



Confound & Destroy

The magazine of RAF 100 Group Association

Autumn/Winter 2019



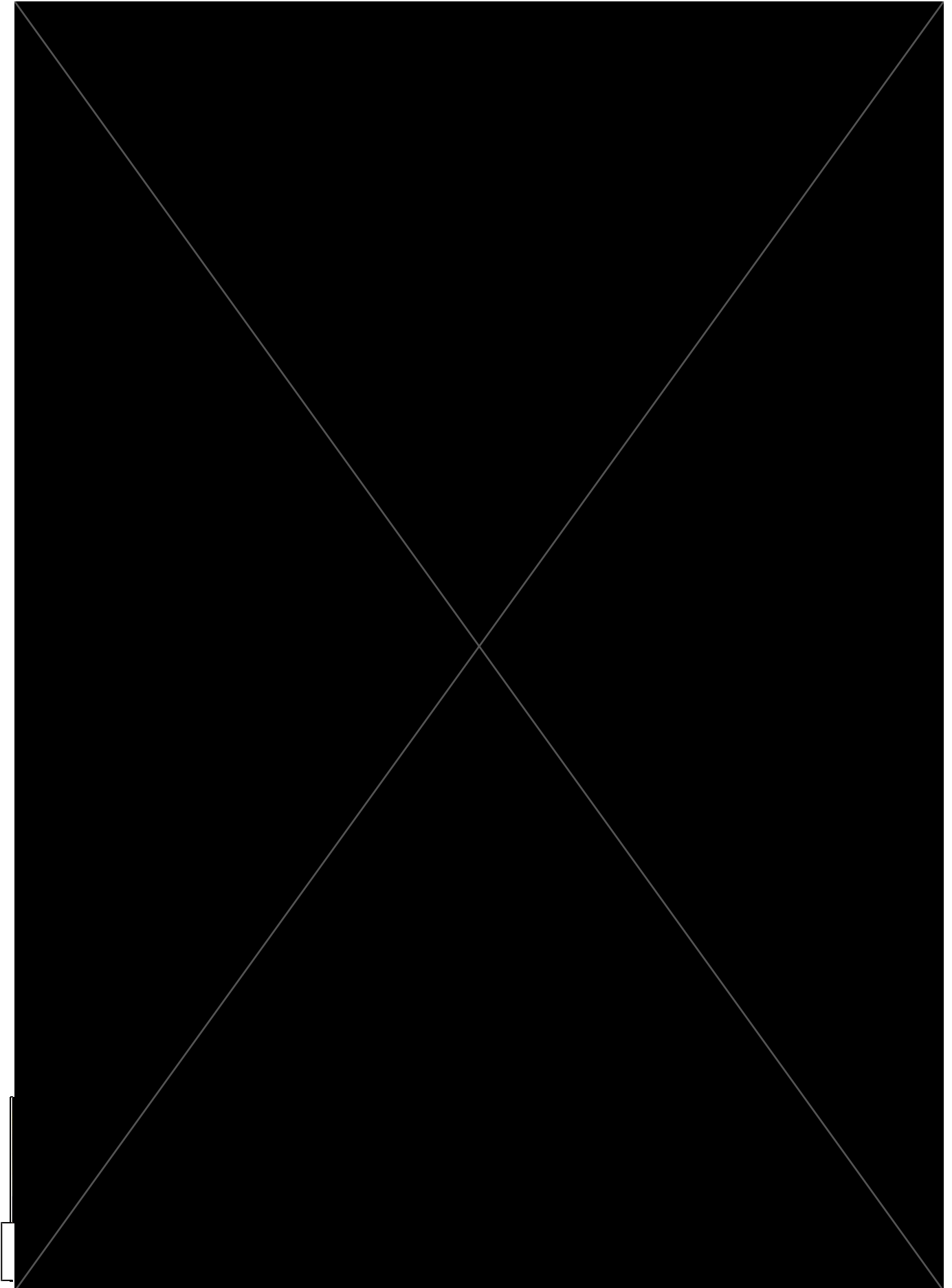
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RAF 100 Group Association



EDITOR'S PAGE



Dearest Kindred Spirits,

Sadly, this is the final magazine of the year. Yes, I know. Usually there is a final Christmas edition. However, a decision was made earlier this year to cut the number of issues from four to three, one argument being that it saved the Secretary work. However, quite the reverse is true. Reducing the number of magazines makes more work due to the enormous pile of letters, articles, stories & photos coming in all the time, which now gives me even less space to produce them than before. Hence the pile grows ever bigger!!!

What was deemed to be a cost-cutting exercise, means additional pressure in trying to meet the needs of our membership. People don't want to wait to see their writings published. What they have to say relates to what is happening now and can't wait until some future copy when there's space to give it justice. It therefore becomes a struggle to know which writings be given priority. I therefore offer my sincere apologies to those of you who have been waiting to see your story or letter surface. Being the final edition of the year, while attempting to offer '*highs and lows*' of 2019, and an overview in terms of Events, Anniversaries, and Happenings worthy of sharing; I am doing my utmost to include as many of your writings as possible. Please know that, even if you've had to wait awhile to see your writings in print, every letter, article and story is read, appreciated and valued, in the same way they are as members now have the chance of sharing them with you.

This year has been a particularly difficult and sad one for many. In our Summer magazine, we said a fond farewell to members no longer with us. Now, this edition carries news of more members who have left on their '*Final Posting*' including **Harry Freegard** who served at North Creak in wartime. Many will remember him from past Reunions at which he was a regular attendee with son Alan. **Des Howarth**, a 36th BS Navigator in the 8th Air Force, came over from the States to join our 2017 Reunion. Just as I finished the story of **Arthur Reid Snr**, I received news he left us on 14 Sept just before his 99th birthday. News is also just in of 223 Veteran **Ron Simmons** in Canada who died in November 2018. It is also with deep sadness I share the passing of **Vera James**, wife of Association President, Phil James MBE. A wonderful Lady with a BIG heart! Dear Phil, you remain in our thoughts and prayers with the rest of your lovely family. There will be many who knew Vera, and tributes to all mentioned are included in later pages of this magazine. If you knew these people and would like to share your own thoughts, we would welcome your input.

For Arthur Reid Snr, this year proved a bad year health-wise. He was to attend in May his second Reunion with son and daughter-in-law, Arthur & Linda, but rushed to hospital with Sepsis, then again later with what was believed to be a series of silent epileptic fits. In 2018, he and his family travelled all the way from Scotland to share our May Reunion, unexpectedly meeting up with dear friend Stan Forsyth DFC who also served in 192 Squadron at Foulsham. I will always remember their scurrilous remarks and antics, offering a flavour of how they must have been as nineteen-year olds ... we had such fun that year, especially on the dance floor! Sadly, Stan Forsyth died just before Christmas, leaving his family bereft. Now Arthur has joined him, and in memory of happy times shared, Arthur's story is included as another of those remarkable people who served in our RAF 100 Group Family of Kindred Spirits. God Bless You All xx

Thank you for the joy you bring, the love we continue to share!

Love & Hugs, Janine xx

Items for the magazine should be sent to:

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

I am writing this in mid-September at our new home in Cumbria. After 21 years on the Island of Anglesey in North Wales we have made way for the proposed new Wylfa nuclear power station. The weather is being kind as some glorious Summer days give way to the beginning of Autumn.

The 45th Anniversary of the crash of Mosquito DZ535 of 192 Squadron on 23 September approaches – an event that ended the flying career of my Father, Flt. Lt. Richard Dobson.

Through membership of the RAF 100 Group Association, we have discovered much about Richard Dobson's time at RAF Foulsham and 192 Squadron. My predecessor as Chair, Richard Forder, identified that DZ535 had an interesting history. It was delivered to Vickers rather than the RAF and used by them to develop the marine version of Barnes Wallis's bouncing bomb ('*Highball*') before joining 618 Squadron, formed to attack German Naval targets. Unfortunately for 618 Squadron, available targets, principally the '*Tirpitz*', had been destroyed by the time they were operational, and the Squadron was re-equipped with replacement aircraft for operations in the Pacific aimed at Japanese Naval targets. This is probably when DZ535 was transferred to 192 Squadron.

I hadn't realised that 618 Squadron was intended to attack Japanese targets from aircraft carriers until I watched an interview with Navy Pilot Captain Eric (*Winkle*) Brown who was the first to land a two-engine aircraft on a carrier. These Mosquitoes were modified with four blade propeller and boosted engines that allowed landing speeds well below the normal stall speed of a Mosquito. Frustratingly for 618 Squadron, the war ended before they could go into action. Eric Winkle Brown was a remarkable Pilot, holding the record for the number of airplane variations flown (487) and the number of carrier landings (2,407). As a Test Pilot, he was first to fly the little-known Vickers Windsor. We are familiar with the big four-engine Lancaster, Halifax, Stirling, Liberator and Fortress which all, save the Lancaster, served with 100 Group, but few people know of the Windsor. This was conceived by Barnes Wallis, the genius behind the bouncing bomb and designer of the R100 airship and Wellington bomber. Barnes Wallis' other bomb innovations were '*Earthquake*' bombs: tallboy and grand slam intended to destroy infrastructure targets not by hitting them but shaking them to destruction through the blast wave of proximity explosion. Barnes Wallis believed that a new aircraft was required capable of flying higher with a heavier payload. The Vickers team developed the Windsor as a successor to the Lancaster generation. Only three aircraft were built utilising the Wellington style geodetic construction and cannons positioned at the rear of the four engines controlled remotely by a Tail Gunner. Before production of the Windsor could commence, the Lancaster had been developed sufficiently to deliver the grand slam bombs and with the end of war approaching, there was no immediate need for a new bomber.

Whilst Eric Winkle Brown held many records, there is a comparable record held by a 100 Group Pilot. A Canadian, George E. Stewart, served with 23 Squadron on 50 operations from Little Snoring, attacking German night fighters for which he was awarded the DFC. After the war, he trained Chinese Nationalist Pilots on Mosquitoes. With 1200 hours, he holds the record for the most hours on Mosquitoes. This offensive role of directly attacking the enemy contrasts with 100 Group's covert activities of electronic countermeasures and intelligence gathering. On reflection, 100 Group's motto '*Confound & Destroy*' could not be more appropriate.

8th AIR FORCE REPRESENTATIVE

Stephen Hutton



Hello Friends,

You might remember that my last Report from the States was tinged with a bit of sadness due to time marching on and the passing of a 36th Squadron Gremlin. So many more of them now joining their buddies in the sky! My story here is also one of time moving forward, yet also one of great pleasure and happiness. I believe it crosses the times of yesterday, today and tomorrow.



Just recently, I received an email from Tom Bittner whose father was Sgt Peter Bittner, a B24 Waist Gunner in the Lt Arthur Glick crew. Tom had my book *'Squadron of Deception'* that contained quotes from his father and wanted to know if I had any contact information on former crew members. As it turned out, I had been in touch with Pilot Glick in early 2018, plus the daughter of another crewman. Of course, to help, I passed this information on to Tom. Tom told me he was one of five children and his father had given my book to all of them.

It was in August 1996 during research for my book that I first contacted the elder Peter Bittner by telephone for an interview about his days in the 36th. What a great honor and pleasure to learn such an important part of his life. I found out his crew flew over 20 missions before the war ended, many in their favorite **B24 Liberator** nicknamed *'21 Special'*. Peter was a wonderful man who, with his crew, bravely served our Nation. His detailed recollections from those glorious days were so vivid and real that I found them fitting to be used in Chapter Nine in *'Squadron of Deception'*. That chapter titled *'VHF Screens – Ready n'Able'* covered the horrible winter month of January 1945. Here below is the input from Peter Bittner and the essence of how the winter of 1945 began for the 36th Squadron Gremlins.



First though, the Glick crew joined the 36th Squadron, then based at Cheddington, on January 4, 1945, and only the day after the Unit completed its missions flying alongside RAF 100 Group. At that time, the 8th Air Force now had the 36th performing VHF Screen missions flying during the Battle of the Bulge. The purpose of the screen was to screen the bomber division assembly. The screen was designed to prevent the enemy from monitoring VHF radio traffic of the 8AF bombers and prevent them gaining valuable information regarding the size of the attacking force, the route to be flown, the bombing altitude, possible bomb targets, and related information.

Peter remembered:

'We went over on the 'Aquitania'. We went to Cheddington and had adjacent training, but that was mostly for the Pilot, co-Pilot and Navigator. Most of it was hush-hush. All we knew about was you go out, you fly around, then you come back. Right at the start, you had your security lecture. It was re-enforced quite a way through. You always had security. It was so hush-hush we were over-

impressed probably being new. It was a Squadron where, actually, you didn't mix, except for the Officers, like you did in other Squadrons; because mainly you were together as a crew and you functioned as a crew as far as the enlisted men went. You didn't meet too many of the other crews.'

From the 36th Squadron Records I also learned during that time a Waist Gunner was being trained to replace the extra RCM Operator on missions and that Peter fulfilled this additional job requirement. Of that he remembered:

'They (extra RCM operators) were phased out and we took over then part of what they were doing. When they took the Radar man away from us, the Navigator would come back with instructions and the guys in the Waist had to follow the instructions in what to turn on and what to turn off in the bomb bays. He (the Navigator) would call back at certain times, according to instructions, and you had your list and you followed it, then reported back to him. You gave him back the list at the end of the flight. You had to keep track of everything you saw in the air and on the ground and report it, and up front they would write it down. And naturally, when you came back, they would talk it over and see what you had seen. We did see V2 trails a lot.'

Regarding the VHF screens, Peter recalled:

'We went out real early. It was still dark. We had to be in position before the other guys even got to the planes. We had to be out in our area there. Actually, when they passed us, then we could come in. We had to be on Station before the other planes took off. We were often closed in by bad weather after take-off. Our operations were more of a screening nature. When the weather was flyable, the Germans knew we would be up. Jamming took many different forms. A lot of the time we would land at a British base. Signing in and getting biscuits (bed mattresses) for our stay was part of 'Return Lend-Lease'. Some of the time British crews would land at our base. They usually had on their best uniform in case they ended up a POW.'

The original 36th Squadron history record stated January of 1945 had 16 days of snow and persistent poor weather conditions continued to be a problem, both from an operational and a training standpoint. Aircraft diversions were frequently necessary, and operations were occasionally conducted from other bases.

Peter remembered diversions due to horribly foul weather and his Pilot's skills during those days:

'I remember one time we came back and going around our field was closed in. Lt. Glick said: 'Do you want to bail out or do you want to stick with it?' Well, we all stuck with him. He said: 'If you see a hole in the clouds, we'll go in.' One of the guys spotted a hole there and he went in it and got us down. Glick was a very good pilot. They all were. All our Officers were good. In fact, that's one of the reasons I think we were picked for the 36th.'

Yes, Peter's information was very important to me and his quotes added substance to the official Squadron history records and were thus most useful to show in my book. Soon after I received Tom's email message, I believed it would be important for us to talk. I had a gift for him.

During the past years, whenever I heard from the Squadron Veterans or family members, I offered to present them with a CD gift containing photos and documents pertaining to their crew. This would complement my book and my website. What I would do was to gather related crew photos from the ten 100-page photo albums created during my book research, crew letters to me, plus related 36th Squadron documents, and put them on a CD. In this case, the photos would show Peter and members of the Lt. Glick crew, B24 '21 Special', crew letters, the Cheddington and Alconbury airbases and sites around England.

Another treat I added for Tom and the Bittner family was a very special memento – aluminum metal debris from the crash site of the 36th Squadron's B24 Liberator nicknamed '*Beast of Bourbon*'. That ill-fated B24 Liberator crashed on take-off on Feb. 19, 1945, killing three airmen of the Lt. Louis McCarthy crew. The B24 crashed the month after the Glick crew arrived from the States. How lucky Peter and his crew were not to be assigned to '*The Beast*' on that day. I saw that piece as a symbol of Peter's dedication to duty and Service to his country, a reminder of the cost of our freedom that we enjoy today.

