



Confound & Destroy

The magazine of RAF 100 Group Association

Summer  *2020*



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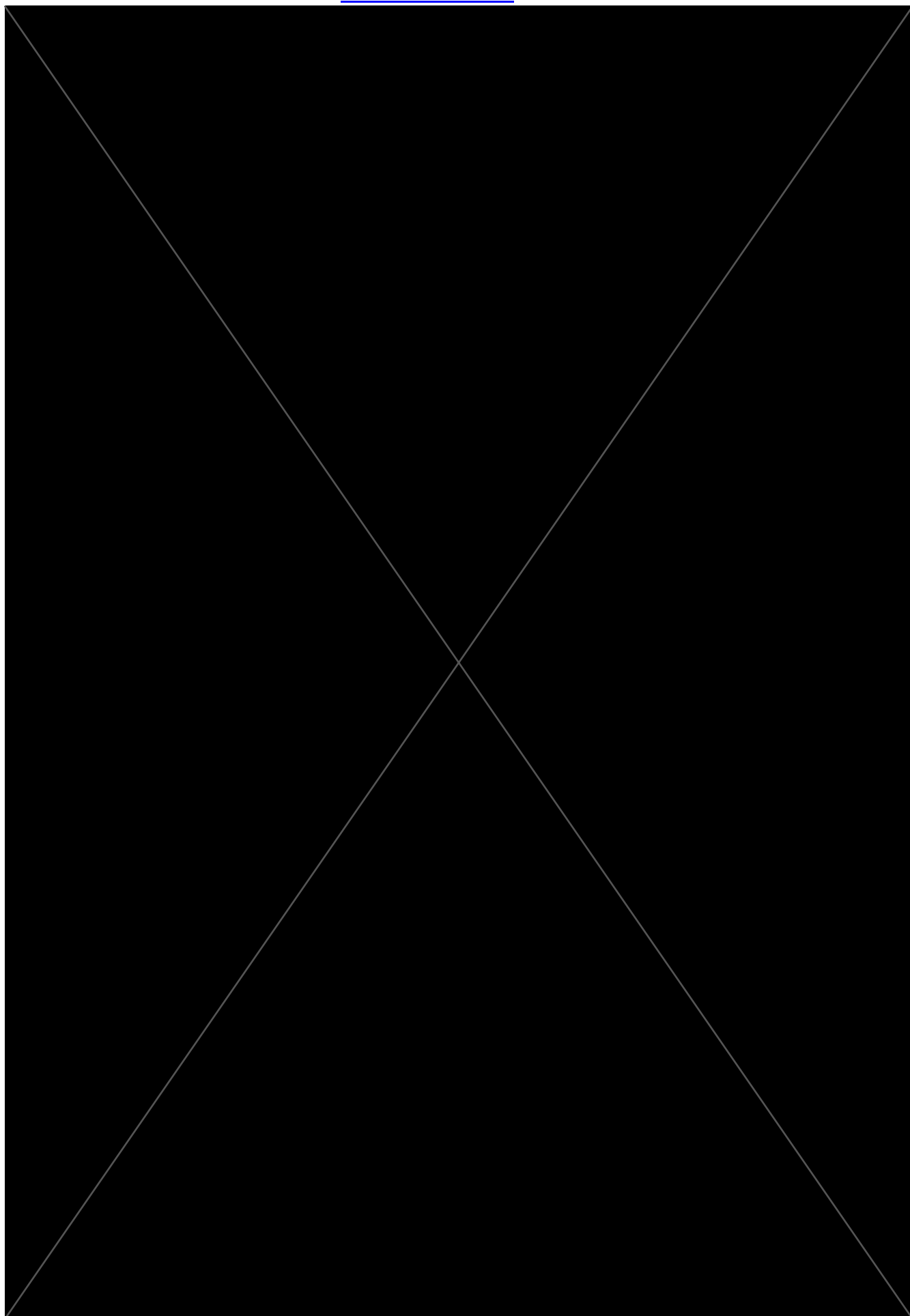
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RAF 100 Group Association

COMMITTEE



Editor's Page



Dearest Kindred Spirits,

We are living in extraordinary times, and my heart goes out to every one of you. New words and phrases are being added to the English language all the time such as 'Social Distancing', 'Covid-19', with stark warnings to wash your hands, not to go outside unless your journey is essential. At the same time, communities are coming together. As Spring moves into Summer, we can reflect on first months of the year, knowing every day has made history.

We particularly need to think of those of us who have lost loved ones:

- **Jeanne Arnett, wife of Rex Arnett a Wireless Operator in 223 Squadron** in wartime; died in August 2019. Rex, thank you for your letters and sharing precious memories, offering a glimpse of this precious lady who remains in your heart.
- **Joe Sayers** died in January this year, a lovely man who, together with his wife Mary, Stuart and I came to know well, visiting them at their home. Joe served in 192 Squadron as a Leading Aircraftman. Mary, we will always remember the warm welcome & times shared.
- **Squadron Leader David Butler DFC** died on 2 February. In wartime, he served at North Creake in 171 Squadron, completing 25 Ops and a 2nd Tour (30 Ops). Dear Edna, please know that you remain in our thoughts and prayers.
- **Betty Johnson, wife of Ron Johnson a Flt/Lt Navigator with 223 Squadron** and a member of our Association since its beginnings; also died in February. Betty and I shared wonderful telephone conversations over many years. She is also missed by Robb, their son.
- **Evelyn Bartram, wife of Len Bartram**, were both involved in the forming of this Association with Martin Staunton and sister Eileen Boorman. Evelyn died on 4 April. A lovely lady, Stuart & I will always remember our time with her, and particularly shared walks around Stody Gardens where she and Len worked for over 40 years.
- **Frank Elliott**, a Warrant Officer in 192 Squadron during wartime, is to our knowledge sadly the only one of our Veterans to die because of the Coronavirus on 16 April after a stay in hospital. Paul, our thoughts and prayers remain with you and your family.

On a joyous note, **J. P. Ostler** who served as a Navigator with the U.S. 36th Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force, reached his 100th milestone on April 28th. J. P. we join in wishing you a very **HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY** and wish you well over the coming year. We also welcome **Nigel Morter** as a member of the Association Committee, representing North Creake where he lives with Claire in the Control Tower, and offer Bed & Breakfast as well as a peak through Time.

Finally, you will notice our magazine has a new look. This is due to efforts of members who helped bring it together. My heartfelt thanks go to **Stuart Borlase in Australia** for accepting the challenge, finding himself on a steep learning curve. Thanks also to my dear Angels of the North **Linda & Arthur Reid in Scotland** for taking over the huge task of enveloping, labelling, and posting it off worldwide. I have been seriously ill over past months. Terminal Cancer with the Coronavirus is not a good combination! Jo my daughter stayed with me for almost six weeks. Now battling Chronic Exhaustion, I have only a few hours each day to write and answer post. So, my thanks to these precious Kindred Spirits for their help, love, and support, and to all those of you who continue to send gifts and flowers. Always so welcome!

*Love & Hugs,
Janine xx*

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Co-Editor's Page

Hello Everyone,



Janine is right, we are all living in extraordinary times. In fact, these times are unprecedented in any history. Our Prime Minister, Mr. Scott Morrison, made the statement recently that we are in fact at war! A war on two fronts - health, with an unseen, silent enemy that seeks to kill, and fiscally, with an enemy seeking to destroy our way of life and ruin us economically. There is talk of a "new normal", whatever form or shape that will take. Either way, it is going to take time for things to get back to a resemblance of life as we knew it

It is very sad too, to lose members of our Veteran family. We lost Joe and David over the course of one weekend. David was 99 and used to joke about waiting to go and just be thrown over the fence - their rear garden backed on to the local cemetery! He was half joking, but I just couldn't laugh. Now we have two new Widows, Edna and Mary. *You are not forgotten either.* And now Rex's wife Jeannie has gone, Betty Johnson, Evelyn Bartram and Frank ('Doc') Elliot. Those we have left are very special, some I have not yet met and there a few that I have not had the opportunity even to speak to.

We, those in New Zealand and Australia, have just commemorated ANZAC Day, an almost sacred National Day, where the sacrifices made not just by the combined Australian New Zealand Army Corps in the Gallipoli Campaign in 1914, but of all those who have served and given all - in all subsequent Wars.

But this year, the Commemorations were very different. Gone were the thousands who would gather in Dawn services at Cenotaphs all over our countries. Instead, all were cancelled except for national broadcasts from major centres, attended by only a handful of Dignitaries and Armed Forces personnel. For the first time citizens of both nations were encouraged to stand quietly in the gathering dawn at the driveways of their homes at 6.00am, with candles or torches to commemorate, to remember and show their support in one more tangible way.



In Nelson New Zealand, there was another something special. Because of 'lockdowns' still being in place to varying degrees and Commemorative Services and parades cancelled, there were two who moved around to a number of key spots in the City, to recite *'The Ode of Remembrance'* and play *'The Last Post'*, including at the front driveway of our own Mr John Beeching, 96, who served with RAF 100 Group out of Great Massingham (seen left).

Two photos courtesy of Stuff NZ/ Nelson Mail

Stuart (Secretary Support)

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

Life is full of surprises. Today on the eve of VE Day I was expecting to be travelling South to a ceremony at Newhaven Fort. I was to represent our Association at an event marking the loss of a 100 Group Mosquito which crashed into the South Downs. Probably one of the last aircraft to be lost in the European theatre of operations. Instead of the South of England, I am at home in Cumbria in the ninth week of our self-isolation. In the absence of an Annual General Meeting and a successor, for the time being, I continue to serve as your Chair.

I take Lock Down in the current pandemic very seriously; possibly because of my experience of the 1957 Asian flu pandemic and my family's experience of Spanish flu in 1918 and 1919. I had just started Secondary School in September 1957 when Asian flu reached us. My father, Flight Lieutenant Richard Dobson, late of 192 Squadron, was working as a pharmacist in the family business. In extraordinarily little time every one of his staff succumbed to the disease – he was literally the last man standing. Spanish flu was much more lethal. Only one of my Grandmother's five brothers survived the First War. He was too young to serve and tragically died of Spanish flu in 1919. One of his older brothers was in the Navy. In October 1918 William Coldwell was a medical attendant on a cruiser HMS Talbot which was lying at the South African Naval base Simonstown.



On the 2nd October 1918, 26 sailors were admitted to hospital. The next day another 26 were transferred to hospital and 53 were in the Sick Bay. On the third day, half the 440 strong crew were incapacitated. On the seventh day the first fatalities occurred and the daily Log records periodic funeral parties ashore for the next seven weeks.

History repeats itself. Last month the giant nuclear aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt took refuge at

Guam following an outbreak of the virus. It is reported that 4,000 of the crew have been quarantined ashore, with 955 confirmed as having the virus.

In my opinion, in severity, the Coronavirus pandemic is comparable to Spanish flu which in 1918 - 1919 caused 226,000 deaths in the UK.

Today we have the advantage of modern medicine, the NHS, and 100 years of learning about quarantine and social separation which, if applied rigorously, should keep most of us safe until a vaccine is developed.

Meantime, we must endure unprecedented restrictions upon normal life. In our case this has resulted in the cancellation of our annual Norfolk Reunion. At each Reunion there are four important ceremonies when we remember fallen comrades and lay wreaths at the Memorials at Foulsham Square and Church Farm, Oulton, and former RAF Swannington at Haveringland. This year there will be no ceremonies. However, thanks to the generous spirit of four local members,

75th Anniversary poppy wreaths will be laid on behalf of the Association on VE Day at Foulsham, Oulton, Haveringland and for the first time at North Creake.

Seventy-five years ago, RAF 100 Group's mission had been fulfilled and demobilisation was around the corner. Whilst celebrations were held throughout our land a little known, brief but vital chapter of history was about to close. Through the long years of peace, we have been the beneficiaries of that victory won at a terrible cost. I hope we will continue to celebrate for many years to come the contribution of the brave men and women who served in RAF 100 Group.

Until we meet again, keep safe. Best wishes.



V.E Day Wreaths placed at the Oulton Memorial on behalf of the RAF 100 Group Association, courtesy of Mr Chris Lambert.

8th AIR FORCE REPRESENTATIVE

Stephen Hutton

Hello friends



In these days with the dreadful and deadly China Virus ravaging the world, here in the States my thoughts can't help but turn to Heroes we see almost daily. The heroes - those doctors, nurses, police, soldiers, firemen, workers on the front lines assisting sick and dying and those in need. These are our heroes of today – those giving such welcome care with great unselfish love.



Thankfully, such heroics have always been seen in times of need in the past. The same heroism was shown to be true in the RAF 100 Group and the 36th Squadron during WWII. Two heroes I learned while researching for my book *Squadron of Deception* were airmen Francis Preimesberger and Lawrence Dickson. Here's what I learned from the Squadron Records and the Veterans



(Preimesberger standing left; Dickson right front kneeling)

On March 20, 1945 the 36th Squadron mission called for eleven B24 Liberators to be used for both the VHF and radar screen. Sadly, the crew in B-24 #42-50844, R4-I, nicknamed Miss-B-Haven with Lt. William Sweeney as pilot crashed on take-off from Station 102, Alconbury. The official crash report stated the pilot taxied the aircraft out to the runway, received a green light from the tower, pulled out on the runway and took off.

