



Confound & Destroy

The magazine of RAF 100 Group Association

Autumn 2017



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EDITOR'S PAGE



Dearest Kindred Spirits,

You might think things would settle after the extraordinary Reunion in May, and I had time on my hands. Well, nothing could be further from the truth!! Even before the Reunion was finished, life became frenetic ... and it hasn't stopped. However, with letters, articles and photos coming all the time, it is as always, an absolute delight to draw together the Autumn 2017 magazine which I hope you will find pleasure in reading. At the same time, I ask your forgiveness if your writings do not appear in this edition. I promise they will appear in the next. As it is, it's been like trying to fit Mount Everest into a very small hole!!

Meanwhile, I am deeply saddened to share the deaths of three dear veterans, part of our worldwide Family for many years: [Sidney Pike, who served with 214 Sqn at Oulton](#), well-known at Reunions; [Shirley Bellwood, Intelligence Officer at Bylaugh Hall](#), and [Mosquito Pilot Cliff Rhind](#), involved with Alberta Aviation Museum, Edmonton, Canada. Tributes are included in this magazine. However, anyone with personal memories we'd love to share them. In our Summer magazine, it was announced, due to financial restraints, our Final Postings pages will be in the Summer magazine only. However, I can assure you these names are added, to be remembered.

On a lighter note, it's always good when people read a letter here, and know they can match information, or are willing to research and help the person concerned. There are a few who have done this much to the delight of those who sent in a question, a photo, or for information. The results open a whole new avenue of stories. It is also good to know new friendships have evolved.

A very positive note to share is that our worldwide Family continues to grow. Since the Reunion in May, we offer a warm welcome to new members [Andrew Crotch with sister Linda Read and daughter Julia](#) ... all family of John Crotch DFC, Squadron Leader, 192 Sqn; [Philip Croft](#), brother of Kenneth Croft, who features in this magazine and the next; [Arthur Reid](#), son of Arthur Reid who served in 192 Squadron; and [Malcolm Osborn](#), an 8th Air Force historian and author, interested in all aspects of 100 Group and the 36th Bomb Squadron.

Meanwhile, another new name, [Mike Perrin](#), has written a very personal tribute to Branse Burbridge. Mike is an author, and one of his books I find particularly comforting. Thanks Mike. Look forward to hearing more from you.

The magazine remains our only tangible link reaching around the world, connecting veterans and their families, and anyone else interested in learning more about RAF 100 Group. John Beeching has shared an extraordinary photograph of ANZAC Day in New Zealand, and there are further letters coming in about the Reunion, with a photograph of the RAF 100 Group Crest presented to the RAF Club in London. I would draw your attention to a published article written by Captain Amanda Farr, 53rd Wing, Public Affairs, in the States, and to what Mike Hillier is currently organising to mark the 70th Anniversary of the closure of RAF Swannington on 11th November.

As always, I thank everyone for the many emails, letters and cards I receive every day. Life wouldn't be the same without them! Always welcome, always valued. Please, keep them coming.

Thank you one and all!

*Love & Hugs,
Janine^{xx}*

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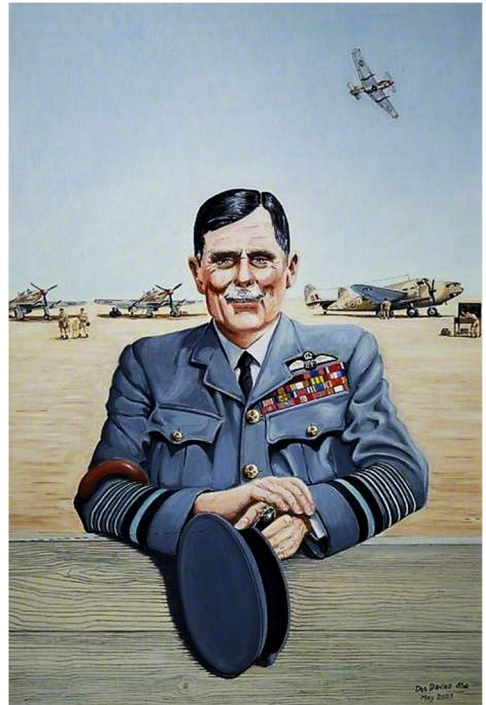
CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Friends,



In the Spring magazine, I wrote of the exploits of Canadian Murray Peden and our own Paddy Gilpin. I referred to the occasion Peden met Viscount Hugh Trenchard and his being RAF number ONE. I promised to say more about Trenchard, who is popularly referred to as the 'Father' of the RAF.

Trenchard was a truly remarkable man, overcoming what we now know was extreme dyslexia. Despite failing many Army entrance examinations, he managed to scrape into the Royal Scots Fusiliers and in 1893, was posted to India as Second Lieutenant. His career took off through playing polo – on occasions with the young Winston Churchill. He was often thought to be slow and unintelligent, but those close to him observed a lightning ability to see solutions to complex problems which he then had difficulty communicating to others. Following Military success in the Boer war, he was very successful pacifying Nigeria where he was awarded the DSO. Bored by peacetime Army and approaching his fortieth birthday, he was taught to fly, at his own expense, by Tommy Sopwith. From then on, flying was his life. In 1913, he was appointed Assistant Commandant of the Central Flying School, Upavon, where his administrative talent rather than skill as a pilot came to the fore. In 1915, he assumed command of the Royal Flying Corps in France, where he was the pre-eminent advocate of bombing the enemy. In 1918, he became Chief of the Air Staff, but resigned after a few months. He was re-appointed in 1919 by War Minister Winston Churchill and served in that capacity until 1929. He undoubtedly laid the foundations of the modern independent Air Force, introducing training colleges and short service commissions. He also saw off many attempts by the Navy and Army to annex the Air Force. Without Trenchard, there would likely have been no RAF in the Second World War and no 100 Group.



If all these achievements were not enough, he was Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police from 1931-1935 where he again achieved considerable success in reforming that body, including replacing the Robert Peel beat patterns, transforming recruitment, improving police residences, and establishing the Police College, Hendon. For more, read '*Boom*' by Russell Miller.

Our Secretary, Janine, has passed to me details of a special Remembrance Service that will be held at St Peter's Church, Haveringland, Norfolk, on 11th November 2017. This Church features in a famous Mosquito photograph:



NF.XIX RS-L of 157 Squadron at its dispersal near St Peter's Church, Haveringland, on which the RAF Swannington airfield was built. Mosquitoes provided 100 Group with a long-range capability throughout 1943-45.

The Church was adjacent to RAF Swannington, which opened in April 1944 and was home to 100 Group's 85 and 157 Squadrons. These were night fighter specialists, flying several variants of Mosquito including Mk VII, XIX and XXX. This year will be the 70th Anniversary of RAF Swannington closing and this special service will commemorate the Anniversary. I hope to join representatives of the Royal Air Forces Association and the Royal British Legion, and members of the Royal Engineers Association. It was the 288th Field Company of the Royal Engineers that built the airfield. The organisers are hoping to plant an avenue of trees on the road approaching the church.

Very best wishes,

Roger Dobson Tir A Môr Uchaf, Cemaes Bay, Isle of Anglesey

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8th AIR FORCE NEWS



Dear Friends,

In the news state-side, although it's just August one would think that here, in North Carolina, it's already Autumn because the leaves and acorns have begun to fall. My mind though, still thinks back to May and the fine time we all enjoyed at our last Reunion. The fun time I spent with everyone – the 36th Squadron and RAF veterans – Des, Rafael, Phil, Andrew



and Stan, the 36th Electronic Warfare Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Moore and his party, along with Janine, Association members, family and friends – carved a fond and deep memory in my mind. Seeing again my friends Brendan, Ann, Hayley with Lily May, Chas and Heda was more icing on the cake. My being with everyone brought out a feeling that it was just like my father being there with

his American buddies and British friends during the war – the closeness, the comradery, so alive and real. To join in and bond with such great people for this occasion was truly a blessing for me.

Yes, it's now August 2017, but it was on August 13, 1944, of long ago that the 803rd Bomb Squadron (Provisional) became the fully-fledged 36th Bomb Squadron Radar Counter Measure Unit and the 36th Squadron Gremlins were born! It was on that day, that simultaneous with this event, the new Unit moved from Oulton to AAF Station 113 at Cheddington. The new 36th now had sixteen B-24 Liberator crews and by the end of the month strength of the Squadron totalled nearly 600 personnel. And the Squadron continued flying its night missions with RAF 100 Group.

Cheddington had been one of hundreds of aerodromes constructed which dotted the face of the British Isles. Prior to August 1943, the RAF used the Base for training personnel of the 26th Operational Training Unit (OTU) to fly the British Wellington bomber aircraft. After about a year, it became apparent that the airfield was unsuitable for operational purposes and particular requirements of RAF OTU. This was partly due to the runways and surrounding hills. Its runways were not suitable for heavy aircraft. However, by the end of 1943, all airfield perimeter taxiways and runways were resurfaced to accommodate heavy aircraft. The aerodrome also lacked servicing facilities, and with only one hangar, remained partially complete.



Stn. 113 Aerial View

American personnel had been based at the airfield for varying, but brief periods, prior to the 36th Squadron's arrival. These U.S. outfits included Officers and men of the 12th Combat Crew Replacement Center, the 44th Bomb Group, the 20th Bomb Wing, the 8th Photo Reconnaissance Wing, the 8AF Composite Command, and two Squadrons of the 801st Bomb Group. One of the early American arrivals at the airbase was Henry Woolf, Sergeant-Major in the Station Headquarters Adjutant's Office. He wrote of Cheddington:

'The name 'Cheddington' was taken from the village in Buckinghamshire, northeast of the Base, that is located on the main line of the railroad that runs from Euston Station in London to Glasgow. It was the scene of the Great Train Robbery in 1963. Within the Base was the village of Marsworth, with a pub, a Parish Church and vicarage, and some other residences. Through it also wound the Grand Union Canal, which runs from London into the Midlands, used to transport goods on conventional canal boats. A mile or two south of the Base was the town of Tring, in Hertfordshire. The county line separating Bucks and Herts ran through the Base. And it was Tring Station, the first stop south of Cheddington, that we travelled to London, 30 or 40 minutes away, on days off.'

Iredell Hutton, Tail Gunner for the Lt. McCrory crew, noted the move to Cheddington in his diary:

'Today, we moved from Oulton to Cheddington. The Base is all mixed up. Had much rather stayed at Oulton. Colonel Scott is no longer our CO. Sack (Andy Sturm of the crew) brought 'Snafu' with him. 'Snafu' is the cat.'

The new locale also offered its own set of geographical hazards. West End Hill and South End Hill bordered the area northeast of the aerodrome runways. These rolling hills established an infamous reputation all their own. S/Sgt Howard 'Howie' Nolan, an Aerial Gunner for the Lt. Sandberg crew, spoke of Cheddington and South End Hill:

'Right at the end of the runway, there are two mountains. To get off, you had to fly right in between those two mountains. It looked like two great big women's breasts. There were spots where people didn't make it, where the planes had piled in and crashed. But even if you had one of these, they sent you right back up afterwards when you had an accident. They didn't let you stay down.'

Lt. Frank Senn of the 18th Weather Squadron stationed there remembered it for similar reasons:

'The one thing I remember about South End Hill was an accident that happened early one morning when a B-17, taking off on a mission and, loaded to the hilt, did not quite make it and the rear end of the plane hit the hill, knocking off the tail, and the Tail Gunner fell out on the hill. The B-17 circled back and landed, while an ambulance was dispatched to pick up the Tail Gunner. Luckily, the plane landed safely and the Tail Gunner survived the incident.'

Sgt. Joseph Danahy, the Radio Operator for Lt. Joseph Hornsby's crew, also remembered the hill plus the dicey weather Cheddington presented:

'That hill was a great hazard. We lost a crew to it. They didn't get over it on take-off. Oh, the weather – it was really bad sometimes. Because of the bad weather we got to spend many a night at some distant Base, unable to land at Cheddington. The Control Tower had big mortars and would fire flares up into the fog or overcast sky to light the area with varying degrees of success, none very good. You'd hear the poor devil who was trying to find the runway go roaring over. One fellow nearly took the smokestack chimney off the Mess Hall. You couldn't help but feel glad you were on the ground.'



Robert Hambaugh & his B-24

On 12 August, [Major Robert Hambaugh](#), a Southern gentleman from Birmingham, Alabama, assumed command of the new 36th Bomb Squadron Radar Counter Measure Unit at Cheddington. He had already seen plenty of action in the Pacific theatre of operations. There as a Captain, he was attached to the 27th Bombardment Group in the Philippines. He was there when the Japanese attacked the islands on December 8, 1941 – the day after the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The 27BG, having no airplanes, fought the enemy with anti-aircraft guns, machine guns and even pistols. Hambaugh was one in a group of only 27

men out of the total of 400 to escape capture by making it to Australia. Most of the 400-odd men who were left in the Philippines became prisoners. Of the 27 men who managed to escape, eight were soon killed or 'Missing in Action'. The remnants of these men, including Hambaugh, went to Java. In February 1942, they fought the Japanese and sank a cruiser and a destroyer. Captain Hambaugh received the Silver Star for gallantry for dive-bombing the Japanese invasion fleet approaching Java. That August, now at Cheddington, Major Hambaugh wrote to his folks in Alabama:

'Dearest Folks, I am getting along fine, plenty to eat and it's good food and a nice place for my Quarters. I have a good Squadron and good boys. We do special work, that's all I can say'.

Squadron photographer Frank Trovato fondly remembered Hambaugh:

'Major Hambaugh (later Lt Col) was well known to me and was a swell guy. Everybody liked him. I think he was kind and considerate. I remember taking some pictures of him, one a nice close-up portrait; also, others of him as he was making medal presentations to crew members.'

Hambaugh was also popular with his pilots. Lt. Joe Brookshire for one. Brookshire explained:

'Hambaugh and I got along real good. He was a good guy. He used to let me get away with what I thought was murder. My brother was stationed not too far from Bristol. He came over to the field, and the Colonel let me have an old B-24 to take him up and give him the thrill of his lifetime – fly in a '24. I got him up in the air and I let my brother fly.'



Lt Col Hambaugh & SSgt Stanley Walsh



Fotogs Frank Trovato & Tom

Once at Cheddington, a Squadron insignia was designed for the new 36th. The insignia depicted a winged radar gremlin whose body and nose consisted of radio tubes, and from whose fingertips emitted radio transmissions which fouled the enemy radar devices. Placed between the wings above the 'Gremlin' was the term RAFU, meaning 'Radar All Fouled Up'. This term was related in a way to the term 'SNAFU'. The insignia was designed and drawn by

S/Sgt Stanley L. Walsh, a Squadron Aerial Gunner attached to Lt. Sandberg's crew. Stanley was formerly employed by the Walt Disney Studios.

