

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION – FESTIVAL OF REMEMBRANCE

ROYAL ALBERT HALL – NOVEMBER 1995



On the Saturday afternoon of the 2015 Legion National Conference weekend, there was the usual parade of attendees from the conference centre to the war memorial, and this year we were honoured to be accompanied by the RAF Cranwell band – particularly enjoyable for us RAF types, as one of the marches played (as one might have expected) was the RAF March Past. During that section of the parade, while strutting my stuff with the other veterans through the cordoned-off streets of Southport, I recalled the occasion of my representing the RAF Reserves as (a very exclusive – just two of us out there) part of the muster parade at the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall, in 1995.....

The whole RAF contingent had been summoned to RAF Uxbridge for three days of rehearsals, which were organised and conducted by RAF Regiment drill instructors. Once we were competent enough to be accompanied by music, a CD player was commandeered, and we enjoyed the march utilised – so much so that when I went into Uxbridge with the other Reserve officer one evening, we found ourselves walking in step and singing said march, much to the amusement of a couple of representatives of the RAF police (the Plod Squad) who had also been practising, and happened to be following us!

Pamela on the right in both photos (above during rehearsal and below at the Albert Hall)



On our return to the parade ground next morning, I asked one of the RAF Regiment blokes what the march was, and he gave me “A Look” (the sort that a long serving Rock Ape NCO gives a dim witted female officer) and said “The RAF March Past”. I replied “No, it isn’t” but of course he just shrugged and called us to form up for more practice.

Some years later, Terry and I were attending some event at which there was a military band playing to entertain, and just as we were considering leaving, they started to play the march engraved on my brain since 1995, so I waited until the end, and then asked the bandmaster what it was. He informed me that it was called “Eagle Squadron”, so at the first opportunity, I purchased a CD which included it, and yes, it was the one that had been going round in my brain for years, it was “Eagle Squadron”, and it definitely was NOT the RAF March Past!

Footnote: It was on arrival at the Royal Albert Hall in November 1995 that I realised that my clean, pressed shirt was still hanging in the wardrobe at RAF Uxbridge, and an airman was dispatched to break in and rescue it for me – evidently not the first time this had happened!!

Footnote to the Footnote : Terry Austin was left at home to watch the Festival of Remembrance on the Television in November 1995 whilst Pamela was marching over the stage at the Royal Albert Hall. He took a photo off the telly and the result is this photo of Pamela Austin striding out, as one does! Well done Pamela.