



CONFOUND & DESTROY

RAF 100 GROUP MEMORIAL MUSEUM
ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2010

100 Group Association Chairman Wg Cdr John Stubbington:

100 Group Association Secretary Janine Harrington:

Home to RAF 100 Group Association

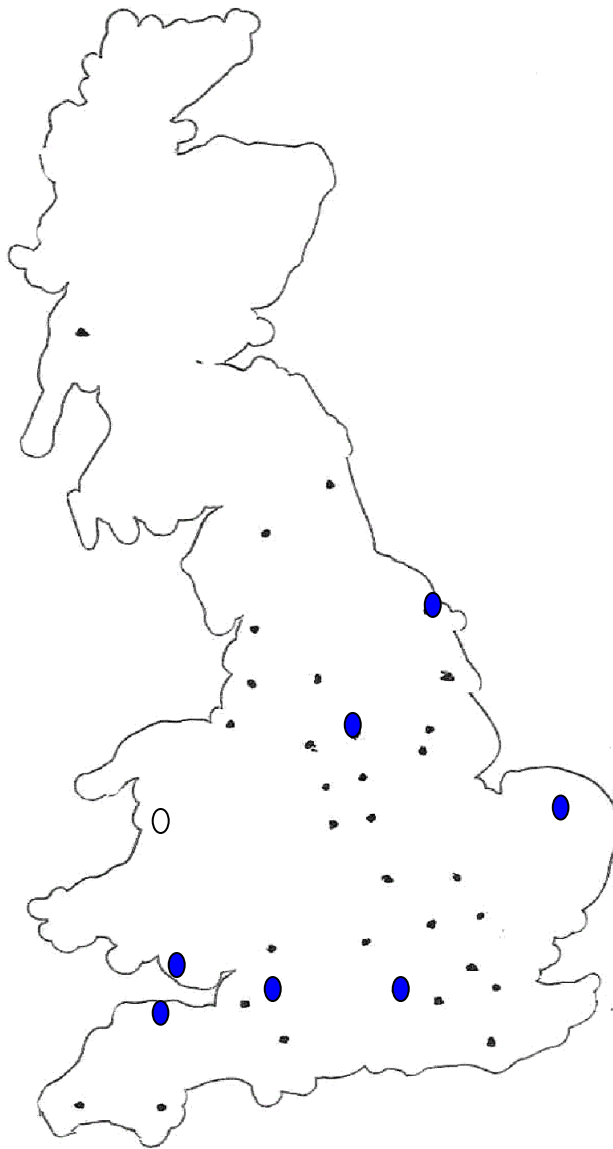
City of Norwich Aviation Museum

Old Norwich Road, Horsham St Faith, Norwich, Norfolk NR10 3JF

Telephone:

RAF 100 Group Association

Membership Areas



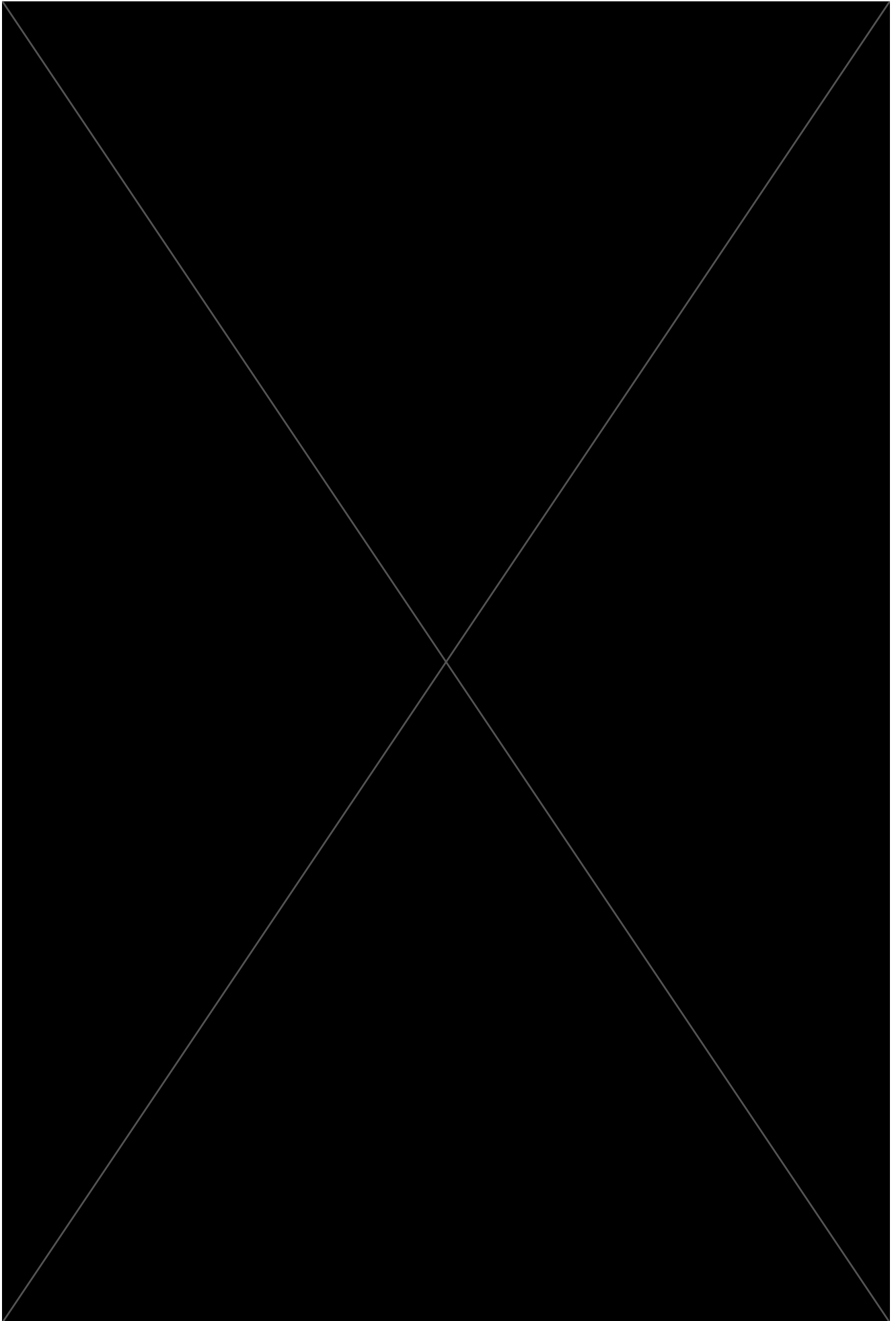
Each dot represents an area where there is a cluster of members
Big dots show where members of the new RAF 100 Group Association Committee live

Members who live abroad are in the following countries:

Northern Ireland
Canada
Austria
China
Germany
Australia
USA

RAF 100 Group Association

COMMITTEE



EDITORS PAGE



Dear Friends,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Well, 2009 certainly began and ended for me on an overwhelming BANG! The year began with Ian, my beloved partner/carer simply walking out the door and disappearing into the blue yonder and me having a complete breakdown. The year ended with me being rushed into hospital as an emergency with something called a 'quincy', only it became life-threatening given it was a growth at the back of my throat which completely took over my mouth, making it impossible to swallow anything including liquid. In the end I couldn't speak or even open my mouth to talk. I was rushed on from Scarborough hospital to Hull, where I remained in a room there. However, where the money for NHS goes I don't know, because I was left waiting in a chair at Scarborough from 4 in the afternoon until 1.30 the following morning with no attention whatever, just waiting for a vehicle to drive me *as an emergency* to Hull. It meant when I was discharged, I then needed to get a taxi home!

That said, thank you for all the wonderful cards and good wishes. You really are closer to me than family and I truly hope 2010 is a year rich with promise for each and every one of us.

Thank you also for the wealth of information, photographs and shared experiences shared. I have tried my best to get as many of them into this issue as possible, otherwise I trust you will bear with me until the next Summer issue. Oh, and if anyone who has paid their subscription for the year does not receive their 2010 membership card with this Newsletter please let me know. If you haven't yet paid your subscription we would welcome your immediate response to this, which was raised last year from £10 to £15.

You will see from this early Spring Newsletter that we're gearing up for the 2010 May Reunion over 7th/8th/9th May weekend. Enclosed is a full programme of events with a booking form for the main Saturday evening meal, this year taking place at Wensum Valley Hotel. Please complete the form right away if you are planning to attend and send it back to me at the address below with a cheque for your meal, this year £24.95 per person.

Deadline for all completed booking forms to be with us: 1st March 2010.

A lot of preparation goes into this event. We do want to ensure everything is arranged according to individual taste and needs, so your co-operation would be appreciated.

And we look forward especially to meeting old friends and new at the Reunion. Let the weather be sunny and fine and the freezing cold weather and snow with us now a distant memory!

Janine
XX

Items for Newsletter should be sent to:
Janine Harrington
'New Dawn', 7 Ashley Court, Filey, North Yorkshire YO14 9LS
Telephone: 01723 512939 Email: writers.retreat@lycos.com

THE 100 GROUP ASSOCIATION



Dear Members

Greetings to you all, and my best wishes for this New Year.

