

Welcome speech-

Given by OC 216 Squadron- Wg Cdr Pete Morgan at the final 216 Squadron Dining In Night. 31st March 2014

PMC, AOC, Sirs, Ladies & Gentlemen.

Welcome one and all to the last dining-in night of 216 Sqn here at the Officers Mess at RAF Brize Norton. Firstly, if I may, my sincere thanks to the PMC for allowing us to use the Mess for this auspicious occasion and for allowing me to usurp her as PMC for the night. From the start, we had planned that this night would be a thank you to all of those units, sections and companies that have led to the success of 216 Sqn over these last 30 years of the Tristar era. Half of you are our guests and I wish you all the warmest of welcomes. To the other half...behave!

I shall be going into more detail later, but aside from serving members, we have ex Sqn members who have played a major role over the years. We also welcome the President of the 216 Sqn Association, AVM Atherton and the majority of the Committee. A particular mention and welcome must go to Mr Fred Hart, our oldest Association member who served on 216 Sqn during world war 2 on Dakotas.

We also welcome members of the Tristar project team and representatives from the units on Station that we interact with the most. We welcome 8 out of the other 11 OC 216 Sqns that make up the 12 Commanding Officers of the Tristar years. We also welcome members of the key industry partners that have made our task possible. To, to those of you from Northrop Grumman, Thales, AMSS, Cobham, Rolls Royce and Marshalls of Cambridge, welcome.

We also welcome Mr Dennis Woods, the Master and his Clerk, Sir Antony Reardon-Smith from our affiliated Worshipful Company of Fuellers and also Flt Lt Kylie Cheston, Officer Commanding of the other 216 Sqn, 216 (Redditch) Air Training Corps Sqn. I am also delighted that Mandy Shepherd, the well-renowned artist who painted our disbandment painting, could join us tonight.

Finally Sir, as our AOC and principal guest tonight, a warm welcome to you.

So, to all our guests who haven't dined in the Mess before, those serving personnel around you will guide you on any of the peculiarities or traditions of dining in the Mess, but if someone tells you that we always do the loyal toast whilst standing on one leg then they are merely pulling it!

And as for the format, we have 3 courses and in-between there will be 2 vignettes which I shall introduce as we go along, there will be just the one loyal toast and then an admin break before the speeches.

But for now, there is fine wine, good food, the accompaniment of the Ensemble of the RAF Central Band and, hopefully, stimulating company. So, let's dine.

Vignette 1 (ed note: if these vignette speech's can be obtained they will be link=ked from here in time)

So, for the first vignette, I'd like to introduce Master Engineer Tom Lee. Now Mr Lee has been on the Tristar for 14 years, but, believe it or not, used to be an A cat engineer on the other of Mr Lockheed's fantastic aircraft, the C130 Hercules. Not that he has ever told us that though. Now for those who don't know what an A cat is, it's an exceptional assessment for knowing an obscene amount of aircraft trivia. Now, Mr Lee, as the RAF's most senior Warrant Officer is shortly leaving the RAF, but is going to take up a reservist post in his dream job, that of talking about history and leading RAF battlefield tours. It is Mr Lee's exception interest in history that has led me to ask him to speak for a few minutes (and I mean just a few Tom) on some of the more interesting parts of 216 Squadron's history. Sirs, Ladies & Gentlemen, Warrant Officer Tom Lee.

Vignette 2 (ed note: if these vignette speech's can be obtained they will be link=ked from here in time)

Now the second guest I would like to introduce is Sqn Ldr Bob Tuxford Retired. Bob is very much involved in keeping the Cold War Jets collection at Bruntingthorpe going and, like a random American entrepreneur, is desperately keen to get his hands on a Tristar. But not to fly registered from an African country with lax servicing requirements, he wants to preserve it for historical purposes. But this is not why Bob is here. Nor is he here as the Victor pilot that gave away more fuel than he required to the infamous Vulcan 607 that performed the Black Buck bombing mission on Port Stanley in 1982 during the Falklands campaign. The mission that earned him an Air Force Cross. No, Bob is here as one of the test pilots at Farnborough that was involved in bringing the Tristar into service. To talk about those days and his initial impressions of the Tristar, Mr Bob Tuxford.

Mr Vice – the Queen

Before we all depart for our admin break, we sadly say farewell to the Ensemble of the RAF Central Band, so please join me in our grateful thanks. Please be back at...