



The Mildenhall Register

15, 90, 149 and 622
Bomber Squadrons' Association
supported by Friends of 75 (NZ) Sqn
and 218 (Gold Coast) Sqn



Newsletter

January 2019

Roll of Honour 2018

Mrs	D	Doris	Bradwell	Sheffield	622
Mr	J F	Jim	Bateman	Maresfield, NSW	149
Ms	M	Margaret	Coulson	Chesterfield	218
Mrs	J	Jill	Cox		90
Mr	K R	Ken	Dougan	Courteney, Canada	XV
Mr	W	Walter	Eacott	Australia	603
Mr	K	Ken	Ellis	Abbotsleigh	218
Mrs	R	Ruth	Ford	Lowestoft	WAAF
Mr	W	Bill	Golding	Northampton	XV
Mr	T S	Thomas	Harris	Torquay	158
Mr	J	John	Healy	Swansea	XC
Mr	F J	Francis	Hogan	Manchester	622
Mr	W	William	Holmes DFC	Chipping Norton	149
Mr	D	Donald	Jeffs	Nottingham	XV
Mr	J	John	Kelly	Wimbledon	622
Mr	D	David	Laird	Friockheim, Arbroath	XV
Mr	P	Peter	Lawrence	Brixham	218
Mr	R	Robert	Mallett	Sutton-on-Sea	
Mr	D C	Dennis	Mason DFM	Sherburn in Elmet	149/40/9
Mr	D	Des	McFadden DFC	Swansea	XV
Mrs	B		Meadon	Newcastle	149
Mrs	B	Beryl	Neville	Methwold	149
Mr	H	Henry	Pam	Highbridge	622
Mrs	B	Brenda	Parker	Market Harborough	75
Mr	E B	Ted	Peck	Nottingham	622
Mr	E	Ernest	Pell	Kettering	218
Mr	J	Jim	Reilly	Redcar	218
Mr	W E	William	Richards	Tea Gardens	622
Mrs	I	Iris	Searle	Peterborough	XC
Mr	L	Lincoln (Artie)	Shaw	Totnes	622
Mr	J	Jim	Smith	Fleet	149
Mrs	J		Smith	Fleet	149
Mr	B	Bernard	Stonehouse	Northumberland	218
Mr	P G	Peter	Thomas	Leeds	149
Mr	W B	William	Wolfe	Dolgellau	622
Mrs	J	Joyce	Wright	Uxbridge	XV/622

Cover Picture: The Oval Plate of Remembrance for the Heligoland Air Battle displayed in Ely Cathedral in front of the memorial window to members of RAF Bomber Command. The inscription at the bottom of the window says:

"In honour and memory of the members of 2,3,8 and 100 Groups who served in the Ely district during the second world war, 1939 to 1945."

Notes from the Chairman

How quickly the past year has gone and what an experience it has been to witness the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Royal Air Force and attend several functions to mark the event. I must confess in a way it makes me feel rather old, for I remember well celebrating the RAF's 50th anniversary whilst undergoing navigator training at RAF Gaydon. However, the last Mildenhall Register reunion put age into context when I witnessed our vets dancing well into the night and I remembered that they were in the RAF the year that I was born, 1944. The expression goes that you are as old as you feel and I find a lot of truth in that saying! What marvellous people, the personnel of WW2 Bomber Command were and are! They are still very much young at heart.

In this newsletter you will read of the 2018 reunion and other events. What an active year, in addition to our annual reunion there has been - the RAF's 100th Anniversary celebrations, the official opening of the International Bomber Command Centre at Lincoln, a remembrance service for the Heligoland raid in Ely Cathedral and the marking of events overseas remembering Colleagues lost in WW2 raids.

Our Secretary, Geoff Reynolds has stolen most of my thunder in his report which has included all of the relevant news for you both past and present! He really fulfils the role of Chief Executive very well which means that I, so ably assisted by Cherry and Smiley Mildwater and my wife Jill are able to focus mainly on the Annual Reunion and the compilation of the newsletter. Our web site continues to attract many hits and is so efficiently run by Geoff's wife, Debbie. The six of us work very well together and I want to thank them all on your behalf for the enormous effort and time they all put into the successful running of the Register.

On a personnel note, I, informed the 2018 Annual General Meeting that come May 2019 I would not be standing for re-election to the Mildenhall Register Committee. It was in 2006 that the then Chairman Fred Coney, ambushed me into becoming his deputy and then ensuring that I became Chairman in 2008! My Wife and I have greatly enjoyed these years, attending the various events, meeting a host of such wonderful people and making many new friends. During this period, I like to feel that with my excellent committee we have taken the Register forward. The newsletter has been expanded, a web site and Facebook forum have been set up, the Annual Reunion expanded to provide more activities and excellent relations have been established with the reformed 622 Sqn and the members of St John's Church Beck Row. However, I feel that now the Register is at the cross roads, with the passage of time we are sadly losing our WW2 veterans, attendance at the annual reunion is decreasing and hence decisions as to the Register's future and activities in the years to come need to be addressed by you the members. The future is yours!

Jill and I will not be saying goodbye, hopefully we will attend Register events in the future. A very Happy New Year to you all.

John Gentleman

Secretary's report

Well, what a busy year it's been, both for me and The Register. No sooner have the newsletters gone out in January than the final planning for the reunion can begin as the booking forms come back to Smiley and myself.

Before the reunion took place, I had the honour of representing The Mildenhall Register at a ceremony in Belgium. This was to commemorate the loss of a 75 (NZ) Stirling and all crew. The event took place over the weekend 13th - 16th April. A report appears later on.

Next up came the reunion in May, another success by all accounts. An interesting tour of the base, with access to their planes and facilities graced the Friday before the

AGM. The river trip didn't attract as much attention as we'd hoped, but was well received and enjoyed by those who came along. Saturday's dinner was a good gathering with five veterans and one widow joining us. With accompaniment from the Skyliners band once again, it was a swinging evening. Sunday we all gathered for the Remembrance service in St John's church, Beck Row before being treated by the good ladies of the parish to a wonderful buffet lunch before we all wend our ways home for another year.

An early 'shakedown' meeting by the committee followed to review the event and begin the planning for the coming year soon followed. We hold quite a few throughout the year. Debbie and I were invited to an event in St Paul's Cathedral in June. As we enjoy our annual trip to 'the smoke' we took the opportunity to visit St Clement Danes church to see the two new XV and 622 Squadron badges which have been placed there. See separate report. At about the same time The Register was formally invited to assist and attend at two ceremonies to mark the Battle of Heligoland. A report of this pivotal air battle appeared in one of our newsletters back in November 1989. Written by Des Lampard of 149 Squadron, which was involved, it told the story of the losses sustained by them and Nos. 9 and 37 Squadron's Wellingtons. This has been a massive project driven by Jack Waterfall, whose family member, Sgt J.H. Waterfall DFM flew with 37 Squadron, although not on this operation. Its aim is to bring together families of those lost on 18th December 1939. The first event took place on 18th December 2018 and a report appears further on in this edition. The second will take place at Runnymede on 18th December 2019 and I will report on this next year.

Next, chronologically for me, came a trip to the National Memorial Arboretum in July with a group from our village who were visiting the Burma railway exhibition there. I was designated driver for the group and took the opportunity to find the plaque that I knew should exist for The Mildenhall Register. I'd read in another early copy of our newsletters, from November 1998, that a tree and plaque had been raised there. Again, see later report.