The aircraft's landing gear was immediately retracted, but the Liberator touched down again with gear partially retracted. The aircraft continued down runway 24. Just past the intersection of runways 24 and 30, the aircraft tilted to the left and fire broke out in number one engine which then blanketed the cockpit. Friction caused the aircraft to catch fire. The aircraft then veered to the left, departed the runway and ground-looped on the grass a short distance from the runway. All crew members escaped through the top and bottom hatches and avoided serious injury, although the aircraft was a complete wreck - a total loss.



Sgt. Francis Preimesberger, the Flight Engineer and Gunner for the crew spoke of the horrible crash:

"We crashed on take-off on one of our missions. The airplane just seemed to mush in. We couldn't kick extra power to it. She just wouldn't get off the runway very far. There was a fire in the engine, but they claim that was from dragging along the ground - a friction fire. I think the engine itself must have been defective and not producing enough power.

That might be one of the reasons it crashed rather than a friction fire from running down the runway because, if there was a fire in the engine while taking off, well, it would lose power and naturally it couldn't get off. We all got out all right. We washed it out. It never flew again".

Yet, it could be said that Sgt Preimesberger was indeed a hero on that day. Sgt Dick Mulligan, the crew's Radio Operator saw Preimesberger come to the rescue of his buddies.



36th Bomb Squadron Commanding Officer Col. Hambaugh, presenting medals to Sgt Preimesberger (left) and Sgt Dickson (right)

Dick Mulligan remembers:

"We cracked up and it did catch on fire. Preimesberger was the guy who was the first one out. And he stood on that wing and got us all out of there - or we would have been gone. The rest of the plane was really a total loss. The guys came out of the back. They got out pretty good.

But in the front which was the Pilot, the Co-Pilot, the Navigator, and me, all of us had to get out. We had all of our gear on then, our flight jackets and everything else. Sgt Preimesberger was the guy that stood up there and got us all out of there. Otherwise, if he had taken off we wouldn't have been able to get out."

Sgt Lawrence Dickson, the Tail Gunner, also remembered the crash, his actions and those of Preimesberger and said:

"On March 20, 1945 we walked our plane out to the runway, centering it, getting on board, with the brakes locked and the engines revved into the red, released the brakes, hoping to take off. We were number two to take off. We were taking off with 2800 gallons of 100 octane gas in our tanks and being an experienced hot crew, the Pilot pulled the landing gear up immediately and the plane

hit a downdraft or air pocket and the plane settled back on the runway at 160mph. We slid for half a mile, smoke and fire shooting back through the plane. When we finally came to a stop the plane was in three sections. Mo [Roland Morin] the Ball Gunner, was in the tail section with me and was the first to the escape hatch. He was standing on the door trying to open it. I grabbed him with one hand, held him off the door, opened it with my other hand and threw him out with me right behind him. I started to run toward the cabin or cockpit which was maybe fifty yards from where I was. The fire was bad, but I saw the Engineer Francis Preimesberger come out the top hatch and started tossing out other members of the crew like they were rag dolls. Their faces were slightly burned and singed, otherwise okay. We were taken to debriefing and to the medics for a check and then back to the flight line and another plane and back into the air before the shock had time to settle in."

Yes, both Preimesberger and Dickson acted fast to help rescue their buddies, potentially saving their lives from a fiery and deadly situation! Thankfully, like as in olden days, heroes are still around today. They can be a stranger, a friend, mother, father, sister or brother, male or female. And they are giving of themselves, sometimes risking their lives for us in a myriad of ways. Indeed, we are truly Blessed to have such heroes.

So, then my friends, the next time you happen by or see one of our present day heroes, a First Responder or a Veteran from yesterday, signal them with a thumbs up to express a big "Thank You" They deserve our gratitude. *Yes, we will remember them, we will remember them!!*

Finally, to each of you I say, *"Take good care and stay safe – tomorrow is a new day."*

With love,
Stephen

Stephen Hutton
Author: 'Squadron of Deception'

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LETTERS PAGES



Hi Janine,

Win Seeley's maiden name is Tomlinson, not Robinson, and Daphne was not an MT driver, but an Electrician. Win and Daphne first met whilst training on barrage balloons in Sheffield. They were then transferred to Glasgow. When it was decided the balloons really weren't effective, all the girls had to re-train. Win decided on driving, while Daphne preferred to learn to be an Electrician, so for a while they



had different postings. Win was posted to Whitchurch where she met Irene. Eventually, Win was posted to Sculthorpe (I think Irene was also, although I can't say this for a fact), then on to Oulton. She let Daphne know, and Daphne managed to get posted there as well. (Daphne left, Winn today, above)



Anne Cheung (Win's daughter)

A small correction to the Tribute written in memory of Daphne Rowlands in the last Magazine. Sorry to have got that one wrong Anne... Ed.



Dear Janine,

Just reading the latest Spring 2020 magazine. Amazing article on page 55. My Dad's brother, Len Carpenter, was married to Roy Smith's sister. I think her name was Beryl. I believe she died, and Len remarried.

My Mum and Dad were great friends with Roy and Doris, and I met them many times in the 1960s but lost touch. Their daughter, Vanessa, used to stay with us in the early 1960s when we were living in Otford, Kent. Would it be possible to put me in contact with Pete please? I attach a photo of Roy, my grandparents, Len (Navy) and my Dad (Front) taken in Hornsey, North London.

Regards

David Carpenter



Letter from John Beeching, Veteran 169 Squadron, to Cymon Hewitt re his letter in Spring 2020 Magazine about an RNZAF family member who flew with 214 Squadron, killed in 1944:

Hello Cymon,

I recently received an email from Janine Harrington, who gathers and writes about 100 Group matters, hence this little note. I was a Mosquito Pilot stationed at Great Massingham, which is not far from Oulton, but because of which, I regret I don't think I can be of much help. We had two 214 Squadron members here in Nelson, New Zealand – Doug Douglas and Ted Baumfield - both of whom have now shifted residence skywards. You have obviously done quite a bit of legwork already and amassed a wealth of knowledge about Colin.

I think your assumptions about aircraft types and possible flight times are pretty close. The B17s used on 100 Group were pretty exclusive and used solely for their high-altitude ability. I don't think they carried any armament as all available space was taken up with electronic jamming equipment. At the height they flew in the hours of darkness meant they were pretty invulnerable anyway. Oulton was the only Station to have B17s; both Foulsham and Swanton Morley had Halifaxes. West Raynham, Great Massingham and Little Snoring all had Mosquitoes, mostly Mark XIXs with Mark 10 American-built airborne Radar, which was very good. We also had Serrate for a while, until we found the Germans were homing in on us when we used it. North Creak did have Stirlings for a while, but these were superseded. As I said, I can't be of much help, but if there is something you believe I can tell you about, then drop us a line.

With best wishes for the coming year,

John Beeching

Nelson,
New Zealand



Dear members of 100 Group Association,

I would like to join your Association as my father was at Little Snoring and Great Massingham in 1944-45. He was LAC in Safety Equipment, name Edwin Webster. If anyone has any knowledge or memories of him, I would love to hear from you.

Kind regards

Lynn Tunbridge

Adelaide South Australia
lynn@tunbridge.org

A very warm welcome to Lynn Tunbridge of Adelaide, to our Association family Ed.



Dear Janine,

I was reading the Spring magazine, and something jumped out at me after all this time! I was looking at the last page, Page 70, and glancing down the list, realised there was no mention of 157 Squadron based at Swannington and their losses, including my Uncle, William Searle Vale on October 6th, 1944. The only entry for the 157 Squadron at Swannington was for May 1944. I am just wondering why? Should it read from May to ...? I hope this can be altered to reflect the above.

Helen Rankin, Australia

... Mike Hillier, our Swannington Representative, responds to Helen's letter on previous page:

Hi Janine

I think Helen has mis-read the information on page 70. When May 1944 is mentioned, the heading it comes under clearly states "1st 100 Group Operation" and does not mean figures for May 1944 only ... I have attached the names of those from both 85 Squadron and 157 Squadron who sadly never returned. I imagine Helen probably has a lot of information about her Uncle, therefore I would be grateful if she would kindly share what she does have with me, including any photographs which I will, with her permission, put onto the RAF Swannington information display boards. My email address is here for her to use.

Mike Hillier

m.hillier091@hotmail.com



157 Squadron Losses – RAF Swannington

F/S John Maurice Moore 12.04.1945
P/O Bruce English Miller (RAAF) 14.03.1945
F/S John Arthur Leigh 04.03.1945
F/L Lawrence Wallace Basan 16.02.1945
F/O Jeffrey Neil Edwards 22.12.1944
F/L Alfred Edward David Ashcroft, DFC 06.10.1944
F/O Edward Henry Lomas 29.09.1944
F/O Harry Smith 29.09.1944
F/L Leslie George Butt 01.09.1944
W/O Peter Alfred Merrall 01.05.1945
Lt Peter Francis Pryor (RN) 07.08.1944
Sub/Lt Douglas MacKenzie (RN) 07.08.1944

Sgt Trevor John Hunter Westoby 12.04.1945
P/O Raymond Gavin Crisford (RAAF) 14.3.1945
F/S Leonard Reginald Johnstone Lucas 04.3.1944
F/L William Taylor 22.12.1944
P/O William Searle Vale (RAAF) 06.10.1944
F/L Sidney Arthur Waddington 29.09.1944
F/O Peter William Fry 29.09.1944
S/L John Harry MacKellar Chisholm 15.9.1944
F/O Chris Noel Woodcock 01.09.1944
F/O Thomas James Michael Nash 01.05.1945
P/O James Cunningham Porteous 01.05.1945

85 Squadron Losses – RAF Swannington

F/O Charles Blackley Hamilton, DFC 13.04.1945
Sgt William Patrick Reidy 20.03.1945
W/O George Clement Redmond 14.03.1945
F/L Thomas William Redfern 26.01.1945
F/L Clifford Bagnell Bryan 14.01.1945
F/O Peter James Cowgill, DFC 18.12.1944
F/S Joseph Potts 03.10.1944
F/L Gregory Bernard Brooker 19.10.1944
F/S Arthur Simpson Warham 26.09.1944

F/L Hitch Ellis 20.03.1945
P/O Sidney James Harrop, DFC 14.03.1945
P/O Arthur R Grimstone, DFM 14.03.1945
F/O Arthur Frederick Witt 26.01.1945
F/O Desmond Trevor Tull, DFC 18.12.1944
F/L Brian Rushworth Keele, DFC 12.11.1944
F/S Peter Frederick John Copp 30.10.1944
F/S Charles John Jones 26.09.1944
F/L Henry Wood 14.01.1945

Hi Janine,

You may remember some time ago, I mentioned I was in touch with a lady who was a Volunteer at Onderduikers Museum in Nieuwlande in The Netherlands. The lady's name was Margualite Ronhaar and she had been researching two airmen who lost their lives, when their Mosquito aircraft was shot down over the village of Nieuwlande on 29th September 1944.

The two airmen concerned were from 157 Squadron based at RAF Swannington - Flying Officers Peter Fry (Pilot) and Harry 'Junior' Smith (Nav/Rad/Op) – [highlighted on previous page listing](#).

In Autumn 2017 magazine I wrote about the 70th Anniversary of the decommissioning of RAF Swannington, the airfield which covered most of the village of Haveringland. Whilst searching for relatives of aircrew members who sadly lost their lives in the conflicts of the Second World War, I managed to locate and contact the sister of Harry 'Junior' Smith. Unfortunately, although locating the wife of Peter Fry who had since moved to Ontario, Canada, I found she had sadly passed away back in 2007. Despite advertising in the Ontario newspapers, I was unable to contact their son, Michael.

*As you will read from the Autumn 2017 copy of the magazine, we held a special service in St. Peter's Church in Haveringland, and Harry's sister, Pauline Shepherd, came from her home in Gloucester to remember her younger brother Harry. You may remember reading that, so intent was Pauline at being in the very place where her brother had flown from all those years ago, she travelled from Gloucester to Haveringland ... **by taxi!** ([A one-way journey of over 4½ hours! – Ed](#)).*

I have now put the two ladies in touch with each other so that Pauline can share the story of her brother, and it can be told at the Museum in the village where he and his good friend Peter perished.

Both these young men, Peter who was 25 and Harry who had just turned 20 and the youngest on the Squadron, have been remembered by the people of Nieuwlande since that fateful day in 1944. Their names are inscribed on a Memorial in the village and a display is being mounted in the Museum in their honour. It is hoped that Margualite will be coming over from The Netherlands, to be with us at the Sunday afternoon Reunion at Haveringland, where I know she will be made more than welcome. ([Sadly, this is the May Reunion which had to be cancelled due to the Corona Virus this year.](#))

I asked Margualite if she would kindly write something about the Museum and its content and of the two young men of whom the people of Nieuwlande call "Our Airmen"

The following are Margualite's own words.

