

Tiger News No 50

Compiled by Bob Cossey

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.And the Winner Is.....

Association member Josephine Smith won the top prize in our very successful Tiger Draw in March - a flight in a Harvard piloted by our President Air Marshal Cliff Spink. Whilst extremely happy to have won this great prize Josephine didn't feel she could fly herself and instead offered to let her namesake Roy Smith, also an Association member, take advantage of this rare opportunity. Roy of course was only too pleased to accept as these photographs show!



Ray and Josephine before the flight on June 4th.

Making sure Roy puts his feet in the right place.





Strapped in, helmet on, in communication with Cliff - and all ready to go. Roy's flight ended with Cliff performing a barrel roll over the airfield.

About the aircraft.

Harvard IV 1747/G-BGPB was built by the Canadian Car Foundry at Fort Williams in 1953 as part of an order for the United States Air Force and was given the US military serial 53-4619. It saw service with the USAF in Europe and was then sold to the West German Air Force in 1958 and was allocated to the Pilot Training School at Landsberg. When the school closed in 1966 it moved to the Technical Training School at Kaufbeuren as a ground instructional airframe. From here it was sold on



to the Portuguese Air Force (FAP) and became operational at the Flight Training base at Sao Jacinta and was given the FAP code 1747. When the Portuguese disposed of their Harvard fleet in the late 1970's 1747 was imported into the UK and placed on the UK register as G-BGPB. The aircraft was refurbished and given a Royal Canadian Air Force colour scheme and operated from Duxford firstly as one of The Harvard Duo and later as one of the 1980's Harvard Formation Team. Following a change of ownership the aircraft was involved in an accident at Little Gransden aerodrome in 1989 and was bought by the Duxford based Aircraft Restoration Company in September of that year. They began a rebuild of the airframe culminating in a first post-restoration flight on 23rd February 2000 in the colours of the Portuguese Air Force which it still wears today.

Prize Glide



The Third Prize winner of the Tiger Museum Draw finally made it to Dorset on Sunday 27th September for her trip in a glider. 1958 Tiger Jon Mosen and his wife Jo, who engineered the prize, met up with Sylvia Guiver and her husband at the Dorset Gliding Club airfield. The weather was glorious as Sylvia was strapped into the Club's Capstan trainer and was towed up to 2,000ft then released over the lovely Dorset countryside. She thoroughly enjoyed the 25 minute flight saying 'it all went far to quickly, when is the next raffle?'.
Jon with Sylvia at the Dorset Gliding Club.



Strapping in ready to go!



At Bovington Tank Museum

Then came part two of the prize which was a tour of the brand new Bovington Tank Museum building. There is so much to see there that come late afternoon, Jon and Jo and their guests were all ready to put their feet up. To anyone who enjoys military museums, this one is outstanding. There must be just about every type of tank on display as well as very realistic walk through displays of the WW1 trenches. There is plenty of parking and a good restaurant.

Our thanks go to The Dorset Gliding Club and The Bovington Tank Museum for sponsoring the prizes.

Model Prizewinner

It must have been Roy Smith's lucky night for apart from the unexpected Harvard flight courtesy of Josephine he also managed to win a made to order model as Es George reports.



'I donated a detailed scale model of a 74 Squadron aircraft as a draw prize. I was delighted when Roy Smith called me and asked for John Freeborn's Spitfire. I am mainly a jet modeller so the incentive to model a classic was most welcome. I had a chat with Roy and he gave me the serial and squadron codes and told me he preferred it to be on the ground and cockpit open. For those into such things this is the Tamiya



1/48 Spitfire Mk.1 to which I used additional parts to detail the cockpit and provide more realistic exhausts. I sourced the serials and codes from specialist decal sheets and used various roundels to capture the right ones for the period. I finally 'dirtied it up a bit' to make it look as

if it had seen action and wasn't straight out of the factory. To finish I quickly knocked up a base.'

