



Confound & Destroy

The magazine of RAF 100 Group Association



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EDITOR'S PAGE



Dearest Kindred Spirits,

Imagine my delight on opening my front door one August day to welcome dear Stan Forsyth DFC and his two daughters Linda and Alison! His daughters only told him where he was going 15 minutes before arriving. It had been a long trip ... and a surprise! Suddenly, he was bursting with energy, as was I, at the prospect of sharing an afternoon talking and sharing with firm friends, followed by an evening meal. They stayed in the area until the following day when they returned to the Lake District where they were enjoying a welcome break. A heartfelt thanks to Linda and Alison, for arranging this surprise trip. Such an enjoyable day shared xxx

Stan's visit couldn't have been better timed. The day before, Julia Read, granddaughter of Squadron Leader John Herbert Crotch, sent through photos and writings, and in sharing these with Stan it was wonderful to know he remembered him. Julia has since bought the Operations Record Book for the *Tirpitz* period from the National Archives, detailing the detachment of 5 Halifaxes her grandfather led from Foulsham to Lossiemouth on the hunt for the *Tirpitz*. Stan went on to receive his DFC for identifying its hiding place. The Record Book lists Halifax 'P' F/O MacDonald with its crew including Special Operator W/O Forsyth. John Croft's story is shared in this magazine.

John Crotch's son, daughter, and granddaughter have become Association members, and it's a wonderful feeling to know the legacy of RAF 100 Group lives on. Next May, many will join us at our 2018 Reunion, the planning of which began as the last one finished. For the first time ever, we have a female Speaker: Flt Lt. Pauline Petch of 42F (Kings Lynn) Squadron Air Training Corps. She will be assisted by two of her Cadets, presenting their Standard alongside our own, together with hopefully, one of the fibreglass model aircraft they are placing on airfields in Norfolk as part of a two-year Project marking the 100th Anniversary of the R.A.F. More about this in our Spring 2018 edition, which will also focus on the unique event happening at Haveringland on 11th November this year, with an impressive list of attendees sharing in the Anniversary of the closure of RAF Swannington, including family and friends of people who served there.

To mark 100 years of the Royal Air Force, I have produced a Special Edition RAF 100 Group 2018 Wall Calendar. Many members put their names forward for one of these, and it is now available, priced £10 + postage and packing. Each month depicts crews and people who served under RAF 100 Group and the 36BS in wartime, with 2 months dedicated to the WAAFs. I am always being asked if we have ladies in our Association, and this is living proof that this is so!



As always, I thank you all for your many letters, phone calls, cards, and writings. I never tire of reading wartime stories and experiences. Every post brings something new, which sets me on a new course of discovery. And yes, I am still writing. My 27th book should be published and out for the New Year. You remain as ever my Kindred Spirit Family, and I wish every one of you a very Happy and Special Christmas, with the New Year bringing joy, happiness, and worldwide peace which we so desperately need at this time.

*Love & Hugs,
Janine xx*

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

There has been a welcome trend in recent years to mark Remembrance Day with greater significance – two minutes silence has been observed on the 11th November rather than just ceremonies being held on the nearest Sunday. In countless towns and villages throughout Britain there are services at local memorials where we remember those from our own communities who made the ultimate sacrifice. Here in the North of Anglesey we are about to embark on the restoration of our own war memorial and I know that other communities are similarly safeguarding their memorials for future generations.

This year I have been invited to represent our Association at the Service of Remembrance at the Church of St. Peter in Haverlingland, Norfolk. As I mentioned in the Autumn magazine, this year is the seventieth anniversary of the closure of RAF Swannington which was one of 100 Group's airfields and was situated on Haverlingland Estate with a dispersal area adjacent to the church. Although I have never visited Swannington I do have an indirect link to it. Following the crash landing of Mosquito DZ535 in September 1944 my father, who was Navigator, was hospitalised for almost two years. His pilot Gordon (Nobbie) Clark DFC was less seriously injured and returned to flying duties. I suppose like many RAF crew they had become good friends. In February 1946 Nobbie Clark wrote the following to my father who was in hospital in Ely.

'My Dear Dobbs

Thank you for my own letter of some time back and please excuse this somewhat belated reply but I've been more than a little 'browned off' since my return to the active Air Force. I've been at home now for nearly four weeks waiting for a flying posting of some sort and I am just about fed up with it.

As you know I was posted to Little Snoring and I arrived to find the place deserted except for the presence of two dilapidated Flight Lieutenants who didn't view my arrival with very much favour. 100 Group H.Q. had officially closed down two days previously and although they were still in charge they wouldn't have anything to do with me, making the excuse that 'officially they were not here'.

So next day I went to Swannington which is, if anything, little better. Having fooled around there for about a week they decided I was more of a nuisance than help so they sent me on leave pending a flying posting. And here I have been ever since. It looks as though I have been forgotten for good especially as they have omitted to send me my extra ration cards.

However, I made the best use I could of my visit to Norfolk where I saw Eddie, Sister 'Strud' who I took out to dinner, and the folks at Briston (where the Mosquito crashed). At Briston I couldn't even recognise the spot where we made contact with 'immoveable object'. They all asked after you and I said you were even 'skunkier' than ever.

Swannington is a dead loss and I don't think it will ever be necessary for you to go there. You can do all the necessary by letter.'

This is a very interesting contemporary account of what life was like in the immediate aftermath of war as the RAF migrated from the extreme effort of war to peacetime in a very austere Britain. Nobbie Clark's next posting was to Belfast where again he flew Mosquitos. In 1947 he attended the Empire Test Pilot's course at Farnborough and as a Squadron Leader was a test pilot at Boscombe Down. He was awarded a Queen's Commendation in 1953 shortly after being killed in a mid-air collision at Boscombe. I am hoping I will find my Swannington experience more enjoyable than his.

With very best wishes, Roger Dobson

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roger Dobson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

8th AIR FORCE NEWS



Dear Friends,



As we enter the Winter and Christmas season, I cannot help but wonder what went through the minds of my father and mother, their family and friends, during this festive season in WWII. Most certainly, all our soldiers wanted to be at home in comfort celebration with their loved ones. Can one really imagine the sense of loneliness that they endured? Those in the RAF 100 Group and the 8AF's 36th Bomb Squadron with their electronic warfare air operations continued in a strong determined pace. The bloody Battle of the Bulge was raging in Ardennes and Hitler's vengeance weapons, the V1 and V2 rockets, still rained deadly on England. It is, of course, very difficult if not impossible to fit into their mindset during those horrific days, yet reading their words reveal their inner strengths and makes me proud of their service and sacrifice.

The well-known entertainer Bing Crosby delivered an especially moving radio broadcast at Christmas time:

'On our fighting front there are no silent nights. But there are plenty of holy nights. I'm sure that all of us are offering up prayers to the gallant gang of American kids to whom anything that has to do with peace still seems very far away. My own thoughts are a lot humbler than they were last year. I've talked and lived and chowed with these boys – boys, whose courage and faith are something that beggars' description. Seeing those GIs kneel in a muddy pasture in France brought back to my mind the lines of an old familiar prayer that I'd heard somewhere along the line back home: 'God grant unto us an early peace and victory founded on justice and instil into the hearts and minds of men everywhere a firm sense of purpose to live forever in peace and goodwill toward all.'

During his stay with the 36th Gremlins there at Station 113 Cheddington, B24 Tail Gunner S/Sgt Iredell Hutton wrote in his diary of fun and entertainment on seeing Bing:

'Sack (Andrew Sturm, Hutton's buddy and radio operator on the JIGS UP) came over and told us that Bing Crosby was over at Alconbury tonight. So, we took the liberty run over to Alconbury about 7pm. Got there about 7.45. Bing came in about 8.30. He had two of the most beautiful girls with him I have ever seen. He had a comedian with him. His name was Joe De Rise. He was very good. Bing sang a lot of songs. He signed off by singing 'White Christmas'. He said that he hoped we were all home by then. Bing's hair is about all gone. He is still a good showman.'



Andrew Sturm & Iredell Hutton

Lt. Robert 'Bud' Thomas, the 36BS co-pilot for the F/O Bert Young crew who flew 42 jamming missions, wrote of his scary Christmas Day 1944 take-off from Cheddington:

'A cold morning that started as usual – dark as hell with a 300ft ceiling! Morgan, our Engineer, and I checked the wings for ice. A little frost build-up, but not too bad. The wings and tail section had already been de-iced. We taxied out, Chief (F/O Young) was flying instruments, and I as co-pilot was observing visual. Morgan was standing between us as he usually did on take-off and landings.'



Lt. Robert 'Bud' Thomas

Just as we got to airspeed and began our lift off, I could see by the runway lights that we were in a bank to the left. About that time, Chief shouted that the flight indicator had toppled. When I glanced over and saw it, I was positive we were indeed in a steep bank to the left!! I screamed to Bert to fly the needle and ball and racked full ailerons and rudder to the right. We fought for the controls for a few seconds, until Chief realised that we were in a bank to the left. By then, we were in the fog, of course, and were at about stall speed. In what seemed to be a long time, but was really only seconds, we got our heads together and Chief took back the controls. We were then well off course, and I think we both realised we were dangerously low and heading for the hills to the left of our runway. As we regained air speed, I really sweated and prayed that we would clear that ridge. We shouldn't have, but we did! We cleared out on top of the cloud bank at about 8000ft. We headed south-southeast out over the Channel into a beautiful sunlit morning. Chief and I both agreed that there must have been ice on that left wing. I leaned back and lit a cigarette, then I tuned in Armed Forces Radio. A bunch of British soldiers were singing 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, Let Nothing You Dismay'. That has been my favourite Christmas carol to this day.'

Lt. Wayne Bailey, the Navigator in the same F/O Young crew, also remembered Christmas time:

'One of the most heart-warming sights I ever saw was at Christmas time. We had been orbiting over the Bulge area and were returning home. It was the first day with good flying weather and it was crystal clear. All the planes in the area had been primed and were ready to go. Everywhere I looked there were airplanes, not single airplanes, but large groups. They were flying above and below, heavy bombers, light bombers and fighters. You name it, and it was there. There will never ever be an assemblage like that again.'



Lt. Wayne Bailey



Sgt. Art Ledtke

For Sgt. Art Ledtke, a 36th Radar Operator in Lt. Royce Kittle's crew, Christmas was a special day for two important reasons. He wrote:

'December 25, 1944

Christmas ... and my 28th birthday. We have been loafing around, getting familiar with the area, equipment, etc. The day dawned with all the trees and buildings covered with hoar frost, no snow. We were fed extra good chow today, visited a few pubs near the Base, had a few beers, felt a little homesickness, and that was Christmas.'

Undoubtedly, many of our soldiers found the comfort of fellowship with their buddies on the Base, in local pubs, with the British citizenry, as well as in nearby churches. At this Winter time in WWII, peace was still very illusive as the destruction and bloodshed of war dragged on. The losses suffered by the RAF and the 8AF would continue.

Stephen Hutton

Author: *'Squadron of Deception'*

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God Bless Them All!!

LETTERS PAGES

NOTE from Editor: I have received many emails, letters and phone calls regarding the contents of these first three letters. All I will say is that I completely understand your sentiments, and have passed on your concerns to Roger Dobson, Association Chairman.

Dear Janine,

Regarding the missing pages in the magazine (which began with the Autumn edition) – Final Postings pages, Committee Page, and RAF 100 Group Table usually displayed at the back. I think the omissions are a real tragedy and certainly not justifiable. Please feel free to let those concerned know that here is one old veteran who strongly opposes such a move. If it is a matter of printing costs, I am sure none of us would object to an increase in annual subscriptions, which are pretty low as it is. This magazine is about **US**, and we should be the ones being listened to. When the Autumn magazine arrived yesterday, particularly having no 'Final Postings' pages included; it sure seems weird to me. The omission of our old mates' names is utterly incomprehensible. Paper is cheap. Look at the volume of well-printed rubbish on glossy paper we get through our letterbox slots every day, all free of charge! May I please officially request a printed answer as to why these couple of pages in particular (Final Postings) wound up on the '*streng verboten*' list, together with the Committee Page and RAF 100 Group Table?

John

John Beeching
169 Squadron, RAF Great Massingham, RAF 100 Group
New Zealand
jaybeebee@clear.net.nz



Dear Janine,

Many thanks for your letter, the 2018 RAF 100 Group Calendar, and Autumn magazine received today. I was concerned to note there are missing pages which are important to members. As such, they should be brought back and included in the Winter edition. They are needed because of their content – Committee Page with faces of the Committee, RAF 100 Group Table at the back, and Final Postings, a Memorial to those who have died. This last because we should remember them, and the list be kept up to date so that RAF 100 Group aren't forgotten ... published so that members are aware of those of our own who are no longer with us. None of us are getting any younger. Listed under Squadrons in which they served, it brings us together, showing we are not alone, but part of something far greater than ourselves ...