It was at this time that residents around Cheddington were experiencing Hitler's V1 buzz bombs. Approximately half a dozen flying bombs dropped within an area of five or six miles of the aerodrome. Cpl. Charles Todaro, a Squadron Armorer, spoke of the V1 bombings:

'We were attacked by V1s. We had shelters all around the perimeter. You'd hear these things chug-chug-chuggin' and you'd just stand there and listen, because if they chugged over you, you were okay. But if the rocket gave out, then it was in the vicinity and you headed for the bomb shelter.'

Iredell Hutton also wrote of their threat in his diary:

The missions are much longer now that we are here at Cheddington. When we came in, the sirens were sounding off because there was a buzz bomb headed our way. We never saw it though. The buzz bomb, which fell the night before last, was only two miles away instead of ten as I had guessed. One of these days, one is going to plaster this Base all to hell.'

Such were the days of August 1944 for the Gremlins of the new 36th and men of the 8AF!

Stephen Hutton

Author: 'Squadron of Deception'

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City of Norwich Aviation Museum



New Chairman: Colin Kerrison

Dear Friends,

Let me begin by introducing myself. My name is Colin Kerrison and I am the new Chairman of the City of Norwich Aviation Museum, succeeding outgoing Chair Derek Waters.

I must first pay tribute to Derek, who has been actively involved with CNAM for many years, and whose efforts, along with our dedicated band of volunteers, have developed our Museum to its current status. My aim will be to build on the progress made so far and develop CNAM into a top-class tourist attraction, whilst still adhering to our principles of preserving Norfolk aviation heritage.

The first, very welcome, piece of news is the fact that we now have a new 25-year lease on our current site. This is such a relief, as we have lived under the shadow of the new Northern Distributor Road for at least ten years and many times feared for our existence.

Now is the time to look forward and to start planning our future. I can already feel the momentum growing as we awaken from what has been a bit of hibernation in terms of getting things done. There are, potentially, so many things to do. It is a chicken and egg situation as to what should we do first. Obviously, we will be looking at short, medium and long-term planning, whilst ensuring we financially stay within our means.

Over the last year, many activities continue to be carried out by our extremely dedicated and committed group of volunteers. That spirit and willingness will ensure that CNAM will flourish in the coming years and we will go from strength to strength.

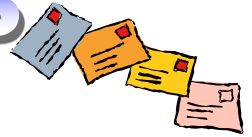
Examples of current activities include: new electricity and water supplies to the site, re-roofing of the Main Museum building (no more leaks!), taking delivery of a new 40ft container for storage (courtesy of 74 Squadron), re-accreditation to the Museum service, exploring the possibility of purchasing land to extend the car park, and planning for a replacement tea room. A purpose-built workshop and a hangar to house some of our aircraft is also high on the agenda.

I hope to meet many of you once again at the annual RAF 100 Group Association Reunion in 2018, where I will be able to update you with the progress we have made.

Colin Kerrison

Chairman, City of Norwich Aviation Museum

LETTERS PAGES



Dear Janine,

The attached photo was another taken at the RAF Club, London, during the presentation of the RAF 100 Group crest. It shows Wing Commander Garry Crosby standing far right, next to myself. He was a former CO of 51 Squadron (re-numbered from 192 Squadron in 1958). He and Phil James MBE (Association President, standing second left) had a long chat. It was a lovely event and we were all very pleased. I shall look for the engraved plate on the badge when I am in the Club next.



Photo credited to Charlotte Gray

John Stubbington, Wing Commander



Dear Janine,

This year, thousands of Nelsonians gathered for the Anzac Day dawn patrols and service at Anzac Memorial Park, New Zealand. Myself and Wendy are sitting on the left, end of second row.

John

John Beeching, veteran
169 Squadron



Dear Janine,

What a magnificent Reunion weekend we all had this year, thanks to you and all the Committee; also thanks to people of Foulsham for the lovely tea and cakes, and to the people of Oulton. Thanks to all for your hard work over the years. Martin, Eileen and Len (Founders), would be so proud of you. It must take such a long time to organise it all. It was good to see so many Americans and our own RAF people present. I have enclosed a cutting out of the Eastern Daily Press which I thought you might like to see and share.

Trust all is well with you,
Love from *Evelyn*
Evelyn Bartram



Standard Bearers Rod Vowler and Lt. Andrew Henderson

A village has held a ceremony to remember the loss of airmen who flew from RAF Foulsham during the Second World War and looked back at a tragic mid-air collision between American and British aircraft.

Former and current members of the Royal Air Force laid a wreath on Market Hill in Foulsham on Friday 12 May, in memory of those who flew in 192 Squadron, part of RAF 100 Group based at Bylaugh Hall.

Representatives of American pilots lost in a mid-air collision also attended and laid a plaque honouring the memory of the men who died when an American B-17 Flying Fortress collided with an RAF Beaufighter over the village in 1943.

Andrew Macnair, of the Foulsham Community Archives, said: *'We laid a wreath, which occurs every year, and were pleased to have three people there who had served at RAF Foulsham. The second part of the event was laying a wreath in front of a newly installed Memorial for the collision between an American plane and British Beaufighter. There was a very nice collection of people who made it, including an American Lieutenant Colonel. It was by far our biggest turn-out, and I would imagine there was about 120 people that attended.'* Speaking of the collision, Mr Macnair added: *'The actual aircraft involved had nothing to do with Foulsham, but it is just by chance that it occurred over the village. This is the first time it has ever been commemorated.'*

The man most responsible for documenting and remembering the tragic accident, which left just two survivors; is historical researcher Richard Ravencroft. Mr Ravencroft said he had begun researching the collision 27 years ago after he found a piece of the B17's fuselage in a tree. He said: *'Foulsham has a Historical Group that gets together and collates information about the village and I had previously contacted them about the collision. They then contacted me to say they'd like to donate the plaque.'*

It is fantastic to see it laid and to see the Americans being there. It is probably one of the first times they've been back. We had representatives from Lakenheath as well as veterans and we spent the weekend with them. It was brilliant speaking to them, and they were incredibly thankful for the interest and commemoration of their fallen comrades.'

Courtesy: Steve Shaw, EDP





Peter Holness sent in these two photographs showing how Horsham St Faith welcomed us to the Sunday worship over our Reunion weekend. A special display decorated the foyer and church to honour RAF 100 Group and the 36th. Thanks, Peter, and your team of helpers, for all you do every year, both on Saturday and Sunday, to ensure the smooth running of our gathering. See you next year! It was a stunning display!!



Heather Marie is a professional vocalist, and has been a featured soloist with the RAF Squadronaires, the Syd Lawrence Orchestra, the Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment and the Band of the Royal Air Force College. I was fortunate to book her for our main Saturday evening meal. It was exceptional ... so much dancing, so many wonderful songs! It truly made our weekend special. Thank you, Heather Marie and husband S/Ldr Matthew Little for going '*above and beyond the call of duty!*' Heather Marie has written in response to that special evening shared:

Hi Janine,

Thank you so much for your truly kind message, it's greatly appreciated. It was our absolute pleasure to be part of your special evening, it was wonderful to meet the veterans and all the guests. The reception we received was so lovely and friendly, and we had a great time! I'm so glad that the evening was a success for you, that everyone enjoyed themselves, and that you're getting such great feedback, which is testament to all your hard work and dedication.

Thank you once again for your kind support.

Very best wishes,
Heather Marie

Hi Janine,

Thank you so much for all the hard work you put in to make the Reunion a resounding success. It was a particularly brilliant touch getting the Americans along, they were so polite and really made us feel appreciated. It was very good also to see the RAF participation. Let us hope that both will continue to join us, and that old friends like Richard (Forder) and Peter (Lovatt) might be able to be with us in the future. Thank you again. The event would be dull indeed without all your hard work on our behalf. In fact, it would not exist without it.

With love and thanks from Dorothea and Andrew. We look forward already to next year!

Andrew
Andrew Barron, veteran 223 Squadron

Hello Janine,

Thank you for a very enjoyable weekend, one of the best I have ever been to. A big THANK YOU should also go to Lt. Col. Moore and his team for making it such a special event. They really got into the spirit of the occasion. It is disappointing that it didn't appear to rub off on their counterparts from this side of the Pond! Although the basic format/schedule for these Reunions remains much the same, there always seems to be something new popping up each year. 2017 was no exception. Out of the blue, at Foulsham, I met the daughter of the pilot of Halifax MZ806, my uncle's aircraft; who was trying to establish where her father was buried. It was a pleasure to be able to help her, and I have since sent her photographs of his headstone at Durnbach. If there are any further developments, I will let you know.

Once again, many thanks.

David

David Hales



Hello Janine,

I am back home now, and Pam and I set out for the cabin today, arriving around 4pm. My mind however, is still stuck in England and the wonderful time enjoyed. Thank you for making my experience so very memorable. Didn't we enjoy such great festivities with the Gremlins of old, and new? The RAF and American Gremlins meeting again at last was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience for all of us to enjoy and savor. Thank you for all your many great and noble efforts to make our experience unforgettable. So far, I have just started to download all my many photos, but I shall soon be getting them along to you. For now, again, I must take my hat off to you for all your magnificent efforts to produce such a memorable Reunion. You did such terrific planning ... one example was Heather Marie and her performance which was simply captivating! Everyone loved her. Stuart's program with the veterans was most interesting, despite mechanical difficulties. 'Twas truly a wonderful evening, thanks especially to you. I love you for the most terrific and meaningful occasion!!

I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Your friend,

Stephen

Stephen Hutton, 8th Air Force representative



Hello Janine,

You beat me to it. I was going to write you this week to let you know how much the Reunion affected me. I think the prime item was the friendliness and graciousness of all whom I met. Stuart, Chas, Mr Hutton, and of course, you. Everyone treated me as if I were a long-time friend. It was very heart-warming. Everyone in their own special way endeared me to them ... I have a special appreciation for Chas for his dedication of preserving the memory of the three airmen who did not survive the crash near his residence. The presentation at Oulton Memorial was very emotional. It was well-performed, so much so, I would like to have a copy of the recording being made (*Stuart Borlase is currently working on Reunion DVDs*). The poems recited by villagers were touching. I

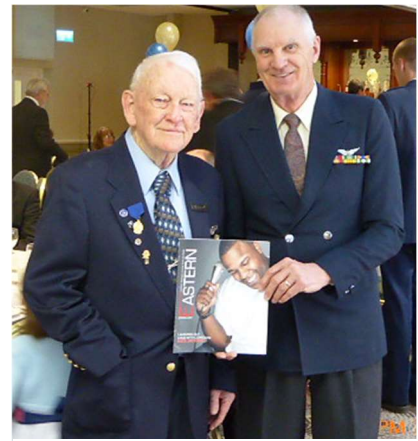
tried to feel part of the poems as they were read, and hold onto the feelings they pressed on me. The only one I remember was the last lines of *'the Click of the Gate'*.

I had a joyful time at the Saturday Dinner, dancing with a lovely English lady ... the entire day of events was outstanding and needs to be complimented. Des' grandson, his wife Allyson and I all agreed that, after that day, we could return home satisfied with the trip. The day was touching, and nothing after that would really matter. But we went to Cambridge to see the American cemetery, then on back to London. We did not stay the full remaining days planned, and returned home three days early. All of us were tuckered!

Thanks, Janine, for all you did to make the Reunion such a success and memorable, and all the work you continue to put into the Association. It is gratifying to know that there are those who did not experience the war, who appreciate those who did. Please pass on to everyone I met at the Reunion how much I enjoyed their company,

David

David Watson (*from the States, accompanying Des Howarth, seen above*)



Des Howarth & David Watson

36th Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force veteran: Des Howarth, travelling from the States to join our Reunion, unexpectedly discovered his Adventure only just beginning as he stepped aboard the plane. Brian, his son, shares what happened:

'Seen left, Dad is in the cockpit of a 767 with the pilots before take-off from Detroit to London. They were thrilled to have a B-24 WWII combat Navigator aboard, and made an announcement to the entire passengers and crew on the flight about Dad and why he was going to the UK for the Reunion. Quite a thrill! Even more remarkable is that the Seattle flight to London originated in Detroit. Dad grew up in nearby Ann Arbor and graduated from the University of Michigan, so it was a brief homecoming. The B-24 Liberators, including his plane 'The Beast of Bourbon', were constructed about 15 miles from this airport at Willow Run during WWII.'



John 'Des' Howarth was a 1st Lt. Navigator with Lt. McCarthy's crew. He was being accompanied by grandson, Ian Howarth, a Captain/Chaplain with the U.S. Air Force, Idaho Air National Guard.



Eglin Air Force Base

Electronic Warfare Airmen Honor Squadron's WWII Lineage

By Capt. Amanda Farr, 53rd Wing Public Affairs / Published June 06, 2017



1st Lt. John "Des" Howarth and Maj. Rafael "Raf" Ramos, 36th Bombardment Squadron veterans, pose for a photo during a Royal Air Force 100 Group Association Reunion luncheon May 13, 2017 at the City of Norwich Aviation Museum, England. Ramos and Howarth provided early, electronic warfare support to bomber aircraft during World War II. (Courtesy Photo)



2nd Lt. Andrew Henderson, 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron EW Engineer, holds the 36th Bombardment Squadron heritage flag during a wreath-laying ceremony at Foulsham Memorial on May 12, 2017. Henderson, along with four additional 36th EWS members, represented the unit at various memorials, dinners, luncheons, teas and wreath-laying ceremonies during the 20th Annual Royal Air Force 100 Group Association Reunion. (Courtesy Photo)

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.

Even 'once-in-a-lifetime' doesn't quite capture the recent experiences of five Airmen and civilians from the 53rd Wing during their whirlwind trip to England.

Members of the 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron helped write history during the Royal Air Force 100 Group Association Reunion in Norwich, England, from May 12-14. This was the 20th Anniversary of the Reunion, but the first time the 36th Bombardment Squadron and RAF 100 Group veterans stood side-by-side since World War II. The 36th EWS contingent was also at their side representing the 36th BS lineage and the current mission of the Gremlins.

'These guys invented electronic warfare, and they did it side-by-side with the Royal Air Force', said Lt. Col. Thomas Moore, 36th EWS Commander.

Within hours of touching down in London, the small 36th EWS group began visiting crash sites where the 36th BS flew in WWII. The itinerary was jam-packed, with Memorials, meals, wreath-laying ceremonies and continuous opportunities to talk with veterans.

