# Paul Interview 2 – 7 July 2017

## C

On reflection how do you feel about your decision to leave the Air Force?

## Paul

Well, initially, I suppose it was forced on me because I was time up. But I was given the option to extend but that was really quite late on so well in a way it wasn’t my decision to leave it was time up, em, and for some period before that I was sort of working towards leaving and what I was going to do. So by the time they, by the time I got the offer to sign on I was too far down the track in my mind, mentally I was too far down the track and then thought well ??? so it was relatively easy to turn round and say well yeh thanks for the offer but no thanks.

## C

and you have no regrets about that? Are you quite happy you made that decision?

## Paul

No I mean ???? the transition has been a lot easier for me than I thought it would be, I had been dreading it, I had been dreading it for years. I knew it was coming up and obviously my personal circumstances as you well know, Lesley died and I was still in quarters so suddenly I found myself you know about to leave a job that em and my personal life wasn’t in a good place but in a way it cemented the fact that, you know, the whole Air force life didn’t fit my life any more.

## C

MMMhm

## Paul

So actually, that has made transition easier.

## C

yeh.

## Paul

You know I’ve probably felt more content you know not withstanding Sue coming along, I’ve probably felt more content than I was because the Air Force life didn’t fit me anymore.

## C

Yeh. And it didn’t fit you because?

## Paul

It was the going away bit, you know because I found myself always, I think what really changed for me em they were very good, when Lesley died I, you know, ok yeh don’t worry about going away, we will keep you exactly where you are. Stability and all of this sort of stuff but that only lasted for a certain period of time. But then to be honest after about 6 months it was well like when are you available to go,? you are on top of the list to go away and I just thought this just doesn’t fit me anymore I can’t ..

## C

You can’t do it

## Paul

I mean although my daughter was 22 and an adult, yeh you know not good.

## C

No go on.

## Paul

So it helped me really, it helped me mentally you know prepare for leaving.

## C

So you said you were dreading the process of leaving but actually it wasn’t that bad.

## Paul

Yeh definitely I mean I had been in the Air Force for a long time and it was what I knew and I was scared of the big wide world to be perfectly honest. Erm, but then I think realising that the Air Force no longer fitted with me and I have got no, I don’t think badly about the Air Force for that because they need people who can go away and do the job and I didn’t feel like I was one of those people anymore. So, em but I was dreading it purely because it’s the big wide world out there and it was purely because it was a big change in my life, another big change in my life and I, you know, I didn’t know what it was like out there. Now I have got a better idea I actually I can’t actually, I am quite happy with life.

(Laughter)

## C

so what is the one thing you would change about that actual leaving experience then that actually period of … running up to and handing that uniform and ID card in? Anything you would of -

## Paul

?????????????? I probably started planning it too far out. They give you 5 years, if you, if you are over 50 you get 5 years. So you get all this stuff lobbed at ye, and as is my want and I just thought I’ll throw myself into this really and I found myself speaking to loads of people and networking when I was still 4 and a half, 4 years out and they and so I was getting disheartened by yeh funnily enough no one really wanted to talk to me but of course they bloody well don’t because I have still got 4 years to run in the job. It’s a life time erm, so I think, yeh thinking about it 2 years out would have been good.

## C

It would have been better.

## Paul

I was about 5 years out and getting quite stressy about the whole, everything really. So

## C

Too long to dwell on it almost

## Paul

Too long to dwell on it, 5 years thinking about it

## C

yeh

## Paul

that’s the thing I would change really.

## C

Em. OK. So from a professional point of view what is the most, the thing that you miss most about the military? About the RAF rather?

## Paul

Probably about the **only** thing I miss about the RAF is, it sounds really trite, but it is the people. It is all these people that I grew up with, people like you, Steve and all of this sort of stuff that I just don’t see as much as I used to.

## C

Yeh

## Paul

I don’t miss anything profess (pause)…em professionally that yeh yeh the whole social em, you know that’s where all my mates were. From the age of 16 sort of thing and the ethos and all of this sort of stuff. I think it is very different outside when its working ???, to a certain extent different em.

## C

We will come onto that later, but there is nothing that, there is nothing that the military \_\_

## Paul

I do think

## C

sorry go on

## Paul

I do think \_\_\_ professionally that I miss but that is the thing that I do miss is just the, you know is the people I have grown up with.

