



Confound & Destroy

The magazine of RAF 100 Group Association

Spring 2018



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EDITOR'S PAGE

Dearest Kindred Spirits,

A VERY HAPPY & HEALTHY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL!!



My heart is still brimming over with the joy and wonder of your many many gifts, cards and letters. It is as if you knew I was at a low ebb, and responded accordingly. I was seriously ill all over the festive season and beyond, while bouquets of flowers, even food hampers, and so much more continued to arrive, in an outpouring of warmth and love. Thank you, my Kindred Spirits, one and all xxxx You each remain a precious part of my everyday life. I would also give a heartfelt thanks to our anonymous Donor, who enabled us to have our 2018 Membership Cards. If yours does not arrive with your magazine, please let me know immediately. Our Donor has included all postage costs around the world. The generous gift comes in response to many who shared grave concerns, explaining these cards are a reminder of the debt we owe so many who paid the ultimate price in wartime. Always they are received with such pride, tangible proof that veterans are still today a valued part of RAF 100 Group, Bomber Command. In turn, they offer recognition and reward sadly still lacking, even within the main RAF ... over 70 years on from the end of the war.

This year, 1st April marks the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Air Force: 1918 – 2018.

Aware of its importance, our Reunion in May will reflect this through special arrangements being put in place as shown in the Reunion Programme accompanying this magazine. The one thing we cannot be assured of, however, is the weather! To secure a place, particularly at the main Reunion Saturday Evening Dinner in the Halifax Suite at The Holiday Inn, Norwich North; I would urge you to fill out the necessary Booking Form, include your Menu Choices, then send directly to me at your earliest convenience. I would ask particularly that you note on the programme the special event being organised by Mike Hillier for the afternoon of Sunday 20th May. I realise it's usually when, following the service at Horsham St Faith, we bid a fond farewell to one another before taking to the road leading home. But please, make Haveringland, once home to RAF Swannington, your final visit this year. Villagers are eager to be a part of our programme. They will be offering a warm welcome with tea and cake, together with an Air Display and Parade. Mike Hillier offers his own personal invitation, describing what will be on offer in the latter pages of the magazine, dedicated to the unique and historic Haveringland Event on Remembrance Day 2017. Mike is someone just as passionate as I about preserving the memory and stories of what happened in wartime at his home in Haveringland, and you can be assured of a rare treat.

As always, this magazine comes packed with shared letters, stories and information. Enjoy your read.

This is a New Year. It presents new opportunities to share experiences. I love hearing from each and every one of you. My time of response might come in slower time these days, but you can be assured ... come it will!! You are valued. I have discovered through being involved in the Association since its beginnings in dear Martin and Eileen's day, and through years of producing this magazine, that love, and support works both ways. I remain deeply touched by the outpouring of mail I receive every single day. This is my lifeline, just as it is yours!

*Love & Hugs,
Janine^{xx}*

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

Although you will probably be reading this in February, I wish you a happy and prosperous New Year. Today, I am writing this on a train crossing the Pennines surrounded by snow-covered fields. My decision to visit our Secretary by train rather than car has proved fortuitous. The journey is coast-to-coast across the breadth of England and Wales.

Janine and I were reviewing finances, our membership, the forthcoming Reunion, and future plans. The good news is that we are solvent, the not-so-good news is that we continue to run at an operating loss. Notwithstanding some very generous donations and the cost-cutting measures introduced last May, I am forecasting that we incur a deficit of several hundred pounds again this year. Our principle items of expenditure are printing the magazine and associated cost of posting. The magazine is very much the lifeblood of the Association – with Janine's excellent editing, it reaches members and others in a unique way. If there is a plentiful supply of contributions and interesting material, we will continue to publish four editions each year and provide hard copy to those of our members who want that format. The inevitable consequence is that we will have to consider raising the membership subscription from January 2019. I expect that the Committee will put a proposal on this at the AGM in May. Encouragingly, our membership has grown in recent times. Amazingly, over a quarter of our members live overseas, ranging from Austria, Australia, and the Americas, to New Zealand, China and Thailand.

Our Secretary has outlined the Reunion Programme elsewhere. I expect many of us will be enjoying the results of her very hard work. For a second year (by popular demand, and thanks to a kind benefactor) we will be entertained at the Dinner by '40s-era Singer Heather Marie. Because of competition for the limited number of venues large enough to accommodate us in the Norwich area, we have to plan ahead. At this stage, we are planning Reunions for the weekends of:

May 15 – 17, 2020

May 14 – 16, 2021

All organisations must change and adapt if they are to survive in an ever-changing world. RAF 100 Group Association is no exception. The focus on veterans and families of 20 years ago has inevitably seen an evolving emphasis on commemorating and publicising the role of 100 Group and the heroism of its personnel. I hope that we will be able to meet the purpose of the Association for very many years to come as we articulated it in the new Constitution:

'The Association exists to research and preserve the history of the Group. In addition, it will serve as a Memorial to the considerable number of aircrew who gave their lives in the last two years of World War II and to keep in contact, if wished, with those Officers, men and women who served in RAF 100 Group and their families.'

We have experienced a plethora of Anniversaries associated with the two World Wars, but an important one for us approaches. Following a Report by General Jan Smut, which Parliament debated and passed, the Air Force (Constitution) Act 1917 was given Royal Assent by King George V on the 29th November 1917. A few months later, on 1 April 1918, the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps were merged together to create something new – the world's first independent air force ... The Royal Air Force.

With very best wishes,

8th AIR FORCE NEWS



Dear Friends,



In this issue, I write from America concerning WWII events here in the States as well as those occurring with the 36th Bomb Squadron in England. During April, in the Spring of 1945; the 36th saw its last operational RCM missions. Having left air operations alongside the RAF 100 Group in January, the 36th missions continued to be that of providing Radar and Radio countermeasures for the 8th Air Force heavy bombardment operations. Operations had now decreased as compared to the month before. March operations were to be the high month for the 36th. During April, the 36th operated the VHF screen to prevent enemy interception of VHF R/T traffic transmitted by bombers during assembly. The screen was put up on 18 days out of the 30 in the month.

Spring Stateside on April 12, 1945, U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died. There in Great Britain, the 36th Squadron personnel at Station 102 Alconbury, having learned of his death in the morning of the next day, joined with personnel from other Units and gathered in front of the flag pole at Station Headquarters to honor the memory of their President and Commander-in-Chief in a Memorial Service.

Listening about the death of the beloved American President on his radio he'd bought from buddy Iredell Hutton, [Sgt Joe Danahy \(seen right\)](#) remembered:

'I particularly remember hearing the news of President Roosevelt's death. It came at night in England, and I tuned from one Station to another across half the world, or so it seemed. I couldn't understand the words (so many different languages), but suddenly, in the midst of a sentence, I would hear Franklin Delano Roosevelt and realised what I was hearing. I heard that news travel across many thousands of miles that night to many, many different countries, and I've never forgotten it. I've never forgotten that old radio.'



For Gremlin 36th Pilot, [Lt James Young, \(seen left\)](#), that day was indeed a most eventful and dark day in his life:

'My toughest day was April 13th, 1945, when we made a blind instrument take-off, went out and flew our allotted time on Station and came back in. We had one little spot there off the Wash in North-East England where we had to approach the coastline at a very specific altitude, airspeed and heading, or if not, the British anti-aircraft would start taking shots at us. So, we had to hit that keyhole just right on the money in all three categories with altitude, speed and heading. As soon as we got inside, then we could just make a left turn, and head back to Alconbury. On this particular day, I had just gotten back over England and turned to the Base and ran into a heavy snowstorm. Well, it didn't really present any problem because I was flying the plane on instruments. The Co-Pilot was sticking his head out the blister and working the de-icer boots to keep the wings from getting covered up with snow and ice and, every once in a while, giving the propeller a shot of de-icer fluid on the props. I guess I had been in that thing a half hour or forty-five minutes. I just took a chance and risked a glance up and out the front of the plane. Just as I looked up, a lightning bolt hit us. I mean, hit us right on the nose. The two .50 caliber machine guns that were sticking out the nose turret – it fused them and drooped them. The right side of the ship

– it broke out all the glass in the Navigator's compartment. The right side of the plane looked like we had had a collision with a fighter or something. It just kind of dented it all in.

After this lightning hit, I asked (Joe) O'Loughlin, my Flight Engineer, to go back to the bomb bay to check to see if he could find any particular problems, because I knew we had lost a lot of our electronics. (However), I could still talk to the crew on intercom. He came back five minutes later and said that everything looked all right. He couldn't find any gas leaks or anything. It looked like we were in fairly decent shape. So, we made it on back into Alconbury and landed.

I went through the usual routine of going through debriefing. I remember Capt. Jones (36th Squadron Intelligence Officer) was taking notes on me, what I had to say. He said: 'Well, Young, did anything unusual happen today?' I said: 'Nothing unusual Capt. Jones, except that I got hit by lightning coming back'. Colonel Hambaugh was standing behind Capt. Jones and he said: 'What did you say, Lt. Young?' I said: 'I got hit by lightning!' So, he turned to Jones and said: 'Let's go look at that airplane'. So, they left and jumped in the Colonel's jeep, took off down the flight line and found the plane I had flown that day. In the meantime, I had finished the debriefing, went on back to the locker room to put up my flight equipment, like the pilot's throat mike, oxygen mask and parachute harness, all the stuff I would normally use when flying. They would always serve us a couple of ounces of either cognac, bourbon or scotch, something like that after we returned from each mission. The medics did that. So, I was sitting back there in a chair having my little drink, when the Colonel came stroking in. He walked up to me and put his arm around my shoulder and said: 'Lieutenant, every day from now on is borrowed time. You should have died in that plane today'. He said that he had never seen anything like that before.

That was the day we heard that President Roosevelt had died. Of course, he died on the 12th of April over here on Thursday. We were six hours ahead over there. By the time the news got over there, we were out on a mission.'

So, then we see, during the Spring of 1945, President Roosevelt had become a wartime casualty ... and it was almost the same for the Gremlin Lt. James Young crew!



Lt James Young & crew

Stephen Hutton

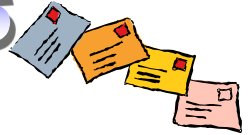
8th Air Force Historical Society Unit Contact

36th Bomb Squadron Radar Counter Measure Unit

Author – *Squadron of Deception*

Web site – www.36rcm.com

LETTERS PAGES



Dearest Janine,

... The population in our town is now around 900 and our local newspaper is closing. So, I thought after all the work you are still doing to follow up on Vic (Vinnell) and Jack (Fisher) my brother, I wanted to put something in the paper on our Remembrance Day (shown below). Many came to say they loved hearing the story and wanted to know more. I know you can't put a book into a small paper, but my family were so pleased with it. I've just finished talking to Audrey (McGovern), my sister, who said she had received a Christmas card from Phil James MBE. Please thank him for me. Thank you for everything you do for us, and please, take good care of yourself.

