



# XXIV SQUADRON ASSOCIATION ROYAL AIR FORCE

President: Air Commodore Richard Gould CBE MA BSc FRAeS  
Chairman: Group Captain K Chapman MPhil BA

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT RAF LYNEHAM 2 OCTOBER 2004.

**Members attending:** Messrs R Gould (President), K Chapman (Chairman), C Harley (Deputy Chair), K Rayner (Treasurer), D. R. Burgin (Secretary).

R.D.Bates, G.Bell, G.Burchell, T.Clack, R.Dew, L.Hagon, R.Hale, R.Hastings, M.Hills, D.Hobbs, W.Holden, G.Jones, P.Mansbridge, J.Martin, D.Parkinson, T.Paterson, M.Phillips, L.Poll, C.Regan, J.Richardson, D.Smith, B.Spurway, J.Sully, P.Tootal, C.Townsend, A.Turner, L.Warrington, W.M.Watkins, S.Webb, S.Wright (34 in total)

The Chairman extended a warm welcome with a special mention to new members joining us at this year's AGM and Reunion events.

### **Item 1/2004 Apologies for Absence**

The Secretary had received various apologies of absence by letter, phone, electronic mail and word of mouth, along with several generous donations to the Association funds amounting to approximately £130. We make special mention from the list of our outgoing President, AVM John Tetley and Betty Archbell, widow of Wg Cdr Tempest Archbell, ex-South African Air Force and a former OC of XXIV Sqn.

As in previous years, the list of notifications and letters was made available for all attending to read. A full list of apologies is as follows:

Mrs B.Archbell (+ donation), D.Barnes, S.Batchelor (+ donation), R.Brawn, C.J.M.Carrington, M.Chase, J.Clark (+ donation), M.Coumbe, V.East (+ donation), W.Francis, F.Goodwin (+ donation), V.Hemmings, R.Holder, P.Keeble, D.Keogh, M.Lythgoe, D.Marney, P.Martin, J.McArthur, R.Payne, M.Stringer, J.Tetley (+ donation), S. Wheeler, C.Williams, R.Wright.

### **Item 1.1 In Memoriam**

Members stood in silence in remembrance of the following comrades:-

Sgt ALM Jo Dickinson, Air Eng Jack Clemons, F/O Edgar Quested, M Eng Eric Mears.

**Item 2/2004 Minutes of the previous AGM**

No observations were raised against the accuracy of the 2003 Minutes, which were duly accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Proposed by Ron Hastings, seconded by Brian Spurway, passed by all.

**Item 3/2004 Matters Arising**

The following actions were left outstanding from the 2003 AGM for the Committee to address:

- Item 6.1/2003 - Promote Membership. The Secretary was tasked to increase activity on advertising in a range of outlets - limited success.
- Item 7.5/2003 - New President. The Chairman was tasked with securing a new President for the Association - complete
- Item 8/2003 - Future Social Events. Committee tasked to have fallback plan in place pending survey results - complete.
- Item 9.1a/2003 - Membership Survey. Committee tasked to devise and distribute questionnaire and survey to all members - complete.
- Item 9.1b/2003 - Geographic Membership List. Action on Secretary to send out with Minutes and Survey pro-forma - complete
- Item 9.3/2003 - Donation to Sqn charity. Action on treasurer to send cheque to Burton Hill House for £88 - complete.

**All Complete.**

At this point, the Secretary read out the summarised results of the Association Survey, published in Issue 11 of the Newsletter for comment. The Chairman remarked that the low response, around 19%, was disappointing in not giving the Committee a clear mandate to take forward any changes.

The feeling from the floor was that not many organisations had high response percentages; maybe existing arrangements were acceptable and hence did not warrant a larger response.

**Item 4/2004 Chairman's Report**

The Chairman reserved his main remarks for Item 10. However, he expressed his thanks to the Secretary and Treasurer for all their hard work in keeping the Association straight and level during the past year despite their many other professional commitments.