## C

okay okey dokey. Em Do you still consider yourself part of the military family?

## Paul

Yes.

## C

In what, in what way? If so how and in what ways?

## Paul

Erm, in two ways really. Erm, you can’t take away from the fact that you spent 38 years in the service, that is in your DNA. So your DNA is still very much part of the service family. Erm, you know. Like that you have got behind you and that I have got behind me is that there is stuff that reminds you of that all the time. The other thing is what I am doing now it is, again this sounds really trite, you know what I do now is still very much connected with the Air Force, they are still part of the Air Force family. I think you have just got to convince the Air force that we are part of that family (laughter). Yeh that is another conversation but I have definitely seen, you know, I’ve definitely seen the light a far as things like whole force and things like that are concerned . I wish I had seen it when I was in to be honest,

## C

Hmmm

## Paul

I think they are missing a trick. And that is not just because Babcock pay me its because I genuinely think there is answers which …but that is another conversation.

## C

That is definitely another conversation which we will have to have over a drink .. So if erm, if professionally you are still involved in the Air Force because you are a contracted

## Paul

Yehh

## C

To them

## Paul

Yeh, I sort of, my actually, funny enough I am doing, I am doing the Air Force stuff that I actually used to enjoy, that’s thinking about how the Air Force is going to, you know, in the future understanding the wider Air Force you know I am not just a loggie or a mover as everyone tried to label me for years and years, sort of thing, I am just thinking bigger stuff now which is really interesting.

## C

And from a personal point of view you still have friends in the military obviously

## Paul

yep

## C

??? (not that I am in anymore but you know what I mean) are you a member of associations and things like that, you have got the MAMS

## Paul

Yeh, I mean I am a member of the MAMS association and obviously there is the movers reunion and Logs Branch stuff so I stay in touch and yeh social media and all this sort of stuff so yeh you say in touch with people. So you know whilst I say I don’t want to give the impression that I have lost all my friends now, but I just don’t see these people as regularly as I used to. I see them…. Part of the good thing now is that I see them socially, I don’t stand there talking shop to them, ????????? because I am not working with them…

## C

So you are not as yeh …

## Paul

yeh so I enjoy the social occasions a lot more

C

Ok, I am crossing out questions as we a before we, as I think I don’t want to ask that one its rubbish so, right ?????? So just going back to em, now, a year after you have left, so what would you say has been your biggest professional challenge that you know in terms of how organisations work and that you have had to get to grips with between being in the Air Force and being in a different organisation.

## Paul

Well, em. … I think funnily enough it ??? is certainly my experience so far which is working on bids and such like is realising what I don’t know about how commercial organisations work. Finance just runs everything, money just runs everything. I didn’t have a lot of dealings with that in the Air Force, erm, so that is probably the main thing really, em deadlines just seem to be tighter you know yeh. So I find myself quite busy

## C

mmmhm

## Paul

yeh That is the main thing, I don’t think the Air Force, the Air Force doesn’t prepare you for working in industry that as far, certainly the bit of the Air Force I was in ???????? so that is the main thing really.

## C

Ok. Why not? Why do you think that?

## Paul

It was probably which jobs I was in if I was in DE&S I probably would have had a better understanding, understanding contacting understanding commercial erm rules and such like and well now I have a lot of dealings and I am going to have to learn quite quickly. I didn’t have naything to do with that when I was in.

## C

So that is interesting because a lot of people would say that the operational side of the delivery side of the Air Force actually ????? transferred out into civvy street.

## Paul

I think the way we work as in, you know, its interesting ???? people in the Air Force we are quite making decisions we are quite sort of erm work ??? within a structure and all this sort of stuff, so working with military people is, like I do, you can tell its military people by just the way they do stuff

## C

Can I have some examples (laughter)

## Paul

???????????? Meetings, I have been to so many meetings where people just ramble on and on and are so unstructured and all these military people just want to ??? lets just get to the structure lets just you know, ??? you just spend all your bloody life in meetings. The work I was on with the Hades bid erm, from about August through to April was just ??? a diary full of meetings it was just like can you just cut to the chase, you know yeh

## C

mmmhmm

## Paul

yeh, time management bloody hell

## C

And yet their dead lines are tighter and yet they

## Paul

yeh, absolutely, and that’s the thing I have found really difficult is your deadlines are tighter but they give you actually so little time to actually sit down and do the work and I am fforever saying ????? you have just got to give me time to do it. Instead of spending time chewing the fat in meetings.