The Plan for the next Reunion in May 2010 is shown alongside this Newsletter. Please note that we have moved away from a visit to the Radar Museum at RAF Neatishead because of the opportunity to see a slideshow on Friday 7th May. I do believe that the Radar Museum would be an interesting visit, but perhaps next year. The slideshow will be presented by Eric Dickens, the son of Group Captain Dickens who was Station Commander at RAF Oulton. The slideshow will be shown in the Village Hall at Foulsham immediately after Tea in the afternoon.

In the evening on Friday 7th May the Committee will meet in The Plough at Marsham, where we will have dinner. You are invited to join with us for Dinner and a general discussion after the Committee Meeting. It would be very helpful to know beforehand which of you would visit The Plough so that Roger and Val could be prepared.

The menu choices for the Dinner on Saturday 8th May at the Wensum Valley Hotel & Golf Club are also shown in the Reunion Programme. May I please remind you that the Hotel is three miles from Norwich Airport, along the A1067 Fakenham Road. Our After-Dinner Speaker will be Air Vice Marshal Grahame Jones. There are 90 double or twin-bedded rooms within the Hotel. Members may access full details on the hotel website: www.WENSUMVALLEY.co.uk

The Sunday morning Service will as usual be at Horsham St Faith and the Rev Andrew Beane will be there to welcome you all.

Since the last Newsletter, Kelvin Sloper has confirmed with me that The Museum will always be delighted to receive memorabilia from members, either on loan or as donation to The Museum. What would not be possible is to ensure that material is on open display because of the space limitations.

With my most sincere best wishes to all members,

John E G Stubbington, Wg Cdr (ret'd)
Chairman

LETTERS PAGE



Dear Janine,

Many thanks for another feature packed Newsletter, we are sure that all of our members appreciate the work that you do in producing such a meaty treat for us.

We yesterday held a brief poppy cross blessing service at the local Catholic Church and then proceeded to each of the service graves in the churchyard to place the crosses and honour those individuals, one of whom is a relative of mine who flew Wellingtons to Africa via Malta.

Beryl & Howard Deacon



Dear Janine,

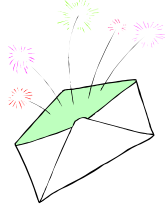
With reference to the list of Crew Captains who flew under the command of Group Captain T. C. Dickens on page 11 of the Winter Edition Newsletter.

This would appear to be incomplete, as the name of Ken Kennett, pilot of the crew I flew with, is not included. Possibly this may be because we joined 214 Squadron in 1945 and only flew a few operations. Other crew captains may of course also have been omitted.

I am certainly not complaining and realize it is too late for any amendments to be made to the plaque now.

Sincerely,

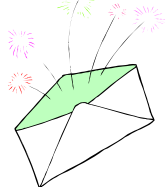
Ken White



Dear Janine,

I have only just started reading the Newsletter and to my dismay our Chairman says you will be cutting down on the picture content. Surely not! A picture saves a hundred words and they are priceless. If it's got to be, can I suggest a booklet of photos now and again where members pay by ordering a copy? So few of 100 Group photos have appeared in books owing to the hush hush attitude that prevailed until the 1970s, it is only your work that is putting them in the public domain when they come from private albums.

Ron & Brenda Durand



Dear Janine

The North Yorkshire Pickering War Weekend, and this is me, Sandy, a war re-enactor, with my fellow officers in the Training Ground. We marched in the parade with the RAF and I felt so proud thinking of all those personnel who served and gave their lives for this country.

Sandy Willford



Dear Janine,

We were at the National Memorial Gardens in Stafford on 28th September to see the RAFA memorial being unveiled by Princess Anne. There were Air Force representatives from all the commonwealth countries and more, all told about 1000 people and 120 standards and she spoke to every one of them. The ceremony also included a Flypast.



*The President and Trustees
of the Royal Air Forces Association*

request the pleasure of the company of

Mr P James MBE

*at the official opening and dedication of the
Royal Air Forces Association Remembrance Garden*

*To be held in the presence of
Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal*

Monday, 28th September 2009

418
Pour Mémoire

Admission by this card only

*Time: 10.30am
Dress code: Day dress or
full ceremonial day without swords*



The Eagle has landed as an officer admires the centerpiece of the new RAF Association Remembrance Garden at the National Memorial Arboretum new Lichfield, Staffs, opened by Princess Anne. Picture on the right shows Phil James MBE together with his wife Vera.

Phil James

Dear Janine,

My name is Peter New. I am trying to discover what my Father did during WWII. I know he flew as an air gunner with 100 Group on Liberators, and was based at Elsham. He never spoke much about his exploits, and sadly, he died in 1996. I do remember he once spoke of Dresden, and how they could read their maps as they turned to fly home from the raging fires below. My father's name was Ronald Harold Edward New, his service number was 1850744, and he was a Flight Sergeant. Could you please advise me on my quest to discover more? And who I can contact? I have several old black and white photos of him in uniform, and one, with his crew, standing beside their plane. Thank you kindly,

I know my dad trained at Lossiemouth. He was billeted at Blickling Hall. (The arrow on the picture below denotes his room, marked for my mother to see.) He was definitely involved in the Dresden bombing. I don't really know much more. He may have been in 223 Squadron as in my Mum's possession is a 223 Squadron mini postcard or this may relate to a friend.

He was a practical joker, with a wicked sense of humour. I do remember him recalling how there was a trench dug as a toilet and a scaffolding pole with which to sit on. He'd wait until a few airmen were perched on the pole, having first dropped petrol in the trench, then he'd drop a match down to ignite the fuel. This image of a line of aircrew rising to their feet in haste amused him no end.



He never spoke about his wartime activities, as I understand not many of them did. He suffered with Parkinson's Disease. He died too young, just into his 70s. I wish he was still here as I would love to be able to discuss all this with him. When he was alive, I never had the

time or perhaps the inclination to do so. It seems like one of life's ironies that you don't seem interested until it's too late.

So Janine, any information you or the 100 Group members could give would be gratefully appreciated. It was nice talking to you and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Peter New



Schools and church from Blickling Road



Lynch Gate & Aylsham Church



Red Lion St, Aylsham



Ronald Harold Edward New where?



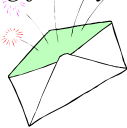
Ronald Harold Edward New, centre



Ronald Harold Edward New far right with crew – 3rd row front, where unknown



Any Association member who may have news or information about Ronald Harold Edward New, Peter New's father; please contact him direct – Peter New, 32 Sedgley Rd, Winton, Bournemouth, BH9 2JN. Tel:01202 777320. Peter has now joined as a member of the 100 Group Association and we welcome him into our ever growing family.

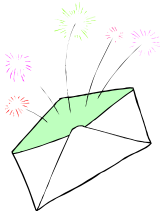


Dear Janine,

Hello. I have just received the Winter 2009 Newsletter. Poignant memories indeed of the night P/O Bennett and crew died. I was also on duty.

I think you do a wonderful job, much appreciated by all. I wish you and all the Committee a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas.

Kind regards,
Win Seeley

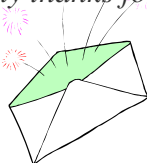


Dear Jan,

I am writing on behalf of my ex husband who served with the 100 group during WWII, name of John Beeching. He currently lives in New Zealand but was here briefly in July to attend the funeral of his brother-in-law, and whilst here met someone who was wearing a baseball cap with the 100 group logo. He asked the man where he obtained the cap and was told at the Air Force Museum. My ex would dearly like to obtain a similar cap but my efforts to obtain one on his behalf have proved fruitless. I visited the Museum at Horsham St Faith but the young man in the souvenir shop said he had never had any such item for sale and my search on the internet was not helpful either. Could you please advise me as to whether such a cap is available for purchase and if so where it might be obtained? It is my ex's 86th birthday on the 19th October so I would like to be able to send him one as a gift. Any help you can offer would be greatly appreciated. Many thanks.

Many thanks for all the help both you and Committee member Rod Vowler have given me in getting a cap for John. His birthday was last weekend but I don't think he will mind getting it a bit late. Rod has arranged to mail it and I hope it will arrive shortly in spite of the postal strike. I hope John will provide you with an article for your magazine next year as I know that he is very good at writing anecdotes and I'm sure anything he sends will be of interest to you all. Good luck with your magazine and once again many thanks for all the help.

Sheila Beeching



Dear Jan,

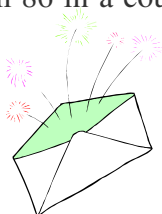
Good to hear from you; Sheila must have gone to some trouble to find out about 100 Group, all of which most appreciated. Now, there seems to be quite a few loose ends floating about concerning our erstwhile employer, for the sake of a better description. Many years ago, Peter Gunn, who lives in Norfolk and indexes books for a crust, wrote a book called "Great Massingham, An Airfield at War". I fed him most of the information I had about 169 Squadron, which of course was one of the 100 Group squadrons, plus all the photos I had, which weren't many as the RAF didn't allow us to have cameras and take pictures. Some years afterwards, Sister Lawrence Mary, a nun at the Little Massingham Retreat, now closed, organised a museum for past denizens of the airfield, which again included the 100 Group activities. At her request, I sent her the extract from my memoirs, as yet unpublished as I keep remembering things which I would like to see included. Sister Lawry put what was then available together and bound them as a small book.