'The attendees of the Reunion, the veterans, and even people on the street we met, they were so appreciative we were there', said Capt. Paul Bennett, 36th EWS Test Management Flight Commander. *'The fact that the current day Squadron members valued the mission and sacrifice and history of the veterans was significant to them ... that was my biggest takeaway.'*

When the RAF 100 Group Association Reunions began, the number of WWII veterans was more than 300, and now it has dwindled to only a handful. This year, two of that small handful came from the 36th BS. Major Rafael 'Raf' Ramos and 1st Lt. John 'Des' Howarth attended to represent that Squadron. The wit, passion and stories that Ramos and Howarth shared with 2nd Lt. Andrew Henderson, 36th EWS Electronic Warfare Engineer, left him inspired. Henderson only entered active duty less than a year ago.

'It was fantastic', he said. *'Meeting with veterans and the passion they had. They would go back and do it again if given the chance. Major Ramos went back to Korea and Vietnam. That kind of passion and drive was inspirational and motivational.'*

Early electronic warfare contributed to many WWII Allied victories, arguably offering major turning points in the war. While at the Reunion, Flt. Lt. Stan Forsyth, an RAF 100 Group veteran, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his use of RADAR to help destroy the infamous, German battleship, Tirpitz, on Nov. 12, 1944, identifying its hiding place in the Norwegian Fjords.

'Due to the electronic warfare support sorties flown by the 36th BS and RAF 100 Group, attrition (ie: losses) for bombers went down 40 percent', said Moore. *'If we would go to our bosses now and say what we're doing is going to reduce attrition by 40 percent, they would be asking for me more and more.'*

Preserving the history and stories of RAF 100 Group, as well as their partners like the 36th BS, remains a passionate mission for Janine Harrington, RAF 100 Group Association Secretary and published author.

'We shared such an epic time, with veterans and present-day 36th EWS, we feel they are all now part of our worldwide family. Kindred Spirits', said Harrington. *'It was particularly wonderful to know they too have the passion for preserving memories and the history and stories of what these people did, which defined the way history came out.'*

Harrington expressed that people from both Groups continue to send her writings and photographs of the work they did in the war. While there are families still today who are unaware of loved ones' wartime experiences, or the kind of work in which they were involved.

Electronic warfare was the forefront of innovation during the war, and the 36th BS veterans were the forefathers. They were testing brand new, unknown methods. All the while, the EW mission was so classified, these men were doing this without acknowledgement or honors for 30-40 years.

'They feel as if they are 'the forgotten heroes', said Janine Harrington, author of 26 publications. 'I hear this phrase so often, as so many continue to take their secrets to the grave. It makes me even more passionate about creating a wider awareness to the vital role they played in WWII, and to give them the honor and recognition they deserve.'

The classification of many electronic warfare missions rings true for the 26th EWS today, and Bennett can relate to the incredible level of humility that comes with the job.

'It's hard to convey what we do, but it's still important to try and convey it without the details', he said. 'Electronic warfare is misunderstood, but we can mess with the bad guys and help win the war'.

Today, the 36th EWS lives by their Squadron motto: Deny, Deceive, Defeat.

'That's what we do', said Bennett. 'Deny that they can see us or track us, deceive them and trick them, and then ultimately defeat them in the air.'

Today's Gremlins poise the war-fighter for the next operation and war with the goal to accomplish the same thing as their 36th BS veterans: reduce attrition and keep aircrew alive, according to Moore. He added that: *'you could write a whole book'* on this one trip alone, because of the rich and numerous experiences of their contingent, but also the stories the airmen shared with the incredible veterans of the 36th.

Courtesy: Captain Amanda Farr, as published in:

<http://www.eglin.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1204877/electronic-warfare-airmen-honor-squadrons-wwii-lineage/>



A few members responded to this puzzling picture shared by Philip Croft in the Summer edition, asking if anyone could identify where it was taken. Thanks Mike Hillier, for finding the answer:



Dear Janine,

Nice to see the letter from Phil Croft, who I've never met, but now through correspondence can look on as a friend. His photo is an absolute baffler! In all my time in the RAF I never saw an assembly of airmen wearing greatcoats and webbing belts. Phil said it was a '*Passing Out Group*'. Passing out from what? No white cap flashes to indicate aircrew cadets, nor very few rank badges. Some of the aircrew looked pretty old to be aircrew ... and '*Battery Hotel*'?

John Beeching, veteran 169 Squadron



Hello Philip,

I'm just looking at your letter in the 100 Group magazine. In answer to your question about where the photo was taken, I have done a comparison check with photos of the time and Google Maps and can tell you that the photo was taken of the Battery Hotel in Morecombe, Lancashire. The chimneys have been removed, but it is definitely the same building. Further information can be found on the

Lancaster Military Heritage website which may lead to information as to where your brother was stationed. I would also suggest contacting the Morecombe RAFA Branch.

Hope this helps,

Mike Hillier

Hello Mike,

Thank you very much for your time and effort in solving a long-term mystery that has bugged me for years. I googled '*Battery Hotel*' many times, but only modern buildings showed up. Not knowing the location was a problem, although it was clearly a coastal town.

I am also attaching a group shot (right) with what looks like a Lancaster? For obvious reasons, the family weren't sure where he was stationed, or planes he flew in, although '*Wellington*' was heard when I was a wartime child. Brought up in Birmingham, I thought Ken might have been trained at Hixon, near Stafford. This, I discovered, was a Training Centre for night-flying ops, using mainly Wellingtons ...



Thanks again for your help, Mike,

Phil Croft

Mike Hillier has also written to let members know about an important event happening at Swannington on 11th November, to mark 70 years of the airfield's closure. We hope as many people will attend as possible, as there are many things planned for this memorable occasion:



SWANNINGTON 70 YEARS ON

by Mike Hillier



On 11th November 2017 at 10.30 for 10.45, a Remembrance Service will take place at St. Peter's Church, Haveringland, Norfolk, the site of the former Station, RAF Swannington. It was from here that 85 Squadron and 157 Squadron, both part of 100 Group, flew their missions. The service will be an Act of Remembrance for all the fallen of the British and Commonwealth Forces who fought in the many conflicts at home and overseas. However, 2017 marks 70 years since the airfield was decommissioned and closed. Therefore, as well as remembering the many lives lost from among its ranks, the service will also be a commemoration of the short time the airfield was a vibrant, active, living being.

We often think of those who flew their missions and never returned, but think very little of those left behind to live in grief. The last line of Lawrence Binyon's poem states: '*We Will Remember Them*'. What we do fail to remember is that these brave souls who flew these missions were: Sons, Fathers, Brothers, Grandsons, Uncles etc. With this in mind, I embarked on a journey to try and find some of the families of those who never returned. It's not an easy task. This happened over 70 years ago. There is also the fact that, what went on here was mainly secret. However, I found a few and it is hoped they will attend the service on the 11th November.

As both 85 Squadron and 157 Squadron have long since been disbanded, their Standards laid up in Churches in perpetuity, these Squadrons will be represented by the youth of today, who hopefully will be the Royal Air Force of tomorrow. Nos. 231 (Norwich) Squadron and 42F (Kings Lynn) Squadron, both Air Training Corps Squadrons in Norfolk, will proudly stand to represent 85 and 157. They will present their Colours and that of the Union Flag at the service, doing so in the memory of those who went before.

Also presenting Standards, will be the Royal Air Force Association and the Royal British Legion, and hopefully the Standard bearer and members of the Royal Engineers Association. It was the 288th Field Company of the Royal Engineers that built the airfield, when, not long after, they were shipped abroad. Many never returned. Those who did will never forget, as they ended up in Singapore where they were captured by the Japanese.

In one case in my search for relatives of the crews, I came across an article in a newspaper from the Wolverhampton City Council Archives. It told of a young man who found a job working at the Borough's Treasury Department at the Town Hall and, at 18, joined the RAF. I contacted the archivist in Wolverhampton where, he told me, they have a photograph of him and a booklet his sister had written about her brother. However, I needed the permission of the sister for them to send me a copy of the photograph. Kindy, they gave me her name and address in Cockermouth. However, the booklet had been written in the 70s. I couldn't be sure if she still lived there or had indeed passed away. Not to miss a chance of contacting someone in the family and that she had written a booklet, I felt it may have been published, held in a local bookshop. After searching the internet for bookshops in Cockermouth, I found one and sent an email telling of my search for this lady. They replied immediately saying they had no such booklet and were sorry they knew nothing of the lady in question. However, they suggested I try the Cockermouth Heritage Group, which I

did. Again, the search was fruitless. But they did tell me they had put a piece in the local free newspaper, hoping someone would recognise the name.

A week later, I received an email from the lady herself. Apparently, her daughter, who lives in Suffolk, was visiting Cockermouth on the very day the newspaper was being delivered. On reading the advertisement, she contacted her mother who now lives in Gloucestershire. Sometimes I believe fate does lend a hand in things, as it would appear the daughter was meant to visit Cockermouth that very day, and meant to pick up and read that newspaper. The airman's sister, and her daughter and family, will be present at the service in November, as will hopefully, some of the other relatives I contacted.

That airman, by the way, was Flying Officer Harry 'Junior' Smith, a Navigator on 157 Squadron. Both Harry and his pilot, Flying Officer Peter William Fry, died when their Mosquito, XIX MM646 RS-R, crashed at Nieuwlande, near Geesburg in the Netherlands, after returning from a night intruder mission over Handorf in Germany on 29 September 1944. Harry was nicknamed 'Junior' by his aircrew colleagues, being the youngest aircrew member on the Squadron. He was 20 years old and Peter was aged 25.

In my research, I found that after Peter's death, his widow Margaret and their young son Michael, who was two years old at the time, went to live in Canada to start a new life. Margaret never remarried, but sadly passed away in 2007. At the time of writing, I am trying to locate the whereabouts of Michael and his family who now live in the Vancouver area in British Columbia, Canada. Hopefully, I will make contact in time for him to know about the service in November.

The site of RAF Swannington today is mostly made up of farmland; there are still bits and pieces of concrete perimeter track here and there, and even an odd bit of concrete of one of the runways. What's left of the control tower, I believe, is where the local farmer keeps his chickens. A sign of progress perhaps, after all this is Norfolk? The church of St. Peter, which stood at the side of the perimeter track, is still there and still in use today, although like most country churches, parishioners are few. Some who have seen the photograph of a 157 Squadron Mosquito parked in front of the church (right); may wonder why it is that the bottom of the church is painted white? The answer is simple; the eyesight of Mosquito pilots in the air at night is far better than it is on the ground when taxiing near churches!!!



157 Sqn NFXIX at dispersal, St Peter's, 1944

It is hoped to plant an Avenue of Remembrance leading to St. Peter's Church in Haveringland (the villages of Haveringland and Brandiston being the former site of RAF Swannington). A colleague and I are working on this to take place by November. The trees chosen will blossom at different times of the year, to become an everlasting reminder of those who gave their lives for their country. Gratefully, we have received funding for the trees and also funding for them to be expertly planted. However (*why is there always an 'however'*) we are waiting for permission from the land owner to plant the trees. But don't worry, we've come this far, we will fight on for that one! Meanwhile, I will keep searching for families of those who served at RAF Swannington, to let them know their loved ones are not forgotten, and whatever happens, I will not let this part of the Norfolk countryside forget them either.

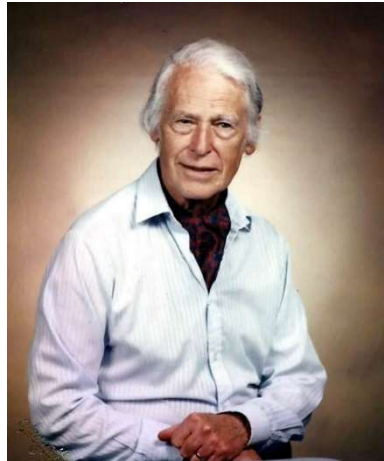
Mike Hillier Haveringland, Norfolk m.hillier091@hotmail.com

IN MEMORIAM

ONE MAN'S TRIBUTE

Wing Commander Branse Burbridge DSO DFC

By
Mike Perrin



Courtesy: Paul Burbridge (son)

In our living room, here in North Wales, hangs a very special picture given to me by my family on my 80th birthday in November 2016. The rather unusual subject of this artist's proof limited edition print, however, possibly requires some explanation. In 1960, my wife and I, recently married, moved to East Suffolk where I had been invited to serve as Pastor of a local Baptist church. Within just five years, however, an unexpected development in the nature of our ministry occurred. A love of mountains from as long as I could remember, and a compelling desire to share our faith with young people were to merge in a deep conviction that God was calling us to Snowdonia to establish a Christian-based outdoor pursuits centre. At this challenging time, we received helpful advice from many sources, but the invaluable support and encouragement of one in particular stands out.

His name was Branse Burbridge.

At the time, Branse worked in London for a Christian organisation known as '*Scripture Union*' where he was instrumental in establishing the '*Inter Schools Christian Fellowship*' (ISCF for short). His responsibility was to train older pupils and teachers in Secondary and Grammar schools across the UK to set up Christian Unions, and in the 1960s, as part of that scheme, he and his cousin Graham, organised summer camps for sixth-form pupils at Arthog, near Barmouth, on the Afon Mawddach. They were both experienced in outdoor activities, and used their skills in canoeing and climbing. This wise and widely respected man, therefore, seemed ideally suited as someone with whom we could share our own vision of establishing a residential Christian mountain centre in North Wales, and so it proved to be. Branse would have been about forty-five at that time, thirteen years my senior, and proved to be invaluable to us in our pioneering work. However, throughout this period, although I had served my obligatory time of National Service in the Far East as an RAF Met Observer, I knew absolutely nothing of my dear friend's remarkable war record twenty years earlier, as Wing Commander Branse Burbridge, DSO DFC. So, turn the clock back to 1940 ...

Branse was 19 and a member of an Evangelical Church at Welwyn (a fellowship we have had quite a lot of contact with over the years). He ran a young people's Bible Class in the church and was an

avowed '*Conscientious Objector*', feeling it was totally wrong for a Christian to take up arms. However, one by one, the young men in his class were called up to serve in the Armed Forces, whilst at the same time, London was being bombed heavily night after night. As a result, he was compelled to change his mind, joined the RAF, and learned to fly. After training, he was posted as a night-fighter pilot to 85 Squadron, which was equipped with de Havilland Mosquitoes fitted with a very sophisticated Radar system capable of intercepting enemy aircraft at night on raids to and from London. Throughout the war, his Navigator was a man called Bill Skelton, also a Christian, who, after the war, was his 'Best Man' when Branse got married. The two of them were undoubtedly very skilled, and at the end of hostilities in 1945, the '*Night-Hawks*' as they were known, had shot down more enemy aircraft than any other night-fighter crew (21 in total + 3 V1 flying bombs – a terrifying weapon indiscriminately killing hundreds of civilians). Though no longer a Conscientious Objector, he always said that, given the choice, he always fired at a plane's engines rather than the cockpit and was always relieved when he saw the crew bale out by parachute! He was awarded the DSO and DFC both with bars, and several other medals.