The Secretary gives his report at the AGM whilst the Chairman and Treasurer listen attentively

With our wonderfully warm summer still with us, Howard Sandall the 622 Sqn Historian asked if I'd be his chauffeur on a trip around Holland and Belgium later in the year. Well, after such a great time (if cemeteries and monuments is your thing) going around France last year, how could I refuse. So, we set about planning a route for early October, eventually getting away on Friday 19th on the DFDS sailing to Dunkirk. Our six-day trip covered just over 1400 miles taking in nine cemeteries, four crash sites and honouring 52 crew who'd lost their lives. With a trip around the Arnhem museums on the Sunday and a return to the 75 (NZ) crash site at the end of the week it was again a memorable experience. I also managed to bring back a few cases of the excellent Chimay beers to add my 65th birthday celebrations in January!

Oh, and I did manage to squeeze in some model aircraft flying too! So that was my year. Looking ahead to the future. We have maintained a fairly static membership of around 500 despite the many sad losses we have reported within this issue. Our website and Facebook pages continue to attract attention and new members. These also provide a source of extra work for myself and our hard working and dedicated squadron historians.

I'd be very grateful if folk wishing to continue receiving the newsletters would respond by returning their booking forms this year with an affirmative. It costs about £1.50 to produce each copy of our newsletters without the escalating postal charges. So, it is a shame to be wasting Register funds sending to those who are no longer members or do not wish to receive a copy by post. Further help in saving costs would be possible if people were happy to receive the newsletter electronically. I can send to any number of e-mails free of charge. The Mildenhall Register has continued for many years without a membership fee and we'd like to keep it that way. So please, send us back your booking forms and let us know you want to continue receiving the newsletter and in what format.

Forthcoming events 2019 Reunion dates for your diary 17th - 19th May inclusive. Booking form enclosed. We have been assured by The Bird in Hand there will be 12 -15 rooms refurbished and available for those wishing to stay this time and that the proposed closure has been averted with the new management now in place. First come, first served. Other places to stay are listed elsewhere in the magazine.

The Mildenhall Museum is hosting a special Stirling day on Sunday 2nd June 2019. This is to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of The Stirling Society's Memorial at the museum. Places are severely limited, so if you'd like to go, contact Mary Ghrist (ghrist@waitrose.com) for further information.

Then 18th December 2019 sees the culmination of all Jack Waterfall's hard work with a special service of Remembrance, Reconciliation and Commemoration being held at Runnymede and Brooklands. This will mark the 80th anniversary of the first named air battle of WW2. A mobile display is then set to tour the country until 2020.

Well, that just about wraps it up from me, except to say thanks to the other members of your committee for all their hard work and support. Not forgetting our historians, without whom we'd never get the answers to your queries or stories for the newsletter.

Happy New Year.to you all!

Geoff Reynolds

From the Treasurer

Welcome, dear reader, to 2019., for the Mildenhall Register, 2018 was a year of mixed fortunes with a successful and most enjoyable Reunion but a not so successful year financially. Although our members donated most generously our income was down on 2017, the reunion Broad's boat trip, which was greatly enjoyed by all who participated, was undersubscribed and the Reunion dinner entertainment all combined to leave us somewhat out of pocket. Also, the newsletter costs continue to rise with printing and postage costs. Although we are not, as yet, heading for Marshalsea, any and all donations will be most gratefully received.

On a personal note, your Hon Treasurer and his CGS laid, as usual, a wreath on the graves of FS Hannah and his crew (15 Squadron Stirling) in the CWGC cemetery at La-Baule-Escoublac, near St Nazaire, and also wreaths on the 42 and 166 Squadrons crews buried in communal cemeteries near Concarneau, Brittany.

That's it from me so here's wishing you all a Happy, Healthy and, above all, a riotous New Year.

Smiley Mildwater

The Mildenhall Register Reunion 11-13 May 2018

Around 60 members attended some aspect of the Reunion weekend's events and again it was viewed as a highly successful occasion. We are once more indebted to the USAF at RAF Mildenhall for allowing us to use their facilities. This year the absence of accommodation at the Bird in Hand potentially could have caused some logistical problems but these never really materialised, and members found accommodation easily (and better) elsewhere in the area,

The weekend started with a tour of the huge American base which included a visit to the Fire Section, a very informative briefing on the Mission of the 351st Air Refueling Squadron given by its Commander, Lt Col Jason Barnes. Following the briefing we inspected (or clambered over!) a KC135 aircraft before finishing the tour by viewing the magnificent stained-glass windows in the base Chapel. The six windows depict the history of RAF Mildenhall from its early days until the coming of the USAF and the arrival of



Piloting the KC 135!

the KC135. Whilst we travelled around the base from one facility to another Sqn Ldr Rick Fryer, the RAF Commander and our tour guide, pointed out various places of interest. Whilst we have now done half a dozen tours of the base each time we see and learn of something different! The tour was very informative and interesting.

After a quick wash and brush up the members met in the Tudor Bar of Middleton Hall for pre-dinner drinks. Middleton Hall was the Officers Mess, built in the early 1930s. It is an impressive building with much solid oak panelling and some fine crystal glass chandeliers. It contains many photographs of World War 2 and is worth a visit on its own! Here after the taking of a buffet supper we held the Annual General Meeting of the Register (see the minutes elsewhere on the web site). The meeting was concluded by an informative talk by 622 Squadron WW2 Historian, Howard Sandall entitled "Paying Respects in France" which was an account of his and our Secretary Geoff Reynolds's journey around France to visit 16 cemeteries and to pay their respects to 77 airmen from 622 Squadron. Saturday saw a modestly early start (nine o'clock) by coach to Wroxham on the Norfolk Broads. Here we boarded the "Condor Rouge" for a three-hour trip to discover the Norfolk Broads. A full commentary from the skipper ensured that we would not miss a thing, he explained the origins of the Broads, identified points of interest along the way and pointed out to us the abundance of local water birds as they came into view. We saw swans with their signets, a Kingfisher, Great Crested Grebes sitting on their floating nests, Coots and Egyptian, Canada and Greylag geese. There can be no better way to learn about the Broads whilst taking in the beautiful scenery all around you. Hot or cold drinks were taken, and we enjoyed an excellent sandwich lunch as we cruised. The weather was most kind, the sun shone all the time until we disembarked for the journey home. The trip was a great success and we must thank our Treasurer and his wife Cherry for making all the arrangements including lunch! We arrived back at our hotels around half three to prepare for the formal dinner.



Observing the scenery on the Broad's trip



Dancing the night away to the Skyliners!

By 1815hrs members were assembling in the Norfolk/Suffolk Ballroom for pre-dinner drinks before the Formal Dinner which this year marked the 75th Anniversary of the formation of 622 Squadron. Here we were joined by guests from the USAF at RAF Mildenhall, the Newmarket Branch of the Royal Air Force Association, representatives of the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Royal Air Force was

represented by a dozen or so members of 622 Squadron. After a welcome by Colonel Chris Amrhein and the loyal toasts we partook of an excellent three course meal, followed by short speeches by our Chairman and the Officer Commanding 622 Squadron. After the raffle we were entertained by the Skyliners, a nine-piece band specialising in dance music from the 1940's. Youngsters and those not so young danced the night away until carriages just after 11. All agreed it was an excellent evening and many want a repeat of it another year.

Sunday saw our Member assemble at St John's Church for the laying of wreaths at the Register's Memorial Plaque followed by a Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving. The Ladies of St John's then entertained us to a superb buffet before we said our farewells and many vowed to meet again next year.