With loving thoughts,

Gloria Douglas (nee Fisher)

REMEMBERING THE LOSS OF A BROTHER DURING WWII



It's something Gloria Douglas will never forget. 'I still remember the day the telegram came', she said. She was only 15 years old. The message was about her brother, Jack Fisher, who was listed as 'Missing believed killed' while on a secret operation into occupied Europe. It was the night of 26/27 November 1944. Pilot Jack Fisher and fellow Pilot and Navigator/Special Duties Operator, Victor Vinnell, left in their Mosquito DK292 named: 'N for Nina', and never returned from the mission to Munich. He was the only boy with six sisters, and he had ambition.

'He wasn't going to farm, like his Dad. He was going to come back and go to University,' said Gloria. She said it was just as well he had made up his mind to leave the farm since they soon found out it was located on an alkali flat. It was near Shaunavon, Sask, at a village called Instow.

Jack Fisher was a member of a group known as RAF 100 (Bomber Support) Group, based at Foulsham, Norfolk. His story lives on in a book entitled: 'RAF 100 Group – Kindred Spirits' by Janine Harrington, published by Austin Macauley. Janine is the daughter of the woman Victor Vinnell was going to marry the week after his fateful mission into Germany. Gloria was interviewed, and her comments appear in the book. Many years later, this is how the flight was explained.

Mosquito DK292 took off at 02.58hrs on 27 November 1944, accompanying a Bomber Command attack on Munich, Germany. The aircraft was due to return to RAF Ford at 07.00hrs, but nothing was heard of it after take-off. The two crew members were: Pilot Officer Glen Millan Fisher (J88232), Canadian; and Navigator Flight Lieutenant Henry Victor Alexander Vinnell (123505). Information was later received that Mosquito DK292 crashed on the French coast at Vassonville, north of Le Havre, at 6.30am on 27 November 1944. The wreckage was covered by the sea at high tide, but by the direction of the aircraft, it was assumed that it flew into a cliff and exploded on impact. The airframe was completely disintegrated. As the beach was most probably mined, attempts to salvage the wreckage were impracticable. No vehicles could gain access to the beach. The only items recovered were a sock marked NBA Vinnell and an Officer's cap marked P/O Fisher 232. The bodies of the two airmen were never found, and from the description of the aircraft having exploded on impact and the disintegration of the fuselage, it was most probable that the remains

of the crew were washed away by the tide. Consequently, both PO Fisher and Flt/Lt Vinnell were recorded as 'Missing Presumed Dead – Lost at Sea'. Their names recorded on the Runnymede Memorial on Panels 246 and 203 respectively.

Although Jack Fisher is recorded on the Runnymede Memorial, he is today one of 3800 servicemen named after one of the many bodies of water in northern Saskatchewan. The 3800 lakes, rivers and rapids were named after fallen Saskatchewan servicemen by the province in the 1950s and 60s. 'Fisher Creek' was named in Memory of Jack Glen Millan Fisher of Shaunavon, Saskatchewan. Location is 59*17N, 106*30W. The framed certificate Gloria is seen holding in the photograph includes the following: Royal Canadian Air Force Flying Officer, J88232 On Active Service to His Country, Killed in Action, November 27, 1944. Age 21. Le Havre, France.

Paul Boisvert

Gravelbourg Tribune, Monday Nov 6, 2017



NOTE FROM EDITOR:

A phone call from Phil James MBE, Association President, precipitated the following letters and information, starting with my own to the family of John Crotch whose story shared by them was featured in the Winter 2017 magazine:

Hello Andrew, (Crotch)

I've just had a phone call from Phil James, MBE, our Association President and a firm friend, who served with 192 Squadron in wartime and remembers your father, John Crotch, well. However, it came as a surprise to him to learn your father received the Arctic Circle Certificate. Phil asks how he might have done this, as he was due one but having enquired about it, was told it wasn't available ... yet he was on the same raid as your father, as was Stan Forsyth DFC, also 192 Squadron? An addition to this query is whether your father also received the Arctic Circle Medal which he believes went with it? Perhaps you can enlighten us, as there are others who are equally surprised to learn about the Arctic Circle Certificate ...

Janine

Hi Janine,

Thank you for the Winter magazine which was waiting for me on my return from a short break. The article about John Crotch is beautifully presented. Thank you for all your efforts on this, and indeed, the whole magazine. However, unfortunately, none of us can tell you anything about the Arctic Certificate as we have no idea how and when my grandfather received it. All we do know is that it was found in a small glazed wooden frame alongside various RAF papers, uniform, books, etc. The only date on it is that of the *Tirpitz* mission: 02/09/44. There is nothing to indicate when he received it, and nothing appears in his Log Books, signed by W/CMR Donaldson. Is this an 'official' RAF Certificate, or something that 192 Squadron created? We remain unaware of any Arctic Medal, but will double check on this for you. In our article about John, our father/grandfather, we mentioned [Douglas Holmes Moore \(shared following\)](#) who was one of John's crew. I remembered his wartime recollections mentioned a Certificate for the long *Tirpitz* flight/mission and believe refers to the same Certificate. If more comes to light, we'll let you know.

In October, I visited Elvington Air Museum and saw their replica Halifax. *Amazing!* I didn't realise how huge they were. In the same hangar was one of the pictures I sent you showing John's full Squadron + goat mascot with his Halifax: 'Matthews & Co Express Delivery Service'.

Julia Read,

juliaread21@gmail.com

SHARED EXPERIENCES

DOUGLAS HOLMES MOORE



'Matthews & Co Express Delivery Service' with full Squadron + goat mascot

Doug Moore was a Wireless Operator who served in both 76 and 192 Squadrons.

Born Douglas Holmes Moore during 1923 at Horncastle, Lincolnshire, at the outbreak of war, at 16 years old, he was an agricultural worker still living in his birthplace. He was in a reserved occupation which made it difficult to join the Armed Forces. Already in the local ATC, he decided to accept the challenge and apply to the RAF who were recruiting, in urgent need of aircrew.

He reported to RAF Cardington, Bedfordshire, to take his Entry Tests – mathematics, general knowledge, aircraft recognition, etc. Cardington is probably more famous as the place where the 'R' series of airships were built and flown during the 1920s, especially the R101. Doug was successful in passing his tests, and in 1942, started on the path to becoming a Wireless Operator in RAF, Bomber Command.

Doug was ordered to report to RAF Padgate, near Warrington, Cheshire, on 21 April 1942. He collected his kit and documents, and received his Service No: 1620298. His first impression of Padgate was that it was like a prison camp, so thankfully, he only had one week to endure. His picture, right, was taken in April 1942.

Later that month, he was posted on to Blackpool to start Morse and Wireless Training at the Signals School, which turned out to be located on the top floor of Woolworths, a sea-front store. In addition to 'square-bashing' in front of the Cenotaph and outside the Metropole Hotel, trainee aviators also had to march to Celeveleys for rifle firing.

RAF Yatesbury, Wiltshire, was the Radio & Radar School where Doug underwent further signals training, there from July to November 1942.

His next port of call was for point-to-point Wireless Training at RAF Church Lawford, Warwickshire, No. 8 Pilot Advance Flying Unit, and it was here he first met Pilot Instructor John Crotch – a man in his mid-thirties, and an extremely experienced Pilot who would eventually become Doug's 'Skipper'.



On 30 April 1943, Doug was posted to RAF Madley, Hereford, No. 4 Radio School, where he started airborne Wireless Training in Percival Proctors. Then, on 30 June, he moved on to RAF Evanton, Scotland, for Air Gunnery Training using Blackburn Botha aircraft. It was here that Doug received his 'stripes'. 21 September that same year saw him posted to RAF Staverton, Gloucestershire, for daytime Airborne Wireless Training using De-Havilland Dominie aircraft. While on 30 November, RAF Moreton Valence, Gloucestershire, originally opened as RAF Haresfield, designated as a landing ground up until 1941; had been rebuilt and upgraded to be renamed RAF Moreton Valence. It was here Doug underwent night flying training in Avro Ansons, and still recalls the manual undercarriage gear in the Anson taking exactly 180 turns of the crank to raise and lower! Trainee aviators were to catch their first glimpse of a jet aircraft, but told to ignore anything they saw or heard which might be unusual, and never to discuss it with anyone. This was a sure way to get their attention ... and they soon got their first sight and sound of an experimental Gloucester Meteor.

From 24 January to 12 February 1944, Doug was at RAF Harwell ... the name probably better associated with more recent use as the Atomic Energy Authority. During the war, it was home to several Squadrons in training, such as 105, 107 and 226 Squadrons. Doug was here with 15 OTU, training on Wellington Bombers. It was also here that he met aircrew members he would spend the rest of the war with, including John Crotch, now Flying Officer Crotch:

- **Pilot:** Flying Officer Crotch – a solicitor in civilian life
- **Navigator:** F/Lt Dimminger
- **Bomb Aimer:** Vic Worsley – from Bolton
- **Flight Engineer:** Anthony Martin – a Cockney lad
- **Mid-Upper Gunner:** Jack Lysaght – a Cornishman
- **Rear-Gunner:** Tony Leonards – another Cockney lad
- **Wireless Operator:** F/Sgt Doug Moore

The crew spent a short time here on cross-country training, circuits and bumps, bombing and stick bombing, with Doug's Log Book giving a rare insight into the fast pace of training:

RAF Rufforth

5 March–28 April 1944. Newly constructed and opened on 10 June 1942, RAF Rufforth was approximately four miles west of York. A new Unit formed here in March 1943, No. 1663 Heavy Conversion Unit, to train aircrew on the Handley Page Halifax Bomber. Doug and the crew trained here on Halifax Vs.

Their first operation was on the night of 27 April 1944 when they were sent on a diversionary raid to drop 'Window'. The aircraft used on this raid was a Halifax V, DG 297 of 'C' Flight. 'Window', or 'Chaff' as named by the Americans, was a method of 'jamming' German Radar, dropping aluminium strips cut to the wavelength of Radar transmissions, giving false 'returns' and confusing German Radar Operators.

Doug's Log Book shows a range of training activities, three engine landings, one engine flying, beam approaches, steep diving turns, 20,000ft climbing and air-to-air firing.

The crew were now fully trained and ready to transfer to their first operational posting.

Holme on Spalding Moor

From 28 April to August 1944, with 76 Squadron at RAF Holme on Spalding Moor, No. 4 Group; this was an airfield which opened in 1941 as a Bomber Command airfield, and became home to 76 and 101 Squadrons, then later to 458 and 460 RAAF Squadrons.

With one sortie under their belts, the crew began a few days of familiarisation and practice before starting full operations on 9 May in 'B' Flight. Doug's Flight Log shows details of all the sorties, but entries for 1-6 June 1944, tell a fascinating story of their part in support of 'D-Day'.