Finally, I remembered when speaking with Tom that he remembered my telephone call to his father from way back in 1996. At that time, Tom asked his mother who his father was speaking with. She told Tom it was just someone who wanted to know about his father's WWII days. Tom said he was amazed that his father was talking and going on and on about his wartime experiences. Tom told me that he was so surprised because his father had never told him that much! He told me he discovered more about his father's Service from reading my book than he had from him. Like many members of that 'Greatest Generation', his father was reticent about discussing those experiences with his children. Today, Peter is no longer with them having passed away at 83 years in late 2007.

Well, for me that just did it!

I remembered I still had the audio tape recording of my telephone interview with Peter from 1996. So, as an extra special gift, I pulled the tape from Peter's recording, found it to be of decent audible quality, then transferred the interview onto a second CD for Tom and the Bittner family. Now Tom and the entire family can hear Peter telling about those exciting WWII days in Service with the 36th Squadron Gremlins!

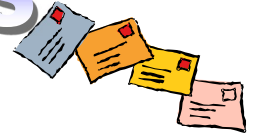
Mission accomplished!!



With love,
Stephen & Pam Hutton

Author: '*Squadron of Deception*'
8th Air Force Historical Society Unit Contact
36th Bomb Squadron RCM
Website: www.36rcm.com. Email: smhutton@36rcm.com

LETTERS PAGES



Hi Janine,

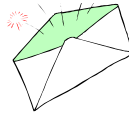
I hope this email finds you well. I just stumbled across this pretty amazing website offering a tour and flights in some original WWII aircraft, including a B-24 just like my Dad flew in – Aubrey 'Bill' Whitworth, Nose Gunner for Lt Soderstrom's crew, 36th BS. The summary of the restoration process mentions both RAF and 8th Air Force: *'In 1998, she was repainted to represent the 'Dragon and His Tail', a 5th Air Force B-24 flying in the Pacific Theater with the 43rd Bomb Group. In 2005, she was repainted as 'Witchcraft' in honor of the Veterans of the 8th Air Force who flew in the European Theater during WWII'.* Here is the link to the website (for those with internet access):

<https://www.collingsfoundation.org/aircrafts/consolidated-b-24-liberator/>

Sincerely,

Kim Whitworth

kkwhitworth@gmail.com



Dear Roger,

I am trying to find a Group or info about RAF 100 Group. My Grandfather Richard Holman was in the 36th Bomb Squadron/RCM and was one of those who had missions jamming Radar of Nazi aircraft during WWII. Is this the correct Group, and if so, how can I join to get further information?

Thank you

Michelle Chrisner

m.chrisner@yahoo.com

NOTE: Contact has been made with Michelle and information sent. However, nothing further has been heard from her. Is the name of her Grandfather familiar to anyone who might know more?



Hi Janine,

My late father, John Adams, was based at RAF West Raynham from 1953 to 1955 during his National Service. I just wondered if you might be able to point me in the right direction to find a copy of either a Squadron or Flight photograph, I remember him being on, but which, over the passing of time, has disappeared. It's probably 50+ years since I last saw it. Any help would be most welcome.

Kind regards,

Stephen Adams

adams1954@btinternet.com

(John Adams seen top right of photograph)

Hi Janine & Stuart,

Last Saturday I put on the RAF Swannington Display at the Armed Forces Day in North Walsham here in Norfolk. During the day, a couple of ladies came up to me to say they were trying to find out more about relatives who served in the RAF. Although they didn't serve here in Haveringland, or indeed in RAF 100 Group, I could sense both ladies were



sad at knowing nothing about their relatives' Service life (one was a father, the other an uncle). So, I said if they email what information they do have to me, I will see what I can do for them. Both went away feeling happy about their visit.

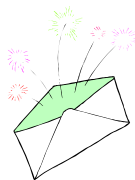
Another lady came up to me to say she had been reading a piece in the Display about Dorothy's time as a Weather Girl at RAF Swannington (*'Dot Hudson' was known to many of us, as she attended Reunions for many years, and was a firm and valued friend!*). The lady said her story had brought back so many wonderful memories as she was in the WRENS doing the self-same job, and recognised everything mentioned about equipment Dorothy used, and how she had to report to the Officers to give them Weather Reports for the day. Again, she went away very happy. Unfortunately, someone else grabbed me to ask questions, so I was unable to talk to this lady further and ask if she would put down in writing how she felt when reading Dorothy's story. I will try to find out who she is, as I think it would make a good article for the magazine to show where these young girls (WAAFs and WRENS) did a vital and important job which generally went unnoticed. If I do manage to find out who she is, I will try to get her to write a small piece on the kind of job they both did and get her to send it to you.

Best wishes,

Mike Hillier

Haveringland Representative

m.hillier091@hotmail.com



Hello Janine,

How are you? We are sitting with Dad (*the now late Arthur Reid Snr*) at the hospital where he is comfortable, opening his eyes a bit, still giving a wee smile. He still has your 'Get Well' card up on his board which he can see at the bottom of his bed. We've just completed a cycle ride from Glasgow to Edinburgh raising money for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Love n'hugs to you from your very own Angels of the North xx

Linda & Arthur Reid



Hi Janine,

Thank you for including in the Summer magazine information relating to the City of Norwich Aviation Museum's Stafford Sinclair Room. I found it enlightening. It was a great idea sharing this feature with new and existing RAF 100 Group Association members who perhaps weren't aware of how the Association began.

With regards to the Lancaster Project I'm helping with at the Museum, Lancaster photographs are needed for a couple of Events being organised by one of our visitors. These Events are scheduled to take place in June and July this year. However, featuring this in the Autumn/Winter magazine may prove beneficial in bringing more into the open.



One Event which took place was on 22 March. 'Sim-Fly Norfolk' was honoured that [Lancaster Tail Gunner Tony Snooks \(centre of picture\)](#) was able to meet Aircrew Remembered [Stefan \(right\)](#) and [Kelvin \(2nd left\)](#) at Felthorpe where other friends enjoyed an afternoon with flight simulators and real aeroplanes, a most memorable day!

Tony's Lancaster crew sadly perished in 1946 and Tony hadn't known exactly what happened to them until a few months ago when Stefan and Kelvin explained the

exact circumstances of the sudden mid-air explosion near Leamington Spa. Tony had been posted elsewhere at the time and has always mourned the loss of his crew and friends 73 years ago.

If anyone wishes to know more about past RAF aircrew, they can contact Aircrew Remembered who do a brilliant job of finding out impossible information: <http://aircrewremembered.com/>

Yvette

Lancaster Project
City of Norwich Aviation Museum



Hi Janine,

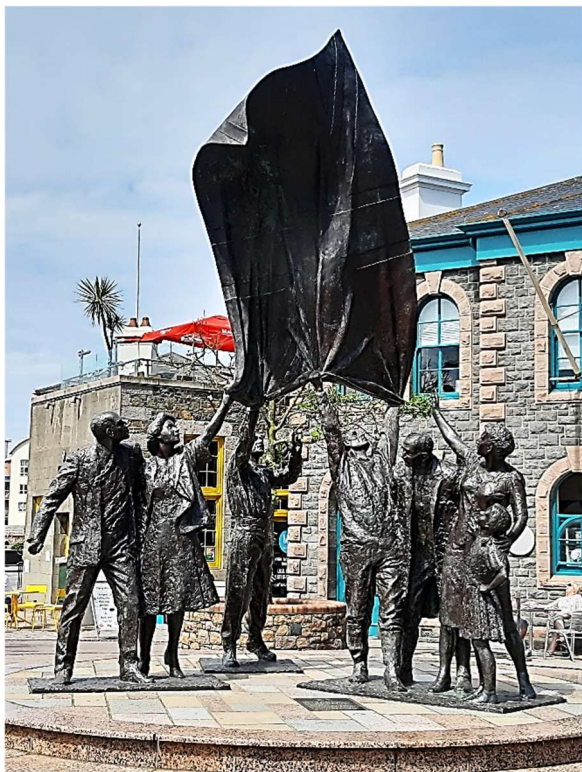
'Jersey is a truly picturesque island, with varying degrees of scenery and landscape at each and every sharp corner you turn. From the mysterious feel of Green Island to the majestic view of Corbiere Lighthouse as the power of the waves thrash against its surrounding rocks. With the ever-present sound of the sea and wildlife all around, this island, the largest in the Channel Islands; is truly spoilt for beauty.

Moving inland, there is a familiar sight of the grazing herd of Jersey cows, with their big beautiful eyes without a care in the world, ready to supply and spoil the islanders and visitors alike as they indulge in their plentiful rich milk and of course the famous cream teas. There is woodland, valleys and the extraordinary narrow green lanes which force you into a slower pace of life. The farmer

working the fields, the silver glint of his plough cutting through the rich and precious soil that will yield the next crop of the famous renowned Jersey Royal potatoes.

As the sun sets and the hazy mist draws in, there are shadows lurking in the failing light, a ghost in the realm, with the darkened silhouettes of old fortifications all around – a reminder that in this small island's history, there have been many darker days ...'

We were recently in the Channel Islands, stepping back in time to when Jersey was liberated from German occupation in 1945, which this remarkable commemorative statue below represents:



We have added photographs and commentary to our website: www.heroesofourtime.co.uk with information on the Jersey Occupation Tapestry which members might find of interest. We would highly recommend visiting the Maritime Museum if you are ever in that part of the world. You can, if you wish, just view the tapestry without paying full entry price into the Museum, available for a reduced fee. The Occupation Tapestry was woven by Islanders to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the liberation from five years occupation by German armed forces, during the Second World War.

Twelve panels of the Tapestry depict life and hardship under Military rule created from memories and stories of Islanders who experienced it first-hand, each panel being created by a different Parish on the Island:

www.heroesofourtime.co.uk/occupation-tapestry-gallery.html

A new article: 'Commandos and the Channel Islands', completes the section on the Channel Islands, and we are now planning to complete writing about the final RAF 100 Group airbase – Little Snoring – before moving onto the Gremlins. We have been keen to start work on this for a while but needed to be disciplined in completing everything else first rather than leave parts unfinished. We like to be thorough and ensure all is correct before putting writings up on the website, which all takes time as you will appreciate.

Otherwise, we are both keeping well and managed to take a rare day off yesterday to visit the Desert Rats Memorial near Thetford. Darren will include pictures on the website very soon. The Memorial is impressive, and you can't miss it as it includes a real tank from the period.

Well, we had better sign off now and do some more,

With best wishes to you all,

Donna & Darren

<http://www.heroesofourtime.co.uk/raf-100-group.html>



Hello Janine,

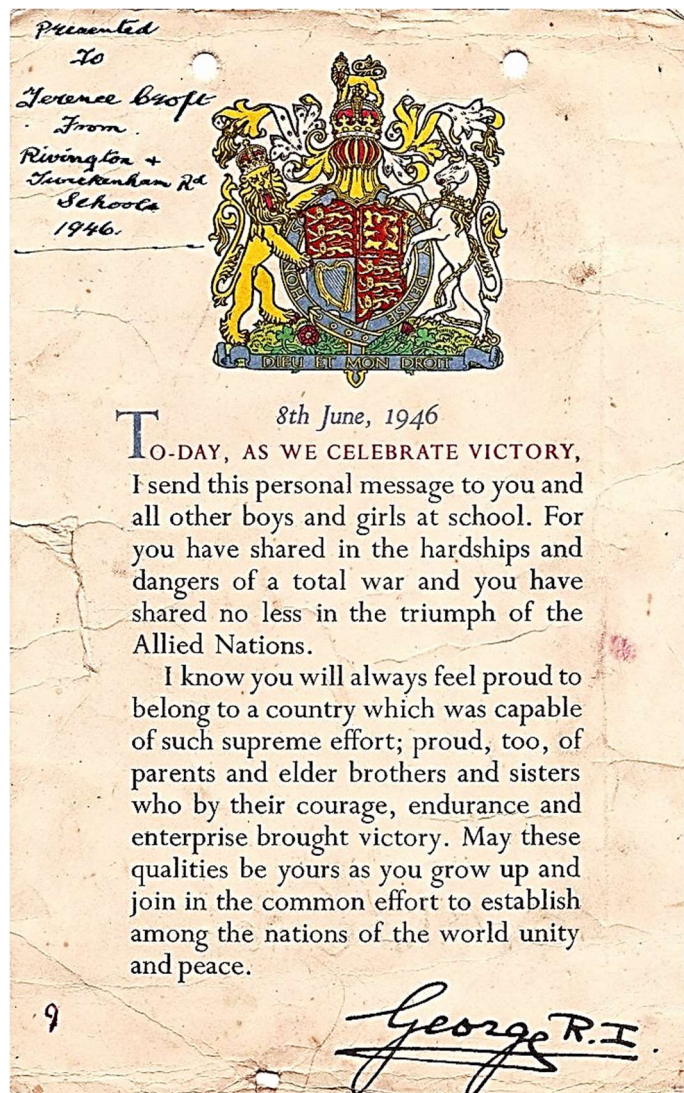
I hope you are well.

I was loaned this attached Diploma by my late elder brother's daughter. Its purpose is self-explanatory. I hadn't seen it for many years. My Dad filled in the reverse side with information of our family's contribution to the war effort. It seems all children were given one, but I don't remember mine. On the front is reference to the school we had just joined. It was literally just around the corner from where we lived in Rivington Crescent. I had sent the school Head a copy of this, and they were all thrilled with it, especially with the link to their school, as they were just teaching about World War Two and how children coped. What a coincidence? Does anyone remember having a copy of this Document?

All my best wishes to you,

Phil

Phil Croft xx



Hello Janine,

I am very sorry to hear how unwell you are and hope that things will improve for you. I am pleased you have carried on with your writing as it is important to have a positive focus (as well as the fact that you have done and are doing a great service for the members of 100 Group and their families).

You mentioned a book about an American Veteran. It reminded me of Chalky White and Alan Mercer laughingly recall, in 2000, a visit from Lofty (Ted)'s brother Ben, a sailor from the destroyer 'Onslaught' to Oulton. Lofty's closest friends were the non-commissioned members of his crew, so he and Ben dressed in Sergeant uniforms so they could attend the Sergeants' Mess with them. Some Americans started to cause trouble, so Lofty went out and returned in his Officer's uniform to sort them out. Alan and Chalky recalled that Bar staff were very grateful to Lofty for sorting out the incident.

However, this is not the only uniform changing they did. Ben joined them on a training flight dressed as a Flight Lieutenant. This meant, in theory, he outranked Lofty, making him the ranking Officer on the flight. On Leave in Portsmouth on one occasion, Lofty went on board the 'Onslaught' to watch movies. He got a few odd looks as a stray Air Force Officer among the Navy ratings! Perhaps he should have grabbed a Navy uniform – he would have had some rights to one as he had been in the Naval Cadets before the war, earning his marksman badge while there.

MEMORIES OF ALAN MERCER & FRIENDS



Oulton 1945

L to R back Row: HRB 'Smithy' Smith, Freddy Langhorn, Ken Kennett, 'Duke' Maddox, 'Curly' Herlihy, Steve Spregg.

Front Row: 'Olly' Green, Ted 'Lofty' Baumfield, Alan Mercer, Ken 'Chalky' White



Birdlip, Gloucestershire, Reunion 1981

<i>Steve</i>	<i>'Chalky'</i>	<i>Ted 'Lofty'</i>	<i>Freddy</i>	<i>'Smithy'</i>	<i>Alan</i>
<i>Spregg</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Baumfield</i>	<i>Langhorn</i>	<i>Smith</i>	<i>Mercer</i>

Regards,
Jennifer & John Baumfield, New Zealand
 Daughter & Son of Ted 'Lofty' Baumfield



Hello Janine,

Members might be interested to know about a new Heritage Centre opening at RAF Sculthorpe. Below is their official flier for the Grand Opening Event which I will be attending. However, the Heritage Centre will then be open for anyone wishing to view ... and there's plenty to see and do in viewing the amazing history of this former atomic base:

Grand Opening

RAF SCULTHORPE
HERITAGE
CENTRE

Sunday 11th August
12:00 - 16:30



Flypast by Battle of Britain
Memorial Flight Dakota
(Subject to Weather and Aircraft Serviceability)

Allied Star Renactment Group
Classic and Vintage Vehicles, Fire Engines
Swing Singer & Music
Bar and BBQ (from 1pm)

Green Park Centre
Wicken Green Village NR21 7RR
Tel 07766715548 facebook RAF Sculthorpe The forgotten cold war base

Best wishes,

Yvette

City of Norwich Aviation Museum

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019

Sheffield Pensioner Pays Tribute



Crew of B-17 Flying Fortress 'Mi Amigo' of 305th Bomb Group

Back row: Robert Mayfield, Vito Ambrosio, Harry Estabrooks, George Williams, Charles Tuttle, Maurice Robbins.