Eddy

Eddy Tomblinson



Hello Janine,

... It's a shame about the missing pages. I believe we need to be able to see who is running the Association. Having their photos helps to know them better, to put faces to names. They should be published in the magazine. I feel subscriptions should go up if it means taking these kinds of drastic measures. Just seeing them in the Summer edition isn't enough. At Christmas especially, people are thinking of loved ones, past friends now gone, and Final Postings are a Memorial ...

A. N. Other



Hello Janine,

Thank you very much for the Autumn magazine and inclusion of my father's story. One article covers the 36th Bomb Squadron based at Cheddington, Bucks. Remarkably, before moving to Leicestershire, we lived about four miles from there, and in the late 60s, my friends and I often spent time mooching around for traces of its former life. Now I don't know whether any members create model aircraft as a hobby, but due to many requests, Airfix have released a newly-tooled model of the Fortress Mk III belonging to 100 Group. One can be made into an aircraft from 223 Squadron, coded B6G, serial no: KJ121; or 214 Squadron 'Take it Easy' Malay States coded BLUE, serial no: KJ/G177. There is some debate over that last one, so if any member can offer proof as to whether it was KJ/G177 or KG117 it would settle the matter.

To update you on my quest for information concerning my father, Roy Spencer Beasley, an LAC2 Electrician; I have emailed RAF Disclosures (for the second time!) regarding my father's post-war visits to RAF Stations. True to form, I've not heard back from them, not even an acknowledgement. I understand they have many things to deal with, and my enquiry is not a priority. But it's a big disappointment to us as we were sure they would find something ... so continue to live in hope. However, I have just found something among my late father's papers at the time of his marriage to my Mum. He was not living on camp, but in a private house in a village adjacent to the airfield. Can't see why that would be. He also sat exams for Junior Leader. I am going to re-visit the National Archives to see if there are any clues as to what else 14 OTU was doing. The last time I went, some of the 14 OTU Logs were out on loan to the Air Ministry!

My best regards,

Clive

Clive Beasley

cjb7gos@gmail.com



Hello Janine,



Two Mosquito pilots 70 years apart. Keith is an airline pilot but usually gets pulled in to fly the exotic stuff. He is remarkably proficient, and I can see why they always call upon him. This picture, by the way, was taken at an Air Show, 'Wings over Wairarapa' a couple of years ago and the Mosquito is the one now in Jerry Yagen's collection in Virginia Beach, USA. The second one built at Ardmore is now based in Seattle, USA but there are another two being built up in Auckland, both destined for overseas customers.

Keith Skilling w John Beeching next to Mosquito

John

John Beeching,

veteran of 169 Squadron, Great Massingham



Hello Malcolm (Osborn) re Autumn Edition,

How very exciting to read your story in the Autumn issue of '*Confound & Destroy*'. Our correspondence since proves what wonderful repercussions can come from the magazine – bringing people together with potentially important information and meaningful contributions! What a thrill it was for me to read your very moving tale and discover that I actually had in my collection, a photo that might prove of significant value to you.

Your story shared in the magazine was truly an eye-opener as I learned of your walk about the grounds of a Medieval Castle Mound in 1971 with friends, and the surprise discovery of the back of William Meyran's watch. Seeing your photo of William and then the picture of the crash site is what really caught me. I noticed the annotations at the bottom of your crash photo and was floored! During the many years of research for my book '*Squadron of Deception*', one of the Radar Operators in the 36th



Squadron, Arthur 'Art' Ledtke, sent me information from his diary and many of his photos. I'll have you know that one of these was a snap showing the wreckage area of the FF B17 #746, albeit from another angle! *Wow!! Can you believe it!?! Anyway, I wanted you to know of my discovery and send along Ledtke's photo to you just in case you hadn't seen it. Unfortunately, Art did not have any information about the crash and could not identify what type of aircraft it was, or to what Squadron it was assigned. (Photo shown above)*

So then finally, let me thank you for providing me background information to the copy of the Ledtke B17 crash photo that I've had for so many years. Thanks to you, now I know the story behind it. As you can see, I've copied Janine this message so she can know her good deeds lend further to spreading the story of those valiant Allied airmen who fought and died for our freedom. I thank you for your grand efforts as well!

With kind regards,

Stephen Hutton

Author '*Squadron of Deception*'

8th Air Force Historical Society Unit Contact

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Dear Janine and Stephen,

I am sat here totally emotionally shocked by the photo you so kindly shared, Stephen, one I have never seen before, bringing home the full horror of the aftermath of that horrendous take-off crash. My researches into the history of the 8th AAF and the 398th Bombardment Group (H) have led to many 'Eighth Air Force coincidences' as we call them, but this has left me absolutely stunned. Another coincidence, a very dear WW2 RAF Veteran friend who served at Ford Airfield in Sussex working on Mosquito and Spitfire Merlin engines, passed away two weeks ago. He was the partner of Peggy Wells, who played me the video of William L. Meyran, and yesterday we



attended his Memorial Service at St Georges Church, Anstey, right next to the Castle Mound where the Meyran B-17G PFF crashed. I took some photographs which I will email to you both with a little explanation of them.

A group of us met at The Angel Hotel, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, back in 1973 at the invitation of three good friends of ours. We formed 'Friends of the Eighth' (FOTE) and the membership grew rapidly, halcyon days, so much excitement, so many historians, researchers. Roger Freeman was an enthusiastic attendee at all our meetings and we all helped him in our respective ways with his researches leading to '*The Mighty Eighth War Diaries*' and '*The Mighty Eighth War Manual*'. He had already written '*The Mighty Eighth*' of course. A Veteran pilot from the 466th Bombardment Group, John Woolnough, came to a couple of our meetings in those early days. He was so impressed with our enthusiasm, when he went back home to the USA, he formed the '8th Air Force Historical Society', always crediting FOTE as the catalyst for 8th AFHS. We welcomed and hosted the first 8th AFHS organised UK Reunion in 1976 – Wow! All those relatively young Veterans. We were totally awestruck!

Pat Carty came to many of our FOTE meetings. I remember him so well, especially his passion for Cheddington, of course. I have his book, plus yours also, Stephen.

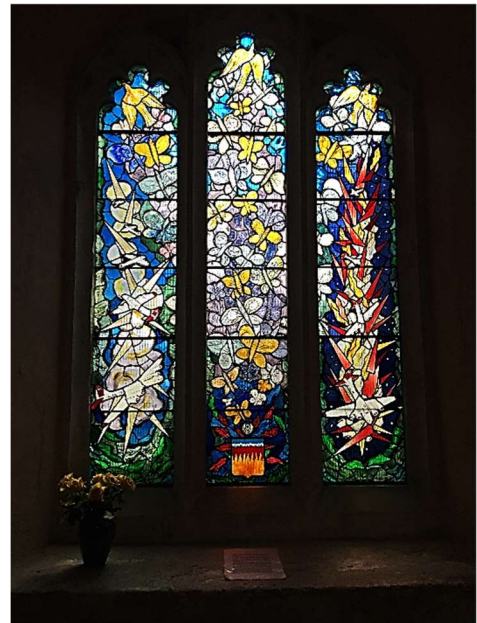
My late father used to pass all his aviation books to me as a voracious 10-year-old reader, take me to Farnborough Air Shows from 1953. Wow! They were truly magical days for me. So, I grew up with a passion for the Battle of Britain, RAF Bomber Command, and from '*Target Over Germany*' a lifelong interest in the 'Mighty 8th'.

We deliberately arrived early at Anstey yesterday so that I could stand with Joyce and quietly take photos at this incredible peaceful spot. Looking at the Castle Mound, it was hard to imagine the photo you sent me, all those young lives suddenly sacrificed. Luckily, the bombs did not explode, but the crash's blast was sufficient to blow out all the Medieval stained-glass windows on the north aisle of the nave. However, there is one tiny fragment surviving, and I have tried to show it in a photo for you. I also photographed the beautiful stained-glass Memorial window dedicated to the 398th Bomb Group, with the names of all those who paid the ultimate sacrifice etched into the wings of the butterflies ...

Malcolm

Malcolm Osborn

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Stephen Hutton also has among his collection of memorabilia two cigarette cases dated 1942, from sailors who served on the '*Tirpitz*'. He thought Stan Forsyth would be particularly interested, and sent them to me once he knew Stan had been to visit Filey, N Yorkshire, with his daughters.
EDITOR



Hello Janine,

Thanks for the Autumn edition of the magazine. It was packed with memories, and a very interesting read. I loved that closing poem, very sad and poignant. Thanks for my inclusion too. I was interested in John Beeching's remarks about uniforms worn in Ken's group photo re some of their ages and lack of a white cap band if they were trainees. Well, I've dug out this recent photo (seen right). It shows Ken on the left, with two pals, all wearing said white cap bands. I sent it to John B. for his perusal, suggesting a possible explanation for the more mature-looking men in the original photo in the Autumn magazine. If they were from RAF Hixon, Stafford (*evidenced by the RAF Christmas card sent by Ken to his sister Beryl in 1940 from Hixon, seen left*), I've



discovered Hixon was a Night Bombing Training Centre, with Wellington bombers. Further, Ken was a crew member in those, and I have a colour photo of a painting showing about 10 Wellingtons rowed up at Hixon. Back to the older guys, what if they were former Trainers in radio and navigation, etc recruited to train younger guys? They would still have to go through the initial training again surely? And they would still need to wear a uniform????

Again, in the Autumn magazine, I sent a picture of the interior of an aircraft, asking if anyone knew what the plane might be. Recently, I watched a short clip of a Lancaster on YouTube and saw a glimpse of the interior where the Wireless Operator would sit. The position was poorly lit, as is the picture I sent. But it looked similar, so perhaps that is the answer to that question ... a Lancaster.

Regarding looking back with fondness of those dangerous times, I have heard that expressed several times. The adrenalin and excitement mixed with fear is something we civvies can only imagine ... Ken's brother, Stanley Raymond Croft, shot down in August 1940 in a Coastal Command Avro Anson, told me that returning to civvy street post-war was a traumatic shock. He couldn't cope with the change. Having been a hero – awarded the MBE on his return from POW camps, being feted, the glamour of the uniform, etc – returning to his old job as a Tool Maker and Engineer in a noisy, oily factory, was not what he wanted. Four years after the war, he married his brother Ken's widow Irene, and they moved to Canada where he died just short of his 90th birthday. I have a good folder of documents, photos and letters from his POW Camp Commandant's son, who Stan visited in Germany in the 1980s, and where Stan was asked to give a lecture to a local school about his experience as a POW.

[Warrant Officer Sgt Stanley Raymond Croft \(632266\)](#) was the second son of William George Croft and Amy Jackson. He was born on 16 September 1921 in Worcester. He joined as a volunteer to the RAF at the outbreak of war aged eighteen years old, probably in late 1939. He joined 500 Squadron (Coastal Command) stationed at Detling, Kent. On 8 August 1940, Wireless Operator Stanley R. Croft was one of a four-man crew flying in a Mk 1 Anson off the coast of Holland. While observing German preparations for the expected planned invasion of Britain, their plane was hit by coastal AA fire. Only two of the four-man crew survived – Stanley and Pilot Officer (78530) J. B. G. Brockway. They both became prisoners of war for the duration. The photo shows a very young Stanley at the front of the group of POWs wearing a knitted jumper.



Stan Croft shown front of POWs in knitted jumper

**A typed transcription of Kenneth Norman Joseph Croft's
last penned letter to his brother Stanley Raymond Croft,
a POW in Germany at the time of writing.
Dated 6.1.1945**

*Dear Stan, just a line in case my ordinary letter does not reach you, which I wrote a couple of days ago to let you know how things are. Dad as you probably know is at home with a bad leg, but not so serious and will most likely have it better in a few days. May and the children are getting along okay, also Beryl is thinking of getting all hitched up. I have asked my Misses to drop you a line, so if you get a letter from Mrs K. Croft don't panic, as it's quite legal having been married for nearly a month (it seems like years) now. Anyway, as soon as I get more photos done I am going to send one for you to nail over your bed – and say some guys get all the luck! It seems from your latest letter we have had, written about four to five months ago, you are still very active as regards the opposite sex, writing by proxy eh? It won't half shake you if they are 50 a piece, won't it? Still, can't blame the lad for trying. Well chiefly, how's tricks these days? I see you have attained the age of 23 safely, quite a big lad now. Next thing we know, you will be smoking. Talking of gaspers, I hope you have received my small donations, will send some more as soon as I can, perhaps 5 Woodbines and a match. Hope you and your other pals are okay. Maybe I'll be seeing you home soon, so bring the 15/- you borrowed four and a half years ago back with you. Cheerio, all the best.
Yours lendingly, Ken and Irene.*



The letter was returned, marked 'Undelivered'. With the war coming to an end, the system of allowing and delivering POW letters and parcels became impossible to maintain, and such items were eventually returned to sender. Due to Ken's death 3 May 1945, the two brothers never met again, and Stan received Ken's letter in early summer 1945.

