# Matt Interview 1 – 27 June 2017

(officer, 16 years, married, no, -2)

## C

Good Morning

## Matt

Morning

## C

Have you got a drink?

## Matt

Yes

## C

I thought you did there I was going to say what!

Matt (laughter)

## C

Right, I am just going to go straight into it if you don’t mind. It should take about an hour erm but I suppose that depends on how much you talk. Which is fine, feel free to talk as much as you want.

## Matt

Well I guess the more I info you get without blathering on the better.

## C

It is indeed it is. Right. You obviously came over from the Colonies

## Matt

Yes

## C

so what, why did you join, why did you come over here to join the military?

## Matt

Well I didn’t. So em ok. I came over here to see the rest of my family and whilst I was working in London I got to know through one of the girls I was working with her husband who was a squadron leader in the RAF. And he started saying to me you should think about joining the RAF so I thought about joining the RAF em looked around various bases because he introduced me to people, started to think this could be interesting even though I had never thought of it before. In fact I was actually, one of the things I always said I would never do was join any military so I want to start from that one. Em but anyway it seemed to be ok it seemed like … it was an organisation that was looking for potential that was the key thing it wasn’t the fact that the Air Force or anything else it was that it was just looking for potential, er and I thought that sounds good to me because I had met lots of people who aren’t. em and then started to go through selection and at each stage I figured they would probably tell me to stop and em they didn’t and I ended up joining, it was that simple.

## C

So what do you mean when you said it was an organisation looking for potential?

## Matt

Right so most other companies that I had applied for in the past or was even applying to work for wasn’t /?? RAF were very much focused on what have you done and therefore why is your experience going to help you do this job that we want you to do. And in most cases I found I did not have the experience people wanted for the sort of work I was looking for. Em whereas the RAF in this case was not so much bothered about what you’d done before, it might be relevant it might not, but er as you know it was looking was what innate abilities or what skills you had that the RAF could tap into and develop and turn you into an RAF Officer.

## C

And that appealed?

## Matt

That appealed, yeh.

## C

Why? Why did that appeal? What was it?

## Matt

Because it potentially gave me opportunities which I felt weren’t being offered by other areas. So it was all about opportunities, erm I wasn’t thinking necessarily when I joined about what a military organisation was, I wasn’t necessarily thinking about these are the sorts of things I want to do once I am in it. Erm I I realised that working with people and and potentially leading people was something that seemed appealing and here was an organisation that was going to let me do it.

## C

Ok, that’s that’s fine that is an interesting perspective. Different.

(Laughter)

So when did you actually start thinking about leaving the military?

## Matt

Em, it’s been an on and off process over numerous years erm because whist I have enjoyed many aspects of being in the RAF and the military its always, its alw.. I’ve always felt slightly like a em a round peg in a square hole. Or whichever version of that you want. Erm despite the fact of doing good work in my opinion em and enjoying what the RAF had to offer it it never really felt like something where I thought hey I am going to be doing this for the rest of my working life because it never felt that way, erm so it had and always been in the back of my mind that there will come a point where I’d say I’ve had enough thank you very much and one of the key factors that I always said in light of experiences of my colleagues and friends in the military is that as and when I get to a point where I am going to seriously settle down with some lady and get married or or live with whichever way that em would probably be the time I would start thinking about not being in the military anymore. So that that happened erm I met said lady and it had almost become one of those automatic processes so ok now I need to start looking at what I might do afterwards erm I think the timing really became full on, there is a cat coming through

(laughter) he wants to make his points known

## C

Yeh

## Matt

He says he agrees. Em I think probably the time will two two things really made it an absolute er decision were erm when I did my last out of area in Afghanistan and whilst I enjoyed that time away immensely actually that was a a positive experience it really proved to me that that 6 months away from J erm was something that neither of us really wanted to do again. So therefore from the time I returned to England the time was ticking from the end of that deployment to whenever the next potential might be.