1 June 1944: take off at 23.05 in Halifax III 'MP-M'. Target – Cherbourg. Flight duration: 4hrs 5min.

2 June 1944: take off at 22.20 in Halifax III 'MP-K'. Target – railway marshalling yard at Trappes, near Paris. Flight duration: 4hrs 56mins.

5/6 June: take off at 02.56 in Halifax III 'MP-K'. Target – Mont Fleury Battery. Doug makes a note in his Flight Log: *'10 minutes before landings started – 6th June'*. Flight duration: 4hrs 25mins.

6 June 44: take off at 22.15 in Halifax III 'MP-K'. Target – St. Lo. Flight duration: 5hrs 10mins.

By the time the crew completed their tour with 76 Squadron, they have 'notched up' 13 sorties. An interesting detail noted in the Log is that F/O Crotch became F/Lt Crotch from 31 May 1944.

RAF Foulsham

Late August 1944, the entire crew transferred to 192 Squadron at RAF Foulsham, Norfolk, remaining together until the end of the war. The existence and purpose of 192 Squadron, with code letters DT, remained a secret until the mid-1970s when details emerged about German wartime radio navigation methods, and the existence of our Radio Countermeasures Unit.

Meanwhile, on 28 August 1944, Doug and his crew began practising cross-country flights and Special Duties training. Their aircraft was Halifax III 'DT V' (shown right), and was used by them more than any other throughout the war.

Five days later, on 27 August, they took part in their first sortie in their new Squadron, Sortie No. 14 - a Special Duty Op dropping 'Window'.

One mission they undertook was to the Arctic Circle, searching for enemy Radio traffic, which took a staggering 14 hours, with only quick re-fuelling stops in Scotland. **NOTE:** It is said that Doug proudly displayed a Certificate issued by the Squadron to commemorate this marathon flight!!



Further sorties followed ... the total number reaching 39, far exceeding the expectation for heavy bomber crews over enemy territory. Doug's reasoning behind this high number of sorties without casualties is explained by having a Pilot with the experience and maturity of John Crotch, who became Squadron Leader Crotch on 28 August 1944. However, it is well-documented that RAF Foulsham suffered higher losses of Radio countermeasure aircrew than any other Station.

With the end of the war in Europe, the crew were sent to former enemy bases such as Shleswig, sometimes carrying high-ranking Service personnel. While at the end of July 45, Doug received a Commendation from the ACC in recognition of his double tour with 39 sorties. Final duties in the RAF were on glider-towing from Shobden, his final entry in his Log being a passenger on 10 Sept.

Doug would like to have remained in the RAF and made a career of it, especially with the up and coming development in Radio and Radar technology. However, this option was not conducive to family life in post-war years, so he settled in North Staffordshire and spent the next 35 years working at the Michelin factory until his retirement.

www.northstaffs1940s.com

END OF AN ERA

Bomber Command Association Veterans Final Luncheon by Stuart Borlase



Graham Pullyn, Nelson Branch BC Organiser; Rex Waters & Stuart Borlase

Friday 17 November 2017, in the back streets of the City of Nelson, at the top of the South Island of New Zealand, saw the last gathering of the Remaining Few, local Veterans of Bomber Command getting together for the very last time.

Together with accompanying families, friends, the local Member of Parliament, Deputy Mayor, the Secretary of the New Zealand Bomber Command Association, a serving Officer from the RNZAF and representatives from the Nelson Returned Services Association; they sat down to some good food enjoyed over scintillating conversation in very pleasant surroundings.

Their number is down to five, only four being able to make it to the Luncheon. Back when these events first began in 1993, around 20 Servicemen would attend. This one, a milestone 50th ... was to be their last.



In the photograph, from left to right, can be seen our own Association member: [Mr John Beeching](#), who served with both 627 & 169 Squadrons, finishing his Service flying Mosquitoes out of RAF Great Massingham, under RAF 100 Group; [Mr David Knight](#), Navigator with 75 Squadron (NZ), flying Lancasters out of Mepal, Cambridgeshire; [Mr Geoff Pattenden](#), Leading Aircraftsman (Engines) with 128 Squadron maintaining Mosquitoes; [Mr Rex Waters](#), a Lancaster Skipper serving with 9 Squadron, based in Bardney, Lincolnshire.

John Beeching said that '*natural attrition*' had reduced the number of Veterans over the years, but the camaraderie between them had not faded or diminished. '*We never seem to run out of things to talk about ... it is a perennial subject that keeps on being perennial.*' He told the Reporter of the local paper that the Mosquito '*had probably the worst seat ever devised. The seat went up and down, but the arm-rest stayed still – there was less space in the cockpit of a Mosquito than there was in a Morris Minor*'.

A photo of John in conversation with [Graham Pullyn](#), the Nelson Bomber Command Association Organiser is shown below. Graham has recently retired from 25 years of Military and Commercial flying, where he finished after a number of years as a Q300 Captain with Air New Zealand.



[David Knight](#) had just turned 93 and was the youngest of those attending. He said: '*the nature of Air Operations gave little opportunity to forge close bonds during the war. It's not like the Army where you make friends because you're living with them over a long period. With Aircrew, you're doing your scheduled activities – Crew Members came and went, and of course, many of them perished*'.

[Geoff Pattenden](#), an Engine Fitter, worked on Mosquitoes, maintaining their Rolls Royce Merlins. Much of the servicing and minor repairs was done out in the open, in all weathers. He is a quietly-spoken man who tells a wonderful story about how he had a chance meeting with a young lady one day when off duty, and offered to walk her home. But in doing so, he missed the last bus, which meant he had to walk several miles in the dark back to the Base! She later became Mrs Pattenden.

[Rex Waters](#), 96, a Lancaster Skipper serving with 9 Squadron, flew on at least one of the *Tirpitz* raids. 9 Squadron often flew together on ops with 617. Returning from an operation on another occasion, he was forced to make an emergency landing because flak damage to the hydraulics meant the undercarriage would not come down. I remember him telling me that the noise as he touched down was horrendous, with all four props bending over and the aircraft screeching and sliding along on its belly to a stop. Everyone got out safely. He became a Dairy Farmer after the war.

[Mr Buzz Spilman](#), who was unable to make it to the Luncheon, was also a Lancaster Skipper, but with 75 (NZ) Squadron, based in Mepal, Cambridgeshire. He took part on the raid on Dresden and I recall him saying that the operation took place on a beautiful clear day. '*We bombed, did the Job, then went home*', he remarked. '*The rest of the whole sorry saga is History, but the reverberations that were flamed*



into a media storm by Joseph Goebbels back on that February day in 1945, continues to be felt right down to this present day, where Bomber Command Veterans are still tainted by the brush of condemnation and vitriol.' Buzz enjoyed a long career as a Top-Dressing Pilot after the war, working for many years in Australia spreading fertiliser and spraying newly developing crops, such as cotton. He later moved to New Zealand where he continued agricultural flying.



Graham Pullyn, the Event Organiser, whose father also flew with 75 Squadron as a Bomb Aimer on Stirlings and passed away in 1999, spoke from his heart, drawing on knowledge of his own family history: *'The sacrifice of the Command went largely unrecognised following the war, but has attracted growing attention in recent years'*. Speaking with a voice streaked with emotion, addressing the Veterans, he said:

'We owe you and your colleagues a huge debt of gratitude for the sacrifice and contribution you have made, to allow us to live in free societies today. I doubt we will ever fully appreciate how much we owe you and your late colleagues. Our grateful thanks, and let's celebrate you over the meal we are about to enjoy.'

Acknowledgements:

Quotes from Graham Pullyn and Tim O'Connell in his piece for The Nelson Evening Mail.
Photos by Stuart Borlase.



Hello Janine,

May I recall that I shall be speaking at the Ipswich Transport Historical Society Meeting on 25 April. My subject will be 100 Group, with particular attention to the airfields in Norfolk.

Further details about timing and location to anyone with an interest in attending, are available from me direct.

Meanwhile, I hope and trust you are keeping well enough in this harsh weather ...

With best wishes,

John

John Stubbington, Wing Commander
Tel: 01420-562722

NEWS FROM OULTON

by Chris Lambert



RAF Oulton Building

Hello All, and a Happy New Year to you,

I am writing with the sad news that an old RAF Oulton building near the pond, which post-war had been used as an old rubber store and was visible from the road, has been destroyed by Harrolds Farm in order to build a new Office on the site. This, despite the fact that we, as a village and Parish Council, strongly objected to it.

The Farm omitted to say it was an old RAF building when they submitted their plans to Broadland Planning Office in the first instance. On realising this, we advised the Planning Office, and they agreed the building should be retained.

The Farm then agreed to re-submit their plans, and by moving their proposed new office back slightly, they would not need to take the RAF building down.

However, just before Christmas, they decided to bulldoze it down, and as you can imagine, we were horrified!

We have sent letters to them, and I have sent the attached letter to Christopher Harrold, the father and Senior Director (<mailto:c.harrold@efharrold.com>) and his two sons n.harrold@efharrold.com and j.harrold@efharrold.com. If you feel the same as we, the Oulton villagers, we would urge you to make your feelings known. I am still trying to calm down even as I write this as we are all very angry. This is part of our heritage and it has been destroyed.

Letter sent to Farm Owners

Up to 1,000 personnel at any one time from all over the world were once stationed here at Oulton during the Second World War. This was not just their work place, but their home. 306 lost their lives whilst serving here.

Some of those who survived have occasionally returned to Oulton to remember those days and the friends they knew and lost. We ourselves have met and come to know many of them over the years, and know how much Oulton means to them. Today, their relatives return every year to walk in the footsteps of their Grandfather, Father, or Uncle, who they perhaps never knew, but by

coming here somehow makes them feel close to them. They can see, touch and feel the past, and for a moment in time be with them.

What is left of the old airfield provides that physical reminder for them and the part their family played.

We cannot live in the past forever, but that does not mean we stop remembering or honouring those who gave their lives for us here in Oulton. There is not a time scale.

We as a village have always understood and recognised our part in that link and the importance of protecting what is left as symbols of remembrance to those who served and gave their all. That is why we are so angry and shocked by the actions of the Farm in blatantly and unnecessarily destroying the old RAF building against our known wishes, and showing such a betrayal of our trust.

You know how we feel. How can you possibly then expect our support in the future when you have deceived us and gone against an agreement to re-submit your office plans and exclude the RAF building from demolition. You have shown total disrespect for the Parish Council and the village and what that building represents to so many.

I understand the need for you to develop, progress, and secure your business' future, but this is not acceptable.

We put up with the constant movement of increasingly larger agricultural vehicles up and down the street seven days a week, from early morning to late at night during the harvest seasons, and this is how you repay us!