Branse spent his final years in a Care Home with Alzheimer's, before he died on 2nd November 2016, aged 95. It was agreed by the family that it would be appropriate to auction his medals, flying jacket, helmet, and his Log Book, and so enable him to benefit from the wonderful care provided by Rock House in Chalfont-St-Peter.

Since I learned of his wartime achievements and started finding out more about his remarkable life, he became something of a 'hero', which I guess is why we have our own tribute to him here in our own home. In a small alcove of our living room there is a 'diorama' depicting RAF Swannington in Norfolk where 85 Squadron was based, with Branse's Mosquito NFXIX registration Y-VY on the right. (The location of the dispersal hut in front of St Peter's church is a case of 'model-makers licence'.)



The birthday gift of a framed print on the wall shows the same aircraft escorting a damaged Lancaster back to its base at dawn. It is entitled '*Safely Home*' and it is signed by Branse Burbridge DSO DFC in the bottom left corner; Phil Ainley DFC, the pilot of the Lancaster in the bottom right with the artist's (Philip West) signature too. Obviously, the print (one of 25 Special Editions) predates his Alzheimer's for him to have signed each copy personally. The day before my birthday when I was

given this very special gift, I received a phone call from David Burbridge (another cousin) telling me that Branse had died earlier in the week. I stood looking at Philip West's painting and read the title once again – '*Safely Home*'. Its poignancy touched our hearts, and I wept, yet rejoicing that his suffering with Alzheimer's was at an end, and that he was now in the presence of the Heavenly Father he had so faithfully served.

Beside the framed print hangs a small frame with a couple of photos of Branse in flying gear and on his wedding day with Bill Skelton, whilst below in a case are replicas of his six medals.



Mike Perrin, author

In May 2017, I rode my Brompton (folding bike) with camping equipment across Norfolk, visiting several 100 Group airfields. Cycling along the old perimeter track to St Peter's Church, where Branse conducted services on several occasions, I stood by the Memorial to Swannington airfield and wept, just as I had in St Andrews Church, Little Snoring, when I first read the poem: '*An Airfield Remembered*' written by S F Ruffle, 23 Squadron. At my age, one is allowed to weep without feeling embarrassed, mindful for the immeasurable gratitude we owe to those who were prepared to offer their lives in the defence of our Nation and freedom.

Branse Burbridge (4th February 1921 – 2nd November 2016) 'Safely Home'!

* * * * *

IN MEMORIAM

Tribute to Flt Lt Sidney Pike, RAF

by Chris Lambert



*Sidney Pike at Blickling Hall, 2013,
courtesy: Chris Lambert*

Having trained as a Navigator first in Canada and then in England, Sidney joined 214 Squadron with a crew in July 1944. The crew was as follows:

- F/O Frank W. Savage – Pilot
- F/O A. N. Craven – Assistant Navigator
- F/O J. Hussey – Special Operator
- **F/Sgt S. A. R. Pike – Navigator**
- Sgt N. J. Lee – Flight Engineer
- Sgt D. Astbury – Gunner
- Sgt N. Rishworth – Wireless Operator
- Sgt C. Hamblett – Gunner
- Sgt S. Judge – Gunner
- Sgt R. D. Kenney – Gunner

Sidney's first operation was on 13 August 1944 on a spoof raid to Hamburg. The task was to take part in the Mandrel and Special Mandrel jamming of the enemy radio communications to the night-fighter aircraft.

Sidney took part in various operations to different cities and targets in Germany and Europe during 1944. Towards the end of that year, as the Allied armies pushed towards Germany, the targets for the bombers became further away, and Sidney's trips became longer, averaging 5-6 hours. Sidney recalls, on the night of 10 November 1944, returning from Saabruken in the Rhur, both port

engines of his aircraft caught fire just as they crossed the front line of the advancing armies. Pilot Flt Lt Frank Savage, having put the aircraft into a steep dive, managed to put out the engine fires. Both engines were then shut down and attempts made to feather both props to prevent them from rotating in the wind, thereby avoiding dangerous vibrations. The inner engine prop, however, could not be feathered and continued to rotate. Sidney gave the pilot a course for the nearest emergency airfield, and they landed at Juvincourt near Rheims in France some thirty minutes later, using starboard engines only. In Sidney's own words: *'Fortunately, we had a very experienced pilot who had to use all his skills to control the plane. The inner port engine propeller had fallen off, taking part of the tail plane with it. The runway of the ex-German airfield had been patched up after damage caused by the RAF'*. The following afternoon, just after four hours sleep on straw mattresses left by the Germans, Sidney and crew were picked up by another aircraft from Oulton and arrived back at 5.50pm. The next day, they were detailed to go on another raid to Dortmund, a round trip of five and a quarter hours, much heavy flak at 25,000 feet in target area, not much respite: *'That's how it was!'*

Sidney continues that, in the early days of 1945, the weather was so bad that flying frequently was cancelled and they only flew on two occasions that month. On the second trip that month, their 29th operation; they took off for Hamon on the Rhur. Shortly after take-off, they experienced a loud bang. Fortunately, the aircraft continued to climb. On approaching the coast at Southwold, the engineer told the pilot that the engines were overheating and that they should return before they failed. Sidney changed course back to Oulton and they arrived at 8.55pm. The Station Commander at RAF Oulton told them they had done enough, and had completed their first tour of operations.

The following morning, most of the crew went out to inspect their aircraft 'H' for Happy, and were surprised to find the plastic blister, which housed the H2S navigational aerial, had been torn off, the leading edge of the aircraft's wing flattened, and the cooling fins of the radial engines were jammed full of twigs. They had gone through the tree-tops of the wood at the end of the runway on take-off. Another lucky escape, unlike so many of Sidney's comrades, and he goes on to remember the 55,000 aircrew killed flying with Bomber Command during World War Two.

With his engineer and Wireless operator, Sidney stayed on at Oulton and was commissioned in January 1945 to become a Pilot Officer. He joined another crew at that time with an experienced Australian pilot who Sidney did not name (from 214 Squadron Records it may have been Flt Lt V. Y. Scandleton, 409950, RAAF).

On 13 February 1945, they carried out the first tour of ops together, a nine-and-a-half-hour return flight to Dresden in support of the Main Force – a combined RAF and USAAF raid aimed at jamming enemy fighter controllers radio communications. They continued flying targets further afield, frequently of eight hours duration. Magdeburg, Seirzig and Munster were such targets. Sidney's tour of ops, although arduous, was concluded without further incident and finished with an eight-hour trip to Magdeburg, on 12 April 1945. His flying days over, he left Oulton for training on RAF administration duties, after which he went to Germany, to H.Q. British Air Force of occupation; where he was employed on Personnel duties. During this time, Sidney, I know, attended the Nuremburg trials: *'A different career, another story!'* Sidney left the RAF in November 1947 as a Flight Lieutenant.

Sidney regularly attended 100 Group Reunions. He also liked to attend our own Remembrance Sunday ceremony with Oulton villagers each November, until his health and weakening body prevented him from doing so. We shall all miss Sidney – a Gentleman and Hero to us all here in Oulton. God Bless you!

Friends All,

It was my privilege and pleasure to represent the Association at the Final Ceremony on 4 August for Flight Lieutenant Sidney Alfred Raymond Pike, together with Rodney Vowler and Peter Sluman. A glorious wreath in Air Force colours had been provided by Andrea and Peter's daughter. Rodney carried the 100 Group flag in his usual excellent manner.



In one sentence, I could report that the whole Ceremony and the Wake afterwards were a perfect tribute to a steadfast and respected veteran. There was a large gathering of relatives, including two very small great grandchildren, and many friends.

The Ceremony was a wonderful example of a family remembrance of a well-loved father and grandfather. Tributes were spoken by the Leader of the Ceremony; a son-in-law; and a granddaughter. They covered the whole of his life, his marriage, the children and the work he did in London after the war and through until his retirement, including his interests and hobbies and so many family anecdotes. A most unusual element was a short film that was immensely helpful in illustrating the story of Sidney's life. The style of the Ceremony was very humanist, with no hymns or prayers; but with two periods of personal reflection accompanied by appropriate music.

The Wake was held at Latimer House, now a de Vere Hotel but previously the National Defence College. We had a most pleasing and enjoyable opportunity to speak at length with the family, and in particular with Sidney's two daughters Carol and Julia. I have not the slightest doubt that they both loved and respected their father; he will be well remembered by all his family, through the three generations present.

It was so good to see many family photographs on display, especially showing Sidney and his wife May, who died some fifteen years ago. They looked really happy together; they had met in Germany soon after the war ended, both then in the Armed Services.

All in all, a wonderful family farewell to a well-loved father, grandfather and great grandfather.

Most sincerely,

John Stubbington



I N M E M O R I A M

Tribute to Flight Officer Shirley Bellwood (nee Peek) **by Wing Commander John Stubbington**



It was a great pleasure to have become a friend of Flight Officer Peek; a situation that arose very much by chance, although Shirley lived only five miles from my home. We met six years ago and she became a member of the 100 Group Association. Shirley had joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in April 1939 and trained at the Code and Cypher School, Oxford; she was commissioned in January 1941.



Her early operational appointments were at RAF Watton (December 1941 to August 1942; RAF Horsham St Faith (August – October 1942; and RAF Marham (October 1942 to June 1943. Working with the operational stations became very interesting; the aircraft being used were mostly Mosquitoes. Shirley was invited to fly on a practice low-level bombing run, piloted by Group Captain Edwards, VC. That was great fun, but the deadly serious matter was the planning of raids, and the briefing of the crews. This picture (left) was taken at Marham during May 1943.

As Shirley so aptly said, the worst part was waiting for the crews to return and then de-briefing them on their missions. At the end of her appointment to RAF Marham, Shirley was Gazetted on 2 June 1943 with a Mention in Despatches.

Her work from June 1943 onwards at Bomber Command HQ was with the Target Intelligence and Damage Assessment Section, as Intelligence IB, and largely coincided with the full-scale strategic bombing of Germany. This was a particularly challenging period for the Bombing Offensive, both against key targets in the enemy homeland and later in preparations for the Allied landings in Normandy, the latter to deliver the requirements of the Transportation Plan primarily against the railway network that provided the vital logistics support to German forces all along the Channel coast. The scope of the aggregate work was extensive and included the urgent need to establish and maintain a current record of all damage and the effects caused by the bombing raids. These Records formed a reference library that was constantly used by the Intelligence staff to prepare appreciations for use by the Commander in Chief Sir Arthur Harris and the Operational staffs.

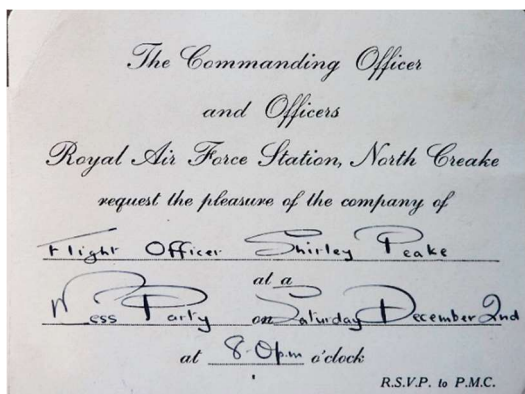
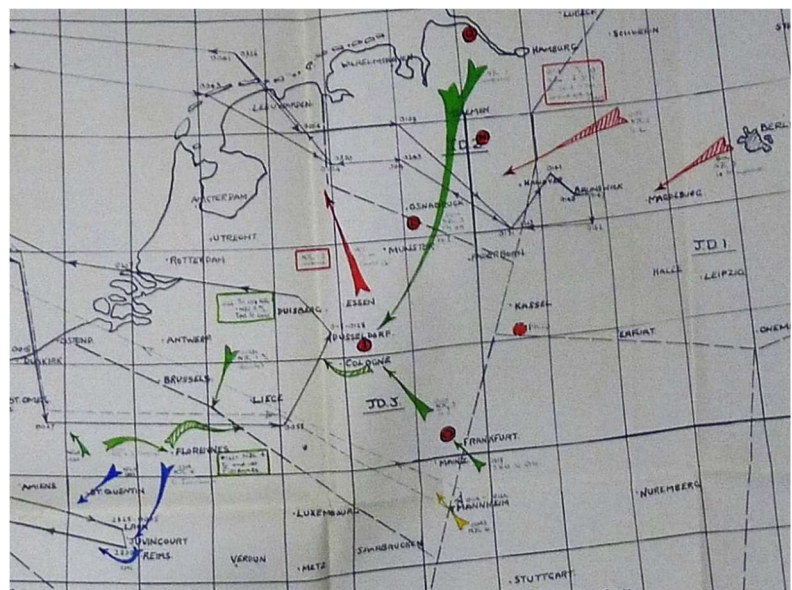
Towards the end of this period, the levels of damage and the consequent effects were becoming enormous. Sir Arthur Harris started the production of the Blue Books to supply HM the King, the Prime Minister, President Roosevelt, the Chief of Air Staff and a very small number of other VIPs with up-to-date photographic illustration of the bomb damage being caused. This process used transparent sheets of Kodatrace laid over the individual photographs and hand-marked to show specific damage effects. The Master Set at Bomber Command was used in the Operations Room. Shirley had a hand in assembling these books and quite often delivered the updates directly to Churchill's official residence at Chequers.

It may have been no chance that Shirley was posted as an Intelligence Officer to 100 Group Headquarters at Bylaugh Hall in April 1944; the Group had just accomplished the initial stages of operations working primarily against enemy night fighters. During April, it was decided to extend the scope of the Bomber Support activities by the inclusion of low level night intrusion using

Mosquito aircraft against enemy airfields, taking advantage of the growing Intelligence Section and information from the Y-Service and Bletchley Park. Separately, but most importantly, the Night Hook-Up Service, which linked in real-time the main Signals Intercept stations with Bomber Command Headquarters and Bletchley Park was extended to include 100 Group Headquarters. That Hook-Up Service provided valuable operational information as raids were progressing and helped 100 Group to inflict growing damage on the enemy night fighting system, using the immediate information on the take-off times and movements of the German fighter aircraft. This was high priority material and was passed immediately on the dedicated telephone and teleprinter network. Shirley would have been involved with this activity.

However, this was only the beginning of the crucial operational support by 100 Group to the Main Bombing Offensive by both the Royal Air Force and the US Army Air Force based in the UK. Through the summer and autumn of 1944, the operations by 100 Group Squadrons were heavy and continuous, regardless of the weather which may have prevented operations by the Main Force.

The Intelligence Section also produced Immediate Raid Analysis Reports containing all the available details of the night raids. These typically had ten or more sheets and had to be complete by the next morning, including an appreciation of the effects of the 100 Group activities. The picture (right) is a chart showing the progress of a Main Force raid on the night 22/23rd April 1944. The coloured arrows show the routes of German night fighters in relation to the tracks of the bomber forces.



