

Harvey R Morton



Left Locking not knowing what I wanted to do and joined the remnants of the 'Kipper Fleet' at RAF Kinloss and the next three years were spent looking after Shackletons of various Mk's and travelling to the far reaches of the world. (This may be a slight exaggeration but we did visit USA, Iceland, Gibraltar, Malta, Canada and Norway) The reality was that we went wherever the Russian Navy went with its Sverdlov and Cresta cruisers.

Moments to remember and think about were when the Cuba crisis erupted and the bomb bays were loaded with real stuff instead of the eight and a half pound smoke and flash practice weapons. Chris Armes joined me at Kinloss and he may well have been the only ex 84th I saw during this time other than Brian Sprosen who just happened to be in a bar in Norfolk Virginia that I accidentally walked into one evening in the early 60's. He was on a Westabout in a Mk2 Shack, we were exercising with the American Navy with our shiny Mk3's. That was the different thing about Coastal (as it was) the air force did it for Blighty whilst most other countries entrusted the work to their respective navies!

We also managed a quick trip to Hawaii, pity about nursing the aircraft all the way there only to find that we had a very sick engine, we made good use of the 10 days it took to get a spare out to us. The replacement engine was brought out in the bomb bay of a Ballykelly Shack, only to creep into Hawaii on 3 engines. Apparently it too sat there for a period of time. I believe that our masters were able to convince Transport Command that it should find room on the next trip to Hickam Field for a replacement engine, otherwise we were looking at a permanent Shackleton detachment in Hawaii.



Change of venue for the next two and a half years when my masters felt that a tour at Idris in Lybia might be just what I needed. Here I worked in the Radio Bay and on the line. The variety is what made that tour so interesting. There were Canberras from Germany who used our bombing range, Hastings from Cyprus (LXX Squadron better known as Love and Kisses) all sorts of odd ball aircraft passing through on their way to darkest Africa and the far east.

Whilst I was at Idris the Biafran war was on going and, although we had nothing to do with it, on night shift we often wondered at the unmarked aircraft which would arrive at night, refuel and then slip away to the south. The reality of what goes on in the world has to be seen to be believed. As a recreational activity I co owned a Land Rover and spent some time travelling into the desert areas, this gave me the opportunity to visit various outposts of the Roman Empire and in particular to visit Leptis Magna and Sabratha; all in all a good tour and I still had no idea of what I wanted to do, it was a life for living.

There must have been a dearth of Shack guys or someone in the Records Office had it in for me for the next tour was to be Ballykelly (stop giggling in the corner; someone has to do it). I had hardly arrived on 204 Squadron when we packed our bags and went to Singapore on detachment. Those of you who had anything to do with Shacks will know the contentment and fun that one enjoys when you fly 'Shack Air'. The comfort of the accommodation, the glorious food, the opportunity to look out of the window and watch the world go by (literally), no colds as a result of dodgy air conditioning or pressurisation, and the ever present risk of finishing the trip with less engines working than you set out with!

There was one up side to travelling Shack Air, I bumped into a couple of ex-84th in spots like Aden and Gan, that was Mick Griffin, he very kindly sorted out some of those wonderful cowrie shells which I collected on my return trip some 3 months later.

After Singapore there were other tasks to be performed at the behest of our masters and I spent time in Aden and eventually on detachment to the much loved Majunga on the tropical paradise of Madagascar. The trip back

was via Nairobi, Kinshasa, Ascension, Cape Verde and Gibraltar; six days to Ballykelly. The Air France 707 went from Majunga to Paris in 12 hours (but you don't see a thing) On the way back from Aden we managed to find a rather extra special thunderstorm, bearing in mind that we were on Diplomatic clearance from Egypt not to depart from our filed flight plan, we pressed through the middle of this dark towering monster. You have little idea of just how tough an aircraft is until you meet such a challenge. Suffice it to say, we got through but not without significant damage to the inside of the aircraft. I managed to bounce off the roof at the same time as a bottle of squash, dazed by hitting the roof when I felt my nape all I could feel was a sticky fluid, I quickly referred to a fellow traveller who confirmed that it was not blood but orange squash.

On arrival at Akrotiri I bumped into Adrian Kyte who thought my story another haggis eater's tale of no substance. My last few days at BK were marked by the outbreak of local troubles (little did I realise it then but this unrest was to last over 30 years) and a quick trip round the Med following some more ships of a certain cold war franchise, with 10 days to do, you can imagine my feelings as we headed off to Gibraltar, then Malta, then Cyprus. I thought that I was going to take my clearance chit around RAF Akrotiri! All was well, as ever, and we returned to the Emerald Isle and shortly afterwards I reverted to 'Civilian'.

I was still uncertain of what needed to be done with my life at this time, these new computer things seemed to be a way forward, so after a couple of interviews my mind was made up and I joined an American company as a technical support person in their head office. After 2 years in the role of supporting several peripheral products throughout the UK, during which time I married, I felt that maybe I should spread my wings a bit and looked to a career in management with the same company.

First of all came a sojourn in South Wales and then to the Midlands where the Company allowed me to run not only the Midlands but South Wales as well. All in all my computer based career lasted 10 years and was ended when I decided that I had had enough of the big corporation life and my best guess was that within another 10 years that organisation would not need me as much as I would have needed them, so the purchase of a Post

Office was made. The intention was that this would last for about 5 years and at that point another furrow of my own making would be ploughed.

Alas, the act of marriage had led to a family of four boys, a mortgage and a business loan, all of which concentrates the mind and the thought of going it alone was lost. However the boys were raised and educated and thankfully are now gainfully employed, two are married, one lives with his partner and family, and the fourth has still to make a commitment. They all suffer a form of deafness when I ask for help in making ends meet, so what is new.

The Post Office served us well for 21 years (not bad when it should have been only 5) ,and eventually the time came to quit, so we sold up and looked forward to some sort of retirement. I continued contact with fellow Sub Postmasters by providing a service as a locum when they wished to go on holiday or whatever. At one time this was regular work and I cannot tell you how much more fun it was. I still continue as a locum to this day but limit myself to smaller offices and a few days at a time.

All during this time I have maintained an interest in sailing, started on 12ft dinghies but now prefer to walk down a pontoon and step on board. I need a little more in the way of creature comforts these days too. Most of my sailing is now done with Bill Hercus, you may remember him, 85th and Pipe Major of the Wing Band.

Other than sailing, my wife Joy and I keep fairly active in the local community, I act as the treasurer for the Village Hall and give freely my twopence worth on the local Community Council, Joy meanwhile supports the Red Cross shop and gives time as a volunteer in a local National Trust property.

We also take the opportunity to travel having visited New England, Australia, New Zealand and our first born who lives in New York State, hence our meeting with Adrian Kyte last year.

Fifty years on I am still not certain of what I would like to do, no doubt I have achieved something which may or may not mean that what I have done is what I am supposed to have achieved, or maybe I am to keep my powder dry for that special moment. A bit like Donald Rumsfeld who said 'Sometimes you don't know that you don't know', I am sure he knew what he meant because sure as death I didn't!