I do not, for one moment, think you will read this, or have any regret or remorse for your actions, and I do not expect a reply.



Dear Janine,

I have been given your email address by Mike Hillier who discovered me on the Ancestry Website. He can fill you in with any further details.

Apparently, my father, Leslie Butt, was in this RAF 100 Group. I know very little about him as he was killed two months before I was born. But his last years in the RAF sound very interesting, hence my contacting you as Mike suggested. Can you give me any further information, and could I buy your book?

Unfortunately, neither myself or my family can attend the Service on 11 November, but you will all be in our thoughts.

I look forward to hearing from you,
Kind regards,

Lesley Hews (nee Butt)
jandlhews@ntlworld.com

NOTE FROM EDITOR: I would welcome hearing from anyone to whom this name is familiar, to offer this family further information about one of their own.

THE GLEN MILLER ORCHESTRA

I am writing to offer your members the special opportunity of a fantastic 1940's Picnic Concert, with an additional bonus.

On **Sunday 5 August, from 1.30pm**, we are bringing the world-famous Glenn Miller Orchestra to Cromer Hall. The Afternoon Concert will celebrate how this music defines a decade, and epitomises the contribution made by the people of Norfolk to the efforts of the USAAF during WWII. The Orchestra will perform a string of wartime chart-toppers and '40s hits, including *'In the Mood'*, *'American Patrol'*, and *'Moonlight Serenade'* as played at many Village Hall Dances during wartime.

The Glen Miller Orchestra will be under the direction of legendary TV Band Leader Ray McVay. Guest Singers include: *'The Moonlight Serenaders Vocal Group'*, and *'The Uptown Hall Gang'* – an outstanding Dixieland Group – who will all perform those well-known and much-loved songs of the era. As the UK's most renowned Big Band, they will swing you back in time, authentically playing Glenn Miller's own arrangements of favourite wartime chart-toppers and Big Band music from the 1950s through to today. They will have you Jitterbugging from the start!!

The Orchestra will perform the second half of the Concert in World War II uniforms of the U.S. Army Air Force. There can be no better way to spend a summer Sunday afternoon. So, pack up your spam sandwiches, dust off your dancing shoes, and join us!

Visitors can also enjoy wandering around Cromer Hall's new Classic Motor Show.

This year, we welcome classic car enthusiasts from all over the UK, displaying rare and loved classics that span more than 70 years. The Cromer Hall Classic Car Show is supported by The North Norfolk Classic Vehicle Club and Military Vehicle Club. We will be raising money for The East Anglian Air Ambulance.

We hugely respect the work our various Memorial Groups, Museums, and Associations do in keeping the memory of those days alive. So, we have tailored a package whereby your Group can benefit with £5 for every ticket purchased. The standard ticket price, if booked before 2 April, is £25, thereafter it will be £30. If you make a Group Booking, we will charge you £20 per ticket, with your Group keeping the remaining £5 for your own funds.

As an additional bonus, we are also able to offer you a space to advertise your Group and display memorabilia if you wish to do so.

Coach parking is available for larger Groups.

If you'd like to place a booking for members, or learn more about the Concert, please contact:

Jo Cottingham

Cromer Hall Concerts info@cromerhallconcerts.com via freshdesk.com

For further information about Cromer Hall Events, including this Concert, visit:

<http://www.cromerhallconcerts.com/glenn-miller-orchestra/>

Venue Address: Cromer Hall, 11 Holt Road, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 9JN

Ticket Bookings: 0333 666 3366

ROYAL AIR FORCE 100th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

1918 - 2018



100 years ago, King George V authorised the creation of a new branch of the British Military. It was formed in response to the growing role of air power in warfare, created by merging Aviation branches of the Royal Navy and British Army together into one single Service:

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE



RAF MOD UK

The use of aviation in warfare evolved rapidly during the First World War. What started off as a tool used solely for reconnaissance, quickly changed and adapted into new roles. Fighter aircraft were developed to shoot down enemy reconnaissance aircraft, while other aircraft were adapted to drop bombs on the enemy.

Across both sides, Aviation branches of the Allies and Central Powers swelled and expanded, quickly employing new technologies. Yet warfare didn't just impact war in the trenches. It also brought war to the Home Front.

Prior to the First World War, the German Military started a Zeppelin-building programme, equipping both its Army and Navy with airships. These airships were designed to conduct reconnaissance and for carrying out bombing attacks.

In 1915, the German Military began using their Zeppelins to conduct raids against the British Isles. These raids were designed to destroy strategic British industry, weakening the ability of the Allies to fight the war. Britain was forced to divert elements of the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service back to the UK as protection from the threat of enemy air raids.

In 1917, Germany deployed long-range Gotha Aircraft, capable of carrying long-range raids against the British Isles. In response to these raids and lobbying by Viscount French, South African General

Jan Smuts was authorised by the Imperial War Cabinet to conduct a review of the British Air Services ... a Report that later became known as '*The Smuts Report*'. Smuts recommended that air should be treated as a separate force, separate from the Royal Navy and the Army. Instead, a new Force should be created, solely responsible for conducting warfare in the air. It was following this Report that Parliament debated and passed the Air Force (Constitution) Act 1917, which was given Royal Assent by King George V on 29 November 1917.

A few months later, on 1 April 1918, the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps were merged together to create something new – the world's first independent Air Force ...

The Royal Air Force!

<https://www.raf.mod.uk/raf100/news/the-world-s-first-independent-air-force/>
Shared for all those without internet access

Top single aircraft photographs taken by Stuart Borlase

* * * *

With 2018 being the Centenary year of the Royal Air Force, perhaps the story of RAF Swannington presents a timely reminder and remembrance of the R.A.F.'s first 100 years, with a chance to look to what the next 100 years might bring.

Mike Hillier has shared what took place on 11 November 2017 at Haveringland, home to RAF Swannington in wartime, including a brief history leading up to that extraordinary and historic event. Further history and stories of those who were there at the time, can be found on my personal blog for those with internet access:

www.janineharrington.blogspot.com

There is also a collection of 12 Norfolk Airfield Booklets by Janine Harrington available, updating those originally written by Len Bartram, one entitled: *RAF Swannington*, detailing the history of the two Squadrons based at RAF Swannington – 85 and 157 Squadron.

Meanwhile, our Reunion Speaker: Flt/Lt Pauline Petch, CO of the ATC Squadron in Kings Lynn, with two of her Cadets; will offer a glimpse into the future in relation to the Royal Air Force. She and her Cadets are already actively involved in building and placing large fibreglass aircraft on airfields around Norfolk, including all those which came under RAF 100 Group. More than a Memorial, there are a total of 40 airfields involved in becoming a Pathway of Remembrance which visitors can follow, stopping at each point to read about the history of what went on there.

Thus, I am hopeful that in 2018 we continue to have an active role in covering past, present and future of The Royal Air Force, keeping alive the memory of all who served under RAF 100 Group through our Association which, since May last year, continues to develop and grow, having taken on a growing number of new members worldwide, spreading across first, second and third generations.

**LONG MAY THE LEGACY OF RAF 100 GROUP AND THOSE
WHO SERVED WITH THEM LIVE ON!**

RAF SWANNINGTON

(Haveringland) REMEMBERED

by Mike Hillier



A very brief History

The 16 August 1947 saw the closure and decommissioning of the airfield known as RAF Swannington, one of many RAF airfields based in Norfolk during World War Two operating under the command of RAF 100 Group, Bomber Command. Before becoming fully operational on 28 August 1944, it was originally to be called RAF Haveringland. However, at the intervention of Prime Minister Churchill, the name changed from Haveringland to Swannington, despite the land on which it was built being the villages of Haveringland and Brandiston. The reason for the change? Churchill's Aunt lived on the Haveringland Estate, a place where he would regularly visit. He didn't want the enemy to associate his family visits with the very place on which an airfield was built.

A large part of the site on which RAF Swannington was built was formerly the ancestral home of Lord de Ramsey and his family, who lived on the Haveringland Hall Estate. However, the Hall had been acquired by the Ministry of War, and was used as the Officers' Mess.

First to be based at RAF Swannington was 85 Squadron, which came from West Malling. They were followed shortly after by 157 Squadron from RAF Valley. Both Squadrons were equipped with De Havilland Mosquito aircraft, which supported bombing operations as part of RAF 100 Group.

On quite a few occasions, the airfield was strafed by enemy aircraft, and one such event was recently shared by a local resident who, at the time, was working at the Hall. She was shaking crumbs from a tablecloth when an enemy fighter came over, firing bullets all around her. Luckily, she was uninjured and lived to tell the tale! On the night of 16/17 March 1945, Luftwaffe Intruder Bombers bombed the airfield in what proved to be one of the very last attacks on a British airfield during the war.

On 27 June 1945, 85 Squadron moved to RAF Castle Camps, and shortly after that same year, on 16 August, 157 Squadron disbanded. RAF Swannington had by now passed over to RAF Maintenance Command to become the Headquarters of No. 274 Maintenance Unit. Those

Mosquito aircraft not serviceable or which could not be sold to foreign powers, were taken to sites nearby and burned. Certainly, not a fitting end for an aircraft that took such an important role in bringing peace to Europe!

2017

However, all that happened over 70 years ago. Most of the concrete runways and dispersals that once felt the roar of Merlins have been torn up to make way for agriculture, while what remains is cracked and patched with grass and moss. The mighty Hall which was once home to the Officers' Mess is now demolished, making way to accommodate Park Homes and holiday cabins. All that is left from that era is the Parish Church of St Peter, which stood in wartime, beside one of the aircraft dispersals.



The Church still stands today, looking like a ship in a sea of fields.



As the Church is all that is left of a once thriving airfield bustling with bodies and life, it became the focal point where those who wanted to remember could congregate, allowing their minds to drift back in time.

It was at the beginning of 2017, that the idea was mooted – to create what was to be, not just a period of remembrance, but to provide an opportunity for a living memory of those who served at RAF Swannington, and those who flew from there but sadly never returned home.

With most of the work carried out by the Squadrons being classified as '*Top Secret*', and much of what remains under a 100 Year Rule today, it took many hours of research to find information about those who served at the Station, and those who didn't return. Once that list was created, the next challenge was to search for living relatives, to inform them of the plan for a Remembrance and Commemoration Service, to take place at the very Church which had sat beside the aircraft dispersal.

Dozens of emails were sent out, inviting personnel to represent various Groups and Associations linked with the airfield in wartime, in the hope they would not just attend the service, but also lay wreaths and parade their colours.