Stan can be seen on the left, striding along Mostyn Street, Llandudno, North Wales, during the summer of 1945 ... finally a free man, post-war. **Editor comments: 'No wonder he has such a wonderful jaunty walk, moving quickly and purposefully to wherever it is he's going!! Love that picture!'**

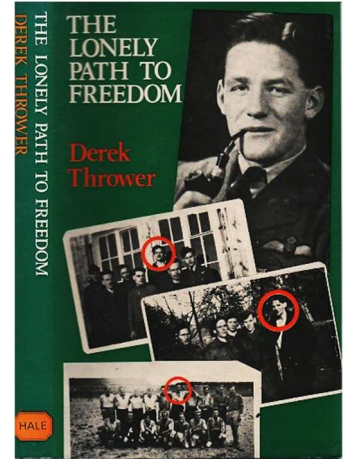
Kenneth Norman Joseph Croft was the younger brother of Stanley Raymond Croft. He too was born in Worcester city, on 21 August 1922. Less than one year between them, but Ken always looked up to his 'big brother' Stanley and hero-worshipped him. The day he became 18, Ken joined



the RAF at the Recruiting Booth in Birmingham, having cycled the 26 miles from Worcester because he couldn't find his Birth Certificate, and they wouldn't believe his age.

Two heroic brothers, one survived after being shot down, rescued at sea by Dutch fishermen, but then captured and spending the war experiencing the horrors of POW Camps, and the long march west to freedom in 1945. The other tragically, having survived five years of active front-line duty, died on the very last punitive air raid on Germany, five days from war's end.

The book entitled '*The Lonely Path to Freedom*' was written by Stan Croft's fellow detainee, the tall Derek Thrower. He was a pre-war teacher who went back to the education system, and later wrote this account of his escape to the west. It is a very exciting story, jam packed with life and threatening incidents. I am amazed that, to my knowledge, nobody to date has based a film or TV series on it. I have to say, though, that there are times within the story when a little imaginative license has been applied to make things flow. NOT that I am qualified to draw such conclusions ... but it's still a great read! It was Irene Croft who told me about this book, and she said that Stan and Derek did meet up during their visit to the UK in the 1980s.



Stan and fellow POWs, with German Guards, evacuated the Camp before the Russians arrived, and headed west. They were to become part of the infamous '*Long Trek West*' when they joined up with a much larger group. In horrendous winter conditions, no proper clothing, very little food and water, of course many died. They had to scavenge for any food, water and shelter, wherever they could find it. Eventually, their captors/guards deserted them and made off west, no doubt fearing the encroaching Russians, and hoping to surrender to the Allies. Meanwhile Stan with many others, made it to an Allied kind of clearing point in Holland. After health checks, Stan was flown to the UK and later interviewed, giving an official Report of all his experiences. As yet, I have not been able to get through the MOD's maze-like system to see his actual official Report. Surely, all these years on, it cannot still be considered sensitive material?



To Ken in memory
of cousin Jack killed
R.A.F. April 21st 1943.
Aged 21 years.

[John \(Jack\) Hicken, Flight Sgt \(so I believe\), 1143768](#); was born in 1921 in Birmingham. He was the only son of Harry Hicken and Florence Maud Hicken (Jackson). She was the sister of Amy Jackson, mother of the two Croft brothers Stanley and Kenneth ... which made the three boys cousins. I remember them as Uncle Jack and Aunty Floss, who were very kind to us cousins, especially as I realise now it was at a time when their only son had died. But my challenge now is about finding out where John, their son, died. Rumour has it he was killed when his plane crashed during an exercise while his Squadron was in Canada. In most cases, Military fatalities are buried where they fell. Yet there is a Memorial Stone for John at the family grave in Little Aston Village, north of Birmingham. Perhaps there are no remains there, although on the 'Memory Card' for John it clearly states: '*interred in family grave*'. The National Record Office for Births, Marriages and Deaths tell me such information would not be recorded. So, I have a question – would RAF Records reveal this information ... or even now would it be considered 'Secret'? One other way might be to contact the Church and have them check Records of Internment, I have all the dates and names, etc. Any further suggestions welcome!

[Phil Croft](#) philip.croft@virgin.net



NOTE: Linda Foye, a relative of Ron Toffield, recently visited the City of Norwich Aviation Museum seeking information about him. Her letter explains further:

My almost-Uncle was delighted to hear about my visit and see photographs. He used to work as a Surveyor in which capacity he visited Bylaugh Hall near East Dereham many years ago and was intrigued by the extensive cellars/tunnels under the main house. He was told these had some very hush-hush Military history and he shouldn't ask questions. He then found mention of these in a book I took home: *'Confounding the Reich'* which said these tunnels were the Communication Centre for 100 Group in which his brother, Ron Toffield, flew on the Liberator. Alan and his brother were close until Ron's death, but he has fairly scant knowledge of exactly what Ron did during the war. We would both be extremely interested to learn any more about that time. I look forward to hearing whatever information comes your way.

Richard Forder, co-author of *'Special Ops Liberators: 223 (Bomber Support) Squadron, 100 Group, and the Electronic War'*, provides further insight into the wartime experience of Ron Toffield:

Dear Janine,

Here is the information I have on Sgt R. C. Toffield such as it is. This 10 AGS Syndicate photo includes Toffield, and was given to me many years ago by Rod Vowler who is happy for you to use it in the magazine. Sgt Toffield sadly, is the latest loss from the 38 Air Gunners that were posted from 10 AGS RAF Walney Island to 223 Squadron in late August 1944 to reform 223 Squadron in 100 Group. Sgt Toffield was a great pal of fellow Air Gunner the late Sgt H. C. 'Bill' Sykes. As you will see from the photo they were in the same Syndicate at 10 AGS. The two friends were allocated to Flt Lt Croft's crew as Waist Gunners. They were both ever-present throughout their tours, flying on all 39 of the Croft crew ops before they became tour-expired in April 1945. Their last op with the Squadron was flown on the night of 16/17, a Jostle Patrol over Schwandorf. I never had contact with Ron Toffield, and as far as I know, he was never a member of RAF 100 Group Association, but I will always remember his face and name. The Syndicate photograph is particularly interesting as it features ten 223 Squadron names, some of whom will be well remembered by 100 Group Association members – Alan Tonkin, Tom Wrigley, Len Vowler, Rob Turpie, Ted Whittaker, Peter Witts, J. J. Traill, 'Tommy' Tucker, 'Bill' Sykes, and Ron Toffield.



Alan E. Tonkin; Tom Wrigley, Len Vowler, P. Edwards,
W. R. Turpie, E. E. 'Ted' Whittaker, Instructor: Sgt Trobridge, Peter Witts, J. J. Traill,
G. N. 'Tommy' Tucker, H. C. 'Bill' Sykes, J. Taylor, R. C. Toffield
Photo credited to Rod Vowler



Dear Janine,

Enclosed is a news cutting of Doug Radcliffe's death. He had been ill for a while:

'Doug Radcliffe, born on 21st November 1923 – President and long-time Secretary of the RAF Bomber Command Association – has died on 7th September 2017 aged 93 years.

Doug made it his life's work that the sacrifice made by 55,573 should never be forgotten. He continued to give educational tours about the role of Bomber Command three times a week at the RAF Museum. His idea was behind the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, which the Queen unveiled in 2012. Seeing the Memorial built was for him a dream come true, and he was awarded the MBE for his service to the Bomber Command Association.

In wartime, he flew as a Wireless Operator, and he said it was the Pilot and Rear Gunner of his first crew he was thinking about, both buried in Germany, when the Memorial was revealed, as they, like so many thousands of others, had nothing to honour and remember them. He had joined the RAF just before his eighteenth birthday, after Broadcasting House was bombed during the Blitz in October 1940, and seven ladies were killed in the Music Library. He had been working there as a messenger boy, but went into training as a Wireless Operator and put on a Gunnery course. Sent to South Africa in 1943 where a depleted Squadron urgently had need of men, the plane in which he was travelling crashed. The shoulder and back injuries he sustained resulted in a lengthy stay in hospital, but saved his life. At the end of the war, the crew's Pilot and Rear Gunner had been shot down and killed.

At the end of the war, he worked as a cine-technician for British film studios, becoming Secretary of Bomber Command Association in 1985; his role until this year when he was made President. He is survived by a son and daughter.'

Phil

Phil James MBE
Association President



Hi Janine,

Thank you very much for your quick and very full response ... I have attached a recent photo of Dad and a booklet my daughter put together a while back which gives a very brief overview. After leaving the RAF in 1946, Dad, being one of nine children, was right back into a working role in the family business, and family life deprived him of any further involvement after this. We lost Mum in January 2016 at a great age of 92, and at this point I, through a couple of contacts, got him involved with the RAF by joining the Association, but more importantly, we have been working with the RAF Benevolent Fund, joining book signing and attending photoshoots, etc. This has been great for him as it's found him a fresh interest, and I'm sure the RAF 100 Group Association will be good for him as well. The following is part of what my daughter put together, which will give more of his wartime experience with 192 Squadron at RAF Foulsham:

Best regards,

Arthur

Arthur Reid (son)

SHARED EXPERIENCES

ARTHUR BAXTER REID

by

Sarah & Arthur Reid



Taken beside a Halifax day before Arthur's last operation.

RAF Service

100 Group SD

Squadron: 192 Squadron (*This was considered a good omen being the same address as home!*)

Enlisted: Autumn 1940 (volunteer)

War ended in 1945. Was then posted to Ceylon for 12 months to open a new Wireless Communication Unit in *Kandy* (Camp name). This was to assist in bringing home all Far East members of the Forces.

Service Ceased: 1946

Ranks (in order of promotions):

AC2 VR (Aircraftman Second Class)

AC1 (Aircraftman First Class) – N/A

LAC (Leading Air Craftsman) – N/A

Sergeant

Flight Sergeant

Pilot Officer

Flying Officer

Flight Lieutenant

Duties: Enlisted as a Wireless Operator (W/OP) and an Air Gunner (WOPAG). From there Arthur progressed to F/LT Signals Officer. This rank he kept until he was demobbed in 1946.

Medals:

Aircrew Star - (for Aircrew only)

Atlantic Star – Coastal Command (for naval duties)

Italy Star – (in lieu of the DFC)

Bomber Command Medal

1939-1945 Medal

Good Conduct Medal/Service Medal



Squadron Information

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

- 8 Wellingtons
- 4 Halifax
- 3 Mosquito

Joining a Crew

On joining the RAF, recruits had to go through a 3-day Medical in a building in Edinburgh. At the time, everyone wanted to be a pilot and the one in charge. Unfortunately, Arthur, who would have quite liked to fly a plane, was unsuitable as his mathematics were insufficient. RAF aircrew were amongst the fittest men in the war, so it was a privilege for him to fly with them.

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

Training

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



Flight Sergeant Arthur B. Reid

The Crew

Normally a crew consisted of:

Pilot
Wireless Operator
Navigator
Rear Gunner
Front Gunner



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

Arthur joined 100 Group Special Duties (SD) and was in 192 Squadron. They had another member of crew who was a civilian, highly trained in the job he was doing. In Bomber Command there were only a few Squadrons specially trained to carry out a special duty of Airborne Counter Intelligence which was important top-secret work. This duty involved the seeking out of enemy frequencies (battle ships, planes, submarines) and jamming them. Doing so would nullify the enemy



communication. Incidentally this civilian expert was so top secret the aircrew flying with him were separated from him by a black cloth.

Arthur was a Communications man. It was on operations he jammed frequencies used by German fighters, battleships and submarines, aimed at co-ordinating attacks on British bombers. Without men like him attached to the highly secretive 192 Squadron, many more bombers would have been shot down before reaching their targets. He admits that, most of the time, missions he flew from RAF Foulsham in Norfolk were so secret he had no clear idea as to their purpose.

Coastal and Bomber Command

An operational tour consisted of 34 operations.

Bomber Command – flying into enemy territory.

Coastal Command – from Norway to the coast of Spain.

Operations

On one of the routine searches in the Bay of Biscay, a combined Airforce and Navy operation obtained the surrender of a German submarine. The naval Captain on searching the submarine was intrigued by a strange-looking instrument. He had no idea what this machine was used for, but brought it back to port. When handed over to the RAF, it turned out to be so valuable it became one the main reasons for the war ending. This machine was called the *Enigma Machine*. At the time no one had any idea what it was used for, but when given to the 'Back Room' civilian people, after much testing they discovered this was the machine by which all German Forces were given information. It took a long time to find its purpose, which was the German method of issuing information by code. This meant from then on nearly every German order was decoded by experts in Bletchley Park. At the same time the enemy never found out the RAF had broken their code.