The USAF have agreed to host the next Reunion over the weekend 17,18 and 19 May 2019. Please put the date in your diary now and make a booking of a hotel for the weekend. Full details including the application form are on our web site and included with this edition of the newsletter.



Ceremony of Remembrance St Johns Beck Row

John Gentleman

Obituaries

Lincoln S. (Artie) Shaw- No. 622 Squadron

Warrant Officer Lincoln Shaw passed away on 19th February 2018. He was a former member of No. 622 Squadron acting as the mid upper gunner in the crew of F/Lt A.R. Taylor DFC. his tour of operations to the same target on 25th July 1944. The crew attacked targets deep in the Ruhr Valley interspersed with trips into France as support for the Allied Army and the Flying Bomb sites.

William Evans Richards RAAF - No 622 Squadron

Flying Officer William Evans Richards passed away on 26th March 2018 in a retirement home in Tea Gardens NSW Australia aged 94.

Bill trained to be a pilot in Australia and travelled by ship to England in May 1944 eventually joining 622 Squadron in August 1944. The crew had an eventful tour of operations being hit by flak on 17 occasions included a trip to Cologne on 27th November 1944 when the rear gunner was injured after being hit by flak.

Francis J. Hogan- No. 622 Squadron

Warrant Officer Frank Hogan passed away on 9th October 2018. He was a flight engineer in the crew of F/O Geoff Conacher RAAF and completed a tour of operations in early 1945 including operations Manna & Exodus.

The most memorable operation for Frank was his first one on a daylight trip to Monchengladbach (01/02/45) bombing with the aid of G/H radar. Shortly after take-off and before crossing the coast, a small oil leak developed on the front edge of the port main plane at the inner engine. The engine was behaving perfectly so they continued. The leak began spreading slowly over the wing and over Europe the situation quickly worsened with the main plane covered, and oil now hitting the rear turret. The Lancaster began to lose its position in the Bomber stream. Attempts to feather the engine were unsuccessful. Flames were seen to be coming from the port inner. Attempts to douse the fire were not successful. The fire quickly spread to the fuselage. The aircraft became increasingly difficult to control, and after crossing into liberated France, the crew abandoned the aircraft, all parachuting at Vitry en Artois near Rheims. The crew were carrying a spare mid under gunner, Sgt E. Baxter who was on his 30th trip. He was reluctant to bail out and he was seen to be falling from the sky with his parachute on fire claiming his life.

Henry Pam- No. 622 Squadron

Flying Officer Henry Pam passed away on 11th December 2017. He was a bomb aimer in the crew of Flying Officer Eric Wills RAAF and joined 622 Squadron in early 1945. His first operation was to bomb the city of Wesel in support of the Allied armies advance. The squadron at this stage of the war were specializing in daylight operations using the navigation aid G/H radar. In May 1945 the crew participated in operations Manna to drop food supplies to the starving Dutch population. Later in the month they brought back POW's to the UK as part of operation Exodus.

Edward Benton Peck- No 622 Squadron

Ted Peck passed away on 21st October 2018. He was a flight engineer in the crew of F/Lt Richard Armitstead and completed his flight engineer training at St Athan in South Wales. He joined his crew at RAF Shepherds Grove (HCU) before being posted to 622 Squadron in early August 1944. The crew's first operation was to attack the docks at Kiel on 26th August. Various heavily defended targets were attacked during his tour of operations finishing with a trip to Mersburg on 6th December.

Ted considered his crew to be extremely proficient, he made his memoirs available to the author for inclusion in the full Squadron history. Over the years Ted was a staunch supporter of all things Bomber Command.

John Kelly - No. 622 Squadron

John Kelly from Wimbledon London passed away on 16th May 2018. He was a navigator in the crew of F/O Gordon Thurn RAAF and completed operations during 1945. His first operation was to Datteln on 9th March 1945 which was quite eventful. Just after take-off at about fifty feet above the ground, the starboard outer engine burst into flames resulting in the

Lancaster dipping its wing dangerously. F/O Thurn skilfully gained control and gained height saving the lives of all on board. The crew experienced numerous flak hits including a serious injury to their mid upper gunner on a trip to Merseburg and an engine failure over the target on 14th March. John finished his operational tour with Operations Manna & Exodus.

Mrs Beryl Neville

Beryl, with her husband Colin, was a great supporter of the Register, in particular entertaining 149 Sqn during their visits to Methwold. She will be greatly missed and we send our condolences to Colin and the family.

Lincoln (Artie) Shaw

A service of celebration of a remarkable life was given for Lincoln (Artie) Shaw in the Upper Gatehouse of Dartington Hall on Sunday 8th April 2018. Many of his former friends and colleagues were invited to attend the ceremony, including The Mildenhall Register. With none of the committee able to attend, we were represented by Bertie Jukes, a member who lives in the area.

Added to the many tributes that had poured in for Lincoln: "A great colleague and teacher", "An absolute gentleman", "A can-do man", "An action man par excellence", "A lovely kind man with a nose for news", "A calm pillar of Pebble Mill", "A great companion and golfer", "A good lad, as well as being a great credit to journalism" and "An astute man. A tough man when necessary, but always fair" Bertie kindly delivered this tribute which Howard Sandall had prepared for him.

Bomber Command Air Gunner Lincoln was without question an extremely brave man and I offer some insight into his RAF service during WWII as a Lancaster rear gunner.



Lincoln giving one of his broadcasts

Lincoln joined the crew of Flying Lieutenant A.R. Taylor DFC as his rear gunner and arrived on No.622 Squadron in February 1944. He went on to complete 30 operational missions against the enemy finishing his 'tour' of duty in July 1944.

It has often been said that all young men wanted to be a pilot however; every member of the seven-person aircrew were essential to survival. Only the most intelligent young men went on to become aircrew in Bomber Command.

The rear gunner's -often known as tail-end Charlie's - primary role was to be a lookout: to defend his aircraft from enemy fighter attack from the rear of the plane and to warn the pilot when to undertake evasive manoeuvres. This meant flying in this confined, see-through turret, enveloped by the pitch-black sky and constantly revolving the turret to scan the eerie darkness for a shadow that could be an attacking German night fighter. Daydreaming

was not an option as relaxing this constant vigilance - for even a moment - could result in death for everyone on board.

He sat in isolation in the rear turret with the control yoke between his legs and used this to rotate the turret and elevate his 4 x .303 machine guns. Very cramped. Space too small to store a parachute. No time to get out of turret and put parachute on, resulting in many rear gunners not escaping in an emergency!

Operations at this period of the air war were extremely dangerous, the Germans had perfected airborne radar to detect the bombers in the dark and the night fighters would creep up underneath the bombers. The rear gunner looking down into the dark sky would be unaware of the danger approaching, the night fighter pilot's view was a perfectly silhouetted bomber against the night sky. Once in position the enemy fighter would fire an upward firing cannon into the bombers wings setting alight the fuel tanks, this would almost certainly result in the bomber blowing up or spiralling down to crash.

Rear gunners would remove a Perspex panel from their turret to improve vision, exposing them to sub-zero temperatures reaching minus thirty to forty degrees. Their faces would be exposed to the slipstream, their breath froze their mask to their face often having to be prized from their face on landing.

Electrically heated flying suits were issued as standard, these were plugged into the aircraft similar to an electric blanket. Heated suits were not without their problems, often they would overheat or not work at all. Some air gunners thought they would fall asleep if they were too warm so did not use them at all.