## C

yeh

## Paul

We have meetings that last a day.

## C

Right, Are they quite common

## Paul

quite common Yeh.

## C

Ok, that’s ….

## Paul

And I have meetingings in my calander that I don’t know what they are about, I’ve got one on Monday. 35 infrastructure in Lakenheath. It’s just in your diary there is no background to it. ????? No nothing.

(Laugher)

## C

you just pitch up and see what happens.

## Paul

But you get used to it.

## C

yeh ?? And that is really realy good so from a personal point of view what would you say has been the biggest change in the last 12 months.

## Paul

Erm (pause). That’s difficult, I don’t think there has been huge change to be honest. Erm. I just think not been surrounded by people in uniform all the time. I know it sounds really ridiculous but I don’t think there has been a massive change. You have still got the same brain in your head, the same way of doing business. Erm yeh I mean clearly there has been changes in my personal life but that could happen to anyone em, yeh I don’t think there has been a massive change.

## C

So do you think…

## Paul

I think, The one think I have found difficult erm is I have been onto Brize for an industry day for a bid (pause) and I honestly came out thinking I feel like the fricking enemy now

## C

really

## Paul

and ????? Wg Cdr he said the same thing, he said I feel like I am the bloody enemy on this station. At themoment, just because of the way it was managed sort of thing. And I have been on other RAF bases and not had that ????? and I think ?????? thought bloody hell, you know.

## C

So what happened that made that,

## Paul

Oh the way it was structured like, we are just going to give you a quick brief in, we will take you round each site and we will clear the building out before you get there and erm you are not to do this and you are not to do that, don’t take photos, we will answer any questions when you get home, it was just like. ??? we just thought bloody hell, you know ???? and funnily enough they were talking about a new relationship with contractors and we were going if this is the new relationship it stinks.

Laughter

## C

And what do you think-

## Paul

In fairness they did follow if up afterwards because they did realise that they had screwed up. And they ????? far better you know. It was interesting

## C

???

15m 50 seconds.

## Paul

you know I can’t get onto Brize Norton, that is one thing, now I get that entirely, but you know I have tried to get a pass, erm I tried to get mess membership, well I did get mess membership but it all got too difficult again to get on, to get a pass onto the camp and that was quite interesting as well again emotionally, it was like right ok,

## C

Lets talk about that then, because this has got me as wellso lets talk about that so you. You have mess membership,

## Paul

yeh. So I applied to mess membership em well the company wanted me to apply for mess membership actually I had a slight problem with it and em and I got all the forms through and you need to go and speak to them you need to go and speak to them to the mess and I got to the main gate and I said can I have a pass to go the mess and they said you are going to have to get someone from the mess to escort you, ok, so I tried to get hold of the mess and no answer and all this sort of stuff it just all fell into the too difficult thing so I thought, sod your mess membership if I can’t even get you know.

## C

And how did that make you feel?

## Paul

Erm,

## C

After serving for that long and having a legitimate reason to be there

## Paul

???? I get it completely because I don’t have an ID card and therefore they can’t just let someone on who is basicly but I had a letter to say ???? em and one thing that ???? the lady on the passes and permits basically said and she said to me you have got to realise that when you leave the Air Force you are nobody and I just thought right ‘thank you’. ??? Right ok, got it I’m off. (laughter) So yeh I think. There could be a better way of treating people who have …. Erm. So that’s thats is one bit that I have found quite difficult. The other thing I slightly feel aggrieved at, only slightly, erm you don’t get a valedictory letter anymore so you don’t get a, you know, I was fortunate I got a DCOM commendation as a going away present, you know when I left. Nick Huntley did a great job. But A simple letter from someone high up in the Air Force saying thank you very much for your 38 years of service bla bla bla. You know I think would go a long way. Erm And I know a lot of other people I have spoken to say that, you know. Erm Testimonials all this you just get given in this JPA form now and in my case erm my certificate of service only runs from 2006,

18.26

## C

when you became an officer?

## Paul

No because that is when JPA came in.

## C

Ahh

## Paul

So anything before then its is out there somewhere, I suppose disclosures have probably got it and if I really wanted it I could go and find it, erm so I have got a certificate of service that’s has got all these acronyms on it Q-Mov-ADR bla

## C

Yeh

## Paul

that don’t mean anything to anyone. I’ve still got ??? a valedictory letter would have been quite nice.