Best Wishes

[*Mike Hillier*](#)

RAF Swannington (Haveringland)

The History of Nieuwlande and Onderduikers Museum De Duikelaar

**by
Margualite Ronhaar**

During the Second World War, more than one hundred Jewish people took refuge in the young village of Nieuwlande in the province of Drenthe. The village of approximately 150 houses was fairly inaccessible due to unpaved dirt roads, canals and outspread neighbourhoods and was surrounded by peat land and woods. Because of the high number of Jewish people hiding here, the village got the nickname '*The Jerusalem of Drenthe*'.

After a relatively quiet first period of occupation, the German occupying forces began with the deportation of Jews. Although Nieuwlande had no Jewish inhabitants, a group of villagers joined powers to provide hiding places for Jews. Farmer and Alderman Johannes Post established this Resistance Movement. Under his leadership Jews were brought to Nieuwlande and the surrounding villages. Not only villagers joined his organization, some of the people who came to Nieuwlande for hiding joined as well.

In Nieuwlande the refugees were known as '*Divers*'. There were many of them and their backgrounds were diverse. The largest group were Jews but many young Dutch men who refused to work for the Germans had to go into hiding as well. Others, such as the American pilot nicknamed "*Texas Slim*" and even German deserters, also belonged to Nieuwlande's illegal residents.

A whole network of addresses was necessary to accommodate the increasing number of people. Many villagers made their homes available as hiding addresses. They opened their doors sometimes for just one night, but mainly for several weeks or indefinitely. The '*Divers*' stayed indoors but would always have a hiding place nearby in case of danger. The hiding places varied from holes in the woods and heaths to crawling spaces in houses, but haystacks and chicken coops were also utilized. The danger was great. There was always the threat of discovery or betrayal, leading to arrest and interrogation. With a little luck the people who opened their houses would be released, but the chance of deportation to a concentration camp in Germany was always possible.

After the war, the State of Israel gave "*Yad Vashem Awards*" to non-Jews who risked their lives to help Jews survive the war. It is normally a recognition of the deeds of individuals; therefore it is even more remarkable when a place receives the award. Nieuwlande is one of only two places in the world who have received a Yad Vashem award for the community as a whole.

There are many stories to be told about the divers and those who helped them. The people of Nieuwlande kept quiet during the war. After the war, they said that what they had done wasn't anything special.

Almost 75 years after World War 2 ended, a group of villagers decided that it was time for all these stories to be told. When the opportunity came along, they joined forces and opened Onderduikers Museum De Duikelaar in April 2018. (Onderduiker and Duikelaar both mean '*diver*') The majority of the village supports the Museum which is located in an old school building. Forty volunteers create exhibitions and host Guests, others help when needed.

The Museum has a touchscreen table with animated stories. In 2020, the Museum will expand and open two new Exhibitions. We currently have three Exhibitions:

- Niemand de deur wijzen; about the general WW2 history of Nieuwlande,
- Gezocht (Wanted) about Johannes Post and his brothers, leaders of the Resistance,
- Memories Remain about Flying Officers Peter W. Fry and Harry Smith, who crashed and died in the village.

Onderduikersmuseum De Duikelaar, strives to record as many stories about the war in Nieuwlande as possible and pass them on to the next generation.

Flying Officers Peter Fry and Harry Smith

On 29th September 1944, villagers of Nieuwlande were woken at three o'clock by a hellish noise. Roaring motors and exploding ammunition could be heard as a burning plane flew low over the Nieuwlande. The plane came down in a meadow a few hundred metres from the village.



The plane that woke the villagers was a RAF Mosquito from 157 Squadron which caught fire and crashed after being shot down by a night fighter. On board were [Flying Officers Peter Fry \(24\)](#) and [Harry Smith \(20\)](#) seen left. There was nothing that could be done to help them.

The plane was recognised as a British plane, probably a Mosquito as '*judging by the debris it seems to have been a two engine plane made mostly of wood*', but the identity of both Flying Officers could not be established.

The two unidentified bodies recovered from the wreckage were buried in the nearest cemetery.

On August 17th, 1945, due to lack of evidence of life, Peter Fry and Harry Smith were declared deceased by the British Air Ministry. It took until June 1946 before both families received news that Peter and Harry crashed in Nieuwlande in 1944 and were buried in the nearby village of Geesbrug. Then at that time, sixteen-year-old Albert Zwaveling was one of the first to reach the crash site.

It deeply touched him. Together with his friend, Henk Griffioen, he made a wooden cross for the graves of the two airmen with the English text:

Died for their and our freedom. Two unknown flying men

Albert Zwaveling was kind enough to share his memories of that day, as did Marinus Smit who was 4 years old when he witnessed the crash. Their interviews are part of the Exhibition.



In 2020 The Netherlands will celebrate 75 years of freedom - a freedom that would not have been possible without the people who fought for it. Peter and Harry were not alone in dying for freedom. In 1944 in Drenthe alone, 25 Allied planes crashed, killing 75 crew members. To the villagers of Nieuwlande, Peter Fry and Harry Smith will always be their airmen. As a homage to all who fell, and Harry and Peter in particular, Onderduikers Museum De Duikelaar opened an Exhibition about the plane that crashed in the village, and the two brave men inside.

As a young girl visiting the graves of my grandparents, I would always pick some extra flowers for the soldiers buried at the cemetery. The idea of being buried far away from your family and friends, having no-one to bring flowers to your grave, seemed so sad to me. Ever since then I have always kept a fascination for Commonwealth War Graves.

When I learned that a plane crashed in our village in 1944, I decided to take it upon myself to try and find out what had happened. In the year in which we celebrate 75 years of freedom I felt we had to pay special respect to those who made that freedom possible. Till then the only thing I knew were the last names and initials on the headstones of the airman involved in the crash. But I wanted to know more. Who were those unlucky men? What happened to them and who did they leave behind?

My research took me to archives in the UK and The Netherlands. I talked to eyewitnesses and searched for relatives of the two Flying Officers. It was an incredible journey during which I met a lot of wonderful people dedicated to preserving history.

At the start of my journey I thought that not many people were aware of this particular history. But I am delighted to be wrong. Peter and Harry (**our airmen**) are remembered and respected.

Margualite Ronhaar
Nieuwlande, The Netherlands



Avenue of Remembrance, Swannington

(Courtesy: Mike Hillier)

“They also serve, who only stand and wait “

John Milton 1608-1674

On November 17, 2017 Harry’s older Sister, Pauline Shepherd, journeyed to Swannington from her home in Gloucester, to be for the very first time, at the place where her Brother was.





Dear Janine,

With reference to the letter in 'Confound & Destroy' Spring 2020 magazine including a photo from Mike Thomas querying the names of figures shown, as above.

The photograph is of H.Q personnel at RAF Little Snoring. Seated centre is Group Captain Hoare. It was taken at the end of the war. I have the same photo with Officers not wearing hats.

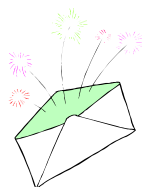
My father was friendly with Group Captain Hoare and just after the war, he showed my brother George and me round a 23 Squadron Mosquito.

If Mike Thomas visits Little Snoring, I would be pleased to show him my photographs.

Yours sincerely,

Tom

Tom Cushing, Little Snoring



Hello Janine,

Regarding the top picture on page 20 of the Summer 2020 magazine, if you look very, very carefully at the Officer's cap of the man in question, you can see the gold edging on the peak. This was worn only by people such as a Group Captain and above.

Cheers,

John xx

John Beeching, New Zealand

Our Veteran, John Beeching, has been photographed more than once, published in the Nelson Evening Mail (New Zealand). He was a Mosquito pilot with 169 Squadron, based out of Great Massingham. Up until Covid19 started having such a devastating effect around the world, including New Zealand; his claim to fame was being New Zealand's oldest paid Employee! -Ed.

Hi Janine,

Hope you are well...?!

I am emailing you today to inform you of an error in your North Creake Booklet...

I purchased the booklet as I am currently in the process of researching a family member who served with 199 during 1944.

His name was F/Sgt James Moore, a Navigator with 199 Squadron.

Sadly, and very disappointingly, I discovered this spelling mistake whilst reading through ... entered as MOORS not MOORE.

I ask you to please acknowledge this email.

I started the research on J. Moore last August/September and what started as just a 'flick through' a comprehensive Navigators Logbook, has now completely escalated into what seems to have become a full-time occupation!!

Jimmy started his Navigation training in 1943 and spent time at training schools in South Africa, as well as conversion units within the British Isles. He then went on to serve with 238 Squadron in January 1945 after he departed 199. After his RAF service he joined the Civil Aviation Authority and spent the rest of his career involved with them.

At present, I've concentrated on his service with 199 Squadron as it soon became apparent that he had an extended and thorough aviation history (sadly, unlike many) so I decided to split it up into sections.

I've learnt so much about him over the last few months, and I've really enjoyed finding out and building a picture of what his life with 199 looked like... Equally, I've also learnt a lot about the Squadron, 100 Group, their extremely important role during the war and the airfield that was his home for the best part of a year...

Kindest Regards

Nick Poulton
mgzr160@live.com

The series of 12 booklets each on an RAF 100 Group Airfield, written by Janine Harrington, our Secretary; were brought together at the request of Evelyn Bartram who died recently. Her late husband Len was our first Association Historian. Evelyn's wish was for Janine to use historic material her husband had written and adding to it to create a full collection of published works in memory of her beloved Len about RAF 100 Group airfields. Both Evelyn & Len had been close friends of Janine since the Association began. Since the letter pointing out the error, Janine has apologised to Nick Poulton, with the promise that the spelling of *MOORE* rather than *MOORS* has been rectified for the future. While every care is taken, at times errors and omissions occur. This was an unfortunate mistake and Janine is grateful for having had it brought to her attention.

If anyone has any information about F/Sgt James Moore (Jimmy) I know that Nick would welcome hearing from you – Ed.

Dear Janine,

I live in the Old Post Office at Matlaske and I'm a member of the Parochial Church Council. We are planning a short [Battle of Britain Memorial Service at the airfield at 4pm on Sunday 13th, September, followed by tea and cakes at our house.](#)

My wife and I have a copy of your excellent booklet, '*RAF Matlaske 1940 – 1945, A Brief History*' – indeed, our house (or at least, the lounge, which used to be the shop) features in the booklet, in the strange case of the bayoneted eggs! I wondered if you would allow me to use a few extracts of your text in a leaflet we could hand out to attendees at the service. The Rector has mentioned there might be a little money to help make a copyright payment. Perhaps we could donate to Association funds? Of course, I would send you a draft for your approval; and reference your booklet clearly.

Looking forward to hearing from you.



Hello Janine – thanks very much for your helpful reply. We'd be delighted if you did promote our Battle of Britain service. I'll have a chat with David, our Rector, and get back to you to confirm the exact date, time and location, and probably a word about parking arrangements. I will set to work to pick out things from your booklet that are likely to be of especial interest to local residents and will send you a draft a little later on.

I would be delighted to give you a write-up of the occasion for the Association magazine.

If you have a spare hard copy of one of your magazines, we could attach it to our History Board at the back of the church. My postal address is:

*Duncan Wood,
The Old Post Office House,
The Street, Matlaske,
Norfolk NR11 7AQ*

There is a Memorial Plaque for the airfield in the church, which, I think, does list all the Squadrons that served in Matlaske.

I have always been interested in the Air Force myself, as my father did his National Service – extended longer than normal because of the Korean War – in the RAF. He was stationed at RAF Valley on Anglesey, where he was a Leading Aircraftman and Airframe technician. In civilian life, he was a fitter of textile and other machinery.

ST PETER'S CHURCH, MATLASKE
BATTLE OF BRITAIN MEMORIAL SERVICE
SITE OF RAF MATLASKE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Rector – the Revd Canon David Longe, has confirmed that the service (Evening Prayer) will start at **4.00 pm, Sunday 13th September 2020**, at the Airfield Memorial Stone, just off Wickmere Road. It's easy to find – it's on a concrete strip that's probably a remnant of the airfield, a few metres off the road to the west.

For the avoidance of doubt, the postcode of the Memorial area is NR11 7JH and map references are:

52°51'59.5"N 1°11'38.0"E
52.866527, 1.193887

(taken from Google Maps)

The service will be no longer than an hour, and probably shorter. Afterwards, we will have light refreshments at my home, the Old Post Office House, which is on the corner of Wickmere Road and The Street in Matlaske, just a minute or two from the Airfield Memorial.

There should be plenty of room for parking. There's some space for on-street parking in the centre of the village, a couple of minutes from the Memorial, and as long as we leave enough space for the service itself there is plenty of room on the concrete road over the airfield site to park up.

I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Thanks again & prayers and best wishes for you personally

Best wishes

Duncan Wood

Duncan.wood@caantab.net

****The following excerpts are taken from Janine Harrington's booklet mentioned in the previous letter, *RAF Matlaske 1940–1945, A Brief History*, published in 2014, reproduced with her permission.**

REMINISCENCES

The Bayoneted Egg Story

'I was an Instrument basher and very much a 'Sprog'. I had served for a time with 151 Squadron at Wittering before joining 222 at Coltishall. A fine Station with the luxury of modern light and airy spacious Barrack Blocks and many other modern facilities. Matlaske I found so different – lovely quiet rural countryside. We interpreted the move as a rest for the pilots, many of whom had served long days during the Battle of Britain based at Hornchurch, Essex. At Coltishall the Squadron was held at readiness from dawn each day and there were many actions and losses.