## C

Yeh

## Matt

And therefore, if I was going to leave, I would need to leave within 2-3 years of returning to England from Afghanistan in order to probably not go somewhere like that again for 6 months

## C

Yep

## Matt

so I think it was that that time in Afghanistan and particularly the return from Afghanistan was probably for me the key pivotal time for that decision to apply I mean ?????? to put things into action

## C

Mmmhm, and how did making that decision feel? What did that feel like?

## Matt

Well it wasn’t easy, em it certainly whilst I’ve said that it was an automatic decision it wasn’t ne where I just woke up one morning and said well there we go I’ll do it, there was lots of thought put into that decision ?? well not so , why was I making those decisions what was ???????? reasons erm and also then I suppose I started talking to people and using the resettlement services that we have on offer to just make sure that wasn’t a rash decision that it was made for good reason. Erm and once I had been through that process, I couldn’t say how long it took but it was a period of a few months I guess erm, then my decision was very clear and it was at that point that I put my notice in and said right I’m Off. (0806)

## C

And It was just, it was almost a ???

## Matt

??????

## C

a considered decision

## Matt

yeh It was a considered decision but once that decision had been made it was then very clear there there was no point quibbling over it or thinking about it anymore. It was ??? done and what might be useful for your research er is to throw in the fact that even despite being promoted to Squadron Leader after I had said I was leaving, so I said I was leaving some period of time some months after that I was told you are promoted to Squadron Leader congratulations therefore we as a service are assuming you will rescind your PVR erm the answer was well ‘No, I’m I am still going’ erm and so then so yes just to try and illustrate the strength of that decision had been made

Yep

And even the great em riches thrown upon me by promotion and (laughter) and er opportunities etc weren’t enough to make me to decide to stay.

## C

Because it wouldn’t have made a difference to the reason you had left.

## Matt

It wouldn’t have made a difference, correct. If my reason for leaving had been I need more money then clearly that promotion might have made a difference but it was it was based solely around my circumstances and therefore my life circumstances weren’t going to change whether they gave me squadron Leader, Wg Cdr or Gp Captain. That was almost irrelevant.

## C

I’m getting .. obviously its its was been a very clear decision ae very considered decision but there is no emotion entering this equation

## Matt

There is I am just not telling you about it

(laughter)

Erm from an emotional point of view erm the decision to leave was obviously not just factual it was also emotional I suppose the emotional bit was clearly what was going on in my personal life that helped me make that decision erm but from an emotional point of view the RAF life wasn’t giving me the erm things I am still in the process of working out what these things are (yeh) I’ve got some idea but wasn’t giving me the the internal rewards erm … so so the emotion was one of ‘I can do better than this. I can do more that this there are other things in the world that I want to do and experience that the military isn’t going to give me. Erm yeh yeh and also I felt that promotion nice as it was to get it had come too late and therefore I suppose from an emotional point of view erm the RAF hadn’t valued me, in my opinion, enough early on or earlier on to to make me feel like I wanted to stay it was too too little too late.

## C

Erm

## Matt

I don’t know if that starts to edge into emotions or …

## C

Barely

(Laughter)

## Matt

Again Erm. I really it’s it’s not feeling valued enough, (yeh) feeling erm too much of one very small cog in one very huge wheel. Erm feeling that … you are almost irrespective of what you do, almost irrespective of what you, do erm you’re still going to be very much as I say a small cog and you are going to have to do these particular things because that is what the organisation wants you to do erm and that wasn’t sort of the way I wanted to be.

(laughter) (*every word heavily considered and thought about before being spoken*)

But I suppose part of the reason why you are not getting gushing emotion on it is because there aren’t extreme emotions involved in this I am not its not a case of I really loved this I really hated that I was really disappointed by this I was overjoyed by that, really that doesn’t factor in here my RAF career has never been one of great joy and skipping around the place and loving just loving being in the military neither, neither has it been me going (laughter) this is dreadful I have to leave because if that was the case I would have left an awful long time ago. Erm so so I suppose my lack of emotion in what I am telling you is partly reflective of my time that I have been in that I haven’t felt this ground swell of … there are people that you and I have known and will have met where, you erm in fact you might know someone fairly close, where you cut them through and they are RAF/Military and that’s them and they are very passionate about that for lots of good reasons and I am very envious of them for having it. I have never had that with the RAF erm I suppose its been over the 16 years I have been in it has been a very transactional process, you know, I have walked into things erm sometimes against my sort of innate that’s what I think or feel but you know I’m in that organisation and that is what they do so I have walked into aspects of the culture erm or had to but I have never had that strong emotional attachment so therefore leaving is not particularly difficult either. Em there are some practicalities about leaving it, the losing pay and em potential growing pension and all those things and I am sure once I have left fully there will be some things where I go, gosh I really wish I or maybe not wish I’d stayed but I miss those things I am sure ???? but I am really not far enough away from it. Does that help?

