Way back when time began in January 1963, I would never have thought that the communications industry would grow in the way it has and now 50 years hence - at the touch of a few buttons we can talk and see world-wide, those who we wish to - from our PC’s, Mobile Phones or whatever. I say this, because, in a way time has turned around and as I start to write this article, I am able to say that in the next hour or so, three of us former RAF-Personnel are about to use a very modern communication-link to talk to and see each other at the same time from three very different parts of the UK and the World – from the comfort of our own homes... (More about that later)...

As we all know, in our training as Telegraphist-II’s, we had to endure the sometimes boring chore of listening to taped-Morse code, where if you were able to copy the slow-speed accurately without falling asleep, you would probably find that when the speed increased to the next level – all of a sudden you had to wake-up and try and catch-up with that automatic transmission, often wishing that it would stop to give you a little break. Numerals were easier as each took a little longer to go through those uncomfortable headphones and then through the “grey matter” down to the pencil and message pad. At least by today’s standards head-phones are much more comfortable (even though Morse is largely a thing of the past --- but not completely).

Having always been interested in all things radio and communications, perhaps (I for one at least) was quite happy to endure these lessons and to attain the highest speeds of around 36W.P.M., but then I had some further tuition from our Training-Instructor in as much as it was arranged for me to be able to construct my very first radio-receiver in the station’s radio-workshops, as well as being able to sit along-side that instructor in his Amateur Radio (HAM) Shack in the married-quarters at Cosford. Subsequently and for aligning and testing purposes, I was able to receive my first message on the Short-Wave frequency of 3510Kc/s at 18:30Z on the 7th February 1964, transmitted just half a-mile from those married-quarters to the workshops and through my CODAR-CR45 Amateur Radio. (As shown-below-whilst in the Fulton Block-circa-1964).
The brilliant-training given to us in Morse code, certainly did the bizz and even to this day, I continue to copy it from the HAM bands as well as from other sources which still find the need to get their signals to places where voice-comm’s cannot... It is still used for aeronautical-navigational purposes today - where some of my colleagues are not very apt at understanding it !!!

I was certainly rather “chuffed” at receiving my first QSL card later in 1964 at Cosford – via our T.I. and the first of many since - (many of those from this very simple and basic receiver’s capabilities, although I have upgraded much to date)... Perhaps an early upgrade to the RACAL RA-17 + a decent antennae (rather than a shortened long-wire) would have been a considerable improvement, but RAF pay was a tad too low for that – in those days.

Radio was not the only extra-curricular activity that I undertook at Cosford, as I was well involved in the Station’s Amateur Dramatic Group, as well as even being a Rover Scout within Cosford’s own Scout Troop, plus even finding the time in the evenings (occasionally) to operate the ticket-desk at the cinema. Can’t remember if I got any pay for that and certainly can’t imagine how I found the time away from the required domestic-chores (bull) etc., although I don’t think I got told-off - often...!!
Well we knew that our time at Cosford was to come to an end in July 1964, when we would be deported to far-flung parts of the globe or the U.K., hopefully to places that we chose, but often not and with many of us never to meet-up again.

I had to remain at Cosford’s hospital a while longer before being allowed on leave, then to be stationed at H.Q.C.C. at RAF Northwood, Middx., where I felt it was not appropriate to continue with using a radio communications receiver for perhaps obvious reasons, so I took on another hobby of building a very large scaled-diesel-powered RAF Rescue Launch in the workshop there. That seemed to be a better option, as the base was combined with the R.N. – even though the R.N. didn’t think to have a lake or pond for me to try it out in. Hmmmm-some Navy !!

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To come right up to date here and within the last 18 months or so, it was decided that along with Mike Sinnott, Dave Hornsby & myself, we would attempt to contact as many of us 48th Tels as was possible, so that there was an opportunity for reunions of one sort or another, as well as allowing for personal contacts between 48th’rs to become easily available.

With much searching of one kind or another and with the ever-growing website that our Mike Sinnott has produced, where images and articles tell much of what the 48th did and beyond to date, it is not surprising (and a credit) that well over half of the original 48th Tels Boy Entrants are now able to reunite and reflect on those good-old days (or otherwise)... In fact even by today’s date, more names are being added to the group.