But life was sometimes fun and this (left) is an invitation to Shirley to attend a Mess Party at RAF North Creake on 2nd December 1944. Shirley stayed at 100 Group HQ until the Group was merged into the new Radio Warfare Establishment that formed at RAF Watton in August 1945. One of her memories of the war was to take a flight in a 105 Sqn Lancaster and to see the destruction of Cologne with just the cathedral standing.

After the war, Shirley studied design and portrait painting at the Chelsea Polytechnic, followed by a job with the Elizabeth Arden organisation, which took her to many locations around southern England, Northern Ireland and Cyprus. A chance encounter led to a job with the make-up department of the BBC – in the early days of television. She worked with the whole series of 'Maigret' and did make-up for many other personalities, such as Noel Coward, Sean Connery, Ann Todd, Michael Barry and many others.

I was honoured to represent the 100 Group Association at the Cremation and Wake for Shirley on 28th July 2017. She was a very remarkable lady, and it was a privilege to have known her.

I N M E M O R I A M



Tribute to Flt Lt Clifford Rhind: Canadian Mosquito Pilot from Alberta Aviation Museum, Edmonton, Canada



Cliff Rhind, died 15 June, 94yrs

Cliff was a long-time volunteer at the Alberta Aviation Museum where he shared his wartime memories with many visitors. Valerie Seehagel at the Museum remembers: *'When I had a class, I would have him come and talk about the Mosquito during our walk around The Museum ... a sweet man.'* He had a unique connection to our de Havilland Mosquito, and loved telling visitors about the famous and fast World War II fighter/bomber. *'They were beautiful to fly, so easy on the controls'*, he remembered during a 2014 interview for our Blatchford Tales Oral History series. For those with access to the internet, you can find part of Cliff's Blatchford Tales interview here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdnKhIjUbg0&feature=youtu.be

Clifford '*Cliff*' Rhind was born in North Portal, Saskatchewan, and had four brothers: Ernie, Bert, Bill and Terry. Later, he moved to Edmonton where he remained for the rest of his life, except for his military service in World War Two.

Cliff was seventeen when he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in Saskatchewan in June 1941. He was so young he had to wait six months before being allowed to go to boot camp in Brandon, Man. He signed up before he graduated from High School.

He commenced training in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, went through the various stages, and received his Pilot's wings in Alberta in February 1942. After a short Leave, he was posted overseas to England and commenced flying with the RAF at an Advanced Flying Unit (AFU), before being posted to Scotland, to an Instructors Flying School. On completion, he was sent to various AFUs in England, giving instruction to newer Pilots in Instrument and Night Flying. After almost two years, in Training Command, he was posted to an RAF Night Fighter Squadron – 239 Squadron, at West Raynham under RAF 100 Group, Bomber Command – flying Mosquitoes. Having spent time in Training Command before getting a chance to fly operational duties, he never got any actual instruction on the Mosquito before taking it aloft for the first time. He remembered being handed a 40-page booklet entitled: *'Pilots' Notes for FBVI'*, and told: *'There it is. Study it. When you are ready to fly, take it'*. He says he got in, taxied around, checked all the instruments ... and away he went!!

He flew a night fighter for the last eighteen months of the war, piloting the fast and versatile aircraft ahead of Lancaster heavy bombers, protecting them from enemy fire. *'We never gave it much thought'*, Cliff then aged 92, said at his Edmonton apartment. *'We just did what we were told.'* He completed 34 missions escorting bombers, flying through the darkness at 480 kilometres per hour, clearing a path for Lancasters carrying heavy loads. As a Flt/Lt at the end of the war, he returned to Canada and was discharged in September 1945. He then took a job at Imperial Oil for thirty-five years before retiring. An avid golfer, Cliff spent his retirement years on the golf course, he also volunteered at the Aviation Museum in Edmonton where he could tell visitors about the Mosquito aircraft he flew during the war and of which he was very proud.

Cliff passed away peacefully at the Kipnes Centre for Veterans on 15 June 2017 at the age of 94.

Remembered by [Valerie Seehagel](#)

New Members & Queries



Dear Janine,

Where do I start?

I will begin with my late father's wartime Service, after which you may find the link between that and 100 Group tenuous, but please bear with me. My father's name was Roy Spencer Beasley. In RAF terms, an 'Erk', an LAC 2 Electrician to be precise. His Unit was 14 OTU based initially at Cottesmore and then Market Harborough which, by then, was using Wellingtons. He attended two courses on them in 1943, then again in 1944, and had a passion for Wellingtons. After the war in the 50s and 60s he would take us to Cottesmore Open Days almost every year. Market Harborough though, was rarely talked about.

I have looked through 14 OTU's Daily Records at the National Archives and found that they were experimenting with TINSEL equipment and Infra-red devices, and his AOC was Group Captain A. P. Richie who, in 1944, was promoted to AVM! I also know that he spoke to my father over the telephone on at least one occasion around 1961.

It is at this point that it gets interesting. At war's end, his Unit was one of the first to disband, but not him. He is instead sent to RAF Oulton, arriving on 2 July 1945, then on the 27 July that same year, he is at RAF Feltwell. He then returns to Oulton on the 24 August 1945 and finally, he arrives at the RWE which, as we know, was very secret, on 1 September 1945. The reason for being at the RWE according to his Records is B? He was released from Service on the 27 November 1945.

I know 100 Group was not disbanded until December 1945, but still it was a Top-Secret organisation with a lot of sensitive electronics still extant. So, I would ask, do any of your members remember meeting with him, or know what he was doing while there, or does his name appear in the Station Day Book if anyone has access to them? Under who's orders was he working? Did he have security clearance? Our family has strong links with the RAF. My late uncle, my sister and her husband, sister-in-law and her husband, and my son-in-law have all served, and we would like this mystery solved and entered into our Family Tree. I do hope your members might help.



Roy Spencer Beasley, far right, back row, RAF Market Harborough, '45

The photos I've sent are cherished by the family. The [group picture \(right\)](#) was taken at [RAF Market Harborough](#), we think early 1945. He is in the back row, far right (*was he hiding?*). The photo above is very sad. He is with Mum, but not sure when or where. Tragically, she died of Crohn's Disease in 1951.

Yours Sincerely,

Clive

Clive Beasley

beasley14otu@gmail.com

Dear Janine,

I recently bought a copy of your booklet: '*Brief History of Little Snoring*' because I am currently researching an aircraft shot down on the night of 26th November 1943. The aircraft was flown by Flying Officer E. B. Woolhouse and recorded as the last aircraft lost by the Squadron at Little Snoring, but also officially the first lost from their new Base at RAF Witchford. There appears to be some confusion over the serial number and crash location of this aircraft. The aircraft is listed by both yourself and Sue Aldridge as DS680, this crew's regular aircraft, I think. You also mention it being lost near Hermee in Belgium. However, it appears they were actually flying DS793 KO-L. I am due to excavate the crash site of this aircraft, which is located just north of Frankfurt, outside the village of Stockheim.

However, the real reason for contacting you is that I'm very keen to find out more about 115 Squadron's time at Little Snoring, and wondered whether you would be able to help, or point me in the direction of anyone you know worth talking to about it? I'd be grateful for any information anyone can give me ...

It's great to hear of your work and that the Association continues to link people to stories of the remarkable exploits of so many wartime heroes. Like you, I am passionate about telling these stories and ensuring their bravery is not forgotten. I regularly visit a group of veterans from RAF 10 Squadron, for which I have a current research project charting what remains of their wartime heritage. Your work for 100 Group is a fantastic thing. It always cheers me when I find other like-minded people who passionately refuse to let their deeds pass quietly.

I will, of course, keep you in touch with the progress of our project. I am currently collecting background information to provide a backdrop to our survey and excavation work that will take place this coming September. In the meantime, if you do have any veterans who may remember 115 Squadron at Little Snoring I'd love to hear from them ... I'm keen to establish what life was like at the Base during the time leading up to 115 Squadron's move to Witchford in November 1943. I'd love to find photographs and identify key personnel on the Squadron at that time. I will no doubt be paying a visit to see the Squadron ORB in due course.

My work for this project is focused on developing appropriate methodologies for the investigation of WWII aviation crash sites and promoting good practice within EU member States (rather awkward now that we are supposedly leaving!). I'll have more to report in October when the first phase of survey is complete.

Many thanks for your time,

With best wishes,

Phil

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Dear Janine,

It is such a delight hearing from you, I so love your emotive descriptions because they accurately reflect how I feel and indeed have felt since that October afternoon in 1971.

My father used to pass all his many books on both Fighter and Bomber Command to me back when I was 10/11 yrs. old, in 1952/53. Thus, I grew up with a passion for the RAF. My father was in a reserved occupation during WWII and always deeply regretted not joining up.

In mid-October 1971, along with a close friend and a colleague from my work with BT, I climbed an old Medieval Castle Mound at Anstey in Hertfordshire. My friend had told me of a B-17G Flying Fortress crashing on the mound back in 1944. Just as it began to get seriously dark, my colleague suddenly exclaimed: '*Hey, look what I found!*' He was holding aloft the back of a gold wristwatch. We wet our fingers, rubbing the back, which revealed engraved on it a name: '**William L. Meyran**'. I realised we must be standing on a spot where young American airmen had died and nobody seemed to know or care much about it. I resolved then and there to find all I could about Meyran, the crash, the crew, and the Unit they served.

It led to my writing to the American Embassy, followed by their giving me an address to write to in the USA. I soon had the full list of the crew, confirmation they had all perished in the crash, serving with the 398th Bombardment Group (Heavy). Those days, it was all typewriters and airmail. Eventually, the USA Records Centre at Maxwell AFB suggested me buying the 398th Records on micro-film. This sounded very James Bond in 1972! However, I ended up with four reels, but no means of reading them. The local Council at Bishops Stortford, close to the Telephone Exchange where I was based, allowed me to use their microfilm reader during the staff's lunch break, leading to writer's cramp as I frantically wrote down details.

To speed things up for you – I contacted many 398th Veterans. Then, along with a group of friends and fellow enthusiasts, we were invited to help form '*Friends of the Eighth*' (FOTE) in 1973. This led to a veteran Pilot of the 466th Bomb Group, Attlebridge, attending one of our meetings, going back to the USA and forming the 8th Air Force Historical Society in 1975 (8th AFHS). In 1976, the 8th AFHS organised the first-ever UK Reunion, and we welcomed back Veterans to most every airfield in East Anglia. Those were halcyon days, they were still in their mid-50s mostly, memories still quite sharp.

Pat Carty, author of '*Secret Squadrons of the Eighth*' used to come to all our FOTE meetings, always keeping me abreast of his researches at Cheddington. I have his book, of course, plus '*Squadron of Deception*' by Stephen Hutton.

I finally 'found' the story of William L. Meyran in 2004, which taught me to never give up with research. I had the honour of designing the 398th BG Memorial at Nuthampstead, which the Veterans unveiled and dedicated in 1982. As an aside; I composed a few lines one weekend in 1982, which are proudly engraved on the Memorial:

*'Their Wings of Silver touched the passing clouds,
Made soft white trails across the azure blue.
But not for them this life we share on earth,
They sacrificed that gift for me and you.'*

Imagine then my astonishment when those lines appeared on the Memorial at Horsham St Faith (Norwich Airport) a while ago, without my permission or foreknowledge, and not credited to the 398th Memorial from 1982!



398th Bombardment Grp (Heavy) Memorial, designed by Malcolm Osborn

At certain times of the year, the setting sun rests on the Memorial, lighting it up in all its glory. I am so proud of what it stands for. We must never forget the sacrifices of all those young men in RAF Bomber Command: 55,573; and 26,000 serving with the U.S. 8th and 9th Army Air Forces. Veterans came over and unveiled it in 1982, and we spoke of Meyran, but nobody could help me, unfortunately, with giving me further information. However, I have discovered that William L. Meyran was an only child and came from Los Angeles. My work colleague emigrated to Australia in 1974 and unfortunately, took the watch-back we'd found with him.

I used to visit all the old airfields with three close friends, Cliff Bishop (of East Anglia Books), his brother Stan Bishop, and Bernie Thorpe. Cliff passed away suddenly in 2015 just before Christmas. We used to call ourselves '*Last of the Summer Wine*' and shared many amazing days out together. Cliff and Stan were/are two of the top 8th Air Force historian/researchers in the world. I miss Cliff terribly. Stan is currently working on his Volume 6 of Losses of the 8th & 9th Air Forces. Each volume comes out at some 700 pages, covering just three months.

I have written two books, both photo histories, 486th Bomb Group (Sudbury), and 398th Bomb Group (Nuthampstead). In November 2015, Cliff asked me to help him finish a history of the 401st Bomb Group (Deenethorpe) which he started in 2008 but put on a back burner. I went to visit him, downloaded his Quark files on a memory stick and loaded them into my iMac at home. I could see there was still much to do with his book, we decided to discuss it in detail immediately after Christmas. But sadly, he died. I promised his daughter and two sons to finish it as my personal tribute to him. It took many months, but East Anglia Books (now run by Cliff's daughter) published it in March this year. As a '*Last of the Summer Wine*' trip, we had a great day at Cheddington a few years ago, talking about the 36th Bomb Squadron and RAF 100 Group (BS). In the last four years, I have been researching/reading a great deal about Bletchley Park and Ultra's importance to most every aspect of WWII, especially Bomber Command, 8th AAF, and the Battle of the Atlantic. There is so much to learn about 100 Group's relationships with Bletchley and the 'Y' Stations, and still a story to be written.

Reading in your book about the 100-Year-Rule concerning some of 100 Group's work I am reminded of a lecture we attended at Bletchley Park the other evening, where we were told that GCHQ have stated that some of the algorithms used by The Testery at Bletchley will never be released!

As an aside – Saturday 24 June this year, we attended the RAF Bomber Command Veterans' Day at Godmanchester, with six veterans in attendance – marvellous! I just love being in these modest gentlemen's company. Roger Leivers, who organised the event – his third – also published his book: *'Stirling to Essen'* – which focuses on a Stirling crash at Godmanchester. A truly superb book!

Meantime, my researches into the 398th continued to grow.

In 1986, I was promoted twice at BT. As Senior Manager, working ten- to twelve-hour days, I had little time to spend on the 398th. However, I took early retirement at the age of 52, then spent three years working for BICC followed by Marshalls of Cambridge. Losing my wife Irene in 1998 hit me extremely hard and for four years I had no interest in anything, but my passion for the 8th Air Force and RAF Bomber Command remained undiminished. They were my precious touchstones.