11 November 2017



When the day arrived, and people gathered for the service, it was realised that numbers far exceeded everyone's expectations! Approximately 300 people packed into the small Parish Church which had been well-prepared for the occasion. In addition to families of those who served at RAF Swannington, also attending were:

- [the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk as Her Majesty's Representative in Norfolk,](#)
- [Corporal Philip Zandona of the Australian Defence Force,](#)
- [Major Ryan Schiffner from the American Base at Lakenheath.](#)

Lt Col. Tom Moore, Commander of the 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron, 8th Air Force, had attended the RAF 100 Group Association Reunion in May 2017, but unable to fly over again from the States, [Major Ryan Schiffner](#) kindly agreed to represent those of the USAF who served alongside RAF 100 Group in wartime.



Standard Bearers also attended from:

- Royal Air Forces Association,
- 100 Group Association,
- Royal British Legion,
- Royal Engineers Association,
- Royal Naval Association,
- Air Training Corps Squadrons from Norwich and Kings Lynn,
- Norfolk Constabulary,
- Norfolk Fire & Rescue Services,
- East of England Ambulance Service,

Wreaths were laid by relatives of those who died in Service at RAF Swannington, joined by Cadets from two Air Training Corps Squadrons representing 85 and 157 Squadrons who placed wreaths in their honour.

Two pupils in Year 6 of the local Primary School in Cawston, spoke movingly the words of the Kohima Epitaph:

*'When You Go Home,
Tell Them of Us and Say,
For Their Tomorrow,
We gave Our Today.'*

(John Maxwell Edmonds (1875-1958) is credited as author of these lines, and in nearly all instances the origin is cited as being the *Kohima Epitaph*. However, it is worth noting the words pre-date the inscription on the WWII Memorial, although it is agreed they are some of the most moving words ever written about veterans - stating what it is that each veteran gave to his fellow citizens.)

The children also recited Robert Laurence Binyon's famous words from his poem '*For the Fallen*':

*'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.'*

It created a powerful and purposeful message to all who listened to these words, which somehow had more meaning and poignancy spoken as they were on this occasion by young children.

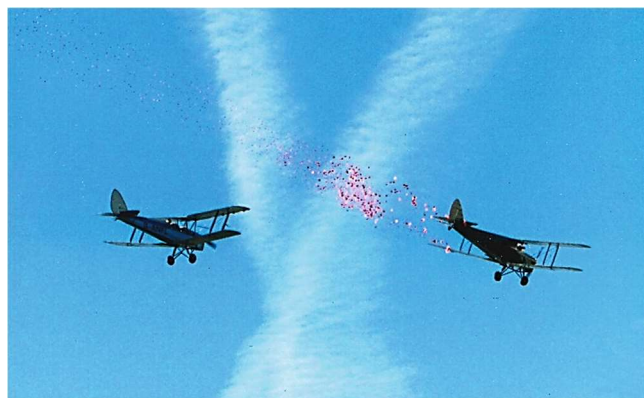
In commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the closure of RAF Swannington airfield in 1947 trees were planted to create an Avenue of Remembrance leading to the Church of St Peter. Two of these trees were planted by relatives in memory of Aircrew and Ground Crew of the two Squadrons in which loved ones served, and for the many supporting Ground Staff in wartime. [Mrs Pauline Shepherd, shown right](#), planted a Tree of Remembrance for 157. She is the sister of the late Pilot Officer Harry 'Junior' Smith who served in that Squadron; killed in action along with his Pilot, Pilot Officer Peter William Fry on 29 September 1944. Harry was aged 20, and Peter, 25. The 'Boys' are buried side by side in Oosterhesselen Cemetery, Geesbrug, in The Netherlands.



A further tree was planted by [Cpl Zandona of the Australian Defence Force](#), shown below, in memory of Australian aircrew members who flew with 157 Squadron:



A Flypast of De Havilland bi-planes dropped poppies as they flew over the Church, in salute of the fallen. These poppies were specially made by local Primary School children on which they wrote the names of those from surrounding villages who never returned home.



The following Monday morning, the farmer in whose field the poppies had dropped, took up the crop and turned the poppies into the soil as a fitting gesture of remembrance.

There are many names to thank for their help and support in making that day such a special one. I would not like to list them for fear of missing someone out. However, they know who they are, and my heartfelt thanks go to all for their dedication in making this day happen. So much went on that day that to share it all here would probably take most of the magazine. However, it is hoped that what is written will give readers an insight into what a special day it turned out to be.

May 2018

On the afternoon of [Sunday 20 May 2018](#), during the RAF 100 Group Association Reunion weekend, the people of Haveringland would like to invite members to meet with them at the Parish Church of St Peter. For those who didn't manage to get to the Service in November last year to see the wonderful display of photographs, stories, and information about RAF Swannington, this would be your chance to view them. There will, of course, be the obligatory home-made cakes to tempt you in, and afterwards, our aviator friends will entertain you with an aerial display of their De Havilland Bi-Planes. We look forward very much to meeting you then.

Mike Hillier, Haveringland, Norfolk

ATTENDANCE

The Deputy Lieutenant of Norfolk, Mrs. Adel MacNicol DL*
Air Commodore Jack Broughton (Rtd). Ex 85 Sqn * Ex DL (Liverpool)
Group Captain Ed Durham (Rtd). Ex 85 Sqn CO
Flight Lieutenant Pauline Petch RAFVR OC, 42F Sqn ATC (Parade Marshal)
Flying Officer Karen Ryan. RAFVR OC, 231 Sqn ATC
Sergeant Chris Murchison. Royal Air Force*
Corporal Phillip Zandona: Royal Australian Defence Force, on behalf of Australian High Commission*
Mr Roger Dobson, Chairman RAF 100 Group Association*
Mr Howard Rolfe, RAFA Coningsby Standard Bearer
Ian Moreland, Organiser/Treasurer 85 Squadron Association*
Miss Beth Cook, Royal British Legion
Mr Trevor Bevan Royal British Legion*
Mr Gus Honeywood, Royal Naval Association
Representative of Royal Naval Association
S/M Mike Wilkinson, Royal Naval Association*
CPSO Stephen Bridges, Norfolk Constabulary*
Mr Mark Brewster, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Services*
TBC: East of England Ambulance Service
Mr Ray Lambert, Royal Engineers Association*
Mr Paul Beauchamp, son of the late Wing Commander K.H.P. Beauchamp, CO of 157 Sqn
Cadets from 42F Squadron Air Training Corps**
Cadets from 231 Squadron Air Training Corps**
Mrs Pauline Shepherd and Family, sister of the Late Flying Officer Harry Shepherd, 157 Sqn
Mr Luke Brooker and Family, relatives of the Late Flt Lt Gregory Bernard Brooker, 157 Sqn
TBC: Mrs Joanne Gordon, relative of the Late Flt Lt Gregory Bernard Brooker, 157 Sqn (*flew in from USA*)
Mr David Jeal and Family, relatives of the Late Sgt John Arthur Leigh, 157 Sqn
Mr Mike Leigh and Family, relatives of the Late Sgt John Arthur Leigh, 157 Sqn*
Mr Rob Leigh and Family, relatives of the Late Sgt John Arthur Leigh, 157 Sqn *
Mr Robin Nash and Family, relatives of Late Flying Officer Thomas James Michael Nash, 157 Sqn
Mr Pat Lower and Family, relatives of the Late Pilot Officer Arthur Reginald Grimstone, 85 Sqn
Mr & Mrs Keith & Daphne Nichols, relatives of Flt Lt Thomas William Redfern, 85 Sqn
Mrs Carol Gunnell & Family, daughter of LAC Albert (Barney) Barnard & LACW Pat Barnard (nee Peck)
Mr Martin Bowman, Aviation Author

* denotes Wreath Layers

Fly Past

Dave Reid (DH Hornet Moth) and Ian Robins (DH Tiger Moth). Felthorpe Flying Group

Last Post/Reveille

Chris Brown, Kings Lynn

Mike Hillier has also arranged for a Poppy Wreath and Poppy Spray to be laid at the graves of Flt Lt Brooker in Ohlsdorf, and PO Hamilton in Durnbach cemeteries, Germany, on behalf of families.

Hi Janine,

I have been researching four RAF Swannington crew members who were in transit, flying an Airspeed Oxford aircraft (No. HM 763). It appears they were 'bounced' by an American Pilot flying a P51 Mustang in a dummy attack, and sadly they lost control of their aircraft which crashed to the ground near Shropham, Norfolk, killing all four. They were all from 157 Squadron at Swannington. The airmen were:

- Flying Officer Thomas James Michael Nash, aged 26,
- Pilot Officer James Cunningham Porteous, aged 21,
- Flight Sergeant Frederick Fraser, aged 30,
- Warrant Officer Peter Alfred Merrill, aged 23.

Their aircraft was piloted by Flying Officer Nash. Since finding out about the incident, I have now been in contact with a living relative of his, who joined us at the Service on 11 November.

Mike Hillier



Dear Janine,

I went to the very moving Memorial Service at Haveringland Church yesterday – my great uncle Arthur Reginald Grimstone, known as 'Grimmy', was one of those remembered. Six of the family were there and we met Mike Hillier. Now I am looking for a copy of your booklet 'RAF Swannington, A Brief History'. Do you have any copies please?

I am sending you a poem about Uncle Reg which you might like to include in the Association magazine. It's about his childhood, not the war, told in the voice of my stepfather Frank Grimstone, who greatly loved and looked up to his elder brother. It will be in a collection of my poems: 'Sandpiper' to be published in July 2018 by Two Rivers Press, although there are no war poems:

We Thought the World of Him

*When my elder brother won his scholarship
to Wilson's Grammar in 1930
he required a Medical – I've told you this.
They said his tonsils had to come out.
Father disagreed, took him to Doctor Morgan
who wrote to the School his objection.
Reg went, tonsils intact, came top of the class.
Dad had been right,
Reg was bright:
a chess player, cricket Captain.
We thought the world of him!*

Arthur Reginald Grimstone, Radio Navigator, 85 Squadron, RAF Swannington, was shot down over Belgium by friendly fire, 14 March 1945.

Thank you,

John Froy

johnfroy3@gmail.com

CHARLES BLACKLEY HAMILTON DFC

With kind permission of the Hamilton Family

Charles Blackley Hamilton of Girvan, Ayrshire, joined the RAF around June 1940 as an Aircraft Hand. He volunteered for aircrew duties and probably went on a short Radar Course at Yatesbury. In early September 1940, Hamilton joined 219 Squadron at Catterick as a Radar Operator. In October 1943, he was serving as a Warrant Officer with 85 Squadron at West Malling. In the late evening of the 15th October, he was flying with Flying Officer H. B. Thomas when they shot down a Ju88 which crashed at St Nicholas-at-Wade, Kent.

Commissioned in February 1944, Hamilton was awarded the DFC (*gazetted 26 September 1944*). He then assisted in the destruction of four enemy aircraft. Hamilton was still with 85 Squadron when he was killed on 14 April 1945. Flying Mosquito NFXXX NT494, he took off from RAF Swannington. But in the early hours of the 14th, was shot down by a night-fighter off the north coast of Germany. The details remain unclear. But it seems the Pilot, F/Lt H. B. Thomas was wounded and taken as a prisoner of war until liberated in Kiel; while Hamilton was killed, aged 23.

