

THE USAF UPPER HEYFORD STORY: 4

1988 to 1989

1988 May 24th: During a routine meeting of the Base Liaison Committee, the Base announces that within the week, jets will no longer follow the "Chicken Run" route adopted in 1974 for reasons of jet safety. There is no consultation with local residents.

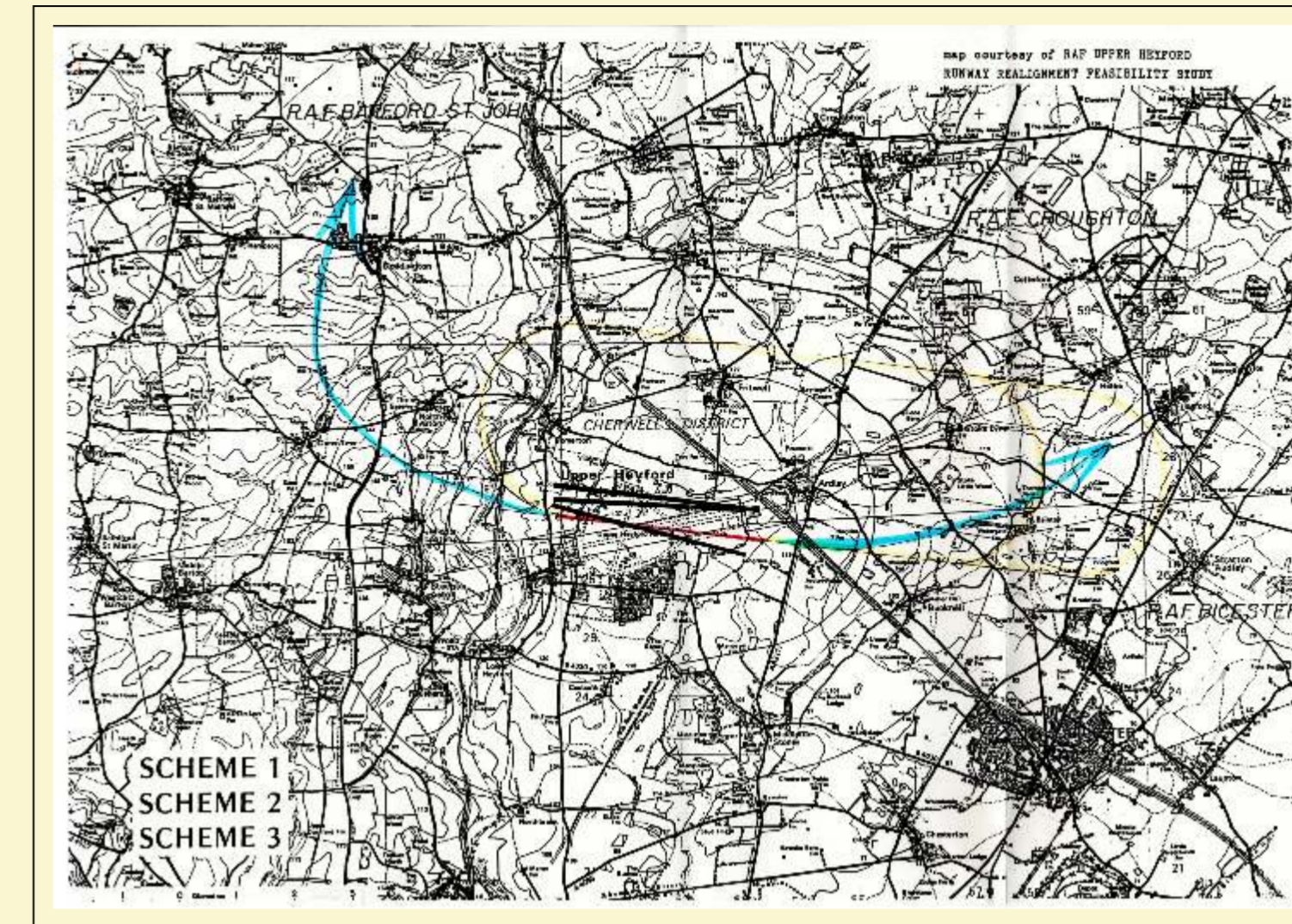
June: The new flight path commences. Jet noise over the village is considerably and very noticeably increased, leading to outcry in the form of calls to the base and MOD. Later in the month, an MOD minister visits the village and offers secondary double glazing for Dr. Radcliffe's School.

November: 75 M.P.s support Tony Baldry's call for action. First debate takes place in the House of Commons. Minister offers consideration to buy out homes in 83 dBA footprint and monetary compensation to others affected.