## C

Yes, it does, it does, I am pausing occasionally because I am really trying not to put words in your mouth and that is really hard for me (laughter) but that is why and I am dragging things out of you here. But that has been really really useful.

Ok, well we will move on from this torturous topic. Erm so what its been a fairly level playing field in terms of your experiences but if you had to choose one, good or bad, your most vivid of your time in the service?

## Matt

Gee that is a toughy isn’t it cause there is so many things from going through your training to meeting other people, to adventurous training erm ththere so many memories erm. ….. I think perhaps because this is more recent its one of the reasons this is coming to mind erm but this last tour I did out in Afghanistan where I was working in the embassy in the defence section. I was one of a small team of a Defence Attaché when I arrived it was a Defence Attaché, a deputy Defence Attaché me as what was called the Air Attaché and a Flight Sergeant, so there was 4 of us which isn’t that many rapidly the deputy defence Attaché went which left me the DA, the Flight Sgt and me. And every couple of weeks one of these 3 people, sorry one of the other 2 people would not be in the country because that was the the rotation system. So, I I would frequently become the Defence Attaché in all but rank

(Yeh)

And so this isn’t one memory it’s a collection of memories of that time over there, but what I loved about that and again this is probably part of the decision making process was erm I was actually in the scheme of things fairly important erm and I was briefing people and dealing with people all of different aspects of life that I hadn’t traditionally been dealing with in my time in the RAF so it was a less insular world that I was in. I was dealing with one star 2 star level people and clearly I was still lower in rank than them but in the various meetings I was dealing with them on a level because I was representing embassy staff that they weren’t involved in directly so for once or for one period of time despite still being Flight Lieutenant Smith I was actually carrying some clout and people were listening to me, because well in a sense they had to

(laughter)

Because I had a certain perspective but that was great, you know and I think that as well helped me to think this is a unique scenario that I am in now and that was by dint of circumstance, by dint of how I conducted myself, by dint of the character of the Defence Attaché who was phenomenal, a great guy. Who put a lot of trust in me. So that is a very rambling way of saying that time is probably the thing I most remember and and perhaps even most treasure because I feel that I genuinely doing stuff at a level that yeh this is me this is what I can do and being involved in things in an interesting way and that memory I think it is amongst all others the one that I take away with me to then go out and go into the big wide world it gives me it, it gives gave me a level of confidence of where I was at that was above and beyond what I had done in terms of being Flight Leiutenant Smith previously.

## C

Yeh

## Matt

Em And it has also informed my decision to go out and do other stuff. (ok) And that is why that memory as a whole is probably quite key.

## C

Yeh, that is good. That’s good. Ok. Emm. You mentioned earlier that em you bought into the culture sometimes you because you had to,

## Matt

yes

## C

is there anything, is there anything that worried you when you were in the services or anything that concerned you about .. what you had to do, how you had to behave?

## Matt

No, I wouldn’t say there was anything that concerned me there was nothing that I em vehemently disagreed with or went against any of my beliefs, culture or morals etc. so no. No I mean things that jump out are that particularly once I had decided to leave so in my last job ??? emm we would have the usual things of em you have got the wrong shirt on to wear a jumper on or you need to wear a tie cause you have got this particular, or its cold but you can’t wear a jumper because you haven’t go the tie and it was things like this which I thought I’ve always had to buy into them because it is part of how we operate but they are bonkers. (laughter) And these are the sort of niff naff and trivia and silliness that I can quite happily get rid of. I can’t get rid of them whilst I am in the military but I can once I am out of it. em So it is these perhaps annoyances and frustrations of that ilk, nothing serious but it is those sort of things that that started to I always thought were stupid but but now have really got silly and again made me realise that em yeh now I am in my 40’s I think I can dress I can pretty much dress myself how I need to. Em ???????