He also expressed appreciation to OC XXIV Sqn and for the considerable efforts of the Squadron liaison team (especially Flt Lt Phil Whitworth), which continue to make the Association weekend a most enjoyable and well-organised occasion.

## **Item 5/2004 Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer presented an Income and Expenditure Sheet and Balance Sheet for the Year ending 31 October 2003 for approval by the AGM.

Once income had been deducted from expenditure, the last financial year showed a net surplus of £97.51, leaving a balance in Association funds of £2,521.69. As with other years and along general principles agreed at previous AGMs, Reunion and Social events continue to be self-financing from those attending, albeit with funds available to support hardship cases and special events. Please contact the Treasurer if applicable.

Generous donations from members continue to give Association funds a welcome (though un-budgeted) boost, for which we are very grateful.

## **Item 6/2004 Secretary's Report**

### **Item 6.1 Membership Champion**

The Association has increased by only 5 additional members this year – down on the previous two years (6 and 12 respectively). This is despite advertising through many outlets, including the Aircrew Association, Air Mail - RAFA, BA 25 Year Club, RAF Club, RAF News, etc.

In order to improve our track record, the Secretary suggested that a “Membership Champion” should be appointed specifically to promote the Association. Mike Phillips, whose efforts and success in fund raising at each Reunion and whose links with the RAF Benevolent Fund have not gone unnoticed, kindly agreed to undertake this new role.

### **Item 6.2 Attendance**

This year's Formal Dinner with Ladies on Friday 1st October in the Sergeants' Mess attracted 30 Association members and guests (excluding serving members of XXIV Sqn) vis-à-vis 37 for the equivalent event in 2003. Squadron personnel, who had been unable to hold their own Ladies Guest Night this year, boosted the overall total to 42. Whilst it is normal for these figures to fluctuate from year to year, this drop in attendance for a second year running gives cause for concern and lends added emphasis to the debate on measures to increase participation (see Item 10). The Saturday programme, including AGM and buffet lunch at the Sqn HQ, attracted 57 members and guests, vis-à-vis 58 in 2003.

### **Item 6.3 Newsletter**

This year's Newsletter (Issue No. 11) eventually turned into a 28-page edition, despite misgivings until the eleventh hour about the quantity of material submitted for inclusion. Feedback from readers was both positive and complimentary.

The re-request for a fresh Editor to bring a new look has failed to draw any response. As a result, expectations of maintaining the current high standard in future issues cannot be guaranteed due to the Editor's other commitments.

The plea is therefore once again for plenty of material – ideally submitted in soft copy - especially photos with brief details. All material will be returned or turned over to the Squadron Historian to add to the comprehensive collection on display at each Reunion. Note also that Issues 5 - 10 are available on the Web Site for reference in **Portable Document File (PDF)** format, which mirrors the look and layout of the original document.

#### **Item 6.4 Summer Social**

The Summer 2004 event was held on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June at the Bibury Court Hotel. (See page 28 of Newsletter). This venue once again proved to be more popular than Aviation Sites or Museums, with 20 Association members and guests attending.

#### **Item 6.5 Website**

Our presence is well registered with the most popular search engines on the Internet, and our website now has a slightly more memorable address [www.24sqnassociation.royalairforce.net](http://www.24sqnassociation.royalairforce.net) with links to many other similar organisations. The site has expanded thanks to Simon Batchelor, an Associate Member who has provided additional research details of aircraft types flown by XXIV.

#### **Item 6.6 Sqn Support**

The Secretary added his thanks for all the support and help received from the XXIV Squadron liaison team who do so much to make each year's Reunion and Summer Social the success it deserves. Mike Phillips merits a special mention this year for his fund-raising raffle and Hercules DVD. The latter has created considerable interest.

#### **Item 7/2004 Ratification of new President**

In mid-2003, AVM John Tetley - who had held the post of President ever since the Association was founded in 1986 – informed the Chairman that he felt the time had come for him to relinquish this post. The Chairman reported this development to the 2003 AGM and was tasked with finding a replacement. With the agreement of the Committee, the Chairman subsequently approached Air Commodore Richard Gould who kindly agreed

to assume the role of President with effect from January 2004. The Chairman suggested that this appointment now be ratified by the membership as a whole. Richard Bates formally proposed that Air Cdre Gould should be adopted as new President of the Association. This was seconded by Mike Phillips and unanimously endorsed by the AGM.