As you can see the result is a superbly realistic model. If any one has any questions regarding this or any other kit, Es would be very happy to answer them - just let me (Bob Cossey) know. By the way David Howley has just designed some superb new 1/72 scale decal sheets for 74 Squadron aircraft . They will be available from November from Hannants of Lowestoft (www.hannants.co.uk).

Farewells

We sadly have to say farewell to **Bart Bartholomew** who passed away with his family around him on September 10th following a heart attack. Bart's funeral was on 30th September at Eltham Crematorium. He was always very proud of his membership of the Association and for his funeral he was dressed in his blazer with its squadron badge and his tiger tie. He was a true gent with an infectious smile and a sense of humour which endured him to everyone. He will be much missed and our thoughts are with his wife Doris and son and daughter Martin and Beverley and their families.



Bart joined 74 Squadron in June 1944 after two and a half years with a Mosquito night fighter squadron. When he arrived 74 were engaged in sweeps across the continent from various locations including Tangmere on the Sussex coast after which they moved to France. Bart and the squadron then moved through Belgium and Holland, ending up at Schijndel where on January 1st 1945 the Luftwaffe had a final fling when they attacked Allied airfields. Schijndel was hit by a squadron of Focke Wulfs with one being shot down by groundfire. However, Schijndel was a comfortable billet after 74's previous accommodation at Antwerp Duerne, being ex-German barracks with bunk beds. It had been captured by the American 101st Airborne Division - the Screaming Eagles - and handed over to the 2nd Tactical Air Force of which 74 were a component. From Holland the Tigers next moved into Germany and made their home at Lingen until the war's end. That was a euphoric moment but as Bart later wrote:

On reflection I had mixed feelings thinking about the future and the loss of the easy going life and comradeship we had all built up in 74 from the CO to the lowliest AC plonk. I was due for BLA leave and after handing in my Sten and ammo I was adequately sprayed with DDT and sent on my way to a transit camp at Calais. I arrived home smack in the middle of a street party outside my house where all the neighbours were celebrating VE Day. In the meantime the squadron had returned home, to Colerne in fact, and I had to rejoin them there. We were due to convert to Meteors with a possible journey to the Far East being rumoured. VJ Day arrived however and my RAF career was on the wane. In May 1946 I found myself on my way to Uxbridge and a double breasted pin stripe suit plus a trilby. On arriving home I gave the hat to my uncle.

I have some wonderful memories of my service - some happy, some traumatic - but looking back I'm glad it all happened and I will never again share such a wonderfully comradely experience as gained by becoming a Tiger.

Membership Matters

Congratulations to ex-Tiger **Air Vice Marshal Martin Routledge** who has been made a CB in the Queen's Birthday Honours list to mark his significant contributions to the RAF over a period of 36 years. At Group Captain rank he served as Commander British Forces Palatine (Italy) and OC RAF Leuchars. At one star he was Director of Air Operations followed by

Director of NATO. His final appointment was as Chief of Staff Strategy, Policy and Plans, HQ Air Command.

Welcome to two new members. **Athol Holmes** was a Tiger at Coltishall from July 1961 until January 1963 as an SAC and served as an Air Radar Mechanic. The highlights of his time with 74 were the 1962 Farnborough Air Show and a detachment to Norway and Sweden. 74 was his first posting after training. His career in the RAF of almost 14 years later took him to RAFs Kai Tak, Changi, Kuching, Stanbridge, Aden. North Luffenham, Episkopi and Boulmer.

It's really hello again to **Tony Ellender** who was previously a member and has now returned to the fold! Tony was a Deputy Flight Commander with the Tigers from December 1968 to September 1971 and it was he who flew the last Lightning out of Tengah following the squadron's disbandment. His 25 year career encompassed RAF Cranwell, 4 FTS, Hunter OCU, Lightning OCU and 23 Squadron prior to 74: and the RAF College of Air Warfare, Jaguar OCU, 17 Squadron, 31 Squadron, RAE Farnborough, 2 ATAF Rheindalen and RAF Marham post 74. After leaving the RAF Tony embarked on a second career with British Aerospace.