The museum was originally located in St. Mary's church in Great Massingham but has since been turfed out and is in the process of relocation. Two alternatives have been offered but the matter has not yet been resolved. There have been screeds written about 100 Group by such capable people as Martin Middlebrook, Martin Streetly, Laurie Brettingham and others that I really don't know if any new and worthwhile threads can be gathered together. Needless to say, there can't be too many of us old codgers left who used to crawl about the night sky over the European continent nearly 70 years ago and I must admit I would love to catch up with a few of the roosters I knew from places like West Raynham, Little Snoring, Swanton Morley and Bircham Newton. We are pretty thin on the ground down here, I know of only two, one was a gunner on Flying Fortresses and the other a navigator on 515 Squadron Mosquitoes. I flew Mosquitoes myself and have just been advised by my brother, Peter, who lives in Essex, that there is going to be 'sign in', whatever that is, by old Mosquito pilots and navigators to be held at the London Colney Mosquito Museum, towards the end of this month. I won't be there, but I was in the U.K. a couple of months back and saw Sister Lawrence, who now lives in Rickmansworth, near Watford. Like all of us, she is knocking on in years but is still as enthusiastic as ever.

I will stop here as I tend to ramble on a bit, but keep in touch. I will mull things over and get back to you in the due process of time. I am 86 in a couple of weeks' time so I suppose I haven't got too much of that commodity left !

With all best wishes,

John Beeching



Dear Janine,

My name is Andrew McDermott and I am writing on behalf of my granddad Sydney Hollis. My Granddad was an Aircraftsman for 695 Squadron, based at RAF Horsham in the 1940s. While based at RAF Horsham he fondly recalls having a Squadron photo where he is sitting astride a cannon on the right-hand side wing of a Spitfire. The photo was taken 1944-1946. My granddad at the time did not get a print because he was in hospital. I am desperately trying to get a copy of the photos to repay all the kindness and generosity he has brought to me. When we talk about his RAF days he always mentions the photos and his disappointment in not owning a copy. With him now being 82, he worries he will not see the photo again before he 'snuffs it' (his words).



Sydney Hollis (aka Brummie) No: 2306116 Aircraftsman.



If you have a copy of the photo or could point me in the direction of getting one, I would greatly appreciate it. I've attached two photos. One of my granddad, above. The other is almost an exact copy of what I am looking for but it's not my granddad or his Squadron.

Many thanks

Andrew McDermott

Tel:

07709336667

amcd2005@btinternet.com

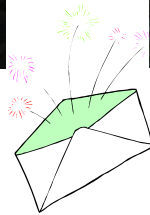
Hi Janine:

Attached please find pictures of the pieces from the 85 Squadron Mosquito crash at West Acre, Norfolk (26 Sept 1944, 2 killed). As you can see, this unimpressive little pile of partly-corroded pieces is not, in most cases, recognisable as aircraft wreckage. However, it is the sum total of our finds at the site, and when on display in a Museum, is another way of remembering the two men who died in this incident. One of the pieces has the all-important '98' prefix number on it, confirming it was a Mosquito part.

I have pieces from another five or six crash-sites which I feel would be more at home at CNAM, but they may have to be "dug out" again! I also have a cracker of an item which we recently recovered at a USAAF dump-site, more on this later.

Regards for now,

Bob Collis



Hi Janine,

Many thanks for the latest edition of the Newsletter. I have browsed through it but haven't had a chance to properly read it yet. I noticed a letter in the Autumn Newsletter from Alf Cooke, who mentions an LAC Harris that he worked with. I think this must be a different Harris to my Grandfather as the photos do not look like him. I have attached the only photo of him that I have from the period, with a wartime friend.

I recall in a previous newsletter (possibly Autumn or Winter 2006) that there were many photos of 192 squadron in front of a mosquito that he was definitely able to identify himself in. Unfortunately, this was before I joined the Association and so I do not have a copy of it. Would it be possible for you to e-mail a version to me? I found it on the City of Norwich Museum website, but it is no longer available there.

Many thanks,

James Kerslake



Dear Janine,

Pam and I are just back home after attending wonderful gathering to honor the 36th Bomb Squadron Gremlins. We really had one terrific time! My English friend Chas Jellis produced a magnificent experience for Pam and I as well as for 36th Bomb Squadron pilot Norman, his tail gunner George and all those in attendance. The significance of everything we saw and did is only just now beginning to sink in. The entire episode - the trip to Cheddington airfield, the Gremlins old airbase, the memorial ceremony, Duxford Air Museum, the crash site visit, all the camaraderie shall forever remain in our hearts.



How wonderful it was to see the "Gremlins" and RAF100 Group reap the rightful recognition they deserve.

I would be happy for you to publish the letter I wrote to Eric Dickens in the light of this experience together with the two photos, including below, Eric Dickens Memorial -

Hello Eric,

It was wonderful meeting you at the 36th Bomb Squadron ceremony honoring the Gremlins. We really had one terrific time! Seeing you there made the event even more special. Thank you for being there. I just wish we had had more time together to talk and get to know one another better. Such was not possible, however, due to the venue I suppose.

Pam and I made it home safe and sound after a good flight even though we did land with a little rain. We were sad we had to leave after a truly wonderful time. Chas produced a magnificent experience for Pam and I as well as for Norman and George and all those in attendance don't you think?



Thank you again for attending. It sure was great meeting you. I know your presence was as important to Norman and George as it was to my wife and I. You helped give the "Gremlins" and RAF100 Group the rightful recognition they deserve.

*With fondest regards,
Stephen Hutton*

Hi Janine,

RESEARCH ON WEST RAYNHAM

My name is David and I am a researcher on a long running series which investigates paranormal activity and describes the history of locations around the UK. I have been advised to contact your Association members whilst speaking with the Norwich Aviation Museum.

We are considering filming a show at RAF West Raynham. I am doing some initial research into the airbase. I am particularly interested in speaking with people who served at that base, historians who have a good knowledge of the history of the base, and enthusiasts who may have used the base.

I would love to hear stories about RAF West Raynham's role in our WWII and cold war defence, light hearted tales connected to the base and any ghost stories.

It would be a great honour to make a show at such a fantastic location, the more information I can gather on the base the stronger the case would be to make a show at the location.

If we are successful in our plans, it would be a live studio show from inside one of the Hangars at RAF West Raynham. We will have a Studio audience who will watch the show as it goes out live. Generally the first hour involves studio guests, experts and short films about the location and its history. Then the following three hours are a live paranormal investigation from a specific location on the site or in the region.

If you know any local historians who you have worked with for your Association Newsletter or in any other connection, I would love the chance to pick their brains.

I will keep you up to speed on our progress. We aim to film/broadcast between 9th and the 15th September 2010. If the RAF 100 Group are able to help I am sure we will be able to get you a few seats in our audience.

Kind regards,
David Leach

Researcher: 07812 62 55 45

Shared Experiences

Tales from George's Scrapbook/Box

by George Fisher

At age 85 years old and on a good recovery from a recent collarbone accident, I am able to write on articles appearing in the Autumn edition of the RAF 100 Group Association Newsletter. And Filey, I know it well from the four weeks on attachment from the Pilot Navigator Bomber Pool RAF Brighton, February 1943 – only 19 years old at the time.

In June 1942, my friend Geoffrey Danby and I had a conversation with a clerk from Aircrew Records Office RAF Reading. I enquired of the Clerk if I could join the RAF with Geoffrey in August 1942. 'Yes', he replied, 'but I can only mis-file your July 1942 Entry Card in Geoffrey's August 1942 box'. So Geoffrey and I went our separate ways into the RAF in 1942.

Herewith is my 'What If' and 'How One Thing Leads to Another', by George, article:

'BOMBER COMMAND NEWSLETTER EXTRACT

What If?

On the night of 22 June 1944, Halifax LW656 MP-B of 76 Squadron RAF Holme, crashed in France as a result of enemy action. All seven of the crew were killed and all are buried in France. A friend of mine, Geoffrey Danby, was the Navigator.

Two years earlier in June 1942, Geoffrey and I were two trainee observers waiting to report to Aircrew Receiving Centre, Lord's Cricket Ground. I was due to report there in July and Geoffrey in August. Since joining the RAF, we had been sent to Ludlow, Aberystwyth and Brighton and the observer trade had been reclassified as navigator, navigator bomber, navigator wireless, etc. At ITW Geoffrey opted for navigator wireless and I for navigator bomber. Needless to say that when our time to leave Brighton arrived Geoffrey was posted a navigator bomber and I a navigator wireless. Somewhere along the line he became a navigator.

On D-Day, I was on leave in Reading, walking along the street when I looked up I could see the armada of planes and gliders make their way to France. I said to myself 'George, you have missed the war'. Little did I know then that within fourteen days both my cousin and my good friend would be dead, killed on bomber operations. After months of waiting in aircrew dispersal units and operational training in Bomber Command, on 6th June 1945 I was posted to 214 (RCM) Squadron, RAF Oulton as a navigator on Flying Fortress aircraft. It was not until I left the RAF in 1946 that I learned of my friend's fate. What if I had gone to be a navigator bomber? What if I had joined up together with Geoffrey? Yes, what if?'