There were no runways at Matlaske. It was just a large grass field with some blister hangars and a small Watch Tower, but very few buildings. We were billeted in a stately home, Barningham Hall. It was a handsome building, but with all furnishings removed the rooms were bare except for Service beds and 'biscuits' (a serviceman's expression for the narrow mattresses on which they slept). Some of us were in a small room in the top storey.

The Cookhouse, the Airmen's Mess and NAAFI were in outbuildings and stables in the Hall courtyard. When our work on the aircraft was complete, we were allowed time off on some afternoons and we spent many lazy hours by the lake in the Park near the Hall and walking in the Gardens and fields close by.

One evening, a touring concert party called in, unheralded, to entertain us. All the 'Erks' and NCOs enjoyed the songs and entertainment performed by the artists out in the open air.

Being a 'Townie', I decided to send some country fare home to my folks. Calling at what was the local village Post Office cum everything-else shop, the only one in the area; hesitantly I asked if there were any eggs to spare. To my amazement, the young shop assistant in a rich friendly broad Norfolk accent (which I love!) asked: 'How many you want, two score?' I never expected there would be so many eggs available during such an austere time. I purchased the lot, packed them very carefully in a strong tin and sent them home. Alas, on arrival, my parents found the tin had been bayoneted by our Censor or someone! It had done the eggs no good at all.'

Frank Webster, 'Instrument basher', 222 Squadron
(at Matlaske 6 May 1941 – 30 June 1941)

'The pilots were sitting around their coke stove in readiness. But one day, a tractor driver got his coat caught in the wheel. He was thrown off and injured while the tractor continued on ... in and through the pilots' hut, wrecking the stove and setting fire to the building. At least one pilot was injured. I started keeping a diary while at Matlaske with notes about the Hall and village. But it was taken off me during a kit search at Waterloo Station. They said it contained names useful to the enemy!'

Arthur Sadler, Electrician, 137 Squadron
(at Matlaske Dec 1941 – Aug 1942)

Hi Janine

I was the Wireless Operator in PO Thompson's crew that was shot down Feb 20, 1945.

The reason I am still around, is that I was grounded that night.

I joined the crew in Nassau in January 1944 and never missed a flight until that night. I had flown the op on the night of Feb 18, 1945, but I had a bad cough and when we landed, I was spitting up blood. I had apparently ruptured some blood vessels in my lungs by coughing at high altitude so that is why the Station Doctor grounded me. This led to a bout of bronchitis.

Sad to say, Sgt Bryant who replaced me lost his life along with five other members of the crew.

This is a picture of some of our crew deep sea fishing, at the O.T.U in Nassau. Also, a picture of Maxwell and myself at Oulton. *(Rex is on the left in both photos)*



My wife Jeanne passed away last August 2019. We had been married 62 years. I enclose pictures of us on our Wedding Day, October 1947 and another more recent, together with words which appeared on the 'Celebration of Life' programme:



**Celebrating the Life of
Jeanne Arnett
April 5, 1926 – August 28, 2019**

*'May the choirs of angels come to greet you.
May they lead you to paradise.
May the Lord enfold you in His mercy.
May you find eternal rest.'*



Best Regards,
Rex
Rex Arnett
Canada

75th Anniversary of Loss of 8th Airforce B24 Liberator named 'The Jig's Up'

Featured in 'The American' by Dan Byway,
published Dec 12th, 2019

These writings appeared in an American magazine concerning a Ceremony due to take place in Holyhead, Wales to commemorate the loss of 'The Jig's Up' and eight airmen.



A ceremony will take place in North Wales this Sunday, December 15, 2019, to mark 75 years since a tragic incident in which 8 US Airmen lost their lives when the B-24 Liberator, "The Jigs Up," crashed into the Irish sea near Holyhead.

During the latter years of the Second World War, the US 36th Bomb Squadron were secretly working with the RAF to jam German Radar.



On December 22, 1944, following one such mission over Europe, the 10-man crew of B-24 Liberator, *The Jigs Up*, were returning to land in the UK when they were diverted to RAF Valley, near Holyhead in the North of Wales, due to adverse weather.

Although two other Liberators successfully landed at the Air Base, *The Jigs Up* had to turn around and attempt a second landing. As they approached the North Stack, just off the Welsh coast, the plane ran out of fuel.

Under the belief that the plane was over land, the Captain, Lt Harold Boehm, told eight members of his crew to parachute out, however they were actually over the Irish sea and all eight were lost. Lt Boehm and his co-pilot, who also parachuted out, managed to survive, one landing at Holyhead and the other at Trearddur Bay.

In the early 1990s, Stephen Hutton of North Carolina travelled to Wales to research more about *'The Jigs Up'*, a plane which his father, Iredell, right, had flown on many times as a Tail Gunner. An article published by a local newspaper in 1992 raised awareness of Mr Hutton's investigation, and not long after, Welsh diver Brendan Maguire retrieved two propellers from the floor of the Irish sea. Working with Stephen, a Memorial was constructed to remember the sacrifice of those US Airmen. One of the propellers is now in the US, at the US National Museum in Fort Fisher, North Carolina, whilst the other was recently relocated in 2014 to Breakwater County Park in Holyhead to create a more prominent Memorial for those lost Airmen.



A ceremony, at 11am at the Breakwater Country Park in Holyhead, will mark 75 years since the incident. Jeff Evans, of the North Stack Memorial Group, will introduce the service and offer a background to the incident. Lt Col Thomas 'Shack' Graham, Deputy Air Attache at the American Embassy, will also attend as the Guest of Honor.



The service will include renditions of the Welsh, English and US National Anthems, with wreaths being laid. Other attendees include Councillor Alan Williams, Mayor of Holyhead, Councillor Glyn Haynes, Vice Chair of Anglesey County Council, Rhun ap Iorwerth AM, and Group Captain Moon, Station Commander at RAF Valley. Words from Stephen Hutton, who unfortunately cannot attend, will be read by [Brendan Maguire, seen left](#).

Thank you to Stephen, Jeff and Brendan for their work on this Memorial, and for helping *'The American'* to tell this story. Their work in developing, preserving and protecting the memory of those eight US Service Personnel lost on December 22, 1944, is a shining example of the Special Relationship, and an important reminder at this time of year to pay tribute to those who safeguarded the freedoms we enjoy today.



'Jigs Up' Plaque on bench

UPDATE

North Creake Control Tower

by Nigel and Claire

Hoping we get to welcome you to the Control Tower in 2020



We hope this finds you well and rested. Leading up to New Year, we have been enjoying a prolonged period of celebrations as we found out on 16th December that our Son's intensive Chemotherapy was a success. Cillian had previously been given the all clear after an operation while travelling in Australia, but when he had his first follow-up at Addenbrookes they found his Cancer had spread to his lungs and abdomen. The last six months have been very difficult for us, but we had the best Christmas present ever – *he is Cancer free!* Cillian has now started to help others by getting involved in a local testicular Cancer Charity Beer by 'Moon Gazer'.

While the latter part of 2019 was hard for us, our B&B continues to flourish, and other Projects carry on around the Tower. We had the north face of the Tower re-rendered and painted in March and it looks amazing ... more of that to come. While our Son was having treatment, we have renovated the interior of the 'scary' chalet so that he and his lovely partner Rosie can have somewhere to recover for the next few months. Our ultimate aim with the chalet is to have a self-catering one-bedroom lodge (Halifax Lodge). We will keep you updated on that as the year progresses.



'Time to Remember' – our Project to build a Memorial for RAF North Creake, is nearing completion. We aim to have the Memorial erected by mid-Summer 2020 with the Dedication Ceremony taking place on 1 August this year (Virus permitting!)

The centre piece sculpture for the Memorial site 'Home Safe', a large skeletal Stirling aircraft, has been delivered by **Andy Knighton** already ...

It looks so beautiful – we can't wait to show you when it is in position. The next big task is to finalise wording for the Memorial metal walls, including the Roll of Honour.

Calling all with RAF North Creak Connections ...

If you have a connection with the Airfield and especially if you know any of the 73 men who were lost during the Station's operational life, please get in touch. We are trying to arrange it so that each person on the Honour Roll is remembered during the ceremony in August. We have a few family members already agreed to do this, but we have yet to ask others. We would love to hear from you if you want to be part of this.



We want to thank all of you who came to stay and helped make our year. We wouldn't be here without you so thank you for all your support, visits, reviews, social media interest and you telling others about us. If you have been to stay and would like to leave us a review, please do on -

[Trip Advisor](#) / [Facebook](#) / [Google](#)

It means so much for others who have not yet been ... and we hope to get to welcome you to The Control Tower Bed and Breakfast, with a generous helping of History in 2020.



This picture is of the talk Nigel gave at Holkham Hall, receiving our fantastic donation of £5,000 from The Earl of Leicester.

The day we got the Good News of Cillian being free from Cancer ... we went up to the roof of the Control Tower where he rang out the 'All Clear' on our Air Raid Siren!

Very best wishes,
Claire and Nigel xx
mail@controltowerstays.com

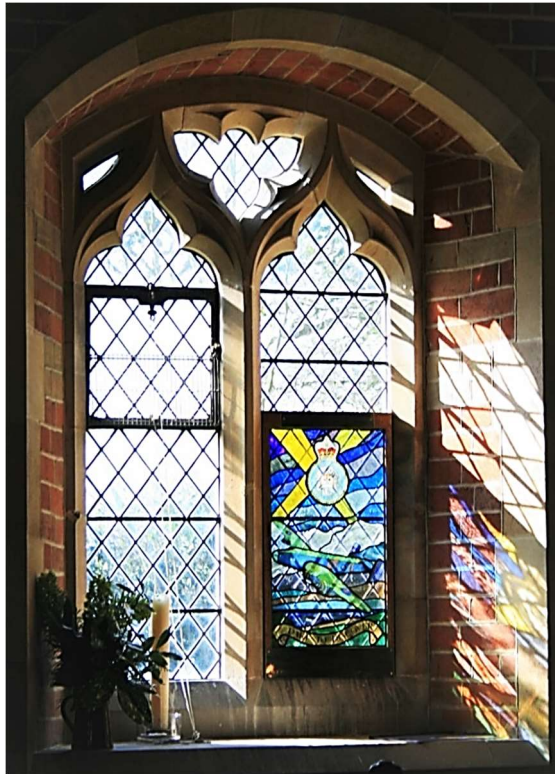
www.controltowerstays.com

That is great news Nigel and Claire. Cancer is a terrible thing and for your Son Cillian to have come through is brilliant! The smiles say it all -Ed.



NOTE: Please be aware that the 'Time to Remember' Memorial Dedication has had to be postponed until next year, while the Memorial Site work is delayed due to Covid-19.

Church in Fulmodeston, Norfolk, Dedicates a New Stained-Glass Window



The Christchurch at Fulmodeston, Norfolk has a new, very beautiful Stained-Glass Window; designed, created, and installed by local Craftspeople with a special Dedication Service held on Sunday 8th March this year.

It commemorates those Aircrew who perished when their Halifax Bomber was brought down in Fulmodeston on the night of 3rd March 1945.

The aircraft was returning home to RAF Foulsham from its hours of lone Electronic Intelligence (ELINT)-gathering role over the North Sea. It was tasked to search for possible navigational aids, thought to be associated with Air Launched V-1s and their guidance to targets in England. 192, RAF 100 Group's lead Squadron, were specialists in these Electronic Intelligence gathering Operations; our own Stan Forsyth and Arthur Reid, both '*Special Operators*', were actively involved in this kind of work with the Squadron during the War.



Stan in his onboard 'Office' (above).

Arthur Reid Snr, and Stan together, both '*Spec Ops*' with 192, pictured right with Linda Reid, on the Sunday afternoon Commemoration of our 2018 Reunion at Swannington, former home of both 85 and 157 Squadrons RAF. – Ed.

In addition, on this night, 192 also flew a 'Spoof Raid' to Ladbergen, to draw away Luftwaffe Night Fighters that would be hunting the Bomber Stream in the darkness. This night's Operation was a combined effort with other Squadrons from bases in Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and the Midlands, involving 21 Lancasters, 201 Halifaxes and 12 Mosquitos.

Halifax LV 955 took off from RAF Foulsham at around 20:00hrs on 3 March 1945 to fly its own pattern, while the rest of the Bomber Force streamed to carry out raids in Germany on the Kamen Oil Refinery and the Dortmund Ems Canal Aqueduct. The Oil Refinery was very badly damaged in this Raid and production ceased. The Aqueduct was breached in two places and put out of action.

March 3, 1945 was a clear night and in crossing the North Sea, some returning aircraft inexplicably switched on their navigation lights early, this despite warnings of possible enemy aircraft activity. Because some of these forward aircraft had their navigation lights on, many others followed suit, effectively beaconing a significant part of the returning Stream.

This night, the Luftwaffe Command Centre, in an orchestrated attack called 'Operation Gisela', tasked around 200 Night Fighters to follow the Bomber Stream home. They first attacked the Bombers as they made their way out over the North Sea, then proceeded to tail returning aircraft over a wide area of the county, attacking aircraft as they made their approaches to their home Bases.