It is with very great pleasure here to announce that the T.I. that I have mentioned above, has allowed me back into his world over the last year or so and an even greater privilege that I was allowed to stay with him at his home in November 2013. I was very-well looked after and thoroughly enjoyed the visit and the many conversations that we both had about so many things – not just RAF related. I was already aware that I had a task to perform – in that I was to try and sort-out his Flight-Simulator which was not performing as well as it should. So now perhaps my flying experiences have to be good for something and I understand the Flight-Sim. is now working better. I even managed to fly a 4-engined Viscount around the country to land at Southend Airport at night, a place at least that I have been very familiar with in the past and although the landing was by far – not perfect, both the T.I. & I - survived that event !!!

So perhaps you are asking “Who was this T.I. that I have been referring to on so many occasions previously in this article ?”
The answer is our Morse Code Instructor as the then “Sergeant Butlin”, later to become Flight Sergeant at Cosford and subsequently a Warrant Officer elsewhere during his tours of duty until his retirement from the R.A.F.

The following is a little of Stan Butlin’s service history and accounts of what he can remember of the 48th – where the latter - he says that he can only remember us as :-

“\textit{A Pimply-faced lot of Sprogs}” (even though he has seen various images of us recently.)

So what became of Stan in his RAF career?
He joined the RAF in **February 1949** with 6-weeks square-bashing at **RAF Locking** (Somerset) and then joining the 6th Entry Boy Entrants at No.3 Radio School at **Compton Bassett** (Wiltshire), where Stan completed the 18 months Telegraphist training course.

Posted to **North-West CommCen. at RAF Haydock** (Lancashire) in 1950.

Then to **RAF Celle** (nr. Hannover-Germany) in 1951 for 18-months before posting to **RAF JEVER** (nr. Bremen) for a further 12 months until about 1953 as a Corporal.

One early morning, Stan drove in his Bedford truck around the airfield to switch-on the VHF transmitter equipment and on returning near to the signals-section, went to walk via the Officers Entrance when he was stopped and questioned as to why he was using this entrance by **Group Captain Powel-Sheddon**, even though it was normal for Stan to use that entrance to open-up the signals-section via that route. Subsequently Stan found-out that the Groupee was waiting by that entrance in order to ascertain the timings of the Officers who should be appearing for their duties...!!!

Perhaps the “hub” comments under the VW Kombo photo below speak for that Group Captain...?

During the early days of the Cold War, nearly everything was based on mobile-communications because we knew that if the Soviet-Bloc attacked we would need the versatility of shifting to other places quickly...{(M.Sinnott)}

Mike Sinnott adds **“The RAF Jever period is still the time of National Service. So many of the personnel there were just serving their time before demob.”**
Interesting period, have a look at their website *** to see that it was indeed the jet-era and with the RAF doing the transition from Sabre F-86 to Swifts and Hunters. The Gloster Javelins could have been from RAF Gutersloh because they were still around when I arrived in 1964 when they changed to Hunters and then Lightnings.”

*** please visit www.rafjever.org/ for much more about this Cold War base...

From Jever, Stan was posted in 1954 to the then RAF Hillingdon with No.11 Group, (which later became part of RAF Uxbridge and since closed in 2010.)

(Coincidentally, I saw my last active-service at the RAF Hospital at Uxbridge, but not as a Teleg. or Nurse,-- rather:- horizontally-polarized as a patient for 6 months. Also I returned to Uxbridge and to the 2nd W.W.’s No.11 Group H.Q.-underground bunker for a private visit to the scene of the Battle of Britain and the Ops Room. there during November 2008.) (hospital-photos available upon request !! Editor)...

Recently married to Janet, he was posted to RAF Ouston. An Army base now-known as Albemarle Barracks and it being way out in the wilderness – (N/W of Newcastle), I would imagine a tad chilly in the winter...(I remember Janet who brought mugs of tea for Stan and myself on an occasion when I was sitting along-side Stan at his Ham’s Shack at Cosford in 1964 and whom I spoke to on a couple of occasions, most recently as November 2012 onwards. Stan was sadly bereaved of Janet in July 2013 after nearly 60 years of marriage.)