It was a Mosquito from 192 Squadron that discovered *Peenemunde*, the area used to develop the V1 (flying bomb).

In total Arthur was credited for 34 operations. Every recruit kept a Log Book of operations. Daylight operations were marked in blue ink and night time operations in red. Arthur's first operation was with a 1,000 Bomber Raid on Cologne, in which 45 planes were lost.

Second operation: Flew from Feltwell - Lossiemouth – Thurso.

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

Dresden Raid

By this time, the Russians had invaded Germany. They demanded the British were not doing enough, so the RAF were sent on a raid. During this raid the RAF used 450 planes at night, while Americans bombed it in daylight with 250 planes. Dresden was an old city mainly built out of wood. When raids started there were so many Incendiary Bombs it caused a flash fire. After the Dresden raid, which caused so many lost lives, the then Prime Minister, Winston Churchill; who always stated his bombers were the main part of the war effort, turned his back on them. This was probably because a General Election was due, and he needed to distance himself from any involvement. During his victory speech when war ended he highly praised his '*Battle of Britain Fighters*' but not a word of praise for Bomber Command.



Status Raid – Nuremburg (home of the German Army)

This was one of the costliest raids in Bomber Command's history because everything went wrong that night. During the briefing, crews were told there would be heavy cloud to provide shelter, winds would be mild, temperatures normal. But when they arrived, skies were clear, winds had changed direction, and temperatures ice cold. This resulted in the heaviest loss Bomber Command had endured. In total, 97 planes were lost, and a further 100 crashed coming back or crashed on landing. The loss was so heavy that next morning, Bomber Command were in shock. The loss of any raid was felt most in the morning. At breakfast there would usually be 80 or so men, but when so many empty seats were seen, everyone knew a raid the night before had suffered heavy losses. The RAF was so efficient that, by lunch time, these seats were usually refilled. Arthur counted himself lucky to be part of the Special Duties Squadron. Most of their operations were carried out in daylight. Also, the civilian on board could speak German, and on a few occasions, when in close proximity to enemy planes, was able to divert them by giving false messages, which did not please their Controllers.

Off Duty

Once Arthur finished training, he was posted to Lossiemouth for a year in a ground Radio Station. One thing Arthur remembered, a plane required a test flight for a raid the next day. A pilot and Arthur were detailed to carry out this test. The pilot was anything but pleased with this, and after carrying out the test, decided to fly very low over the Officer's Mess. This was called a '*shoot up*'. Unfortunately, he overshot the runway, ending up in an adjacent field. The plane started burning; the pilot got out of his escape hatch leaving Arthur on his own. He eventually got out okay and gave a report of what happened. Next morning, the pilot was Court Marshalled and sent back to Canada. One night, one of the planes crashed just off the runway, but did not go on fire. Next morning, ground crews were sent to strip the plane and found the front gunner guns were gone. This was most unusual and puzzled everybody. They were sent to investigate in the village nearby, and eventually discovered them in a cottage mounted in a cross shape above the fireplace.

Finally:

The 1939 – 1945 conflict caused Bomber Command to lose the lives of over 55,000 men, with hundreds more missing. Arthur always said these men were the bravest of the brave and it was disgraceful how their country turned against them.

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

Arthur (veteran, 192 Squadron) & Sarah Reid

August 2010

In addition to the above, something further happened this year, reported in The Mail, 9th September 2017. Boulton Flying Academy are establishing a new Base in Scotland, and were seeking from the RAF Benevolent Fund a WWII Scottish veteran to assist them. As we do some work with the RAFBF, they approached Dad right away, and after a bit of thought, he volunteered to go for a flight in a Spitfire. It was his first flight since 1st June 1945, 72 years ago. He is 97 years old next month, so it came as an unforgettable day out.

For those with access to the internet, they can watch the day's full events as recorded on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwRAhU7Pppw&feature=youtu.be>



Veteran Arthur Reid after Spitfire ride



Veteran Arthur Reid with his family



At war's end, Flight Lieutenant Arthur Reid had stepped out of an Avro Anson believing he would never fly again. The date was 2 June 1945. That part of his life was over. He had lost friends, seen things he would never want to see again. Now all he needed was to get back to loved ones and live a 'normal' life.

Yet at 96 years old, this 192 Squadron Signals Officer was again airborne ... and in the cockpit of a Spitfire!

In seven decades, his family had been unable to convince him to return to the skies. So why now? The answer lies in the fact that it was his 'other family' who was asking ... his RAF Family. The RAF Benevolent Fund asked if Mr Reid would fly in a refurbished Spitfire, marking the launch of an operation aimed at giving Scots the opportunity to fly in classic fighter aircraft from Cumbernauld Airport, Lanarkshire. At first, he declined. But then, because it was on behalf of the RAF, he changed his mind.

He had faced appalling odds in wartime. There was a time when he came down with conjunctivitis and had to miss an operation with his crew. All who flew on that operation were killed and never returned home. There was also a time during a training exercise when the crew of a Wellington perished as its wings came off on landing, with the aircraft exploding. When his own Wellington came down moments later, the same fractures were discovered on its wings.

Just over a week on from being asked to participate, Arthur Reid climbed into the rear compartment of a two-seater version of the Spitfire. It was raining. But nothing was going to spoil his day. His family watched, wondering what he was thinking and how he felt. Then after a circular tour, he was back over the runway, chuckling, having enjoyed his trip.

Arthur Reid

(son)

arthurreid@live.co.uk



NOTE FROM EDITOR: Association Member Ted Cudgington has sent in material and photographs relating to 169 Squadron, RAF Great Massingham, where his father was a Fitter F11E. A HUGE 'thank you' to John Beeching, veteran of 169 Squadron, for helping decipher and transcribe these 2 official documents, as well as offering valued insight to photos which both Ted and I shared with him:



Dear Janine,

Herewith, first of two Combat Reports. As you cleverly surmised, it was a bit of a task, and I must confess there are a couple of words I just couldn't decipher, but in the main, the whole thing is pretty readable, and very interesting. I can add from personal experience that Flight Sergeant Francis was a very good pianist and used to provide the accompaniment for our drunken rowdy song sessions at The Royal Oak pub in Great Massingham. The pub is now a private dwelling, but should contain some interesting ghosts!!

PILOT'S PERSONAL REPORT (SERRATE COMBAT)

RAF 100 Group **STATION:** Great Massingham
26/27 August 1944
169(T) Mosquito VI 146

Captain W/O Turner
Navigator F/Sgt Francis

Planned Serrate Patrol Patrol?/T 52°7'N 09.3W Beacon Zebra 52.48N 1.017E
B***Heads – Patrol in this area for 60 mins at 20,000ft at 23.59 hours.

Planned Serrate Patrol Base – Haisboro – 52.50N 04.40E – Patrol – 52.50N
04.40E – Haisboro – Base

Took off from Great Massingham at 2215 hours on 26th August 1944 in Mosquito W, setting course immediately over base, crossing English and Enemy coasts on E.T.A. Nothing of note occurred until we reached position approx. 53.00N 03.00E at 23.45 at 20,000ft where considerable searchlight activity was observed to port. It was apparent that there was obviously aircraft of some sort concerned so we decided to investigate and forthwith 'mucked-in' with a Hun co-o(?) searchlight exercise. Occasional fleeting A.I. contacts were obtained all showing 3rd above and from this, the position of the cone, and the apparent firing of the colours of the day, it was assumed there were some aircraft, possibly single-engined, at about 25,000ft which made chances of interception very slim with a Mosquito VI. Having ourselves been coned on two occasions, and discretion being the better part of valour, we proceeded to lower to make an attempt to reach our scheduled patrol height.

At 00.30, nothing further having been seen, we turned on a reciprocal westerly course, and after about 20 minutes flying, obtained at a position 52.30N 08.50E at 00.50, 20,000ft, a forward A.I. contact at maximum range. Target appeared to be crossing port to starboard on estimated course of 030. We chased for approximately 5 minutes reducing height to 14,000ft where target was held in the ahead position at 1,000ft range. A visual was obtained and range reduced to 500ft where aircraft was positively identified as a Ju88. We allowed the target to pull away to 1,000 range, where we opened fire, the port engine immediately bursting into flames. Target turned gently starboard into a diving turn, leaving a long spiral of grey smoke. We followed, firing intermittently, observing trailers(?) all over the fuselage. A tremendous flash was seen as aircraft hit the ground at very approximately?? 09.20E at 00.57 hours.

A westerly course was set for base which was reached at 02.25 hours without further incident.

420 rounds of cannon fired. ??? film exposed.

Claimed 1 Ju88.

Weather: Starlit and clear W/O Turner



*169 Squadron B Flight, Great Massingham
Pamment, Close, Flt/Officer Southcott USAF, Hopkins,
?, Johnson, Bailey, Bone, Murphy, Miller,
Dix, Shipley, S/L E. Thorne, Staziker, Mills*



*169 Squadron A Flight, Great Massingham
P/O H. Reed, F/O Loomos, F/Lt Dunn, F/O Tidey, F/L Drew,
P/O Dils, F/Sgt Hayes, F/O P. Kemmis, F/Sgt Giles, F/O Watts, P/O Robinson, O/Farrell
F/Lt Connolly, F/S Woodison, S/Ldr J. A. H. Cooper, Cremer, F/O A. P. Mellows*

169 (B.S.) Squadron

Royal Air Force
GREAT MASSINGHAM
Norfolk
11th December 1944

FLYING BATTLE CASUALTY INVOLVING AIRCRAFT
MOSQUITO V1, NF.172. PILOT: F/S R. J. WARE
(1338162) & N/RAD: F/S B. R. SOPER (1607026)
THIS UNIT'S SIGNALS A.791 d/d 7 DEC 1944
AND A.792 d/d 7 DEC. 1944. R??R

I have the honour to refer to the above-mentioned signals and report on the accident to Mosquito VI. Aircraft No. NT172 pilot, R. J. Ware, Navigator/radio F/S B. R. Soper.

This crew was carrying out a high-level Bomber Support patrol on the night of 6th December 1944. Their estimated time of return was 22.14 that night and as



nothing was heard of this crew or aircraft till 11.00 hours on 12th December, they were presumed missing, which occasioned the despatch of signal A.791 date 7.12.44.

At approximately 11.00 hours, on 7.12.44, Operations advised that Mosquito aircraft N.T.172 had crashed near Malmedy and the crew were in hospital.

On the night of 9th December 1944, notification was received that Navigator/Radio, B. R. Soper, was on his way back to England in a Dakota and had been interrogated at Air Ministry, he reported to this unit yesterday.

The circumstances of this incident according to F/S Soper are as follows. While in the vicinity of Koblenz, at approximately 21.05 hours, and having completed their patrol, the Mosquito was fired upon by heavy flak, when at a height of approximately 15,000ft, the starboard engine lost all power through lack of fuel and could not be feathered. The port engine also appeared to have been affected as full power could not be obtained and the aircraft was unable to maintain height.

About 5 minutes afterwards, an enemy fighter opened fire from dead astern at extreme range. No strikes resulted on the Mosquito, but it became necessary to take violent action which resulted in considerable loss of height and turning to port with the good engine.

It then became apparent that the crew would have to abandon aircraft after a further attempt to feather the engine which was unsuccessful and having only jettisoned the drop tanks. The aircraft was heading to what was estimated to be the nearest part of the front line and the abandoning was delayed to the last possible minute. F/S Soper abandoned the aircraft at approximately 7,000ft and landed uninjured in a pine forest.

After taking a compass bearing, he made his way in a north-westerly direction, taking every precaution to avoid any patrols, having on one occasion ??? himself and blacken his face. He discovered a box which, on examination, proved to be a German ammunition container, but after approximately 6 hours, he discovered an American ammunition box in a disused gun position.

He then noticed what appeared to be sparks from a wood fire over a ?nt hill and finally was able to see the barrels of a heavy gun battery. He made his way very slowly and cautiously through entanglements and possibly ??? and finally reached the gun position of 134th Bombardment Group, ??? Battery, United States 3rd Army. Hearing American voices, he disclosed his identity, was given every assistance and was sent first to Spa then to Virbiers, finally being sent to Brussels and on 9th December was flown back in a Dakota via ???, and reported to P.R.C. London.

While in Brussels, he was able to ascertain the condition and whereabouts of his pilot and information has subsequently been received from ??? Flying Control that F/S Ware is in 32418 Noll Company Hospital and is suffering from shock and a broken leg. F/S Sloper also ascertained that the aircraft had crashed near Malmedy, hitting a house, exploded and completely burned out. It was being guarded by the American 2nd Army who were handing over to the 2nd T.A.F.

Next of kin in both cases have been advised as information has been forthcoming.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

Squadron Leader, Commanding
169(B.S) Squadron R.A.F.



