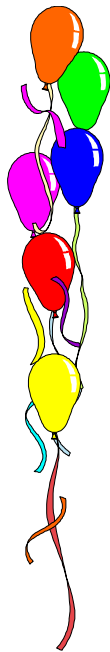


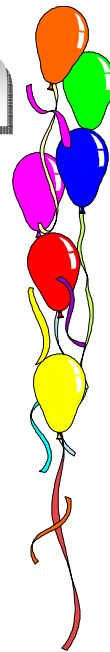


RAF 100 Group Association



2006 Reunion

12th - 14th May



Highlights brought together by
Janine Harrington

Editor: RAF 100 Group Association Newsletter

with special thanks to
Bob Histed, Paul Dunn, Rob Walden for their contributions

Introduction

RAF 100 Group Association Reunions are such special events which happen but once a year that we came up with the idea of creating a Supplement to run alongside the regular summer '*Confound & Destroy*' Association Newsletter, bringing together a collection of memories and highlights from the weekend.

We hope this will enable those members who cannot attend to feel a part of the spirit of the occasion which comes when people from far afield come together to talk and share, meeting old friends, making new.

In fact, people who came furthest this year came from Vienna!

We look forward to this yearly Reunion, and take away from it such warmth and love that we feel it is a shame when so many members do not have the opportunity to feel the same, as well as sharing in visiting airfields of the past, and exchanging memories of the way it had been.

We also believe this provides an excellent opportunity to show off the Museum and the good work a very committed and dedicated Team put in.

We therefore hope you will enjoy this small collection of photographs, and trust that in the re-telling of events, at least some of the atmosphere comes through.

Janine Harrington

REUNIONS

How they began



Founders: Martin Staunton & sister Eileen Boorman

RAF 100 Group Association was started by Eileen Boorman and her brother Martin Staunton. Eileen's husband was the Signaller in the last aircraft lost by No. 214 Squadron. His aircraft was lost over Hamburg on the night of the 21st/22nd March, 1945.

The aircraft was stationed at RAF Oulton and in 1989 Eileen and her brother visited the site. They realised that, within a short time, Nature would reclaim the remaining buildings and nothing would remain to mark where Nos 214 and 223 squadrons were based. They also visited Blickling Hall where the administrator gave them the names and addresses of ex-Oulton personnel who had visited the Hall in recent years. Many people were contacted and all stressed the importance of doing something to commemorate those who had died while serving at RAF Oulton.

A committee was formed which consisted of Eric Phillips, Gunnery Leader on No. 214 Squadron, Eileen Boorman, Martin Staunton, Arthur Anthony and Hazel Southgate, an MT driver, who was married to Jimmy Southgate a rear gunner on No. 214 Squadron.

A gradual build-up of members followed and in 1994 a Book of Remembrance was established in Blickling church. The church was full for the service, attended by representatives of the Commonwealth Air Forces and the United States Air Force. The American Air Force was invited because an American unit, the 803rd. Bomb Group had served at Oulton for a few months, although they did not suffer any casualties.

In the afternoon the Memorial at Oulton village was dedicated. The Bishop of Lynn officiated together with the Chaplain from RAF Coltishall. The American Air Force base at Lakenheath sent a Colour Party and there were standard bearers from the Royal Air Force, Aircrew Association, Royal British Legion, and other local organisations. At the end of the one minute silence a low flying light aircraft dropped British Legion poppies over the Memorial and this was followed by poems read by representatives of the different squadrons which had served at the station.

After the Memorial dedication, refreshments were taken in a marquee at Oulton Hall. The owner, Bolton Agnew, very graciously permitted us to put the marquee on his lawn and allowed us to use the facilities in the Hall. One of the difficulties we encountered was the European regulation concerning the handling of food. When the ladies of Aylsham British Legion heard of this they immediately volunteered and handled the catering arrangements superbly.

From that time to the present day we have found the people of Norfolk to be very kind and helpful and obviously grateful to the men of the RAF who gave their lives for our freedom.

It was during this period that we discovered that very few of the men who flew in the Main Force aircraft knew of the efforts made by No. 100 Group to protect them. The work of the group could be split into two main parts. The radio counter measures squadrons which detected transmissions from radar and fighter controllers and used powerful transmitters to jam these German defences. The other section of the Group were the Mosquito squadrons which conducted high and low level intruder patrols which protected the Main Force aircraft at high level and at low level attacked German airfields preventing fighters from taking off or landing. These efforts obviously required many squadrons and airfields in Norfolk.