Flying Officer Charles Blackley Hamilton's body was recovered and buried in Hamburg Cemetery, Ohlsdorf, Germany.

In September last year, 2017, a spray of poppies was placed on Charles' grave by Mrs Evelyn Brown. Evelyn lives in Norwich, but was visiting her mother in Germany, near to the place where Charles is buried. On hearing of this Commemoration at Haveringland, she kindly offered to lay poppies on behalf of the Hamilton Family in Scotland and New Zealand.



The following are her words:

'The helpful Gardener who found the grave for us does a wonderful job keeping the graves looking their best and told me that she really enjoyed her job. She certainly takes pride in what she is doing and deserves recognition for her good work. Our brave lads are well looked after and remembered.'

The picture shows the grave at Ohlsdorf Military Cemetery of Flying Officer Charles Blackley Hamilton DFC showing the poppies in front of it.

The two ladies in the photograph are (*right*) the mother of Evelyn Brown from Norwich, who lives in Germany and the German CWGC Worker who tends to Charles' grave (*left*).



LAC ALFRED JOSEPH MANSFIELD

by Yvonne Reed

Prior to the war, my Dad worked as an Apprentice Electrician. Dad joined the RAF and was stationed as Ground Crew on plane maintenance, which probably kept him away from the firing line, although some of the stories he told about *'nipping over to France to bodge the planes up enough to fly them home'* was a bit hair-raising!

Dad was stationed at several Bases in the UK, one Base was Stony Cross, and I believe he was posted to a Polish Base in Norfolk. The only memory from his stories of that Base were that he and his fellow airmen just couldn't eat the raw and pickled fish, demanding *'proper food!'*



He always seemed to be in *'the wrong place at the right time'*. One story he told was when he was posted to Canada. They welcomed him with open arms, saying: *'At last, a Limey Electrician!'* But Dad, at that time, had never worked on a British plane!! Whilst in Canada, he told the story about walking back to his Billet (*in or near Banff?*) with a mate one afternoon. Up ahead, came the sound of German voices ... they really thought the invasion had come, and dived for cover, only to hear someone say *'CUT!'* They then realised there was a film being made, with Paul Munie, a film star of the day. He said he'd never felt so relieved!

Dad had some narrow squeaks, and was shipped back to England. One story he told was being driven to a hospital in Ely when a German plane came over. The ambulance he was strapped into swerved, went over into a ditch, while he was left hanging upside-down in the back of the vehicle. He said that, as he had Jaundice, he was rather hazy about exactly how long he remained there, but the *'strapping in webbing'* left bad bruises which took weeks to go. Unfortunately, both the driver and his nurse were killed.

Prior to going into hospital, he had arranged to get married to my mother. They had to let him out of the hospital to marry at St Andrews Church, Chelsea, on 23 December 1944. He then had to go straight back to hospital ... *some honeymoon, Mum!!*

Jewellery with Unique History Goes on Display at Eden Camp Museum, Malton



Unique pieces of jewellery, crafted during the Second World War by an RAF Crewman, have gone on display. The jewellery, made from Perspex from a salvaged aeroplane windscreen during the war, can now be seen at the Eden Camp Museum, near Malton, in North Yorkshire.

LAC Alfred Mansfield, a member of Ground Crew with No. 85 Squadron, made the two pieces – a heart pendant and a necklace of five leaves – for his sweetheart, Margaret 'Peggy' Wilkins.

He had met Peggy at the age of seven. They married in the Winter of 1944. Peggy wore the heart pendant at their wedding.

The Museum came into possession of the pieces after the couple's daughter, Yvonne Reid, who was born in 1945, sold the jewellery on the Channel 4 television show *'Four Rooms'*, which was filmed a

number of years ago, and aired again recently. On the Show, Yvonne said she hoped the pieces would be donated to a Museum, to be cared for and used in a way which would ensure the memory of her parents endured. She said she hoped for £60 for the pieces, but admitted: *'What is a piece of shattered windscreen worth?'*

Yvonne shared how her father died of cancer, and her mother died with Dementia. Any money made from the sale would go to charities helping with these two respective diseases.

The heart pendant features within it an RAF wing. Yvonne said her father took off one of his RAF buttons, filed it down, and set it into the heart. Dealer, Celia Sawyer, ended up purchasing the pieces for £150. The other three Dealers on the Show, Andrew Lamberty, Gordon Watson, and Jeff Salmon, all made donations to Yvonne's chosen charities of £100 each.

'It's been wonderful', Yvonne said. *'I didn't expect this at all.'* She donated the money to the charities, and it was agreed the necklaces be displayed at Eden Camp, fulfilling Yvonne's wish that her parents' story lives on.

Eden Camp Museum Archivist, Jonny Pye, said that families often approach the Museum requesting they safeguard medals or other special heirlooms. *'We feel quite honoured in that'*, he said, adding that the appeal of pieces like this was the personal, human stories behind them. *'At the end of the day, we like to concentrate on the individual stories'*.

The heart pendant and leaf necklace are on display in the Museum alongside a wedding photograph of Alfred and Peggy.

Yvonne & Paul Reed



PAT & ALBERT BARNARD

157 Squadron, RAF Swannington



Pat Peck (*seen right*) was from Gorleston, Norfolk. Albert Barnard came from London. They both joined the RAF and found themselves posted to RAF Swannington when it opened in 1944. The war lasted just for another year, but their union lasted a lifetime.

Albert revisited what remains of the camp at Swannington in December 2002, and shared memories of events which happened there during 1944 and 1945.



Albert was 20 years old when he joined the RAF in 1942. He qualified as a top craftsman Carpenter 1, Group 1, having in addition studied aerodynamics, hydraulics and general maintenance – ideally suited to working on the airframe of the Mossie, the *'Wooden Wonder'*. He was posted to 157 Squadron at RAF Predannack, Cornwall, only to find when he got there that the Squadron had moved to RAF Valley in Wales.

When he caught up with them, he was delegated not to hangar duties, but instead to A Flight to carry out normal daily inspections, and night shifts to despatch aircraft on their missions, to receive them back, and refuel them. It was on one of these occasions that he acted in a way I am sure would today be recognised with a Bravery Award. Albert described the incident:

'After marshalling the kite into the Dispersal Bay nearest the A Flight Office/Crew Room, and having positioned the petrol browser in front of the aircraft, I smelt burning. I traced this to beneath the Navigator's seat, calling to the airman already on the main plane unscrewing the petrol tank caps to get to the Office and report the fire; while I re-started the tractor to move the petrol browser to safety.

On returning, I saw the oil browser on the grass in the same bay where the aircraft was alight, and moved it to safety. By then, the Mossie was burning fiercely, its cannon shells exploding in the direction of other aircraft in the same bay. I hitched on the towing cable from the tractor to the main under-carriage wheels, and getting the airman on duty to steer the kite via the long bar attached to the tail wheel, we removed it to safety towards the Control Tower area. The aircraft burned to ashes.'

With the launching of V1 'Doodlebugs' from the other side of the English Channel, there was a serious threat to London and the South East. One of the few planes capable of the speed necessary to catch them was the 'Wooden Wonder'. In July and August 1944, both 157 and 85 Squadrons were temporarily transferred from Swannington to RAF West Malling in Kent. Albert throws light on this period:

'When the V1s started to come over the Channel, the Mossies had some success in exploding them. 157 A & B Flights, and I believe 85 Squadron were sent to West Malling. The aircraft were modified to use a higher octane petrol and, when refuelling, gloves had to be worn. The manifolds were removed, and stub exhausts fitted to give extra speed. To the best of my knowledge, the Pilots were permitted to pull the booster tit for a specified number of seconds to get that extra bit of speed.

It was from one of these missions that Sqn/L Matthews of A Flight returned to Base having exploded a V1. He had dived onto it, and it was a question of shooting at it and going through the resulting fireball, or peeling off and letting it go on. The result was that every bit of dope paint, lettering and roundels were scorched off his Mossie, including the fabric on the rudder. The canopy and windscreen were blackened with soot, except where the wipers were used.'

There were, of course, lighter moments. The boys would get to Cawston for a beer or two and occasionally travel to Norwich where 'The Bell' was a favourite haunt.

The Church Army Tea Wagon would pull up on the perimeter in front of the maintenance hangar. Here, the various RAF personnel would queue up for their tea and wads. Albert would get in the wagon to help serve. One young lady, an assistant from the parachute section (having become redundant from the fabric section), on several occasions kept her fingers in the handle of the mug as she handed it to Albert. They would have a good laugh, and soon started courting.

Albert had met his Pat!

Albert recalls:

'For the celebrations of Victory in Europe, the acceptance hangar was emptied, and a bar was set up, extended to the whole length of one side. A good portion of the concrete floor on the other side was treated with aircraft dope paint to make a dancing surface which was surrounded with trellis

work and bunting, and there was a huge bonfire away from the hangar. It was a happy night. I can recall a chap called 'Pinky' returning next morning with a bucket to salvage any beer left in the barrels!'

Albert remembers other fun moments:

'I can remember playing for RAF Swannington Hockey Team. I also remember converting two drop tanks with a sail to mess about on the Lakes (Haveringland Hall). The shed that housed the sluice gate on the side of the roadway between the two lakes (which had different water levels) was used for snogging! After VE Day, a weekly Sports Day was introduced, and a troop carrier used to go to Caister-on-Sea for a day trip with a huge inflatable dinghy lashed to the roof. Pat and I had a whale of a time!'



Pat and Albert married on 1 December 1945 (pictured left). Pat was then discharged from the Service (shown right in 'civvy street'). But Albert was moved on to at least five different airfields before being discharged in 1947. They set up home in London.

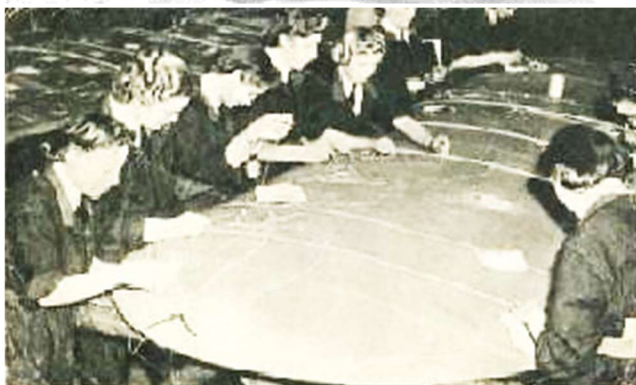


When Pat died, on 1 December 2002 – precisely 57 years to the day of their marriage – Albert and a family group fulfilled Pat's wish by spreading her ashes within yards of where they met in 1944 ... under a tree on a patch of grass adjacent to the old site of the hangar at Haveringland.