Front row: John Kriegshauser, Lyle Curtis, Melchor Hernandez, John Humphrey.

Courtesy: American War Museum

The date was 22 February 1944. Tony Foulds at eight years old was with a few friends, having problems with a group of boys from a rival school. They had arranged to meet in Endcliffe Park, Sheffield, UK, to sort things, prepared for it to escalate into a fight. He was just an ordinary boy living in the extraordinary days of World War Two. For him, the day had begun like any other, while his thoughts snagged on a smaller, more personal war of sorts as he wondered how this day might end ... Victor or Loser. Little did he know then it was to be a very different outcome!!

As they arrived at the Park, a plane was circling. The Pilot was waving to them. Tony waved back. Just being friendly.

But then ...

The aircraft didn't lift higher into the skies and fly away as expected. Instead, it seemed to fall even lower, heading for trees at the edge of the Park. Suddenly, the aircraft plunged nose first straight into the ground. There was a HUGE explosion ... then ... Silence.

Tony Foulds has lived the events of that day in his mind every day over the ensuing 75 years, feeling personally responsible for the deaths of the ten men on board the American B-17 Flying Fortress as the Pilot desperately tried to avoid crashing into the children he saw below.

In the 1970s, Tony decided to do something in memory of these airmen killed. He erected a Memorial in the Park, regularly watering flowers he planted, keeping the area clear of debris and litter. Today, this has become a special place for him. He sits and talks with the airmen who saved his life that day in February 1944. All these years on, he realises the Pilot had been frantically

waving, not in friendship, but as an urgent warning of imminent danger. Tony feels a link between him, the Pilot and his crew ... a connection reaching beyond Time.

In early January this year, 2019, Tony Foulds was tending the Memorial as he does every day, quietly going about his business, sitting and sharing thoughts with the American airmen he views as his friends. At the same time, BBC Breakfast Presenter Dan Walker was walking his dog in Endcliffe Park and happened across him. They talked and shared awhile. Tony explained about that day in February 1944 and how he had created a Memorial, feeling a kinship with the Pilot and crew who saved his life. Dan was so moved by what he heard that he tweeted his colleagues:

'Just met an amazing man in Endcliffe Park, Sheffield. Tony Foulds was an 8-yr-old playing in the Park when a US plane crashed in Feb 1944. He has diligently maintained a Memorial to them ever since. He was planting new flowers as I passed by. Almost 75yrs of service ... what a man! I'm in bits ...'

Tony Foulds had told Dan that it was his dream to see a Military Flypast at the Park to pay tribute to these airmen, and the Presenter immediately launched a Twitter Campaign, telling users:

'He doesn't want a medal. All he wants is a Flypast on the 75th Anniversary of the death of the American airmen ... 22 February 2019. Can anyone help?'

Tony appeared on BBC Breakfast in early January thanks to an invitation from BBC Breakfast Television Presenter Dan Walker. Afterwards, a huge social media Campaign quickly gathered pace.

Meanwhile, more about the story of the American airmen is now known.

B-17 Flying Fortress nicknamed '*Mi Amigo*' of the 305th Bomb Group was supposed to be dropping a 4,000lb bomb on a Luftwaffe Air Station in Aalborg, Denmark, but was ambushed by German fighters over the North Sea, sustaining heavy damage. The bomb load was jettisoned before it attempted to return to its base in Northamptonshire. However, it ended up off course over the skies of Sheffield, and the U.S. bomber came down in Endcliffe Park on 22 February 1944, killing everyone on board.

Pilot Lt John Kriegshauser was awarded a posthumous Distinguished Flying Cross.

On Friday 22 February 2019, Tony Foulds' wish was fulfilled, bringing a fitting end to this story. Colonel Will Marshall of Lakenheath in Suffolk, which houses a U.S. Air Force Unit, had, a few days previous, appeared on BBC Breakfast with a message, saying that Tony should: '*Look to the skies on February 22nd for a very special Flyby*'. In the days that followed, there was a huge build-up, while Tony remained very emotional:

'It means everything to me. They're my family. It's the tribute they deserve. It was only when I was in my teens that I really understood what a terrible thing had happened, and what an enormous sacrifice the young Americans made. I could not have been here if those lads hadn't given up their lives'.

On the exact place and time as *'Mi Amigo'* and its crew met their fate, thousands of people gathered to witness a Flypast honouring the ten airmen who died when their plane crashed in a Sheffield Park 75 years ago.

Dan Walker, Presenter on BBC Breakfast, was extremely moved by Tony's story, and the Memorial he had created and kept going all these years. As a result of his initial *'Tweet'* and bringing the story to the attention of television viewers, he was inundated with messages of support. Within 48 hours he had spoken to the U.S. Embassy and top-ranking officials at both the U.S. Air Force and the RAF. He was determined to make Tony Foulds dream come true, and more, to honour the men who had given their lives for the children playing in the park that day.

Among the thousands of people who came to Endcliffe Park in Sheffield were family members of the crew who gave their lives. In meeting them, Tony's words summed up his feelings:

'I never thought I would ever meet the families of this Pilot and crew. They are all lovely, lovely people. I have had a guilty conscience all my life because, if I hadn't been in the Park that day, they could have landed safely. Instead, the Pilot avoided us children and crashed into the hill. I owe them my life. Their sacrifice gave me everything. I love them as much as my own family. And my ashes are going to be put on the Memorial so that I can remain with them ...'

He was given a rousing round of applause and wiped away tears as aircraft flew over his Memorial at approximately 08.45 GMT. The double Flypast included United States Air Force aircraft from two Suffolk airbases – RAF Lakenheath and RAF Mildenhall. Crews set off in an F-15 fighter jet, to be joined by Ospreys, Typhoons and a Dakota.

Wreaths were placed as part of the Remembrance Ceremony attended by The British Legion, and new steps and a flagpole added to the crash Memorial created by Tony Foulds.

Tony continues to visit his *'Mi Amigo'* friends every day. If he can't make it for any reason, then it's his son who goes in his place.

Woody Johnson, US Ambassador in the UK said: *'It takes amazing people to have an amazing moment!'*



Tony Foulds at his Memorial created for 'Mi Amigo' pilot & crew

Brought together by Janine Harrington

GREAT GATHERINGS

Bikes Honour Bomber Crew



Over 600 bikes converged on the International Bomber Command Centre at Lincoln for the second annual **'InSpire Ride'** – a day dedicated to the commemoration and remembrance of those who gave their lives as aircrew during the bombing campaign of the Second World War.

Two mass ride-ins were organised; a northern group from the Humber Bridge and a southern one starting at Woody's Bar in Ancaster, both arriving at the IBCC in glorious sunshine after a short tour of the Lincolnshire lanes. People's comments sum up the day:

'I love things like this ... the camaraderie is great in a big group and you learn a lot too. More people should do it!'

'It's also very moving. When you see all the names on the walls it can be quite emotional.'

One of nine Veterans attending was 94-year-old Aneurin 'Taff' Owen, a Wireless Operator on Lancasters with 153 Squadron at Scampton:

'It's wonderful to see so many motorcycles. Bikers often get a bad name, but these are really wonderful people – it's an excellent turn out.'

Nicky van Der Drift, IBCC Chief Executive shared her thoughts:

'The story of Bomber Command is incredible and hasn't been told fully since the war. The IBCC cost £16m to build, was opened in 2018 and relies on fundraising to keep going. We're at an age where we are losing Veterans rapidly and it was so important to get this built – they're so moved by the fact that people have come out in such great numbers to hear their story.'

Shared by member Ed Tomblinson, from Eastern Daily Press

TREASURES OF THE PAST

FINAL PLEA TO SAVE RAF CONTROL TOWER



Hethel aircrew in mid-1943

The airfield was first developed in 1942 to be used by the U.S. Army Air Force as a Bomber Squadron base – Station 114 – from which to launch attacks across Europe during WWII. The base was assigned to the 320th Bombardment Group before construction was completed, and the 310th and 389th Bombardment Groups were also posted on the site. Having lost 107 aircraft during its campaign, the 389th flew its final combat mission on 25 April 1945, returning to the USA. Of the 321 missions in which RAF Hethel personnel were deployed, around 588 men went missing or were killed in action. After the end of the war in Europe and departure of the Americans, the airfield was assigned to RAF Fighter Command to see further service prior to its closure in 1948.

Today, for some, it acts as a Memorial to hundreds of lives lost. For others, it is a building which has reached the end of its life span.

Now Hethel airfield Control Tower is to be demolished. Lotus Cars had been using the Control Tower for track training days until last year, when the building was found to be structurally unsound. This led to the car company's decision to demolish the building and create a new Club House. Meanwhile, Bracon Ash and Hethel Parish Council has asked the car factory to halt plans for demolition while another Consultation takes place to look at possible ways to save the building.

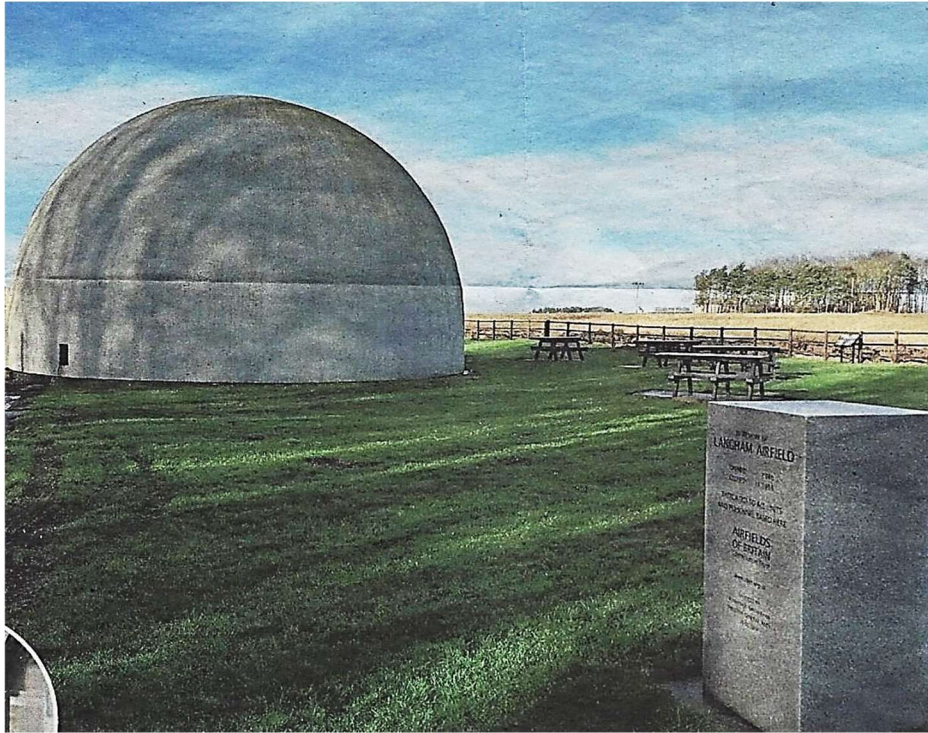
While it is recognised as a Memorial to those 600 men who never came back from war, and despite the argument that there is a moral duty to save a significant part of local history; a Report by MLM Consulting Engineers who inspected the building states the existing first-floor slab, believed to have been built in 1941 with poor quality concrete, is in poor condition, showing signs of severe corrosion. The outcome of the Report is that it is life expired.

The Report further suggests that, even with significant repairs, the structure is likely to have a limited useful and safe life before further substantial repairs would be required.

No date has yet been set as to when the demolition is to take place. However, with the deterioration of other such buildings, the same arguments will arise, and this is therefore but one example of what to do with airfield buildings which hold so much history to become true treasures of the past.

TREASURES OF THE PAST

A MEMORIAL TO THE MANY!



Langham Dome, with former airfield behind it

A full-sized silver replica of a Supermarine Spitfire is being planned to sit alongside Langham Dome and Visitor Centre at the now disused airfield at RAF Langham. It should be finished by the end of this summer's season after a fundraising campaign reached its target. About £20,000 of the £35,000 needed was raised through grants and functions, while Friends started a crowdfunding page to raise the additional £15,000 needed. Trustee John Blakely confirms the appeal was very successful with pledges in excess of the target from 100 very generous donors. There was also a generous donation from outside the crowdfunding page from an anonymous U.S. donor.

The Supermarine Spitfire has been given to Friends of Langham Dome Charity by the RAF Museum at Hendon and will be mounted on a plinth next to the building once used to train ante-aircraft gunners. At Hendon, the Spitfire was mounted internally. But for the Dome Museum, the only option is to strengthen it structurally and place it securely on the plinth where it will be subject to the vagaries of the weather. It will be 9.5m long, with a wingspan of 11.2m.

The Dome **was** reopened for the 2019 season early and will remain open until the end of October half-term.

Meanwhile, plans for RAF Langham Reunion and Dome Heritage Day went ahead on 1 June. A request for the Battle of Britain Flight was granted, with a full display by a Hurricane as well as an aerobatic display with the Extra 260 flown by Steve Carver.

Visitors were urged to attend in 1940's dress and win a prize, with live music provided by The Blighty Belles.

It's good to know that history lives on while the many who did not return from the Second World War, together with those who did; remain honoured and remembered for the future.



SHARED EXPERIENCES

ARTHUR BAXTER REID

'Per Ardua ad Astra: Through Hardships to the Stars'



Arthur Reid beside a Halifax prior to final operation

RAF SERVICE

Arthur was initially on Home Guard duties, waiting to enlist in the Royal Air Force, which came in Autumn 1940, when he joined as a Volunteer. He was later transferred into 192 Squadron, RAF 100 Group, Special Duties, at RAF Foulsham. When war ended in 1945, Arthur was posted to Ceylon for 12 months to open a new Wireless Communication Unit in Kandy (Camp name). This was to assist in bringing home all Far East members of the Forces. His Service ceased in 1946.

RANKS (in order of promotions)

AC2 VR (Aircraftsman Second Class)
AC1 (Aircraftsman First Class) – N/A
LAC (Leading Aircraftsman) – N/A
Sergeant
Flight Sergeant
Pilot Officer
Flying Officer
F/Lt (Flight Lieutenant)

DUTIES

Enlisted as a Wireless Operator (W/Op) and an Air Gunner (WOPAG). Arthur progressed to F/Lt Signals Officer, remaining as such until demobbed in 1946.

MEDALS

Aircrew Star – (for Aircrew only)

Atlantic Star – (Coastal Command, for Naval Duties)

Italy Star – (in lieu of DFC)

Bomber Command Medal

1939-1945 Medal

Good Conduct Medal/Service Medal



Aircrew Medal



Atlantic Star



Italy Star



Bomber Command
Medal



1939-1945



RAF Good Conduct
Medal

SQUADRON INFORMATION

The Squadron was made up of a fleet of 15 planes:

- 8 Wellingtons
- 4 Halifax
- 3 Mosquito



Wellington



Halifax



Mosquito

JOINING A CREW

On joining the Royal Air Force, recruits had to go through a three-day Medical in a building in Edinburgh. At the time, everyone wanted to be a Pilot and the one in charge! Unfortunately, Arthur, who would have quite liked to fly a plane, was unsuitable as his mathematics were considered insufficient. RAF aircrew were among the fittest men in the war, so he felt it a privilege to fly with them.