The wrong king!

Many thanks to **Colin Hales** (one of our senior members who celebrated his 91st birthday in March) for pointing out that in Tiger News 49 the introduction to the article about Pilot Officer Peter Charles Fasken Stevenson DFC stated that his father was in 1940 a Group Captain and on the verge of becoming ADC to King George V. It should have course read King George VI.

Chris Stott photo group - Tiger News 49. Who's Who? - Ch Tech 'Jimmy' Greaves believes No.2 in the group looks like Roger Silk (engines) whilst No.6 looks like Graham 'Nobby' Clark (airframes), a keen swimmer. Trev Taylor thinks No.3 is Roger Clark (fitter)

'Bankline'

In *Tiger News 48* Peter May told us of his narrow escape when the Spitfire he was flying crashed at Manston on returning from ops over France, colliding with a mast whilst landing in formation. The aircraft was P7740, a subscription aircraft named 'Bankline' and Colin Musson has unearthed a little more information about it by referring to Henry Boot's excellent book *Gifts of War*. The Spitfire was presented with a donation in August 1940 of £5,000 by Andrew Weir and Co through its Chairman Lord Inverforth who had been Minister of Munitions 1919-1921. The MkIIa had been taken on charge at 8MU Little Rissington on 5th December 1940 passing to 74 on 28th December with whom it was coded ZP-P. After Peter's accident the aircraft was passed to Air Service Training who were able to effect repairs (a remarkable achievement given the state of the aircraft) after which

P7740 was sent to the Station Flight at Middle Wallop on 6th July 1941 and finally to 5MU Kemble on 6th June 1942.

Colin also points out that the photograph on the top right of page 13 of Tiger News 48 isn't HMS Illustrious - but is HMS Eagle and it shows her entering Vigo Bay in North West Spain in November 1953. On deck are six Skyraiders, six Sea Hornets, six Fireflies and twelve Attackers. Colin recognised her because he was treated to a Mediterranean cruise on board her in 1955 with 826 Naval Air Squadron!

Gripe Sheet

This has been doing the rounds in various forms for a while now but this latest version contains some new problems and solutions. These are from Qantas. Pilots fill out a gripe sheet after every flight and the engineers correct the problems listed and document their repairs on the form. Can you come up with a different version for a future Tiger News?

Problem. Left inside main tyre almost needs replacement

Solution. Almost replaced inside main tyre.

P. Test flight OK except autoland very rough

S. Auto land not installed on this aircraft

P. Something loose in cockpit

S. Something tightened in cockpit

P. Autopilot in altitude hold mode produces a 200 feet per minute descent

S. Cannot reproduce problem on ground

P. Evidence of leak on right main landing gear

S. Evidence removed

P. DME volume unbelievably loud

S. DME volume set to more believable level

P. IFF inoperative

S. IFF always inoperative in OFF mode.

P. Suspected crack in windshield

S. Suspect you are right.

P. Number 3 engine missing.

S. Engine found on right wing after brief search

P. Aircraft handles funny

S. Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly right and be serious

P. Target radar hums

S. Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics

P. Mouse in cockpit

S. Cat installed

P. Noise coming from under instrument panel. Sounds like a midget pounding on something with a hammer

S. Took hammer away from midget.

A Name On A Window

Geoff Simpson recently researched the story of Fred Eley which appeared in Issue 9 of the *Friends of the Few* magazine. **Photographs** are from the book *Dear Mrs Jones - The Next Generation* by **Mark Potts** and **Tony Marks**. Friends of the Few support the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust in maintaining the National Memorial to The Few at Capel-le-Ferne, Kent. See www.battleofbritainmemorial.org.