The 398th came over for their bi-annual Reunion in 2002, and finally I felt able to attend, with Joyce's support. It went very well and I decided to go ahead with a project which had been sitting at the back of my mind for a few years. I had read of a software package allowing photos to be stitched together making a panorama. By inserting a 'hotspot', it allowed you to zoom in and move on to another panorama. So, starting in 2004, for two years I would walk the whole of Nuthampstead airfield and surrounding fields, with landowners' permission, my camera on a tripod, taking a photo every 30 degrees for the 360 degrees, then walk several yards and repeat the process again and again ... It took hours, once home, to stitch them together into seamless panoramas, add hotspots, then add auxiliary hotspots to original wartime photos taken at almost identical spots. Thus, I could zoom from 'Now' to 'Then' and it worked extremely well. It also meant I regained my concentration, and my enthusiasm returned. The project took two amazing years (the software company has since stopped trading).

One cold afternoon in the winter of 2004, I was leg-tired and eye-tired and knocked on the door of a sweet lady and her partner whom I had known for many years at Nuthampstead. Peggy makes delicious scones. If I was lucky I may get a scone and coffee! Peggy was a young girl when her father farmed the land adjacent to Nuthampstead airfield during WWII, she had a raft of stories we shared together. So, this day, she said she would plug the kettle in and asked would I like a scone ... would I???? Peggy said: *'whilst I'm in the kitchen, I'll put a video on for you to see, which Larry Paul sent me a few weeks ago'*. The name 'Larry Paul' was somehow familiar.

The video started. Larry Paul was projecting a film he had made at Nuthampstead during WWII. He was filming the projected film while giving a running commentary. Suddenly, a young man appeared. *'This is Billy Meyran, who was my Pilot. The day after I filmed this he was killed in a take-off crash ...'* My God!!!!

Here was William L. Meyran!

I sat, totally stunned, biting back the tears, tears of joy, tears of immense sadness, tears of relief. I had suddenly 'found' Bill Meyran! Of course, I suddenly remembered, Larry Paul was Meyran's usual Co-Pilot and had been stood down for the 15 October 1944 mission, as had the usual Navigator and Bombardier to be replaced by the Squadron Command Acting Pilot, Navigator and Bombardier, to determine if Meyran was suitable for Lead Pilot on subsequent missions. Thus, Meyran's three regular crew members survived.

I asked Peggy for Larry Paul's address, which she gave, along with the precious video to watch at home and get copied. I drank my coffee with shaking hands, ate two warm scones, sat chatting for an hour or so, then bade Peggy goodbye, walked up to the Woodman Inn car park nearby, and started to drive home. I didn't get very far, before pulling onto the grass area where the Group

Commander's hut once stood. I rang Joyce, told her the amazing news, losing my emotions whilst speaking to her, rang off, then sobbed alone in my car. My goodness, from 1971 to 2004 ... never give up! I wrote to Larry Paul the very next day and received a warm reply two weeks later.



William L. Meyran

It had been Bill Meyran's 25th birthday on 15 October 1944. When the 'Charge of Quarters' aroused him and the other guys in their Nissen Hut, Bill leapt from his bed, punched the air and exclaimed: 'Guys, it's my 25th birthday today. My Grandfather left me a \$100,000 bequest, with the first \$25,000 to be paid on my 25th birthday ... and today is the day! When I return, we are going to have one hell of a party ...' Just two hours later, William L. Meyran would lose his young life on a Medieval Castle Mound.

To the left, stands Bill Meyran. Below, is the crash as photographed in 1944. The picture on the next page, shows the moat, where all the unexploded bombs landed. The stricken B-17G's remains came to rest on the mound after crashing and exploding, while the bombs were all in the moat and did not explode, thankfully, although the force of the aircraft's explosion blew most of the medieval stained glass out of the windows of St George's Church nearby.

A fireman (whom I met in 1971) at the time based at Royston Fire Station, told me how they started pumping water from the moat. He got into the water with his waders on, found a firm footing, and directed the pump hose into the water. As the water level dropped, he discovered he was actually standing on the unexploded bombs and vacated the site extremely smartly! The crew's remains were strewn everywhere, a crew of ten as this was a lead aircraft.

I have your books 'RAF 100 Group – Kindred Spirits' and 'RAF 100 Group – The Birth of Electronic Warfare'. I am so loving reading them. I purchased both of Wing Commander John Stubbington's books. Each was published some time ago now. Then yesterday, the postman delivered 'Espionage in the Ether' by William J and John E. Rees, I have the companion volume 'Swift and Sure' already. I also found 'Special Ops Liberators', 223 (Bomber Support) Squadron, 100 Group, and the 'Electronic War' at



Duxford this past weekend. So, I have some excellent books to read in the weeks ahead. Of course, I have a great many other books, but the new purchases will enable me to come up to speed with the latest 100 Group research and I can gradually assimilate that with my knowledge of the workings of Bletchley Park. It is all so very exciting!



Moat with unexploded bombs

We are all Guardians of precious stories told to us by Veterans over the years, it is only they who can truly tell us as it was. We are given the privilege of listening to them as they share their memories with us. At a 398th Reunion in Phoenix one year, I sat with six Veterans at a table after dinner, their wives were at a distant table talking to each other. Slowly, the tales began to emerge, eyes became focused on long distant memories, some eyes became moist, these are extremely special moments.

As they opened up to me, quietly I listened in awe as experiences I had never read about slowly came to light. Describing seeing a B-17G with a best friend inside, flying not too far away, suddenly becoming confetti as it took a direct flak hit just before bombs away. *'Nobody gets out of that'*, they said with shaking voices.

After an hour, some of the ladies came over. *'Honey, are you talking to Ozzie about your missions?'* *'Just a little, Hon, just a little.'* As they broke up to go to bed, one of the wives whispered to me: *'Ozzie, now his nightmares will begin again.'* Next day, she explained it happened after every Reunion, happened frequently after they were first married, carried on for many years on and off. I immediately apologised. *'No, Honey, he loves talking to you. He has never talked about it to his family.'* Some did talk a little, most never did. That makes listening to veterans even more of a special honour, because they trust me, I carry their stories in my head, they know I will never abuse that trust. I always tell young researchers to never try to embellish or exaggerate the exploits of these young men, because believe me, you can never embellish or exaggerate them enough!

Goodbye for now, Janine ... thank you so much for allowing me to share my story with you and your readers: *'Lest We Forget'*.

Warmest regards,

Malcolm 'Ozzie'

malcolm.osborn@gmail.com



Dear Mr Dobson,

Thank you so much for sending me the latest edition of the 100 Group magazine ... I would certainly like to join the Association and have copied this response to Janine in order that she might, please, let me know how I should go about enrolling, etc. It was a pleasure to meet you, together with your sister and husband who so kindly looked after me and my husband. You will appreciate the Reunion afternoon was a very moving occasion for me. I could never have expected to meet the relative of someone else who flew with and died with my father as a result of that fateful Halifax flight from Foulsham in November 1944. An extraordinary outcome for me, and for David Hales. I hope it will be possible to meet again in Foulsham next year:-

MY FATHER: W/O BERNARD HARLEY HARRISON, 1915 – 1944



Where to begin? Well, I would like to start by thanking Janine for her welcoming emails and enlisting me as a member of the RAF 100 Group Association following on from my attendance at the Memorial Service held in Foulsham on Friday 12 May 2017. Secondly, I have to say there is no way I could have anticipated the amazing outcome arising from my attendance at that event. I am still wondering if I dreamt it all!!

The fact that I attended at all was a matter of pure chance. On the Tuesday preceding the Memorial Service, my husband and I were at our cottage on the North Norfolk coast packing our car to return home to East Sussex, when a near neighbour phoned to draw attention to an article in the Eastern Daily Press about the forthcoming Memorial Service. He was aware that my father, flying from Foulsham, was shot down and killed whilst piloting a Halifax over Germany in 1944. He knew the article and Memorial Service would be of interest to us. On seeing the article, my reaction was *'well, isn't that typical – we get to hear about it just as we pack our bags to leave!'*

On the drive home, and whilst reminiscing about my Dad and the little I knew about him, my husband and I decided we would change the commitments we had in Sussex and return to Foulsham for the service on the Friday. I cannot begin to tell you how glad I am we made that decision. Neither of us could have dreamt how significant that decision would turn out to be, and what a tremendous outcome the afternoon would have for me.

Whilst I have a remembrance cross planted for him at Westminster Abbey every year and a tree planted in his memory in Leicestershire, I have never visited Germany to locate my father's grave. In some small way, I therefore felt that if I attended this Memorial Service, held in the village he would have known and last flew from, it would be a way of honouring him. Regrettably, neither of us got to know or even to see each other. He was killed in November 1944, and I was born in March 1945.

The short service and Minute's silence specifically to remember those who flew from Foulsham gave me the opportunity to pay that honour. That of itself made the entire day worthwhile. But little did I know there was so much more to come!

Members of the Association, Susan and Norman Eccles, had kindly made us welcome early in the afternoon. They went on to tell us about the refreshment generously provided by the Parish Council in the village hall, and that we were welcome to attend. Whilst chatting with them and walking to the hall, we were joined by another gentleman who I now know to be David Hales. David told us that he was there to remember his uncle, Sgt. Richard B. Hales, who also died in Germany having flown from Foulsham in a Halifax. In an unforgettable exchange where I was telling David why I was there, he casually asked my father's name. As I told him, he stopped in his tracks, and asked me to repeat it. I did so, whereupon he responded: *'He was my Uncle's Pilot!'* It was a momentous exchange for both of us. I could never have imagined I would meet a relative of my father's crew. His Uncle and my Dad were flying in Halifax MZ806 which was shot down on the night of 21/22 November 1944. Of the crew of eight, four were killed in the crash (my father, Sgt Roland P. Clancy, Sgt Tom D. McGill, and W/O J. R. Sutton), two became prisoners of war (Sgt Stan Wharton and F/Sgt Jack G. Smith RAAF), and two were murdered on capture (David's Uncle and Sgt Alec P. Bloomfield). David has told me this tragic incident was the subject of an article in the

October 2011 edition of *'Flypast'* and has kindly made a copy available to me. David has also given me other information that he has unearthed in researching the incident for which I thank him.

My father joined the RAF on 11 July 1939 from the TA. I know little about his Service before his posting to Foulsham and serving with 192 Squadron. But I do know he spent time in Canada training other pilots.

Neither do I know how he and my mother met or when. According to my Grandmother, her daughter was very popular, being quite attractive. Unfortunately, my father was already engaged when he met my mother, but broke it off, which alienated us from his family. They married in 1941, so it was a short marriage with long separations. By the time I was four, my mother had married again and begun a new family. As a consequence, I have never known much about his background either as a child or as a young man before and after joining the RAF. All my mother had to say about his childhood was that one Christmas he had a stocking filled with coal as a punishment! I think that was a warning to me not to misbehave.

I have sorted out a few photos from the small collection my mother passed on to me. Two are forwarded with this article. Unfortunately, I do not have any possessions that would have been personal to him, save for the wings from his uniform and of course, he would have handled the photos.

12 May 2017 was a truly remarkable day for me. I send my thanks to all who made it possible.

Brett

Brett Crocker (nee Harley Harrison)

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EAGER EAGLE

The Wartime Story behind a new Plaque at Foulsham

by Richard Ravencroft



Approximately 27 years ago, I got married, and my wife at that time lived with her family at Church Farm, Foulsham. It was not long after this that I first became aware of the significant history related to this farm as a result of wartime events, which resulted in the tragic loss of many young and brave aircrew. Now, 27 years on, I have finally been able to commemorate this event.

For those of you who don't know Foulsham, it is an old established market village in the County of Norfolk, and is listed in the Domesday book of 1085. Our American friends may be interested to note that the village gave its name to a family of Puritan dissidents who fled England for the town of Hingham, Massachusetts, (and later Exeter, New Hampshire). Spelling of the name was slightly changed to Folsom. Today, these American descendants of Foulsham have given rise to Folsom, California, Folsom Street in San Francisco, Folsom Prison – all named for California pioneer and New Hampshire native Joseph Libbey Folsom, as well as General Nathaniel Folsom who represented New Hampshire in the Continental Congress. (Source: Wikipedia)

In World War Two, RAF Foulsham played host to RAF 100 Group, a special operations Unit who flew bombers including the Handley Page Halifax and de Havilland Mosquito in electronic warfare missions. During that time approximately 2,500 airmen, WAAF, Australian and New Zealanders became part of village life. A comprehensive photo archive, including some taken at an Air show following the cessation of war, for those with computers can be seen by visiting the community archive at <http://foulshamarchives.weebly.com/> The event which captured my attention over past years was the history behind the loss of several young men on the night of 31 August 1943.

At 2330 hours, while on a training flight, B/17F 42/5376 was involved in a mid-air collision with an RAF Beaufighter from the 96th Squadron over Norfolk. Only the two Waist Gunners managed to bail out, suffering a few scratches and bruises. Church Farm, Foulsham, and its outbuilding, were damaged in the crash, along with some cattle being killed.

The aircraft involved was: B-17F-50-BO 42-5376 'JJ-X' 'Eager Eagle' 305th BG, 422nd BS

The American crew were:

- 1st Lt. Floyd H. Truesdell. Pilot – Killed
- 2nd Lt. Allan N. McDaniel Co-Pilot – Killed
- 2nd Lt. William M. Cullity Jr. Navigator – Killed
- 1st Lt. Robert W. Barrall. Bombardier – Killed
- T/Sgt James N. Yongue. Top Turret Gunner/Engineer – Killed
- T/Sgt Joseph F. Van Esley. Radio Operator – Killed
- S/Sgt Charles F. Awrajcewicz. Ball Turret Gunner – Killed
- Sgt Carl G. Ruehl. Left Waist Gunner – Baled out, survived
- S/Sgt John E. Breen. Right Waist Gunner – Baled out, survived.
- S/Sgt George D. Simon. Tail Gunner – Killed
- Squadron Leader E. M. Appleton. Observer (RAF) – Killed

The crew of the RAF Beaufighter V8715 were:

- F/O (119.881) Frederick Neal ROBERTSON DFC (Pilot) RAFVR – Killed in action
- F/O (47873) Bertram Ernest DYE DFM (Observer) RAF – Killed in action

Eager Eagle was assigned to the 305th Bomb Group of 422nd Bomb Squadron. This was a United States American Air Force plane which flew from Chelverston Base 105 in Northamptonshire. Most of these young men were already experienced aircrew, having seen and survived the traumas associated with flying aerial combat sorties. They would have started basic training in the States, pilot, navigation, air gunnery, etc. eventually being assigned to the European Theatre of Operations (ETO). I believe many of the air and ground crews of the 305th came to England via the Atlantic on the Queen Mary, whilst the aircrew flew their aircraft on the North Atlantic air ferry route via Newfoundland, to airfields in Ireland and the south-west of England.

The young 24-year-old pilot of Eager Eagle already wore the wings of the RAF and those of the USAF Air Force. The following is an account of his first ever mission:

VALOR: VICTORY FROM THE JAWS OF DEFEAT

by John L. Frisbee, Contributing Editor

Seconds before 'bombs away', the battered B-17 was without a Bombardier. Only one man, gravely wounded, could save the mission.