All aircrew were volunteers. This was strictly adhered to and no-one was called up to the RAF. The RAF had a unique system of picking crews. After training was finished, aircrew were left on the Parade Ground. The now fully trained men stood until a Pilot asked them if they wanted to join his crew. When on Operations, the Pilot was always in charge of the plane and the crew.

TRAINING

Morse code was taught in the Blackpool tram sheds. There were so many thousands of trainees that most of the side streets in Blackpool were full of Squads learning all the drills. From there, Arthur went on a six-week Air Gunnery Course in Wales. The new crew was posted to an OTU (Operational Training Unit) and finally for more radio communications at Yatesbury Camp in Wiltshire.



Flight Sergeant Arthur B. Reid

THE CREW

Normally a Wellington crew consisted of:

- Pilot
- Wireless Operator
- Navigator
- Rear Gunner
- Front Gunner



From left to right: Tosh Lines (Rear Gunner), Don Baird (Flight Engineer) Jones (Pilot), Steve Tinkler (Navigator), Arthur Reid (Wireless Operator)

Arthur joined 100 Group Special Duties (SD) and was in 192 Squadron. Arthur felt this a good omen being the same number as his address at home! Another crew member was a civilian highly trained in the job he was doing. In Bomber Command, there were only a few Squadrons specially trained to carry out a Special Duty of Airborne Counterintelligence, which was important top-secret work. This duty involved the seeking out of enemy frequencies (battleships, planes, submarines) and jamming them. This would nullify enemy communications. Incidentally, this civilian expert was so top secret that aircrew flying with him were separated from him by a black cloth.

COASTAL & BOMBER COMMAND

Strictly speaking, an operational tour consisted of 30 missions. However, in late Spring 1944 near the end of Arthur's tour, the RAF Higher Command temporarily extended the number of ops required to complete a tour. Arthur completed 34 operations, recalling two types of operations:

- Bomber Command – flying into enemy territory.
- Coastal Command – from Norway to the coast of Spain.

OPERATIONS



A combined Air Force and Navy operation in the Bay of Biscay obtained the surrender of a German submarine. The Naval Captain, on searching the submarine, was intrigued by a strange-looking instrument (left). He had no idea what this machine was used for but brought it back to port. When handed over to the RAF, it turned out to be so valuable it became one of the main reasons for the war ending. It was called the 'Enigma Machine'. At the time, no-one had any idea what it was used for, but when given to Back Room civilian people, it took a long time to find its purpose, but ultimately discovered it was the German method of issuing information by code. From that point on, nearly every German order was decoded by experts at Bletchley Park. At the same time, the enemy never found out that the RAF had broken their code.

OPERATION HYDRO

A Mosquito from 192 Squadron discovered and photographed 'Peenemunde' which was the area used to develop the V-Bombs (Flying Bombs). 596 heavy RAF Bombers were deployed on the mission where 40 of these were lost. The partial success of this mission proved to delay the V-Bomb attacks on England by six crucial months.

SECOND OPERATION

Flew from Feltwell – Lossiemouth – Thurso. Arthur wrote in his Log Book: '*In Ambush. Bad start!*' The crew had dinner at Thurso, then joined another raid of 70 planes to discover a German battleship. The crews had to fly at 50ft off the water, which was the only method of flying under enemy Radar screen. Arthur's plane broke down halfway, meaning they had to turn back. The rest of the raid continued, but when they arrived in Norway, there was no battleship, just a large number of German planes. This resulted in 14 planes being lost.

DRESDEN RAID

At this time, the Russians had invaded Germany. They demanded that the British were not doing enough, so the RAF were sent on a raid. During this raid, the RAF used 450 planes at night, while Americans bombed in daylight with 250 planes. Dresden was an old city mainly built of wood. When the raids began, there were so many Incendiary Bombs they caused a flash fire.

Following the Dresden raid, which lost so many lives, the then Prime Minister Winston Churchill who had always stated that his bombers were the main part of the war effort, effectively turned his back on them. This was probably because a General Election was due, and he felt it prudent to distance himself from any further involvement. His Victory Speech when war ended highly praised his '*Battle of Britain fighters*', without one word of praise for Bomber Command.

NUREMBURG RAID

Nuremburg was home to the German Army. This was one of the costliest raids in Bomber Command's history, because everything went wrong that night. During their Briefing, crews were told there would be heavy cloud providing shelter, winds would be mild, temperatures normal. However, on arrival, the skies were clear. Winds had changed direction. Temperatures were ice cold. This resulted in the heaviest losses Bomber Command had endured. In total, 97 planes were lost, with a further 100 crashing on their return or on landing. Losses were so heavy that, next morning, Bomber Command were in shock!!

The loss of any raid was felt most in the morning. At breakfast, there would usually be 80 or so men, but with so many empty seats, everyone knew a raid the night before had suffered heavy losses. The RAF was so efficient that, by lunch time, these seats were usually refilled.

Arthur counted himself lucky to be part of the Special Duties Squadron. Most of their operations were carried out in daylight. Also, the civilian on board could speak German, and on a few occasions, when near enemy planes, was able to divert them, giving false messages which did not please enemy Controllers. In total, Arthur was credited with 34 operations. Every recruit kept a Log Book of Operations. Daylight operations were marked in blue ink, night-time operations in red.

Arthur's first Operation was a 1,000 Bomber Raid on Cologne during which 45 planes were lost.

OFF DUTY

Once Arthur finished his training, he was posted to Lossiemouth for a year in a Ground Radio Station. One thing Arthur remembers is that a plane required a test flight for a raid the next day. A Pilot and Arthur were detailed to carry out this test. The pilot was anything but pleased with this, and after carrying out this test decided to fly very low over the Officers' Mess. This was called a 'shoot up'. Unfortunately, he overshot the runway and ended up in an adjacent field. The plane started burning. The pilot got out of his escape hatch, but left Arthur in the plane on his own. He eventually got out okay and gave a Report of what had happened. Next morning, the Ground Crews were sent out to strip the plane to find that the front gunner guns were gone. This was most unusual and puzzled everyone. So, they were sent to investigate and, in the village, nearby, eventually discovered them in a cottage mounted in a cross shape above the fireplace.

FINALLY ...

The 1939-1945 conflict caused Bomber Command to lose the lives of 59,000 men, with hundreds more missing. Arthur always said that these men were the bravest of the brave and it was disgraceful how their country turned against them.

This story was brought together in August 2010, written by Sarah Reid in collaboration with Arthur Reid, her grandfather, who has done so much to keep alive the memory of these brave men.



Arthur and Sarah Reid

NOTE: It was just as I finished writing up dear Arthur's story into this magazine, that Linda and his son Arthur sent through to tell me:

'Arthur Senior has gone Home to Our Father. Very peacefully, he is at rest in the arms of our Lord and with Stan (Forsyth). He slipped away at 12.49 on Saturday 14 September, just short of his 99th birthday in October ...'

Our thoughts and prayers remain with you, my Angels of the North, during this sad time xxx

TAPESTRY OF TIME

by Bob Burrows

I wanted to share my memories after reading Janine Harrington's booklet about RAF West Raynham which I found very interesting. I knew the area well, working during wartime on Manor Farm, the boundary of which joined the peri track where three bombs meant for a Hangar on the airfield fell on Kipton Field. Land Girls were billeted at Kipton house. I saw two prangs – one a Meteor 14. Two took off with the second flying too close to the first and ended up coming through the hedge.

Another day, I was baling straw when a Javelin was doing acrobatics prior to the Battle of Britain Show. At the time, I said to my mate '*You can't loop a Javelin!*' The pilot obviously thought he could, with the result that the Javelin fell like a leaf. We saw the ejector seat come out as the plane levelled. '*Ah ...*' I said, '*the pilot's got her.*' But no. The kite crashed at Rudham, with only a little damage.

My Dad was a horseman for Sister Brown at Merries Farm, Tilney, All Saints, near Kings Lynn. He was in the Home Guard having volunteered for Service but been refused as he was in a reserved occupation. His brother, my Uncle George, was in the 4th Norfolks and served in Belgium and France where he queued in the sea at Dunkirk to be rescued before being put on a train to be sorted. He cried when he told Dad about Dunkirk. Most of his mates were killed as Germans came up behind them. Without only rifles and no heavy guns to defend themselves, they were lost before they began. He later went to Singapore and died there.

One evening, Dad and I heard machine guns and engines roaring as a Halifax came over us on fire, breaking up in the air and crashing, dividing into pieces with the fuselage section landing in Merries Farm. The main section with engines and cockpit landed behind Mr Wagg's house ablaze. I ran along the A47 with others, but we could only watch. There were no survivors. I saw the pilot collapse into the flames. A crew member lay in Wagg's garden, another was in the turret.

Was this aircraft one of RAF 100 Group's? This episode occurred at the beginning of 1944.

In 1940, I was seven years old and worked on the farm pumping water for six heavy horses, morning and night. One morning, I got up to find two airmen drinking tea. Their Faery Battle had landed on the farm, and then took off again later. Then again, in 1940, I was playing in our garden when an aircraft came low over the railway line. I always waved to aircraft as they followed the line to Sutton Bridge (Spitfire training drome). The gunner waved back to me. But then I spotted the cross ... *OOPS!* This was an ME 110 which I believe flew on to be shot down at Clenchwarton. Dad was machine-gunned from a Ju-88 that had bombed Lynn clocks and missed. When they made the '*Battle of Britain*' film, they used Spanish HE IIIs.

Another time, Dad was hoeing sugar-beet with a tractor when he heard engines overhead. Looking up he saw aircraft with German markings. He jumped off the tractor and lay underneath. He saw a Doodle-Bug launched from a HE-III pass over, thinking it was one of ours damaged.

I worked with an old WWI veteran. He was mowing wheat to make a path for the horses to pull a binder. It was after Dieppe. He stopped to sharpen his scythe with a hub stone. '*There you are, boy,*' he said, '*they know nought. They should have been at Wipers. Those German 'chine gunners*

mowed our Norfolk boys down like I'm mowing this here wheat. I lost some mates there – nothing, boy, nothing.'

My hero was Russell Fuller. He was in the RAF and visited our school on Leave. His Dad was Station Master at Clenchwarton. I went with Mum to the Station. This would have been in 1943. Mrs Fuller was crying. Russell had died over Berlin in a Halifax on his first trip. Meanwhile, a Mosquito crashed at Tilney and us boys salvaged Perspex after the crash crew had gone. My favourite rescue was a 50-calibre machine gun from a B-17 dropped on the farm. Dad took it to the Home Guard, while I kept some of the bullets.

* * * *

I was in the RAF at Watton and biking home the day six Hunters crashed, one near Weasenham. My wife, Audrey, was Bat Woman to Basil Locke (No.007). She met Micky Martin and Douglas Bader when they visited West Raynham. One of the Kestrels pranged near Rudham with little damage. Audrey's Mum was hoisted into a tree to recover body parts from a Blenheim crash at High House at Weasenham.

It was an Avenger which crashed on Yarmouth beach, spoiling our *'No Prangs'* Record. I stood by in an AEC Matador awaiting a Washington crash as his wheels wouldn't lower ... but then he came in on finals and his wheels lowered!!

I was posted to Foulsham – AC1 MTM. 99MU stored vehicles for the RAF. Oh, and we tried a Ouija board with a ring of letters and numbers. It said our Flying Control was haunted, so a Snowdrop said he would sleep in the Tower. He was back by eleven that same evening. He said he'd heard voices, with doors banging, but seen nothing. However, he wouldn't go back into the Tower again. Snowdrop Station Police 99MU supplied vehicles for the 53 floods Cromer pre-heater vans (burning paraffin and blowing hot air to the engines).

I was S.A.C. on the storage line when we had an AOC Inspection. Our Sergeant said: *'Stand by, I'll be in the Workshops and take him there'* (AVM Jackman). But no, when he arrived, he wanted instead to view *'Issues & Storage Lines'* ... which meant Me! I saluted and showed him round. *'Thank you, Airman'*. To our CO Squadron Leader Andrews, he said *'S.A.C. in charge of this line, make him Corporal'*. But no - MTM must be a Fitter or Driver Mechanic. So off I went to Blackpool, Weeton, for *'Fitters Course'*. I was posted back to Foulsham as Acting Corporal. Arrived at Guestwick to ask about transport. *'No, they don't send any now. You'll have to walk'*. So, with my kit bag – a big pack! – off I went. The police hut was empty, nettles in the garden. Back to Guestwick – transport to Swanton Morley – rail warrant to Lichfield. 99 was moved a week after I left as we were on a Russian Target map ...

So many memories!



I've been looking through old photos and found a 1960 one of **Fred & Kathy English**. Fred flew in Stirlings and Halifaxes from North Creak (Egmore).

On the right, is **SAC Gordon Young** of 99 MU by the 'haunted' Foulsham Tower.



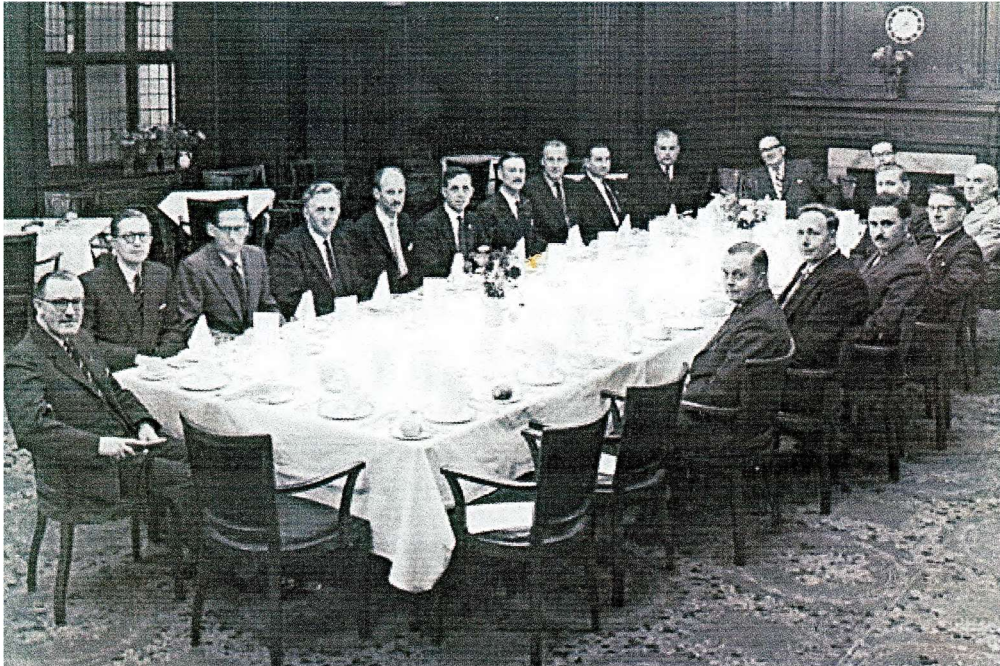
RAF WEST RAYNHAM

*They're digging up the runways where once the Blenheims flew,
Most went on a one-way trip in '40 – one and two.
The mighty Flying Fortress first went to war from here,
One hangar still has the scars of a Junker's bomb to bear.
Bostons and Mosquitoes carried on the war
Leading up to D-Day in nineteen forty-four.
When the war was over, jets came screaming in to land,
Meteors, Vampires, Javelins and a Queens Flight – Heron grand.
The Kestrel it was tested here by an International crew
One Squadron went 'twice vertical' in the Harrier brand new.
Last of all the Blood Hounds pointed noses to the sky,
Waiting for a Russian Mig that never did come by.
I watched as the last Blenheim flew by for all to see
And thought of those brave airmen who died to keep us free.
If they came back, they'd recognise the Hangars and the Square,
But not the Solar Panels scattered everywhere!*

Bob Burrows

'THE EARLY BIRDS'

John Wightman, ZLIAH, ex-G3AH



25th Reunion Dinner 1964

Clockwise from far left: Bert Allen G2UJ, (SK), Jim Pollard G31Y (SK), Vernon West 2DYW, Vernon Rayner G6FZ, Bernard Wynn G8TB, Les Coupland G2BQC (SK), Maurice Brookes G501, Merton Trier G8VH, Geoff Mason G5BR, Roy Stevens G2BVN (SK) John Clarricoats G6CL (SK), Courtesy Guest – Gen Sec RSGB, Les Hill G8KS (SK) (partly obscured), Ernest Dolman G2DCG (SK), Organiser of the Dinner: Ted Howard G4FZ, Harry Willetts G2FPI (partly obscured), **Vic Flowers G8QM**, Doug Legge G3MP, Archie Davies G4JY, Maurice Newman G3DZ, NB.