As Pilot Officer Roberts swung his heavy Bomber on wide approach to Foulsham, he and his crew were intercepted by one of this following Force, a Ju88 Night Fighter flown by Hauptmann Johann Dreher and his crew of three, of NJG 2.

Flying Officer Roberts later wrote:

'The attack appeared to come from above us. It looked like that from Tracers. The aircraft was hit and both inner engines were put out of action and the aircraft caught fire. Sergeant Ken Sutcliffe, the Mid Upper Gunner, reported streams of flame as the fuel from the wing tanks ignited. I thought that there would be a chance for some to escape by parachute and gave the order for an emergency parachute escape; the Wireless Operator, Flying Officer R.C Todd was able to bail out. I ordered all crew back to normal crash positions and told them to sit tight. We suffered a further attack, and this resulted in the death of Warrant Officer William Clementson. I grappled with the controls and tried to maintain some sort of stability, looking for a place to crash land. I can remember passing over some trees then making a belly landing.'

He impacted the ground at what was then Ainlies Farm in Croxton Road, Fulmodeston, now a major poultry operation around 6 kms out of Foulsham, almost in a straight line between the airfield and Little Snoring. This raises more questions about what happened up in the air sometime just before midnight on the 3rd March 1945.

The aircraft came down, heading in a North Westerly direction, *away from* Foulsham, directly towards and only 3.7 kms from Little Snoring. A story for another day perhaps ...

Mr Roy Hawes was one of the first on the scene and another from the local community, Mr George Utting, found the body of the Rear Gunner, 34-year-old Sergeant Richard Grapes a day or so later,



in a field near Severals Wood. His parachute was unopened. Other members of the crew were found in the burned-out wreckage.

Mr Bamford, who ran the Rescue Squad locally during the War, wrote in his Log:

'We had a few visits from Gerry lately following Bombers in, shot one of ours down outside the Town (Fakenham) in a nearby Village. All the village went out to see if they could help any of our lads who were trapped in the flames. Gerry came down and plastered the place with anti-personnel bombs and cannon fire, lucky no one was injured. I had to make a survey on the Sunday night whilst the RAF were trying to find some that had not exploded. Felt sorry for the farmer and his wife, every bedroom smashed, car blown to blazes, buildings flattened. I never saw such a mess, but by Monday night, we had the place more like home.'

In the early morning hours of March 4th, Hauptmann Johann Dreyer attacked Elvington Airfield in North Yorkshire, coming around, having mistaken the lights from a passing taxi on the road for the runway. Pulling up and around for another pass at 0151, the Ju88 came in strafing very low, shells exploding into Dunnington Lodge, a farmhouse on the outskirts of the airfield.

The available light in the very early morning was sufficient to give Hauptmann Dreyer the confidence to continue to press home an attack at low altitude, but his JU 88 clipped a tree and smashed into the outside of the farmhouse, killing the crew. The farmer, Mr Richard Moll and his wife, Helen, aged 60 and their daughter-in-law Violet, 29, all died later from their injuries.



This Ju88 Luftwaffe Night Fighter (Notice the Radar arrays protruding from its nose) from NJG 2 landed in Woodbridge Suffolk on July 13, 1944. The 'gift' was warmly welcomed by the RAF, but I don't think the Pilot meant to land in England ... The aircraft was later painted in RAF markings, extensively tested then scrapped in October 1945 - Ed.

Flying Officer Roberts suffered a crush-fractured spine and burns. After treatment at the RAF Hospital in Ely and East Grinstead, he was discharged from the RAF in 1947.

Mid-upper Gunner Sergeant Ken Sutcliffe survived with burns to his face and body. He returned to Leeds after the war, passing away in 1983.

The Barney and Fulmodeston Local History Group spent four years thoroughly researching this story and actively fund-raising before commissioning a Stained-Glass Artist to create the Memorial.

The Group's Chairman, Chris Heath, said:

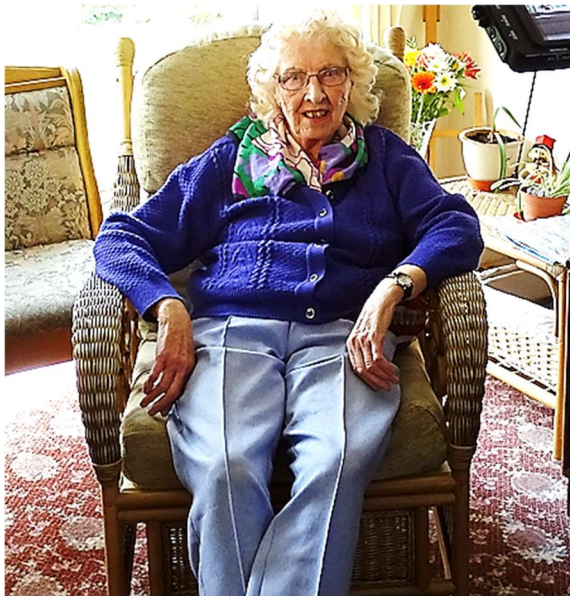
'The Memorial window on the south side of Christ Church measures 20 inches tall and 16 inches wide. It is mounted in an oak frame, made by one of the members, Brian Mann, with a matching

stain to the pews. The glass panel was made by an Oxford stained glass Artist, Lilian Shaw, who has lived locally and carried out commissions for local people.'

Brass Plates, made and engraved by **Cromer Trophies and Engraving**, detail the crew:

Flying Officer E.D. Roberts
Sergeant Ken A. Sutcliffe
Warrant Officer W. S. Clementson
Sergeant J. C. Anderson

Flying Officer R. C. Todd
Flying Officer W. Darlington
Flight Sergeant R. G. Holmes
Sergeant R. T. Grapes



This story is directly connected to one of our own Veteran family, Winifred Seeley, who was a WAAF stationed at Oulton at that time. She clearly remembers an attacking German Fighter, loud, overhead at low level in the darkness above the airfield. She had just picked up a crew who had recently landed from an Op and was returning to the Mess with them in the back of her lorry, when the night air was torn with cannon and machine gun fire, raking across the airfield and into several buildings. She recalls that the Cookhouse was a real mess after the attack and as she shortly discovered, sadly, there were several casualties. She remembers being told later, that this Fighter was intercepted and shot down not too long afterwards – Ed.

Thanks to **Eddie Tomblinson** for the original piece from the '*Eastern Daily Press*'.

Special thanks to **Chris and Jane Heath and Team** for their dedicated research (Chris, Chair of the Barney and Fulmodeston Local History Group) for providing their published booklet on the crash and to **Rev Francis Mason and Mr Andrew Lee of Christchurch Fulmodeston** for their help.

NEW FILM COMING

A Steven Spielberg Drama, set in Norfolk during World War Two, starring Tom Hanks.

Courtesy of the Eastern Daily Press, Norwich

First mooted as a follow-up to the pair's previous hugely successful Second World War series, *Band of Brothers* and *The Pacific*, *Masters of the Air*, the third of a planned trilogy from HBO, had appeared grounded reportedly over its high production costs.

But the drama, based on historian Donald L. Miller's nonfiction book about American bomber pilots of the US Eighth Air Force, now looks set to instead be made as a flagship series for the tech giant's new Netflix-style streaming service, Apple TV+.



Mr Miller, scriptwriter John Orloff, who worked on *Band of Brothers* and Kirk Saduski, an executive from Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks' production company Playtone, toured of the region in 2017 visiting the 100th Bomb Group Memorial Museum at Thorpe Abbots, near Diss.

At the time they said it would focus on the Aircrew and Ground Crew of the so-called '*Bloody Hundredth*', part of the Eighth Air Force stationed at RAF Thorpe Abbots from 1943.



Mr Orloff said:

"The 100th is wonderfully representative of a larger story of all the airmen. They had a particularly rough time at the beginning of the war, and they were led at various times by some very dynamic characters."

"When Band of Brothers came out there was a big spike in tourism in Normandy, so we would hope that a high-profile drama like this would benefit lots of different Museums in the area, not just us."



It has been suggested that Tom Hanks may himself have made an incognito visit to the Museum a few years ago, possibly signing his name as Woody in the Visitors Book after his Toy Story character.

Squadron Leaders John 'Bucky' Egan, left, and Gale 'Buck' Cleven, two of the Service Men based at Thorpe Abbots on which the series will be based.

Picture: 100th Bomb Group Memorial Museum

The 100th Bomb Group who were based at Thorpe Abbots flew missions in B17 Flying Fortress aircraft.

However, it is unlikely that the series will be filmed at Thorpe Abbots in the UK.

Ms Towne said:

"We have only had quite small things filmed at the Museum in the past. I'm not sure how suitable it would be as a site location for what would be such a big production. Film crews can be quite intrusive, and it would probably be over quite a prolonged period."

Eastern Daily Press

11 December 2019



NOTE:

While on the subject of promotion and things to look out for, it is worth noting the incredible work Donna & Darren (Association members) have put into their website, on which RAF 100 Group Association is featured and continually updated:

www.heroesofourtime.co.uk

It is the passion and drive of their writings which brings people to view what is written and immerse themselves in the stories and memories shared.

Thank you both for all you continue to do to bring a wider awareness of the work in which RAF 100 Group were involved.

Heroes Honoured

VE Day Pilot's Relatives visit site of his fateful 1944 crash

by JON COATES IN BELGIUM

The family of a British airman killed in action, are marking VE Day by visiting the village in Belgium where he died.



Alfred Ashcroft's medals were sent to his Mother in a small box,
complete with a letter from the King

Relatives of [Flight Lieutenant Alfred Edward David Ashcroft](#), 24, a Navigator and Wireless Operator from Surrey, were traced after an appeal by the Sunday Express.



He was killed with [Australian pilot William Searle Vale](#), 27, [seen left](#); when their Mosquito came down in a field near Drieslinter, Belgium, on October 6, 1944. They were returning to RAF Swannington in Norfolk after a raid on Bremen and Dortmund in Germany.

A few months earlier American Pilot Olger Ivan Aal, 21, was killed when his P47 Thunderbolt Fighter Bomber was hit by anti-aircraft fire while strafing a German airfield in nearby Melkwezer.

The sacrifice of the three airmen fighting to free people from German occupation touched villagers so much, they are still remembered decades later.



Australian Grace Harding (left), whose brother William Searle Vale died in the crash

Officials in Linter, the new name given to seven villages including Drieslinter in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, began a mission to trace relatives of the war heroes to attend an unveiling of a plaque honouring them in a ceremony today.

The Sunday Express was approached to help after the Belgian authorities contacted welfare charity SSAFA, formerly known as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association. They were struggling to trace relatives of Mr Ashcroft until a story was published in February and Wing Commander David Bramley from the Surrey branch of SSAFA was contacted, allowing him to get in touch with a niece, Carolyn Mason, of North Devon and a cousin, Chris Toase, from Gloucestershire.

The family of Mr Vale were easy to find, as they still own and run the family farm he lived on in Picola, Northern Victoria, 246 Kms out of Melbourne.

Relatives of Mr Aal were also quickly traced in Washington, Minnesota and North Dakota. Mr Bramley said last night:

"We could not have cracked this without the Sunday Express. We did not know where to go and without help, Britain would not be represented at this Event, which would have been awful."

The retired RAF pilot travelled to Belgium with Mrs Mason and her husband David. They were joined by Mr Toase and his daughter Stephanie, who is serving in the Royal Navy. Seeing the Plaque and crash site for the first time, was a highly emotional experience for both Mrs Mason and Grace Harding, the sister of Mr Vale and Irvin Aal, a cousin of the American pilot. Caroline Mason said:

"My Uncle, whom I never met, feels so much more real to me after coming here. Before, I just had a few bits of paper and some medals in a box, but I feel closer to him, now I can fully understand his story."



Left: Mrs Carolyn Mason, Grace Harding and Mr Irvin Aal, mourn the members of their family that were lost.

"Seeing the plaque for the first time with Grace standing by my side felt right, as that was how Alfred and William were when they flew together"

Mr Ashcroft joined the RAF as a trainee pilot in April 1939 but became an Air Gunner, forming a successful partnership with Battle of Britain ace Squadron Leader Edward Wolfe which gained him a Commission and Distinguished Flying Cross.



Grace Harding and Carolyn Mason in the field near Drieslinter where the doomed Mosquito crashed.

After retraining as a Navigator and Wireless Operator for the RAF's new Mosquito planes, he flew 95 operational and training flights with Mr Vale. Mrs Mason said she had to sit down when she heard of the plans for a Memorial:

"It was very touching and humbling to find so many people in this village, still care about what for us has been a family tragedy."

Mrs Harding, 82, of Nithalia, Victoria, said:

"I still remember the day we got the telegram saying he was missing in action and the next day another one saying his plane had crashed."

Lisette Wouters, of the Linter Remembrance Group, said:

"We are very proud that families of the three Airmen are all here today."



Pilot Officer William Searle Vale

No. 401553 Royal Australian Air Force, Pilot, 157 Squadron.

