

## **MORE ON THE MINE SAGA-By J.M Moore**

The following item has been reproduced from the book 'Over and Out- A History of RAF Locking' by Squadron Leader Ray Tillbrook

More on the mine saga from JM Moore, 684850, who was not involved in the recovery which he says involved overnight journeys the length of the West Country in illegal cars, double dealing on sprog entries and all manner of underhand goings on. However he clearly was involved in subsequent events:

My involvement with the thing began late one Saturday evening in the spring of 1961 .When I first met it, it was lying in the middle of a manure heap just around the back of Locking Village. I, and about a score of other 90th Entry had collected there with a view to manoeuvring it onto the squadron handcart. It was a fine handcart, all metal with large car wheels and sturdy handles. Its quality was, I suppose, our ultimate undoing.

By midnight it was safely aboard the trolley and we set off for Weston at a good pace, with half the team in harness and the other half ready to take over from anyone feeling the effects of too much scrumpy from earlier in the evening.

We passed the Borough Arms without incident and the streets were deserted as we proceeded on our way. Even though we were all shod in plimsolls, our passing had not gone unnoticed for it was not long before we met a detachment of the local constabulary. One of our number, whose silver tongue should, by now, have elevated him to at least cabinet level, convinced the police that mine was destined for an officer's front garden in Worle. With a conspiratorial chuckle and a 'Good wheeze lads' we were bade on our way.

At the confluence of the five roads in Weston the rostrum was quite unique. About four feet in diameter and two feet six high with a little parapet another foot high running around it, it seemed the ideal place to locate the mine. It was the work of a moment for 20 strapping lads to off-load the mine onto the rostrum, which we achieved by 2.15am. And then we made our first, and terminal, mistake. Actually it was more of a compound error, since we decided not to abandon the cart, split up and make for camp in twos and threes via the

back streets and fields. Instead, it seemed a better idea to leg it, in formation, complete with handcart, straight up the main road, directly to Locking. At 3.30am, just as we approached the airfield straight and with the camp so tantalisingly close, the long arm, or rather, the fast patrol car, of the police finally caught up with us. The police had outwitted us!

It was about turn and back to Weston, accompanied by the police car, a bus complete with camp guards, the Duty Officer and a Snowdrop. We retrieved the mine by 4.45am and recommenced the long haul back to camp arriving by 6.30am or so. We were all charged, did janks, which should have been the end of the incident. It probably was for everybody else.

On passing out I was posted to RAF Sealand, which was strange camp with more civilians than airmen. In fact, there were only sufficient airmen to fill one 16 man room, so we all knew each other. Occupying a pit fairly close to me was a most objectionable National Serviceman who insisted on telling me several times a day what he thought of apprentices. Not being renowned for my tolerance or good grace, I sustained his jibes for a few days before I had enough and rounded on him: 'Look, just what is your problem, because we can settle this outside here and now if you like'. 'No no' he said, 'it's just that when I was at Locking a few months ago a bunch of stupid apprentices put a mine on the copper's rostrum in Weston and I was on guard that night and spent half of it rounding them up. It's nothing personal'.  
But it was.