

## Ron McConkie



After Passing out with the 85th in 1959 I was posted to the Air Radio Flight at Benson working on a wide variety of aircraft belonging to the Ferry Communications Squadron and The Ferry Squadron. If it flew in the RAF it came through the Ferry Squadron It was an amazing place: Valetta, Devon, Anson, Pembroke, Canberra, Javelin, Meteor, Twin Pioneer, Piston Provost, to name but a few.

I remained at Benson for 2 years before starting Air Signaller training at Hullavington and finishing it at Topcliffe when the unit moved North.

After getting married in 1962 I moved to The Maritime Operational Conversion Unit at Kinloss for Shackleton training. My next move was "overseas" to 210 Squadron at Ballykelly where I spent a tour on the Shackleton Mk11 getting around the world quite a bit; Canada, Norway, Singapore, Borneo as well as hours and hours over the Atlantic going nowhere and coming back to Ballykelly, sometimes airborne for up to 19 hrs at a time.

After a conversion course to become an Air Electronics Operator I was posted to St Mawgan as an Air Instructor where I flew on the Mk1 or T4 Shackleton.

As I could see no civilian equivalent job to match my training I changed horses and applied to become an Air Traffic Controller. Having done the commissioning Course at Henlow and the training at Shawbury I then spent 3 lovely years at



Bovingdon at the Communications Unit. While there I was involved in the making of the films, Battle of Britain and Mosquito Squadron.

I then got swept up into the Area Radar Network and after training at Sopley I ended up as an Area Radar Controller at Heathrow Military Radar Unit, which was located in some asbestos huts on the north perimeter road at Heathrow.

I hung in there until it was closed down and then moved to West Drayton doing a similar job working Upper Airspace. I intended to leave the Service at age 38 as I felt that family disruption was no longer appropriate thus I got an airfield posting to St Mawgan for my final tour in order that I could obtain civil ATC qualifications to fit me for civvy street.

On leaving the Service in 1977 I accepted a job offer as an Operations Officer working for the BAA at Heathrow where I stayed for the next 15 years finishing up as the Airfield Planning Manager.

My last career move came in 1992 after my first marriage ended when I became the Operations Director at Bournemouth Airport. I stayed there for nine eventful years involving runway extension and route development with Ryanair. I retired from the airport when it was sold to the Manchester Airports Group in 2001. I remarried 25 years ago and live in Ferndown close to Bournemouth airport.

In retirement I became a JP and took a part-time job with Postwatch becoming the area rep for Dorset. Being in the Poole area, I have an ongoing interest in sailing and take disabled people out in a specially converted sailing catamaran under the auspices of PHAB. I retire as a magistrate in July when I reach my 70th birthday but hope to keep on sailing for as long as possible.