At this point our new President thanked the Association for its vote of confidence and made the point that we should all feel fortunate to be involved with a Squadron still on active service after nearly 90 years.

#### **Item 8/2004 Annual Election of Officers**

##### **Items 8a - d**

The present Committee confirmed that they were all willing to serve for another term but, as required by the constitution, offered themselves up to the AGM for re-election.

It was proposed by Ron Hastings and seconded by Sam Wright that the current team remain in place. This proposal was unanimously endorsed by the AGM.

Accordingly, the Committee structure for 2004/05 is:-

<b>Chairman</b>	Keith Chapman	<b>Deputy Chairman</b>	Clive Harley
<b>Treasurer</b>	Keith Rayner	<b>Secretary</b>	David Burgin

(see <http://www.24sqnassociation.royalairforce.net/admin.htm>)

#### **Item 9/2004 Celebration of XXIV Squadron's 90th Anniversary – 1 Sep 05**

This agenda item was included at this early stage in order to alert Members in good time to this historic milestone in the Squadron's history. The Squadron intends to celebrate this event on **Thursday 1 September 2005 at RAF Lyneham.**

Planning has already begun. The Squadron is very keen for the Association to participate fully in the celebrations, which will take the form of a day and evening programme, culminating in a formal dinner. Representatives of other organisations affiliated or linked to XXIV Squadron (e.g. HMS Campbeltown and the Worshipful Company of Carmen) will also be invited to participate. The Squadron hopes that as many former OCs as possible will attend.

It was suggested that, with the Squadron's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations set to take place within a month of our AGM's usual date, the Association should bring forward next year's reunion and AGM to 1 September 2005. This proposal was unanimously approved. Details of these special arrangements will be distributed to all Association members as soon as possible. The provisional format is as follows:

*Evening of Wednesday 31 August 2005*

*Informal gathering of Association Members at hotel or pub near Lyneham.*

*Thursday 1 September 2005*

*At time TBN, join XXIV Sqn for 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations. Association AGM will be held either on or off base depending on availability of accommodation for this purpose. Day/evening programme will be arranged by XXIV Sqn. Celebrations culminate in formal dinner with ladies.*

**Item 10/2004 Format/Date of Future Association Meetings**

The Chairman returned to a theme he had raised at last year's AGM, namely his concern over the gradual decline in numbers attending Association events. He said that the Association faced an awkward dilemma. On the one hand, we have a healthy membership, with great potential for recruiting future members thanks to being associated with an operational front-line Squadron. On the other hand, it is proving increasingly difficult to attract members to participate in Association events. In order to address this problem, he suggested that the AGM should consider two inter-related options:

Option 1 - Revert to "ONE DAY" format used by many Sqn Associations, with the entire formal programme taking place on a Saturday. The main advantage of this format is that it allows members to travel to reunions on a Saturday morning, rather than a Friday afternoon when many people (and/or their partners) are working. There would still be scope for members to meet informally in a pub or hotel bar on the Friday evening, if they so wished.

Option 2 - Combine some elements of XXIV Sqn Association's annual reunion (eg lunch, visits to aircraft, formal dinner) with the 30 Sqn Association annual reunion. The Chairman said he had learned, from an unattributable source, that 30 Sqn Association was experiencing attendance problems similar to our own, and might welcome a proposal for some form of link-up. The main advantages of combining some elements of the respective reunions would be to encourage greater attendance overall (particularly at the formal dinner) and to gain the economic advantages of scale. Many people have served on both XXIV and 30 Sqns. Moreover, there is an excellent rapport between the two units (going back at least 30 years) and today they not only have their HQs under one roof but also share a common crew room and other facilities.