(laughter)

## C

OK that is brilliant. Is there anything. Em (22m27s)

Is there anything that is concerning you now, in this stage that you are at? Today, you know ..

## Matt

Yeh. Only the fact of finding work. Erm I mean that is that is a fairly base one, I mean I need to earn income Erm but but that doesn’t worry me, I mean it concerns me but it doesn’t worry me because until I’ve got something I haven’t got it. But it doesn’t worry me, I’m not lying awake at night going Oh My God this is terrible (yeh) erm far from it I am enjoying the freedom of time and of being able to look at options and see what can be done for the future so no is the answer.

## C

That’s brilliant, erm if you had a magic wand and you could change anything about your military experience. What would it be?

(long pause)

## Matt

I don’t think I would because because it’s been what it has been you know I have had the normal ups and downs of life that that we all have in any job erm but I see that as how that’s life goes you know. Erm overwhelming I have enjoyed it, it has been a positive experience I’ve done things I would never have done had I not joined I have had responsibilities that I wouldn’t of had in the same way if I had not joined erm I’ve had abilities to train and develop, em study em and become someone different by being in the military than if I had never been joined the military of that I am absolutely sure. So, no I wouldn’t wave a wand at all to be honest.

## C

OK, I am going to delve into that that response a bit.

## Matt

Ok

## C

In what way do you think you would be you are different due to military service?

## Matt

??? ok, so I think I am probably a more confident more capable individual by being in the military by dint of the training from the very beginning and and the experiences you have throughout. Em I doubt but I will never know but I doubt that I would have developed in the same way had I gone into er purely a commercial life. I might have done, who knows? But I doubt it because I think the sort of work I may have ended up doing or the types of hobs I might have done may never have allowed me that capacity to do stuff. Em But as I say we can never know that.

## C

But that’s

## Matt

But that is my my supposition based on the fact that the military has made us do certain things and trained us in certain things, to do what it needs to do. Maybe other careers out there don’t. And so therefore its either by accident or default your own personal way of being that you would develop those skills. Erm yeh.

## C

OK, Cool. Em If you had to describe military life, life in the military in 2 or 3 words how would you, how would you describe it?

## Matt

Right ok, Military life. So erm exciting, although let’s you know caveat that with there are some dead dull things we have to do. But overwhelmingly I would say exciting. Erm, I would say exciting, broadening because of the sorts of stuff we get involved in. Exciting, broadening and contrary to what I said earlier I would say rewarding. I would say rewarding, now I don’t feel that Matt Smith S was valued enough by the RAF as a system in terms of capabilities and promotion or whatever, although maybe they were right and I was wrong, you know

(laughter)

We will ever know but I don’t think so. Erm but I have had a rewarding time by being in and there is, there is a subtle difference. I have gained a lot by being in but I don’t feel I was valued enough by it as a service.

## C

Yeh,yeh. How do you think that is going differ in civilian life, how do you think that civilian life, is going to differ from military life?

## Matt

I have no great erm expectations there the wider world, the ???? world is necessarily going to value me is probably the best ?? erm better or differently it might erm what I would say is they are considerably more options out there in order to find that reward and satisfaction because there are so many other different things in the rest of the world, which being in the RAF in particular or the military as a whole you are still going to be bound within a certain sphere of what you can and you can and cannot do you are allowed or not allowed to do. Because it only has a certain sphere of stuff in mind. So yeh there is no guarantee that by leaving that is going to improve but it has a chance of improving whereas staying in is still within the same bubble.

## C

Yeh, yeh, ok, ok. So how would you describe your situation at the moment in terms of your… how comfortable you are I suppose.