After serving about a year at Ouston, in 1956 a rather unusual deployment to a Mine-Sweeper at Plymouth was next in his travels ?? H.M.A.F.V - “Bridlington” was a Bangor-class and former R.N. vessel launched in 1940 and handed-over to the RAF in 1946 then scrapped in 1958. The RAF still had the tot of Rum on-board..(Apparently in 1940 the sum of £293,762 was raised by the people of Bridlington, to pay for the building of this vessel.)

As Stan says “On one occasion, I was the Flag Officer and promptly on time after I had lowered the flag, was followed by a telephone call from the ‘Flag-Officer of the Day’ aboard HMS Belfast in the port, to tell me-off for lowering the RAF Flag – before the NAVY-Ensign - had been lowered.” ?? Oh dear, Somebody had to complain...!!!
A very small RAF base near Kyrenia/Cyprus with No.7 Signals Unit where there were just 12 personnel with Corporal Butlin in-charge - his duties being to decipher messages from Nicosia. The first 2-years were completed at the small signals-section during times when EOKA terrorist-activity was prevalent on the Island. When terrorism had abated, Stan thought that he might get a repatriation, but that was not to be, as he was then sent (for the final 6-months) to the Cyprus CommCen at RAF Ayios Nikolaos near Famagusta as part of the “Commonwealth Air Forces Network.”

On asking Stan if he enjoyed his tour of Cyprus and its’ beaches, he replied “Oh Yes !! Every day we went ‘blinking’ skin-diving. We bought all the gear, flippers & spearguns. We used to fish and we sold the fish to the locals because there’s not a lot of fish in the Med. and we were getting good prices...!!!”

On further asking whether the spear-guns might have been useful against the terrorists, Stan replied “Oh we were all armed – everybody had their own guns. I had a ‘blinking’ Sten-gun and nearly killed someone with it. Silly. I was riding ‘shot-gun’ on a Bedford truck where you stand on the engine. I don’t know if you know the Sten-gun, but I pulled the bolt back and it locks-in. Well I didn’t like that because you’ve got to undo it before you can fire. So we’re going through this little village with steep houses on either-side and just about enough room for the width of the truck
and I saw this young fella sliding down a wall grabbing something and I thought he was gonna throw a Grenade or something and so what I did was I had my finger on the bolt, so all I had to do was let it go and it would fire and cock itself. Anyway I actually let it go, but caught it just before it would have fired. The fella just stood-up and looked at us... I would have emptied the ‘bloody’ magazine into him, I tell you – I hated the Sten - as a pain in the arse.” !!!!

Editors comment: “Sounds like the Cypriot-one that got away from Stan - compared to all those fish” ???

After Cyprus, Stan was posted back to the U.K. via a troop-ship to Southampton and “when you got-off the ship, you got your posting.” he said. To which he was informed that he was staying here at Southampton’s CommCentre. Anyhow that was changed for Corporal Butlin to be deported to RAF Cosford - in around early 1960. Within the first three years at Cossy he was promoted to Sergeant – (as we all knew him.) One might have thought that he would have stayed-on at Cosford teaching sprogs until the end of his service-career, but far from it...

In-between Stan’s posting to Cosford and the time that we came under his ‘training wings’ in ’63, he was actually posted on an unaccompanied tour to the Maldives (a British Protectorate until 1965) in the Indian Ocean.

*“In 1953, there was an abortive attempt to form a republic, but the Sultanate survived. In 1957 the British established an air base in the strategic southernmost atoll of Addu, paying £2000 a year, employing hundreds of locals. Nineteen years later, the British government (Labour's Harold Wilson) gave up the base, as it was too expensive to maintain.”* – A Wikipedia citation.