Mosquito Aircraft XIX MM678 RS-A crashed whilst supporting an air raid over Dortmund on 6 October 1944. Both William and his Navigator/Wireless Operator, Flight Lieutenant Alfred Edward David Ashcroft died in the crash. William was aged 27 and Alfred was aged 24. The son of Henry William Searle and Marion Eliza Vale and husband of Emilie Georgina Cecilia Vale of Southall, Middlesex. William, originally from Picola in Australia, is laid to rest in Brussels Communal Cemetery, Evere Arrondissement, Brussel-Hoofdstad, Brussels, Belgium. Plot X, Row 23, Grave 26. William's name is inscribed on Panel 131 of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, Australia.



Flight Lieutenant Alfred Edward David Ashcroft

No. 112736 Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, Navigator/Wireless Operator, 157 Squadron

Mosquito Aircraft XIX MM678 RS-A crashed whilst supporting an air raid over Dortmund on 6 October 1944. Both Alfred and his Pilot, Pilot Officer William Searle Vale died in the crash. Alfred was aged 24 and William was aged 27. The son of Alfred and Edith Maud Ashcroft of Cobham, Surrey, Alfred is laid to rest in Brussels Communal Cemetery, Evere Arrondissement, Brussel-Hoofdstad, Brussels, Belgium. Plot X, Row 23, Grave 25.



RAAF FATALITIES IN WORLD WAR TWO AMONG RAAF PERSONNEL SERVING ON ATTACHMENT IN ROYAL AIR FORCE SQUADRONS & SUPPORT UNITS

401553 Pilot Officer VALE, William Searle



Source: AM 237 (65) NAA: A705,
166/43/87 Digitised,
Commonwealth War Graves
Records

Aircraft Type: Mosquito
Serial number: MM 678
Radio call sign: Unknown
Unit: ATTD 157 SQN RAF

Summary:

Mosquito MM678 took off from RAF Swannington at 1807 hours on 6th October 1944, detailed to carry out an intruder support sortie of targets being Bremen and Dortmund. Nothing was heard from the Aircraft after take-off and it failed to return to base



**RAAF 401553 P/O W.S Vale
Captain (Pilot)**



**RAF Flt Lt Ashcroft, A. E. DFC
Navigator/Radio Operator**

The aircraft crashed 5 miles north east of Tirlemont which is east of Brussels, Belgium. Both the crew were killed and they are buried in the Brussels Town Cemetery, Belgium. The Cemetery is located in the north east corner of Brussels in the district of Evere.

The Last to Fall

A 75th Anniversary Commemoration with a connection to RAF 100 Group

by Ed Tyhurst of Newhaven Fort

Friday 8th May 2020 marked the historic 75th Anniversary of VE-Day. As we turned our thoughts to that momentous day 75 years ago, it was of course a great day of celebration for the people of Britain and her Allies. For the vanquished and for the citizens of all Europe, it was just the beginning of a long process of re-building not just of towns, villages and cities, but of industry, infrastructure and life as a whole.

In the past, any major Anniversary of historic events were met with great National and International celebrations. A chance for today's generation to celebrate the achievements of those who went before, reflect and pay tribute to those who were lost or gave so much to what we take for granted. It has been my privilege to work on our special Events and Commemorations for the 60th, 70th & 75th Anniversaries of D-Day and 60th and 70th Anniversaries of VE & VJ Day to name a few. But as I type this during week seven of the UK-wide 'lockdown', brought in to combat the new global crisis of Coronavirus, these seem almost like a dream of a bygone era. I only hope that, in the not-to-distant future, to quote two popular wartime songs, *'Blue skies are round the corner'* and *'We'll meet again'*.

Here follows the story of the last two Allied aircraft to crash in the county of Sussex during the war with Germany. Tragically, both these aircraft (one British, one American) crashed in accidents with the loss of all crew only two days before VE Day. Their story was to have been told at our 75th Anniversary VE Day Celebration and Commemorations, cancelled to protect against the new foe.

On Sunday 6th May 1945, Britain and Europe were only two days away from peace. The delicate process of surrender terms and negotiations with Germany, however, were only known to a very few top Government and Military officials. Even since the suicide of Adolf Hitler on April 30th, German forces were fighting a desperate battle for survival and regular operations as far as the Allied forces were concerned, carried on.

The weather over Southern England on 6th May was low cloud, rain and fog, completely obscuring the normally picturesque South Downs. 169 Sqn were one of around fifteen RAF and USAAF Squadrons belonging to the 'top-secret' RAF 100 Group, part of RAF Bomber Command. The 169 Sqn motto was *'Hunt and Destroy'*, perfectly suited to their roll. Flying independently, around half a dozen *'Mossies'* would take off on a given night and fly cover for the main bomber formation, ready to *'bounce'* any Luftwaffe plane that threatened our operations. On the return flight, Mosquitoes would then fly low, seeking targets of opportunity.



At 14:25hrs, De Havilland Mosquito night-fighters of 169 Squadron RAF took off from their base at Great Massingham, Norfolk, on a formation flight exercise (probably the only time the entire Sqn flew together).

Flying Mosquito NF MkXIX, serial no. MM637 was pilot Flight Sergeant Douglas P Williams (aged 27) and his Navigator/Radar operator, Flight Sergeant Kenneth Rhoden (aged 21).

F/Sgt Williams had, before joining the RAF in 1940, worked in the grocery department of the Co-Operative Society in his native Oxford, where also in 1942, he married Peggy Williams (nee Cooke). F/Sgt Rhoden, before joining the RAF in 1942, had been a member of the Air Training Corps (ATC) in his native Atherton and was employed by Messrs. Gregsons of Tyldesley near Wigan.

Around 16:30hrs, the Squadron were navigating their way through the rough weather persisting over Sussex. At 16:40, the flight lost sight of Williams' and Rhoden's plane. They had struck the South Downs near the Dyke road, 1 mile south of the Saddlescombe junction. In the crash, both F/Sgts Williams and Rhoden were killed. These two young men and their Mosquito night-fighter were the last to be lost by RAF Bomber Command in the War.



F/Sgt Douglas Williams
Pilot

F/Sgt Kenneth Rhoden
Navigator/Radar Operator

Later that day at 18:00hrs, a C46 Curtiss 'Commando' transport plane took off from RAF Membury in Berkshire loaded with stores, timber and mail bound for the Allied airbase A-73 'Royaume' in France. The Commando belonged to the 314th Troop Carrier Squadron, 349th Troop Carrier Group of the US 9th Army Air Force.



The crew flying Commando serial no. 44-77861 that day were pilot 1st Lieutenant Sydney J Gibson from Newkirk Oklahoma (aged 22), co-pilot 2nd Lieutenant Victor L Young from Muskegon County Michigan (aged 22), crew-chief Staff

Sergeant Daniel M Campbell from Maiden North Carolina (aged 20) where he lived with his wife Laura and Radio Operator S/Sgt James F Maloney from Pleasantville New York where he lived with his wife Verna.



1st Lt. Sydney Gibson (Pilot).



2nd Lt. Victor Young (Co-Pilot)

By 18:35, they were flying due south over Sussex on a track toward Beachy Head, a well-known navigation point for Allied Aircrew. As the flight continued through the low cloud mist and fog that had persisted throughout the day, the Crew were seemingly unaware of the South Downs terrain that lay beneath them.

At 18:40, Sgt Charles Hopkins (Hailsham/Polegate Police) received a telephone call reporting a crashed aircraft near the Long Man of Wilmington, an area known to be less than 600 ft in height. On arrival at the scene, surrounded by a dense fog, Sgt Hopkins and Dr Shaw of Hailsham were confronted with a scene of devastation. The aircraft was a complete wreck, with timber strewn all around and mail blowing in the wind. The four crew were found around 50 yards in front of the wreckage; two found deceased, the other two passing away while attempts were made to convey them to the RAF ambulance, which arrived on the scene from the Friston aerodrome.

I would like to end this article by giving thanks, not just to the young men mentioned above, but to the people and Organisations who helped with my research. Janine Harrington, Secretary of RAF 100 Group Assn, whose help and information made much of my research possible. Former F/Sgt John Beeching of 169 Sqn RAF and Mr Ted Crudgington, whose father was Groundcrew with 169 Sqn, both of whom provided fascinating and often humorous insights into life in the air and on the ground with the Squadron. The Oxfordshire History Centre and Wigan Archives and Local Studies. The Keep at Falmer and local Historian Peter Longstaff-Tyrell; Curator to the American Air Museum Duxford Emily Charles and the ABMC Cambridge.

Help from across the Atlantic came from Historian Richard Mullaly of Muskegon County Michigan and Skip Farrow, who provided a photograph of S/Sgt Maloney's headstone at the Cambridge American Cemetery.

To Bruce Keever, great-nephew of S/Sgt Daniel M Campbell and Brenda Lentz (nee Campbell), daughter of S/Sgt Campbell, born only four months after her father's tragic loss, many thanks for the information shared regarding S/Sgt Campbell's life.

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In Memory...

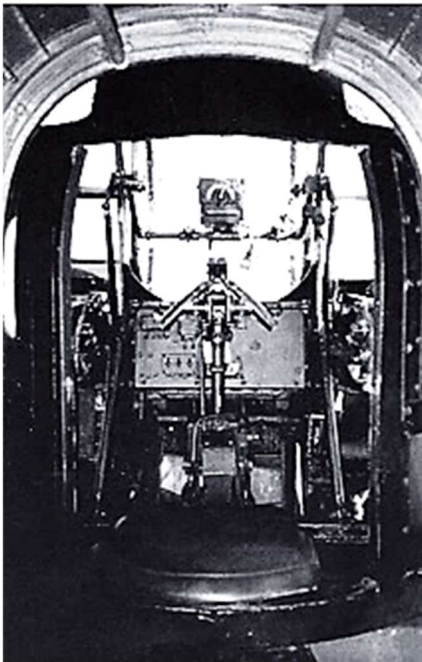
LAST WORD

When we were moving towards finishing the restoration of the Control Tower at RAF North Creake, we decided we needed a Celebration. This was to take two forms: a public party with an 'official' Opening and, the day before, a gathering of Veterans of RAF North Creake and their families. We'd reached out to as many as we could find at the time and were delighted to welcome seven to the Tower on a sunny day in June 2014. It was a wonderful afternoon.

Among them was a tall upright gentleman who introduced himself as David Butler. Sadly, this was the only time we were to meet him, but he formed a very strong impression on us. First, was his height – you could imagine in his day he was an incredibly impressive figure and he still carried himself very well.



The Tower seems to have a strange effect on Veterans – as they get out of their cars their age is very apparent, but as they approach the Tower the years seem to start falling away. Their steps become more determined, their posture, somehow, more upright. Even more so as they exchanged stories with people, they had shared so much with 70 years earlier - this was David.



On realising, through conversation, that he was a Rear Gunner, we expressed our astonishment that his height allowed him to fit in the rear turret, shown left. He told us, in a charming and unassuming way that, *'it was a bit cramped'*, the practical impact, he told us was that he had to leave the parachute in the fuselage of the plane. He shared with us a number of reminiscences but one in particular stayed with us; he remembered how he'd undertaken an experiment on a flight test.

He said he'd decided to test how long it would take him to turn the turret, reach for the parachute, turn the turret back and ready the parachute for use. The conclusion he'd reached from this exercise was that he needed to rely solely on his pilot to keep them out of trouble as there certainly wasn't sufficient time in an emergency for a parachute to be of any use – *'purely decoration'* he told us.

It's hard for me to conceive that anyone can do as many sorties as David and come through it so apparently unaffected. I feel certain it must have had some impact, but we witnessed none of it. The person we met seemed kind-hearted, warm, interested and interesting. No hint of bitterness for a generation that, in many cases, failed to remember these young men were fighting for a

Nation's survival in a total war, losing so many comrades in the process, while fighting the most evil philosophy humankind has ever devised. Instead, there seemed a quiet, dignified determination and with it he declared, despite his stick 'let's go to the roof' and up to the roof of the Control Tower we went.



(David is 2nd from the left, taken North Creake)

It was a privilege to meet David and we'll honour him in the best way there is - by not forgetting. David, we thank you.

Nigel Morter
The Control Tower
North Creake

Mr David Butler DFC ... a Tribute



David and Edna both made an impression. They were hospitable, genuine and very welcoming. Meeting them for the first time back in 2016, Janine and I were treated to a lovely lunch in their home in Histon and over subsequent years there was always tea and cake while chatting in the sun-lit Lounge of their home. He was quietly spoken ... until he got excited and the passion in his voice punched the air for a few moments and you were left in no

doubt that he was trying to tell you something!