## Matt

I am I am very comfortable with where I am at at the moment. Erm In fact I was having a chat with someone literally over the weekend and erm it became very apparent to me actually that I am very comfortable with this scenario (laughter) … ?? erm almost almost too comfortable. Erm so yes other than securing some sort of employment which obviously we will discuss a little in some part of it, but other than getting that thing erm which is uncomfortable until that is done. I am very comfortable with where things are at I am very comfortable with the fact that I can now I have more freedom of manoeuvre and choice in my life now that I am in that process of leaving erm than I have previously had because for the last 16 years I’ve been very much under the thumb of the RAF. With some degree of freedom of manoeuvre but not a huge amount.

## C

Yes, ok SO that freedom of manoeuvre how does that make you feel, how’s tha

## Matt

Good. That is good that is a very very positive thig and that is definitely one of the things I wanted to achieve by leaving. Erm to step outside of what is a very protected bubble it’s a sort of, you are employed, you ??????? all the medical service??? You step outside of that and you take on some degree of risk by stepping out of it but you also open up a huge amount of freedom in terms of how you do things, where you live, whether you go here or there, if you don’t like a job ???????? and within one month or so your no longer in it erm those freedoms I like and the prospect of those freedoms.

## C

ok cool just going back to your decision to leave, did you did you feel the support you got from the military was good, what type of support did you get.

## Matt

Oh phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal I think the support I had from my particular bosses was outstanding. They gave me all the flex at the time that I needed to do what I needed to do. Erm the system for leaving the formal system with the careers transition partnership ?? brilliant. The Officers Association I have found to be absolutely fantastic and I have made quite a lot of use of them. erm so yeh I couldn’t fault that leaving process at all, its been top notch and I can say that in light of the fact that I have had other colleagues who perhaps haven’t had that support in the same way because of the personalities of the people above them erm so I recognise that I have been very fortunate in my circumstances.

## C

Good. Good. So what are you expecting to be the biggest change? About leaving the military?

## Matt

Erm, I mean other than the fact change the sort of thing I do day to day for employment yeh that’s quite possibly the biggest change em well I guess in tandem with that the other biggest change is the fact that I get to live at home and whilst I was very lucky while I was at HW I did live at home certainly …. Doing for the the last few years that hasn’t always been the case of curse nor will it be the case in the future. (yeh) erm Though I think possibly the biggest change will be able to have that domestic life where I will only take a job that allows me to be at home and if if it doesn’t I wont do it. So so being able to have that grounding of being at home wherever I choose that to be whether its where I am now which is in this house here or when I am married we decide at some later point to move again that will…..??? In order to have that family life and that feeling of stability in a sense. I think that is going to be one of the biggest changes in a very positive way.

## C

Yeh. ok so what erm what happens next them what is your ?

## Matt

So I am in the process of applying for various work I am going onto another Officers Association do tomorrow in London erm which is with Lloyds of London Insurance and various syndicates there so I am going to have a nose around there to see if that might be of interest to me or not. Em so it’s a case of just applying for all sorts of stuff, and its it started off at the beginning of this career transition that I wanted to be self-employed which I still do actually but I wanted to be self-employed I wanted to run erm leadership events and team development events whatever being around the knot of it now I have seen enough people to realise that whilst that is all fine and dandy the financial risk to me doing that at the moment doesn’t work erm there are too many unknowns in that scenario and so therefore at the moment I have gone full circle and I am now applying for work so that I know I have an income, Meanwhile if I still want to work on I can still branch out to self-employment I can. But I am not doing it from the point of view if I don’t go and earn money now I’m stuffed, which is what I would be

(???)????

Erm so yeh that is what I am doing, I am applying across a whole range of sectors it’s certainly not related to my background of logistics erm yeh the default position would be you’ve spent the last 16 years dealing with logisticy stuff, in the main, therefore clearly you are going to be applying for logistics work, no, because it doesn’t interest me. Erm, so hence I am applying for a whole load of other stuff and re-jigging my cv with great frustration every time I get told this is the thing you wanted. (laughter) so, so that’s where I am at at the moment.

## C

Ok, ok em where do you think, you don’ti ts early days I appreciate that erm but do you have any anticipation with regards what you think you will miss about the military?