Otherwise and more commonly known as RAF GAN, Stan recalls:- “There was an incident which caused a lot of concern. I was operating an amateur radio station and I went into the ComCen., one morning. It was a relay centre – all 85R’s – no teleprinters, just punched-tape and there was a message about sighting a ship which had to be stopped and the message was copied to Gan and the Navy and whatever. As the Duty Signals Master in charge of the shift, I saw the boss there (a Squadron Leader) and told him that I had spoken to the Radio-Operator on the ship that you’re looking for. His name is ‘Oi’ and he is Japanese. He’s going to Boston via Reunion Island. They have been scouring the Indian Ocean for this ‘blinking’ ship with Shackleton aircraft, also they flew a Victor-bomber from the U.K. & fitted with cameras fitted in the bomb-bay to fly along the Chinese-borders to take photographs. Anyway along with the Shackleton’s from Singapore, the search was on for this vessel. What they were worried about then was that there was a blockade on with Rhodesia (Arms Limitation) and they thought this ship was running the blockade, but as it happened the ship turned-around and went to Chitagong (in the other direction). They reckon it was just a ploy.” (As an avid amateur-radio operator Stan was on the key or mic. even to vessels at sea, but perhaps this was another-one that got away. Ed. )?
as parts 1 to 4 show what life was like in this wonderful part of the world for those who had experienced it,!!!  or might even consider going there now, as   Gan Airport is now an International Airport for tourism and diversions.

After the hot and secluded climates of Gan, Stan returned to No.2 SofTT at Cosford and trained us and other entries through to the last Boy Entrants of the 51st at July’65 and continued to stay there for his 2nd stint...

Some adult trainees (mainly women) as T.P.O’s were trained by him.

He was promoted to Flight Sergeant during this stay at Cosford.

At one point after we left Cosford, Stan involved the Vulcan aircraft that many of us saw land at Cosford, where the trainees went out on the airfield whilst learning about the petrol-electric generator sets and putting-up 30’ aerials and sending radio messages to each other and Stan remembers using the Vulcan’s radio equipment in those exercises. We were never that lucky.

About 1968, a posting to Singapore was next in-line for Stan to complete, of which I have seen some of the beautiful items that he was able to bring back.

In fact Stan should have been posted to Edinburgh Field (a Royal Australian Air Force Base – near Adelaide Australia), but that was not wanted and as Flight Sergeant Butlin had another HAM mate who was an Admin.Officer at Cosford and as was said to him “I don’t wanna go to ‘blinking’ Edinburgh Field.” His mate replied “I’ll see if I can get it changed” So be it and what a good “mate”...!!

Stan was one of four Duty Signals - Warrant Officers at the huge CommCen at Changi, which was H.Q. F.E.A.F.

He told me that the Stores-Officer there was an ex-Telegraphist (who’d taken a commission as a Flying-Officer) and who gutted the married-quarters and fitted it out with new carpets, furniture and everything – “it was great”...he said.
I dare say that many of you will know much about Changi in around 1968 or later and perhaps it would be interesting to hear in subsequent articles from you, about your experiences there or at Tengah, Seletar etc.???

If those experiences are anything like Stan Butlin’s, then as he says,

“A tremendous place and I lived a life of Riley – there’s no doubt about that”

Promoted to Warrant-Officer at Changi and later Stan was given the three choices (“including those not in the London area”) for his next posting, but in fact was posted to RAF Hendon in August 1971 !!! He would have liked to have been posted back to Cosford as School-Supervisor, but no such luck – this time. (Editor’s note; Perhaps it was decided that he’d already served enough time there.)

RAF Hendon in ’69 was already suffering from the cuts in military airfields (as today), but in this case was primarily due to 3 very short runways and the close proximity to housing. Those runways were in fact removed by 1969, with the very last flight of an RAF aircraft being a Blackburn Beverley, which was on display for a number of years as part of the up-coming development of the RAF Museum there.

“So was there much left to do at Hendon” I asked Stan.?

His reply was simply “I was an Orderly-Officer every other week as there were few Officers there. I had a civilian-boss (as Sqn-Leader status) in charge of the Data Collections Centre. It was a boring place and all the Warrant-officers before me – had found a way of ‘running away.’ With
all the commuting from my married-quarters at Uxbridge and only doing days - it was quite horrible and I hated the place...