Having gained the expertise of establishing the Memorial at Oulton, the committee decided to continue and provide a 100 Group Memorial Room. Finding a suitable venue proved to be very difficult until we received a letter from the City of Norwich Aviation Museum offering us a newly built room at no cost to the committee. The rest, as they say, is history. The museum fitted out the room to the high standard which we see today. They even found a Lloyd-Loom chair from the officers' Mess at Blickling Hall.

In 1997 we had an Opening Ceremony attended by a lot of people who had served on 100 Group. In the evening we had dinner at the Wroxham Hotel. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day which set the tone of our association with the museum ever since.

With the exception of 1998 we have had a Reunion at the Museum every year. The usual pattern is to go to RAF Coltishall on the Friday afternoon where we have always had a very interesting visit. Unfortunately, RAF Coltishall is closing in November 2006, but we are sure that the museum will find something interesting for us to do. On the Saturday morning we gather at the Museum for a chat and an AGM to bring people up to date on the plans for the museum. This is followed by a buffet lunch at the Museum after which members travel by coach to two No.100 group airfields to lay wreaths on the main runways. On the way back to the museum we visit Oulton where the villagers entertain us with a tea and cakes after which the villagers and our members have a short ceremony at the Memorial and a wreath is laid.

Our membership is open to anyone with an interest in No. 100 Group and we have several members who had family members who served on the Group. We also have members with no connection but who enjoy our friendly reunions in good company with good food.

Martin Staunton

Co-Founder

RAF 100 Group Association

FRIDAY

12th May 2006



People arrive on the first day of the Reunion to look around the Museum and in the afternoon, gather at RAF Coltishall for a final visit. RAF Coltishall is sadly closing in September 2006. There are now no operational aircraft remaining there. The Jaguars which flew for over thirty years from this, the last Battle of Britain fighter station remaining in the Royal Air Force, have departed to RAF Coningsby.





Members at RAF Coltishall

SATURDAY

13th May 2006

The Museum is open at 10am, and RAF 100 Group Association members gather to view the Memorial Room together with other displays.

There are a number of new arrivals, together with a 'fleet' of three 'Staff Cars' sitting proud under the wing of a Vulcan Bomber:





Inside the Museum, there is a special RAF 100 Group Room dedicated to their work and memories of those who have passed.





192 Squadron resting



192 Squadron

'Bambi'

Back Row (Flight Crew) 1. Jimmy Jones. 2. Jack Short.
3. Don Earl (Pilot).

4. Doc Elliot. 5. Bob Webster. 6. Buck Rogers.

Front Row (Ground Crew) 1. LAC Robinson. 2. LAC 'Nabor' Edwards.

3. Nipper Harris. 4. Alf Cook. 5. CPL Kirton and Chum. 6 ?.

7. CPL Arnold Bits. 8. Richardson.

'Nabor' Harris painted 'Bambi' on the nose of the Wellington.

An hour and a half can pass quite happily musing around the Museum inside and out, meanwhile, members are gathering in the Friendship Tearoom for the Official Weekend Welcome and Annual General Meeting.



Chaired by Kelvin Sloper (Director and Treasurer at the Museum) items discussed on the Agenda include new and up and coming books -

- '*Avenging in the Shadows*' by Ron James, published by Compaid Graphics is now on sale at the Museum and available to buy for the first time since the 1970s. Thanks are given to Martin Staunton for his work and dedication in getting it ready for publication;
- '*To Confound and Destroy*' which Martin is also currently preparing. This forthcoming publication has a pre-dominance of 214 Squadron, and Martin is interested in anecdotes from other Squadrons which members might be able to provide?
- '*100 Group Then and Now*' by Martin Bowman will be out shortly, as will -
- '*Life and Times of Roy Hastie*' by Peter Lovatt.

MEMBERSHIP

It is agreed unanimously by members to raise membership fees for the first time since the Association began to £10, with the understanding that anyone who is struggling to meet this can contact the Museum in confidence direct.

Membership is flourishing, and by going through records, past members have been encouraged to come back after five and six years.

It is also noted that this Reunion has more people attending than ever before, from as far afield as Vienna!

NEWSLETTER

After much discussion and going through a list of suggestions, it is also agreed for the future that the Newsletter be called '*Confound and Destroy*'.

RAF COLTISHALL

The Museum is currently in negotiations with RAF Coltishall to receive their archive items. RAF Coltishall will close in September this year. Planes finished flying from Coltishall last month.

The AGM is a fairly relaxed and enjoyable affair with members encouraged to participate, and after, we are able to enjoy a magnificent buffet spread for lunch made ready by volunteers. The weather is still sunny and warm and we make the most of it by gathering in groups at outside tables with laden plates of food, to catch up on news and exchange views, again with that chance of meeting friends and making new ones.