This is the story of the Civilian Wireless Reserve, nicknamed '*Early Birds*' by the RSGB, of which Association member Vic Flowers, seated fourth from right, played an active role and passed these writings to us before his death. In later years of his life he was to serve at RAF North Creak.

By 1938, the Armed Services in Britain had realised that, in the event of war, they were going to face a serious shortage of Wireless Operators. With the co-operation of the Radio Society of Great Britain, the Civilian Wireless Reserve was set up and radio amateurs were encouraged to join. Very shortly, however, the CWR was absorbed into the RAF Volunteer Reserve and, at the time of the so-called Munich Crisis in September, we all received mobilisation instructions and travel warrants to report to our designated places of assembly.

At the end of August 1939, war appeared to be inevitable. In that final week, I talked twice to Operators at the amateur station SP 1 ZK, located at the Warsaw Radio Exhibition, and they were in no doubt. At 11pm on 31 August, I listened to the BBC News and heard that all British radio amateurs were to close their stations from midnight. I went back to my transmitter, had two final contacts with the USA, then pulled the plug for over six years.

Next morning, 1st September, we awakened to the news that Germany had invaded Poland. I went to work as usual in the city of Manchester but, when I returned from lunch, there was a phone message from my mother. A telegram had arrived telling me to report to London. This was completely different to what I was supposed to do, but the telegram obviously overrode my

orders. I took myself off to London by train and eventually arrived at the Air Ministry at about 10pm, almost the last of our group to get there. (There were about 40 of us, of whom 37 were radio amateurs.) I was partly kitted up, then taken to a very nicely appointed hotel, where I spent my first night in the Air Force in a private room. The following morning arrived a three-course breakfast and choice of newspapers. But green as I was, I knew this sort of caper wouldn't last. How right I was! We were collected and taken to draw steel helmets, gas masks and identity discs. We were assured the latter were fireproof, so that even if we were burned to crisps, we would be identified to our grieving relatives. This was an early introduction to the gallows humour which is such a feature of the Services!

We were marched through the streets to the nearest tube station and thence to Liverpool Street Railway Station, where we entrained for Saffron Walden in Essex. This was the nearest the railway came to our destination, RAF Debden, one of Fighter Command sector stations responsible for defending London against attacks which came in from north of the Thames.

The rest of Saturday was spent in queues, collecting various things. The worst queue was for injections – three of them: Paratyphoid, Anti-tetanus, the third I forget. We took off tunics, rolled up shirtsleeves and ran the gauntlet. It was two injections in the left arm and one in the right. In these days of AIDS and Hepatitis-B, it seems incredible that orderlies used the same syringes and needles throughout, pausing at intervals only to put in a new ampoule. And were those needles blunt by the time the last victims were done! I was amazed to see some of those ahead of me fainting, odd ones even before they reached the needles. Perhaps fortunately, I had had two or three courses of flu injections in years before the war, so I was not adversely affected. However, worse was to come. Debden was not equipped to handle more than its normal complement of personnel, so there was no accommodation for us, not even a mattress. We slept Saturday and Sunday nights on the concrete floor of an empty hangar, with just two blankets and a ground sheet. Like everyone else, my arms were swollen and painful, so sleep was fitful and disturbed. Then at 4.30am we were blasted awake when a flight of Spitfires took off on the first patrol of the day.

The British Government had given Hitler until 11am on Sunday 3 September to withdraw from Poland, but of course, no reply was received. Promptly at eleven, the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, broadcast the declaration of war and we sat and listened to it on the PA system. It is said that, in America, everyone remembers what he was doing when President Kennedy was assassinated. Presumably, all my generation remembers what he was doing when the Second World War was declared. I was sitting on the grass outside our hangar, enjoying the warm sunshine, aware that this was a defining moment in my life. But I had no concept of just how much of an upheaval was in store for the world! The rest of that day was spent packing kit and getting ready to move, though nobody said where.

On Monday 4 September, the 4.30am Spitfires did not bother us because we were up already. After an early breakfast, we were taken by truck to Saffron Walden station to await our special train. This was another learning experience – how the Military mind works. We were delivered to the station at 6am, but the train did not arrive until nearly midday. When we finally got away, the sun indicated we were travelling north, and this caused a flutter. If we were heading for Grimsby or Hull, then we must be bound for Poland, a prospect that thrilled none of us! Eventually, our route turned west, and tension eased. My memory is uncertain of the exact route, but most of it was undoubtedly on lines which no longer exist (part of the thousands of miles of railways closed in the 1950s). However, I will say that I think the route was Saffron Walden – Cambridge – Bedford – Oxford – Reading – Southampton.

Eventually, at about 9pm, we de-trained on the quay at Southampton. No doubt about our destination now! We boarded one of the Channel Island ferries: *'Isle of Guernsey'*, in company with a large number of troops and sailed at about 11pm. Since breakfast at Debden, all we had had to eat was bully beef and 'hard-tack' biscuits washed down by water. However, when we were bedded down, an angel appeared in the shape of our Senior NCO, and the only *'Regular'* in our outfit. He had bullied the ferry cooks into making a dixie of tea for us which he brought round to our bunks. That was one of the best cups of tea I have ever had. I often thought of this episode when, later in the war, there was a comic song:

*'Kiss me goodnight, Sergeant Major,
Tuck me in my little wooden bed ...'*

Before dropping off to sleep, I peered through the porthole and could just see the shape of a destroyer escorting us. I think this finally brought home to me that not everyone out there was disposed to be friendly! However, I had no trouble in falling into a deep sleep, having been on the go for about twenty hours.

Tuesday 5 September was another eventful day. We berthed at Le Havre before daylight. The two destroyers escorting us, turned back just short of the port, no doubt to go and pick up another ferry load. We were one of the first Units of any of the Services to set foot on the Continent in World War Two and for this reason were later nicknamed: *'The Early Birds'* by the Radio Society of Great Britain.

Once off the ferry, we were placed aboard a train which was standing at the quayside and there we sat, and we sat ... and we sat. It was now more than twenty-four hours since breakfast at Debden and, apart from that mug of tea on the ferry, all we had was that damned bully beef in those trapezoidal tins, those tooth-breaking biscuits, and water (no food was provided on the ferry). Now, sitting on the platform was a pile of wooden boxes and, according to the stencils, these contained tins of crab. One of our Unit was not a radio amateur, but a former Naval Telegraphist (God knows why he joined the RAFVR!). Unlike us innocent ex-civilians from sheltered homes, he was skilled in the art of converting things for his own use. Making sure he was unobserved, he nipped out, grabbed a case, and was back on the train in a flash. The Army guys further up the train, saw this and repeated the operation, but with much less skill and were spotted. All hell broke loose among the French railway officials. The train was shunted out of the station. We were marched back and made to wait while the carriages and our kit were searched. The soldiers were caught red-handed, but we were as blameless as choir boys. While the train was being shunted out of the station, our telegraphist friend smashed up the wooden case and threw it out of the window. (As the train was moving, there was no way of knowing which window the wood had come from.) Then he proceeded to hide the tins of crab. The coaches had *'concertinas'* for access between adjacent ones, and each concertina had two steel plates which folded down to form a floor. The crab nestled cosily under these plates and railway staff did not have the gumption to look underneath. Once we started our journey, out came the crab and, instead of bully-beef and biscuits, we had crab and biscuits. Our RAF issue knives, equipped with a tin-opener, did a sterling job of opening those tins. I was rapidly developing a part of my education which had been neglected in my previous life!

Eventually the train deposited us at Amiens which was to be our base for a couple of weeks. We were accommodated in an unoccupied Convent completely devoid of furniture. We slept in the refectory on a parquet floor with no mattress – just two blankets. The only good thing was that the blankets were new French Army issue and were magnificent – roughly twice the size and thickness of the RAF ones we used at Debden. (The only other French issue we got was tinned

meat for emergency rations and we were grateful we never had to make use of it because dates embossed on the tins indicated it was fifteen years old!!)

That evening we were let loose in the city, but it was a case of *'Look, but don't touch'* because we had no French money. Of course, I had damned little English money either! But to give the RAF credit, next day we were paid and could also change our own money into francs (about 240 to the pound). So that evening it was out on the town in a big way. Food, glorious French food! With our rates of pay, we were in much the same position as the Yanks in Britain later. From now on, we went out for dinner every evening at a good hotel. We discovered we could buy a five-course meal, including wine, for the equivalent of one shilling and sixpence, which was about the cost of a seat in a London suburban cinema in those days. It was here that I first encountered the heavenly *'escargots en aspic'* served as hors d'oeuvres.

As soon as we had settled into the Convent, we were informed in strict secrecy, that we were now part of No.1 Wireless Intelligence Screen, and that we should soon be going out on location. Our days were spent driving around the countryside in the vicinity of the Belgium and Luxembourg borders. I found myself co-opted as a driver of one of the new Renault vans, which had been delivered to us direct from the factory in Paris. It was an interesting experience! Not only was it the first time I had driven on the 'wrong' side of the road and used my right hand to operate the gear lever, but the said gear lever went through a hole in the dashboard. The whole area was very fascinating, because it had been fought over with great ferocity during the First World War and British troops had been heavily involved. We took time out to visit places like Arras, Cambrai, Vimy Ridge, etc. It was eerie to see the old trenches winding across the countryside and often still quite distinct, even though the outlines had been blurred by weather and cultivation over the previous twenty years.

At the end of two weeks, we were split up into individual stations and spread out along the Belgium border. This was obviously a dry run because, after a fortnight, we were recalled to base and the whole unit was moved to a new HQ at Metz. This was the centre of another very historic area which had been the scene of bloody battles and sieges involving French troops; places like Verdun and Douaumont. Our HQ was in the 'caserne' at Metz, but we were rapidly deployed to our posts and I finished up at Station N. at the south end of our screen. As a twenty-year-old (just) I was Senior Wireless Operator, with an eighteen-year-old as my second Op, plus four Royal Artillery spotters to feed the plots to us. We established our station in an empty cottage in the village of Bellange, just eight kilometres down the road from the town of Morhange. This was in the Maginot Line defence area, so, apart from us, all the troops were French. We were just dumped down with our equipment, a two-burner cooker and some ration money, and told to get on with it. We were given what the RAF called *'Higher Rate Ration Allowance'* with which to buy food locally. This was quite generous and each of us was receiving more money for food than we were getting in pay. We made little use of the cooker as the cottage had a wood-burning stove which did double duty for heating and cooking. As there were six of us, we did duty in pairs on a three-day roster. It was a most interesting experience!

One day, I made a jam tart for dessert – a real work of art, with twisted strips of pastry across the top. Sadly, after cooking, it was impossible to cut and, when banged against the corner of the stove in frustration, it shattered like glass. I was not aware that fat had to be rubbed into the flour and water mixture!! One of the others made a milk pudding – he took a large bowl, poured rice up to the rim, filling in the spaces with milk. After a while, a smell of burning came from the oven. When the door was opened, the pudding billowed out. Strangely, our salvation was cigarettes. The British ones were as superior to the French variety as home-made bread is to hamburger buns, so our *'Players'*, *'Capstan'*, *'Gold Flake'*, and *'Senior Service'* were extremely popular with French troops.

We were each issued with a free tin of fifty every week and could buy extra at duty-free prices from our support van which called several times a week. As bribes went, cigarettes were cheap. Across the road to our cottage was the Officers' Mess Cook House of the French Battalion occupying the village, and the Senior NCO was formerly the Chef at a large hotel in Anger. We put him on the payroll – a tin of fifty twice a week and in return he acted as adviser and supplier. Most evenings he sent over a large dish of whatever the Officers were having for dinner, but if we were having something special, eg. Goose, suckling pig, etc., he would come over to supervise its cooking. He kept us supplied with fresh vegetables and gave us a crash course in cooking. One of the exotic dishes he showed us was a rum omelette for dessert. (The last one I made used twenty-three eggs!) The total cost of the two tins of cigarettes was less than one day's ration allowance for one man.

If we went as far as Morhange we could buy liquor and, at that stage of the war, there was a wonderful range available at low prices. I did very little drinking, but as the winter advanced, our cottage gave a fair imitation of an icebox at night. I took to having a rum toddy on retiring – three fingers of Jamaican rum in a large tumbler, a dessert spoon of sugar, the juice of a lemon, topped up with boiling water. I used to get into bed before drinking this, then slept like the proverbial top all night. It's laughable to think that the lemon was more expensive than the three fingers of rum. One other delight in cold weather was morning tea at any small café, except that it was not tea but coffee, thick and black, with a shot glass of brandy on the side.

This was the period known as the '*Phony War*' because nothing very much was happening. We were in the Maginot Line defence zone, checked out regularly by German reconnaissance aircraft, with the occasional one shot down. For some time, I kept a piece of the Heinkel Hell 1 which came down close by. I did not know then that, a few months later, when I was in Kent, downed German aircraft would barely raise a flicker of interest. Propaganda leaflets were dropped on us by these same planes and I donated mine some years ago to the Archives Section of the Tauranga Library.

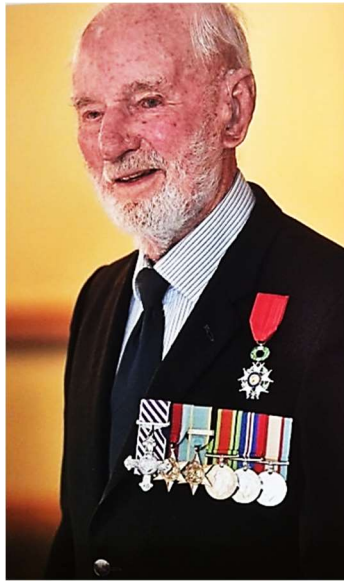
To use one of Winston Churchill's figures of speech, this was '*The End of the Beginning*', though he said it later at a quite different stage of the war.

John Wightman, ZL1AH, ex-G3AH
Tribute: Early Birds, 21.8.2011

Shared by the late Vic Flowers who was part of this story.

VERN SCANTLETON DFC

In Memory



Copyright: Peter Walker

F/Lt Vern L. Scantelton DFC, RAAF, died on 11 April this year in Toowoomba, Brisbane, aged 97 years old. He was awarded the French *Legion D'Honneur* in 2015 by the French Ambassador in Brisbane. Vern served with 214 Squadron at RAF Oulton, Norfolk, flying 46 Fortress 'jamming' operations between April 1944 and April 1945 – more than any other Pilot. He volunteered to do a second tour over and above the normal 30 ops. He also flew five bombing ops on Stirlings with 214 from Chedburgh (not then 100 Group).

The following two accounts are personal writings shared.

It should be appreciated when presenting a first-person story, that it is difficult not to appear to be '*shooting a line*' as wartime pilots were renowned for their ability to do so. You will have to accept what you read here at face value. With any story relating to Bomber Command during World War Two, it is also essential to have some appreciation of difficulties experienced both by pilots and crews.

Piston engine aircraft were greatly underpowered, compared to today's jets and required every inch of the runway for take-off. A standard Bomber Command aerodrome was one, two-thousand-yard runway criss-crossed by one twelve-hundred-yard runway. The twelve-hundred-yard runway was only used when high winds caused too much cross wind on the two-thousand-yard one. Bomber Command operated mostly at night, and all dromes had strict blackout conditions. This added to the pilot's problems. For instance, taxiing a Stirling Bomber with an all up weight of approximately 75,000 pounds around a perimeter on a black, windy, wet winter's night with only a few pinpoint lights as a guide could prove very demanding.