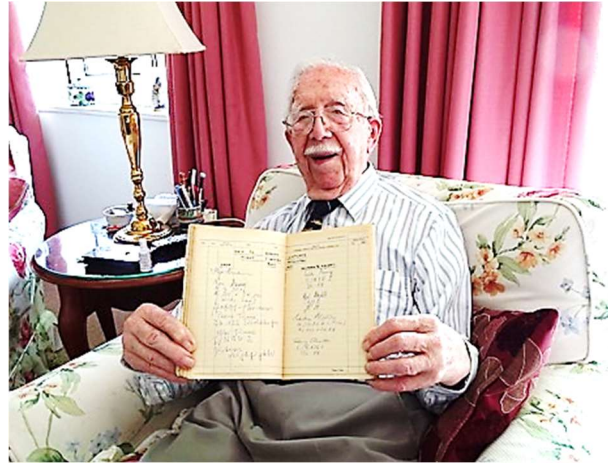
David saw service first with 12 Squadron during the War, flying as a Rear Gunner in Lancasters, then accepted an invitation for posting to an obscure airfield way out in the middle of the Norfolk countryside for something special – at a place called North Creake. He knew that



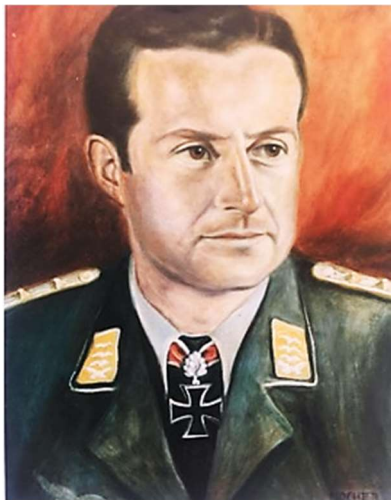
there was something different about this Unit even before he got there and so his time with 171 began.

He stayed on after the war, pursuing a career in the RAF and retired as a Squadron Leader.

His most treasured wartime possession is his Logbook. It was personally signed by a number of former Luftwaffe Night Fighter pilots at their September 1987 Reunion, to which David was invited.



The signatories include: Hajo Hermann, father of the Luftwaffe Night Fighter Force and Martin Becker, who flying his Me110 with his crew, brought down nine four-engine Bombers on the night of 14/15 March 1945.



*"To my friend and erstwhile enemy, David Butler,
for the wonderful memory of the Nightfighter
meeting Sobenheim at Jabo-Geshwader 35 and
Commemoration Memorial Kingelbach.*

*Horrido,
Martin Becker."*

[Martin Becker iv/NJG, seen left](#)

David later became firm friends with the very men who years before whose job it was to hunt him in the darkness and to destroy him. He and his crew as part of 171 Squadron, were tasked to assist in their own special way, as part of a far larger Command, whose role it was to rain destruction on the Reich and win the Peace.

David was a man of gentleness, integrity and grace. Yet he was determined and did not resile from the duty he was called to perform and made no apologies for the war he was called to wage.

He made a lasting impression on me and I miss him.

Stuart Borlase

SQUADRON LEADER DAVID BUTLER DFC



During wartime, David served his second Tour under RAF 100 Group at North Creake with 171 Squadron, on jamming and bombing operations, completing 30 Ops.

I value times shared with David and wife Edna. Stuart and I felt like Royalty, provided with such a wonderful spread of food, brought into the front room on a tea trolley. Initially, we became friends through the written word, but then as I joined Stuart in visiting Veterans and their families, we always looked forward to sharing time with this lovely couple.

I was delighted when Stuart was able to bring Martin on one occasion to film David as he shared wartime experiences.

Having written many books including the voices of those who served in RAF 100 Group, filming adds another dimension. It makes a real difference to be able to see the person sharing his own story. In watching it unfold, it can enable a relationship to be formed while watching them on screen.

In turn, that film as with many others; will become part of a Project dedicated to RAF 100 Group and the U.S. 36th Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force, ultimately leading to a Documentary aimed at reaching a much wider audience to honour the secret work they were jointly involved in during the Second World War.

David, I will always hold you in high regard. You are one of Life's treasures and will remain so.

God Bless You. Rest in Peace,

Janine xx

JOSEPH HENRY SAYERS



Joe served in RAF 100 Group during wartime as a Leading Aircraftsman (LAC) in 192 Squadron. I knew him for many years, and we kept up a steady stream of letters to one another. Over that time, I held the image of a true gentleman – kind, gentle, generous.

A few years ago, it was such a delight to finally meet this man and his wife Mary in their home thanks to Stuart, to share tea and cake while talking in real time about his life experiences. Always, he would deny he had done anything special. He wasn't a hero, he said. He never flew planes. In humble simple words he explained that he didn't fly

operations or get to gather with Pilots and Navigators. He believed them to be the true heroes who made a difference, ultimately bringing the war to an early conclusion, saving so many thousands of lives.



Wartime painting of Joe

I remember one time when we sat talking together. In response to his belief that he really hadn't done anything special, I tried to find words to alter his perception of what he had done to raise his self-worth.

I said that as a Leading Aircraftsman, he was responsible for hundreds of lives and therefore had a vital role in the war effort. Without his knowledge and expertise, aircraft wouldn't have been able to fly. Without planes in the sky there was nothing to fight the enemy apart from on the ground. While Germany was producing more and more sophisticated flying machines, we needed to keep pace, and while aircraft were being built, they still needed people to maintain them, as well as installing secret equipment aboard.

For the first time I saw a glimmer, a tear even, as he realised maybe he truly *had* made a difference, he *had* done something worthwhile, *he was worthy* of a place in RAF 100 (Bomber Support) Group, and could be proud of what he had achieved. Every time he used his skills, he

was ensuring as far as he was able, both the airworthiness of the craft and the safety of aircrews, who needed to trust the integrity of the machine of which they were a part.

Joe, you will always have a special place in my heart. I WILL remember you. To me, you are a Hero. It was always such a joy to spend time with you and Mary. Yes, your final years were frustrating and difficult with a loss of sight and hearing. But that in no way changed the man I knew and loved, who used his skills in the service of his country, who loved music and the arts, and who was a true and loving husband, a firm and valued friend.

God Bless You, Joe

*Janine*xx



With my whole heart I agree with Janine's tribute and could not have put it any better - there is simply no need to say more. Our hearts go out to Mary... and Edna, who after so many years, find themselves alone. To us you will always remain dear and very special people.

Joe will be missed.

Stuart

Ron and Betty Johnson – A Family tribute



Ron and Betty got married on July 27, 1946 in St Mary's Church, Isleworth, Middlesex.

Betty, 21 years old that March, looks absolutely radiant in the bridal dress her dad Harry had somehow sourced, & Ron, 24 years old that January, looks very happy, and very haggard and a lot older than his years, in his RAF uniform that hangs awkwardly around the thin figure it can't quite camouflage. They would spend the next 67 years together, most of it at 6 Worton Road, Isleworth.

They moved in when the house was built in 1949 and left 60 years later for a brief last few years in Hove. Ron died in 2013 - and Betty decided it was time to say goodbye this January, just before the pandemic set in.

Both Ron and Betty were born in working class Fulham. Ron was born in 1922, the second son of Ern and Lil. Ern worked as a musician in a dance band and Lil worked as a cleaner to augment Ern's erratic income.

Betty was born Elizabeth Marion Elsie Jenner in 1925, the eldest of three daughters of Harry and Elsie Jenner. Harry worked with his brothers in the building firm they ran.

She loved and admired her dad with great intensity. The feeling was mutual: she remembered he would always say "*Go on, Bet, you can do it,*" whenever she was faced with a challenge. At 11, Harry paid for her to go to the modestly prestigious Godolphin School, in Hammersmith. On the first, she found herself standing next to a tall, cool girl. "*Shall we be friends?*" asked the tall, cool girl. Betty said yes and Eileen "*Rodgie*" Rogers remained her official best friend for the next 82 years.

Ron loved football. His position was goalkeeper. He got taken along to make up the numbers in the chorus in Hounslow Amateur Dramatic Society productions of '*Gilbert & Sullivan*' by his elder brother Ernie and I found to my surprise when sorting through his papers, that according to his Report Book, he spent his time at Spring Grove Grammar School permanently close to the bottom of the class. But as the 30s moved relentlessly towards war, Ron was also – thanks to the Church Youth Group he attended, I think – reading poets like Spender, MacNeice and Cornford and developing a love for the paintings of Van Gogh. It was at this Youth Group that he first met the victims of Fascism face to face. The organiser had invited German refugees to speak to the fellowship group. Ron always said how he always remembered their dark haunted eyes. This was why, I think, when war was declared, Ron volunteered immediately for the RAF, because he believed Fascism had to be opposed.

When he was old enough to be Called Up, Ron was sent for training in Canada. In Canada he played football (in goal, again), learned to fly in a Tiger Moth, but decided to be a Navigator rather than a Pilot, and spent Christmas 1943 in New York, where he managed to see Paul Robeson play Othello. He was sent to the Bahamas as part of Coastal Command, and crewed up with the young men he would fly with in '*J Johnnie*', who would be forever part of his story, Betty's story, and my

story too. Tommy, Rex, Brian, George & Ronnie were all RCAF Canadians, then there was another Ron, who was RAF. After a brief time, flying B23 Mitchells, they moved on to "*the pregnant duck*", the B24 Liberator.

Betty, meanwhile, had started working in a bank. When war was declared, the Godolphin School evacuated to the countryside. Betty stayed in Hounslow, did a secretarial course and got a job with Nat West at Bell Corner, at the western end of Hounslow High Street. Her dad built a shelter in the garden. Betty remembers how one night, she stood in Harry and Elsie's little back garden watching wave after wave after wave of German bombers passing overhead. She learned next day they had been on their way to demolish Coventry. Betty later got a job working at a bank in St James. She remembered fire watching, nights spent in the bank to protect the building if it was hit by incendiaries. This got you tokens for breakfast and Betty found a favourite café where they served real eggs to Officers. Betty also remembered one night in the blackout, tumbling from the darkness through a curtain into a club, to find seated at every table, airmen horrendously disfigured with burns. They were Polish airmen, she said.



Ron returned to England, via Canada, in Summer 1944, he and his crew were posted to 223 Squadron, part of RAF 100 Group, stationed at Oulton in Norfolk. It was pretty much in the middle of nowhere, but from there, he and his crew were sent to "*Confound & Destroy*" the German air defences. On December 6th, a bitter winter night, '*J Johnnie*' was the only plane that carried out its mission, flying to Berlin and back, Ron navigating by dead reckoning there and back through headwinds of 120 mph. One engine died on the return journey and, by the time they eventually landed, diverted to Manston, one engine had less than a cupful of fuel left. On December 6th now, we always raise a glass to '*J Johnnie*'.

'*J Johnnie*' was shot down in the early hours of February 21, 1945. Two Night Fighters caught up with them south east of Dortmund. Pilot Tommy Thompson and co-pilot Jack "*Jock*" Kendall managed to regain control of the burning Liberator and fly it for as long as they could for as far as they could so as many of their comrades could bale out as possible. Upper Gunner Ron Woods stayed at his gun, firing continually at attackers as the plane went down. Ron found his escape hatch jammed. He kicked it again and again, until it opened. Rear Gunner Ted never wore his parachute. His friends last saw him trying to put it on. He was found in a field by German villagers; he looked like he was just asleep, clutching his parachute to his chest in his lifeless hands. In rough line with Bomber Command's casualty rate of a 44.4% death rate, 5 of the crew survived and 6 didn't. If you go to look at their gravestones in the Military cemetery in Venray, Holland, there they are, in a line. Tommy's gravestone looks a little lonely, I think, because there's no loving inscription on it. No-one is older than 25 ...

Ron always called Betty a "*Perseverator*". Ron had been posted '*missing believed killed*'. But as the war drew to a close, Betty would go to the cinema, to watch the PATHE Newsreels, convinced she would see Ron's face amongst the thousands of prisoners and refugees and homeless and displaced persons filmed adrift in the ruins of Europe.

For most of April, Ron was part of a column of thousands of POWs force-marched around Germany. The column was attacked by American fighter planes, guarded by Hitler Youth.

He wrote in his Memoir *"A Navigator's Tale"* they *"summed up for us all that was evil about the Hitler regime."* This experience, on top of interrogation and imprisonment, left him stick thin, sick and wasted. A decade later, children in his class would still affectionately nickname him *"Nobby"* because his hands were so thin the knuckles stuck out like knobs. He was also still having the nightmares then too, leaping out of bed believing it was still the early hours of February 21st, 1945 and he was trapped in the burning Liberator. After being shot down, I think he only ever went in a lift once, when he had to take my wife Meeta to hospital in the middle of the night when our second son Arvin arrived 5 weeks early. Ron finally returned to England on May 11th. Nobody – apart from Betty – was expecting to see him again.

I think that although it wasn't entirely happily ever after, Ron and Betty had a good life together. Ron decided to train as a teacher – the Welfare State saw a massive expansion of education. Rather like a boy who was apparently never any good at maths becoming the man who could navigate a Liberator safely home by dead reckoning through 120 mph headwinds, this might seem something of a surprise decision, but Ron knew all about what it was like to be overlooked and so made an inspirational teacher, later Head Teacher.



'J Johnnie' and 223 kept us all company, though, through remembered Anniversaries and odd coincidences. The first time Ron and Betty travelled abroad after the war (Betty had previously done a day trip to Boulogne from Eastbourne, aged 14, in the summer of 1939. Hitler's about to invade Poland and my mum goes on a boat to France!) was to visit me in 1974 when I was working in Mainz. Later, we learned the fighters that shot Ron down probably came from a Mainz aerodrome too.

Ron and Betty were proud to attend the Commemoration Events at Oulton in 1994 and Ron read his moving poem for his crewmates, *'In Memoriam'*. They both enjoyed contact with people that shared a connection with 223 Squadron.

