



Qualitas Non Quantitas

95th Entry Halton Apprentices Newsletter

Number 14

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50th Anniversary of Attestation



APRIL 2010 SYDNEY, NSW, AUDACIOUS SOCIAL EVENT

REPORT

The April 2010 Audacious Social Event in Sydney, NSW, Australia, to celebrate 50 years from Attestation into the Royal Air Force and Royal Rhodesian Air Force, as appropriate, has been an unqualified success, despite the occurrence of many events, e.g. world recession, personal accidents and the Icelandic volcanic eruption resulting in all European airspace being closed to air traffic, beyond anyone's control.

It had been an ambitious task to create the catalogue of re-union activities resulting from 5 years of careful planning, organising and long distance co-ordination by Roger Miller in UK and Tony Dapre in Sydney; both are commended for their hard work. In the end, the attention to detail bore bounteous fruit. Unfortunately, intended attendance numbers were much reduced by the unplanned travel disruptions mentioned above.

It fell to Tony to negotiate and book the many agreed arrangements and venues in Sydney. Also, the warm welcome and outstanding support provided by the Forestville, NSW, Sub-Branch of the Australian Returned Services League (RSL) has to be greatly acknowledged.

With the laying of the Paver (see figure overleaf) in the Forestville RSL Sub-Branch Memorial Garden, it can be truly said that the 95th Entry have made their mark on Australia.

Tony was asked to provide notes and observations on each of the separate re-union activities. His complete report is reproduced here. It is a fitting all-round commentary.



REPORT ON “AUDACIOUS EVENT” SYDNEY’ APRIL 2010

To all members of the 95th Entry and their partners.

At the 40th Anniversary of Graduation in Thame in 2003 it was casually suggested that there should be a 50th reunion of Attestation in Sydney in 2010. The Planning Team took this suggestion on board and about five years ago the idea was underway with the proposed date for the formal dinner to be 22nd April 2010. The estimated number of attendees was guessed at about 40-50 including partners and the ensuing planning was done with this number in mind.

Was it meant to happen?

If we look at the attempts made to prevent it then it would appear that it was not meant to happen. Firstly we experienced the worst world financial crisis since the Great Depression which must have affected the earning capacity of retired pensioners including many of our lads which would naturally have prevented them from making such a commitment. Secondly we had the accident to Ann Eve in California which caused the cancellation of their trip after they had already started and finally the Icelandic Volcano Eruption came which either dramatically changed the travel arrangements of some of the participants or forced their total cancellation. In spite of all this we went ahead as planned.

Was it worth the effort?

Five years in the planning, uncountable emails between myself, Alfie Banyard and Dusty Miller plus the other emails to the eventual participants resulting in a total of nineteen members and partners attending in one way or another.

Was it worth it? Yes, by golly, it jolly well was! We had a ball.

Errol & Liz MacBean, Roy & Mary Scott, Geoff & Rose Stevens and John & Pat Soothill had already started their trips before the volcano eruption and were already in Australia. Jan & Chris Michalak live in Sydney and Tom & Cindy Fielding came over from New Zealand so we did have a number of certain starters. Fritz Bahr came over from Perth but Susan was stuck in England by the volcanic ash problem and was prevented from joining us. Mike & Susan Gay were able to get here for the Paver Ceremony, Alfie Banyard arrived on the morning of the ANZAC Day march and Dusty & Pam Miller finally arrived after it was all over.

The Meet and Greet.

It was wonderful to finally meet up after all the time and planning. As it turned out the area in the Crown Hotel was perfect for the event and of those who were in the country only Geoff & Rose Stevens missed this as they were still on the way from Melbourne.

Formal Dinner.

It wasn't actually very formal. We had decided at the meet and greet that with the revised numbers it would be better to make it informal. We had fifteen at the dinner as Errol and Liz had a family commitment. I had written a poem and I want to add it to this report:-

We came from all around the UK
So many names, one was Gay
Anticipating all the thrills
Squarebashing in the Chiltern Hills
Nose to the grindstone at the schools
Learnt a trade whilst on the tools
And so the read to graduation
But first a spot of aviation
The 94th had boots galore
Accompanying a Sycamore
Plus George the pilot in a chair
Paraded there on 2 wing square
And so we're all confined to camp
Exposed the spirit and the stamp
Of a great Entry, we stood tall
And graduated one and all.
Now 50 years have safely past
And in spite of an Icelandic blast
Here we are again. At last.