Seen right:

Members of A Flight,
157 Sqdn.

Albert is in front of
'Mossie', extreme left



Seen left:

Fabric Training Course
WRAF learning to
patch bullet holes on
a Wellington wing.

MOSQUITOS & MERLINS

MM677: Gone, but not Forgotten

by Martin Rouse

Growing up in the 1970s, a highlight of the weekends as a young boy were the many black and white Second World War films shown in the afternoons. Particular favourites of mine being '633 Squadron', 'Mosquito Squadron', and 'The Dambusters'.

Building model aircraft kits was one of my hobbies at the time, my collection including the De Havilland Mosquito. This was an aircraft which, even at my young age, I recognised as one which had great elegance. A machine designed to fly as fast as possible, its smooth sleek outline without any unnecessary lumps, bumps, or add-ons to slow it down. As has been said many times, if something looks right, then it generally is right!

Living in Swindon, Wiltshire, the workshop town of the Great Western Railway, there was an inevitability that I would have an interest in railways, which would lead me into a career in which I remain today. My interest in aircraft, therefore, took a bit of a back seat for some years. However, what did retain my attention was whenever I heard the unmistakable sound of a Rolls Royce Merlin engine. There are few sounds which stir the emotions in the way that the roar of a Merlin does!

Early last year, whilst working in Lincolnshire, my interest in Mosquitos and Merlins was about to get re-awakened. Whilst idling away some time on the Internet in the Hotel, I saw an advertisement for a Merlin from a World War Two Mosquito for sale in the Derby area. Derby is somewhere midway between where I was working and home. I could go and have a look at it! But, to buy a Merlin? This was a crazy idea! A few hours of trying to reconcile with myself the reasons for and against and a phone call to my partner Tina to explain my crazy idea followed. Anyway, I did call in to see it on my way home, bought it, and on Friday 28 April 2017, Merlin 25, Serial No. 150969 arrived at my home ...

Mosquito MM677

This aircraft was built at the De Havilland factory in Leavesden, Hertfordshire, being completed for service on 22 May 1944. A Night Fighter NFXIX fitted with two Merlin 25 engines and Airborne Interception Radar equipment built to contract No. 1576/SAS/C.23(a), it was one of 25 NFXIX Mosquitos built at Leavesden in May 1944. Delivery to 157 Squadron at RAF Swannington followed and the aircraft was given the Squadron Code: RS-U.

Merlin 150969 A439943

Merlin 25 with Single stage, two speed super-charger. Reverse flow cooling. Produced at the Rolls Royce factory in Hillington, Glasgow. Build commenced on 20 January 1944, and the engine was despatched one week later, on 27 January. The early history of this engine is not known, but it was returned to Rolls Royce at Bilborough for overhaul in October 1944, being despatched to 25 MU Hartlebury following the rebuild.

At some time between October 1944 and April 1945, this engine was fitted to the Port wing of MM677, coupled to a Nash Kelvinator propeller.

Flight Sergeant John Maurice Moore

Service No: 573817

Son of William Robinson Moore and Ruth Hannah Moore, of Bassenthwaite, Cumbria, John trained at Virden, Manitoba, Canada, on Cessna Cranes, before progressing to Airspeed Oxfords, Avro Anson, Bristol Blenheims and Bristol Beaufighters. At 51 OTU Twinwoods Farm, he was teamed up with his Navigator, Sergeant T. J. Westoby. In February 1945, he commenced Mosquito training. By 12 April 1945, he had amassed 526 flying hours, of which 41 were on Mosquitos.

Sergeant Trevor John Hunter Westoby

Service No: 1806456

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Son of Donovan Lord Westoby and his wife Gertrude Margaret of 'St Ives', Maypole Road, East Grinstead, and later of Burton's Green, Essex. Joined the RAF in 1943 and trained in Canada.

5 APRIL 1945

Bad weather forced an early cancellation of operations at RAF Swannington, so the opportunity was taken for a football match in the afternoon, Ground Crew v Air Crew, which Ground Crew won 4-0. A Squadron party followed in the evening.

Two crews arrived from 1692 BSTU –

F/Lt J. W. Mawe

F/Sgt R. D. Keefe

F/Sgt J. M. Moore

Sgt T. J. Westoby

10 APRIL 1945

At 20:48hrs, with Belgian Pilot F/O Vermeulen at the controls and F/Sgt Hersh navigating, MM677 took off from RAF Swannington on a high-level escort mission to Dessau. They were accompanied two minutes later by RS-T, NT382. Both aircraft returned safely at 01:30 and 01:17 respectively. This was to be the last operational flight of MM677.

12 APRIL 1945

In the morning, there was a long lecture for Navigators by F/Lt D. Bunch DFC.

At 14:26hrs, F/Sgt J. M. Moore and Sgt T. J. Westoby took off from RAF Swannington in MM677 on an authorised night-flying test in company with another Mosquito of 157 Squadron: NT379, RS-Q piloted by F/Sgt K. W. Crane with F/Lt R. J. V. Smythe as his Navigator. The two aircraft climbed to a height of 11,800ft and flew on a southerly course with MM677 approximately 250yds in front of NT379.

At 14:56hrs, MM677 carried out a 'peel off' to Port, the following crew immediately lost sight of them and gave chase. When they next saw MM677 two or three seconds later, it was approximately 2-3,000ft below them. They had the impression it was on fire. It then entered cloud and they lost sight of it. They descended through the cloud and saw the wreckage.

F/Sgt J. M. Moore and Sgt T. J. Westoby both died in the crash, their bodies being found in the wreckage. They were both just 22 years old and had only been with 157 Squadron for one week.

The official Report into the accident states as its conclusion:

'The primary cause of this accident appears to have been over-stressing the aircraft. Contributory factors may have been the flying with a full fuselage fuel tank and flying a Mk XIX Mosquito without the 5lb inertia weight in the elevator control system.'

It is a sobering indication that, by this late stage in the war, people had become so hardened and accustomed to tragedies of conflict, that the remains of the aircraft were rapidly buried in the ground or unceremoniously removed to allow the ploughing to continue that was in progress when the aircraft crashed.

THE REMAINS OF MM677

MM677 lay buried in the Norfolk soil for the next four decades until they were re-discovered and subsequently excavated by members of the East Anglian Research Group. I have been unable so far to find out much information regarding the recovery of the wreckage or the locations of any other parts of MM677 recovered from the crash site.



*Port Side, immediately following excavation
(photo copyright: EARG)*

Over the years, the wet Norfolk soil has found its way inside the engine, filling the inlet manifolds and cylinder heads. Many of the steel parts have severely corroded, while the majority of moving parts have seized solid. To prevent the engine from deteriorating further, I am gradually and carefully dismantling it, removing as much of the mud and corrosion as I can. The engine will then be re-assembled using as many of the original parts as is possible. It will unfortunately never run again, as to do so would require the replacement of so many components that it would eliminate the history of the engine.

Alongside the restoration of the engine, I have been carrying out research into the aircraft and its crew, their Squadrons and operations – a fascinating and open-ended process, leading me to new and interesting discoveries, places and people. Most importantly however, it is ensuring that the history and sacrifice of these brave men and women is not forgotten or lost in the passing of time, and is preserved for future generations.

Martin Rouse: martin.rouse1966@gmx.com

The engine impacted the ground on its Starboard side, causing significant damage. The Port side was relatively undamaged as can be seen from the picture (left). Also visible is the 'saxophone' exhaust system fitted to night fighter Mosquitos to reduce flames from the exhaust, which would otherwise make them visible to enemy aircraft. The supercharger and carburettor were ripped from the engine in the impact.



*Starboard Side, showing impact damage,
(engine partly dismantled for restoration)*

We have been delighted with the response to the (Haveringland) Remembrance Service in November 2017, and hope it was equalling memorable for you and your family.

There was so much going on that you may not have seen the wonderful watercolour which Rory Kent painted, especially for us to mark the occasion.



His original picture was bought but we still have a limited number of signed prints for sale. These would make a unique souvenir of the day and be ideal as a gift for someone interested in aviation.

They can be bought framed in either black with white mount, or white with cream mount [53cm x 43cm] or simply mounted.

***Framed:** £25 [collection or local delivery only]*

***Unframed but with mount:** £10 +£5 p&p*

All the proceeds from the sales are going towards the continued upkeep of the "Church in the Fields" which has stood here for so long.

If you would like to buy one, please email djbald@outlook.com or phone 01603 754250 to arrange payment and delivery.

With best wishes,

*Deborah Boldero
St Peter's Church Action Group.*

HERITAGE ARTS TRAIL

Commemorating & Remembering 100 Years of the Royal Air Force in conjunction with Norfolk Airfields

RESEARCH



This is a Project which began with visits to the Heritage Centre at RAF Marham. With their help, 40 airfields were identified on which to focus, while it was decided that research needed to be on a continuous basis. Photographs and documents were discussed and worked through to establish the usage of each airfield and enable airfield information sheets to be designed. Further visits to the Centre as well as visits to different airfields assisted with the research, and Talks by Flt/Lt Tony Hall helped bring more substance to the Project, with a very informative evening on the Monuments of War, looking specifically at Norfolk.

MOULDING

Studio days at the start of the school holidays began by helping staff with the moulding of aircraft. Soon after arrival, an initial Briefing was given, and work in progress in the Studio explained. Different types of medium were shown and photographs of end Projects, as well as videos of them being made were shown throughout the day. Cadets assisted with the aircraft-making process, and helped get the silica mould ready for the fibreglass and resin to be added. As the next stage of the aircraft moulding began (after drying and setting) Cadets shadowed staff to learn skill processes.



YOUTH INVOLVEMENT



PowerPoint presentations were designed and given to Primary Schools situated in areas of the chosen airfields. Then aircraft, once received, were distributed to Schools and Air Cadet Squadrons to be decorated. Once returned for display, they will be erected with History Boards designed by Cadets in conjunction with Marham Royal Air Force. Pictured above are Bacton School children with the Spitfire before painting. Each School has been given information relating to the importance of 'their' airfield to help them understand the time-line of the RAF in the last 100 years.

www.heritageartstrail.co.uk (Further information about this unique Project will be shared by Flt Lt Pauline Petch and two of her Cadets, at our main Saturday evening Reunion Dinner in May.)

WAR & PEACE

Sent in by Major Raphael Ramos DFC, 36 Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force

A pilot glanced outside his cockpit ... *and froze!*

He blinked hard and looked again, hoping upon hope it was just a mirage.

But his co-pilot was staring at the same horrible vision.

'My God! This is a nightmare!!' the co-pilot said.

'He's going to destroy us!!', the pilot agreed.

The two men were looking at a gray German Messerschmitt fighter hovering just three feet off their wingtip. It was five days before Christmas 1943. The fighter had closed in on their crippled American B-17 bomber for the kill.