The following is an account from an air gunner who also flew on No.622 Squadron at the same time as Lincoln. The account describes the danger experienced when flying operations against the enemy:

"Over the target the searchlights seek out targets of opportunity like beams of death waiting to suck the life out of a bomber. The result of a searchlight locking onto a Lancaster would trigger a barrage of flak guns to 'open up' and enable the night fighters to see the target clearly. The nervous tension was unbearable as I scanned the sky for fighters approaching from the rear. Our only chance of survival would be for me to spot the fighter first and order the skipper to perform the 'corkscrew' manoeuvre to escape the fighter's attention.

The mid upper gunner broke radio silence to make us all aware that he has seen Me109 and Fw190 fighters attacking aircraft in the vicinity, his identification was assisted by the fires burning below and the pyrotechnics going on in the night sky. These aircraft are armed with formidable firepower including 20mm cannons that literally shreds open a Lancaster's thin metal structure. A fighter's range and armament could be used against a bomber from a distance that far exceeds the range of my four .303 Browning machine guns. My attention was drawn to a dark shape that was closing in from behind and the fires below allow me to identify a single engine fighter, which I know for sure is the enemy.

My mind reverted to the lucky escape we had on the Stuttgart mission and I am determined that history will not repeat itself, although the pit of my stomach is telling me to get the Lancaster out of there immediately. I decide to wait for the right moment to give the

skipper the order to 'corkscrew' and he asks for a positive identification. As the fighter draws nearer, I can clearly see the silhouette of a Fw190, a deadly adversary that potentially could blow us out of the sky. The fighter approaches rapidly, I was just about to give the order when his nose comes up and a stream of tracer bullets, mostly amour piercing comes towards us and narrowly flies over the top of my turret. I issued the instruction to 'dive port' and we plunged down and up in a stomach wrenching manoeuvre designed to lose our attacker. We level out and I search the night sky intensely for any further sign of his presence and I start to take things personally, why has he chosen us from all the aircraft in the target area?

I cannot help my thoughts drifting to my family and especially my mother who I know prays every day for my safe return. My grip tightens on the firing handles, a natural reaction to accompany the tension and trepidation that fills my very soul. I again glimpsed a dark shape approaching and I informed the skipper to prepare for evasive manoeuvres, at around 300 yards the fighter sits centrally in the gun sight and I fired a long burst of fire, willing my bullets to strike home and defend our Lancaster. The tracer bullets illuminated the night sky and I watched them drive into the fighter as I screamed 'dive port' through the intercom. The action is over in a few brief seconds and I witnessed the fighter turn away and dive down on fire.

A warm sense of relief filled me and I could not help screaming 'I've got him' down the intercom, a fact that was reinforced by the mid upper gunner who saw the bullets strike home and the fighter fall away. A surreal silence filled the aircraft and my sense of smell was heightened allowing the smell of burnt cordite and hot oil to fill my nasal passage. The silence was broken by the crackling intercom and the skipper congratulated me on my efforts and promised me a few beers to celebrate if we came through the rest of the mission. The bomb aimer guided the skipper through the bomb run and we are again very vulnerable to fighter attack whilst we are flying straight and level. The intensity of the flak has not decreased and the searchlights still search the night sky for our presence. The Lancaster rose up sharply signalling that we had released the bombs and the bomb aimer called 'bombs gone' over the intercom, we had to fly a few more seconds on a straight and level path so that our photograph could be taken to record our target has been bombed. We turned for home with the skipper throwing our Lancaster into a turning dive and setting course for home and safety."

The bravery and courage that was displayed on a daily basis on Bomber Command Squadrons up and down the country should never be forgotten. Lincoln Shaw was one of the 'Bomber Boys' that took the fight to Germany. 55, 543 aircrew lost their lives, the highest loss rate of any armed service during the Second World War.

As the years pass the interest into Bomber Command grows and in June 2012 a magnificent memorial to Bomber Command was unveiled in Green Park London by Her Majesty the Queen. This memorial goes some way to rectify the injustice of Bomber Command never having being honoured for over 65 Years.

H. J. Sandall 2018

Celebrating the Royal Air Force's first 100 years!

As you already know the RAF celebrated its centenary in 2018. The event was covered far and wide in the press and on television. We thought that we would publish just two accounts of how the event was marked by Register members, one being a report on 622 Sqn's commemoration at the Bomber Command Reunion and the other an article by one of our members, George Worrell, of the way it was celebrated in parts of Buckinghamshire.

George Worrell wrote:

On Sunday the 15th of April RAF Halton exercised its right to the Freedom of Chesham. Led by the Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment and escorting the Queen's Colour Standard a contingent of RAF personnel with fixed bayonets marched through the town to mark the centennial of the Royal Air Force. At the civic service which followed the parade the Bishop of Buckingham gave the attached address which I think is worth sharing.....

"It is a great honour to say a few words on this 100th anniversary of the Royal Air Force. Britain's military tradition was locally raised regiments with strong attachment to the communities in which they were raised. Today the Bucks Yeomanry is no more, The Ox and Bucks, whose memorials you will find in almost every church in those counties, are amalgamated – our local regiment's HQ is in Winchester.

In these circumstances the Royal Air Force fulfils, in many ways, the emotional and civic space of the old county regiments. We are immensely proud of our connections, both with RAF High Wycombe and, whilst it lasts Halton. There have been 16 RAF stations in Bucks. That's 16 without counting Operation Hillside at Hughenden Manor.

Today we celebrate the RAF as a fighting force, its flyers, ground staff and dependents, everyone with a roundel. Sometimes, as in the Battle of Britain, the RAF has been a central and visible part of national life. Modern camouflage schemes have made the roundel all but invisible, but it's important that it's still there, and vital not to lose identity entirely in camouflage.

Spare a thought for the Australian army. It spent \$78,000 dollars on a new land cruiser. They applied the most sophisticated camouflage system in the world, and now they can't find it.

The RAF distinctive must not be lost – courage, resilience and comradeship in the face of danger, sometimes facing impossible odds and unknown challenges. The RAF of the Few, by 1942 the largest in the world, experienced high casualties many in horrifying circumstances. Bomber Command crews, with 30 mission tours of duty, survived, on average 13.

We think also of the 1950's V-Bomber crews who knew that if scrambled, as one put it, there probably wouldn't be very much to come back to. The Courage, daring and willingness for self-sacrifice required was more than just conventional military skill.

Serious aviation was 11 years old at the outbreak of war in 1914. Flying in aircraft made of canvas, wire and wood, no parachutes, guns or identifying marks, was in itself a supremely hazardous undertaking. Graham Donald joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1914. He learned to

fly, at his own expense, on a Wright Biplane. Its maximum speed was 49 knots. Level flying was possible at 43 knots. 42 knots induced a dive, and 39 knots a stall. The sole instrumentation was an 18- inch length of String attached to a forward strut. So, said Donald, "you hadn't got very much to play with."

Later in the war, flying a Sopwith Camel, Donald experimented with a new dogfight manoeuvre that involved looping the loop. Hanging upside down at the top, his Webbing seatbelt proved inadequate. He fell through the air and landed 2000 feet below on the Camel's wing and recovered the plane, but only just, accidentally spraying the aerodrome with bullets in the process.

100 years on, operating at the leading edge of technology continues to be a hazardous activity. Operating at the leading edge of military technology has also inevitably involved controversy, from the very earliest days about bombing, to today's lively ethical debates about drones. General Smuts reported on aerial warfare in 1917 and proposed the formation of a Royal Air force. There were interesting ethical debates to be had about bombing of civilians, but Zeppelin raids had been made upon London, posing an acute practical challenge. Fresh thinking was required, over and against traditional inter-service rivalries. The RAF has lived through technological leaps and bounds — only 14 years separate the Wright Flyer from the Sopwith Camel. Seven, in design terms, the Lancaster and Vulcan bombers. Innovation has been the order of the day, not only for flight, but supporting technologies like radio, radar, photography, biometrics, and meteorology.