Wrenbury is an attractive village in lush south Cheshire countryside. The Shropshire and Welsh borders are not far away. The Llangollen branch of the Shropshire Union canal passes by. The Dusty Miller, at the canal side, has a high reputation for its food. St Margaret's church in the centre of the village is made of red sandstone from the nearby Bickerton Hills and dates from around 1500. It contains a musician's gallery built in 1791, a pulpit from the same era and a collection of 18th century box pews. The doors of some of the pews feature the coat of arms of local families including the Starkeys and Cottons. A visitor who enters by the main door and turns to the right will quickly find a stained glass window which remembers Wrenbury'd dead of the Second World War. There are eight names recorded on the window and they are also listed in a book of remembrance. Twenty years ago visitors could turn the pages of the book. Now it is locked in a glass topped cabinet though the churchwardens regularly display a fresh page.



Frederick William Eley is one of those remembered. He was a Spitfire pilot and he was killed in the Battle of Britain. He is buried in the churchyard.

Fred was born in 1919 and in his early years lived a few miles from Wrenbury at Cholmodeston Hall Farm near Wettenhall where his father was a dairy farmer. The business failed, Fred's mother died and he went to live with the family of his cousin Brian George, seven years younger than Fred, in Aston, another nearby village. Both boys went to Nantwich and Aston Grammar School, popularly known as NAGS. From the 1930s this nickname was marked with two horses on the badge. On leaving school Fred joined Lloyds Bank, working first in rural Shropshire at Church Stretton, under the Long Mynd, and then in considerable contrast at Burslem in the Potteries. The rules of the bank demanded that in both cases Fred had to lodge

near his work and Brian's father supported him financially. It was while in Burslem that Fred met his girlfriend Nancy.

He had always been interested in aviation - Brian George feels that he might eventually have made his career in the RAF even if war had not come. In the Spring of 1939 Fred joined the RAFVR at Tern Hill near Market Drayton. He was called up on September 1st and, training

completed, joined 74 Squadron at Rochford in Essex, now Southend Airport. Apart from a brief spell at Leconfield, the squadron would alternate between Rochford and Hornchurch until August 1940. On July 8th one of Fred's fellow Sergeant Pilots on the squadron, Edward Mould, was credited with the first German fighter to come down in Britain. The Me109 flown by Leutnant Johan Boem force landed on Bladbean Hill outside the village of Elham near Folkestone.

It was not until July 31st that 74 lost pilots in action in the Battle of Britain. This was a day of Luftwaffe attacks on shipping and on the Dover balloon barrage. In the late afternoon 74 engaged 109s over Dover. In the resulting fight the squadron suffered three casualties. Pilot Officer Gunn was killed, his body being recovered by the Germans and buried in Belgium and Flight Lieutenant Kelly returned to Hornchurch uninjured but in a badly damaged aircraft. Fred Eley's Spitfire went down burning off Folkestone harbour. It seems he was the victim of the vastly more experienced Oberleutnant Horst 'Jakob' Tietzen, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War. Boatmen and service personnel brought the British fighter ashore and Fred's body was recovered from the cockpit.



Brian George remembers clearly the moment he learned his cousin was gone. The school holidays had started and he was in the garden with his father. His mother came out of the house holding a telegram and crying. Many people attended Fred's funeral and there was a RAF flypast. 'Jakob' Tietzen survived less than three weeks longer than Fred. On August 18th his aircraft fell into the sea off Whitstable, probably shot down by the Polish Pilot Officer Zenker of 501 Squadron. Six days later Zenker was killed. Tietzen was posthumously promoted to Hauptmann.

On October 12th 1939 Fred Eley wrote to his sister Molly from Tern Hill. This is an extract.....

Dear Molly,

I expect you were wondering what had happened to me as I have been so long in writing. Believe me, there is little time left when we have finished work here. We fly till it is going dark and in the evening we have to swot. The amazing thing is that we all take it in the right spirit and although it is a bit tiring we usually find plenty to laugh at. Anyway, it is all for our own good.