All Bomber Command raids were carried out with strict R/T and W/T silence from prior to take-off time. The reason for this being that any increased R/T or W/T activity could be picked up by listening devices of the enemy, which would alert them to the fact that Bomber Force was about to leave or already on their way.

My first story relates to a mid-air collision which took place on 6 November 1943.

We took off from Stradishall Airfield at approximately 9.30pm and had climbed on course to a height of approx. 7,000ft over Cambridge. The night was dark and full blackout conditions were in force. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a dark object loom up on the port side. Instinctively, I pulled back on the control column, raising the nose of the aircraft. Almost immediately, the nose of our aircraft collided with the tail plane of a Wellington Bomber. Beyond any doubt, pulling back on the control column saved our aircraft, otherwise the two aircraft would have collided at the same height with almost certain death to both crews. Because we struck the tail of the Wellington, the pilot would have lost immediate control.



Courtesy: Vern Scantelton DFC

The aircraft would have gone into a 'Corkscrew' spin and centrifugal forces would have made it impossible for the crew to bail out. All seven Australians in this Wellington were killed.

Our advantage was that the Stirling was the 'Rolls Royce' of aircraft made by Short Brothers, makers of the famous Sunderland Flying boats. Added to that, the Wellington was only a two-engine aircraft and about a third of our all-up weight. The Wellington Bomber was affectionately known as the '*Wimpy*' and played a major role in Bomber Command in about 1942 and prior to the introduction of Lancasters and Halifaxes. The Wellington Bomber was invented by Barnes Wallis, later to be made famous as inventor of the Dam Buster bombs. It was later to transpire that, at the moment of impact, I pressed the intercom button on the control column and called out: '*Christ!*' This exclamation was later to bring a little mirth to the staid Court of Enquiry held a month later.

Immediately following the collision, we were able to ascertain that we still had the aircraft under control, but the starboard outer motor was running roughly, and this motor was feathered. I consulted with the Navigator and it was agreed that we should fly back to Base on a reciprocal course and, due to the impact, the gyroscopic compass would probably have toppled and be useless, meaning we would have to rely on the P15 magnetic compass. Little were we to know that the gyroscopic compass had not toppled and, in fact, the P15 had been knocked out by at least 45 degrees and we were not flying a reciprocal course.

After approximately 25 minutes of flying, we became aware that we were lost. To add to our woes, we had other problems to contend with. In the impact, the port side of the nose of our aircraft was opened up. At the time of impact, the Bomb Aimer, who operates in that area, was lying on

his stomach, map reading through the Perspex viewer. The poor fellow copped the full blast of the impact, but miraculously did not suffer broken bones and, in fact, was only in hospital a few days. Unfortunately, in the collision, his parachute was ripped open. He was found enveloped in approximately 70 square yards of silk which he was manfully trying to repack without any success.

An urgent assessment of the damage which we could determine internally showed that the airspeed indicator recorded zero, which meant the Pilot head, which is located externally under the nose, had been ripped off. Knowing your airspeed is a vital and essential piece of information needed to fly a large and heavy aircraft as the craft must always be kept above stalling speed in the air, except at the point of landing.

The thought of bringing an aircraft in to land with an all up weight of 75,000 pounds, at night, without knowing our air speed was hair-raising to say the least! Whilst a Stirling Bomber had dual controls, the RAF used only one Pilot. The Bomb Aimer was trained to act as second dickie to assist the Pilot in take-offs and landings. One of his functions on preparing to land was, on the Pilot's instructions, to call the air speed every three or four seconds when the aircraft was at a height of about five hundred feet and on the descent in the approach funnel. Without a known air speed, the only way to bring the aircraft safely in, was under high power and going like a *'bat out of hell'*. An attempt to call Base on P/T proved useless as the set was damaged during impact. We called *'Mayday ... Mayday ...'*, the international distress call; a number of times, but obviously we were only talking to ourselves. The trailing aerial of the W/T set was ripped off, which meant the Wireless Operator was unable to transmit or receive messages.

Having decided we were lost, Roy Forbes, our New Zealand Navigator took some Astro shots and determined our position. By some outstanding calculations under extreme pressure, he worked out a course to set for Base, this time using the gyroscopic compass. Roy proved to be an outstanding Navigator and justified his award of the Distinguished Flying Cross after completing 30 operations.

After arriving over Base, we fired a number of red Very Lights, to indicate our distress situation, hoping they would clear the runway for our sole use. We need not have worried. They were already aware that a collision had taken place and, with no R/T or W/T response from our aircraft, had assumed we were one of the planes involved.

At one stage, the opportunity was given to some of the crew to bail out, but all refused to do so. This was a little surprising as some must have thought our chances of survival fairly grim. As one of the parachutes was useless, it meant that, in the event of a forced bail out, one of the crew faced certain death. Fortunately, this terrible decision did not have to be made.

Having decided to land, the undercarriage was selected to be lowered and ... bad luck again! ... nothing happened. The huge wheels and 16ft Oleo legs of the undercarriage are operated independently by electric motors on either side. As these were obviously unserviceable, we were left with no alternative but to get the wheels down manually. This was a slow, laborious job as it takes six hundred turns for each wheel to be lowered, all this time stooging around above the airfield at a fairly low altitude in an aircraft with unknown external damage.

Finally, with the wheels locked down, the time had come to land the aircraft.

The aircraft was brought in under high power and, in hindsight, at an excessive speed. Over the start of the runway, the throttles were pulled off and we had hopefully expected the aircraft to settle. Instead, our excessive speed would not let the aircraft stall onto the runway, and we went tearing down the runway using its length up at an alarming rate. Finally, the aircraft settled onto

the runway and it was a great relief to find that the undercarriage did not collapse on impact. Our relief however was short lived. On applying the air brakes, they failed completely!

The braking system had been damaged and we had total loss of air pressure, therefore no braking power whatsoever. As it had become apparent we would overshoot, the only remaining option was to ground-loop the aircraft and hope the Oleo legs would not collapse, and that in the wide arc required, we would not collide with some stationary object which, of course, we would have no way of avoiding. Fortunately, the Oleo legs withstood the stress of a complete ground loop, and we were all pleased to be back on terra firma. We were met by a welcoming party, all keen to learn what had happened.

Over the next few days, I noticed that the Medical Officer on the Station sought me out in the Mess on several occasions to pass the time of day. Was it that he was looking for some twitching of the eyes, or the shaking of the hand which was holding the pot of beer?

Next day, the aircraft was considered a total right off and towed to a remote part of the airfield. No doubt it supplied valuable spares over the next few months.

Because the collision occurred between two RAF aircraft over England and seven Australians had lost their lives, it was deemed necessary to hold a Court of Inquiry. Two Investigating Officers interviewed me, taking statements from the three senior members of the crew. A date was set for the forthcoming Inquiry about a month after the collision.

A dour Legal Wing Commander was President when the Court was convened. After the preliminary waffle, the Clerk began reading Statements made by the three crew members. The first stated that first knowledge of the impending collision was when the Skipper pushed the intercom button and called out '*Christ!*'. The second Statement followed similar lines, again quoting that the first he knew of the impending collision was when the Skipper called '*Christ!*' on the intercom. The third Statement was read out, and as it got to the part concerning the Skipper's exclamation, the dour President held up his hand to stop the proceedings. He turned to me and said:

'Mr Scantleton, tell the Court, was that blasphemy or were you just appealing for help?'

Well, I'll leave that for you to decide!

* * * *

WAR EXPERIENCE TWO

This is my second effort at putting on paper some of my wartime experiences and it is a mixture of observations, comments, nostalgia and my first and only admission of a most stupid and reckless decision made during my flying career.

Whilst most boys in the 1930s were captivated by the great flying feats of Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith, Charles Ulm and others, nurturing secret dreams of becoming Aviators, my doom was sealed when, in about 1939, I saw the pre-war film '*I Wanted Wings*' which, amongst others, starred the gorgeous but absolutely dumb blonde Veronica Lake. The film must have made quite an impact as I can still recall most of it today. Needless to say, at the tender age of eighteen, it was not the dumb blonde who mesmerised me, but the remarkable at that time B-17 Mk 1 Flying Fortress four-engine bomber. This aircraft was featured throughout the film and would have been one of the first four-engine bombers to be in Service anywhere in the world. Little was I to know,

as I watched the film in the Kerang Theatre one Saturday night, that I would be flying the latest version of this aircraft on my second tour of operations over Europe in 1944.

It was my good fortune to survive two tours of operations relatively unscathed in Bomber Command. The first tour comprises thirty operations, and the second tour twenty. Actually, I only completed nineteen operations on my second tour as the Station Commander, Group Captain Dickens, refused to let me do the twentieth saying '*You've done your share and have completed your second tour*'. It is rather difficult for a Flight Lieutenant to argue with a Group Captain. Statistically, one had to have a lot of luck to survive two tours as it had been worked out that, over a period, the chances of survival was about one in thirteen on each raid. This therefore was somewhat akin to playing the poker machines. If you play long enough, you will lose eventually. I was very fortunate in having two very good crews which, I must admit, I was very severe on regarding training and discipline. With a total crew of ten, this was essential. But I was well aware at times that some of the younger members hated my guts, especially as I was only 23 at the time.

On 11 March 1944, I was called to the Wing Commander's office and told that I was to take Flight Lieutenant Cam Lye, a Pilot in the Royal New Zealand Air Force, and Roy Forbes, my Navigator, with a skeleton crew, and go to Langford Lodge RAF Station in Northern Ireland and fly back a B-17 aircraft. This, on the surface, looked to be a simple and routine exercise. Pilot Officer George Mackie and crew were to fly us over, waiting until we had taken off the following morning. At this stage, it is worth giving a few comments on George Mackie. George was one of the great characters of the Royal Air Force. In 1940, he was studying architecture at Edinburgh University when he joined the RAF and gained his wings as a Pilot. George was well read, witty, highly intelligent, and one of the few to have had his Log Book endorsed as an exceptional Pilot.

On the debit side, he was very bad tempered, argumentative, sarcastic, 'red-ragger' and a true Scot in his intense dislike for the British. He did little to conceal his various dislikes and thus paid a high price as he was only Commissioned in 1944. With his ability, he should have won a Commission in 1940 and with the passing of time and loss of Pilots, could reasonably have been expected to rise to the rank of at least Wing Commander by the end of the war.

I well remember the trip across the Irish Sea as it was a beautiful day. As we approached the Isle of Man, George took the aircraft down to zero feet, skimming across the waves. This is a very dangerous stunt as water is very deceptive. A moment's inattention can put the aircraft into the drink. As we approached the Isle of Man, George raised the nose of the aircraft and we slid across the Island at tree-top height, no doubt frightening the hell out of animals and humans alike.

On landing at Langford Lodge, we sought out the Station Engineering Officer and were stunned to learn that the aircraft we were to pick up had been in the Station for about four years. It had been flown over the Atlantic, dumped at Langford Lodge, and forgotten. He was unable to give any details and interested only in getting it off his hands. However, he did confirm that no maintenance had been carried out, the motors had not been run, nor had the compasses been 'swung' in all that time. Finally, we were taken to the aircraft and somewhat staggered to see that it was a Mk1, which didn't even have the fairing on the tail plane. In other words, it was similar to the aircraft in the pre-war film '*I Wanted Wings*'. An interior inspection showed that various spiders and other wriggles had taken up residence for the duration. The aircraft had no R/T or W/T and, as RAF and American flying equipment were totally different, we would have no intercom communication throughout the flight. On the Squadron, we were flying the latest B-17 H aircraft with twin row Wright Cyclone radial motors. The motors in this aircraft were single row of unknown horsepower and capabilities. This all added up to the fact that the aircraft was totally unairworthy and under no circumstances should it have been flown, especially as the return flight was over water and

with no means of communication. I have prided myself that, during my flying career, I always paid particular attention to detail and did not take unnecessary risks. Why then should I decide to take off in an aircraft which was certainly not airworthy? Perhaps it was because of the discussion with Cam Lye, a more experienced Pilot than I, as he had been an Instructor in Canada prior to his posting to the United Kingdom. As Captain of the aircraft, the final decision to take off however, was solely mine.

On the morning of 12 March, we decided to take-off as it was a lovely clear day, and the Met Report was favourable particularly over the Irish Sea. We turned the aircraft into the runway for take-off and gave the motors full power.

We had not gone more than a couple of hundred yards when the combined four motors set up a tremendous scream, giving the impression we had four runaway propellers. I looked at Cam. Cam looked at me. We both dived to pull off the motors. By the time we taxied to the end of the runway, we could find nothing wrong with the motors or instruments so could only assume this was the normal function of these particular motors. We decided to try another take-off. As we turned the aircraft onto the runway, the yellow Vauxhall Control Tower van came rushing across the field, lights flashing for us to stop. An Erk got out of the van and was pulled into the aircraft at the rear door. He scrambled breathlessly up to the cabin and said to me:

'The Control Officer said to tell you that he has now placed an ambulance at the end of the runway'.

Hells Bells!

That was the last straw!!

Or then again, was it? Because we were in Ireland, it could be just a sick joke. I'll bet very few Pilots have ever had a personalised ambulance placed at their disposal on take-off!

By now, readers will have guessed the second take-off was successful and, with just a little sweat on the brow, under the armpits and a few other places, we turned easterly and headed for Base.

The weather over the Irish Sea was clear, but as we came up to the United Kingdom coastline, we could see clouds forming ahead. Soon after passing landfall, we were in thick cloud, intensifying the further we went. This placed us in a serious situation as we had no communication with the outside world, and with an unswung compass, we did not want to 'pussy-foot' around in case we ended up in some mountain range. We decided to forget going back to Base. At the first opportunity of a break in the cloud, we would land at the first aerodrome we could find.

We finally found a break in the cloud and descended cautiously, after time thankfully spotting a drome. This was a fairly small drome and as we had no R/T to call up the Control Tower, we fired off a couple of Very Lights to make sure we had the runway to ourselves and for our exclusive use. We had no wish to risk an abortive landing and having to go around again. We were directed to a dispersal pan near the Control Tower and were to learn that we had landed at Llandwrog in Wales.

On entering the Officers' Mess that evening, I was delighted to be met by Geoff Bromley, a fellow Pilot who got his wings and Commission on the same day as I at Point Cook. Within a short time, (that is a couple of beers later) he informed me he was getting married to an English girl the following month. My mind had to work overtime as I well recall having loaned him twenty pounds to buy a ring to get engaged to a Melbourne girl just prior to our embarkation for overseas. On our way to the United Kingdom, we were billeted for six weeks at Camp Miles Standish in Taunton, near Boston in the USA. During this time, Geoff got himself engaged to an American girl. Needless to say, I did not question him as to what happened to the other girls. But boy, oh boy, was he a

fast worker!! On the other hand, the weaker sex did fall for the boys in blue. Even some of the girls at Benalla married intrepid airmen!

Apart from the fact that it took an hour and a half to get the four motors started the following morning, our return to Base from Llandwrog was uneventful. This aircraft of course was totally unsuitable for operational purposes and again, was put in a lonely dispersal pan.

On 16 April 1944, 214 Squadron was moved lock, stock and barrel to Oulton on the Oulton Broads just north of Norwich. All aircraft had to be flown over, and as this clapped out old machine was on the Squadron Inventory, I was given the job of flying it over. Fortunately, it was only a short distance between the two dromes. But about halfway to our destination, there was a loud bang and the aircraft shuddered violently. It was promptly picked up that the problem was number three engine and this was feathered immediately. On arrival at Oulton, quite a number of aircraft were milling around all wanting to land. Again, with no R/T, we could not communicate with the Control Tower and with a clapped-out old machine on three motors, we were not prepared to take risks. We fired off a series of red Very Lights clearly indicating to all that we needed the runway exclusively for our own use. It was subsequently found that a couple of connecting rods had snapped on number three and punctured the cylinder walls. No wonder it had kicked up such a racket!