The floor was opened up for discussion of the above options. One potential problem was that, whereas our Association traditionally holds its Reunions in early October, 30 Sqn Association usually convenes in April. However, it was generally agreed that there could be advantages in bringing forward our Association Reunions from the autumn to the spring, if this was to be a condition of any link-up. Many other air-related Reunions take place in

October - a factor long identified as contributing to our current low levels of participation. Apropos the first option discussed above, it was noted that 30 Sqn Association holds all elements of its formal reunion on a Saturday.

Discussion of this topic was wide-ranging and constructive. Two main points emerged. First, any proposal to combine elements of XXIV/30 Sqn Reunions would need to be respectively and formally approved by each Association. Second, given that XXIV Sqn Association will (exceptionally) hold its reunion and AGM on 1 September 2005, any combined reunion could not take place earlier than April 2006.

Some members suggested the possibility of links with other unit Associations, notably those of 36 and LXX Sqns. However, it was generally agreed that, in the first instance, it would be more appropriate and productive to explore a link-up with 30 Sqn Association, for the reasons stated above.

To establish the way forward, Sam Wright proposed, and Roger Hale seconded, that we should adopt a Saturday Reunion format (Option 1) with effect from 2006, regardless of any link-up with 30 Sqn Association. Richard Bates then proposed, and Mike Phillips seconded, that the Chairman should formally contact 30 Sqn Association to explore the viability of a combined Reunion in April 2006 (Option 2). Both of these proposals were carried unanimously. The Chairman agreed to write to his counterpart in the 30 Sqn Association and to report back to the Committee as soon as possible.

#### **Action on Chairman to contact 30Sqn Association**

#### **Item 11/2004 Summer Social Event 2005**

In line with earlier discussion recorded above and corroborative attendance figures, it was agreed that the next summer social event should take the form of lunch at the popular central location of **Bibury Court Hotel** in the Cotswolds. This event is planned for **Wednesday 1 June 2005**.

**Action on Secretary to contact Hotel first week of May 2005**  
**Action on those attending to notify Secretary prior to May booking date**

#### **Item 12/2004 Any other Business**

It was proposed by Richard Bates and seconded by all present that the Association should make its customary donation to Burton Hill House at Malmesbury, the Squadron's nominated charity. It was unanimously agreed that the amount donated this year should be £89, the number of years that the Squadron had been operational.

Patrick Tootal suggested that, to mark the Squadron's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Association might donate some special gift (eg a commemorative piece of silver or crystal). The Treasurer estimated that Association funds could probably afford around £200 - £300 for this purpose.

**Action on Treasurer re Burton Hill  
Action on Chairman to write to OC XXIV re Gift**

[**After-note by Chairman:** In subsequent discussions with OC XXIV Sqn, Mike Watkins and others, it was agreed that a painting might be a more appropriate gift. MW also pointed out that, with the Sqn's Centenary now only a decade away, it is not too soon to be building up funds for the donation of a gift on that *very* special occasion! The Sqn's Centenary is probably the occasion when the Association should be thinking in terms of presenting a piece of silver. Meanwhile, preliminary investigations by MW, who has agreed to assist the Chairman in exploring the possibility of commissioning a painting for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, has discovered that such a work might cost at least £1000 – a considerably higher amount than that envisaged by the Treasurer and AGM! No decisions will be taken without the consent of the full Committee. This topic will feature on the agenda of the 2005 AGM.]

After a constructive debate on the above issues, the 2004 AGM closed at 12:05hrs in anticipation of OC XXIV Sqn's briefing on current and future events involving both the Squadron and Station.

*Secretary's Note :-* Would anybody with an e-mail address who has not already done so, or **changed address** please send a brief message to:- **the24secretary at royalairforce dot net** (see also web site). This will allow us to compile an electronic address book and distribute minutes, notices etc electronically.

**Bookmark this site, its the Association Web Page on the Internet**

<http://www.24sqmassociation.royalairforce.net>

**PLEASE NOTE! DATE OF NEXT AGM & 90th ANNIVERSARY REUNION -  
THURSDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2005.**