Approximately 3 years ago, the Secretary of the Rugby RAF Association was on holiday in Weston Super Mare, staying at the Association's hotel. There he met an old colleague of mine from the time I lived in Reading with whom I used to meet at Aircrew Association meetings. As a result of their conversation RAFA contacted me. He and his wife now call upon me approximately once a month for a cuppa and a chat, also magazines are exchanged. Resulting from a conversation between RAFA and Howard Deacon, articles pages 15, 16, 17, 18 appeared in the 'Confound & Destroy' magazine Summer 2008.

Some years ago, when residing in Kenilworth, a Special Duty Operator Lloyd Davis contacted me having read my name in an article of mine. We maintained contact with one another until he dropped off the heavenly path a few years ago.

On the night of May 24/25 1944, No 214 Squadron suffered its first Fortress casualty when P/O Hockley RAAF was shot down on a patrol to Antwerp. It was on this flight that Special Duty Operator Lloyd Davis was a stand-in operator. P/O Hockley stayed at the controls of the burning aircraft to give his crew the chance of baling out, and in so doing forfeited his own life. All the crew with the exception of the pilot and Sgt Simpson managed to parachute out and landed on one of the small Dutch islands in the North Sea. As the area was well guarded by Germans, they had no opportunity to evade capture and were quickly rounded up by the enemy. The aircraft was Fortress II SR384 BU-A (Page 9, Autumn 'Confound & Destroy' 2009).

Between November 1943 and April 1944 LAC Fisher GT and LAC Mercer A were two Navigators, Wireless Operator Air Trainees Course No 88A, No 8 Air Observer School. Ansienne Lorette Quebec, Canada. Both graduated Sergeant Navigator W/OP Air, April 1944.

Posted back to UK 10th May 1944, we were together at No 7 Receiving Centre RAF Harrogate until July 1944 when we were posted to other units.

Between 10th August and 19th September 1944 I was stationed at No 22 Aircrew Holding Unit RAF Kirkham.

Situated near Kirkham is the village of Freckleton. Not keen on drinking NAAFI tea a few of us at morning tea break would race down to the 'Sad Sack' Café in the village for our morning cuppa.

Freckletonians will never forget what happened on the morning of 23 August 1944. It was a Wednesday, the bright morning sunshine suddenly vanished as the sky darkened and a ferocious thunderstorm struck the village. A four engined Liberator bomber aircraft of the USA undergoing an air test flight from nearby Warton airfield was immediately recalled. On its descent to the airfield it was struck by lightning and crashed onto the 'Sad Sack' café, some adjoining cottages and part of the wing and undercarriage continued across the road into the village school where morning classes were in session. In the school, 38 school children and two teachers died. Two civilians and seven USA personnel were killed in the café, also two RAF sergeants (Pilot & Navigator) were killed. Among my colleagues who were having morning tea, two RAF sergeants (Navigators) died of wounds sustained and two other sergeants (Navigators) survived having suffered serious wounds, in addition in the village seven civilians died. The pilot and engineer of the Liberator died. That night two beds in my hut were empty. Because I hate getting wet, that fateful morning I stayed on camp and had tea in the NAAFI.

On a Sunday afternoon years later I had a telephone call from the Secretary of the then Thames Valley Branch of Aircrew Association. He had a request from a Bournemouth member who wanted my address. The person in question was none other than Alan Mercer. He had seen my name to my article '*I Hate Getting Wet!*' which had been published in the Aircrew Association's magazine 'Intercom'.

In conversation, he informed me that he had been posted to RAF Kirkham. On the day of the crash he was away on a course. Also I learnt that about 6/7 weeks he was posted to No 214 (RCM) Squadron where he undertook three operations RCM. Probably because of the bicycle accident our paths did not cross. However, we did meet some years later when I called upon him at his Dorset home. At this meeting we decided upon a search for the other trainees of Course 88A No 8 Air Observer School Ansienne Lorette. As a result of this search, of the 37 successful graduates, we traced 12 alive, 6 had died, despite our efforts 19 gone away, not known, and no trace. Alan arranged a Reunion at his home, at which 7 of us turned up 50 years on. I was saddened to learn of Alan's death in USA. To my knowledge of the Magnificent 7, only 3 survive.

During the brief period of time that I had at No 1699 BSTU and No 214 (RCM) Squadron, RAF Oulton, 3 May 1945-27 July 1945, I undertook several Ruhr Tour trips and two and a half post mortem operations. I shall never forget seeing the terrible destruction wrought upon Germany by Bomber Command. Clogne, towns and cities in the Ruhr Valley, Essen/Krupps and two trips to Hamburg. War no matter how GOOD the reason, has *terrible terrible consequences*. Will they never learn ... will they never learn.

On take off, my position would be to stand behind the pilot. However there was the occasion when on a circuit and landing trip, I sat in the navigator's compartment. At point of take off, the port engine of the Fortress cut, instead of up, up and away it was walk about across the airfield, blood wagon to left of and crash truck to right of us. As I watched with interest our predicament I said to myself 'I wonder what is going to happen next?' Fortunately the aircraft stopped just over the perimeter fence with nose overlooking the Norwich/Aylsham railway. If the aircraft had travelled further it would not have been a case of '*Atlas carries the world on his shoulders*' but '*George carries a Fortress on his shoulders*'. As the old wag told me at OTU, you don't have to go on operations George to get killed!

How true!

No 214 RCM Squadron disbanded 27 July 1945. I spent 3 months in Aircrew Holding Units then to Heavy Conversion Unit, Transport Command, where I had a choice of aircraft Liberator or Avro York. Because of my Fortress experience I opted for Liberator.

Posted to No 206 Squadron, RAF Oakington, where from I flew on the Curry Run UK India UK carrying goods and service personnel.

On 6 March after a flight lasting nine and a half hours from Karachi to Aden, the pilot had he landed according to the book, who knows there could have been on the runway 5 crew and 32 passengers, 37 'Walkers Crispy Potato Crisps'?

My memory of seeing the Engineer's dip stick after dipping the four tanks means we flew on empty.

George Fisher

(A Memorial Tribute is written to Alan Mercer, former Navigator 214 Squadron on page 27)

Shared Experiences

Identifying a Link Between RAF 100 Group & The Dambusters (617 Squadron)

I first became interested in The Dambusters when I was about 13-14 years old after seeing the 1955 film of the same name with Richard Todd as Guy Gibson. Then my interest grew as I started to read books on it – how it was thought, why, also how the bombs would work against the dams. I needed to understand the practice of what it was all about and the real story itself behind the film.

It wasn't until I was working in a Junior School that it really took off. The year I was helping out were doing World War II for that term. The teacher asked if I had any ideas what to do apart from what she had. I said I was interested in the Dambusters, explaining to her what they did, etc. She was really interested and asked if I would do a talk on it with the class divided into small groups. It went well. The children were all very interested, asking lots of questions and practically wanting to understand how and why and when, etc.



Guy Gibson

From then on I have been doing my own Project on the Squadron – contacting libraries, MOD archives, also RAF Scampton and Maizham as well as reading books and searching through the internet.

I talk to people about it and always get the same question asked back: 'was it worth it?' My answer is I don't really know. Yes, it slowed the German industries ... but only for 6 months. And no, it wasn't worth the loss of lives on both sides.

However, of late, Janine Harrington (Editor of 'Confound & Destroy') and myself have been doing some research, and unexpectedly came across a link between 100 Group and 617, The Dambusters.

The question then begged to be asked: How did 100 Group get involved? And in what other ops were they involved?

We have up until now credited the sinking of the Tirpitz to the 617 Squadron and Navy involvement, but suddenly, this line of thought opened a whole new wave of research.

* * * *

Regarding the sinking of the Tirpitz, there is definite evidence now that 192 Squadron of 100 Group who were involved in secret operations during the war identifying and jamming radar were involved and more than that, actually took part in further raids working with 617 Squadron.

192 Squadron always took the lead, going out in all weathers, and it was on their information that other Squadrons in 100 Group went out. 100 Group were formed in March 1944, all men hand picked from other UK Squadrons to be based in Norfolk. All their work was secret, and most of what they did is still under 100 year rule.

The decision to use 192 Squadron to search for any gaps in the German coastal radar cover along the northern shores of Norway was a decision taken by Air Intelligence in the Ministry, in conjunction with tactical decisions by Bomber Command and 100 Group. So far as 192 Squadron was concerned and were led to believe, this was just another task to avoid highlighting any importance to the mission.

The outcome of that task by 192 Squadron was that a radar gap was discovered. The existence of that gap was then used, by Bomber Command and AOC 5 Group, to plan the attack by 617 Squadron in conjunction with 9 Squadron. Two squadrons took part in the attack; not just 617.

A great deal has been written about the attack on Tirpitz. One book is called 'Tirpitz' and specifically mentions 192 Squadron's involvement on p190/191. In another book 'Even When the Sparrows are Walking', which writes specifically about 100 Group, there is mention of the Tirpitz missions carried out by 192 Squadron - Phil James has written on that subject on p. 82/83.