Hendon was the first data collection centre for all the stores and supplies which was computerised and where the Murray Code tapes came in the reverse-order from all the stations in the RAF. They were then fed onto the huge-computer tape-disks of which I was in charge.”

Fortunately Stan’s stay at Hendon was not to last longer than nine months as he was informed by a Corporal at the little admin. Section, that there was a requirement for a Telegraphist Warrant-Officer Instructor at the School of Education at RAF Upwood to teach Management Practices and as he’d done the course and thought it was wonderful, so applied as “That’s for me and to get me out of here. I went along, had the interview and got the job.”

Subsequently he was posted to **RAF Upwood** (Cambridgeshire) in 1972. Although a non-operational base it was home to Technical Training Command, where the **School of Management and Work Study** was to be the next challenge for Warrant-Officer Butlin - where he was teaching Management Practices to senior NCO’s – teaching them to be consultative-leaders, rather than “when I bark – you jump sort of thing.”

We know about some of ‘em...! Ed.

“Upwood - was thoroughly enjoyable and tremendous and I didn’t want to leave - I was heart-broken to leave the place.” said Stan...

No doubt part of the reason why he was to enjoy his stay at Upwood, was partially due to the fact that he was made **“CMC in Charge of the MESS within 5 minutes of his arriving at the base...”**

Well somebody’s got to be, so why not Stan and imaginations might run wild as to what he got up-to in that position. (Actually Stan, it does sound a job of some complexity, but I dare say - some joys..Ed.)

As Stan says **“There were a lot of senior N.C.O. trainees on the base and they would spend a lot of money in the mess-bar resulting in an awful lot of money being made and it was embarrassing as it just goes into PSI if not spent. We had a ‘one-armed bandit’ there and we had to alter the pay-out to pay more as it was making so much money. Anyhow the Mess-Steward used to come to me and say “Can we have Twofoers (two for one) again, because all these guys on training were drinking like crazy?” We were making money ‘hand over fist’. Also they never had a ‘Dining-In Night’ for years and years and we had a mess-meeting and somebody proposed that they had a ‘Dining-In Evening’ with full mess-kit and inviting the Station Commander and his wife, because he was leaving the station for a posting somewhere else. I got a little bit ’sloshed’ and chairing the event, I made a speech (I can’t remember exactly what it was about), but something about the value of women to serviceman and the fact that we preferred to press our own trousers because we could do it better ourselves. Anyhow I got through the speech - somehow. !!!”**
“Rather angrily” Stan had to depart from Upwood in 1973 for another posting, this time to RAF Benson (on April Fool’s Day!!!) after 24 years service...

Well that was to be W.O. Butlin’s last and by far the shortest posting, as he was to resign from the RAF and left in October’73.

“On arrival at Benson, the Station-Commander greeted me and said “Welcome Mr. Butlin, we’ve been looking and waiting for you for months.” Stan replied “I’m sorry to disappoint you Sir – I’m putting-in for discharge to pension.” The C.O. replied “You can’t be serious !!” with Stan replying “I am. I got yanked out of a wonderful job to come ‘ere. I just do not want to know about this.” “You’re a young Warrant Officer – you’ve got everything in front of you and you could go for a commission.” replied the C.O.

Stan wrote-out his resignation-application and submitted it – the same day...

In the short time that Stan was stationed at Benson – he was in charge of the NAAFI and Airman’s Club... “Nothing but trouble. The locals came-in, they had dances and there was fighting --- it was a nightmare. !!!

The person before me (who was in-charge of the Airman’s Club) that I took-over from, was frightened to spend any money and they had thousands in the kitty that again would have gone to the PSI and been swallowed-up and I couldn’t believe it !! I’ve just arrived at this place and here I am ‘Chairman of the Airman’s Club.’ I felt they were trying to get at me. It was a big NAAFI and the committee-members were saying “Can we have this, can we have that. We haven’t had any new records and whatever.” --- So I spent all the money that had previously accrued between my arrival in April and my departure in October’73.” (Editors’ note:- Now I know why the Queen’s Flight -which was based at Benson at the time, used the call-sign - “KITTYHAWK.”)