In 1913 the old RFC Air Mechanics School moved from Farnborough to Halton, where it stayed in one form or another till 1990. The heart of today's celebration belongs, with all due respect, not to politicians, but to the family of the RAF as it is often called.

There is a harsh pragmatic reality about flight and war in the air, which has always made the RAF something of a forward-looking Meritocracy.

In wartime, it was largely women who staffed the Air Transport Auxiliary. From the start, Trenchard sought to recruit a modern service, disciplined and effective but free from historic baggage and undue deference. It has reflected British Society from the age of upstairs downstairs in which it was founded to today, but, characteristically for the RAF, at the leading edge.

In 1913 the first commanding officer of the RFC asked his officers to come up with a suitable stirring motto for the new service. Lieutenant Yule, cursed with a classical education, came up with the "Ad Astra" but from Virgil's Aeneid. Expanded by a brother officer's reading of Rider Haggard, this was the origin of the motto — per ardua ad astra — through hardships to the stars.

The original context of Latin is Virgil's description of a Bronze Age dogfight between two warriors, Aeneas and Turnus. As the business begins, Aeneas shouts out to Turnus, what we are about is no mere foot race, but desperate hand to hand combat — so assume your best tricks and disguises, gather up all your skill and courage, wish yourself a bird, and fly to the stars. Per ardua ad astra. Through hardship to the stars.

Some say it is untranslatable, because of course it is really. The whole human experience of struggle and courage, resourcefulness and ingenuity, the heart of the community of the

service that has achieved so much, including the freedom of John Magee's high flight, climbing sunward, doing a hundred things the rest of us never thought of, chasing shouting wind along, and, famous last lines, putting out the hand to touch the face of God. It's an extraordinary story, and we in this county are proud and delighted to have had a part, even a very small part in it. We face an uncertain future, today in Syria and who knows where tomorrow, or how. The integrity and professionalism of the service is comforting. Our deepest gratitude for the past 100 years of service, and, our hopes and prayers for years to come."

*Taken from an address given at the RAF Centenary Anniversary Service
Led by Simon Cansdale and Bishop Alan Wilson.*

John Myhill, currently serving with 622 Auxiliary Squadron at Brize Norton, sent in these pictures. They show the Squadron commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the RAF at the Bomber Command memorial in Green Park with two very well-known faces.

Flanking OC 622 Sqn are Bill Gould, former flight engineer on Lancasters and 'Chick' Chandler, also a flight engineer on Lancasters.



Chick served on two squadrons with two different crews. On XV Squadron with Oliver Brooks from Oct '43-Apr '44. He then transferred to 622, completing his tour with Tom Hargreaves from May '44-July '44. Bill did his whole tour of 30 ops with 622, serving on Flt Lt Rumble's crew. Their tour was a very quick one, beginning with Trier on 21st Dec '44, last was gardening in Kattagat May 3rd '45. Two Manna ops to Rotterdam and 4 Exodus Ops to Juvencourt. As at 2018 there are still two other crew members alive, Frank

Cook (MUG) in Lowestoft and Stan Taylor in Clitheroe.



We particularly liked the photograph of the Lancaster seen through the roof of the memorial.

Official opening of the International Bomber Command Centre

More than 300 veterans from across the world, including some from the Register, were among thousands of people who turned out for the ceremony to mark the official opening of the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln

The centre, which was reviewed in earlier newsletters, aims to commemorate all those who were involved with Bomber Command in the Second World War, is now open to the public. The official ceremony to open the £13m facility was held on April 12 hosted by former BBC journalist John Sergeant. He was joined by a range of bands, choirs and drama performers.

Nearly 4000 people including the 300 veterans that came from all over the world for the opening ceremony attended the ceremony.

Planned flypasts were cancelled because of the weather, but in a touching gesture all the veterans along with their families were invited cut a ribbon to mark the centre's opening. The opening ceremony was likely to be the last formal gathering of those from WWII. The youngest veteran present was 93.



The Spire



Veterans cutting the ribbon

The Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Trust was formed in 2009 and the project has received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, LIBOR, Biffa Award, WREN FCC Environment, Veolia Environmental Trust, Community Covenant, Garfield Weston, North Kesteven District Council and Foyle Foundation and many other smaller funders. Over 728 volunteers in 9 different countries are working with the

project which is predicted to bring £2.1 million in economic impact the county each year. The finished spire is 31.09m tall and 5m wide at the base which is the wingspan of the Avro Lancaster bomber and 16ft (5m) wide at the base, the width of a Lancaster wing and it is the UK's tallest war memorial and weighs 55 tonnes. It is well worth a visit to the site. A quote on Trip Advisor says: *"Having seen this memorial when it was just a building site it was a great to see what a magnificent job had been done. A truly wonderful place to visit if you have the slightest interest in bomber command and the hardships the crews fought through. Well laid out exhibition to see and quotes from the veterans. Most certainly makes you pause for thought"*.

The IBCC is open daily, except Mondays, from 0930am until 5pm. More details may be found at <https://internationalbcc.co.uk>.

Stirling BF513 75(NZ) Squadron Failed to Return Or 'My trip to Belgium'

The Mildenhall Register was first made aware of this event back in 2017, when an invite arrived for us to attend a commemoration of the above Stirling.

The bomber and crew being remembered had fallen prey to an enemy ME110 night-fighter of 1./NJG 4 based at Florennes on the night of 14th/15th April 1943. They were returning from a raid on Stuttgart. The aircraft crashed into steep and wooded land near the tiny Belgian hamlet of Regniessart in the Commune of Viroinval just 3 miles inside the Belgian border with France.



Children bearing the names of the dead crew members

None of the crew survived. They were: -

P/O DG McCaskill RNZAF, Sgt A McVicar, P/O JK Grainger RNZAF, Sgt B Elwell
Sgt RTC Green, Sgt ED Cook and Sgt RA Smith RNZAF

The former Mayor of Viroinval, Bruno Buchet had heard many stories about the crash and enrolled the assistance of Guy Lapaille who became the driving force behind this whole project, working for some years towards this moment. He'd researched the crash site and the crew, finally erecting a memorial on the crash site in 2015.

Now, on the 75th anniversary of the loss, family members, representatives of the RNZAF and Belgium Air Component (Air Force), local dignitaries and locals were to join in a whole weekend of commemoration.

I drove out independently of the family and 75(NZ) group, arriving in Nismes, where the first welcoming event took place in their magnificent Castle. From there we were taken, rather ironically, to our 'digs' in the accommodation blocks of the Florennes air base. This would be our base for the remainder of the weekend, all transport provided by coach. Despite some of us having a working knowledge of French, we were given a team of translators to help during the more formal occasions. They were very much appreciated and greatly helped this multi lingual group.

We were collected later, after sorting out where we were all billeted, by said coach and taken to the Commonwealth War Graves in the village cemetery of Florennes where the whole crew were interred in 1943. We gathered with local dignitaries to pay our respects at the seven graves. This sombre event was followed by a drinks reception in the village and a buffet before we were returned to the base for a well-earned sleep.