John Beeching who served in 169 Squadron at RAF Great Massingham under RAF 100 Group adds:

As a matter of passing interest, Johnny Ware's Call Sign on 169 Squadron was Kaolin26. I took his place a few weeks later and became Kaolin26, which stayed with me until the Squadron disbanded in 1945. I visited the Wares in Bristol some years ago, as they happened to be good friends of the Waites – Doug Waite was Kaolin22. The Waites lived in Bridgewater, Somerset, which is not far away, and we had a little get together, you might say. This was quite a few years back and now both the Wares are dead. John married again after his first wife died, but fell ill and shifted to the big Sergeants' Mess in the sky. The Waites are still in the land of the living, and Wendy and I occasionally phone them. Doug and Enid came to New Zealand for the Wanaka Air Show many years ago, and we dropped in to see them when we were in the UK for the Bomber Command unveiling in Green Park.



Dear Ms Harrington,

Please excuse the intrusion. I am an amateur/hobbyist Military Researcher. I recently acquired a modest group of miniature medals of W. O. John Richard Buswell, RAF. I was tempted to the Group as this man was awarded the Order of the Red Star (USSR). The medals came with a box of ephemera, including his Service Record Book and a Citation for his Russian Order. The Citation was signed by B. L. Addison, and it didn't take long to find out that he was C/O of RAF 100 Group.

Warrant Officer John Richard Buswell X0513036 was born in 1912 in Avon, Somerset, where he spent his life until his death in 1994. He enlisted into the RAF in 1930, and served almost 37 years. He has the RAF LSGC Medal with Clasp. He also served in Malaya.

Buswell was recognised by the USSR for his services in 'Archangel' between 1941 – 1943. He was a highly skilled telegraphist with many qualifications, and a glowing conduct and skill entry, but was totally unrecognised by the Air Ministry, and as 'Archangel' was outside a recognised theatre, not even a 1939/45 Star!

I am still researching his RAF Service and have applied for his Records as he passed away in 1994. Only 24 awards of The Red Star were made, only 4 to the RAF, and only 1 to a Warrant Officer.

I thought this may be of interest to you, and if maybe WO Buswell was a member of RAF 100 Group Association? At the moment, I have no idea of the Units he served in, but hope to find out more when/if his Service Record arrives. I'll keep you posted.

Kind regards,

Don

Don Neal mem.omrs

Author: 'Guns & Bugles'

don.neal55@gmail.com



Hi Janine,

I see you are prominent in RAF 100 Group matters. My father served as a Navigator in 223 Squadron. He has a page on my website: <http://mwgthomas.com>. I have been reunited with the Operational charts and Logs of his flights, which were stranded in Miami after I moved to Belize. Lord Ashcroft has arranged with the Curator at the Imperial War Museum for me to send them



there. I am contacting you with some photos of what survives ... one of his photos was published in a book without permission. I hope you find them interesting. My father told me in great detail about his RAF Service, and according to his Log Book, he flew the first 1,000 Bomber raid to Cologne, as well as being a part of RAF 100 Group. In the interim, he served on 32 Squadron in Egypt.

My last operational duty was for the 1991 Gulf War at RAF High Wycombe when he stayed with me in the Officers' Mess for a visit. We were going to visit Oulton, but he died before we could do that.

A rider to his and my story is that, just before he died in 1992, I was a Staff Officer at RAF High Wycombe. When my father visited me for a week, staying in the Officers' Mess, he dined in the Bunker and visited Bomber Harris' office, sitting in his chair. A befitting culmination of his RAF Service. My appointment was the Battle Group Secretary in the Bunker.

Best regards,

Martyn Thomas

martynwg@gmail.com

SHARED EXPERIENCES



WILLIAM HERBERT GLYN THOMAS



by son

Martyn W. G. Thomas



Glyn was born on 1 November 1915 at 14 Water Street, Briton Ferry, Glamorgan; that street is now known as Ormond Street, Briton Ferry, Neath, Port Talbot. He matriculated to Neath Boys' Grammar School, Dwr-y-Felin, Neath, leaving to work at W. B. Trick, Son & Lloyd, a local Estate and Travel Agency.

W. B. Trick, Son & Lloyd (known as 'Tricks') was formed around 1871 by W. B. Trick, who was an entrepreneur and politician. 'Tricks' held the license for livestock auctions in the town of Neath and practised as real Estate Agents, which, through selling chattels of immigrants to the 'New World' of the USA, were appointed by the Cunard Steamship Company as Ticket Agents.

Glyn developed the Travel Agency part of this business, and in 1954, took over the business, practising both Estate Agents and Travel Agents. He further developed the Travel Agency, bringing



it to a fully licensed Travel Agency, including IATA and ABTA, selling the business to the P & O Shipping Company in 1970 (Bethell Gwyn). The family then opened a new Travel Agency – Clearway Travel Ltd – in Morriston, Swansea in 1973, selling their shares in 1978. Glyn retired in 1980 when Martyn moved the business with a new name, Trick & Thomas, to Alfred Street, West Glamorgan, Wales.

RAF SERVICE

During World War Two, Glyn served in the Royal Air Force as an Observer (Navigator), with his first operational flight as a student Navigator on the first 1,000 Bomber Raid to Koln, Germany, in 1942.

On the night of 30 May 1942, Glyn was a trainee Navigator in Vickers Wellington X9606 departing RAF Morton-in-the-Marsh at 23:13 for a 5-hour, 45-minute flight; this flight to Cologne in Germany, part of the first 1,000 Bomber Raid, and his first operational mission.

On completion of training, he served on Vickers Wellington Bombers on 38 Squadron, RAF, in Egypt. After Egypt, he returned to Britain by RAF Sunderland seaplane, being posted to RAF Limavady as an Instructor. His next posting was for conversion training to Consolidated B24 Liberator bombers in the Bahamas.

RAF 100 GROUP

On return to Britain, he was posted to 223 Squadron at RAF Oulton, Norfolk, as part of RAF 100 Group.



*RAF (ex USAAF) Consolidated B24 Liberator 'O' Orange 223 Sqn, RAF 100 Group
RAF Oulton 1944, courtesy: Martyn W. G. Thomas*



*Crew with RAF (ex USAAF) Consolidated B24 Liberator 'O' Orange 223 Sqn, RAF 100 Group
RAF Oulton 1944, courtesy: Martyn W. G. Thomas*

FAMILY & PROFESSION

Glyn married his wife Betty in 1951 at St Catherine's Church, Baglan. They had three children – Elisabeth, Lynne, and Martyn. Betty passed away on 22 December 1990. Glyn was a Rotarian and member of the travel organisation SKAL, gaining Honours in his studies with the Valuers and Auctioneers Institute as well as MTAI (Member of the Travel Agents Institute).

Glyn passed away on 1 May 1992.

Martyn W. G. Thomas



IN MEMORIAM

SQUADRON LEADER JOHN HERBERT CROTCH DFC

192 Squadron, RAF Foulsham

1912 – 1994

by

Julia Read (Granddaughter), Linda Read (Daughter)
Andrew Crotch (Son)



John Crotch had practised as a solicitor in Norwich since 1935, and was also a Freeman of the City of Norwich. He married his wife Mary in May 1937.

John volunteered to join the RAF in September 1940 (aged 28), and from November 1940 was stationed at No. 8 I.T.W (Initial Training Wing) Newquay – having had no previous flying experience. John left behind his wife Mary and daughter Linda (born 1939) at home.

John commenced practical flying training when he was stationed at No. 1 E.F.T.S. (Elementary Flying Training School) Hatfield in March 1941. Flying lessons were taken in Tiger Moths and Oxfords during the period March 1941 to December 1943, before moving on to Wellingtons.

He qualified as a bomber pilot in March 1944 when he commenced Command Operations. He was stationed at Holme-on-Spalding Moor (Yorkshire) in 76 Squadron, before moving to 192 Squadron RAF Foulsham in August 1944. John was appointed Squadron Leader in that same month, and was awarded the D.F.C. on 16th February 1945 aged 33.

On 28th May 1945 John was invited to fly A.V.M. (Air Vice Marshal) Addison (A.O.C [Air Officer Commanding] for the RAF 100 Group) to Schleswig and back.

On 5th July 1945 John was invited to fly General Edward Curtis Peck (USAF) to Grove airfield (Denmark). John's son Andrew remembers John recalling flying General Peck on a tour of UK bases, to enable him to congratulate each base for their wartime efforts in achieving a successful outcome of WWII.

With effect from 5th September 1945 John assumed command of No. 192 Squadron as Acting Commanding Officer Squadron Leader.

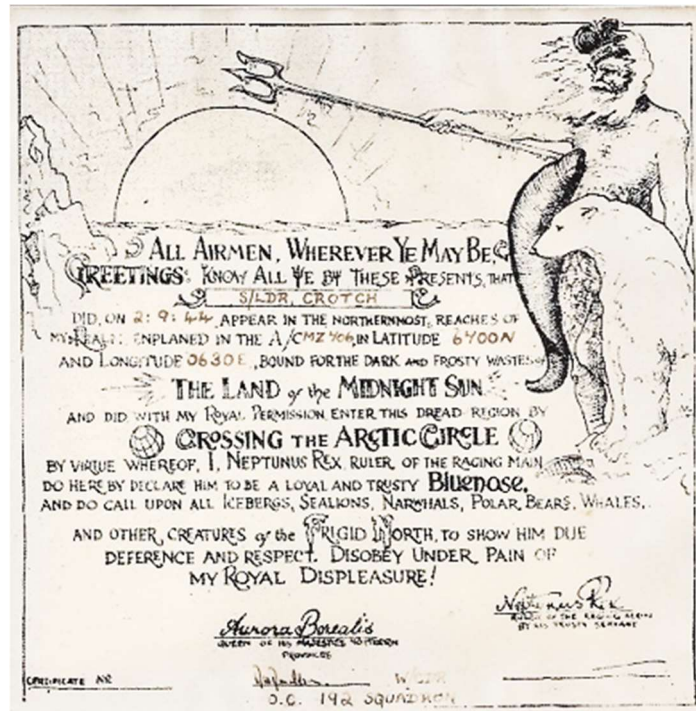
In 1994 John was contacted by author Martin W Bowman in connection with his proposal to write a book about the operational history of RAF 100 (Bomber Support) Group. We all recall several meetings taking place, when John supplied Martin with photos, information and his experiences during his service in the RAF. The interview and photographs can be found in the book '*Confounding the Reich*' by Martin W. Bowman and Tom Cushing.

John recalled:

- He and his crew moving from 76 Squadron (Holme-on-Spalding Moor) to their posting to the RAF 100 Group, based at Foulsham, near Norwich.
- Flying Halifax IIIs over enemy territories and monitoring German fighter frequencies using Radar sets in the aircraft.



- Dropping 'Window' over the Continent to simulate raids of large numbers of Allied aircraft.
- On the 31st August 1944 John led five Halifax bombers to Lossiemouth, to participate in an exercise involving the *Tirpitz* which took place on 2nd September 1944. John and the other Halifax bombers returned to Foulsham on the 5th September 1944. The *Tirpitz* was anchored in Norway; in the Arctic Circle. Data gathered from this mission (and other similar missions over a number of nights) was successful in finding 'blank spots' in the *Tirpitz*'s Radar frequencies, which was instrumental in the Allies being able to carry out bombing missions against the *Tirpitz*, culminating with the *Tirpitz* finally being sunk on 12 November 1944; by 617 Dambusters Squadron.



It remains a matter of deep regret that John Crotch died before the book was published.

Amongst John's papers we found correspondence (dated 1988) which he entered into with William J and John E Rees regarding WWII 192 Squadron activities. Some of the memories shared are as follows (quoted verbatim from their correspondence):

'I had only been at Foulsham about a week when the Lossiemouth affair (Tirpitz operation) occurred. My first trip in the Squadron was to Stettin and the next day (a Sunday) I went home for the night as I lived near Norwich. Squadron Leader Kendrick knew where I was, and I was woken at about 6 AM on the Monday morning by Kendrick throwing stones at the bedroom window. We got back to Foulsham as soon as possible and I went to Lossiemouth without any breakfast. I didn't go to bed on the Monday night as we had an early return. On Tuesday, I went myself and flying low level over the sea for 9 hours 45 mins is very tiring. The local Station Commander invited me to dinner at his house on Wednesday and after dinner we played cards and almost immediately I fell sound asleep at the card table!'

'You will see from my Log Book that I always got landed with when a 'Big Wig' was told to take a trip. You will also notice that Kendrick (who was completely screened and was the Group Liaison Officer on the Squadron) came on several trips with me. We were great friends and he used to say that this was to get the sweet ration. We had to get Group dispensation on each occasion. I would think that this was fairly unique.'