## Matt

Erm yeh I think there is a very good chance I will miss the camaraderie that is, that is lets not say its always there but in the main it’s there and certainly for the most part with the people I have dealt with part of it you are definitely part of a team and that’s part of the culture and I have really enjoyed that so I suspect moving into a world where, of course there are teams and of course there are all sorts of different ethos and different companies and different parts of companies, but where I don’t think the word is structured to be as team orientated as the one I am leaving so to think that is possibly one thing that I will miss.

## C

Erm, do you intend to sort of keep in touch with the military in anyways, do you intent to..

## Matt

Well yes there will be lots of individuals that I will be staying in touch with. I have good friends over the years so I guess vicariously there will be that I shall remain a member of the RAF Club because that is good. Erm but I am not doing overt things such as becoming a reservist erm or joining any particular organisations that sort of very much, again I’ve known several people who have left where their default option has been, well of course I am going to be a reservist and they are going to do this and that because they still very much want to be a part of the military although they may not necessarily want all of the military. That is not the perspective I am coming from which is probably quite apparent from everything I have said from the beginning of this chat. Erm I have ??????? several links to the RAF I wouldn’t want to say they are dead to me you know but nor do I feel this need to cling onto it. I am quite happy to start a new life and actually I have got something that will demonstrate this very clearly to you, so, I am a member of one of the city guilds the worshipful company of Carmen that I think you might have aware of erm, I to date have been part of a ???military liaison between the RAF and Carmen because I am in both organisations, the last meeting we had which was only last week erm my main brief was that I am stepping away from that role in Carman as the link because firstly I am no longer in therefore it makes it harder to do it but also because of the fact that I want to make the psychological break that I am not still dipping my toe into the RAF waters I am leaving it because I am leaving it, I am leaving it for all the reasons we have discussed Erm, quite happy to step away. That is one prime example where I was already in a position to keep that foot in and I very consciously said I don’t want that foot in thanks very much I don’t need that so.

## C

Yeh

## Matt

I think that says a lot about how I perceive it

## C

I think it does, it does indeed. Ok well we are almost done.

## Matt

Wow.

## C

I know its fantastic. Erm There is just one last question. Which is really is there anything you would like to add about leaving the whole transition process, that we have not really covered?

## Matt

I think this will probably be a very individual thing so therefore what I am saying is very much Matt rather than yeh a person leaving the military. But what trying to find where my niche or niches might be out of the military has not proved easy. Erm. Nor did I ever expect it to which is why it’s not a shock and em because I think there is a lot of self-discovery that goes on as part of that unless there are things you have done in the military that clearly that transfers across erm or something ese that naturally… so for example lots of people have dealt with er in the military who are leaving during this transition process a number of people are doing thigs either directly or indirectly with project management. That has just astounded me erm because it is just a very well-trodden path because we may or may not have had qualifications in ???? erm we have all to one degree or another all managed projects in some form small or large and so you know there is a lot of people who have gone off in that direction, well that doesn’t interest me in the slightest so therefore a big potential area of what is a fairly natural way of going that in a sense I’ve closed off by recognising it doesn’t interest me at all.

## C

No

## Matt

Em so therefore I am in the process of having to try and find more Matt related areas of work and that is still ongoing. Em and I have found that challenging if not difficult em but I’m not I don’t see that as a problem I just see that as part of the process of doing this. Em so yeh yeh and of course I’m sure everyone that you interview about this will have their own take on that very point but I am not wanting to do stereotypical stuff because I am leaving the military therefore I must therefore want to go and do that. So the trick is trying to find out what the other stuff is.

## C

So you are you want a clean sheet really?

## Matt

Yeh, yeh absolutely but of course you create your own risk with that because you are making it harder for yourself by perhaps not going down more traditional routes.

## C

So staying away from logistics, staying away from project management staying away from defence.

## Matt

Yeh, so I think tap dancing is my next (laughter) ?????

## C

It’s erm well I will probably close the interview there actually and we can just have a chat but I will still record actually because sometimes things just come out.

## Matt

Of course.

