



CCXVI DONA FERENS '216 Bearing Gifts'



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Newsletter Issue 02- Winter 2010

On behalf of the committee, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the second edition of the 216 Squadron Association newsletter. I hope you find the newsletter informative, entertaining and most of all an enjoyable read. Its purpose after all is to provide a window into the Association and a link between the committee and the membership. We would warmly welcome any articles, comments, suggestions and any other items of general interest to the membership, it is your newsletter about your association – we look forward to hearing from you all.

It was very encouraging to see such a great turn out at the last 216 Squadron Association function, held in the Officer's Mess at RAF Brize Norton on Friday 8th October 2010. It was fantastic to see so many people from the various chapters in 216 Squadron's chequered history all mixing together, sharing memories, exchanging stories and having a most enjoyable evening! I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the committee who made it all possible – congratulations on a job well done! Through the generosity of local businesses and of the membership a total of over £1640 was raised for the 216 Squadron Charity 'Beer for the Boy's' – a tremendous effort that will benefit many of our HM Forces personnel returning from their tour of duty in Afghanistan – well done all!



Dave Maloney (Association Secretary) meets Fred Hart who was on 216 Squadron when it operated Dakotas. Fred is our oldest association member.

For those not aware, we invited the members from the pre – TriStar era to a 'meet & greet' held in the 216 Squadron conference room where OC216 Sqn, Wg Cdr Al Green gave a presentation on 216 Squadron Tristar operations past and present, this was warmly received and was most informative and enjoyable. Squadron memorabilia was displayed around the room which certainly provided time for reflection as fond memories returned. This was followed by a tour of a TriStar aircraft and refreshments provided by the 216 Squadron Air Stewards Section. Although the numbers were low, the feedback was very positive and is certainly something we will host again.

We have since had a committee meeting where we focused on the above function, determined to learn lessons and build upon what was achieved. We were honest and thorough in our deliberations and are all committed to raising the bar further with complete focus now being on the formal Squadron Association dinner scheduled for Spring 2011. The date, time, venue and format will be released soon – a slight curved ball was thrown with the announcement of the change in

catering arrangements at RAF Brize Norton, we are exploring all options with the decision due at our next Committee meeting scheduled for 06 Dec 2010. Please remember we welcome feedback and suggestions on how we can improve the service, functions and communication for the membership – if you have any comments then please bring them to our attention.

As Christmas is fast approaching I would like to take this opportunity in wishing you and your loved ones a very happy and merry Christmas and a prosperous 2011. This is also a poignant moment to spare a thought for those personnel who are currently serving away from home on active service and wish them all a speedy and safe return to the UK.

Thanks for your support through 2010; we look forward to seeing you all in 2011.

On behalf of the committee I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas one and all! –

Doug Swinney Chairman 216 Squadron Association

It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces at the reunion held on 8 October at Brize Norton. It was particularly good to meet those members from the pre-TriStar era who embody the long term spirit of what we all hope the 216 Squadron Association will become. This is particularly pertinent following the recent Strategic Defence and Security Review which has sadly brought forward the retirement date of the TriStar to 2013. This is some 3 years earlier than was planned and reflects the introduction to service of the new Airbus KC-30. Sad as it is, things could have been considerably worse when you consider what has happened to the Nimrod and Harrier fleets.

The obvious question is what will happen to the 216 Squadron name. At this time, and one must bear in mind that the SDSR announcement was less than a week ago, there is no future plan for the 216 Squadron number plate and it maybe, that the Squadron is disbanded for a period of time as it has been in the past. This makes our association all the more important to ensure that the spirit of 216 lives on. To that end, I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible again at the AGM and dinner planned for 2011.

In the meantime, 216 Squadron continues to face the challenges of the Afghanistan Airbridge. We continue to plan a task to Kandahar, through Akrotiri both ways, every day of the week and there is currently no plan to end this task for the Squadron and I think that it will be the majority of all that we do until the end of the TriStar.

Last, I would like to thank all those who took part in the charity raffle at the reunion on 8 October. We managed to raise £1600 for the 216 Squadron cause of Beer for the Boys which aims to give a beer to every Serviceman and woman leaving Afghanistan on their way home as a way of thanks for all they have done. Not only do we now provide a beer for troops on the aircraft but we now also pay for a beer for every Serviceman as they Decompress in Cyprus on their way back to their families. Additionally and most recently, we are supporting home coming parties, particularly for units that have suffered some terrible losses of life during their deployments. This is a great cause and unsurprisingly, has been exceedingly well received. Again, thank you.

Wg Cdr Al Green, OC 216 Squadron.

216 Sqn Association Reunion Raffle



Wg Cdr Al Green, Doug Swinney, Jon Hoult, Andy Maycock, Air Cdre Paul Atherton and Shaun Allen with the £1638.42 cheque for 'Beer For The Boys'

Prior to the reunion I was tasked with coordinating a charity raffle in order to raise money for 216 Squadron's charity 'Beer for the Boy's'. After a great response from local and national companies a large catalogue of prizes was obtained. During the evening the Association members showed great support for the charity, raising over £1600 for 'Beer for the Boy's', surpassing all expectations. I would personally like to thank everyone who purchased raffle ticket's, your generosity is greatly appreciated.