Writer Richard Forder presented Ron with an aileron from *'J Johnnie'*. There were phone calls to new friends and old, though now only Rex in Canada remains of the *'J Johnnie'* crew, still feeling a little uneasy that he missed the last flight of *'J Johnnie'* due to a bad bronchial infection. His replacement, Des, was one of the unlucky six.



Rex Arnett in 2016

Ron was in and out of hospital for the last 14 years of his life; he would usually modestly tell the doctors at some point that he had been in the RAF. I was there in 2013 when the Doctor said they could try to prolong Ron's life by a few months with a procedure. Ron thought about it and declined. He thought he had probably gone on long enough and he talked about being in the RAF. *"Well, you certainly outlived Hitler,"* said the Doctor and we all smiled.

Ironically, it was the war that killed him; the critical factor was Ron's failing kidney function. One was completely covered in scar tissue. *"How did that happen, do you know?"* asked the Doctor. Ron said he didn't, but I had read his Memoir, which only mentions in passing and a post-war piece of creative writing that is much more explicit, that his captors had interrogated him, viciously, vengefully, seriously, with their boots.

Ron was my best friend. He still is. Pretty much anything I have got right is down to his unconditional kindness and love. He also loved my Mum with unconditional devotion and continued to write deeply moving, finely polished poetry to her until he died. I had a more difficult relationship with Betty. I am not sure anybody other than her Dad ever quite lived up to her great expectations. She had a very quick intelligence and a great energy that were never quite well-served by leaving school at 14, getting married at 21 and being a housewife, then mother in the 1950s.

When Betty did eventually get a job worthy of her, working as Secretary to the Education Advisers for the cheerfully multicultural London Borough of Hounslow, they got her an MBE the year she retired in 1989. I think Ron and Betty are in many ways, pretty good representatives of the best of their generation. The war did such damage, but they set about making things better, trying to make sense of the physical, emotional, moral and spiritual devastation done from Coventry to Dresden, from Auschwitz to Hiroshima. 223 and Oulton were Betty's favourite passwords as – with the patient help of our sons – she worked out how to use things like phone banking and iPads in her eighties.

At Ron's cremation, I helped carry his coffin in, to the soundtrack from the film *"The Great Escape"*. At Betty's cremation, her grandsons Hari and Arv shouldered her coffin and she entered the chapel to Al Bowley singing *"Who's Taking You Home Tonight?"*, because Betty said that was the song they always played at the end of the dances she went to.

We'd had a lovely Christmas Day 2019. We had gone round to Betty's flat for lunch and stayed till gone tea time. She took a turn for the worse a week later. The paramedics arrived and took Betty to Haywards Heath, because the Royal Sussex Hospital was already full. The NHS were simply superb; Betty gradually shut down and they supported her with kindness, care and dignity. This was the humanity for which the boys of 223 had climbed into those terrible coffins, night after night after night, knowing the odds of not coming back, a humanity for all, young, old, the saying hello and the saying goodbye. Unconditional kindness and care and dignity for all.

Thank you.

*'We that are young
Shall never see so much
Nor live so long.'*

Robb Johnson(son)
robbjrobb@yahoo.co.uk

ELIZABETH JOHNSON MBE

Betty, as she liked to be known, was the wife of Ron Johnson a Flt/Lt Navigator with 223 Squadron, based at RAF Oulton in wartime. Ron was a part of RAF 100 Group Association since its beginnings, liaising with Martin Bowman and sister Eileen Boorman. Ron and Betty attended the first Reunion in 1994 when Oulton Memorial was dedicated. In honour of the occasion, Ron wrote this special poem and read it aloud in memory of his crew lost in June 1945. He spoke the words with great dignity, remembering every one of them, rewinding the film of Life, playing through events of that time:

IN MEMORIAM

*Who loved life,
Just as much as I
Nor wished to fight
Or fighting wished to die?
How shall I tell of you my friends?
What songs shall satisfy*

*My heart? What verses
Penetrate the crowd
Of platitudes when crude
Pen-scribblings shroud
With drooping laurels your simple dignity?
The stars were lost in cloud*

*The night I left you
Four miles high
Above the German mountains
Falling from the sky
Like flaming Autumn leaves
There was no time to say goodbye*

*Familiar voices heard
Above the engines roar
Our flying kit flung carelessly
Across the crew-room floor
Are murals for my inner walls
Point, counterpoint of war*

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

Ron W Johnson

223 Squadron, RAF Oulton

June 1945: in memory of J-Johnny and his crew

Ron and Betty were regular attendees at Reunions, until Ron was unable to travel. He had not enjoyed good health for many years, and his death aged 91 was a merciful release according to Betty. It should also be said that Ron was author of an early book about his Squadron in which he produced a personal account of his wartime RAF Service – '*A Navigator's Tale*'. Richard Forder visited the site of Ron's aircraft which crashed, TS520 (J) and was able to present him with a piece of it which he framed in a glass case.

Betty and I kept in regular contact through the years, by letter and phone, and it was always a pleasure to hear her soft voice on the phone including me in her life, sharing everyday goings-on.

God Bless you, Betty. I miss our phone calls so much. You were always such a valued part of my life.

Love you,
Janine xx



At home: Ron & Betty Johnson

EVELYN BARTRAM

Hello Janine,

Thanks for your letter from RAF 100 GROUP ASSOCIATION. Your kind words are much appreciated.

Evelyn, my mother, passed away on the 4th April, after poor health for one reason or another for a couple of years, but she kept going till her last few days. She always said she had a full and enjoyable life. She worked hard and thoroughly enjoyed her time working as a cook and domestic help at Stody Estate. During this period, she also supported Len, her husband, as he did research into local airfields and then his involvement with yourselves. She continued to support Len's work after his passing in 2002. She will be sorely missed by her family who she was very proud of, including myself, her daughter Julie, her 4 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. She always put other people first and would help anyone as much as she could, and all her neighbours have expressed how much she will be missed.

Regards

Ian Bartram(son)

ianbartram@yahoo.co.uk

...from Janine ...



Evelyn's beloved husband Len was said to be '*an inspiration*' by Martin and sister Eileen as they slowly drew the Association together in its infancy. Len became Historian in the early days, with an encyclopaedic knowledge of civil and Military aviation in Norfolk. He wrote many booklets on RAF Stations in Norfolk written in the same rich Norfolk dialect he spoke, and following his death, it was a personal honour for me to be asked by Evelyn to reproduce these booklets and add to them, forming a collection of twelve through which Len's voice can still be heard clear and strong. Len was also the first person to write to my mother and I, formally bringing us into the Association, putting us in touch with so many other members who knew and served

alongside Mum's beloved wartime fiancé Navigator/Special Operator Vic Vinnell and his Canadian Mosquito Pilot Jack Fisher, serving in 192 Squadron at RAF Foulsham.

Those initial beginnings blossomed into a firm and very special friendship between Evelyn, Len and I. It was particularly after Len's death that Evelyn would regularly telephone me and write. She was a sweet, kind, gentle, very giving and warm woman whom I loved dearly.

In later years, following May Reunions, Stuart and I would visit with her and share tea together.

Often, we spoke of the early days. She missed Len so much and was always eager to share stories of the past.

The last time we visited Evelyn she took us on a tour of Stody Gardens where she and Len had lived and worked for over 40 years. Len was a Queen's Scholar who studied forestry in Sweden, receiving a Gold Medal from Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.



He also holds the record for the greatest number of trees planted in one day. However, if the subject was ever mentioned in his presence, with a shy smile he would simply say: *'It was sandy soil'*.

Despite all he achieved through his lifetime, he remained a shy, modest man, yet his knowledge knew no bounds. Even in later years he was still learning, still pushing the boundaries of what he already knew to discover more.

Evelyn, I miss your warmth and friendship. Fond memories will always be with me. I like to think you are now back beside your beloved husband Len, living in a place so much better than the one we are living in today.

Thank you for all the teas we shared, for all the walks and talks, your gentleness and concern over my welfare. You remain in that special place in my heart.

God Bless You,

Janine xx





Friends we've had to say Goodbye to ...

Martin Albert Staunton & sister Eileen Boorman (nee Staunton), Len & Evelyn Bartram

Founders of RAF 100 Group Association – remembered in love

2019

- 169 Squadron** Brian Odam, Groundcrew, died 7 Feb 2019. Missed & loved by daughter Rosemary.
- 171 Squadron** Jim 'Ginger' Fawcett died 1 March 2019. Remembered with love by wife Ruth and family.
- 171 Squadron** Henry 'Harry' Freegard died 8 July 2019. Lovingly remembered by son Alan & family.
- 214 Squadron** Flt Lt Vern L. Scantleton DFC died 11 April 2019. Received Legion D'Honneur in 2015
- 214 Squadron** WAAF MT Driver Daphne Rowlands serving w Win & Irene: 'The 3 Musketeers'. Much loved xx
- 192 Squadron** Flt/Lt Signals Officer Arthur Baxter Reid died Saturday 14 Sept 2019. Remembered with love by son Arthur & Linda & family; together with all who knew him. God Bless, till we meet again x
- 199 Squadron** Flt Lt Roy H. Smith, Navigator died 1 Aug 2019. Remembered in love by family.
- USAAF 36th BS** Donald Burch, Lt Boehm crew. Remembered with love by all who knew him.
- USAAF 36th BS** John 'Des' Howarth, Lt McCarthy crew in Lt. Boehm's B24 'Beast of Bourbon' when it crashed on Feb. 19, 1945. Died 9.6.2019. Remembered in love by friend David, sons Brian, Barry, & family.
- USAAF 36th BS** Sgt Jack Hope, Tail Gunner in Lt Brookshire crew, remembered with love by wife & family.

2020

- Co-Founder** Evelyn Bartram, co-founder of this Association w husband Len, Martin & Eileen; has died. Loved & remembered by family & all who knew her.
- 192 Squadron** Warrant Officer Frank Elliott died 16 April 2020. Missed & loved by son Paul & family, together with all in the Association who knew him.
- 192 Squadron** Leading Aircraftsman Joseph Henry Sayers. Joe died in January this year and is loved and missed by wife Mary and family, as well as his worldwide Family of Kindred Spirits.
- 171 Squadron** Squadron Leader David Butler DFC, Rear Gunner, died 2 February. Missed by wife Edna and family, together with all who knew him.



Oulton Memorial

A time to meet old friends ... and new
Veterans, families, and friends

WELCOME TO OUR 2021 REUNION

21– 23 May (we hope...all being well)

Remembrance, Recognition & Reconciliation:

From the **International Bomber Command Centre** in Lincolnshire we hope to introduce our Guest Speaker for next year's Reunion Dinner.

At this stage we are not sure exactly who it will be but trust we will be able to share that with you at the very latest in the 2021 Spring magazine.

So... stay tuned!

100 Group Order of Battle

SQD	AIRCRAFT	1st 100 GROUP OPERATION	BASE	SORTIES, LOSSES ROLL
192 US RCM	Mosquito, Halifax Wellington Lightnings	Dec 1943 Aug 44 – March 45	Foulsham	2171/5 Losses Electronic Intel/Elint
141	Beaufighters, Mosquito	Dec 1943	West Raynham	1214/11 Losses 80 EA, 58 Trains, 7 Ships Destroyed
219/239	Mosquito	Jan 1944	West Raynham	1394/9 Losses 51 En AC Destroyed
515	Mosquito	March 1944	Little Snoring	1366/21 losses 29 En AC Destroyed
169	Mosquito	Jan 1944	Little Snoring, Great Massingham	1247/13 Losses 25 En AC + 1 V1 Destroyed
214	Fortress	April 1944	Sculthorpe, Oulton	1225/13 Losses Electronic Jamming
199	Stirling, Halifax	May 1944	North Creak	1707/6 Losses Electronic Jamming
157	Mosquito	May 1944	Swannington West Malling	1336/6 Losses 37 En AC +39 V1 Destroyed
85	Mosquito	June 1944	Swannington West Malling	1190/7 Losses 71 En AC+30 V1 Destroyed
23	Mosquito	July 1944	Little Snoring	1067/8 Losses 18 En AC Destroyed
223	Liberator Fortress	Sept 1944	Oulton	625/3 Losses Electronic Jamming
171	Stirling, Halifax	Sept 1944	North Creak	1583/4 Losses Electronic Jamming
462 RAAF	Halifax	Jan 1945	Foulsham	621/7 Losses Jamming/Windows
36 & 803 BS	Boeing B-17F P38	Jan 1944	Sculthorpe, Oulton	1211/0 Losses Electronic Jamming
857 & 858 BS	Consolidated B-24G	Jan 1944	Oulton	280/2 Losses Electronic Jamming

Created by Stuart Borlase. Edited by Janine Harrington.

**Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped bring this magazine together
with such a special collection of rare and wonderful stories and photographs:**

**To Arthur and Linda Reid,
for continuing to support our Association by taking on the arduous task of enveloping,
labelling and posting the magazine to the four corners of the Globe,**

**To David & Tracey Mortimer and their team
for their diligence and dedication in printing this magazine.**

Prontaprint, Scarborough, North Yorkshire

You are all so very much appreciated.