

BRANCH CHAIRMAN - TERRY AUSTIN



Under the microscope is Chairman Terry Austin AE FCA. Despite originally wishing to join the RAF as a pilot, Terry was instead steered into the accountancy profession, and whilst living in South Wales, he suggested to his father (who happened to know the Group Commandant) that he might join the Royal Observer Corps. This he did, and served for an evening each week as an Observer for 8 years, before being promoted to junior officer rank in 1970. He managed four reporting posts in rural Oxfordshire, before being moved into the Group Control in the city as a crew officer. Further promotion followed in 1984, when he became an Observer Commander, and Group Commandant of Oxford Group.

When the Cold War was declared over, and HM Government wished to save some defence expenditure, the ROC was stood down, and Terry had to find something to do with his suddenly increased spare time, now considerably in excess of the original commitment of 2 hours per week.

In late 1993, he joined the RAFVR as an acting Pilot Officer in the Reserve Intelligence flight. The two year intelligence training course, and worse still the Reserve Officer Initial Training course at the RAF College Cranwell were something of a shock to the system (particularly the latter at the great age of 50), but things improved after that, and Terry was commissioned, and subsequently promoted to his final rank of Flight Lieutenant, training for one weekend each month at RAF High Wycombe, and then from 2000, at RAF Waddington, also serving each month for some years as Executive Staff Officer. In addition, two weeks each year were spent in 'operational' training, mostly at RAF Marham, and later at MoD.

The RAFVR was subsumed into the Royal Auxiliary Air Force in 1997, the flight became a squadron, and everything continued to run smoothly until 2003 when the coalition forces invaded Iraq. "Our HQ had been dropping hints for some time, but in January 2003 the government finally decided that reservists would be called up for military service, so I packed my bags and moved into PJHQ at Northwood (Middlesex) for the duration, working mainly twelve hour night shifts, five days on and one day off" - not at all what he had expected of retirement! Life returned to normal in June 2003.

In his civilian occupation, Terry, having decided early on that the auditing regime of the accountancy profession was not for him, had worked for the greater part of his career in commerce for the conglomerate Pearson plc, as Group Accountant. In 1993, he took advantage of the opportunity to take a new job in one of the subsidiary companies, the Tussauds Group, as Group Financial Controller and for some years as Company Secretary as well. In 2000, after the pressures of a management buy-out, the opportunity for early retirement presented itself, and he hesitated for no more than a nanosecond before deciding to give it all up.

In 2004, Terry and Pamela were able to move from Maidenhead to Stanhoe, and buy a converted barn with a large garden in which to relax. After almost 45 years in a blue uniform, he finished his RAuxAF service in June 2007, but hopes to continue with the various committees and other community projects with which he is involved.