'Were you at Foulsham for the Open Day after the War? We were advised by A.M. to expect 10,000 people, but we laughed and expected about 2,000 and made no preparations and in the event more than 50,000 came and there was complete chaos.'

John's daughter Linda has one vivid memory of this Open Day; (as a very young child) as she managed to fall out of one of the planes' (open) bomb doors to the ground below!

'In October 1945, the Squadron moved to Watton and become the Flying Wing of the Radar Warfare Establishment and in November 1945 I was demobbed.'

Some of John's WWII photographs & re-collections appear in the book *'Espionage in The Ether'* published in 1999, by William J and John E Rees.



Left to Right:

Back: F/Sgts: Tony Leonard, D H Moore, Lysaght, A Martin

Front: V Worsley, J Crotch, C Ashworth

Following some internet research, Julia also found mention of John's wartime activities as recalled by Douglas Holmes Moore (WWII Wireless Operator), on the *'North Staffs 1940's Association'* website www.northstaffs1940s.co.uk. Doug first met John when John was Doug's Pilot Instructor and met again later during the war when he was part of John's regular crew.

As a teenager Julia remembers John showing her his Flight (Log) Books and the reconnaissance photographs that he still had. She remembers him telling her about:

- Joining up, his training, some of the Bases he was stationed at, some of the Polish and Canadian Servicemen he trained and served with, and the purpose of the reconnaissance missions.
- Remonstrating with Norwich residents who failed to follow blackout regulations.
- Describing the 9hrs 45mins flight to Norway – the conditions of the flight etc. It is only now, however, I understand the significance of that flight in particular.

Whilst these were fascinating memories he shared at the time; Julia now realises that, with the benefit of hindsight, she should have asked so many more questions.

After the war John returned to civilian life as a Solicitor and farmer, until his death in 1994.



Linda, Andrew and Julia all recall meeting up – on more than one occasion – with the (then) surviving member of his crew, Tony Leonard (his former Flight Engineer). We were able to accompany him on visits to various Norfolk based aerodromes, including RAF Foulsham. Sadly, these visits were made after John had passed away.

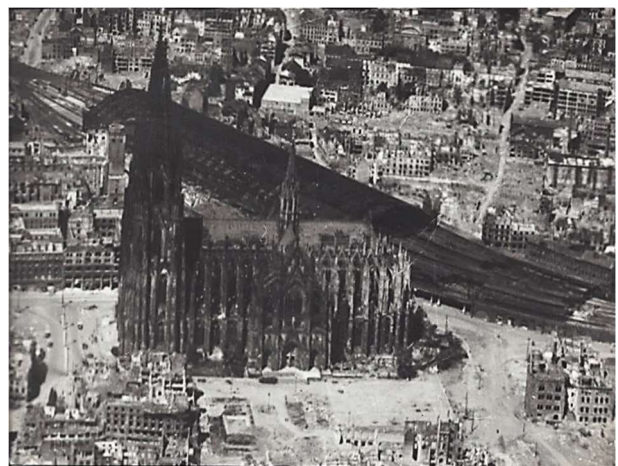
At the recent RAF 100 Group Association Reunion held at Foulsham in May 2017, we met Mr. 'Doc' Elliott, from Essex – 92 years young – who recognised John from photographs, during his time at Foulsham.

Some of John's WWII photographs

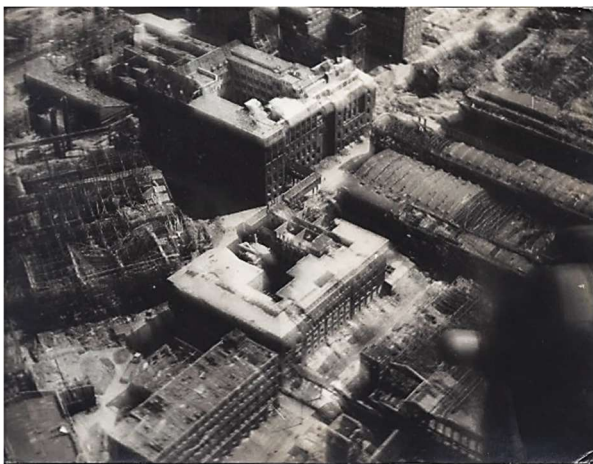
Reconnaissance Photos:



*Cologne: destroyed bridges and Cathedral
(to the left)*



Cologne Cathedral



The Krupps works at Essen



*South of Cologne: Thousands of German POW's in
makeshift bivouacs*



Personnel Photos:



Halifax B111 NP970 DT-T. W/Cr D.W. Donaldson (4th from R), CO 192 Squadron with O/C and pilots of B Flight – including John Crotch (3rd from R)



S/Ldr J Crotch, DFC O/C B Flight and F/Lt A Hazelhurst. As Acting C/O S/Ldr Crotch signed the last entry in the Squadron Operation Record Book



192 Commanding Officer and Section Leaders:

L – R back row:

F/Lt T Y Hicks RNZAF, O/C; F/Lt A Kelly (Flight Engineer), F/O G Savage (Bombardier), F/Lt R L A Woolgar (Gunner), F/Lt H W Churchill (Wireless Operator), F/Lt E Groves (Special Operator), F/Lt J N Barren (Navigator), F/Lt I Thomas (H2S Instructor).

L – R Seated:

S/Ldr B M Fawkes (O/C: A Flight), S/Ldr A R Kendrick (Operations and Deputy CO), W/Cdr D W Donaldson (Squadron Commander), S/Ldr J H Crotch (O/C B Flight), F/Lt Loudden (Adjutant)



IN MEMORIAM

Flt/Lt MICHAEL CROSBIE aka 'Bing' 186368 214 Squadron



F/Lt Michael Crosbie w crew, Billington, Healy, Odgers far right, 1944

My Dad and I were very close, but in the 23 years since his death at the relatively early age of 71, I feel a major part of his life was blocked out. Like a great many people, he probably suffered nightmares and flashbacks, but never said. Perhaps he didn't want to show vulnerability, I will never know. Here is his story of time spent at Blickling and RAF Oulton.

Dad had already been in Service two years by the time he arrived at RAF Oulton. He trained in Canada and gained his wings in July 1943. On his return to the UK, he did Conversion Courses on Wellingtons and Stirlings. But then in September 1944, Sergeant Michael Crosbie 186368 was posted to 1699, a Flying Fortress B-17 Conversion Unit. The first task on arrival was to 'Crew Up'. Dad's original crew was as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| • Navigator | Don Hall |
| • Bomb Aimer | Jack Karter |
| • Wireless Op | Eric Brazier |
| • Flight Engineer | Les Billington |
| • Special Wireless Op | Lindsay Odgers |
| • Mid Upper Gunner | Ted Edwards |
| • Tail Gunner | Jimmy Healy |
| • Waist Gunner | Alastair McDermid |
| • Waist Gunner | Terry Sullivan |

On 27 September, they first flew together, and over the next nine days, flew for an average of two hours a day. Then on 6 October, Dad's name appeared on the Battle Order for the raid over Dortmund. He was 2nd Pilot to Flt Lt Scandleton. Over the next few weeks, he flew in 'WINDOW' raids over various locations.

On 18 October, Dad was granted his Commission. With his Commission, he gained more pay and better living conditions. We believe it was then he moved into the main Blickling Hall. During his first ten missions, Dad once returned early. This was on 6 December due to 'acute icing'. Then a week before Christmas, Dad had his 'finest hour'. The night of 18 December, the Squadron were Briefed to support a bomber attack to Gdynia, a port in North Poland. While over the target, he



lost one engine, then shortly after, lost power in another. He was forced to '*feather*' both to descend to 2,000ft all the way home across the North Sea, landing at Foulsham with the aid of FIDO. This was done by a chap who was still only 21!!!

Even at Christmas he was back on Operations to Antwerp, where the flack was 'unfriendly'. The New Year brought no respite. On 2 January 1945 over Nuremburg, they returned on three engines because of damage caused by anti-aircraft fire.

On 3 February 1945, Dad and his crew were told to fly to Jarnvinctourt. When they arrived, Dad slipped on his way out of the aircraft, discovering soon after he had broken his ankle. On his return to Blickling, he was laid up in Sick Bay for a few weeks.

Meanwhile, on Saturday 3 March, most of Dad's crew were detailed to fly with another pilot and friend of Dad's – Bennett. Much has been written about the events which happened that night. When hearing about it, I'm not ashamed to say it made me cry. Dad lost 3 members of his crew:

- Les Billington
- Lindsay Odgers
- Jimmy Healy

What made this more awful for Dad was that he witnessed the incident. I am convinced the memory remained with him for the rest of his life. These men had to be replaced, along with Eric Brazier who had completed his 2nd tour of Operations. The replacements were:

- B. Collings
- L. Mercer
- S. Nessner
- D. Antbuy

I have often wondered whether Dad ever thought about Les, Jimmy or Lindsay? I think he did, but like many, just never let on. One fact I have discovered is that 214 Squadron lost six more complete crews between March and VE Day. That amounts to 60 young men in their prime. Such a waste!

Dad and his crew flew in five more raids after the crash, the most notable being 16 April. While over Schwan Dorf, he was again hit by flak. He lost the power of two engines and crashed on the A78. Then, after a trip to Flensburg on 2 May, and 28^{1/2} raids in total, Dad's war was done. No longer would he take off and fly into the carnage of the Reich.

I have been told Dad was a popular figure among his comrades. He took them out drinking or to the Pictures. He listened to their problems and advised them. He was that sort of chap. In closing, I would like to add a personal note about Dad. He cared about people and protected the ones he loved. On our first trip to Blickling, I went on my own to the churchyard to pay my respects to Les Billington. He lies there alone in a beautiful setting chaps from the Commonwealth would love. So very England, the old country they came to save. While I was there, I swear I felt someone next to me. Yet I was alone. Was it the spirit of Dad? I hope so. I hope he thought I was doing the right thing. While there, Susan, my wife, found a picture of a tree planted in memory of those who paid the ultimate price (our freedom) while serving at Oulton. This tree was planted on the very day my Dad died. How spooky is that? I would love to hear from anyone who knew my father and can share more about his wartime memories with me.

Rupert

Rupert Crosbie

crossers65@gmail.com

LOSS OF FORTRESS HB 815 BU-J AT RAF OULTON 3/4 MARCH 1945

First, a note from John Beeching, veteran of 169 Squadron, Great Massingham:

The name given by the Germans to the Operation in which Michael Crosbie's crew was involved was 'Operation Gisela'. It so happens, like Michael Crosbie, I was also out of action on that night, being in bed with flu or a bad cold, something which kept me on the ground anyway. Based in 169 Squadron at RAF Great Massingham I heard all this activity going on overhead. But then, flying at night is all part of the curriculum, so I didn't attach too much importance to it, until I staggered from the sack next day to be told the Luftwaffe had really had a picnic, shooting down one of our chaps – Squadron Leader Jack Fenwick – on the circuit, and strafed trains on the local branch line (Midland and Great Northern Joint), killing passengers and all kinds of nasty things. Seems like the Hun must have ranged far and wide over Norfolk on that occasion.

John Beeching

Kelvin Sloper (City of Norwich Aviation Museum) has information about this German Operation and damage caused which he recently uncovered and shares here:

A lot has been written about the shooting down of Bennett's Fortress at Oulton over the years. However, here is something I recently found which I've not seen before. For those with access to the internet, the story can be found here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/19/a1073819.shtml>

(**Note from Editor:** I've tried this link and it doesn't work. However, further information can be found at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/43688219@N00/1463300666> where I discovered the following:

Aircraft HB815 4.3.1945 ... badly damaged following a night-fighter attack during the Nachtjagd Operation 'Gisela'. Attack was probably made by Lt Arnold Doring of 10/NJG.3. On return to Oulton a/c crash-landed at Lodge Farm on the Oulton airfield boundary at 00.51hrs.

Bob Davies was the pilot of an aircraft given priority to land given he had only three engines, with Bennett having to do a second circuit and coming under fire from an enemy intruder.

SQUADRON LEADER BOB DAVIES AFC



'Bob' was born on 11th July 1920 at Gravesend where his father was a Trinity House river pilot. His father had served in the Royal Navy, commanding a destroyer in World War One and a flotilla of mine sweepers in World War Two. He was awarded the DSC.

Bob was actually christened 'Bevis Denton'. However, from a very young age, Bevis Denton Davies knew his own mind and assumed the Christian name 'Bob', which stuck. He was educated at Gravesend Grammar School, 'matriculated' and gained a place at the College of Aero and Auto Engineering in Sidney Street, Chelsea. Whilst there, he joined a Royal Engineer TA Searchlight Battery and then in 1940, volunteered for aircrew training. Offered pilot training, he happily accepted.