Andy and I were invited to a special Christmas Sunday lunch at the Petwood Hotel, hosted by Jim Shortland, 617 Squadron Historian, and author. Unfortunately, something cropped up at the last minute and we were unable to attend. It was indeed a missed opportunity given that the crew of 617 Squadron was to be present, together with those who have gone on the Dambuster Tours which Jim Shortland and his wife conduct, manage and host each year. Jim is very interested in the link between 617 Squadron and 100 Group. He agreed to write a few lines to introduce himself to 100 Group Association members as we continue our research together:

Jim Shortland goes on to say: *'I have no official connection with 617 Squadron whatsoever. The result is I only represent myself. The Association has their own official historian who I am not in contact with. I have been presenting lectures on the war-time operations of the Squadron for the past 25 years or so and for the past 8 or 9 years have been presenting them on power point and average about 22 lectures a year and it has taken me as far away as Norway, Canada, Germany, etc.*

You can imagine being engaged with this hobby for the past 34 years I have collected a vast amount of material. For example, I have around five and a half thousand slides relating in some way to the Squadron's history 1943-1945, as well as hundreds and hundreds of photographs, some of which can be seen in the Dambusters in Focus Book which I co-wrote with Mark Postlethwaite. He used around 70% of my photographs in the book. I have also written many articles for national and international magazines.

I wish all the RAF 100 Group Association members a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

One further snippet of information leading to a further link between 100 Group and 617 Squadron is that in April 1944, Cheshire was the C.O of 617. He was using a mosquito plane to drop Target indicator flares, given that Lancasters were too big to do this. On the night of the operation to Munich, Cheshire took off later than the Lancasters. He used the jet stream to get him there and hit a thunderstorm. He called his deputy on the radio to ask for a weather report. The reply he got was from Mick Martin in another Mosquito on an intruder mission to Bonn. Martin was then with 515 Squadron at Little Snoring, part of 100 Group. Martin left 617 in early 1944.

Thanks, [Rod Vowler](#), for this additional piece of information.

*Jim Shortland
Andy England
Janine Harrington*

The Work of RAF 100 Group

Eastern Daily Press

The intense work of the RAF from airfields in Norfolk during WWII has been well documented. But not so many people know about the work of 100 Group. Reporter Elaine Maslin spoke to veterans about their work in early electronic warfare and the sinking of the German battleship Tirpitz.

The story of the Tirpitz has been told in books and a 1955 film.

A Bismarck class battleship, she had posed a massive threat to allied forces and, until she was finally sunk in 1944, had stood in the way of allied control of the North Atlantic. At the time she was the largest battleship built in Europe with a crew of 1,700. Efforts to get rid of her had soaked up immense naval and RAF resources. But what is little known is that it was RAF Squadrons based in the heart of Norfolk that were key in tracking her down in a German occupied Norwegian fjord. They were part of 100 (Bomber Support) Group, a specialist unit set up in late 1943 originally tasked with air and ground based radio counter measures (RCM) to aid the increasingly intense air battle over Germany. Its Headquarters was at the genteel 19th century Bylaugh Hall, near Dereham, designed by Houses of Parliament architect Charles Barry. And it included more than 15 squadrons, with some 200 planes, flying a total of 16,740 sorties from 1944 until the end of the war from airfields in the area, including Foulsham, Oulton, Sculthorpe and North Creake .

An earlier RCM group, No 80 Wing, known as the beam benders for interfering with navigation beams used by the Germans to guide bomber aircraft to targets, had been subsumed into the new group. Together their duty, and motto, was to "*confound and destroy*" the enemy.

John Stubbington, chairman of the 100 Group Association, said they did this through use of night fighters, air and ground RCM, investigation of enemy radar and radio equipment and information gathering to plan future operations and plot enemy fighter movements. Tricks included creating spoof raids - using radio and electronic technology to make it appear a Squadron was flying to one location when in fact they were flying somewhere else. Their aircraft were bombers stripped of their bombing equipment and fitted with technical radio and radar tools.

At the forefront of their most secretive work was Foulsham-based 192 Squadron. It alone flew 2,088 sorties, the most of all the 100 Group squadrons, with just five losses. One of those sorties was the mission to find the Tirpitz, the biggest ocean-going target in the war, so that it could be sunk once and for all. Repeated attempts to destroy it had failed.

Stan Forsyth DFC, 88, was in 192 Squadron and on that mission. A special operations (radar), he won the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross). He had been one of the first batches of radar operators in the newly formed group. "*It had been injured a few times by other aircraft and battleships and had limped in to this Norwegian fjord and was well hidden. But it was still a danger to the shipping in the Atlantic,*" said Mr Forsyth, who now lives in Southport. "*The Allies wanted to keep it there or sink it.*"

It was 1944. Six 192 Squadron Halifaxes were sent up to Lossiemouth, Scotland, from where they would carry out their mission.

"*I assumed the job I went to do was to pin point it,*" he said. "*At the time I didn't know. We were merely told to go up to the Arctic Circle fly across and let me do my stuff. It was all hush hush, the crew didn't know what I was doing. They always wondered what we were doing because we never*

dropped any bombs. I had the job of searching frequencies. We were told to search and if we picked it up to photograph it." The mission took about 10 hours, he said.

The plane had extra tanks on the wings for fuel to give them additional range. But some of the six planes sent out turned back due to bad weather. Near the North Pole they had problems with ice and had to make sure they flew below the cloud. But the work paid off. *"I got some sort of signal going north and coming south,"* said Mr Forsyth. *"Checking on the navigator's plan gave us some position which indicated where it was. They were trying to keep quiet but they had to listen out for us, which meant there was a signal."*

Once the ship was pinpointed, Bomber Squadrons were called in and the Tirpitz, sister ship of the Bismarck, was sunk west of Tromsø, in the bay of Håkøytan. Of the 1,700 crew, 1,000 were killed. *"It was just like going to work, you did what you were told,"* said Mr Forsyth.

The Tirpitz mission was just one of many secret missions 192 Group specialised in.

"Our job was to go out and try to investigate certain things," said Mr Forsyth, who had to comply by the official secrets act. *"The boffins back at the station then tried to produce an antidote to whatever we had picked up."*

Mr Stubbington said the main function of 100 Group was investigation of enemy communications and radar services. In this 192 Squadron played a dominant role, originally under the technical and operational control of Air Intelligence, part of the Y Service alongside work at Bletchley Park. The Squadron had evolved from the RAF's first airborne electronic unit, called the Wireless Intelligence Unit. Aircraft were fitted with special receiving and recording equipment. One of their tricks included radar reflective foil strips used to confuse enemy radar operators. They were dropped in predetermined patterns to maintain the illusion of large numbers of approaching aircraft.

To further the deception, other electronic measures were used, including what were called Mandrel jammer sets. The enemy's radio transmissions were also jammed to hamper the directions given to enemy night fighters from the ground controllers using a system known as Air Borne Cigar. A typical order for one bombing mission would include use of jammers on ground and airborne radars to screen the approach of bombers to an area, a spoof raid to make it look like the real raid was going somewhere else, jamming enemy communications and radars in the target area as well as the spoof target area, to harass enemy night-fighters and fighter support.

"On one night, not having heard a recall message, one Flying Fortress from 214 Squadron completed the planned sortie alone and was plotted by the enemy as a force of 20 to 30 aircraft," said Mr Stubbington. One of the many tasks for 192 Squadron was a 24-hour watch for V-weapons - long range rockets developed by the Germans. Bomber Command held the view that, due to work by 100 Group, at least 1,000 bomber aircraft and their aircrews had been saved. This was all controlled from Bylaugh, where Mr Forsyth was moved after returning from the Tirpitz mission to a job *"moving the pieces around on the boards"* as he put it - assisting the controller.

Sidney Pike, 86, now living in Hellesdon, was a navigator on one of the Flying Fortresses based at RAF Oulton under the control of 100 Group HQ at Bylaugh. He said: *"We were carrying out airborne radar jamming, jamming the radio signals between fighters in the air and ground controls, and spoof raids. Our mission was to confound the Germans. It was hard to say if we had been successful. We might send a Mossie (Mosquito) out the following day to see how much damage had been done. We took part in bombing raids as well. But we had electric gadgets inside our planes, not bombs to jam their signals."*

Gerhard Heilig, 84, who now lives in Austria, was in 214 Squadron. He had moved to England in 1938 as a refugee from Nazi Vienna and was taken in by a Quaker school in West Yorkshire. He later volunteered to the RAF, where his German came in handy for 100 Group. He became an ABC operator, observing the German night fighter bands on cathode ray tubes. Any transmissions came up as a blip. Having identified them as German they would try to jam them.

"The key was to disrupt the radio control," he said. "If controllers couldn't get through the fighters couldn't be told to intercept the bombers. Originally there was a microphone fitted in the engines of some bombers. It would send out a signal from engine noises on normal radio sets. Those were early days, we developed it. It is now known as electronic warfare and it is still going on today."

Peter Witts was a rear gunner in 223 Squadron on Liberators (B24s) and Flying Fortresses (B17s) and then in 462 Squadron with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on Halifaxes from Foulsham. *"I was the tail gunner - the tail end Charlie sitting in the rear facing the bullets,"* he said. *"Our motto was Confound and Destroy. It was electronic warfare. We went out and looked for German radios and radars. We would go out and jam them. They used to try and shoot us down. They gave us a hot welcome then tried to get rid of us."* Mr Witts now lives in Devon but had been a head teacher at Beachamwell Primary School, near Swaffham, in the 1950s.