Day 2 dawned early, with breakfast in the mess, courtesy of some personnel who'd been retained to cater for us. Then the coach arrived and took us across the airfield where we were treated to a very informative tour of the Spitfire museum housed there. Although named after Col R Lallamant DFC*; it transpires he was actually a Typhoon pilot in the RAF

doing ground attack. There were many interesting aircraft housed throughout the hanger, and I was able to sit in one of my favourites, a pretty little Fouga Magister, two seat trainer. The base has been home to the Belgian Air Force, then the Germans after occupation took place, it then reverted to the Belgians before being used by the US military and finally back to the Belgians as their largest base for operations these days. The visit ended with a buffet lunch and our first taste of the local Chimay beer.

After lunch we were whisked away to Brûly-de-Pesche, about half an hour's coach trip. Lost in the middle of a sprawling forest, Brûly-de-Pesche could have forever remained just another spot on the map. However, the events of World War 2 decided otherwise. Locals were ejected from their homes with few possessions and forced labour built this imposing site. Hitler and his High Command came here on 6th June 1940. He oversaw the Battle of France from here, which he called the "Wolf's Ravine". The site is still home to vestiges of Hitler's stay, with two pavilions, rebuilt to resemble those of 1940. One boasts a large collection of period photos and DVD films, while the other, located nearby, commemorates the resistance efforts of Hotton Service Group D. An exhibition of materials they used and models gives a glimpse of the tough day-to-day life of the resistance fighters. Finally, the impressive Bunker designed by an architect in the 1940s, with its immensely thick walls and sealed rooms it would have been quite impregnable to anything but a direct hit.

We returned to Nismes where a special event had been organised. The local park has a meandering lake running through it and there are electric powered launches on which we could take a trip around. Captains were soon sorted out amongst those wishing to take the trip and we all thoroughly enjoyed the quiet tranquillity of the early spring day, drifting through the beautiful grounds of the castle amongst the numerous water fowl. This preceded another civic reception, official dinner and speeches. Thank goodness for our translators. The food and drink, however, needed no translation and we were well feted before our late return to barracks for another well deserved rest.

Sunday morning we awoke to an overcast day with light drizzle and wind thrown in, which didn't bode well for the outdoor ceremony to come. However, armed with another good breakfast we awaited our coach to the crash site. The journey wasn't too far and we were joined by local people and by the many dignitaries when we reached the impressive memorial high in the wooded hills about the tiny hamlet of Regniessart. The weather was clearing, but it was still damp and cold as the numerous family members from around the globe (Australia, New Zealand, USA, Eire and the UK all being represented) were seated, along with the locals and others in a large covered stand. A very smart armed guard paraded and a kilted pipe band stood to one side. Children from the local school were there too, some carried laminated pictures of the dead crew members. To say emotions were running high, is a bit of an understatement as the speeches began. The New Zealand High Commission was

represented, along with the RAF and the base commander from Florennes. The National Anthems were played. There were many speeches, ably translated into both languages by our hosts and translators. The pipe band played and dignitaries, including Dee, Kevin King and myself, then families laid wreaths and tributes to their lost family. Then from out of the distance and flying right over the clearing came four General Dynamics F16 'Fighting Falcons' from the BAF at Florennes in a tight diamond formation. As the national flags fluttered damp and limp in the heavy air, it was a real tear jerker for me and I don't think I was alone.

With the 'official' part over those gathered mingled and some that had not been to the earlier event in 2015 were shown the exact impact point, although one of the wings was severed and landed some 800 metres away deeper in the forest. We were then all taken back to Nismes Castle where welcome drinks flowed and we were treated to the opening of the exhibition "The Short Stirling and its Crew". This was followed by leisurely lunch in the restaurant across the road. This lunch interlude was followed by a walk up the street to their local cinema, 'Cine Chaplin'. Little did we know, we were in for a real treat. The lights dimmed and the whole story of 'The Short Stirling BF513 failed to return' began to flicker across the screen. It documented all the work which had been done up to this point. The search for the families and finding out who the crew were. In the beginning it is shown in black and white, narrated in French with English sub-titles, using stills provided by the families and coloured overlaid narration by Guy, his wife and others, we were led through this amazing story. It later reverts to colour film of the modern part of the story, the research and erection of the earlier memorial. The search for family and their feelings are poured out on screen. Towards the end it again reverts to black and white, with some grand old

Bomber Command veterans reciting lines from the poem 'Faces'. This blends seamlessly into video of Stirlings flying overlaid by the statistics of Bomber Command losses through WW2 with Dame Vera Lynn belting out "We'll Meet Again" as the sound track. This reaches a



The kilted pipe band



Geoff, Dee and Kevin pay their respects



In remembrance

crescendo with backing singers as the credits run. For the second time in one day, there isn't a dry eye in the house.

To see this film, it can be accessed by following this link to You Tube where Guy has kindly shared it. (<https://youtu.be/sQpuO7yH82A>) Everyone agreed that Guy and his band of helpers had produced a wonderful tribute, this was acknowledged by Mayor Delizee in his summing up.

With time to spare, a few of us repaired to a local hostelry to enjoy the convivial surroundings, local hospitality and a game of the strangest billiards I've ever come across! Despite not understanding the rules and there being a lot of coaching from the side-lines I was just able to uphold the British end of things and win 1-0. I'm still not sure how!

It was soon time for dinner, so back to the restaurant for yet another wonderful spread with Belgian beers to compliment the delicious platters. It was yet another late night, but it had been the most wonderful tribute to seven brave young men.

I was up early, shunning breakfast in favour of a cup or two of coffee, I had a boat to catch. With a heavy heart I left these wonderful people from around the world who had joined together to make such an amazing weekend. Some were returning home, others to see the sights of Europe, but all taking with them their own special memories of the event we had shared. The words of 75 (NZ) Squadron motto "Ake Ake Kia Kaha" - "Forever and Ever be Strong" ringing in our ears.

A small computer glitch at passport control in Dunkirk meant I missed my ferry home, meaning a frustrating two hours wait on the dockside for the next one, but hey ho! one can't beat the French system when it comes to bureaucrazy!

A follow up-story to Geoff's article on his visit, based on material published in the New Zealand Taranke Daily News and it is well worth recording:

A Sister remembers

Lorna Young holds a photograph of her brother, airman Sergeant Ron Smith, who was shot down over Europe in April, 1943.

Lorna has four vivid memories of her elder brother Ron, who never returned from World War II.

The first is her mother's reluctance to sign the papers allowing 19-year-old Ron to go to war in Europe in 1941. She also remembers saying goodbye to him at the Ashburton railway station,

and going to church to pray for his safe return. She remembers later the arrival of a telegram, saying he was missing, then another confirming he had been killed in action.



Sergeant Ronald Smith, who at not quite 22-years-old, was part of a crew of seven on a Short Stirling British bomber shot down on a mission to bomb Stuttgart in 1943. He was buried along with fellow New Zealand crew members, Pilot Officers McCaskill and Grainger, near the small town of Florennes, Belgium. A cemetery near the village contains the graves of 75 airmen who died in the area in the World War II.

Lorna was invited to attend the memorial event in Belgium. "They invited me to go, but it was too far," said Lorna, whose father David Watson Smith and husband Nelson 'Happy' Young both served their country in wars overseas. The town is not far from Messines, where the battle known to history as Passchendaele was fought, and where Lorna Young's father was wounded, eventually losing a leg. Passchendaele became a symbol of the worst horrors of World War I, of the shattered landscape where many thousands of soldiers from many countries were killed, and many hundreds never recovered. Lorna recalls: "Ron was buried in the same country where his father fought. That's very meaningful," "It's a very emotional time of year, because of course it's also Anzac Day. I've only been to one (memorial service) since I've been here. It's just too hard," said Lorna.

