

24th July 2021 eventually arrives and with great anticipation all members of a Band of Brothers known as 223 after a 2 month delay to the proceedings due to something called a Pandemic were making their way from the 4 corners of the Globe to celebrate our 50th anniversary. Everybody seemed to arrive at Horwood House without any hitches.

Once checked in and bags thrown into rooms, everybody started to muster in the Bar area. ( Now that is a surprise ) After ordering the drinks one had to be picked up after paying nearly £7 for a pint. As the afternoon progressed more of the lads arrived, some solo and the majority accompanied by their spouses. Some who said they were coming cried off for various reasons. Bob Wilson had a good excuse but was sorely missed. Then some who weren't expected turned up to surprise us & what a wonderful surprise it was to see Keith and Steph. It was great for me to see Gezz and his missus Jan as I hadn't seen him for about 46 years as this was the first one he'd turned up to since I started coming. I was told Steve Farmery wasn't coming but I'm sure I saw him sitting with Cheryl and Julia. Then unlike 2 years ago everybody left the drinking area to go and prepare for the evenings festivities, even the naughty boys who caused the meal to be delayed slightly behaved themselves and left on time. These will remain anonymous.

Once everybody was seated in the Restaurant we all enjoyed a nice meal. Once finished Davey Jones delivered the opening speech which had been written by Phil Jones who was another unable to attend. Yes Phil my sentiments are with you regarding Chew, then again he didn't like me either and I didn't even have a car. He also read a message from Bob Wilson, which as per was full of humour and he also hits the right notes.

Now I must apologise because things start to get a bit blurred ( I just don't know why ) I can remember a raffle which raised £250 for the BHF and Ryan monopolising all the Spitfire prizes. Gingell and Davidge treating us to a turn on the bagpipes and drum, then I must have visited the Twilight Zone as the rest of the evening has disappeared from memory. I can't even remember having the photo taken. The next time I recall anything is arriving at my room at 1am. At least I managed to do it unaided unlike somebody who needed the assistance of the Night Manager to get to theirs.

So onto the Sunday, after breakfast people went out to sightsee the surrounding countryside. Our little group went to Bletchley Park, seen others there and had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

Back to Horwood House and the plan was to go back to the room and prepare for the forthcoming evening. Then we bumped into Dave Gingell who dragged us into the Beer Garden. Once again it was like Deja Vu from Saturday, some people had left but there was a new arrival in the form of Jock Kerr. Yet another great afternoon followed with loads of anecdotes being told and laughter in abundance.

On to the evening where we enjoyed a carvery before Yvonne's new Bingo game and an excellent quiz. Once finished more chatting and laughter from all over the room. Everybody eventually grew tired and departed for their rooms and a night's sleep. So yet again another reunion was coming to a close when the following morning after breakfast there was loads of kissing and hugging (and that was only the men) with all saying their farewells and making their way back to the 4 corners of the

Globe. As far as I know everybody has had a safe journey home and are getting prepared for the next one in 2 years time. Here's hoping it's a bit closer to us next time as my missus is getting too old to be driving too far. I suggest either the wonderful Cities of Chester, the walled City or the ex Unesco site of Liverpool.

Now just before I sign off I would just like to say a few thoughts of my own regarding our 50 years. Who would have thought that 50 years on from those fresh faced lads (well some were ) stepping up them steps of York Flight we'd still be meeting up. During our 2 years there we did have our little clicks and it does show at times during the reunion but since the start of these get togethers I was a late starter, I missed the first 4. I have made even more good friends that I never really knew at Halton. All of this is due to the wonderful hard work of Bob and Yvonne Rodham. I thank the pair of them from the bottom of my heart for getting in touch with me and bringing me back into the fold. I am so proud to have been a member of 223. Long may they continue to meet and that includes our newcomer Luke Ryan who was at Cosford.

Cheers to all you " Small but Deadly " guys. See you again in 2 years time and some of you in between as well. Take care and stay safe Pancho.