The flying side of the business is really good. That, we all enjoy. It is not unusual to do five hours in the air in a day. At that rate you can guess we are beginning to feel quite at home in an aeroplane. Once you get the hang of the new machines we have to fly it is quite simple. I have been flying solo for practically three weeks now. By that time one can make the machines do as one likes. A loop becomes just an ordinary thing, the thrill leaves it after a time.

We shall probably be here for another eight weeks after which we go to a training camp somewhere in Scotland for another three weeks. It seems hard to believe there is a war on. At first we had Sundays off but that has been stopped now. Bad weather has held up flying on one or two days and we have to make up the lost time somehow.

We are all keeping very fit. The food is still being kept up to scratch: in fact it is better than we had dared to hope for. Are you having any difficulty in getting such things as bacon and sugar? The petrol rationing is a bit of a blow. Amongst the crowd who come from Stoke several have cars which did good work in getting us back to civilisation before the rations came in but now they are all idle. It seems such a farce to think that one can't get hold of a drop of juice for pleasure when I alone have used between 800 and 900 gallons since I have been here.

They reckon it costs £100 a week each to train pupil pilots and I for one can well believe it. The expense of running a show like this is terrific. For every pupil there are nine men working on the ground. It seems incredible but it is true.

Well I must close now. It is getting late and we have to rise early.

Love to all.

Fred

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Byron Duckenfield.

Length of postings to a squadron are pretty well standardised these days but in wartime it could be very different. We have members in the Association who served during the last war for periods as long as five years to as short as a week. Byron Duckenfield falls into the short posting category as **Stephen Hill** has discovered - and it is always interesting to see how a career developed after time with 74.

Duckenfield was born on April 15th 1917. He joined the RAF in June 1939 as a direct-entry airman under training as a pilot. Commissioned on April 1st 1940, he joined 74 Squadron at Hornchurch on the 5th and then moved to 501 Squadron at Tangmere in early May and that marked the end of his time as a Tiger. 501 flew to France on May 10th and Duckenfield followed with the rear party the next day in a Bombay. As it prepared to touch down at Bétheniville the aircraft's nose went up and the pilot went round again. On the second approach the same thing happened, the pilot appeared to lose control and the Bombay, L5813, went into a tail-slide and crashed. Three passengers were killed and six injured, including Duckenfield. He was treated at the Casualty Clearing Station at Epernay and sent back to Roehampton Hospital. After convalescence he rejoined 501, then at Middle Wallop, on July 23rd 1940. On the 29th he claimed a share in a Ju87 destroyed, on August 15th claimed a Do 215 destroyed and probably another, on the 28th a Bf 109 and on September 8th one more. He was posted away to the Air Fighting Development Unit at Northolt on September 15th 1940 on instructional duties and he was awarded the AFC in September 1941. In October 1941 he took command of 66 Squadron at Perranporth and in February 1942 615 Squadron at Fairwood Common, the squadron which he subsequently took to the Far East in March 1942. He failed to return from an attack on Magwe airfield in December 1942 and was later reported as a prisoner of the Japanese. He was released from captivity in Burma in May 1945. Byron Duckenfield retired from the RAF on June 28th 1969, as a Group Captain.

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Tiger Memories.

Reg Howard recalls his time with 74, his first squadron after he came out of training

Upon completing our technical training at Cosford we were all posted to various units and squadrons and after a few days leave I made my way to join the squadron that I had been posted to. I arrived during the late evening due to the train services being disrupted by occasional air raid warnings and after a short walk towards the aerodrome I was challenged with 'Halt! Who goes there!' and surrounding me were five armed Home Guard gentlemen with their rifles at the ready and wanting to know who I was and demanding to see my identity papers. I immediately showed these and my instructions to report to RAF Rochford. After a few minutes they let me go.