Life at HQ at Bylaugh was not quite as luxurious as the Hall's image might have suggested. Local resident John Tye, who still lives in Swanton Morley, remembers as a youngster going to see films at an RAF run cinema at Bylaugh and water running down the walls of the Nissan huts where staff lived. *"I did think the base had something to do with radio of radar because they had the wireless on flash on their arm,"* he said. *"I found out years later that they found ways to jam German radar. I never saw any guards on the gates and you could bike up to the Hall without being stopped."*

Despite the apparent lack of security, 100 Group's work was only recently actually commemorated at the now privately owned Hall when a plaque briefly telling of their work was unveiled. There are traces of their work in the rundown Nissan huts still strewn about the site. But little else.

Phil James, MBE, a flight engineer in 192 Squadron whose hearing was left damaged by the nine hour mission to find the Tirpitz, said: *"There is very little known about the 100 Group because the records have not been released. In those days all our mail used to be censored. Now if you mention 100 Group people have never heard of it, even ex-RAF."*

[Elaine Maslin](#) and [Eastern Daily Press](#) are accredited as the media source.
'Sunday' 7 Nov 2009.

SHARED EXPERIENCES



American WWII pilot returns to England to unveil Memorial to his fallen comrades

An American WWII pilot who survived a crash in which his best friends died has returned to England for the first time after being tracked down by a farmer who unearthed the wreckage of his aeroplane.

The last two surviving members of the nine man crew, Pilot Norman Landberg (89) and Tail-Gunner George Eberwine (85) attended the service. (Photo taken by Eddie Mulholland.)



Waiting in the departures lounge at JFK airport on Thursday morning for a flight to London, an announcement came over the public address system. We would be traveling with a very important passenger. An elderly man was sitting in a wheelchair. This, we were told, was Norman Landberg, who during World War II had flown 56 missions over Europe in B24 Liberator bombers, and who was returning to Britain for the first time since 1945 to be guest of honour at the unveiling of a Memorial for two of his comrades who had died when a plane that Mr Landberg was piloting crashed on take-off.

America has a heightened sense of the respect due to war veterans, and the passengers of AA 142 rose as one to applaud as Mr Landberg was wheeled through the gate and down to the plane.

I found him sitting in Business Class, his seat set in the reclining position, being cosseted by two flight attendants, a modest, quietly-spoken man in a track suit and trainers, slightly bemused by all the fuss.

During the war, 1st Lieutenant Landberg of 36 Bomb Squadron, as he was then, was stationed at Cheddington Air Base, in Ivinghoe, Buckinghamshire. This was not only the first time he had been back to Britain since 1945, he told me, but the first time he had been in aircraft. *'I'm a little nervous'*. He thought for a moment. *'Anticipatory'*.

It was all very different from flying over Germany at night in a B24. *'What was that like? Oh my God ... there was no insulation. It was cold as hell – 50 degrees below. Your wings would be flapping all over the place, rickety as anything. It was terrible.'*

Landberg's Squadron was engaged in special ops, attached to RAF 100 Group. His B24 Liberator did not carry bombs, but top-secret radar-jamming equipment. His job was to fly lone missions, without any fighter support, over Germany, in advance of Lancaster bombing raids. Flying below enemy radar, Landberg would circle a defined bombing area at an altitude of between 50 and 100 feet, transmitting radar signals into the air designed to fool the Germans into scrambling their fighter squadrons in pursuit of non-existent enemy.

By the time the actual bombers arrived – or so the theory went – the fighters would be back on the ground busily refueling. Landberg's description of this is succinct. *'Scary ...'* He was just 21, responsible for the lives of his ten-man crew. *'That responsibility was not lost on me. And that's the reason I'm coming to England'*.

On the night of November 15, 1944, Landberg took off on what he expected to be a routine – if such a word can be used – mission. Shortly after take-off his aircraft lost power. *'All my lights went out. My engineer had a flash light which he shined in my eyes. I couldn't see the instruments, and my left wing caught the ground and I started to tumble ...'*

The plane hit the ground, ploughing across two fields. The plane was loaded with 4,000 gallons of high-octane fuel and 26,000 rounds of ammunition. It should by rights have exploded; miraculously it didn't. Landberg's navigator, and best friend, William Lamson and the left-side 'waist-gunner' Leonard Smith were both killed on impact.

But the cockpit in which Landberg was sitting was ripped from the fuselage and catapulted 300 yards from the wreck. *'I just snapped off the safety-belt and stepped out on the ground'*, he remembered. *'Oh my God, it was something!'*

His seven other crew members also survived.

Landberg had a week of R&R in Torquay before rejoining his Squadron, to fly another 30 missions. At the end of the war he went back to his home in Atlantic City, and his young wife Elizabeth. *'She was a great girl.'* He paused. *'She still is.'* He thought of staying on in the Air Force, *'but I'd sort of had my fill, particularly of flying.'* He went to Engineering School and then got into sales. *'I was traveling all over the country. You can sell anything. And I loved driving a car.'*

Landberg had been so affected by the crash that he had never spoken of it, not even to his wife. And it might have passed, forgotten, into history, had it not been for Chris Jellis, a 43 year old film prop man who lives in Ivinghoe. Jellis's cousin owns Force End Farm, where Landberg's B24 crashed in 1944. For years he had been ploughing up bits of the remaining wreckage, including live 50 calibre machine-gun shells, without knowing what they were exactly the wreckage of.

In 1993, Jellis himself picked up a piece of metal bearing a manufacturer's plate – Ford motor co, Dearborn. He turned detective, becoming in his own words, *'a bit of an anorak on the B24'*. A local Historian told him that America bombers had been stationed at Cheddington. Through military records here and in America he determined the Squadron and names of the crew of the crashed bomber. Dialling every N Landberg in the American phone directories eventually led him to Norman. I said, *'Is that Lieutenant Landberg?'* Jellis told me. He said *'No-one's called me that since 1945'*. When I told him I'd been picking up bits of wreckage for years, he said, *'didn't they clear the sucker up?'*

Jellis resolved to erect a memorial in honour of the two airmen who had died. On Sunday, Norman joined the only other surviving member of his crew, the tail-gunner George Eberwine – whom he has not seen since the end of the war – at a ceremony to unveil the marble stone at the site of the crash. The unveiling included a dedication by a US Airforce chaplain, Flypast and wreath laying. He later plan to visit the US War Cemetery in Cambridge and the Imperial War Museum.



Memorial to commemorate the 65th Anniversary of the loss of two American Airmen Walter Lamson & Leonard Smith, who died when their B24 Liberator crashed shortly after take-off.



'This whole trip', Landberg told me, adjusting his duvet, and accepting a drink from a passing flight attendant, 'was quite something'. It might even have cured his aversion to flying! 'It was most pleasant', he said as we taxied to the Arrivals Gate. 'I don't think I'll be quite so nervous flying home.'

During the war, 1st Lieutenant Landberg of 36 Bomb Squadron, as he was then, was stationed at Cheddington air base, in Ivinghoe, Buckinghamshire.

by *Mick Brown*

Taken from the Daily Telegraph
Photos: Eddie Mulholland

Our thanks to Association Member Roger Dobson whose friend, Dick Fresson, alerted him to the article which appeared in the Daily Telegraph, 15th November 2009

* * * *

IN MEMORIAM

ALAN MERCER

Former Navigator 214 Squadron, 100 Group



Sgt Smith (Engineer), Sgt Langhorn (Starboard Waist Gunner)
F/O Kennett (Pilot) F/Sgt Maddox (NZ) (Rear Gunner)
F/Sgt Herlihy (NZ) (Mid-upper Gunner) P/O Spregg (Wireless Op)
P/O Green (Special Wireless Op) F/O Baumfield (NZ) (Bomb Aimer)
F/Sgt Mercer (Navigator) Sgt White (Port Waist Gunner)

OULTON JUNE 1945

Alan was born on 3rd August 1924. He grew up in the Hammersmith area of London. On taking up employment, he worked for the then GPO telephones until 1942, when, as a volunteer, he enlisted in the RAF.

He received training in this country and Canada, where he qualified as a Navigator in 1944. Returning to the UK, he was posted in November of that year to No 11 Operational Training Unit at Westcott, Bucks. There he was crewed up with F/O Ken Kennet (Pilot), F/O 'Lofty' Baumfield (NZ) (Bomb Aimer), F/Sgt Steve Spregg (W/Op), Sgt 'Duke' Maddox (NZ) (Rear Gunner), and Sgt 'Curly' Herlihy (NZ) (Mid Upper Gunner). About 3 months later, after training, they qualified as a bomber crew.

At the end of the course at OUT, they were posted to a Special Duty Squadron 214 FMS in 100 Group at RAF Oulton, Norfolk. On the journey by road transport from a nearby railway station to Oulton they saw the scattered remains of a BM Flying Fortress which had been shot down a few nights earlier by a German fighter intruder aircraft. 8 of the crew had been killed in the incident. Alan later met an Air Gunner, one of the survivors, at either a 214 Squadron or 100 Group Reunion in 1994.

On arrival at RAF Oulton, Alan and his OUT crew were increased by Sgt 'Smithy' Smith (Flight Engineer), PO 'Olly' Green (Special Radar Operator), Sgt Freddy Langhorn (Starboard Waist Gunner). Steve Spregg then about 30 years of age was the oldest member of the crew and had previously completed a tour of operations in the Middle East. Ken Kennett, the Pilot, a former

flying instructor, was about 24, whilst the majority of the others were 20 to 22, with the exception of the two Waist Gunners who were 19 years of age.