But this is where I get to, because I have tried very hard not to put words into our mouth during the interview and now I can just

## Matt

Now You can put all sorts of words

## C

Yes, but to me its em it’s an opportunity, to me leaving the military was an opportunity to do something completely different and I have only half got there because I am still studying the military.

## Matt

Yeh yeh yeh

## C

But I am doing it in a completely different world to the one I occupied before. Em and unlike you, J has nothing to do with the military even though I left I was still in it, here I am in a quarter at RAF Wittering.

## Matt

Yes, absolutely.

## C

So I haven’t really been able to escape so I am quite envious of you being able to escape it (laughter)

## Matt

No I agree with you Caroline. Its em that is why everybody’s scenario very different and is exactly why what you are doing is very worth while and interesting because every scenario is different

## C

It is

## Matt

I am in the lucky position, I think that I am able to close the door on the military and thats as closed as I wish it to be or as open as I wish it to be.

## C

Yeh

## Matt

But there is nothing keeping me in that world what so ever.

## C

It’s actually part of what I am looking at and there is so many things in this research that are coming from left field,

## M

Yeh, I bet.

## C

And it is just in terms of, you talked about being valued

## Matt

yeh

## C

the promotion offer didn’t come early enough, aside from promotion because we know promotion is fickle there is 2 some years there is 20. Aside from promotion how else can the Air force show value and show reward towards individuals.

## Matt

Yeh, you are absolutely right because it is it has very few strings to pull apart from promotion. We had a chat about this funnily enough I haven’t left yet because I went to a top table up at high Wycombe. For AP.

## C

Oh, oh is he going?

## Matt

Oh he would be an interesting one for you? (laughter) em but let me go back to what I was going to say first. So we spoke about this very point a few of us because there are a number of people who were at that top table both Squadron Leaders and Flight Lieutenants who are feeling you know I am not getting anywhere here no matter how many blood sweat and tears I put into this (yeh) and we were saying one avenue the RAF or the military as a whole could potentially investigate is recognising that you are a very good as a whatever rank and for reasons or the reports you have had previously, the the jobs you are doing, the skills you have got, you might not go above that or maybe one rank or whatever and we already know that the way the system works is that you will very quickly know whether you are likely to become a Gp Capt or an Air Commodore or not because of how much time you have been in the jobs you have done the jobs you are doing etc. If like me or at nay rank level you have reached the top pay structure, 9 or whatever it is now (yeh) you know that unless you get promoted you are stuck in fact you are not just stuck you are going backwards because inflation is going upwards and your pay is not. (yeh) There could be virtue in saying you have reached the top level rank after a period of time you will still go up in pay so for example you have reached the top level Flight Leiutenant you have not been promoted in the last 5 years ???? so we are going to give you the incremental Flight Leiutenant pay ??? a bit like flying pay in the sense that you are still being loyal you are still being paid and valued because you are still staying in for in for one year two years three years etc but you both recognise the service and you, you are never going to become a Squadron Leader or a sgt or whatever it is (Yeh) I think that is one way they could do it. Because em again pay isn’t the only thing but it is one way they could do it. Have I felt valued by most of the people work for yes em both in the comments and feedback they have given me throughout my tours and the reports that have been written em so I guess yeh there is a good question you are asking because you have to distinguish what level of of value are we talking about, you know. From a one to one point of view so with my current bosses I have felt very valued and I will always take that with me. Em, I will tell you another thing as well so in terms of value how how often ???? a rhetorical question to me how often has the desk officer really given a toss about Matt Smith and what Matt smith is telling the desk officer? Very little. there have been individual desk officers that have done it more than others but they get greater respect as a result of it. But because the system requires us to do certain things and I don’t fault that I understand that it is one of the reasons I have left it’s because the way the system wants me to be versus me is different it’s too discordant now and the desk officers in general have not em yeh really valued me in terms of I am a human being this is the scenario I am in lets try and meet mid-way. Quite frequently that has not been the case if anything it has been totally the opposite. Erm that is where the service need I think em as often gets quoted is quite often out of kilter with “what about me here” and I think how you feel valued fits into that. We are talking about me here and how you feel valued fits into that.