His flying training started in September 1941 on the Tiger Moth. He was selected to complete his training in the United States, and travelled there by sea. Bob was awarded his wings and commissioned on 5th September 1942. It was at this stage of his flying career that his exceptional flying skills were first recognised, and he was, in today's jargon, '*creamed off*' to become a Qualified Flying Instructor. After collecting his Officer's uniform, he moved to California, then South Carolina, where he spent the next eight months up to the summer of 1943 honing his QFI flying skills.

He returned to the UK in summer 1943. It was a frustrating time as he had to go through the whole British re-training process, not joining his Squadron until July 1944. Bob and his crew then completed 18 day and night operations on the Squadron over a period of very heavy losses over all the RAF Bomber fleet. Bob was a great believer in 'luck', and during this period, he had his fair share. In September 1944, a bomb was dropped by a Lancaster flying above them, falling through his aircraft just aft of the Top Gunner's position. Apart from the Tail Gunner losing his oxygen supply, the aircraft continued to behave normally. They set course for home, but as they approached, although losing height, they decided to try to make Base – they were, after all, going on Leave next day! Weather, in the end, forced a landing at Old Buckenham, south of Norwich.

A man of independent spirit, he did not have too much respect for 'Rules', demonstrated in an earlier episode when an unauthorised long weekend led to some days of reflection in the 'bad boys' Detention Centre at Shedfield. He was also admonished for inadvertently wrecking his CO's nearly new 'runabout' aircraft.

None of this, though, was considered particularly important as Bob was promoted to Acting Squadron Leader and posted as A Flight Commander to 214 Squadron flying from Oulton. Bob's luck continued to hold. Returning on three engines from one countermeasure operation, he was given priority to land, and the aircraft ahead was instructed to '*go around again*'. Unfortunately, this aircraft was shot down by a German night-fighter intruder. A short time later, the intruder returned and shot up the de-briefing room just as Bob and one of his crew were leaving, somehow missing them. Bob remained on 214 Squadron until the end of the war, completing some 12 operations, including the Dresden raid, before VE Day stopped all operational flying. He was recommended for a DFC by his Squadron and Squadron Commander, but it was refused at Group level for reasons unknown.

After the war, Bob wanted to remain flying and was offered a post as a Flight Lieutenant flying the B24 'Liberator' on a four-year extension to his engagement. In September 1945, Bob was posted to the B24 Ground School and in October, joined No.102 Squadron engaged mainly in trooping flights to Karachi. Unsurprisingly, it was Bob who flew the last operational Liberator sortie.

Kelvin Sloper

CNAM

* * * *

LOSS OF FORTRESS HB 815 BU-J AT RAF OULTON

3-4 MARCH 1945

Written by Bob Davies

I will endeavour to recall the events which lead up to my witnessing Bennett being shot down, virtually within the circuit at Oulton, and my subsequent visit to the crash site and lucky escape I



experienced (for the second time in 2 hours!) when the intruder shot up the Control Tower and Briefing Room which, incidentally, was crowded by already returned aircrew.

I cannot remember what made me select a different crew from my regular one, which I had brought with me from No. 4 Group when we had completed 17 ops flying Halifax aircraft. For that night only, Flt/Lt Eric Phillips (214 Gunnery Leader) was my Tail Gunner, Flt/Lt Chant (Navigation Leader) occupied the front of the aircraft as Bomb Aimer, and 2nd Navigator and Flt/Off Jock Fitzsimmons (Deputy Flight Engineer Leader) was my Flight Engineer who, as usual, sat in the right-hand 2nd Pilot's (not carried) seat. Anyway, the operation, so far as I remember, was uneventful but, for some reason I cannot remember, we crossed the English coast and approached Oulton on three engines. Or perhaps we were experiencing some other sort of emergency.

I seem to remember the drill on returning to Oulton was to announce our return to Base with an ETA only when we were in range of 20 miles. I had, of course, been listening out to the RT traffic for some time and had heard Bennett call at 20 miles and receive approval to be first to enter the circuit and land. When I subsequently announced my arrival '*on three*', I was given priority to continue to approach, and approval to land first. Bennett, who was on long finals, was told to '*go round again*'. I continued my approach, turning left onto finals as normal, with all navigation and identity lights on. When I looked forward to satisfy myself that Bennett was, in fact, overshooting and not in my way, I saw his port, starboard and white light quite clearly but, at the same time, I saw the flash of tracer from an unseen aircraft hit the Fortress in the port wing root and the wing start to burn. I looked away then, to better concentrate on landing my own aircraft on the still fully illuminated runway.

At about the same time, I heard the Tower call '*Bandits ... Bandits!*', and the runway lights went out just as I came to a quick stop, thus better able to switch off my own lights. I thought my Flight Engineer and I did this in double-quick time, only to be contradicted by the Tail Gunner who said that a white light still burned brightly high above him on the aircraft's vertical fin. By this time, I felt very, very exposed and I am sure the remainder of the nine crew felt the same. But despite checking with my Flight Engineer from left to right in the cockpit, we still heard the Rear Gunner entreating us to turn that '**** light off!*'

I must admit, I can still remember the feeling of utter panic, expecting to be shot up at any time. Trying to compose myself and, in desperation, I very reluctantly used my torch (feeling naked as the beam went on) to search the entire cockpit for the final elusive key to our survival. After what seemed an eternity, I found what I was looking for, a small unmarked switch that controlled, of all things, a lone white light at the very top of the fin, fitted not for operational use, but as an aid for '*night formation*' flying. With this switch in the 'Off' position, and in the glow of Bennett's burning aircraft, I could clearly see the runway and taxied back to our normal dispersal.

We were all very relieved to be safely on the ground, especially so when we realised we were the last aircraft to make it back to Oulton. The remaining Fortresses and Liberators having the dubious privilege of having to face an extra two hours flying to their diversions at Bawdy and Haverford West in West Wales – some of them with only just enough fuel to reach their destinations.

After getting out of the aircraft and seeing my crew off in the crew bus, Fitzsimmons and I drove to my Hillman Utility to the site of the still burning Fortress, not very far from Station Sick Quarters. There, wonder of wonders, we saw the two, apparently uninjured Waist Gunners who had miraculously walked out of the half shell of the rear fuselage, the only sizeable part of the wreck which looked as if it had once been an aeroplane.



We did not hang around the burning wreck. The point-five shells and pyrotechnics and what remained of the 110/120-octane fuel, reminded me of a pre-war Guy Fawkes Night (but not the smell). At that time, we little realised that, as we returned from de-briefing, our luck would be put to the test once more in the space of an hour.

After crew de-briefing and coffee (liberally laced with Navy rum which, when mixed with dehydrated milk, turned into something nearly solid-looking, like penicillin mould) my crew went their separate ways to their traditional fried eggs and bacon. Fitzsimmons and I left the hut to return to the Squadron Office to meet the Squadron Adjutant and arrange for post-crash procedure to be out in hand.

As we made our way to the door, outside of which I had parked the Hillman, we passed the Station Commander, Group Captain Dickens, coming in. Nothing unusual about this, but nothing warned us of the scene which greeted us when we stepped out of the building into what we expected to be darkness. The silly old fool had driven up in his Humber Hawk staff car and parked it in front of the door from which we had just stepped. He had switched off the lights, but forgotten that at some time he had switched on the car's two powerful fog lamps which, with blackness around, illuminated the Tower and Briefing Room as if in broad daylight. Fitz and I each opened a door of the car to find the switch which controlled the offending lights. However, as we searched with our backsides high in the air, we both became aware of the sound of aircraft engines at very high revs, approaching us at speed. We quickly dropped onto the unfriendly concrete in the lee of the staff car as the Ju88 (yes, the exact same one!) opened up on the Humber. How he missed I don't know, the cannon shells bounced on the tarmac all around us, some unfortunately finding the corner of the Briefing Room which, fortunately, was fairly empty by then. However, if I remember rightly, the panic inside was considerable, but only one or two WAAF Intelligence Officers were slightly injured. And the spotlights? No, we did not go back to find the elusive switch. Jock Fitzsimmons had a simpler remedy. He quickly and expertly kicked both lights into darkness. And no, the Group Captain did not complain, but he was promoted to Air Commodore a few months after the end of the war.

POSTSCRIPT

I have discovered that on Bennett's previous operation, about four days before his last, he was returning from the target when a Junkers 88 Night-Fighter attacked them. Although the Rear Gunner shot it down, its cannon fire severely damaged Bennett's aircraft, and wounded the Navigator so badly he was not able to carry on with his duties. These were taken over by the Bomb Aimer who got them back to Manston in Kent, where the Navigator died in Station Sick Quarters. Bennett was awarded an immediate DFC and his Bomb Aimer the DFM.

As Bennett was now short of a Navigator for his next Op, he took with him the Navigator of a new crew who had just arrived on the Squadron and as yet had not flown on operations. This unfortunate person flew his very first operation sortie, which proved to be his last.

NOTE

I have just realised that on that night, Johnnie Wynne was detailed for operations described in the Ops Report simply as a 'Window Patrol', possibly in the same area as Bennett, whose duty that night was also a 'Window Patrol'. Whereas I was detailed for, and successfully completed, a Jostle Patrol (RT Jamming) in support of a Bomber Command raid on the Dortmund-Ems Canal.



Crew of Flying Fortress Mark III HB 815 BU-J

FS Harry 'Barney' Barnfield, 1059973, Navigator	KIA 4 March 1945, aged 24
F/O Harry 'Benny' Bennett DFC, 190245, Pilot	KIA 4 March 1945, aged 24
Sgt Leslie Ernest Billington, 2205644, Flight Engineer	KIA 4 March 1945, aged 20
F/S William Briddon, 1817057, Wireless Operator	KIA 4 March 1945, aged 27
W/O Bill Church, Waist Gunner	
F/S Leslie Arnold Hadder, 1804649, Mid-Upper Gunner	KIA 4 March 1945, aged 20
F/S Frank Hares DFM, 1581827, Air Bomber	KIA 4 March 1945, aged 21
Sgt Patrick James Healy, 1300369, Air Gunner	KIA 4 March 1945, aged 24
Sgt Alistair McDermid, Waist Gunner	
W/O Lindsay Joseph Odgers, 417595, RAAF	KIA 4 March 1945, aged 21

Sources: Bob Davies writings, *Nightjar* Newsletter Spring 2003, BBC Website World War 2 – Peoples War.

NOTE FROM EDITOR: One further piece to the puzzle of this night at RAF Oulton is added by Eric Dickens, son of Station Commander Group Captain Dickens, made mention of in Bob's writings:

Dear Janine,

Much has been written about the crash of 3/4 March 1945, and the part that my father, Group Captain T. C. Dickens played by leaving his car lights on so that the Junkers shot at it. Some Reports say it was at the Intelligence Centre. Some say at the Sick Bay. But the story I have adds this. I know that my father was Mentioned in Dispatches for this episode. He said that he rescued a member of the crew from the burning bomber, which still had bombs on board. Dad pulled him out and took him away by jeep. But the heat caused the fuel tank to explode, so he changed to a car, and I think he was taking the crew member to the Sick Bay. It must have been chaotic, and I'm not surprised that he left the car lights on. Being at the Sick Bay explains why Dad was there and not directing other activities. The Log says: '*Shot down Oulton, 8 killed, 2 alive*' against Fortress J.

I can still remember that night, even though I was only 7 years old at the time. We lived in Green Farm, which is not far from the Oulton Memorial, and where the Sick Bay used to be. The crash was just beyond that. Because bombs were still on board, we were advised to go to our air raid shelter, but that was closer to the crash, so we spent the night under the stairs, which were off a corridor linking the converted cottages, and there were no windows facing the crash. While going there, we looked out of the window and all we could see was a ribbon of fire.

I have been trying to find out the recommendation for Dad being Mentioned in Dispatches, but despite contacting the Records Section at RAF Cranwell who did a detailed search, it seems that no Record is ever kept of the reasons for these recommendations. So, if anyone knows how to find a recommendation, I would very much like to know what was said officially about the episode. I have checked the Squadron Log Book at the National Archives, but that just contains the basic facts.

Best wishes,

Eric

Eric Dickens

A MOSQUITO'S TALE

Rob Sekersky is a member of the Canadian Historical Aircraft Association (CH2A) in Windsor, Ontario, who is currently working on two documentaries with them. To see some of his work on 'A Mosquito's Tale', for those with internet access, view:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB_vp4nnXOYvw0sSQ8hLyw_5f7Rq8gsvL

He is undoubtedly passionate about this ambitious Project and has been seeking what is known as 'crowd-funding' via the internet. However, he is also interested in speaking to Mosquito veterans, of which there are many on this Association. He goes on to describe both himself, his extensive experience, and his Project:

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

I am a classically-trained (film) Cinematographer and Editor, with over 25 years' experience in the film industry in Canada (Toronto, Vancouver). I have a strong art and photographic background which goes back to childhood. The first role of film I shot was back in 1977, and I've had a camera or three ever since. It now seems appropriate that on that very first role of film I got to photograph a plane crash in Algonquin Park! My professional film career began in the summer of 1988, when I started working as a Production Assistant (PA) for Rawi Schultz Productions. At that time, it was growing into the second largest commercial production house in Canada. In October 1989, I moved into their editing department, and through 1990, continued to hone my craft, completing the CSC's Camera Assistant Course to become a member. In June 1991, I joined the Camera Guild and began working as a Camera Trainee.