I had always been aware that Grandfather John Scantleton migrated from Northern Ireland to Australia in the 1860s. In more recent years, I was to learn that he left from Moneymore, which is very close to Langford. How ironic it would have been if, through my foolhardiness, my broken bones had been scattered over a field near where my Grandfather had left some 80 years earlier.

For 50 years, I have pondered on why a B-17 Mk1 aircraft could have been dumped at Langford Lodge and forgotten. This, of course, would have been before the Americans entered the war. The answer came when I was browsing through some war books in the Maroochydore library last year. I opened a book on the RAF and started to read a paragraph which told how twenty B-17s, that is Flying Fortress Bombers; were purchased from the USA in 1940 for use by Bomber Command. These aircraft were found totally unsuitable by Bomber Command and 'scrapped'. Beyond doubt, this particular aircraft was probably the last to be flown over the Atlantic, and by that time, no-one wanted it. Those readers who were aware that I was flying B-17s at the end of the war, will have picked up that contradiction exists in the above story, so I had better explain.

After Bomber Command 'scrubbed' the use of B-17s as a bomber in 1940, they did not use these aircraft again for carrying bombs. By 1943, the invention of Radar and other highly sophisticated electronic devices were rapidly being used by both sides. Bomber Command decided they needed a bomber support Squadron in which aircraft carried no bombs, but only specialised equipment operated by two German-speaking Operators.

The power needed to operate this equipment had to be equivalent to the output of the BBC pre-war. The only aircraft available to generate this power was the American B-17 series G & H. Thus, the B-17 was brought back into the Bomber Command fold. In their great wisdom, the Powers-that-Be selected 214 Squadron to convert from Stirling bombers to B-17s. The whole Squadron and Station were then classified as '*Top Secret*'.

On raids, the Squadron aircraft were placed throughout the bomber stream, that is at the head, tail and middle. Our problem was that we had to carry home with us the same pay load we went out with, unlike Lancasters and Halifaxes that dropped their load over the target, put their nose down, and clocked about 270 miles per hour whilst they got the hell out of the target area. For use of the special equipment, the B-17 bristled with antennas and a large Perspex blister under

the nose. All this impeded our speed so that within twenty minutes of leaving the target, the B-17s were at the tail end of the stream heading home.

Not a good place to be when the night fighters came up!

Vern Scantleton (F/Lt R.A.A.F.)
214 Squadron, Bomber Command
1 April 1995



DIED 11 APRIL 2019

* * * *

Dear All,

In the Summer edition of this magazine I shared the fact that member Brian Odam had recently died on 7 February 2019.

Brian served with Ground Crew at Great Massingham in 169 Squadron during wartime. He attended Reunions and gave a great deal of time and energy as a Volunteer to the City of Norwich Aviation Museum.

Stuart and I had the opportunity to visit Brian and his daughter Rosemary last year following the Association Reunion, and shared time with them which he seemed to enjoy. He held a great love for the Association as well as the Museum, and always enjoyed meeting old friends and new.

In his Will, Brian has left £500 to the Association of which he was so proud to be a part.

Meanwhile, Rosemary his daughter continues to remain in touch, and I know his monies will be put to good use. He wanted to ensure that the Association continues.

I have written a special letter of thanks to Rosemary on behalf of the Association.

I knew Brian for many years, and I particularly remember the teas I shared with him and Mary at their home, and the garden which was one of those I'd have loved as a child in which you could explore, each time finding hidden pathways leading somewhere new. He was a lovely, gentle, very caring man, and the world is a sadder place without people like him.

Rest in Peace, dear Brian



We are truly blessed to have known you.

God Bless,
Janine xx

* * * *

IN MEMORY

VERONICA JAMES **8 March 1925 – 25 June 2019**



Vera was born to Miriam and Patrick McGrath at 24 Vivian Square, Aberavon, in 1925. She was one of their seven children.

Vera attended St Joseph's School with her younger brother Gerald, and she was a very good swimmer and athlete, so those long legs of hers came in handy. Vera met Phil when she was 14 and went on to work in Richard Thomas and Baldwin (Mansel) Tinworks just over the 'Half-penny Bridge'.

She then worked at the Albion Tinsplate Works in Briton Ferry with her sister-in-law Evelyn, eventually ending up working with Phil's family in their Arcade Shop and Ice-Cream Factory. Vera and Phil were married in 1946 and celebrated their 73rd Wedding Anniversary in April this year. They decided not to marry earlier until Phil finished flying with the RAF. They bought a house in John Street, known then as Vatican City, and had one daughter Barbara, who married an out-of-town boy Peter, from Cwmavon. Vera and Phil had an Ice-Cream Stall and owned the Big Apple on Aberavon Beach, and both carried on working in Phil's father's garage in Sandown Road until it was knocked down. Both Phil and Vera worked very hard, but they also shared a full life together, enjoyed socialising with their RAFA friends. Vera enjoyed taking part in Concerts and Shows at both St Theresa's and St Joseph's Hall where the UCM including her friends Lelia, Theresa, Cath and Julie had much fun entertaining and raising funds for both Churches. She loved music and enjoyed singing along to Dorothy Squires and Doris Day.

Vera and Phil travelled several times to Canada for Reunions with Phil's Canadian flying crew and became part of their extended family.

Although they travelled widely, Vera was already an established global traveller with her late friend Megan Goosey, when they would decide to just 'book and go', even visiting Russia together in the late 1970s/early 1980s when two unaccompanied ladies just did not do that kind of thing! But off they went and returned home having bribed their way with the hotel staff, their cases stocked with Revlon cosmetics!

The arrival of their granddaughter Tracey made her and Phil so happy, but unfortunately, Tracey did not have the same passion as Vera for the *treading of the boards* and the '*footlights*' but

ventured into more daring adventures with the Air Cadets of which Phil was President. Tracey then made them both very proud when she married her Phil, also serving in the RAF. Life was perfect! The arrival of their great granddaughter Natalie made their family complete and gave them so much joy.

The past three to four years had not been easy for Vera, with her health deteriorating, losing her eyesight and having Dementia. But the family did everything they could to keep her at home where she was loved and cared for by her family. Vera continued to receive the Sacrament at home and at Swn y Mor (through the kindness of St Joseph's Church volunteers and her friend Theresa Welsh). Her faith was important to her, and she visited Lourdes several times, reciting her prayers to the end. It was always seven candles that had to be lit.

She was renowned for her humour, singing, lovely smile and raised eyes, especially when Barbara was around!

Phil, Barbara, Tracey and their families are blessed to have had so many cherished years with her, and cannot say 'thank you' enough to the remaining supportive family members, loyal friends, devoted Carers, doctors and nurses, who have supported them and looked after Vera.

She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.



Phil & Vera James

Barbara Richards
Vera's daughter

Funeral Listing

JAMES Veronica Nee McGrath Vera. Passed away peacefully surrounded by her loving family on Tuesday 25 June, in the care of Swn-Y-Mor Care Centre. Vera, beloved wife of Phil, loving Mum of Barbara, dear mother-in-law of Peter, adored Gran of Tracey and Phil, and a much-loved Great Gran of Natalie. 'She will be sadly missed by all her family, loyal friends and Carers.

Funeral was held on Tuesday 9 July, with a Requiem Mass at St Joseph's Church, followed by committal at Morgan Crematorium. Donations were asked in lieu of flowers, to be sent to the Alzheimer's Society.

VERONICA (VERA) JAMES – IN MEMORY

by Wing Commander John Stubbington, Past-Chairman



Taken at Association Reunion

It was my honour and privilege to represent the Association at Vera's Cremation on 9 July at Port Talbot. Many of you, like Valerie and me, will have enjoyed Vera's company at Reunions over many years. It was a pleasure to have known her as a friend. She was a truly caring and wonderful lady who married our President Phil James MBE in 1946 and celebrated their 73rd Wedding Anniversary in April this year. Together, they were an outstanding example to us all.

Vera was born on 8th March 1925, one of seven children, and she first met Phil when she was 14 years old. During the war and after, she worked in the tinsplate industry. They had decided not to marry until after Phil had stopped flying with the RAF, during which time he was a Flight Engineer on Halifax aircraft with 192 Squadron. Both Vera and Phil worked hard, but they also had a full life together, enjoying their RAF Association friends. Vera often took part in Concerts and Shows at local Churches and Halls. She loved music and enjoyed singing. Although Vera and Phil travelled widely together, Vera was already an established global traveller with her late friend Megan. They visited Russia in the late 1970s when two unaccompanied ladies just did not do that sort of thing; apparently, they used Revlon cosmetics to help with negotiations with hotel staff! Many of you will remember the Annual Reunion in 2013 when their daughter Barbara and granddaughter Tracey conducted the amazing after-dinner auction, from which the Association funds increased significantly. It may be that their skills came from Vera's experience in Russia.

Over the last several years, Vera had become increasingly unwell, with her eyesight deteriorating and suffering with Dementia. These were sad times, but the family did everything they could to keep her at home as long as possible with Phil, where she was loved and cared for. The family were blessed to have had so many cherished years with her and cannot say 'Thank You' enough to all the loyal friends, devoted Carers, and medical staff who looked after Vera. In the end, Vera died peacefully on 25th June at a Nursing Home with Barbara, Tracey and her great granddaughter Natalie by her side. Dear Phil arrived just minutes later in his dressing gown and pyjamas.

The Service was held at St Joseph's Church, Port Talbot, the Cremation at Margam Crematorium. On entry to the Crematorium, a Ladies Choir sang 'Hello Dolly', and on exit sang 'Que Sera Sera' – both songs close to Vera's heart. Tracey read a very moving memory of her Grandmother, bringing tears to many eyes. Most of the congregation joined with Phil and the family at a local hotel for a Reception, which was most splendidly presented. On a very personal note, I thought Phil was very brave to cope with the immense sadness and pain of the occasion, supported throughout by his close and loving family.

Personal Tribute to a Great & Lovely Lady

by Janine Harrington



'She was bloody marvellous!'

I have known Vera and Phil for over twenty years, and in that time, they became like second parents to me. Their ongoing support, understanding, and love knew no bounds.

Our connection reaches back in time to 1944. Phil served in 192 Squadron at RAF Foulsham with Vic Vinnell, my mother's wartime fiancé. Jack Fisher, Vic's Canadian Pilot, was Phil's best friend. Phil has recently written the Foreword for my 30th publication: 'A Wing & A Prayer' which came out in August to mark the 75th Anniversary of their deaths. At the back of the book, he recounts events as they unfolded, and the Squadron learned Vic and Jack were missing. My mother was to have married Vic a short while following this final fateful operation from which they never returned. But it was when Mum and I became founding members of this Association that Phil wrote to us, sharing his memories. In doing so, he brought great comfort and strength. For that, I will always be grateful.

Phil and Vera have given so much of themselves throughout their lifetime, doing whatever they could to help others in need or distress. Behind the scenes, Phil continues to work as a Welfare Officer, supporting, advising, and arranging Award Ceremonies. They are both extraordinary people who have made a difference to so many.

I started my life in North Yorkshire living in a caravan for three years, and Phil and Vera were always there for me. Phil's brother's family live nearby, and when he visited them, I became part of his extended family, invited to join their gathering. When living in a caravan came to an end because the field became flooded more and more each year, Phil drove all the way from Wales to ensure I was safe ... then helped me sell the caravan before I moved to the rented home where I live today.

I will always remember Vera for her love, kindness and humour. Each Reunion they attended she would beckon me into the room where they were staying at Church Farm, and I would find myself surrounded by an array of clothes she had brought for me. The laughter we shared extended throughout the weekend. We had dinners together. And always, they made me feel part of a deeper, wider Love, bound by the strength of our connection stemming from events which took place in wartime.

I love you so much, Vera and Phil. Thank you for all you have done for me, for being there when I was most in need. My thanks extend to your Family, and to Barbara who remains in contact. You are all wonderful people xxxxx

Dear Janine and All,

Pam and I are very saddened to learn of Vera's death. For Phil, the loss of the love of his life over so many years must surely be great. May God comfort Phil and welcome Vera into His Loving Arms. Peace be with them both.

Sincerely,

Stephen Hutton



Vera with daughter Barbara, granddaughter & great granddaughter

* * * *

IN MEMORY

John 'Des' Howarth



Reunion 2017

Courtesy: Stuart Borlase

Dear Janine,

Our Dad left his Earthly bounds at 95 years this afternoon, Sunday 9 June 2019, after a brief illness. He passed away peacefully and is now with his beloved wife of 67 years and our Mom Ann – and his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

He lived his life as a good and decent man who was always an inspiration to my brother Barry and me as we grew up in our wonderful family in Southern California, and later Oregon. In addition to my brother Barry and me, he leaves with love his daughters-in-law – Jean and Vicki, his grandchildren Joyclynn, Ian, Eran and Emily, and their spouses and significant others, Ben, Allyson and Adrian, with his great grandchildren Jonathan, Savannah, Ellyanna, Naomi, Jonas and Rylan. He also is leaving his new-found and close lady friend Sue from Church who he spent the past three years enjoying her company.

Dad did so much good in his life for others as an Educator, a Boy Scout Leader, Little League Coach and his life-long commitment to Lions International and as a member of the Shriner's as well as his numerous activities and Board assignments with the Presbyterian Church. His sense of humour was only matched by his conviction of what was right and what was wrong. Dad was also a member of the Greatest Generation, being a Veteran who, at 20 years of age, bravely navigated a B-24 during combat operations over occupied Europe in World War Two.

Dad had so many friends throughout his long life and met many new ones since moving to Richland, WA, from Oregon coast after the death of our mother in 2013. We will miss you, Dad, and love all your fantastic memories we have of our times together.

Brian Howarth

Son of Des Howarth

PERSONAL TRIBUTE

Friend: David Watson



Des and David Watson at 2017 Reunion

RAF 100 Group Association has lost another member. Des passed away early afternoon, Sunday 9 June 2019. He had a bypass operation in his right leg to increase blood flow to help battle the infection which developed. The bypass did not work, and about two weeks after, he could not survive. The options available to him were to have another bypass, which doctors said would only be 40% successful, or to amputate above the knee. He wanted to go out as a whole person.

A Memorial took place on 6 July, and his ashes will join his wife on the Oregon coast.

Our Church now has one remaining 'Greatest Generation' member remaining. He is just a couple of months younger than Des – sharp in mind, but frail in body. He served in the Pacific Theater as an Engine Mechanic for the B-25 Mitchell.

I am glad you asked me to pay tribute to Des. At Church last Sunday, I placed a white rose and a couple of pictures of Des in England on the pew seat where he would have sat. I also shared a small passage to the Congregation about 'Grief':



*Grief never ends but it changes.
It is a passage, not a place to stay.
Grief is not a sign of weakness,
nor a lack of faith.
It is the price of love.*

In retrospect, Des was important in my life for the short time I knew him. If it were not for him, I probably would never have visited the birthplace of my father. It was a joyous trip and will always be remembered for the people I met.

Here are some thoughts of mine about Des.

Mr John Desmond (Des) Howarth was an amazing individual. He was quite versatile in his endeavours: an artist in oils and water colors, plastic model airplane builder, photographer, journalist. He also served people through the Shiners, Lions Club and his Church. His impact on my life will last with me forever. I am grateful for his friendship and companionship, for without him I would not have made the trip to my father's homeland, but also never met the wonderful people at the RAF 100 Group Association's Reunion in 2017. The gracious, friendly hospitality has endeared them, and you, to me.

We did many things together and I am fortunate to have had him as a friend.

Now he has joined others of '*America's Greatest Generation*' who have gone before him.

Des, thank you for what you contributed to this world!



Des & David at Oshkosh

David Watson

* * * *

PERSONAL TRIBUTE

Chas Jellis



Des with Chas Jellis, Reunion 2017

Hi Janine,

Thanks for sending through news about Des Howarth. I had just got back from our Normandy trip when I was told the sad news.

What a man Des was!

What a life he led!!

I'm so blessed to have crossed paths with Des and his generation, passing on as much respect as we can. Sadly, we had planned to go and see Des this October, but it was not to be.