RAF SWANNINGTON

Home to 85 and 157 Squadrons and their Mosquito Nightfighters

The coach arrives at 1.30pm for a coach tour to Swannington. As the only representative attending, it is interesting to share Dorothy Hudson's wartime experiences of being a 'Met Girl' at the tender age of nineteen years based there.



This is the Control Tower (as was!) As a Met Girl, Dorothy was based in the rooms with windows shown bottom far left of the picture. Later, she lays a floral tribute to those who were lost on 100 Group operations flying from this airfield:



For those who can, it is worth visiting the internet and logging into the web pages of

www.wartimememories.co.uk/airfields/swannington and
www.swannington-norfolk.co.uk

to find further images of RAF Swannington, now and then. The following two pictures we found there of RAF Swannington Naafi, and the Sergeants Mess -



RAF NORTH CREAKE



On the Saturday afternoon, while one group of members went by coach to RAF Swannington, another small group travelled by car to RAF North Creake. The group was made up of members Harry Freeguard and his family, Alf and Doris Cooke and Frank Elliot along with Paul Dunn and Stef and Rob Walden from the Museum.

North Creake is at N52:54:37 E0:49:23, close to the village of Egmere (pronounced Egmer) which is on "The Dry Road" (so called because it has, and never has had, any pubs on it!) between Fakenham and Wells-next-the-Sea.

The airfield site is now part of the Earl of Leicester's Holkham Estate and the estate office were very kind to us, allowing, by prior arrangement us to visit the airfield site and drive around some of the old taxiway and runways where they remained.

We approached the old airfield up an access road that runs from the spectacular ruin of Egmere church roughly north to the perimeter taxiway. From there we proceeded to the west around the taxiway to the end of the NE-SW runway and then around to the start of the W-E runway which we drove along to the intersection with the N-S runway, here we turned and headed north. To the right the old Watch Office (now a house) and the technical site (now a site used for the production



of animal feed by ABN - a tenant of the Holkham Estate) could be seen. At the far northern end of the runway we stopped and here, with a view of the two remaining T2 Hangers, Harry Freeguard laid a wreath in memory of all those who served with 199 and 171 squadrons.

At North Creake the routes of the taxiway and the runways are clearly visible, though in most locations the width of these has been reduced to the width required for farm vehicles, the aggregate being sold as rubble for use in construction. The northern end of the N-S runway is at its full width as are a very few sections of taxiway. From the road the remaining hangars can be very clearly seen as can a number of Nissen huts and the old watch office.

Rob (Walden)

May 2006

OULTON



Final stop, Saturday

It has become a tradition over a number of years for the coach to take us the short distance to Oulton. Here there is always a warm welcome and afternoon tea at the home of our hosts Kysnia and Keith.

Tables in their home heave with a feast of veritable delights. We spend the time sitting with friends, sipping tea and eating home-made cake, while rooms fill with laughter and memories of all that has been.

It is nearing the end of our stay that Phil James presents our host Kysnia with a paper-weight from Wales filled with real pressed flowers.



And then the coach is once more on the road for our final visit of the day.

Before our return to the Museum, we have one more stop to make. And it is to the airfield memorial where we make our way to gather in solemn silence, in remembrance of those lost flying from Oulton.



The villagers join us for a simple and yet nonetheless meaningful and poignant ceremony and to place a memorial wreath -

Poems are read by Richard and Sue Bryan, one by the famous poet Rupert Brookes, and followed by a minute's silence to remember those passed on.



The afternoon has proved an eventful one and we need now to take time out to recover, and revitalize before the Reunion Dinner at the Aylsham Lodge Hotel in the evening.

Aylsham Lodge Hotel

It is a wonderfully warm May evening. We meet at 7.30pm for drinks before Dinner at 8pm and the rooms are overflowing with good natured conversation full of the events of the day. As members congregate, gradually we drift on into the main dining room which is looking lovely, decked with balloons in traditional red, white and blue. We each seek out our name on tables and, drinks in hand, take our seats.

It is an occasion.

Everyone is dressed in their best, and all down the rows of tables people are acquainting themselves with people they have been placed next to so that the whole room feels alive in anticipation of a great evening to follow.



The food is gorgeous, tempting, filling. One course follows another while wine and conversation flows.

On the top table sit the Directors, together with Mick Jennings MBE, RAF Community Relations Officer based until now at RAF Coltishall. He is our Speaker for the evening.

