and we are looking into a possible flight in the TriStar simulator, just to give you an idea.

If anyone has suggestions for functions or future charity events please let one of the Social Secretaries know. This is your Association and we are here for you at the end of the day.

Please could I just remind members that if they are paying membership or function money by standing order, please could you ensure you put a reference with your transfer, i.e. 'Membership Fee' or 'April Function'. This just makes things a lot easier when tallying up the books with the bank statement.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone again for their patience over the past few months whilst pin badges were made and certificates finalized.

There is still a great deal more that we want to do to make the Association a success for every member, and your suggestions, ideas and stories from the past will ensure that it is.

The next Newsletter will hopefully be with you towards the end of October and will include a report and feedback from the 08 October '10 function. We would encourage and welcome additional input from the membership - so please send in any stories and pictures that you would be happy to share.

We look forward to seeing you all on the 08 October 2010 - in the Officers Mess, Royal Air Force Brize Norton. Get your tickets now.