Sgt Jon Hoult

Our thanks to:

Arsenal FC – *Lynne Chaney*
ASDA Orbital Park, Swindon – *Yvonne Bidwell*
Avalon Television Ltd- *Al Murray & Gail Taylor*
Boots Witney
Breitling UK - *Charlotte Price*
Burford Garden Company
Curry's Witney
Fabulous Bakin Boy's
Giles Toy's Carterton

Haldanes, Carterton
Hook Norton Brewery
King of Shaves Ltd

Sainsbury's, Witney – *Heather Smith*
Tesco, Stow, Stow-on-the-Wold - *Kate*
Timpsons, Witney
Whittard's, Cheltenham Store
Wychwood Brewery

Ticked all my boxes!!

Well, my first committee meeting is over and the Chairman has already given me my first task! 'Grahame, can you please write a few notes about the last function – from outside looking in as it were, from a Non Committee member stance'. OK - so what did I think of it?

Organizing any function is a thankless task; you will never ever please everyone all of the time. Having spent many years on Mess Ent's Committees I know exactly what it's like, everyone has different 'boxes' that they want 'ticking'. Trying to cater for everyone's needs, particularly of such a wide and varied group, is nigh on impossible! So how did the last function go? Were the right choices made? Did it 'tick your boxes'?

Firstly choice, the location, 'on Camp' or off? - For me personally, as I am still serving in the RAF and live in Carterton, 'on Camp' is easy, just walk on and off when I like and back home to bed at the end of the night – easy for me to say? I guess for someone who retired years ago and lives miles away I am not so sure? Just getting onto Camp must be like trying to break into a prison, what a myriad of checks you have to go through. Then you have to arrange accommodation, not cheap around here is it! and transport to and fro? It starts to get very expensive no doubt – So, whilst 'on Camp' is good for me – it was perhaps not necessarily so for you!

Friday or Saturday or even mid week? – Me I love Friday Functions – I can really let myself go and overindulge (Hic!) – I then have all day Saturday to get over it and still have Sunday to do my chores! (Well the chores the wife sets me) – Bargain! However, what if you work Saturdays? Probably didn't suit you then did it? Nor would mid week I guess?

Officers Mess or Local Hotel? – What did I want personally? Beer, and lots of it and cheap as well! Hey as far as I am concerned the OM worked fine, fantastic array of drinks, lovely decor, clean and tidy, super service and by comparison to any local hostelry, dirt cheap! Fantastic for me! - But was it for you? If you're not a drinker then you probably don't see it as I do.

Sumptuous feast or Beer food? – Well, for me I didn't want much as I had eaten dinner at home before I left. I just needed a snack to help soak up the Beer, and so a hot buffet snack was ideal, a pint in one hand and Sausage and Chips in the other – perfect! (but of course like Doug I told the wife that I had salad!). I Loved it! - But then again, if it was going to be my only meal of the day, after travelling for miles, then I am not so sure? Was it ideal for you?

Entertainment? Band or Disco? Or just something in the background? – Me, I plump for the latter, I was there to meet and chat (and after 35 years of working on ac I am just little 'Mutton Geoff' to say the least!) So the Disco playing in the background was fine for me – However, after just a couple of beers many of you probably believe you're a Disco Diva and feel sure you could out dance John Travolta! - Then perhaps it's a full on Band and Disco that 'ticks your box'?

In all, for me, it did as the title says; it 'Ticked all my boxes', every single one! I really thought it was a superb Do! And I am extremely grateful to all that were involved in making it happen.

However, I can completely understand if you still had some 'boxes' that remained 'un-ticked'. - If that is the case then the most important thing is that the Committee need to know!

Grahame Lee, Social Sec

Membership Matters

Association membership has grown to some 156 (of which 75% attended the reunion in October). Considering the 216 Squadron Association was only formed in January 2010 this is a fantastic membership base. Obviously we would like more current and ex 216 Squadron members to join us so please pass the word amongst the contacts you still have from old 216 Squadron days.

Thanks to all those who took the time, did you have a choice?, to sign the print of Jimmy James 216 Squadron Bombay being bounced by German 109's during the summer of 1947. This attack resulted in the death of 18 military personnel including the newly appointed commander of the 8th Army Lt General Gott. Read Jimmy's account of this incident on the 216 Squadron Association website. One of the prints has been donated to 216 Squadron and we are arranging for it to be framed. Don't forget to visit the associations website for more stories from ex members of 216 Squadron.



Dave Maloney Membership Sec

Welfare

In addition to the current benefits we are offering, we are looking to identify ex-Squadron members who may be in need of and wish support from the association to help them through difficult times or illness. Indeed we do not wish to impinge on the excellent work of RAFA, the British Legion and other associations but just to provide additional support from current and ex-216 Squadron members and the association itself. We are considering writing an obituary column in future newsletters and on the website. To achieve this we need to be informed of any serving and ex-Squadron members that have passed away with contact details of next of kin for permission to publish. Please contact me in the first instance.

Mike Bourne, Welfare rep

Final note: AGM and Dining in night will be held in April 2011. We had hoped to have it on the weekend of the 216 Squadron birthday but this isn't possible. We are in the final stages of confirming the date and venue. Numbers will be limited to 160 but all Association members will be informed of the date, ticket prices etc early in the new year by email and via the website. Those who do not have access to a computer will be informed by letter.

Dakota, Comet, Buccaneer and Tristar Girls and Guys have a great night at the October reunion.