When I reported to the Guard Room I was told to find the Orderly Sergeant and he in turn showed me a very odd looking kind of long hut which was once part of the pre-war aerodrome and had obviously been taken over by the RAF. I was dismayed at the number of people already in the hut! It was apparently being used not only by 74 squadron staff but by another squadron too (who had I think Hurricanes) and some mild form of competition was underway between members of both. During the very early hours of the morning I was woken by lots of shouting and people hurrying about. Apparently the 'drome was in danger of being hit by German bombers and most people were told to get into the shelters immediately. Nobody seemed to worry about me however so I went back to sleep until later in the morning! I went to find the Airmen's Dining Room and made myself known to other 74 people and immediately felt comfortable. They told me to go back to the Orderly Sergeant and he showed me the ropes as regards everyday routine.

He also pointed to a Spitfire standing in a bay and told me to give it a good D.I. Fortunately my recent instruction at Technical School paid off! When I had finished I reported to the Sergeant i/c and he told me to sign the form confirming the job had been carried out satisfactorily. Shortly afterwards I saw a pilot walking towards the Spitfire and a member of the groundcrew stood on the wing and helped him do up his harness. The ground crew chap patted the pilot on the shoulder and stepped down. The engine roared into life and at that moment I felt so proud that I was now a member of what was known as the finest squadron in Fighter Command.

A while later a fellow airman told me the Sergeant i/c wanted to see me 'at once'. I reported to him and suddenly my proud world was completely destroyed. I was shouted at and called an idiot plus a few other choice names. Apparently the pilot had reported that the top of the Glycol tank hadn't been tightened and consequently the fluid started to leak. It was lucky the pilot decided to abort his sortie and land otherwise his screen would have been covered making it impossible to see anything. The fact that the pilot was Sailor Malan really shattered my confidence for a while - until later in the day I was told to report in person to the great man himself. I shall never forget the way he spoke to me. He was like a father figure and he talked about the comradeship and care each squadron member should have for each other. So, in future, I should not forget this and remember that each action taken means that somebody's life would depend on it. I have always recalled that interview

and from that time he told the Sergeant that I, AC1 Reg Howard, was to service his aircraft which I did for many weeks subsequently.



As time passed the squadron was moved to different airfields to be rested. One that stays vividly in my mind was Long Kesh in Northern Ireland. We were billeted in huge huts and had a regiment of the Highland Light Infantry next door to us. They were the toughest bunch of army types you could ever come across. Their role was to put the frighteners on the Germans but they scared the wits out of us as well! The fights between us (the Brylcreem Boys) and them (the Brown Jobs) were frequent but in the end it was just too much energy expended to no purpose. I also remember we made a couple of illegal forays into Southern Ireland where there was no shortage of nylons for the wives and girlfriends and other much wanted items that both air and groundcrew wanted.

Going back to Sailor (**pictured above**) I remember one incident when a small tent used for storing oxygen bottles caught fire with the consequence that in the inferno they started flying around like shells fired from a gun. If they had hit anyone they would have taken their head off. Everyone hit the deck fast, but whilst we were all on the floor Sailor stood there in the middle of it all with bottles flying around him shouting instructions to the few trying to put the fire out. That was the man - apparently fearless.

I lost contact with 74 after I was posted away but memories of Sailor and other groundcrew and pilots will always remain with me. They are people I will never forget.

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Singapore Part 2 by Sid Simpson. [As this Tiger News was completed the sad news came that Sid had died after suffering a second stroke - with great courage and determination he had come to terms with a first suffered several years ago. An appreciation of Sid's life will appear in due course on the website and in the next Tiger News. This article meanwhile serves as a memorial to him. RIP Sid.]

Sid continues with his reminiscences of his time at Tengah with the Tigers. Photos by Jim Jolly.