1989 January: Eight jets taking off from the Base are in near collision with light civilian aircraft over Folly Field. Pilots file "air miss" reports.

Feasibility study set up by Ministry of Defence to consider realigning the runway. Its proposals are rejected as being too expensive at £300m (see plan and headline below right).

November 9th. The Berlin Wall falls.



1988

July SAL reports on proceedings of Base Liaison Committee in May. The reasons for changing the flight path are that:

The jets are now ageing and it is unsafe for them to undertake the banking manoeuvre necessary for them to avoid flying over Steeple Aston:

The F-111s now also have an increased payload which also makes banking more difficult to do in safety because of reduced "lift";

The new pilots are relatively inexperienced, no longer the veterans who learned their trade in Vietnam, and have technical problems with banking so soon after take-off.

DEFEND STEEPLE ASTON is instituted as a campaign group to coordinate the views, protests and actions of the village aimed at military and governmental bodies.

October SAL reports on DEFEND STEEPLE ASTON which held a public meeting attended by Tony Baldry M.P. who thanked the village for its "patience and forbearance". He says he will exert pressure in parliament to support a move to realign the runway. He has also sent a report to all MPs, inviting them to sign the motion.

SAL report by Roger Mason on the Commons debate and the coachful of Steeple Aston and Ardley residents who went to support Tony Baldry MP. The MoD spokesman, Roger Freeman, acknowledged the high level of protest made by phone calls and letters to the government and newspapers and said he would set up a feasibility study regarding runway re-alignment though he held little hope for it.