The crew then spent four weeks at 1699 Heavy Conversion Unit, also at Oulton, getting accustomed to the B17 Flying Fortress, doing such things as cross country exercises, bullseyes, air firing, fighter affiliation, etc in readiness for operations with 214 Squadron.

In early April 1945, the crew actually became operational with 214 Squadron, the European War was then nearing its end. But regretfully Bomber Command aircraft were still being destroyed. Alan and the other NCOs in his crew shared a Nissen Hut with similar rank members of two other crews. One of these crews failed to return one night and their belongings were removed the next day. This obviously brought home realization of the dangers still involved, even at that late stage of the European War.

The first operation by the crew was a Window dropping raid to Schleswig Holstein. The objective was to jam and mislead German radar, and by use of the Window, to spoof the Germans into believing a heavy force was making for a certain target, thus detracting their fighter defences away from the main bomber force who were en route elsewhere. Flying at 22,000 feet on this night vapour trails were observed and as RAF aircraft were flying at staggered intervals about 20 miles or so behind each other, the trails appeared to indicate fighter activity. This was followed by searchlight activity involving the Fortress, causing the Pilot to corkscrew for quite a few minutes to evade the searchlights and possible enemy fighters. Corkscrewing in a BM involved very severe movements with resulting 'G' effects and was not at all pleasant. In fact, so violent were the movements that for the first and only time in his life Alan was airsick. He was not alone in this, as so were some other crew members. No doubt the bacon and eggs before the flight had also helped to unsettle the stomach! Luckily Alan was sick over a spare chart, so the operation was able to continue. It was later learned from Intelligence that fighters had in fact taken off to attack the spoof raid.

The second op was a similar mission which was disturbed in flight over Germany by a burst of gunfire from the mid upper turret. The Pilot reduced height very quickly and then received an apology over the intercom from Curly the Mid Upper Gunner, who stated he had caught his parachute harness in the gun triggers, which did not have trigger guards. The operation was resumed and again carried out successfully. On this occasion odd sights of flames were observed by the Gunners. These appeared to be connected with fighter aircraft and were subsequently confirmed by Intelligence as being German jet aircraft.

The crew were ready at dispersal on another occasion for operations, but were not called upon to fly.

The third and last operation for Alan was on 2nd May 1945 (the last Bomber Command Raid over Europe). This was carried out without incident over Germany, but as the aircraft was about to land at Oulton, Alan, standing in his take off and landing position behind the Pilot, saw exhaust flames of a plane crossing in front of the B17 slightly above, and some 20 to 30 feet away. Thoughts immediately went to the wreckage seen on arrival at the station, shot down by an intruder joining returning aircraft. Ken Kennett, the Pilot, immediately reacted to it being an enemy aircraft, putting the nose down rather quicker than normal, to get on the runway and avoid a disaster.

Whilst waiting at dispersal for an hour before take off on operations, there was an obvious, though hidden tenseness. On one such occasion a burst of gunfire came from the waist of one aircraft. It transpired that a Waist Gunner had left his gun strap on the gun trigger. The result being that when the aircraft engines were started, the vibrations which were considerable, caused the gun to

swing round, tightening the strap on the trigger and firing it. This caused comments and laughter, thus relieving some of the tensions.

V.E Day Celebrations followed a few days after, resulting in a few sore heads, including Alan's the next day.

Flying duties following this included taking members of ground staff on tours over Germany to see the effects of Bomber Command activities, being involved in two exercises to give experts and technicians opportunities to assess the quality and efficiency of German radar installations and equipment. Other duties consisted of air tests, fighter affiliation, and disposing of surplus ammunition and equipment over the North Sea and Wash.

On one of these air tests, Curly, the Mid Upper Gunner, after firing a burst with his .50 Brownings, went against regulations and turned his guns towards the rear. Consequently a round in one gun cooked in the hot breech, hitting his own aircraft about a foot above the Rear Gunner's head. Luckily no controls were damaged and the Pilot was able to land safely. Needless to say, feelings between the Mid Upper and Rear Gunner were very frosty for a few days.

Another incident involving Alan and the crew was on an air test when a lot of smoke came from one of the installations in the bomb bay, where radar jamming equipment was carried, indicating a fire of some sort. This was put out by extinguishers and the aircraft landed safely. This much to the joy of two crew members who, against all regulations, had gone on the test without their parachutes.

Much has been written about the merits of different aircraft. Alan and his fellow crew members had no experience of the Lancaster, but on one occasion when returning from a North Sea trip, a Lancaster came alongside the Fortress. After the exchange of 'V' signals, etc, the Lancaster shut off one engine and began to pull away. Ken Kennett pushed the Fortress throttles as far as possible, despite which the Lancaster, on three engines, continued to leave the Fortress behind. All were impressed by the Lancaster.

The Squadron was disbanded in mid-1945, the New Zealand crew members returning home and the remaining crew posted to various other duties. Alan was posted to 570 Squadron, Transport Command, flying in Stirling aircraft mainly carrying items to troops in Germany. He was demobbed in 1946 as a Warrant Officer.

Although Alan's crew served together for a relatively short period of time, companionships and friendships were established which have carried on ever since. Two of the New Zealanders have visited England with wives and families, when visits to, and get togethers with other crew members have taken place. In 1985, Alan and his wife traveled to New Zealand and visited the three crew members there.

Unfortunately, Olly Green was killed in January 1947 whilst on a joy ride in an aircraft that crashed. Freddie Langhorn died in August 1981. Steve Spreng about a year later. Curly Herlihy in November 1992. Duke Maddox in April 1993. Ken Kennett in June 1993. Smithy in March 1995. Lofty Baumfield in August 2000. Alan in June 2009, leaving one, Chalky White still alive. Despite crew members passing, a number of their families are still in contact with each other.

On retirement from the RAF, Alan returned to employment with the GPO telephones, rising to Managerial posts on contracts involving the construction of new exchanges, etc. He married Pam in 1948 and they resided in West London until Alan's retirement when they moved to Hampshire. They had 2 daughters, 2 sons-in-law, 6 grandchildren, 2 step grandchildren, and Alan was very proud to become a great grandfather in March 2009. Unfortunately, Pam pre-deceased him in

November 2001. Alan was visiting one of his daughters in America and had been proud to attend the Graduation of one of his grandsons. He was later taken ill, hospitalized, but sadly passed away on 6th June 2009.

A man from humble beginnings, who worked tirelessly to improve himself and provide high levels of comfort and opportunity for his family. A true friend, trusty crew member, loyal to his country and who had great pride in his RAF Service.

Written in memory of Alan Mercer
by *Ken White*

* * * *

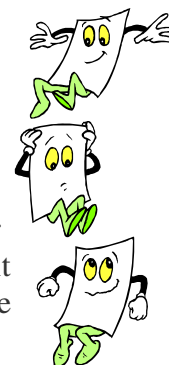


A place where members can keep in touch



Rod Vowler voices some pertinent legal points of which members need to be aware -

- Photo driving licences only last for 10 years before they need renewing.
- Members who drive need to check their driving licence numbers. The number is in 3 blocks. First block has your name. Second block has your date of birth moved around. Third block. The first two letters are your initials. If you only have one then the second one is replaced by a 9. The next figure should be a 9. Frequently this is 8 or a lower number. This means there are two records for you.
- Two records for you happens on occasions when you renew or update your licence, or have other groups added. For some reason the DVLA computer thinks this is a new application so gives you the next number.
- Telephone the DVLA. They will say there is no problem and your driving licence is in order.
- If you do not contact the DVLA and you are stopped by police and fail to produce your licence - they do a check which comes up with the 9 number, which will not show the correct details.
- You then receive a summons for the alleged offences.

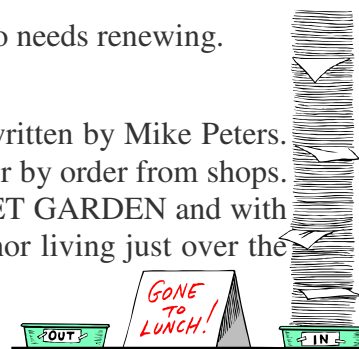


Hope this makes sense. I checked my works licences. 10 per cent were affected by this.

The EEC card for medical treatment in the EEC only lasts for 5 years so also needs renewing.



Members may be interested in a new book – ‘**Glider Pilots At Arnhem**’ written by Mike Peters. It has just been published by Pen & Sword and is available on the internet or by order from shops. Association members will be aware of East Anglia's links with Op MARKET GARDEN and with the Glider Pilot Regiment in particular. The book is written by a local author living just over the A140 in Suffolk.





Final Postings

*Death is but crossing the world as friends do the seas
- they live in one another still.*

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

Founders of RAF 100 Group Association – remembered with love.