## C

So that that valedictory letter what does it represent?

## Paul

It represents just acknowledgement and appreciation and someone who, you know, preferably Chief of the Air Staff who, even if he doesn’t sign it personally even if he uses a ???? on behalf of, its basically saying yeh, we appreciate the service you have given. That would have meant more than any commendation.

## C

And that is erm and by not doing that it’s the inverse isn’t it—

## Paul

Yeh, I don’t feel massively strongly about it, because you move on but I just think as a good employer if you leave the company you would get a letter saying thank you very much. I’ve done 38 years, you know this Babcock guy he got an ovation letter is what they call it, for erm doing 25 years.

## C

yeh

## Paul

SoYou know in front of everyone. ????? And I just thought nice touch, the Air Force used to do this.

## C

Ok.

## Paul

Are you depressed now?

## C

No sorry. Lets talk about the future. The future is bright!

(laughter)

## Paul

???? that is the only two things ?????? They could do the soft side of looking after veterans better. And even if you have done a long period of service. Yeh cause I got erm my clasp, my second clasp of my long gong through.

## C

Mmm

## Paul

erm so that came through in a, in a jiffy bag with a you know, please sign acknowledgement of sort of thing erm. Which is fair enough but em that sort of????? yeh A valedictory letter would be quite nice actually, you know (laughter)

## C

????? So, in a years time then where do you think you are going to be in terms of that transition out of the Air Force, cause that will have been 2 years.

## Paul

I think I will be not far off where I am now. To be honest, you know, erm yeh I will still be part of the RAF family erm I’ve I’m sure I will be with Babcock erm I don’t doubt that erm funnily I think I am in a pretty good place so yeh I don’t see a lot of difference really. Erm Mentally I have made the transition now, you know as far as I will get to be honest. I don’t want to be one of these people who goes to Armistice parades with my beret and my medals and all this sort of stuff. ???????

## C

Why not?

## Paul

Oh I just hate it. (laughter) no I mean when you wear your service ???? I mean I have never worn my veterans badge or anything like that

## C

No

## Paul

????? but I am quite proud of it, definitely there is a lot to look back on with a lot of fondness. And all of the stuff I have talked about ??????? doesn’t take away from what was a really god time. But you know, I am enjoying what I do now.

## C

Mmmm. Its ??? so you say that erm you can always spot military people when you re, you’r on, do you think they can spot you?

## Paul

yeh definitely. ??? No doubt about it (laughter).

Well certainly what I do, erm there is a mixture of military and …. And its amaz I find it amzing that certainly at Babcock how many people don’t understand their customer in any and don’t want to. You know, its the ex-military that bring that credability, they have a lot of knowledge out there on finance, commerce, HR you know there is a lot of knowedge out there,. You know how to put proposals together and all of this stuff erm but what I bring is just knowledge of the service. So essentially I am still, I’m still doing RAF stuff but not wearing a uniform.

## C

So do you think that is how you get spotted if you like because of that, is it your behaviour or is it sitting in a meeting and you are talking and people can tell immedialtey because of what you are talking about…

## Paul

No I think it is softer stuff than that. Its pitching up for meetings on time. Its pitching up You know its not texting in to say I am stuck in traffic again. Its erm being relatively organised erm its and its being quite forceful at meetings probably you know but not worrying about an argument

## C

MmMM

## Paul

We don’t Military people we don’t worry about have a decent, well I don’t agree with you on that sort of thing. No, yeh ?? but not in a bolshy way we are far more well lets just get to the point. Talk about it and move on.

## C

yeh, ok. That tis interesting that is good. Ok so is there anything else that you would like to bring up that has occurred to you …

## Paul.

No, I mean ??????? I think I think I fell into something erm just when I really was getting to the stage where I really didn’t know what I was going ??? what I was going to do at all. I would quite like to do something less busy than what I am doing now in an ideal world. As long as it as long as I am enjoying what I am doing then that is fine, sort of thing. Yeh so that is my thing about Associate Lecturing and all this sort of stuff.

## C

I did mention you to …

## Paul

I want to go back to that cause you know my aim is to do this for about 3-4 years then basically do something less stressful.