1989

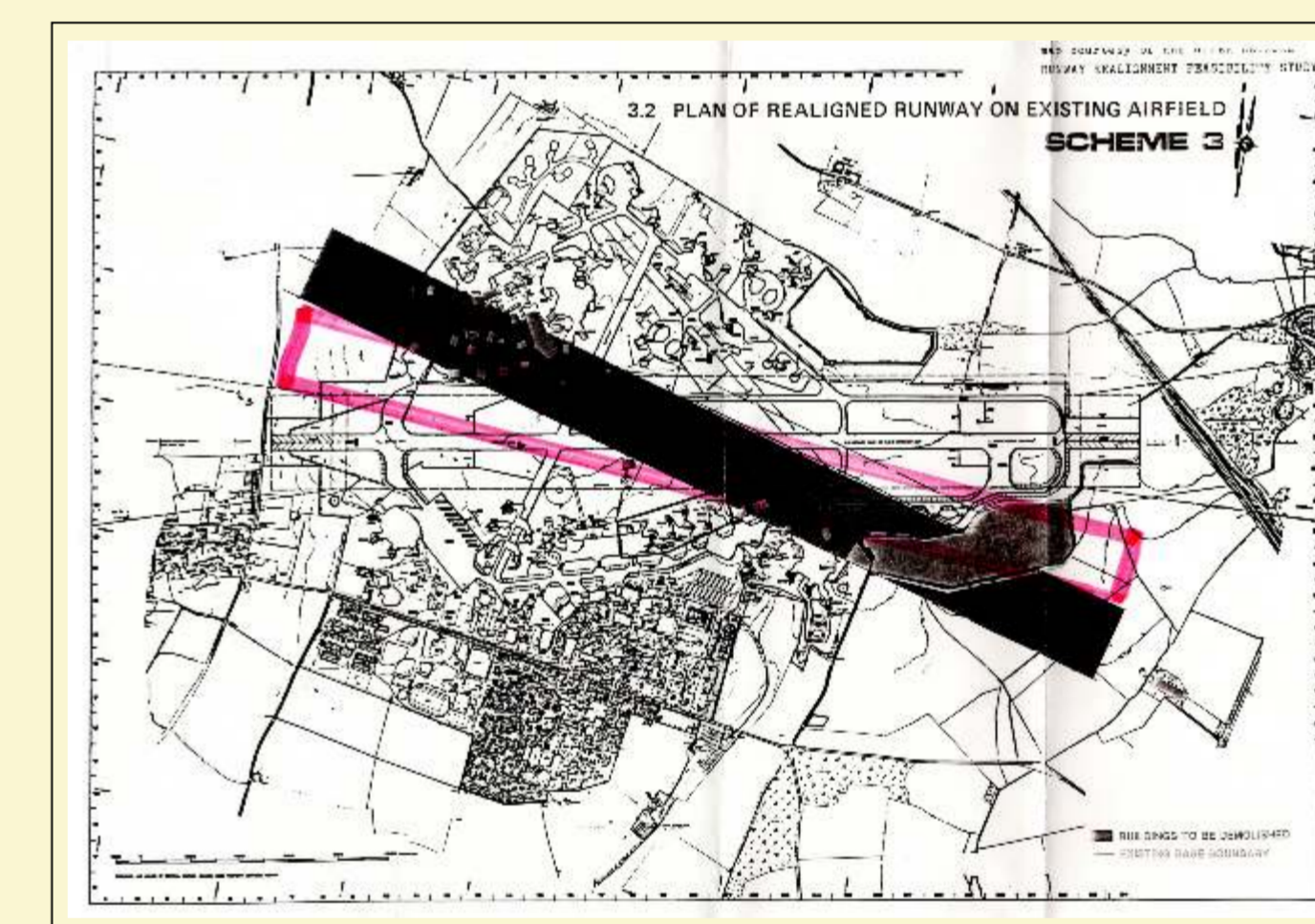
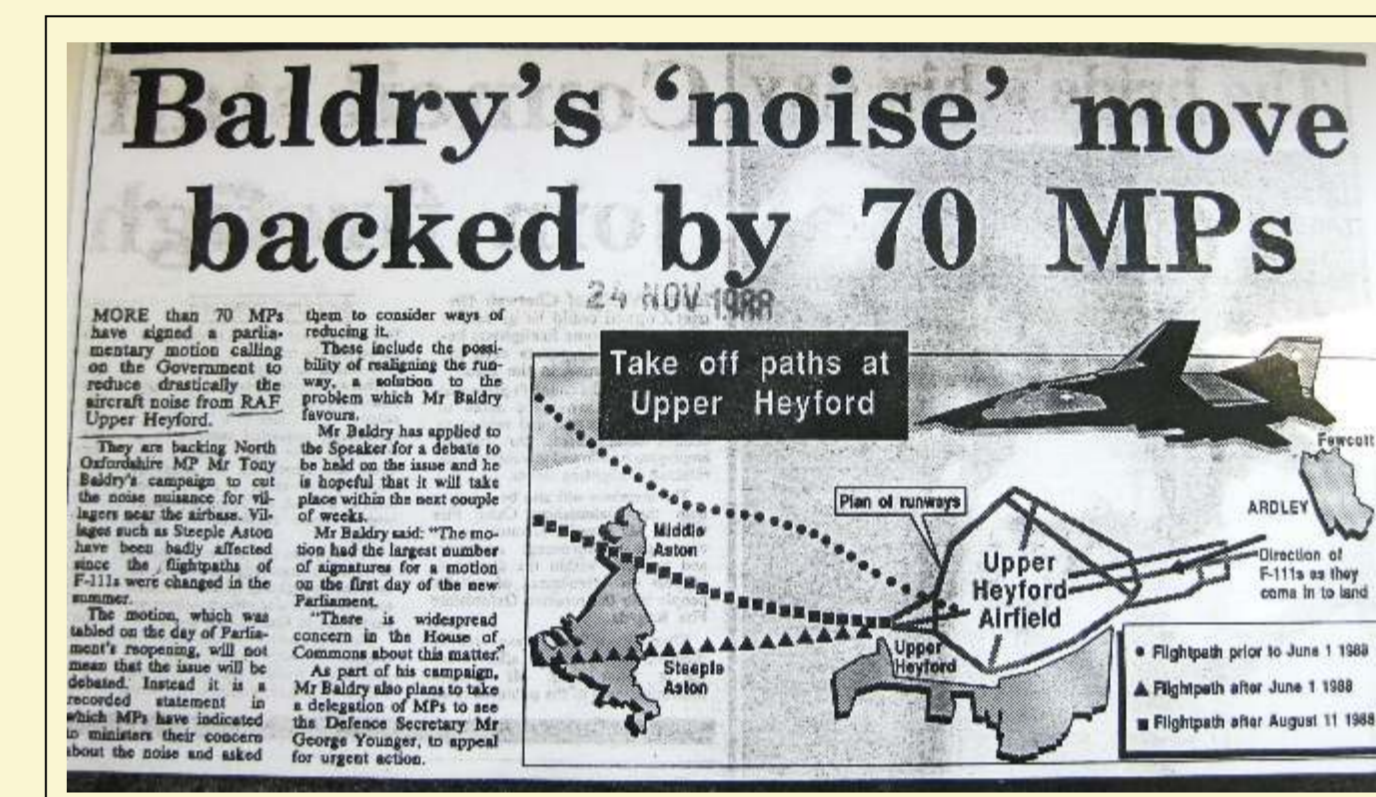
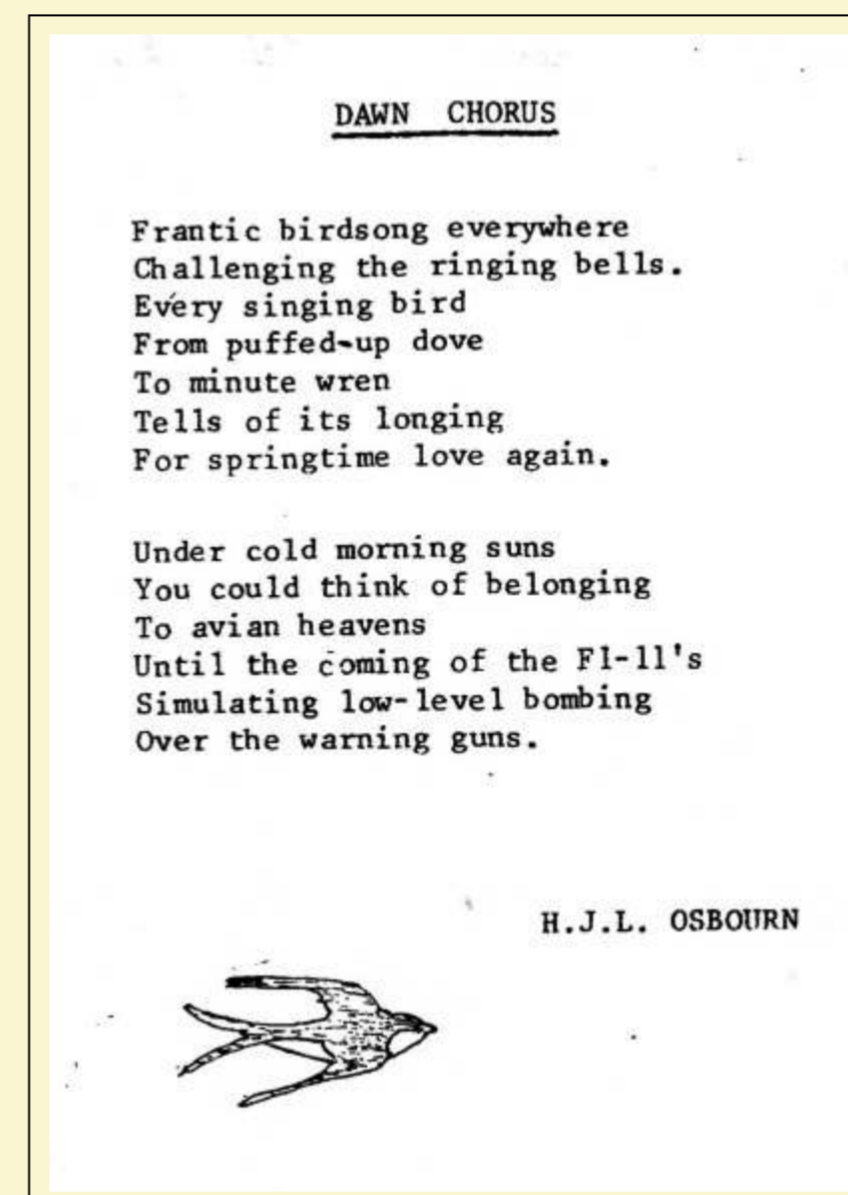
May A 25 page report on the noise nuisance appears in SAL.

June SAL reports on a "fireball" incident in May when fuel was hastily jettisoned and ignited in the after-burner two minutes after take-off. SAL also carries some discussion regarding the cautious offer for compensation by the MoD for the fall in the value of houses.

July SAL reports that all parish councillors have refused an invitation from the Base to take a trip in a refuelling tanker.

August Through SAL, Defend Steeple Aston encourages villagers to write to named senators and House of Representatives in Washington. A reply is received from Pat Schroeder, one of the senators.

November SAL invites the USAF commander to use the magazine to communicate with villagers. Base withdraws promised ban on night flying. Steeple Aston and Ardley defence groups organise a press conference with the intention of widening the dispute further.



STEEPLE ASTON LIFE: 189th ISSUE: MAY 1989

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SAL is in mourning for the quality of life of those who live within the environs of RAF Upper Heyford after the sad decision of the MoD to do nothing to relieve the present situation. This is an unhappy day but hopefully the sick depression experienced by many of our readers will soon be alleviated by a renewed determination to do something about the problem.

SUBVIM 20/4/89

HOME NEWS 3

Villagers lose £300m battle to cut jet noise