Singapore was renowned for its evening markets around the island. Bukit Timah was one of the most popular as it was large and so close to the main traffic link and was full of local traders - Chinese, Indian and of course Malaysians - selling their wares. Fruit and veg, toys and noisy music stalls with hundreds of 12 inch vinyls. These music areas were very loud and played wonderful oriental tunes which I remember with fondness. They gave the whole area a sense of identity, excitement and happiness and of course the urge to spend money. We spent some pleasant evenings pushing Simon around in his small pushchair looking out for

bargains. The Indian stall was to our liking with many beautifully carved ornaments, casual tables and on one occasion a sewing box which we purchased for Lesley's use.

Trips into the city were few and far between and then mainly to Orchard Road which was famous for its exclusive shops. We only ever went on Saturday mornings when I was free from duties and could help with our son. One of our favourite places was C K Tang, a huge emporium and shop of wonderful culture, an Eastern paradise with for example Chinese pottery and Indian wood carvings. The larger items were very expensive and mainly bought by the wealthier house owners but we bought many smaller examples of Far Eastern craftsmanship. (Another favourite shop was the Cold Storage superstore which provided many recognised brands of food and a level of hygiene not found in the local shops). The village markets were another means of stocking up with affordable memorabilia. Simon was at an age when he enjoyed all the magical Chinese toys.

The squadron's aircraft had all arrived from the UK, flight refuelled around half the globe - an outstanding feat of planning and flying by our crews and of course the supporting tankers. Our presence on the island gave us a sense of importance and we had lots of invites to special events such as visits to the Tiger Brewery. Tiger beer was drunk by most locals so we new service personnel didn't need to be asked twice! My name was one drawn out of a hat so off I went with about nine other squadron members to this famous brewery I was never much of a drinker but I thoroughly enjoyed the rapid tour of a very tall building which processed the raw ingredients on each floor down to the bottom one ending up in vast tanks full of crystal clear, pale yellow, cold beer ready to be bottled and fed into barrels to be delivered around the world. Tiger beer has a lager appearance and taste and was (and is) often drunk with a small amount of lime or lemonade giving a refreshing taste referred to as a Tiger top. After the tour we were whisked off to the guests' bar full of mementos from other visiting squadrons and ships. Once there we Tigers were ready to contest the Yard of Ale challenge. A glass replica of a huntsman's boot (hence the yard of ale) would be filled with the finest Tiger beer then under strict timing drunk without stopping for breath. The two Tigers selected to drink the ale stepped forward and they downed the two pint boot in a record time of 20 seconds. The record had been held by the head brewmaster, a Dutchman, with a time of 22secs. He gracefully handed over the coveted Tiger Tie to his triumphant victors. We non participating guests just looked on and enjoyed being filmed by a Singapore TV station eating the piles of food provided by the brewery. By now I was happily drinking Tiger tops and feeling good enjoying the occasion.

It had been a long day and the time to go home was drawing near. Taxis were ordered as no one was fit to drive and I was soon in our front room unsuccessfully trying to disguise my rather unsteady state of mind and body. Suddenly there on the TV were pictures of myself and other squadron members having a great time in the Tiger brewery! The following morning I had a stinking headache and I was physically sick. Never again I thought to myself



The time came when I was offered housing slightly nearer to Tengah. This was again a bungalow and was on the popular Woodlands Estate behind the war memorial of Kranji. Hundreds of war graves on a hill overlooked the Bukit Timah Road and the cemetery was dominated by a magnificent marble monument depicting the names of servicemen and women lost in action during the island's invasion. The Woodlands Estate was accessed about a mile away from Kranji and consisted of about three hundred bungalows, all detached with their own gardens. This was a great improvement for us all as the population was exclusively British servicemen and their families. We didn't have a car so as the expected date of our new baby was December and we were now into September I decided to look for one of our own. Our budget was limited so I kept my eyes on the second hand adverts and any bargains in local garages. Soon I saw what seemed ideal for us and well within the price we could afford. The car was a grey Ford Consul. It was free from any corrosion, the tyres were good and inside the seats were clean and in good condition. As an aircraft engineer I was confident of the price being value for money. I bought the Consul in time for our move to 'The Street of the Bamboo Tree' which proved to be relatively easy with the car packed with clothes and the boot full of Simon's toys. We soon blended into the Woodlands' community which was very friendly and sociable.