A stele (pronounced 'shteelar) or funeral monument will be erected at the site of the crash to pay tribute to the men of the BF513 Short Stirling Mk III bomber. Lorna's two sons, Stephen and Ronald, along with daughter Vanessa Morgan attended the ceremony.

"Every day now I regret not going, but I'm so glad they will remember him there."

Born at Lauriston, Mid Canterbury, Ronald was an all-round student, academic and sporty, excelling at cricket, rugby swimming and boxing, and went to high school in Ashburton. He was a government clerk in Wellington when - with permission from his parents - he signed up at Levin in 1941.

After training in Canada to be a pilot, Smith was promoted to sergeant, and joined the McGaskill and Grainger

crew also from New Zealand. They were posted to No 75 (NZ) Squadron, RAF, at the Newmarket racecourse in Suffolk. Targets of their first three sorties were the German U-boat base at St. Nazaire on the French Coast, Frankfurt in Germany and one sea mine-laying operation.

As a rear gunner, isolated from the rest of the plane, the freezing cold turret at the tail of the 26-metre plane would have been violently buffeted flying at an altitude 5000 metres and at a speed over 300 kmh.

Unheated and unprotected, the 'Tail End Charlie' also knew enemy planes would attack from the bomber's most vulnerable spot - behind and below. The fourth mission was returning from Stuttgart, and this is where its most vulnerable crew member was strapped in, pointing his four 0.303-inch Browning machine guns into the cold darkness on the night of April 15, 1943.

At 0225 hours on April 15, a German night fighter piloted by Captain Fritz Greuth, aged 20, shot down the plane and it crashed in the Nismes Wood at the entrance to the hamlet of Couvin, southern Belgium.

The memorial service was held at the crash site on May 8 2018.

Paying Respects in Holland & Belgium

Inspired by last year's trip to France, Geoff Reynolds and I set off to pay respects to all the graves of No. 622 aircrew that rest in Holland & Belgium. Visiting one month before the 100 years commemoration of the end of WWI added some poignancy to our trip.

In total there are 47 aircrew from 622 Squadron that rest in Holland and Belgium located in eight Commonwealth War Grave Cemeteries, only Hotton War Cemetery is in Belgium. Whilst in Holland we took the opportunity to visit the crash site and resting place of a XV Squadron crew that of P/O C.S Thompson RCAF.

Day 1 Friday 19th October

We travelled on the overnight ferry from Dover to Dunkirk arriving in Holland at 07:00 local time. Our first stop was at the Bevrijdings Museum at Zeeland to meet up with Hans Van Dam who has spent years researching the crew of P/O L. P. Bacon RAAF who crashed near the village of Nieuwdorp on 20th March 1945 claiming the lives of all the crew. P/O Bacon was flying with No.7 Squadron at the time after being posted from 622 Squadron in December 1944. We were treated to a wonderful day by Hans and the



Bevrijdings Museum Zeeland

other volunteers from the Museum experiencing the wonderful preservation work they have completed. We were transported in an original war time lorry and at times a jeep, to the Island of Walcheren to see the memorials at Vlissingen (formerly Flushing) and at Westkapelle. Bomber Command including 622 Squadron, played a part in the liberation of the Island as part of Operation Infatuate on 1st November 1944. The breaching of the sea wall at Westkapelle and the subsequent flooding that forced the Germans to eventually evacuate. A short journey onto the Island of Goeree- Overflakkee brought us to the small village of Oude Tonge and the crash site and memorial of F/O J.E.A. Pyle and his crew. The crew crashed here after being shot down by a night fighter on 20/21st July 1944 and all are buried in Bergen Op Zoom cemetery. We laid a wreath at the crash site and continued our journey.

Our final destination for the day was to the Cemetery at Bergen Op Zoom and the Canadian Cemetery adjacent. In Bergen the crews of F/O Pyle & P/O Bacon rest with F/O F.C Montgomery RCAF resting in the Canadian cemetery (B/A in the crew of F/Lt A.L. Smith). We spent the night in Tilburg.

Day 2 Saturday 20th October

First thing in the morning we took the short drive to the cemetery at Gilzerbann. F/Lt Alan L. Smith's Lancaster crashed on 21st July 1944 at around 01:40 hours at Dongen (Noord-Brabant), 11km from the centre of Tilburg Holland. The next day the remains of the crashed plane were found and the crew members were removed. Alan is buried in Gilzerbaan town cemetery with five of his crew. One crew member is buried in the Canadian War Cemetery

(F/O Montgomery RCAF) section at Bergen Op Zoom Cemetery and Sgt J. Spencer is buried in the Roman Catholic Cemetery at Dongen which we visited shortly afterwards. We headed north to the inland bay area of IJsselmeer to a place called Andijk. It was here that F/Lt T.L. Griffiths RAAF and his crew crashed into the sea area known as the IJsselmeer in the early morning of 16th February 1944. Trevor Griffiths and 2nd pilot Harold Morral, were washed up on the shore almost immediately, one month later the sea gave up the body of Sgt Chapman (F/E). Three months later the body of Sgt C.A. Brown was washed ashore, he was buried in the Canadian War Cemetery at Groesbeek which we visited on day three.



Gilzerbann General Cemetery, Tilburg where F/Lt Smith is buried with five of his crew.

Day 3 Sunday 21st October

Whilst we were in Holland, we both wanted to visit the Bridges at Arnhem and Nijmegen which were strategic points to capture in Operation Market Garden. There is a small museum adjacent to the bridge at Arnhem which is well worth a visit. From here we made the short journey to the Airborne Museum at Hartenstein which was the former HQ of the British Airborne Division during the Battle of Arnhem. We could not leave without visiting the military cemetery at Arnhem to pay our respects.



A short journey brought us to Jonkerbos War Cemetery in Nijmegen where P/O C. S. Thompson RCAF (15 Sqn) and five of his crew are buried. I had the privilege of writing the crew's story published in the 'Fighting High' Series of books with the great assistance of Jack Trend who was the only survivor from the crash and an evader.

Arnhem Bridge today, bullet holes can still be seen in the concrete structure.

Day 4 Monday 22nd October

We made our way to the village of Oirschot which is 12Km from Eindhoven. In particular we were heading for the banks of the Wilhelmina Canal at a point named Brug Groene Woud. It is here that F/O W.F.H. Rattle RAAF and his crew crashed.

They were returning from an operation to Gelsenkirchen on 12/13th June 1944 when they were intercepted by a night fighter who shot them down. The majority of the wreckage was spread over a wide area however, the majority of the crash was on the river bank. Recently a plaque was erected to the crew by a local Dutch historian and we were able to lay a wreath at this memorial.

From here we made our way to Eindhoven War cemetery to visit the graves of F/O Rattle and his crew and to lay another wreath.

The final destination for the day was to visit the actual crash site of P/O Thompson which is situated in Meerlo. The wonderfully maintained memorial is made from part of the Lancaster's fuselage and is placed next to the house where the bomber fell.

Day 5 Tuesday 23rd October

We spent the night in Hotton Belgium in readiness for the short hop to Hotton War Cemetery. It is here that two crews from the squadron rest. Firstly P/O E. Pickin who was brought down on the infamous Nuremberg raid of 30/1st March 1944.

