

profile

Warrant Officer ROY O'CONNELL



On 19 September 1994, GREDIT's WO Roy O'Connell will be retiring from the RAF after exactly 38 years service. In recognition of his having made it to the top and putting in a "full innings", this is the Bowline's tribute to one of RAF North Luffenham's livelier characters.

Roy O'Connell joined the RAF Apprentices on 19 Sep 1956, his 17th birthday, after having taken the entry exam as something to do and a day off school. On the same apprentice entry were Chf Techs John Moncur of RTPS and Stan Folds of the Car Club (allegedly!). On passing out of RAF Locking in Jan 1960 as a Jnr Tech Ground Radar Fitter, Roy's first posting was to GRIS at RAF Henlow. Fifteen months later he joined No 17 Joint Services Trials Unit (JSTU) at Ferranti, Manchester, where he worked on the introduction of

the Bloodhound Mk 3 missile system. After 18 months at the Ferranti factory, during which time he was promoted to Corporal, the JSTU moved to RAF North Coates for field trials. On completion of the trials in 1966, Roy was promoted to Sergeant and posted to 112 Sqn at Woodhall Spa, then moved with the Sqn to Cyprus in 1967.

Upon leaving Cyprus in 1970, he was posted to Ulster Radar at Bishops Court, taking over the post of Chief Tech on promotion in December 1971. Another Bloodhound tour followed between 1972 and 1975, this time at RAF Laarbruch in Germany. Roy's first tour at RAF North Luffenham began in 1975, where he was initially I/C the PAR Bay before taking over the AR1/AR15 section in 1977 on promotion to Flight Sergeant. Being in the

privileged position of being able to use the "opendoor" to PMC, he was informed that he would be at the GRSC for some considerable time and proceeded with his plans to enter the housing market. In the same week as contracts were exchanged, the posting notice came through- RAF Benbecula!

After only a year in the Hebrides, Roy was promoted to Warrant Officer and took over as OC Missile Firings at Aberporth Ranges in 1980. During 3 years in the job and as CMC of the combined RAF/Royal Navy Mess, he was introduced to such niceties as Trafalgar Night, Pussers Rum, "runs ashore" and "sippers". In 1983 he was posted to RAF Newton where he was the supervisor of the Missile School and remained there until 1987. Having helped in moving the School to RAF

North Coates, Roy was rewarded with a trip to Mount Kent and returned to disestablishment and a posting to MOD Harrogate in 1988. After spending just one year involved in ranging and scaling Missile spares, he escaped to sanity with the GREDIT here at North Luffenham, for his last tour of duty.

When asked if he had any career highlights, Roy was certain that there was only one. In 1992, after having waited 36 years, he managed to beat Stan Folds in an exam. Apparently, Stan's excuse that he didn't have a GDT Aide Memoire to study is neither here nor there! Whilst being a supremely confident character, Roy is at the same time modest about his achievements, having been awarded the following honours during the course of his service: the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal in 1975, followed by the clasp in 1990, the AOC 11 Gp Commendation in 1980, the Meritorious Service Medal in 1985, and the AOC Training Units' Commendation in 1987.

Sport has played an important part in Roy's career; representing Commands such as Signals, Fighter, Technical Training, as well as NEAF and RAFG, at Rugby, Squash, Cricket and Athletics. He still maintains an active interest in sports and heartily recommends hill walking in the Lake District. On retirement, Roy has no plans to do any work other than on his allotment, and as a volunteer for the National Trust.

On reflection, Roy told us that he has enjoyed 99.9% of his service career but feels that, like many of the Commands, it is time for him to disappear. When he leaves the service in September, he will have served for half the life of the Royal Air Force itself.