Brown's crippled B-17 stalked by Stigler's Me-109

The B-17 Pilot, Charles Brown, was a 21-year-old West Virginia farm boy on his first combat mission. His bomber had been shot to pieces by swarming fighters, and his plane was alone, struggling to stay in the skies over Germany. Half his crew were wounded. The Tail Gunner was dead, his blood frozen in icicles over the machine guns.

But when Brown and his co-pilot, Spencer *'Pinky'* Luke, looked at the fighter pilot again, something strange happened. The German didn't pull the trigger. He stared back at the bomber in amazement ... *and respect!* Instead of pressing the attack, he nodded at Brown ... *and saluted!*

What happened next was one of the most remarkable acts of chivalry recorded during World War Two.

Luftwaffe Major Franz Stigler pressed his hand over the rosary he kept in his flight jacket. He couldn't shoot. It would be murder. Stigler wasn't just motivated by vengeance that day. He also lived by a code. He could trace his family's ancestry to Knights in 16th Century Europe. He had once studied to be a Priest. A German Pilot who spared the enemy, though, risked death in Nazi Germany. If someone reported him, he would be executed. Yet, Stigler could also hear the voice of his Commanding Officer who once told him: *'You follow the rules of war for you ... not your enemy. You fight by rules to keep your humanity.'*



Alone with the crippled bomber, Stigler changed his mission. He nodded at the American Pilot and began flying in formation, so German anti-aircraft gunners on the ground wouldn't shoot down the slow-moving bomber. (The Luftwaffe had B-17s of its own, shot down and rebuilt for secret missions and training.) Stigler escorted the bomber over the North Sea and took one last look at the American Pilot. Then he saluted him, peeled his fighter away, and returned to Germany.

'Good Luck!' Stigler said to himself. 'You're in God's Hands now.'

Franz Stigler didn't think the big B-17 could make it back to England and wondered for years what happened to the American Pilot and crew he encountered in combat.

As he watched the German fighter peel away that December day, 2nd Lt Charles Brown wasn't thinking of the philosophical connection between enemies. He was thinking of survival. He flew his crippled plane, filled with wounded, back to his Base in England, and landed with one of four engines knocked out, one failing, and barely any fuel left. After his bomber came to a stop, he leaned back in his chair and put a hand over a pocket Bible he kept in his flight jacket. Then he sat in silence.

Brown flew more missions before the war ended. Life moved on. He got married, had two daughters, supervised foreign aid for the U.S. State Department during the Vietnam War, and eventually retired to Florida.

Late in life, though, the encounter with the German Pilot began to gnaw at him. He started having nightmares, but in his dream, there would be no act of mercy. He would awaken just before his bomber crashed. Brown therefore took on a new mission. He had to find that German Pilot. Who was he? Why did he save his life? He scoured Military Archives in the U.S. and England. He attended a Pilots' Reunion and shared his story. He finally placed an Ad in a German Newsletter for former Luftwaffe Pilots, retelling the story, asking if anyone knew the Pilot.

On January 18, 1990, Brown received a letter. He opened it and read:

'Dear Charles,

All these years I wondered what happened to that B-17. Did she make it home? Did her crew survive their wounds? To hear of your survival has filled me with indescribable joy ...'

It was Stigler.

He had left Germany after the war and moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1953. He became a prosperous businessman. Now retired, Stigler told Brown that he would be in Florida come Summer and *'it sure would be nice to talk about our encounter'*. Brown was so excited, though, that he couldn't wait to see Stigler. He called Directory Assistance for Vancouver and asked whether there was a number for a Franz Stigler. He dialled the number, and Stigler picked up.

'My God! It's you!' Brown shouted as tears ran down his cheeks.

Brown had to do more. He wrote a letter to Stigler in which he said:

'To say THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, on behalf of my surviving crew members and their families appears totally inadequate.'

The two Pilots would meet again, but this time in person, in the lobby of a Florida Hotel. One of Brown's friends was there to record the Summer reunion. Both men looked like retired

businessmen. They were plump, sporting neat ties and formal shirts. They fell into each other's arms and wept and laughed. They talked about their encounter in a light, jovial tone.



Charles Brown, with wife Jackie (L), and Franz Stigler, with wife Hiya (R)

The mood then changed. Someone asked Stigler what he thought about Brown. Stigler sighed, his square jaw tightened. He began to fight back tears before he said in heavily accented English:

'I love you, Charlie'.

Stigler had lost his brother, his friends, and his country. He was virtually exiled by his countrymen after the war. There were 28,000 Pilots who fought for the German Air Force. Only 1,200 survived. The war cost him everything. Charlie Brown was the only good thing to come out of World War II for Franz. It was the one thing he could be proud of. The meeting helped Brown as well, says his oldest daughter, Dawn Warner.



Brown and Stigler became pals. They would take fishing trips together. They would fly cross-country to each other's homes, and take road trips to share their story at Schools and Veteran Reunions. Their wives, Jackie Brown and Hiya Stigler, became friends.

They met as enemies, but Franz Stigler and Charles Brown ended up buddies.

Brown's daughter says her father would worry about Stigler's health and constantly check in on him. *'It wasn't just for show', she says. 'They really did feel for each other. They talked about once a week.'* As his friendship with Stigler deepened, something else happened to her father, Warner says, *'The nightmares went away'.*

Brown had written a letter of thanks to Stigler, but one day he showed the extent of his gratitude. He organised a Reunion of his surviving crew members along with their extended families. He invited Stigler as a Guest of Honor.

During the Reunion, a video was played showing all the faces of the people that now lived – children, grandchildren, relatives – because of Stigler's act of chivalry. Stigler watched the film from his Seat of Honor.

'Everybody was crying, not just him,' Warner says.

Stigler and Brown died within months of each other in 2008. Stigler was 92, and Brown was 87. They had started off as enemies, became friends, and then something so much more.

After he died, Warner was searching through Brown's library when she came across a book on German fighter jets. Stigler had given the book to Brown. Both were country boys who loved to read about planes. Warner opened the book, and saw the inscription Stigler had written to Brown:

'In 1940, I lost my only brother as a night fighter. On the 20th of December, four days before Christmas, I had the chance to save a B-17 from her destruction, a plane so badly damaged it was a wonder that she was still flying. The Pilot, Charlie Brown, is for me as precious as my brother was. Thanks Charlie.

Your brother, Franz'

NOTE FROM EDITOR:

A Timely Story, and I defy anyone to read it without feeling the emotion behind it!

Thank you for sending it in, my dear friend and Kindred Spirit ... Rafi,

Major Raphael Ramos, DFC, 36th Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force

Stuart Borlase, on reading this, shares further insight and information:

'This story comes from the book 'A Higher Call' written by Adam Markos, taking him eight years to complete. It is a wonderful story and one of the best, warmest, honest, exhilarating, disturbing and enlightening books on the air war during WW2 I have read. The painting above showing the bomber and the Me109 off its port wing, was painted by John Shaw and the 250-print run was sold out. Each is signed by both Pilots, both of whom passed away in 2008.

Interestingly, by the end of the war, Franz was flying Me262s and went with other ranking Luftwaffe Officers to confront Goering about the war ... the fact that they had effectively lost and blamed stupid decision-making by him. They expected to be arrested. But Goering actually apologised, admitting they were right!!! Very interesting ... from a man who was there!

If you want a very good read, grab a copy!

<http://www.valorstudios.com/Franz-Stigler-Charlie-Brown.htm>

The book 'A Higher Call' is very worthy of a read ... and it's true! The experiences of two enemies who, because of one situation during war, became as close as Brothers decades later in peacetime. Franz relates another situation of a returning night fighter, a ME110, landing quickly with the flash of runway lights to assist on Finals because there was an Intruder Mosquito in the circuit! The German aircraft was being actively hunted, even in the darkness of a blackout airfield. What happens next ...?? Well, you'd better get the book and read it for yourselves. But it made me think of the escapades of Sir George Stewart DFC and the kind of adventures he recounted ...

Stuart

mosquitofbv1@gmail.com



THE GATES NOW CLOSED

*The gates now closed on an era long
And minds drift on to friends now gone,
Of memories lived in other times
Of olden songs and distant rhymes.*

*The thoughts of runways long and clean
Now holed, broken, patched with green
Of hangars tall and kept with pride
No longer used, so bare inside.*

*The planes whose engines used to roar
That once took off, return no more.
Where oft' they taxied, to fly away
Now looked upon another day.*

*Of men and women who would strive
In days gone by, to keep alive
The heart to beat for all to see,
Gone forever, but not the memory.*

*To look across that field so bare
To wish, to think, to say a prayer;
For to forget them would be so wrong.
The heart may have stopped, but the soul lives on.*

Copyright © 2017 Mike Hillier

In Memory of RAF Swannington,
and all who served there and other Stations under RAF 100 Group

Dates for your Diary

2018 REUNION : Friday 18 – Sunday 20 May

2019 REUNION : Friday 17 – Sunday 19 May

Be sure to put these important dates in your diary.

PLEASE NOTE

Annual RAF 100 Group Association Membership Subscriptions are OVERDUE!!

- **RAF's 100th Anniversary on 1 April 2018, with Centenary the following year**

The RAF Benevolent Fund is the leading Welfare Charity for the RAF. Ahead of the 100th Anniversary in April, they are on the hunt to find untold stories of RAF Service to share with the RAF Family as a whole. If you have a story you would like to share ...

CONTACT: My RAF Story, RAF Benevolent Fund, 67 Portland Place, London W1B 1AR

Email: hello@rafbf.org.uk

- **SUMMER 2018 MAGAZINE**

Please can I have all material for inclusion in the Summer edition at your earliest convenience as The Reunion brings its own challenges. Your input is always welcome!

- **ADVANCE WARNING**

I have received news from Gary Thompson of McAully Flying Group about a [Stone Remembrance Marker being placed at Little Snoring Airfield](#) by the Airfields of Britain Trust, in memory of all who were based there and flew operations during World War Two. It may be placed to one side of the private access road leading to St Andrews Church where more people would have sight of it. Negotiations remain in progress, and I will keep members informed. They would very much welcome RAF 100 Group Association being a part of the ceremony when the stone is put in place ... which should now be during 2018.

- **REUNION 2017 DVDs**

Stuart Borlase, based in Australia, continues to feverishly work on the creation of Reunion 2017 DVDs from film footage he implemented, taken of our historic and memorable Reunion in May 2017 by a professional team. If you were unable to attend, this is your opportunity to experience our coming together in the comfort of your own home. For those who came to Norfolk and were a part of this phenomenal experience, you already know it truly was something very special, celebrating the historic coming together of RAF 100 Group and 36th Bomb Squadron veterans, joined by the present-day 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron, serving under the 8th Air Force.

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

Created by Janine Harrington

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