Best regards,

Chas

Chas Jellis



Des Howarth with Rafael Ramos DFC at 2017 Reunion

* * * *

IN MEMORY

HENRY 'HARRY' FREEGARD



Henry 'Harry' Freegard, 171 Squadron

Hi Janine,

Dad, Henry ('Harry') Freegard, peacefully died on Monday morning, 8th July 2019.

He was very proud of his Service with the Royal Air Force and his membership of the RAF 100 Group Association.

He is sadly missed by both family and friends.

Best wishes,

Alan

Alan Freegard

Son

A Veteran based at North Creak in wartime, Harry was so well-known during Association Reunions which he attended for many many years.

If you would like to include a Tribute to him, it would be most welcome!



Final Postings

Death will be but a pause ...

Martin Albert Staunton, Eileen Boorman (nee Staunton), Len Bartram

Founders of RAF 100 Group Association – remembered in love

2018

- 9 Squadron** Rex Waters, New Zealander, took part in raids on *'Tirpitz'*, died February 2018.
- USAAF 36th BS** Sergeant Lester Jones, Liberator B-24 Aerial Gunner, Sgt Landberg's crew, flying night missions w RAF 100 Group, died 16.1.2018, remembered by his family & all who served with him
- 223 Squadron** Dr Peter Lovatt, Squadron Leader, died in hospital 5.3.2018. Remembered with love by daughter Nina & Family. A well-known, well-loved Association member who regularly attended Reunions.
- 171 Squadron** Ernie Hughes, Flight Engineer. Died 11 June 2018. Remembered by crew member Jim 'Ginger' Fawcett, post-war friend Mel Carey, with fond memories carried by Janine H. & Stuart Borlase.
- 223 Squadron** Pilot Officer P. G. Nash. Died 5th May 2018. George is remembered with love by daughter Barbara, and friend Richard Forder.
- 223 Squadron** Ron Simmons, Mark Levy's Navigator, Mark Levy's Navigator; Aircraft: A for Apple, Name: AD LIB died November 2018. Loved & missed by all.
- 199/171 Sqn** Peter Sclaverano, W/O in 171, 199, 462 Sqs at North Creak. Died June 2018. Remembered with love by Janine as a good friend and all who knew him.
- 214 Squadron** Paul Henry, Navigator died Aug 2018. Remembered with love by cousin Victoria, & all on the Association. Attended Reunions regularly with wife Peggy, as a Founder Member.
- 214 Squadron** Flt/Lt James Wharton 'Dinty' Moore DFC died Aug 2018. Founding member of Association.
- 192 Squadron** Stanley Forsyth DFC, Special Operator. Died night of 22.9.2018. Remembered with love by his Family, Janine & Stuart, and all who served with and knew him. God Bless, till we meet again xx
- USAAF 36th BS** S/Sgt Deacon Joseph 'Joe' Melita, Radio Operator on B24 *'Lady in the Dark'*, died 2018. Remembered for his 40+ years in the Roman Catholic Church, his deep faith, courage and love.
- USAAF 36th** Art Brusila, Pilot, died 2 June 2018. Remembered by all who knew him.

2019

- 169 Squadron** Brian Odam, Groundcrew, died 7 Feb 2019. Missed & loved by daughter Rosemary.
- 171 Squadron** Jim 'Ginger' Fawcett died 1 March 2019. Remembered with love by wife Ruth and family.
- 171 Squadron** Henry 'Harry' Freegard died 8 July 2019. Lovingly remembered by son Alan & family.
- 214 Squadron** Wing Commander John Wynne DFC died 19 November 2018. Remembered with love by wife & daughter. Son died just over one week previous to his father in a farming accident.
- 214 Squadron** Flt Lt Vern L. Scantleton DFC died 11 April 2019. Received Legion D'Honneur in 2015
- 192 Squadron** Flt/Lt Signals Officer Arthur Baxter Reid died Saturday 14 Sept 2019. Remembered with love by son Arthur & Linda & his family; together with all who knew him. God Bless, till we meet again x
- USAAF 36th BS** Donald Burch, Lt Boehm crew. Remembered with love by all who knew him.
- USAAF 36th BS** John 'Des' Howarth, Lt McCarthy crew in Lt. Boehm's B24 *'Beast of Bourbon'* when it crashed on Feb. 19, 1945. Died Sunday 9.6.2019. Remembered with love by son Brian & all his family.
- USAAF 36th BS** Sgt Jack Hope, Tail Gunner for Lt Brookshire crew. Remembered with love by wife & family.

A Quiet Corner

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Many, many years ago I dreamt
Of this life of mine and what it meant.
I was just a plain, everyday young lad,
I knew right from wrong, good from bad.

The need was great for such as we
To serve the cause to keep us free.
I met with strangers, persons unknown,
With families and cares, a life of their own.

We were flung together, no colour nor creed
Would partition us in the fight for our need.
I met chaps there, my friends to be,
Be it home or across the sea.

We shared our space, our lives together,
All for one no matter the weather.
We had our laughs, our joys, our sorrows,
Some, I regret, never saw their tomorrows.

To all these men, yes, that is to what we have grown;
I say thanks for all the pleasures shown.
We did our bit; we made our stand.
Oh! If I could now just shake your hand ...

To you goodbye, my dearest friend,
You have my regards, my respect, right to the end.

'Mel'
Cpl Arm Melliush

Dates for your Diary



Merry
CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY
New Year



My humble apologies for not being able to bring out a
SPECIAL CHRISTMAS MAGAZINE.

However, please know that every one of you
will be held over this festive period in Love xxx

Membership subscriptions are due at the end of this year!
Please ensure cheques are made out to RAF 100 GROUP ASSOCIATION.
Subscriptions went up last year from £15 to £20. Veterans are FREE!!
Direct Debits will need to be changed with banks to the correct amounts.

* * * *

REUNION 2020: 15 – 17 May

REUNION 2021: 21 – 23 May (provisional)

Be sure to put these important dates in your diary.
We look forward so much to sharing these Reunion Weekends with you!

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Spring 2020 magazine + Reunion Programme – out Feb 2020,
with details of our After-Dinner Speaker Paul Robinson,
Trustee of The International Bomber Command Centre, Lincoln.
Deadline for inclusions: end of October 2019.

* * * *

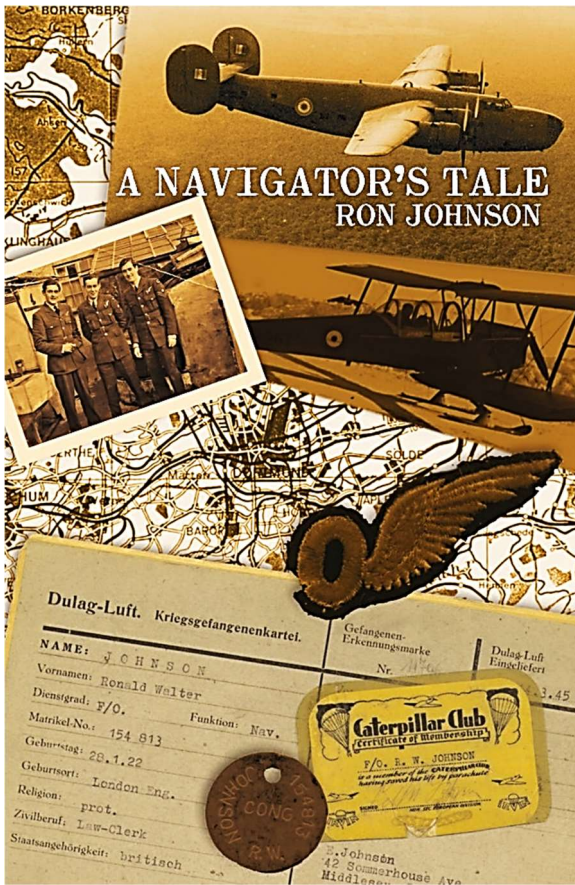


TV Channel 5 series 'Walking Britain's Lost Railways'
will be featuring Little Snoring airfield at some point this year.

*Janine has been working with them over recent months,
and the programme includes material from RAF 100 Group during World War Two.
When they first made contact, it seemed an ideal opportunity
to create a wider awareness of RAF 100 (Bomber Support) Group
which will appear in the credits.*

SOMETHING TO LOOK OUT FOR IN THE WEEKS TO COME!!

NEW PUBLICATIONS



Hi Janine,

We have just reprinted an expanded edition of my Dad's memoir: '*A Navigator's Tale*'.

My Dad, Ron Johnson, was a Navigator in 223 Squadron, part of RAF 100 Group. When we first published his Memoir thirteen years ago, I think there was a very kind review of it in the Association magazine. We were hoping you might give this new edition similar support – we are very happy with how it has evolved!

The book is published by Irregular Records, ISBN No: 978-0-0537855-3-7.

People can obtain a copy by emailing:

info@irregularrecords.co.uk

All the very best regards,

Robb

Robb Johnson

SUMMARY

'*A Navigator's Tale*' is my Dad's Memoir of his experiences during the Second World War.

Ron was the Navigator in Liberator '*J Johnnie*', 223 Squadron, RAF 100 (Bomber Support) Group. He was born in Fulham in 1922 but grew up in Heston and the westward creep of suburbia in the 1930s. In 1938, his Mum was among the crowd at Heston aerodrome that welcomed Neville Chamberlain back from the Munich Conference, proclaiming '*Peace for our time*'.

At the Church Youth Group he attended, Ron met refugees from Fascist Germany. He would say how he always remembered their dark haunted eyes. I think that was the reason, when war was declared in 1939, that Ron volunteered immediately for the RAF.

This is where his Memoir starts ...

... training in Canada, Leave in New York, crewing up in the Bahamas. Then there is the return to Europe, the '*Confound & Destroy*' operations, then the night '*J Johnnie*' was shot down, captivity and liberation.

After the war, Ron trained as a teacher, as part of the Welfare State expansion of State Education. He was a very good teacher. As a child, whenever I visited his classroom, it seemed just the most exciting place you could imagine. In 1967, he became Head Teacher of Grove Park Primary School, and retired in 1982.

Ron had written poetry in the 1940s, and in his retirement, along with attending classes in cookery, watercolour painting, and Spanish, he wrote more poems. Ron was proud to attend the first RAF 100 Group Association Reunion at Oulton in 1994. In 1999, I persuaded him to turn his wartime memories into a book. I believe our experiences, our testimonies and voices, are of equal if not more significance than the self-serving memoirs of politicians or the impersonal, academic perspectives of professional historians, that often seem to shift with time and hindsight.

Ron's Memoir is, I think, a remarkable book; a modest, dignified, factual yet engaging tribute to that generation of young men who climbed into those terrible machines night after night, knowing how so many of them wouldn't be coming back.

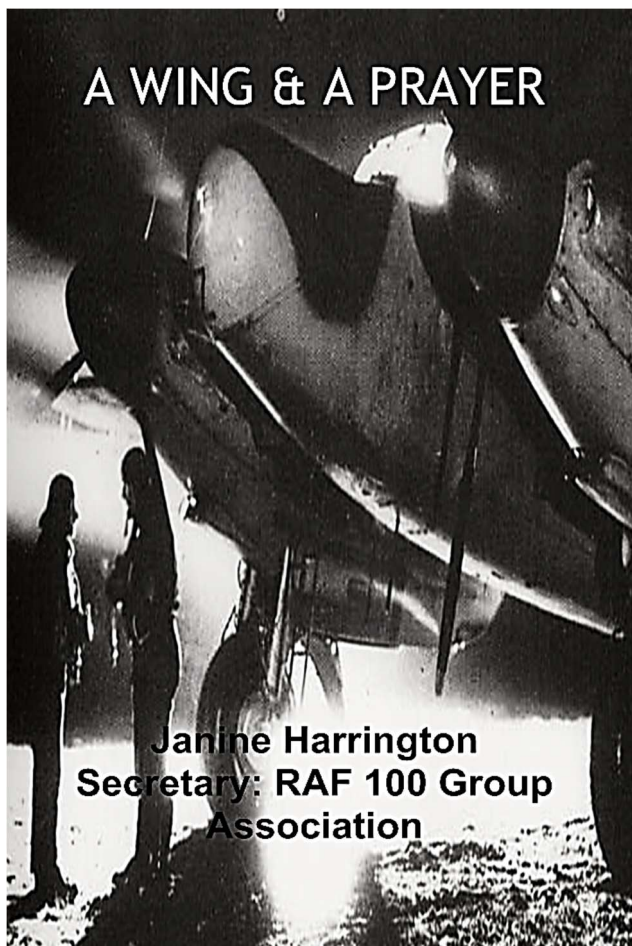
The initial print run of '*A Navigator's Tale*' soon sold out. In 2018, I completed what turned out to be a 3CD song suite based on Ron's life and times: '*Ordinary Giants*'. It seemed a good reason to reprint Ron's Memoir – I think my Dad always says things better than I do anyway. For the reprint, we added some letters and photographs, while I wrote a short biography – Ron was the best, kindest of fathers – and, perhaps most importantly, where the original text included three of Ron's poems, we have added a section that collects all of his poetry, written between 1940 and 2012, the year before he died. But the heart of the book remains the same. It's a memory of and a Memorial to the crew of '*J Johnnie*', 223 Squadron, RAF 100 Group, and the men of Bomber Command.



*'And so, for me
You did not die
Because the corn grew tall
Where you passed by
And you loved living
Every bit as much as I.'*

(In Memoriam, Ron Johnson)

Robb Johnson
robbyrobb@yahoo.co.uk



'My promise, Dearest Nina, is that one day I shall write a book about the most beautiful love story that ever was – our story, the story of Nina and Vic.'

Vic believed he had the rest of his life to fulfil his dream - to marry his wartime fiancée Nina and become an author. He yearned for peace and a family where love prevailed - something he had waited a lifetime to experience.

Meanwhile, caught up in the Second World War, he had an active and dangerous role as Navigator/Special Operator in 192 Squadron of the very secret RAF 100 (Bomber Support) Group under Bomber Command. He regularly flew deep into the heart of Germany in Mosquito DK292, named '*N for Nina*', involved in covert operations. His Canadian friend and Pilot Jack Fisher was to be Best Man at his wedding taking place at the end of the year on his next Leave.

It wasn't until the early 1980s that Nina's eldest daughter Janine shared her mother's wartime story. Together, they began fulfilling Vic's promise, in doing so, re-igniting the flame of a wartime love, giving Nina an inner glow of warmth and hope which had lain dormant for too long. For the first time in 50 years, she spoke Vic's name aloud, reminded of his words: '*Love is Eternal*'. Nina and Janine became founding members of what was to become the worldwide RAF 100 Group Association of which Janine is Secretary today, and Editor of their magazine: '*Confound & Destroy*'. They wrote and talked to Vic and Jack's former friends and colleagues who, sadly, Nina didn't get to meet as she died of Cancer a short while before their first Reunion. However, for Janine her daughter it has become a humbling and privileged experience to know these people and be a part of this Family of Kindred Spirits.

In the 75th Anniversary Year of their death, this book is written as a Memorial to Vic and Jack who still have no resting place to call their own. It tells their fascinating and powerfully emotive story.

Foreword written by Phil James MBE – Association President

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RETURN FROM LUTZKENDORF 14/15 March 1945

Stories of Two Wartime Heroes:

**Wing Commander
John Wynne DFC
&
Flight Lieutenant
Norman Rix DFC**

**by Peter Walker
& Janine Harrington
- RAF 100 Group Association -**

It is March 1945. In only a matter of weeks Germany would surrender, leaving most of her cities, industry and people in ruins. Meanwhile, Allied aircraft continue relentless attacks on a variety of targets as huge Russian armies surge within Germany's eastern borders.

Against this background, all but two of a crew flying Fortress HB799 BU-K lose their lives, murdered at the hands of Nazi Youth. While Flt Lt Norman Rix and his crew in second Fortress HB772 BU-Q have an equally compelling story to share. Both crews served in 214 Squadron, based at RAF Oulton, Norfolk.

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Created by Janine Harrington

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who helps bring this magazine together
with a collection of rare and wonderful stories & photographs.

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

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