The 305th Bomb Group, based at Chelveston in the UK, was one of four pioneer B-17 groups assigned to the Eighth Air Force. It was commanded by Col. Curtis E. LeMay, a tough, no-nonsense leader and a tactical genius. All the groups arrived in England without combat experience and faced a steep, perilous learning curve. They entered combat in the Autumn of 1942.

It was obvious to LeMay that two major deficiencies of the bomb groups were formation flying and air discipline. He experimented with various formations to give maximum mutual protection against enemy fighters. To improve bombing accuracy, he had all B-17s in a group formation drop on signal from the Bombardier of a select lead crew.

Because of the short range of escort fighters at that time, most early targets were in France or the Low Countries. The first penetration of German territory came on January 27, 1943, when LeMay's group took part in an attack on the port of Wilhelmshaven. Then it was back to targets in German-occupied western Europe for the most part.

On March 8, 1943, Eighth Air Force launched 67 B-17s, a large force for the time, against railyards at Rennes, 190 miles southwest of Paris, at the base of the Brittany peninsula. Sixteen of the B-17s were from the 305th Bomb Group. They suffered heavy fighter attacks before reaching the initial point to begin their bomb run.

One B-17 from the 305th's 422nd Squadron, commanded by Lt. Albert Kuehl, bore the brunt of enemy attacks. It started its run with the No. 3 engine out, a fire in the radio compartment, and damage to the control cables and hydraulic system. The crew had been decimated by enemy fire. Both Waist Gunners, the Top Turret Gunner, and the Radio Operator were wounded. A head-on attack had critically wounded the Bombardier, Lieutenant Spatz, who lay unconscious over his bombsight. The Navigator, Lt. Raymond Rahner, was severely wounded in the thigh. Despite major damage to the aircraft, Lieutenant Kuehl was able to stay in formation on the bomb run with the help of co-pilot 2nd Lt. Floyd Truesdell, who had recently transferred from RAF Coastal Command and was on his first B-17 mission. The wounded Gunners all remained at their positions, but the crew was without a Bombardier.

Only minutes away from 'bombs away', Navigator Rahner, suffering from painful injuries, lifted the unconscious Bombardier from his bombsight and carried him to the rear of the nose compartment. He quickly applied compresses to stop the flow of blood and attached a walk-around oxygen bottle to the Bombardier's mask.

The time to 'bombs away' now was measured in seconds. Unless someone replaced the incapacitated Bombardier, all the damage and suffering would be for naught. Only Lieutenant Rahner was in a position to do it. He resolved that their mission should not fail. He crawled painfully back to the Bombardier's position, opened the bomb bay doors, released the bombs on signal from the Lead Bombardier, and buttoned up the doors. He then returned to Spatz's side and continued first aid, undoubtedly saving the critically wounded man's life.

As the formation turned off target, fighter attacks on the damaged B-17 resumed. Alternately manning the two guns in the nose, Lieutenant Rahner drove off several head-on attacks. One of the Waist Gunners, SSgt. T. E. Johnson, wounded by 20-mm fire in both legs, one shoulder, and his right eye, and with his electrically heated clothing inoperative; shot down a Bf-109 confirmed. A second Gunner, Sergeant Johns, probably downed another. Three more fighters were known to have been damaged.

Heading north over the comparative safety of the English Channel, sixty miles wide at that point, Lieutenants Kuehl and Truesdell could no longer keep the aircraft with the formation. Lieutenant Rahner left the nose guns long enough to give the Pilots a course to an RAF Base in England, where they landed safely.

The valiant men aboard that B-17 salvaged what almost certainly would have been a failed sortie, but for their heroism and teamwork. For his extraordinary performance as Navigator, Bombardier, Gunner and 'Flight Surgeon', Lt. Raymond Rahner was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Pilot Albert Kuehl received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Co-Pilot Floyd Truesdell the Air Medal. The Purple Heart went to all six wounded members of the crew. They had written an early chapter in the long and gallant history of the Eighth Air Force.

Thanks to George H. Collins for bringing this story to our attention.
Published September 1994

Floyd Truesdell's early flying experiences with the RCAF, before serving time with RAF Coastal Command ultimately gaining experience in night flying, is what possibly led to his inclusion in the dropping of propaganda leaflets at night over occupied territory flying with the 305th. As a result of internet-based research, I have been able to collate several letters written by friends and people who knew Floyd, this provides an insight into his life and more importantly, how well liked and respected he was even at such a young age. See the following letter below:

*G H Collins
R I. I, Box #1032
Niceville, Florida 32578*

Floyd Harold Truesdell was my best friend. In 1937, when my family moved to Alaska, Floyd took me right under his wing. My dad worked for his dad on the Alaska railroad, and Floyd took it on himself to introduce me around, meet the girls, show me the High School, (the only one) I'd be going to, a ride around on his motor cycle and anything else he could think of. He was one of the most caring, thoughtful and generous people I've ever known.

His best friend, and later a good friend of mine, was Jack Harold Storm - a handsome devil (who also became a pilot) and a real hand with the gals. All of us having the same middle name, we soon became 'The Three Musty Beers'. We all three, sooner or later, even went with the same gals.

In 1938, Floyd went outside to Washington State and Dad sent me outside to Puget Sound Naval Academy. Floyd and I met again a number of times in Seattle during that two years. He had a rickety old car and would drive up to see me and we'd go to a dance, drink beer or whatever.

Not long after that, he enlisted in the RCAF and got more flying training there - he had been flying while at Pullman. I don't remember when he went to England with the RCAF, but he flew with the RAF too in Coastal Command, if I remember correctly. He saw plenty of combat with them plus night flying. I suppose that's why the AAF later picked him to start the night flying training mission for the upcoming propaganda leaflet dropping over France and Germany.

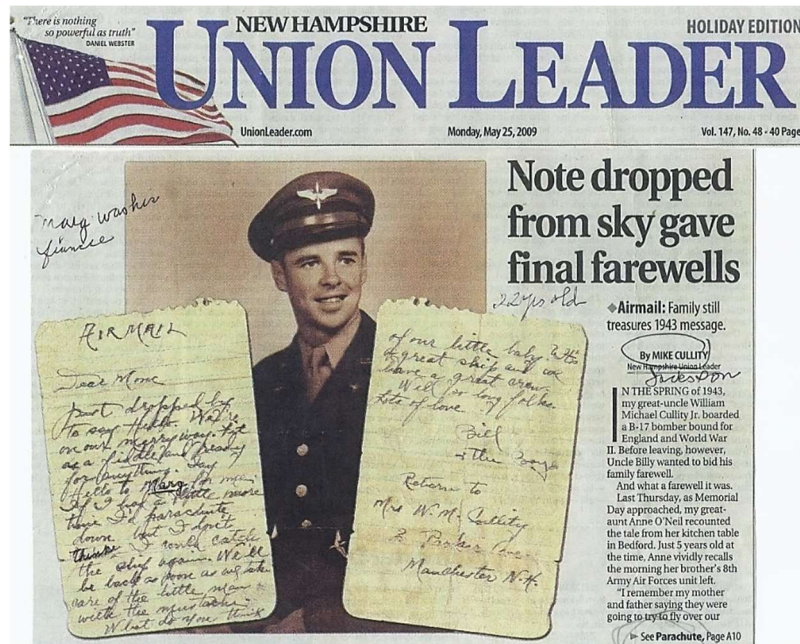
Early in July 1943, he came to see me in a B-17. I don't think it was Eager Eagle, but may have been. We went flying around England and came back to my Station (164) to land, made the approach ... and it was the wrong field ... easy to do ... but it didn't bother Floyd. Hauled the gear back up and away we went.

The next time I saw him, he came after me in an English 'Oxford' two-engine admin plane. We buzzed a couple of Englishmen on their bicycles, went to the south of England and returned a flare gun he had borrowed. As I left the plane on our return, I told him to take good care of himself and wished him good luck ... he turned and said, and I'll never forget this ... '*He'll, the Krauts haven't made the bullet that will kill me*' ... he was right ...

I have intended to return to England over the years to visit friends, relatives and Floyd's grave ... So last winter I called graves registration in Washington DC and they informed me that Floyd isn't buried in England but had been disinterred and buried in Phoenix, Arizona. So last summer on my annual trek to Colorado Springs, I came home via Phoenix and visited his grave in that city. He is buried alongside his mother and father. I don't know when he was brought home. I have thought about him many times over the last 47 years, and missed him sorely, and wondered how different all our lives would have been had he made it. We lost a hellova fine friend when we lost Floyd.

George

Details of other crew members are gradually coming to light. On board the B-17 that fateful night was William Cullity, Navigator. Having been in touch with a distant family member in the USA, I was sent the following interesting newspaper clipping regarding him flying over his parents' home as he left American for England:



The full article reads:

'In the Spring of 1943, my great-uncle William Michael Cullity Jr boarded a B-17 bomber bound for England and World War Two. Before leaving however, Uncle Billy wanted to bid his family farewell. And what a farewell it was! Last Thursday, as Memorial Day approached, my great-aunt Anne O'Neil recounted the tale from her kitchen table in Bedford. Just 5 years old at the time, she vividly recalls the morning her brother's Eighth Army Air Force Unit left. 'I remember my mother and father saying they were going to try to fly over our house ... Then, all of a sudden, my father yelled 'Here they come!'

Anne and her parents, William and Elizabeth Cullity, hustled down the back stairs of their home at 2 Park Ave, on Manchester's west-side. Above them, the B-17 approached, flying low with its wings tipping to and fro as if to wave hello. 'That's how we knew it was him', Anne said. As the bomber passed overhead, the family spotted an object falling from it. A small canvas pouch sewn to a gold cloth streamer landed about a block away on Winter Street. 'A little boy found it and gave it to a policeman, and he brought it over to my mother and father', Anne said. Addressed to 'Mrs W. M. Cullity, 2 Parker Ave. City', the pouch contained a note from Billy. 'Dear Mom', it read in part. 'Just dropped by to say hello. We're on our merry way. Fit as a fiddle and ready for anything ... We'll be back as soon as we take care of the little man with a mustache.'

Born in Manchester on July 2, 1921, Billy attended St Raphael's Grammar School and graduated from St Joseph's High School in 1938. Blue-eyed and curly-haired, he was an honors student whose poetry and essays graced the pages of the school's bi-monthly literary magazine. A plumber's apprentice before America entered the war, Billy enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Forces as an aviation cadet a month after Pearl Harbor. Trained as a B-17 Navigator, 2nd Lt. Cullity flew several missions over enemy territory after arriving in England. 'You could count on his cool head and steady nerves to navigate through flak, fighter attacks and even through hell to reach his objective' wrote Major Charles G. Y. Normand, a fellow Manchester soldier who served with Billy, in a letter home.

On August 31, 1943, Billy and 10 other crewmen boarded their B-17, nicknamed 'Eager Eagle' for a night training flight. Because there was a red air-raid alert on, they flew without navigation

lights. At 11.30pm, the *Eager Eagle* collided with a Royal Air Force *Beaufighter*, also flying without lights, over the town of Foulsham on England's southeast coast. In his letter, Maj. Normand wrote that the *Beaufighter* was returning from a night bombing mission. Nine *Eager Eagle* crew members, including 22-year-old Billy died that night. 'Imagine going through hell and high water and coming out of it all without a scratch, then getting killed in a night practice mission', Maj. Normand wrote. 'It just doesn't make sense, and I still have a hard time convincing myself that he is actually dead.'

On September 10, William and Elizabeth Cullity received a War Department telegram informing them of Billy's death. At the time, two of their three younger sons were also serving their country. My grandfather, Private John Cullity, was a Marine stationed at Cherry Point, NC. His brother, Private Thomas Cullity, was in an Army coast artillery battalion in Berkeley, California. Both would later serve overseas – my grandfather in the Pacific and Uncle Tom in Europe, where he was a prisoner of war in Germany from Oct. 28, 1944, to May 1, 1945.

Five years after he went to war, Billy finally came home. Temporarily buried at the U.S. Military Cemetery in Brookwood, England, his remains arrived by train in Manchester in June 1948. After a funeral at St. Raphael's Church attended by Mayor Josaphat T. Benoit and other city luminaries, he was buried at St. Joseph cemetery in Bedford.

At home last week, not far from Billy's grave, Anne acknowledged that, as a girl, she didn't grasp the gravity of her brother's duty. 'I didn't think anything of war,' she said. 'My brothers were away, but they were coming home. As a kid, you don't realise how serious it is.'

Although two Cullity brothers returned to raise families and live to an old age, Billy paid war's ultimate price. But with his goodbye over Manchester, he gave his sister a parting gift she still treasures 66 years later. 'It was quite thrilling,' she said. 'It's something I'll always remember.'

Another well documented crew member is Robert W. Barrell, Bombardier. He had survived uninjured aboard a plane known as '*Old Bill*', made famous in the original black and white film following the last mission of *The Memphis Belle* filmed by The Army Air Force First Motion Picture Unit. (Original film can be viewed, for those with a computer, on YouTube.)

Two of the crew from '*Eager Eagle*' were fortunate to survive the collision. These were Waist Gunners John Breen, survivor from '*Old Bill*', and Karl Ruehl (Rookie). As a result of the collision, the two Waist Gunners were able to make a good escape as they were close to the rear fuselage exit. John Breen had instructed the rookie Ruehl to jump. One of these two landed in a field and was not believed to be in the air long, indicating a low altitude at the time of their jump for survival. Both men were incredibly shaken by the events and unable to serve on active duty following this. It is well catalogued that Breen was requested to visit the men in the mortuary to identify his crew mate's bodies which had been recovered, but was unable to carry out this request due to the bodies having been severely burnt.

This letter from John Breen was found in an old issue of '*Can Do Notes*'.

'First, the '**Old Bill**' episode May 15 '43. We got shot up pretty bad over Germany. We dropped out of formation. All told we had the nose shot off, Hydraulic System shot out ... Pilot and Co-Pilot were wounded. The Tail Gunner flew the plane over Europe ... We were repeatedly attacked by fighters. We got the Pilot and Co-Pilot revived. We found the English Channel and flew at about 50 feet off the water. A few German fighters followed. By that time, it was almost over. We threw out guns and anything else we could do to lighten the plane. Captain Whitson took over the plane and did a fantastic job getting us back to base and landing the plane. Myself and the Tail Gunner were the only ones not wounded. Everyone on board got medals.

With all that crew in hospital, I had to find a new crew. I had signed up to fly with Lt. Perkins. He was from Chicago. Just previous to that, I heard from your friend Truesdell he was looking for a crew. I talked to him because I heard he was a terrific Pilot and a nice fellow. Then I informed Lt. Perkins of my decision. I flew a few times with Floyd Truesdell, then they decided the 422nd was to do night stuff, half paper and half bombs. I heard that Lt. Perkins was shot down on his first mission.