With my association with The Belrose Men's Shed I had seventeen toy timber helicopters made and suitably labelled with the event. Given the reduced numbers I decided to give one to each of the lads and also one to their partners so I guess the grand kids will end up with one.

Naturally we ended up in the bar afterwards.

The next day was a free day and most people did their own thing. Denise and I met Tom, Cindy, Rose and Geoff in Manly for fish and chips on the beach.

Paver Ceremony and BBQ.

We had enlisted the help of our good friends Doug & Carolyn Smyth from the Forestville RSL to help for the day and I want to formally thank them for the wonderful assistance they gave us. The morning was spent preparing for the BBQ and then we went to the RSL to prepare for the Paver Ceremony. The pavers had been laid the previous week and I had a framed print of the Entry Crest to cover them and to be used for the "unveiling". I went to Roseville station to check that everybody had a lift to the club and Roy Scott was schooled in how to lower and raise the flag at the appropriate times. Several of the Sub Branch members were there to assist and everybody was impressed by the friendliness and hospitality afforded to us by them. Robin Tapp was the main coordinator for the club and he took many photos which will be available to us. He has also penned a write up to be sent to our local newspaper and the "Reveille" the RSL's magazine. Our Padre, Dr. Henry Martin, was in attendance to assist and Mike Gay was kind enough to do the "unveiling". I wish to especially thank Maddy who did a wonderful job playing the Last Post and Reveille on her bugle. It was a moving ceremony and the "Vale" was read out. Finally the Halton Bear was played and we retired to the bar for a welcoming drink.

The BBQ went very well also and everybody enjoyed the opportunity to eat drink and be merry. We had an anniversary cake, suitably decorated, which was cut by Mike Gay.

ANZAC Day (Sunday 25th April).

We all met at the Sheraton Hotel except Mike & Sue Gay who had already left for a family holiday in Queensland. We joined up with the ex RAF people who form the RAFA in Sydney and for the first time in 47 years we all marched together. Tom Fielding pushed Alfie (who couldn't manage the pace & distance) around in a wheelchair (loaned to us by the RSL for the occasion) and refused to share this honourable task with anyone else. Alfie carried the Entry standard. Afterwards we all went to the City RSL to join the others for the after march lunch. The highlight of this was the sing song where we were led by one of the RAF Association Irish members and we sang many of the old favourites most heartily, including Tom Fielding singing the whole of "On Ilkley Moor Bar Tat". This, for most of us, ended the festivities and we bade each other farewell with promises to all meet up again at the 2013 reunion.

I picked up Dusty & Pam the following evening and we spent the week with Alfie at home whilst exploring Sydney and surrounds, which was something of a compromise for them as they had missed most of the festivities, being delayed 10 days by the Icelandic volcano ash cloud.

Conclusion.

Speaking personally, I have found it quite fascinating to meet up again with comrades from 50 years ago. With some of these I had no actual previous personal involvement as we spent most of our time at Halton with our own trades unless there were other things which brought us together, sport, bands etc. So it was very interesting to find out what others had done with their lives given that we all had a similar start and it is amazing the diversity of careers we have followed. One thing we noticed here was the way all the ladies got on so well together and they have all swopped email addresses in order to keep up with each other. I believe this is the warm legacy from the 95th policy of always including the Girls in Entry activities.

I would like to emphasise just how wonderful this event has been, as were the two other events we have been fortunate enough to attend, those being the 30th anniversary in Thame and the 40th anniversary at the same venue. It was actually the fantastic time we had at those which gave all of us the incentive to plan and run this one. The next one that we will be attending is the 50th Anniversary of Graduation wherever it is held and I would strongly urge all of you to make the effort to be there. We are unique as an Entry and at this end of our lives the memories seem to be more important now than ever before.

With our warmest regards to everyone,
Tony and Denise Dapre

That's all
News of the next event will be transmitted in due course.

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On behalf of the Planning Team,

Best Regards,

Alf