## C

Yeh, I did mention you to Wayne again and he said he still has your details so .. yeh.

## Paul

Yeh, if I keep my eye on something, to be honest it’s a question of when to leave.

## C

yes,

## Paul

so I pay the mortgage off this year so that is going to be interesting .

## C

Nice

## Paul

Because then you start thinking, do I really need to go to work everyday? Yu know. So yeh I do for my sanity but something like that would be yep, that’s …

## C

Have you heard of this erm, a friend mentioned BSG, Base Supply Group, it’s a new thing apparently. Basically, you get an ID card erm sign up to them and its like a zero hours contract so they will basically put you on a register and, I suppose, if they come up with a project or a job as in the Air Force comes up with a job that you could do they will contact you and then it’s entirely up to you whether you do it or not.

## Paul

What’s the thing BSG.

## C

I will see if I can find out about it, cause she just mentioned it the other day …yesterday

## Paul

Delta Seria Golf?

## C

B Base Bravo.

## Paul

That is interesting, I would be interested in that. I know Lossiemouth are trying like a reservist thing. Where you basically do a local commitment I just picked up on it and Babcock and I said look Yeh erm … This could be something we could start to help develop really ……….?????? Yes. I’ve got no wish, I have to say I have no wish, to go back into uniform. I don’t miss the uniform I mean I took the uniform off and my last day in uniform I didn’t feel any, I handed it in and didn’t feel any pang of anything. You know, I don’t miss, I don’t want to go back to that really, I mean I have done that I think that’s going backwards now.

## C

yeh, yeh. I will see what I can find out about it, it des sound quite intresting cause my friend is just in the process of, she has a few days left in but unlike you she has not had the time to kinda of ????? three months leaving so she is a bit of a head on fire, doesn’t know what to hand into clothing stores and stuff?? And em she doesn’t want to, she has like got this emotional attachment to her respirator because (laughter)

## Paul

oh no, are you sure its just an emotional attachment? (laughter)

## C

She said but what if I need it. I said you are not going to need your respirator (laughter).

## Paul

I think

## C

yeh, I don’t think she is ready to go, she hasn’t quite accepted that she is leaving yet.

## Paul

That is odd

## C

She is quite odd.

## Paul

I was speaking to Tori M cause I see her quite a lot cause she has got an easy job at Shrivenham at themoment.

## C

yeh, I bumped into her at a BBQ the other week

Paul oh, alright. Yeh I hadn’t seen her for a little while but she has gone back into uniform.

## C

Yeh

## Paul

yeh I did look at ADC and the terms weren’t very good and to be honest you know going back into uniform

## C

yeh. I mean, for me although I do just feel that I could put my uniform back on now it would also feel like a backward step. I mean life has moved on I have moved on and that’s .. I can see why people do it I can see why it is really appealing ..

## Paul

hh yep, I can. I did think about it. But ow yeh ???? I say you know the aim is to do this for a few years then Associate lecturer or something like that work from home ?????? or something like that cause I really enjoyed doing that with Lincoln.

## C

yeh

## Paul

Yeh

## C

Yeh, I really enjoyed it.

## Paul

So are you still doing it?

## C

Yeh I did it this year and yeh so. Its just interesting reading the dissertations you know.

## Paul

yeh, I ????????thought I was doing it on top of my day job in the Air Force so time management was difficult and the idea of fully being at home doing didn’t do it ???? with just me here to be honest …. But em yeh you know do a few years,mortgage paid off this year. Marry Sue and enjoy that really cause you know that is what really matters,--

## C

Exactly …and just go off on holidays all the time.

## Paul

?????? without sounding … What I get paid for what I am doing now plus my pension you know.

## C

yeh

## Paul

I am doing a huge salary sacrifice every month so it is just another pension, so the two I could live off my Air Force pension if I wanted to ???? make sacrifices but that is where it is all going really.

## C

yeh, that is top tastic. Sounds perfect. Right it is quarter to eleven so we had better sign off but I will probably come down and see Gill at some point over the summer holidays with the kids so

Paul yeh pop in.

## C

even if it is only for a cuppa or something.

## Paul

yeh definielty

## C

unless you want to stand in a play park with the kids screaming.

## Paul

Emmm no!

(laughter)

## C

yeh we will definitely catch up.

## Paul

yeh you and steve. So he is …. (STOPPPED)

32 minutes