Meanwhile work at Tengah was satisfying and I was certainly enjoying my job. The Lightning was a big challenge and always kept us on our toes. I recall that one of the evaluation exercises we carried out was to test the arrester hook fixed to the underside of the fuselage. The large belly tank had been removed for these tests. The runway had an arrester wire firmly positioned about 100 yards from its end which if required could be used to stop the aircraft. The Lightning had a very fast landing speed so braking was very demanding on the brake system. If this failed the hook would be released by the pilot to avoid an overshoot situation. The tests were designed to ensure that the pilots and the equipment could stop the aircraft safely and in time. This meant hard work for we groundcrew. Once the aircraft had been stopped by the hook engaging the arrester wire the latter was repositioned as the Lightning taxied back to the squadron dispersal where a very

quick turn round servicing was undertaken, the brake chute was repacked and the tyres checked for damage. As we were unable to lift the heavy, solid hook ourselves a purpose made jig was designed which, once lined up and located, would raise it back into position. Once located the appropriate warning light in the cockpit would extinguish allowing the pilot to begin his departure for another take off and landing to test yet another hook.

I remember working on first line servicing which was handling aircraft before and after a flight, then carrying out the necessary inspections ensuring all was serviceable for the next trip. Sometimes, for example, tyres were worn and necessitated a wheel change. Refuelling was also required so there was a lot of activity on the line. The pilot for the next sortie would arrive and be strapped into the compact cockpit. Once in, and all checks carried out, he would lower the canopy and via a well rehearsed combination of hand signals initiate the engine start up procedures. Once the two engines were running he would signal 'chocks away' and then be slowly guided out of his tight space in the row of glistening Lightnings. On one such occasion an aircraft was waiting for clearance to line up on the runway when the pilot noticed in his peripheral vision something leave the tall grass by the runway's edge and head for his Lightning. He turned back as a precaution. On his return to the line he was positioned in an available space. News had spread fast and soon civilian personnel were waiting for permission to slowly approach the aircraft with service crews. The cautious approach was requested by the pilot as he thought what he had seen was a snake. And he was right! A 14ft python was nestled in the nose undercarriage bay which was removed by the civilian pest control staff. The snake, when sedated, was held by at least ten airmen, the civilian staff, the pilot and other squadron members to show its length and girth!

To be continued.





I guess you can recognise our webmaster John Crow here - well, a younger version of him anyway! - holding a smaller version of snake to be found at Tengah compared with the monster shown on page 17. You'll be pleased to know that John has come through another very difficult few months health wise and although there are still problems to be overcome, as I write he is definitely roaring again as all good Tigers do!

Who's For Cricket?



This photo was sent to me by Tiger **John Tod** (known as Eddie at the time) who now lives in New Zealand. It was taken at Coltishall around 1959/60. John remembers from the radio section Les Duhigg, Gordon Palin, Ian Munro, Ron Strudwick, Jim Templeton, Fred Winter, Mick Compton (who had a Chinese wife who cooked pheasant for the boys) and Jim Ramsbottom (who used to eat sardines at work with a screwdriver!). Representing electricians are ?Twiddy (a Spurs supporter) and Cpl Gray, Of the rest John remembers Chief Tech 'Red' Kyte (who was forever trying to nab 'volunteers' to manually pump the hydraulics on undercarriage tests), 'Granny' Groves who tried to run his motorcycle on Avtur (or was it Avpin?), Bob Swinscoe (a connoisseur of Manns Brown), 'Bert' (who had an SS Jag which was de-coked in the block laundry room) and Fred Thomas (who bought a Triumph Mayflower with his signing-on bounty).....

Does all this jog anyone else's memory? If so let me know!