1963 ~ ~ ~ ~ 2013

With spending the time that I had with Stan at his home and hearing not just these and many more tales of his experiences within the RAF as well as beyond, it has been a great pleasure to at least
recount some of these here and to know that his career -beyond the service was also full until his retirement.

Up until recently Stan has remained very active in the Amateur (HAM) Radio world and has been well recognized around the globe for his very accurate Morse-code sending procedure, of which I have heard recently. Unfortunately he is only able now to spend a very little time for that hobby and I’m sure that many others around the world would prefer to listen to his sending messages, compared to that of the auto-modes and poor manual modes by others...

A very-well earned & deserved Morse-Key & Certificate at Stan’s Shack...

A reunion with a difference – took place on the 29th December 2013.
Between Stan Butlin, Mike Sinnott & myself & lasting for some 1-3/4-hours, it was a great pleasure in the 50th anniversary-year to have been able to have the three of us meet-up together again.

It was an even greater pleasure, to just sit-back and listen to the conversations between Stan & Mike, which well-fascinated me, whilst I was downing the all important Sherry...!!!

I’m not sure if “over-whelmed” is the correct word that the three of us felt, but I know we were all very happy to relive our memories together & no doubt will not forget that occasion. Oh Yes !! we had a glass or two for the occasion as well...

And all thanks to just another method of communications of which we have become accustomed to – these days.  Thank You - SKYPE  (Ed.)

As mentioned in the paragraphs above & photo by Terry we had a memorable three-way contact via Skype. It was quite something to be able to use this video-conferencing facility between the U.K. and Mauritius.

I was +4 hours ahead of the U.K. and sweltering in 28c/82F., all the more so because I had to switch-off my air-cooler which was making too much noise for our audio contact.
At this point Terry was sitting back sampling Sherry while I tried to be brief about my own service and civilian-careers.

I talked to Stan about my post-RAF career in the offshore platform/pipeline construction-sector as a Telecoms Supervisor.

This included how I completely set-up a Brussels office tape relay commcen with radio, Telex and SSB R/T via the Belgian Coast station of Ostend Radio, to facilitate direct communications with construction-barges in the North Sea. Later with the advent of the first personal computers I would be automating the system using the famous IBM-PC-XT with two floppy-diskettes and French Sintra S100 which would end tape relay in the mid-80's.

What came out of this conversation was that Stan was amazed that our RAF training was so beneficial to our civilian-careers. He told us that instructors at Cosford had in mind only the RAF career aspects of our advancement. Hence his pleasant surprise that many of us actually benefitted from this training and experience in civilian life.

For Stan this was a revelation some 50 years later. Also, I can imagine that, for him, it was also a warm satisfaction to hear this from both of us. In a way, through Stan, we got to symbolically thank our Cosford Trade-Instructors for their patience with the "pimply sprogs."

Stan’s cold war period in the RAF was certainly an amazing one. I was doubled-up at his R.N. escapades and you have to laugh at the incidents created due to a mix of two military traditions. He was also a solid and respected HAM radio-enthusiast and I also caught the bug soon after the Cosford days.

Unfortunately, I had to pull the HAM plug because chasing the DX was getting addictive. Also, the Mrs was threatening to take legal-action against my extra-conjugal activities with my Yaesu transceiver.

At the end of our three-way Skype-QSO and it being almost the end of the year we duly toasted with a little tipple to moisten the 'by then parched-throats from all that talking.' Mike Sinnott - January 2014.

Finally as Stan has said during the SKYPE contact:-

“It has been a pleasure hooking up with yourselves and I just hope that we can do it again” whilst saying privately to me; “KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS”...
We are now true-friends... Thank You Stan & for adding-in your experiences here...

BEST WISHES TO ONE AND ALL.

Have A Very Happy 2014 To The 48TH ENTRY/TELS

In This 50TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR from the

“BEGINNING Of Our TIME.”

Stan Butlin & Mike Sinnott (Co-Participants) & Terry Jacobs (Ed.)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

A tribute to Warrant-Officer Stan Butlin (RAF)
June 1932 --- December 2014 aged 82 years. R.I.P

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