

No.16 COURSE 50TH ANNIVERSARY LUNCH

To mark the 50th Anniversary of the graduation of No.16 Course from ETPS Farnborough a reunion celebratory lunch party was held on 23rd October 2007 in the Officers' Mess, Boscombe Down, by kind permission of the PMC, Squadron Leader Steve Austin.

For many it was the first time of meeting for over 40 years. Hence, during security clearance at the main entrance to the Aircraft Test & Evaluation Centre (aka A&AEE), several minutes were spent in trying to identify each other. This test of memory was not helped by the beards adorning all but one of the naval members.

Seven course members proved sufficiently fit to travel and survive the journey. Unfortunately, an enthusiastic RAF member became medically unfit the day before, giving the majority to the dark blues. Vice Admiral Sir Edward Anson (aka 'Ted' in 1957) proposed the loyal toast before welcoming the wives and other guests. Pre-eminently amongst them was Bill Morrison, a very popular tutor from whom we gained much knowledge and encouragement 50 years earlier. Other distinguished guests we were delighted to welcome were the current CO ETPS, Commander Chris Maude RN, and Secretary ETPS Association, Clive Rustin (20 Course).

Ted then recalled some of the extraneous and renowned episodes during the course. Weekends at Lasham with the School fleet of gliders and the tug Chipmunk featured prominently, particularly when one glider 'inadvertently' landed in France and the whole party had to go over to air-tow it back.

Alan Merriman conveyed the thanks of the members to the PMC, Mess Manager and Head Chef for the splendid arrangements they had provided. He then expressed the regrets of those members who had been unable to attend, especially Peter Baker, another distinguished tutor who later played a leading role in the flight testing of Concorde. He also recalled those members who had made their last flight either in aircraft accidents or due to ill-health. The meal was concluded with the toast of 'Absent Friends'.

Discussion continued over coffee in the ante-room until late afternoon. It was drawn to a close only when the chauffeuse wives insisted on setting off before darkness fell. This unique gathering was hailed a huge success and the members departed with murmurings of 'See you at the 60th'.