## C

Would you say that that occurred even though when you were single ..

## Matt

Oh absolutely

## C

or as you are now engaged to J?

## M

Its just that now now I am engaged and soon to be married the stakes are higher and therefore for my my tolerance for that scenario is far less than it would have been when I was single although I think I think I think age has a lot to do with it as well. If I was single now I think I would still be getting old enough that I’d be thinking this is a bit silly now to be honest this is a bit like boarding school rules I I am way beyond that now time to live my life in a different way. As you and I both know every person you talk to will be different on this for some people that’s they absolutely happy with that regime but I haven’t met many people who have spoken favourably about the desk officer posting system. (hmm) Very few, so I think that is an area that across the board could probably be investigated if the RAF wanted to improve its retention. And I think they are there yeh there are all sorts of work and surveys that have gone on em but I do think the pressure that is put up on desk officers and the role that they have to fulfil I think time and space for them to be able to think about how am I valuing the individual is very limited. Em so I don’t think they have got the task there at all I don’t underrate that.

## C

Ok, one last thing then cause you kind of brought it up again, discordant you said discordant between

## Matt

With me

## C

Yes can you give me an example? Of that discord

## Matt

Erm I think it is hard to give a singular example but I think if I may sort of generalise, I know its not what you have asked for but but there is there is a need, I feel I need for control over my, my life. The way I live it, where I live it, how I go about it well that that is totally against the RAF and the military’s mindset that which is one individual as a culture the individual doesn’t matter and I need to clarify that because I think you know within command chains people do matter and do matter greatly but as a system where you are based on sending people off to war zones ultimately, the individual doesn’t and can’t matter so I think you have you have got opposing forces there, you have got a culture that says you are one of many you are part of a team and we need you to do what the service needs you to do whether that be move to Wittering er go to Afghanistan em suddenly realise you are half way across the world with one day’s notice, that is what we need you to do. So, it’s has got that at the top but then you have got people who like my management line that I have just left who massively care about the individual who very much look after the individual you have got those tensions going all the time. Unfortunately, I can’t rely on the fact that my previous management are going to be in every job in the future so therefore the one constant is the system and that system is what is disconcordant with me.

## C

Right

## Matt

Because I don’t have enough control over my life.

## C

No, that is perfect.

That is really useful because I have an issue with what the way it is a sort of theoretical separation you make between what is the big discourse of the organisation spouts out and the little discourse that is the interactions day to day that people have to live with so it is the policy and the reality for people. The policy says one thing the reality says another.

## Matt

Yeh.

## C

And up until til you just said that there I was thinking the policy is all about we value people we want people to stay in and we are doing this that and the other about it and then the reality is it doesn’t actually filter down to the bottom

## Matt

Yeh

## C

But actually, it flips as well so sometimes it is the organisation can’t value can’t give you the attention you deserve because it just needs you to do a job whereas your individual line manager can actually really actually give a shit about you. So, you have got this constant flipping going on and that’s erm

## Matt

You do and a colleague of mine a friend and colleague was also er left, his last boss was so not caring about the individual that that made both his process of leaving difficult because he wasn’t given the flex he needed to getting him sorted he also left very bitter because of that particular boss erm and all of the things that fall out of that. That is not the culture, that is not the RAF that is absolutely down to those individuals that we are talking about. So again, that reinforces why I know well I know that I am very fortunate with the people I have had around me in this last few years because that has allowed me to do what I needed to do.

## C

??? Fantasitc.

(moved onto talk about another potential participant)

## Matt

You know its funny, talking back through there when you said you were not hearing much emotion early on and I thought you know it is interesting you could easily think that I haven’t got one ???? if you didn’t know me, Matt hasn’t got much emotional buy in and dealing with this whereas clearly I have loads of it because you can’t do any of these things without it, it’s one of the drivers of it. In fact if you didn’t have emotion about it you probably wouldn’t leave in the first place probably.

## C

Yeh.

## Matt

Erm but it is interesting in the way that we do describe stuff. Yeh

### Notes

End of interview.

59 minutes.

Interview concludes with Matt asking where I am in my research.