192 Squadron	George Ward DFC Sqd/Ldr; Phil James' Canadian pilot
192 Squadron	Kenneth 'Paddy' Passmore: DFC Flt/Lt; Canadian, died 2005.
192 Squadron	John Cooke has left memorabilia to the Museum archive collection.
192 Squadron	Ron Phillips passed away in late 2005.
192 Squadron	Ted Gomersall passed away on 30 th November 2004,
192 Squadron	Hank Cooper DSO, DFC passed away in 2005.
192 Squadron	Michael Simpson W/Op & F/O passed away on the Isle of Man.
192 Squadron	'Richie' Richards Rear Airgunner flying Wellingtons has passed on. We have just had news that his son, F L Richards, a member of the Association, died in August 2009.
192 Squadron	Air Commodore Vic Willis, C.O of RAF Foulsham passed away 30.7.06
192 Squadron	Group Captain Jack Short passed away December 2006. Chair of RAF 100 Group Association until 1996.
192 Squadron	W.O (later P/O) A G McEachern RCAF died 15th August 2007 at home in Lanigan, Saskatchewan aged 85.
192 Squadron	LAC Harris, Ground Crew passed away 15 th August 2007. Grandson James Kerslake is now a member of the Association.
192 Squadron	Wing Commander David Donaldson passed away 15.1.2004.
192 Squadron	Wilhelmson, F/O Sander Willie Raymond (J10026). Distinguished Flying Cross. Home in Elbow, Saskatchewan.
192 Squadron	Flight Lieutenant Richard (Dick or Dobbie) William Dobson, died 1996, remembered by his son, Roger and daughter Susan, both new members.
192 Squadron	W/O John Rhys Powell, rear gunner flying Wellingtons, died 1992 remembered by son John Powell.
192 Squadron	Sgt George Richards, tail gunner, posted missing evening of 4th/5th July 1944. Remembered by niece Cheryl Cairns nee Colgan & sister Agnes Colgan (nee Richards).
199 Squadron	F/O Ed Emmerson, Navigator to Flt/Lt Paddy Passmore DFC, a Canadian Pilot, has passed away.
199 Squadron	Arthur Fitch, former RAF Bomber, passed away July 2006.

199/171 Sqdn	Group Captain George Cubby, MBE, FRMets; passed away in 2005. His wife donated memorabilia to the Museum. He is also remembered by Roy Smith, only surviving member of his crew.
171 Squadron	Joe Brogan, Halifax pilot, who finished the war at North Creak; passed away 2004, remembered by his widow Sheila.
171 Squadron	Arthur Adcock passed away February 2008 & Syd Love, Canadian crew member, passed away April 2008. <i>'Friends to the end!'</i>
157 Squadron	Bryan Gale Flt/Lt passed away 2 nd January 2009 and is remembered by daughter Valerie & son Chris (<i>see In Memoriam in this issue</i>).
214 Squadron	Geoff Liles, pilot, passed away 4 March 2006.
214 Squadron	Mr J Creech passed away April 2006.
214 Squadron	Don Austin passed on and is remembered by Les Bostock.
214 Squadron	Air Vice Marshall Jack Furner passed away 1 st Jan 2007.
214 Squadron	Squadron Leader/Flight Commander Bob Davies passed away June 2007.
214 Squadron	Bill Howard passed away October 2007.
214 Squadron	Flt Lt Blair passed away Sept 2007.
214 Squadron	John Hereford, Spec Op, has passed on.
214 Squadron	Robert Moorby W/Op passed away January 2008. Michael and Robin his sons gave memorabilia to the Museum. Bob is also remembered by Shirley Whitlock.
214 Squadron	Ft/Sg Hadder, Air Gunner in Fortress III HB815, bearing code letters "BU-J" killed 3/4 th March 1945, remembered by nephew Leslie Barker (<i>his story will be told in our next Winter edition</i>).
214 Squadron	Alan Mercer passed away 6 th June 2009 (<i>see memorial piece included</i>).
214 Squadron	Warrant Officer Gordon Wing, known as 'Howie' (a character taken from an Australian cartoon page of a newspaper) passed away the end of Nov 2009 aged 87 years. He was a Rear Gunner in Eric Morrison's crew in Stirlings and Fortresses, and also Founder member of the Airgunners Ass.
223 Squadron	Flt Lt A E L Morris (Tony) died June 2005. He is remembered by Andrew Barron, his skipper: Oct 44 – 1945.
223 Squadron	Tom Butler 'Bishop', is remembered by Peter Witts.
223 Squadron	C. L. Matthews (Les) rear gunner, Peter Witts nose gunner in Flt/L Stan Woodward DFC crew before Peter went on to 214 Squadron.
223 Squadron	Arthur Anthony, Flight Engineer, passed away May 13 th 2006. A member of our Committee at the start of the Association.
223 Squadron	F/Lt Jack Brigham DFC passed away 2008. Original Captain when 223 reformed. Flew mainly Liberator TS 524, 6G-0; 36 ops. Remembered by Len Davies, Waste Gunner only surviving member of crew.

88 Squadron	F/Lt Len Dellow passed away Christmas/New Year 2006-7; veteran of 88 Squadron, 2 Group & rear gunner/wireless operator on Bostons.
49 Squadron	Len Bradfield passed away Nov 2005. Len & pilot Johnny Moss survived as war prisoners when their Lancaster ED625 was shot. Len returned to Britain with injuries sustained in escape attempt, nursed back to health by Nora, who he married.
462 RAAF Squadron	F/O H .R. Anderson DFC ‘Andy’ passed away 6 th April 2008 at home in New South Wales with family around him.
Unknown	F/L/Sir John Briscoe has been dead for a few years but never appeared in ‘Last Postings’

A Quiet Corner



The Final Inspection

The army soldier stood and faced God,
Which must always come to pass.
He hoped his shoes were shining,
Just as brightly as his brass.

'Step forward now, Soldier,
How shall I deal with you?
Have you always turned the other cheek?
To My Church have you been true?'

The soldier squared his shoulders and said,
'No, Lord, I guess I ain't.
Because those of us who carry guns,
Can't always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays,
And at times my talk was tough.
And sometimes I've been violent,
Because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny,
That wasn't mine to keep....
Though I worked a lot of overtime,
When the bills got just too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help,
Though at times I shook with fear.
And sometimes, God, forgive me,
I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place,
Among the people here.
They never wanted me around,
Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here, Lord,
It needn't be so grand.
I never expected or had too much,
But if you don't, I'll understand.

There was a silence all around the throne,
Where the saints had often trod.
As the Soldier waited quietly,
For the judgment of his God.

'Step forward now, you Soldier,
You've borne your burdens well.
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets
You've done your time in Hell.'

~Author Unknown~ Sent in by Andrew Barron

Dates for your Diary



2010



January 2010

Any member who has not yet sent in their Membership Renewal Form needs to do so asap to ensure you receive the next bumper Summer edition of the Newsletter together with the special Reunion 2010 Supplement that comes out alongside – membership was raised last year to £15 per person per year.

For those members who have paid their membership, please let Association Sec Janine Harrington know immediately if your membership card is not enclosed with this Newsletter.

7th/8th/9th MAY



2010 RAF 100 Group Association Reunion – full Programme enclosed. Please note that the main Saturday evening meal will this year be at the Wensum Valley Hotel. Members need to make choices from the menu, complete your details, and send together with a cheque for £24.95 per person to cover the cost by 1st March 2010.

Look forward to seeing you there!

1st JUNE

Deadline for inclusions in Summer issue of Newsletter due out in July.

End of August

Deadline for inclusions in Autumn issue of Newsletter due out for October.

Mid October

Deadline for inclusions in Winter issue of Newsletter due out in time for Christmas.

100 Group Order of Battle

SQD	AIRCRAFT	1st 100 GROUP OPERATION	BASE	SORTIES, LOSSES ROLL
192	Mosquito, Halifax Wellington Lightnings	Dec 1943	Foulsham	2171/5 Losses Electronic Intel/Elint
141	Beaufighters, Mosquito	Dec 1943	West Raynham	1214/11 Losses 80 EA, 58 Trains, 7 Ships Dest
219/239	Mosquito	Jan 1944	West Raynham	1394/9 Losses 51 En AC Dest
515	Mosquito	March 1944	Little Snoring	1366/21 losses 29 En AC Dest
169	Mosquito	Jan 1944	Little Snoring, Great Massingham	1247/13 Losses 25 En AC + 1 V1 Dest
214	Fortress	April 1944	Sculthorpe, Oulton	1225/13 Losses Electronic Jamming
199	Stirling, Halifax	May 1944	North Creake	1707/6 Losses Electronic Jamming
157	Mosquito	May 1944	Swannington West Malling	1336/6 Losses 37 En AC +39 V1 Dest
85	Mosquito	June 1944	Swannington West Malling	1190/7 Losses 71 En AC+30 V1 Dest
23	Mosquito	July 1944	Little Snoring	1067/8 Losses 18 En AC Dest
223	Liberator Fortress	Sept 1944	Oulton	625/3 Losses Electronic Jamming
171	Stirling, Halifax	Sept 1944	North Creake	1583/4 Losses Electronic Jamming
462 RAAF	Halifax	Jan 1945	Foulsham	621/7 Losses Jamming/Windows
36 & 803 BS	Boeing B-17F P38	Jan 1944	Sculthorpe, Oulton	1211/0 Losses Electronic Jamming
857 & 858 BS	Consolidated B-24G	Jan 1944	Oulton	280/2 Losses Electronic Jamming

Produced by
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