Derek Waters, Director and Chair, opens the proceedings finally at the end of the meal, introducing the Speaker. Mick is due to immigrate to Australia with his family shortly and he will be missed. Reunions of the past have enjoyed tremendous support from RAF Coltishall, and Mick has been a regular to the proceedings. Now he speaks passionately of RAF Coltishall and his time there (*seen below*) -

'The history of the RAF is waning ... 16 and 54 Squadrons have disbanded ... Coltishall is closing in September. Coltishall belongs to the people of Norfolk. Professionalism is still there, a part of its heritage just as it has always been. The Great in Great Britain is there because of RAF servicemen and all they have done and achieved. And the memory of Coltishall will live on ... a history room has been built as a continuation of its heritage by moving it to the Museum. And so what of Coltishall? The Base is being put on the open market in September and the hope is that it will be used in Aviation or else go back to being a potato field so that the circle is complete.'



It is a sad note on which to end. Coltishall will hold so many memories of life there for so many different people. However, like Mick says, the memory of Coltishall will live on through the Museum.

However, there is a surprise in the proceedings to follow. Martin Staunton unexpected stands up to make a special Award to an unsuspecting person. Dorothy Hudson's daughter Kath, also attending the Reunion, has, through research and contacting official channels, finally succeeded in obtaining the War and Defence Medals for her mother.



Dorothy had written to us earlier to explain -

'As I reached the 80 mark this year I decided I would write to claim my Defence Medal, but in view of what follows perhaps I should have left it alone.

I have a small chit will tells me that I am entitled to it and it was signed by the last station's Commanding Officer. I duly wrote to the appropriate department at Innsworth and was told that it would be 18 months before I would receive it. I'm sure they would have posted it on to wherever I was! However, yesterday, I received a communication from the Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency, Ministry of Defence Medal Office saying:-

'To qualify for the award of the Defence Medal, 1080 days of non-operation service in the United Kingdom is required. Your record shows that you enlisted on 6 October 1942, placed in Reserved on 7 October 1942, and then called to active service on 21 October 1942. You served on non-operation duties in the United Kingdom until the end of the war in Europe on 8 May 1942. You may therefore count from 21 October 1942 as counting towards the award of the Defence Medal. Regrettably, this is less than the 1080 days required and you did not qualify for the award of this medal. I am sorry to send what must be a disappointing reply!!'

According to their calculations I served only 929 days, approximately 151 days short of the target!! I was not discharged until 12 months later. You can imagine how very very disappointed I was to know that my service in the WAAF was not recognized, even tho' I served with those who were eligible.

I would have thought that any service in war-time in the forces was eligible. Perhaps there are others in the Association who have had similar experiences. Perhaps also this is why the MOD issued the Veteran's Badge. Hey Ho such is life. I've had worse knocks but it makes you feel nothing and has dented my pride a little.'

Some stories DO have happy endings!



And so it comes about that here, at the May Reunion of RAF 100 Group 2006, Martin Staunton is able, finally, to present Dorothy with her War and Defence Medals to rapturous applause from members ... some 61 years on!

It is the perfect end to a lovely day.



All that remains is for the raffle to be drawn, providing a host of prizes to Chris Lambert (representative from Oulton), Margaret Taverna, Alan Thomsett, M Dain, Phil James, Rodney Scott, Andrew Barron, Doc Elliott. A grand total of £117 has been raised through this enterprise.



*Vera & Phil James
who celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary in April
enjoy the final moments of their meal
at the Aylsham Lodge Hotel*

SUNDAY

14th May 2006

Final day of the Reunion.

We converge on the village of Horsham St Faith to take part in the service being held in the church there. Again, it has become a tradition each year that we do so. And members proudly wear their medals for the occasion.

The minister always welcomes members from RAF 100 Group Association and pays special tribute to those passed, and her theme this Sunday is about '*staying connected*' which is also appropriate to the occasion.

Following the service, we meet in the Hall opposite to share a final cuppa and chit-chat before heading for home.

People are reluctant to leave. Reunions bring us close, keep us 'connected'. A year seems a long long time before it all happens again.

But then, finally, we depart, each to our own part of the country and abroad. For some it is a longer journey than for others. We wish one another well, with hugs and kisses expressing the close bond we share.

And it is this spirit of love and friendship that we carry with us Home.

* * * *

We are not alone in stating that this year's Reunion has been the best to date. More people attended than ever before, and even over the time we were there, four new members joined.

It was a wonderful time shared

And in sharing with you the events of this weekend, we would hope to have captured the essence of what it meant to once more be together again.

Our single thought at this time is - how do we top that next year! We can't wait to find out!!



RAF 100 Group Association members
outside the City of Norwich Aviation Museum



Our thanks to Bob Histed, Rob Walden & Paul Dunn
for letting us use their pictures alongside our own



... and a good time was had by all ...

See you all again next year, May 2007!