I have now worked on over 700 projects; including theatrical features, movies of the week, TV series, commercials, music videos, documentaries and industrials. I have also had the opportunity to work for some extremely talented cinematographers, including Gabor Tarko CSC, Director of Photography (DOP) on my first professional job. It was on a Cadillac commercial pool at Rawi Shultz Productions. They were shooting the running footage and hero product shots for the entire Cadillac line. Years later, I would become one of his camera assistants.

I've seen how some of the best film-makers of the day have worked, and over that time, learned one indelible fact. Good cinematography can make a good film (story) great ... but good cinematography cannot make a bad film (story) good. The inner strength of any film, whether that be a drama or documentary; comes from its story.

THE STORY

Like a phoenix, a de Havilland Mosquito fighter/bomber rises from its fiery ashes. A Mosquito's Tale is a feature-length documentary telling the story of Mosquito CF-HMR, and the Mosquito Bomber Group's restoration efforts at the Canadian Historical Aircraft Association (CH2A). However, it is so much more than a re-build in that the documentary revolves around three different de Havilland Mosquitoes. They will be combined into a concise and easily understood narrative that takes us from the deadly skies of the Second World War, into the new Millennium and the hangar of the CH2A.

The first Mosquito is KB 161 Vancouver. This was the first Mosquito fighter/bomber built in Canada to see service in WWII. Through this plane, we learn about its origins and service during the war. The second Mosquito is CF-HMR, owned by Spartan Air Services, used primarily as a photographic platform in Northern Canada. As an in-flight fire forced the pilot to make 'wheels-up', landing on a gravel runway at Pelly Lake in the north-west territories, the plane promptly burned to the



ground. In July 1996, a group from the CH2A headed to Pelly Lake to collect its remains. The third aircraft in the documentary began life from the remains of CF-HMR, and is presently being built by the Mosquito Bomber Group at the CH2A.

THE PLAN

Photography began in July 2014 at the Windsor International Airport (YQG), in the CH2A's hangar where most of the documentary will be photographed, together with interviews to complete it. Thirty-eight minutes of historical footage have already been obtained from Campbell Films in California, which easily covers the Mosquito's dramatic origins and history during the war. What has yet to be photographed and makes the Mosquito one of the war's truly unique aircraft, is the production of its fuselage - made by stretching and gluing thin pieces of wood together over a concrete mould. This process involved gluing successive layers, one on top of the other, until the two halves of the fuselage, and their internal structure, was complete. These two halves were then mated together. Presently, there is only one place on the planet where Mosquito fuselages are made, this being done by Glyn Powell at Mosquito Aircraft Restoration in Auckland, New Zealand. He has already been contracted and plans made to travel to New Zealand. While there, interviews will be conducted, and fuselage construction process photographed.

Until then, the Mosquito Bomber Group's progress will continually be photographed, while pictures and videos of KB 161 are being sought, as are Mosquito veterans to be interviewed.

The final piece of this puzzle is music. This will be created by the very talented musician/composer Bryant Didier, at B. Musique Productions/Studio in Toronto. He has already agreed to create the music, and is just waiting for funding to make a start.

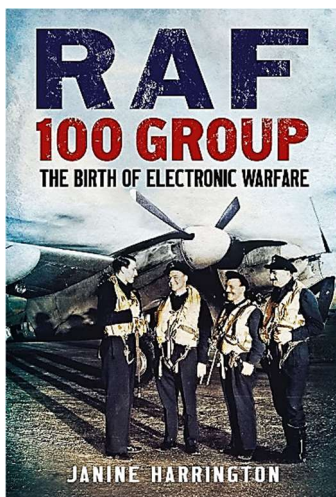
Anyone wishing to contact me direct, to become involved in this venture as a Mosquito veteran, and/or in supporting and funding this worthwhile venture, I would be happy to hear from you:

My Kickstarter Funding Campaign website, where you can find out more, is
<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/211433267/a-mosquitos-tale>

Rob Sekersky
robgodis@yahoo.com

* * * *

BOOK REVIEWS



Now then, this 'ere book. It is by a lady named Janine Harrington, who we know and love, and I must say that it is a damned fine read; nice and easy and not full of technical jargon. Even an old chap named John Beeching gets a bit of footage in it, with chunks of correspondence I had long since forgotten. I hope people find it as interesting as I am finding the rest of the book. Good on you Buddy! I am only about a third of the way through, but it is good and factual. A few pictures might have added a bit of dressing, but it loses nothing because there aren't any. I like the cover, which I think is guaranteed to attract buyers. It would be lovely if the BBC could make a programme about 100 Group generally, as I don't recall ever seeing too much about our clandestine activities. However, I am guilty of one small error which readers need to note. I always thought the Call-Sign for aircrews in



169 Squadron was 'Cowling', but after 75 years, have discovered it was actually 'Kaolin', presumably like clay. It is a good book, and thank you, Janine, for writing it.

John Beeching, 169 veteran, RAF Great Massingham

I have just finished reading *RAF 100 Group – The Birth of Electronic Warfare* and enjoyed the body of work very much, particularly the stories and reminiscences of veterans. I share your concern, Janine, about lack of photos, maps, index and appendices, etc. which Fonhill Media, the publishers, for reasons best known to themselves, completely left out. It is clearly not the book you set out to write and ultimately wanted them to publish, but it is very much worth reading. Whilst I'm not sure that many photos exist, as many were censored like the ABC aerials on Lancasters of 101 Squadron; others were photographed post-war in grave-yards, but it adds so much as do maps, so you know where the Bases, targets and night-fighters were.

I was going to ask about the guarding of 100 Group aircraft when not at their home base, as I understood from my father that any aircraft with /G after the serial number had to have an armed guard at all times when not at their base. I have only seen one photo indicating that /G was applied to 100 Group aircraft, but you confirmed guards were required. Martin Streetly's book also details aircraft with /G after the serial number. My father often had to guard aircraft landing at RAF Heliopolis with a Sten gun, which he always felt was more dangerous to him than any enemy!

During the Second World War, RAF aircraft carrying secret equipment, or were in themselves secret, had '/G' suffix added to the end of the serial, the 'G' signifying 'Guard', denoting that the aircraft was to have an armed guard at all times while on the ground, for example: W4041/G, the prototype Gloster E.28/39 jet, powered by the Whittle engine. My Uncle Jack was cycling by RAF Cranwell in 1941 and saw a Gloster E28/39 land and cycled like mad to the Guard Room to report an aircraft had lost its propeller and obviously crash landed! The Guard Room couldn't say anything. Or then again, ML926/G, a de Havilland Mosquito XVI experimentally fitted with H2S Radar.

Your story about aircraft being sent to collect equipment from Guardermoen in Norway rang a bell as my father was on the Signal Flying Unit at RAF Honily, who used a couple of Short Stirlings, and he was sent to Norway to collect Signals equipment. He was also a keen motor cyclist and had spotted the same pristine BMW motorbikes you mention in the book. He had chosen a BMW Motorbike and sidecar with the aim of putting it in the Stirling somehow. As he was Ground Crew, he probably had tools with him. Unfortunately, the pilot wouldn't let him, asking: '*How are you going to get that registered in England?*' He replied: '*You leave that to me, Sir*'. Sadly, he then got back to England and stayed in the rear turret for landing (which he had been told not to do) and had scars for the rest of his life. All he could say was: '*I know why I was told not to*'. Wherever they landed (I think it was Croydon) he was disgusted by Customs not being interested in them, so could have driven off with a motorbike. He was further upset when he saw what the aircrew had sneaked back, but he didn't mention the strawberries!

I'm now reading Martin Bowman's: '*German Night Fighters versus Bomber Command 1943 – 1945*' which I hadn't read before, and it is full of 100 Group missions, particularly 100 Group Mosquitos and details of losses of 214 Squadron B17 Fortress II and III aircraft. It is reassuring to know the number of German Night Fighters shot down by 100 Group Mosquitos and the effectiveness of 100 Group RCM missions that unknowingly saved numerous RAF bombers and their crews.

If it's of interest to those who haven't seen them, there are a few diecast 100 Group models available, some more difficult than others to locate at a decent price:



1/144th scale 199 Squadron Stirling EX O R LJ525 'Jolly Roger',
1/144th scale Fortress III BU O U HB819 Corgi AA31101 Limited Edition,
1/48 Fortress BU O U HB819 214 Squadron from Franklin Mint 'Give it to Uncle' MPN B11B636,
1/72 B24 Liberator 223 Squadron 6G O T TS525 Corgi AA34012 Limited Edition of 1400,
1/72 Mosquito FBVI (ASH) RS575 3P O V RS575 515 Sqn Corgi AA32815 Limited Edition of 1500.

Regards,

Shaun

Shaun Newton

Shaun.Newton@sfa.bis.gov.uk

Dear Janine,

I appreciated the chance to read the excerpt from your book. Joe Brookshire was my great-uncle, and when I was a young man, he told me stories from the war. I still have his Air Medal that he received for his actions overseas. Reading the passage from your book, reminded me of sitting around my grandma's table listening to Uncle Joe tell me stories about flying through flak in Germany. Thank you for helping keep that history alive and not allowing us to forget the sacrifice so many men made.

Sincerely,

Graham Nelson

grahamnelson@att.net

Dear Janine,

I've read the Jack Hope book, and found it really interesting ... not only that, I also found it very moving. I'd be grateful if you could pass on a message to his family. Okay, I know I'm only me. But if you could tell them that I take my hat off to Jack. He must have been quite a chap to survive all, and I don't mean just the perils of war. To achieve what he did makes me feel quite humble.

Peter

Peter Holness

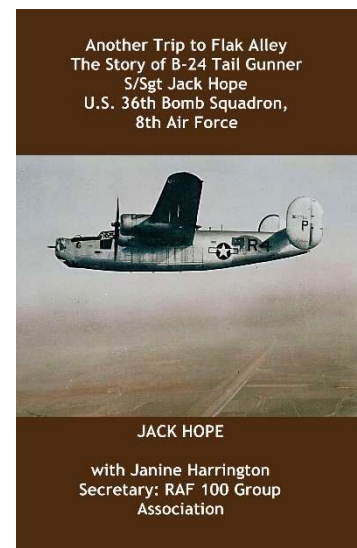
Horsham St Faith

Dear Janine,

When Jack's book arrived he was in awe and absolutely thrilled with it ... so delighted he can hardly put it down. There are not enough words to thank you for your time, effort and kindness in putting this together. THANK YOU!

Marian Hope

(Jack Hope's wife)





SQUADRON MEMORIES

The Mess

I wonder if anyone else recalls
that wartime 'Sergeants Mess',
And the feeling of doom in the ante-room
Which grew as the time grew less.

Perhaps it was only I who saw
The weary and hunted look
On an airman's face which he tried to erase
With the wit in a crumpled book.

At a corner table tension eased
As a game of chess was won,
'Check', said a Gunner – 'That waitress's a stunner!'
'Checkmate – 'My word, she can run!'

The black piano tinkled a tune,
Then mood of the player changed
To classical theme – as heard in a dream –
Of a drama that Mozart arranged.

And last to my memory comes pencil and pad
Of a pilot sketching a face;
Intent, as he captured the features, enraptured
By melody none could debase.

Now chatter was muted, and words unsaid
Were the ones that told me most;
The air now taut with a thousand thoughts
Was home to the Squadron's ghosts.
And their ranks were joined, that Summer Eve,
By the airmen I now recall,
When the dice were played, on that final raid,
The 'Reaper' – beat them all.

Ernest W. Hughes

Veteran, 171 Squadron, North Creake

Taken from his book: '*The Silver Thread*'
Ernie is known as 'The Welsh Poet'

God Bless you, dear Friend!

Dates for your Diary



Merry
CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY
New Year



2018 REUNION : Friday 18 – Sunday 20 May

2019 REUNION : Friday 17 – Sunday 19 May

Be sure to put these important dates in your diary.

PLEASE NOTE

Annual RAF 100 Group Association Membership Subscriptions are DUE NOW!!

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

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

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

Email: hello@rafbf.org.uk

- **SPRING 2018 MAGAZINE**

Please can I have all material for the Spring edition at the earliest, as New Year brings its own challenges. This is an important magazine, going out with the Reunion 2018 Programme, to allow plenty of time for travel plans, etc.

- **ADVANCE WARNING**

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

- **REUNION 2017 DVDs**

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

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



Created by Janine Harrington

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