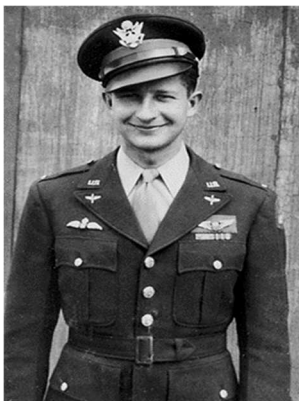
We were notified by Floyd Truesdell that we were going to fly a practice mission. We had 13 on board, one just going along for the ride.

God was with me all the time I flew. On the way to the plane I stopped off at the Parachute Bldg. The Corporal told me it wasn't there. That was hard to believe because I faithfully turned my chute in every time I flew. Anyway, I decided to go without it. After we were in the air, I turned on my flashlight and sure enough, it was near the Tail Gunner's door. I always wore my chute even on practice runs. It was quite dark that night. I went into the radio room for a smoke. Then I went to my right Waist Gun position. There was a terrific crash. I got knocked down. But not hurt. I looked out my window and the entire right side of the plane was missing; the wing and two engines. The kid (C. Rhuel) who was on the left Waist had never been on a mission. I hollered at him to bail out. I blew the door off and jumped. All this happened in about ten seconds. They found me in a farm yard.

I did not know until the next day, when a British Officer came into the RAF Hospital and told me there had been a mid-air collision. We were at 7,000 feet when it happened. The bodies, I was told, were burned beyond recognition. They asked me to go to the hangar where the bodies were. I couldn't do it. The other Waist Gunner must have fallen out of the plane. They found him unconscious. The doctors asked me to try and talk with him. He came to immediately. They flew a plane down to pick me up. As far as Rhuel was concerned, they sent him away and I never saw him again. I got sent home several months later. I swear to this day that I owe my life to the pilot, Floyd Truesdell.

The following document was written by MacKinlay Kantor. Kantor was an American journalist, novelist and screenwriter. He wrote more than 30 novels along with 'The Best Years of Our Lives' aka 'Glory for Me', Robert E. Sherwood; then adapted it as a screenplay winning seven academy awards. Kantor reported from London as a War Correspondent for a Los Angeles newspaper 'The Saturday Evening Post'. After flying with some bombing missions, he asked for and received training to operate the Bomber's turret machine guns, although he was not in Service and this violated regulations. It is around this time that he must have written the following:

THE DRINKS WERE ON TRUESDELL



Floyd Truesdell

A lot of the fellows had some drinks up here at Thornhill (Chelveston) the other night. The drinks were on Truesdell, but it happened that he wasn't here to join in.

Let me explain about Thornhill: the place isn't real. Neither are the names of Barnwell and Mugley and Hepworth – all USAAF bomber bases scattered throughout nearby countryside. That's the set-up in this Wing of the Eighth Air Force Bomber Command. You take the train from London and come to a good-sized city which we shall call Cartside. From Cartside, you travel by jeep or command car or truck to any of the fields occupied by different B-17 Groups where hard runways stretch solid above the bones of forgotten Saxons or the dust of sleeping Druids.

Thornhill has been a kind of second home to me ever since I landed in England months ago. I have flown with the Thornhill boys, and dined with them, and slept with them; and I have seen them die, and can report that they die very well indeed.

That's the way True died. It was a while ago, so now they will allow me to tell you his real name: 1st Lt. Floyd H. Truesdell. He came from Anchorage, Alaska, of all places. Guess he was the first person most of us ever knew to come from Alaska. He used to operate a bulldozer before he went into the Service; and most of us never knew a bulldozer operator before, either. True was a swell pilot and a swell boy. He lived in the same barracks with Bailey and Greene and Webb and Foxy and Dris and Spring; that last building, clear out on the end site, next to the barley field. The barley is all gathered now, but it used to be tall and green, and later on it was tall and yellow.

English Land Army girls worked in the fields, harvesting, and the boys used to 'Hoo-hoo' at them through the fence. Quite a number of the fellows around here who grew up in North Dakota or Kansas or places like that – they went to work at odd times in the harvest fields, and had a lot of fun imagining that they were shocking wheat back home. I don't think True shocked any wheat, but he used to shock the daylights out of the RAF with his skill and his jauntiness when he took to the air. He was one of the few Americans at Thornhill who was privileged to wear embroidered RAF Wings on his blouse, opposite the stiff silver Wings of the U.S. Pilot. Yesterday, I heard a Sergeant swearing to some newcomer that Truesdell had forgotten more about flying than that newcomer would ever know.

Anyway, he was killed last month; and something shrill and bright and important departed from the simple night life at the Officers' Club when True didn't come sauntering up to the bar any longer. The boys have fun at the bar. They don't drink enough to float a battleship – there isn't that much to be had, usually – but they play ping pong between drinks, and there are some slot machines (the profits go to a fund for occasional parties) and a good time is had by all.

Well, one of the fellows was going through the drawers of the old battered bureau in Truesdell's room and he found six pounds there: English pounds of sterling, all folded up. Truesdell had left instructions about what he wanted done with that six pounds. He wanted the boys of the Squadron to go over to the Club and have drinks on him. So, they waited until Major Price got back to Thornhill (he is the Squadron Commander, and was on Leave) and then everybody went over to the Club and had drinks. Some took beer and some whiskey. Rum and coke too: that's about the most popular drink at Thornhill. And a few just had coke, because there are some Army fellows who don't drink liquor because they have promised somebody that they won't, or maybe just because they don't drink liquor. It doesn't matter either way, whether you drink or whether you don't – that's our own business. It was pretty nice of True to save that six pounds (twenty-four U.S. dollars) in his bureau drawer. Everybody had several drinks, because six pounds will buy a lot. Cokes or rum; both are cheap at Thornhill. Life is a little cheap over here, too, these days. But there was nothing cheap about Truesdell. Everybody around Thornhill feels that war is pretty expensive when it keeps demanding nice guys like True, and doesn't give any of them back in change. That is the way we buy liberty today. Liberty is expensive; sometimes it costs more than six pounds Sterling. Everybody was glad to have a drink on 1st Lt. Floyd H. Truesdell, age 24, of Anchorage, Alaska. That was what he wanted them to do with his six pounds.

MacKinlay Kantor

Also on board the B-17 was Flying Officer E. M. Appleton, an RAF Pilot experienced in night flying, although he had lost all his crew, except his Wireless Operator, whilst piloting a Stirling flying with

75 (NZ) Squadron. On that night, they were heading for a night raid on Duisburg when the starboard engine failed on take-off from RAF Newmarket, Suffolk. The plane struck the Devils Dyke or Devil's Ditch, a significant linear earthen barrier thought to be of Anglo-Saxon origin, situated in eastern Cambridgeshire. It runs in an almost straight line from Woodditton south of Newmarket to Reach, north-west of Newmarket. On recovery, he was assigned to the 422nd for night flying observation duties. I believe that the B-17 was also one of only a few within the 305th which flew at night. The task at this time was for night leaflet dropping over occupied territory, although at the time of the collision, they were on a training flight from Chelverston across North Norfolk back to Chelverston AAF Station 105.

Beaufighter – RAF

Flying Officer Frederick Neil Robertson and Flying Officer Ernest Dye were again both extremely qualified and respected Pilot and Observer/Aerial Gunner, both served in the defense of our country during the Battle of Britain. These two men were also killed in the collision on 31 August 1943 whilst flying an RAF night-flying Beaufighter.

Back in October 1939, Robertson was posted to 66 Squadron at Duxford. Over Dunkirk on 2 June 1940, he destroyed a Ju88. Immediately after, his Spitfire was hit by flak, making it uncontrollable. Robertson bailed out, landing on a beach, five miles west of Dunkirk, and managing to get on one of the last boats to leave. By 6 August 1940, he was flying Hurricanes in the relief of Malta, flying off HMS *Argus* whilst in 'B' Flight, 261 Squadron. During this period, he was accredited with several other enemy kills. This is an account of aerial combat as written at that time by Robertson:

'I was Pink 2 and on patrol with Pink 1 when we sighted the enemy formation coming in over Gozo at about 19,000 feet. Pink 1 peeled off and attacked the S.79, leading the formation. I followed him down about fifteen seconds later, but was attacked by the CR.42s which were above and behind the S.79. I gave one a good deflection burst as he was turning, causing him to spin. I watched him partially recover, but he continued to lose height in a spiral dive until I finally lost sight of him just before he crashed.'

He was later reported shot down after his Hurricane V7495 was hit and set on fire, once again parachuting to safety, landing in a field near RAF Luqa, Malta. He eventually returned to England via Cairo some time in 1941, eventually teaming up with Flying Officer Dye DFM on night fighters based at 96 Squadron at Honiley.

Robertson is buried at Cambridge City Cemetery. His gravestone reads: *'God overrules all accidents and makes them serviceable to His Purpose'*. Dye is buried in Cambois (St Peter) New Burial Ground, United Kingdom.

The Collision at Foulsham

The official AAF Crash Report states that the Beaufighter was returning from an intruder alert. Both aircraft were flying without navigational lights as they were above 5,000 feet. As a result of the Beaufighter making a steep turn, it collided with the B-17 on its flight path at around 7,000 feet. The resulting crash severed the wing and tore away two engines from the Fortress, as witnessed by Breen (*Eager Eagle's* Waist Gunner). The force of this collision broke the Beaufighter in half. The remains of the B-17 smashed into two trees, before crashing into Church Farm; whereupon it was engulfed in an inferno of aviation fuel. A small piece of the airframe remains in one of the trees to this day. The Beaufighter crashed in open farmland east of Church Farm, fragments of both aircraft were scattered over at least 3 square miles around Foulsham.

A further tree was smashed on the point of entry into the farm buildings and I was told the fuselage was seen to lie partially across the road by a young lad called Len Barham. He remembered the fire hoses being trailed across the road to douse the fire. A local Police Sergeant, believed to be Sgt. Sampson, was awarded a commendation for his effort in rescuing animals from the burning farm buildings.

The official Accident Report concludes that, as both aircraft were flying above 5,000 feet without navigation lights during an air raid alert, the collision was unavoidable.

The dead crew members from *Eager Eagle* were taken for burial to Brook Wood Cemetery near London. After the war, eight of the bodies were exhumed and flown back to various private burials within the USA where they now lay at rest.

Site investigations and research over the past 27 years collating information available via many links and articles on the internet has enabled me to collate the history of this incident. Without this source, I would not have been able to bring this story to life. This is only one story of many similar thousands across the UK which, to date, have had little exposure or recognition of the sacrifice paid by such young crew members in the defense of our country.

As a result of attending previous Reunions with RAF 100 Group here in Foulsham, I am most grateful to Janine Harrington for being given the chance to dedicate a plaque to all crew members at the crash site at Church Farm. This would not have been possible without the help and funding from Foulsham Community Archive, or the current owners of the barn and Church Farm. Also, a special thanks to Warrant Officer Mo Howard and his colleagues representing the RAF. I am also greatly indebted to the personal interest taken in my research by Col. Tom Moore and his kind offer of assistance in making copies of the original crash report available to aid further research. My thanks must go also to Tom's colleagues who were present at the Reunion, bringing RAF 100 Group Association together with both veterans of the U.S. 36th Bomb Squadron, and the present-day U.S. 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron, 8th Air Force.

Footnote:

On the Friday of RAF 100 Group Association's Reunion weekend, I finally managed to arrange a meeting with a gentleman now in his later years who, as a boy, came across the body of one of the crewmen whilst bringing in a horse from the adjacent meadow to where the Beaufighter crashed. For years, he believed this to be one of the crewmen from *Eager Eagle*. However, from his description of a blue uniform and the location of the body, I believe this to be either Fredric Neil Robertson or Ernest Dye from the Beaufighter. He also reported finding a rubberized torch nearby, which he wishes he had kept as it was likely to have come from the same plane.

After 27 years of research, this story is far from complete as I still have several of the crew member's lives and Service history to trace. The internet has been a major source of information and a direct link to two relatives of *Eager Eagles* crew. I hope further family members will eventually make contact so the true history of these men's sacrifice is recorded for future generations.

Richard Ravencroft

richard@ravencrofttrees.co.uk

6 Reepham Road, Foulsham, Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 5SL



THE FLIGHT LIEUTENANT

In memory of all brave heroes who did not return

In the marsh the curlews cry
Beneath the empty bowl of sky,
Beneath the sun and flying cloud
Earth my grave and mud my shroud.
For forty years I've quietly lain
In the wreckage of my plane.
'Bailed out', they said, or 'Lost at Sea'
But no-one came in search of me.
A distant ploughman drives his team,
And rushes rattle in the stream:
In summer time the cattle tread
Heavy-footed overhead.
Yet somehow in these bones I know
Man will devise machines that show
Where metal lies, and he will trace
My plane in its last resting place.
Then will the lonely waiting cease
And these tired bones will rest at peace.

K.D. Clarke

Dates for your Diary



2018 REUNION : Friday 18 – Sunday 20 May

2019 REUNION : Friday 17 – Sunday 19 May



Be sure to put these important dates in your diary.

- **Winter 2017 magazine**

Out beginning of December. Deadline for material, end of September at the latest.

- **11 November 2017**

St Peter's Church in Haveringland, will host a ceremony in commemoration of RAF Swannington's closure 70 years ago. Mike Hillier is the person to contact about anything relating to this event. He would welcome as many people as possible to join them.

CONTACT: Mike Hillier, Norwich 870609, email: m.hillier091@hotmail.com

- **ADVANCE WARNING**

I have just received news from Gary Thompson of McAully Flying Group about a [Stone Remembrance Marker being placed at Little Snoring Airfield](#) by the Airfields of Britain Trust, in memory of all who were based there and flew operations during World War Two. It may be placed to one side of the private access road leading to St Andrews Church where more people would have sight of it. Negotiations are in progress, and I will keep members informed.

- **REUNION 2017 DVDs**

Stuart Borlase, based in Australia, is currently creating DVDs from film footage taken of our historic and memorable Reunion this year by a professional team. If you were unable to attend, this is your opportunity to experience it in the comfort of your own home. For those who came to Norfolk and were a part of this phenomenal experience, you will already know it truly was something very special in celebrating the historic coming together of RAF 100 Group and 36th Bomb Squadron veterans, joined by the present-day 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron, serving under the 8th Air Force. It would prove a fitting memento.

You need to contact Janine now and put your name on the list to be assured of receiving your personal DVD. The cost will probably be £20, plus postage and packing from Australia.

Created by Janine Harrington

My heartfelt thanks to David & Tracey Mortimer and their team
for continuing to support our Association in the printing of this magazine:
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