

## My transition from the Royal Air Force into Thames Water

### Andrew Wingrove



I joined the Royal Air Force in July 1990 as an Assistant Air Traffic Controller working in control towers and operations environments in various locations in the UK and abroad. Moving around regularly to ensure we had a wide experience of different roles and job descriptions. (It isn't just about talking to pilots in the air, but planning and administration, procedures and documentation and a point of contact between aircrew and airport operators/authorities) I was in this role for 17 years when I had the opportunity to become an Air Traffic Controller in its own right. This was a tough course and stressful but perseverance won and I passed the course. This new role entailed actually talking to pilots, giving guidance and instruction to maintain flight safety. In sometimes stressful situations talking pilots down to a safe landing in poor weather conditions or in aircraft emergencies. Teamwork and sound communication are probably the two biggest skills to ensure the tasks and jobs are completed to the best of ones abilities. These skills are something that I have been able to bring to Thames water.

When I decided to leave the RAF, I was mainly focused on a role within Health and Safety where my skills in Flight Safety could be linked. As part of my resettlement process I attended a careers fair at the Madjeski Stadium where I approached the Thames Water stand. It was this point on speaking to one of the recruitment team who pointed out I could transfer my skills into an Operations role with the company. After a visit to Kemble Court and viewed what the role consisted of, I decided this would suit me far better and decided to apply for the role. My first job application and first job interview in over 24 years, I was a little apprehensive, but confident in my abilities. As a result, I was successful and here I am, working in the Network Management Control Centre where I am on a steep learning curve learning about a completely new job role and business area.

There are some similarities whereby I used to control aircraft, where now I control water to a certain extent. Team work and communication are probably the two most used skills to ensure all parties involved are kept informed and safe. Through my past experience and knowledge I have been able to adapt relatively easily into Thames water, but there is still a great deal to learn. Visiting other departments, clean water treatment works, and completing some of the courses available to me are all helping in the transition. In due course I will get out on the ground with an NST to see the other side of the coin so to speak and to see the issues they have out in the field. The amount of help, guidance, and benefits are second to none, something else which is similar to life in the military, again this helps with the transition.

I am now just approaching the end of month 3 with the company and I can confidently say the transition has been easier than I anticipated and I have been warmly welcomed by the team. I still get quizzed about my past life in the RAF which is nice with the amount of time I refer back to it is getting less so I must be getting used to being a civilian. I am looking forward to getting to know the business in more depth and progressing further in my new career (contract renewal depending) and I am confident in my future with Thames Water.

Thanks to all who have helped me in my new venture and look forward to meeting you all.

Andrew Wingrove

Royal Air Force Military veteran