The crew bombed the target at approximately 01:30 and dived out of the target area and set course for home. The strong winds meant constant navigation and course corrections so as not to venture over heavily defended areas. In the south east corner of Belgium P/O Pickin collided with a Halifax bomber from No. 427 Squadron, the only survivor from the two aircraft was the rear gunner in the Halifax. He lived to report that his Halifax cut across the top of the other aircraft and he witnessed both aircraft fall away in a deathly spiral. ND767 crashed near Rachecourt (Luxembourg), 13Km SW of Arlon, Belgium. On 31st March 1990 a memorial was opened in Rachecourt to honour the crews.



We shortly afterwards visited the memorial at Rachecourt and *Headstone of F/O M.E.M. Ray* made our way across a rural track to the crash site.

The second crew buried here is that of F/O M.E.M. Ray and an eight member of the crew acting as a mid under gunner. Ray was shot down by flak on an operation to bomb Cologne on 2nd March 1945.

At the crews' De-briefing sections across airfields in England reports of very heavy accurate flak were recorded. An eye witness records seeing HK769 receive a direct flak hit over the target area. The port wing caught fire and then fell off. The aircraft was last seen spiralling down through cloud, no parachutes were seen.

Day 6 Wednesday 24th October

The final day was a relaxing trip back to the ferry port. We caught the ferry out of Dunkirk at 16:00 hours arriving in Dover 19:00 hours local time. We had travelled some distance across both countries enjoying the excellent weather and each other's company. Another one ticked off the bucket list!

Howard Sandall

No.622 (WWII) Historian

Heligoland '39 (The first named Air Battle of WW2) Ely event

As storm Deirdre lashed much of England making driving challenging and threatening heavy rainfall, relatives and guests were making their way to Ely Cathedral for the Act of Remembrance that had been organised by Jack Waterfall. It was so unlike the conditions 79 years before when the aircraft of 9, 37 and 149 Squadron's had taken off into a gin clear sky. Awaiting them was a turkey shoot for the Luftwaffe who were scrambled to meet them. Just seven days before the first Christmas of the war a very sad analogy.

Those of us invited to attend all arrived safely, thank goodness. I parked near the Cathedral and was just making my way to the reception at the Old Palace when I met a family group, obviously heading in the same direction. We spoke and it was immediately obvious we had something in common. The matriarch of the group was none other than the niece of Wing Commander Kellett who had led the whole group on that fateful day. He flew with 149 Squadron and I was there to lay a wreath on behalf of Squadron historian Alan Fraser. Accompanied by her daughter and grandson we steadily made our way to the reception, chatting as we went.

Once inside there was a great hubbub of noise as families met, sometimes for the first time in a while. Others chatted with the numerous representatives of those lost and the luckier survivors of the raid. Many only to lose their lives in later operations as the RAF continued its futile early raids.



The Service was held beneath the famous Octagon

It was wonderful to meet with some of those who have assisted Jack in his mammoth task. Faces to names only until then known as e-mail attachments. But it was Jack who had single-mindedly driven this wonderful event to this great conclusion. Although, of course, there is still the 80th Anniversary event to come next year at Runnymede and Brooklands. There were faces there that I knew too, with Alan Canham representing Lincolnshire Royal British Legion amongst the standard bearers. Members of the RAF were there from 9 Squadron, currently Tornados at Marham, but soon to be Typhoons at Lossiemouth. The RAF Regiment from Honington represented the base from which 9 Squadron flew that day in 1939 and 37 Squadron. Representing the Luftwaffe's two losses were members of today's Luftwaffe, the aerial warfare branch of the Bundeswehr, the armed forces of Germany.

I eventually managed to hook up with Jack as the timetable of events had failed to include a point at which the wreath from Alan was to be laid. (As far as I'm aware, this was the only hiccup on a very well-choreographed occasion) So, after the Town Crier had called us all to order and his Worship the Mayor of Ely had given his formal address of welcome, we got together with Canon Barber, the celebrant, and decided what we were going to do. A quick word with Alan about the rules and formalities of wreath laying were also required. As the wonderfully presented buffet opened Jack and I adjourned to the cathedral for a quick run through. Sadly, this took a little longer than the buffet took to be consumed as I had to make contact with John, Smiley and their wives to give them the lowdown. Anyway, I was able to leave them to find their reserved seats and get back to the Old Palace and grab a quick coffee before joining those present before forming up in the West doorway to process to the Octagon altar beneath the magnificent Octagonal Lantern feature. I was to join the very end of those processing in.

So, with all the commemorative disc layers, made up of family, RAF personnel and the Luftwaffe, lined up in number order, the 'parade' was called to order. Led by the RBL Standards, the Mayor and Civic Leaders walked ahead of the families and disc layers, and representatives of Mildenhall, Feltwell, Honington and the two Air Forces down the magnificent nave to their allocated seating around the Octagon altar. I tagged along as agreed.

As the procession were taking their seats the sound of an aircraft could be heard, as though flying low overhead. Through the engine's sounds could be heard a Morse message being repeated. The aircraft appeared to land nearby and after the twin

motors had stopped, from behind the pulpit appeared five young men of 1049 City of Ely ATC dressed to represent the crew of the Wellington which had just landed. Their haggard faces and tired demeanour telling the vivid story of the perils which they had just survived. As they passed through the assembled congregation, and a trumpet solo rang out, I moved forward and laid the 149 Squadron wreath on the bottom step of the Octagon, beside the Heligoland wreath with specially designed centre of a three petalled poppy and two blue forget-me-nots. Ceremonial duties complete, I retired to my seat with the other MR committee members. One sad note here, Dee Boneham, former RAF personnel serving at Honington and wonderful supporter of all things RAF had fallen just two days before and broken her left arm, so couldn't drive or make the ceremony



Each candle and emblem represented the life of an airman lost on the raid



The last post and reveille were played

The ceremony then continued with a welcome by Canon Chris Barber. He handed over to Pastor Marcus Christ of the Evangelical Lutheran church who delivered a message from Bishop Gothart Magaard of the church in Norddeutschland covering the base of Jever, where many of the German fighter aircraft had been based.

Tim Harris then gave a bible reading. This was followed by the 59 names of those lost being alternatively read by the Canon and Pastor as relatives and representatives laid the specially designed discs around the altar beside little tea

lights. These poppy discs were the same as the wreath centre and contained details of the deceased and their squadron badge. A cellist played a lovely Bach piece.

Prayers followed, before the most poignant moment. The lone bugler stood before the altar and played the last post. Standards dipped and heads bowed as the notes rang out clearly.

There was then a silence of 59 seconds to reflect again the numbers of dead. The Standards came briskly back to the port, heads raised as the notes of Reveille rang out. A wonderfully emotional tribute indeed.

The congregation were then dismissed by a blessing from Canon Barber, the wreaths and discs were transported through to the Lady Chapel and the candles were snuffed out. Over this, the strains of 'O Valiant Hearts' drifted.

The Lady Chapel had been transformed into a display area for the project, with information boards around the edges. It was lovely to see Sue Aldridge there from the 115 Squadron museum at Witchford and a representative from the Methwold History Group, who have done so much to maintain the historical links to 149 Squadron and the village.



An oval plate on which were 59 poppies, backed by flags.

In the very centre was an oval plate on which were 59 'stalks', backed by the Union and German flags. With everyone squeezed in,

the Town Crier brought us all to order once again and the names of those lost were slowly read and the stalks were propagated with the poppy and forget-me-not heads. This display will remain in the cathedral, adjacent to the RAF Roll of Honour until New Year's Eve. Jack then has plans to take the display 'on the road' touring the country. Watch our Facebook site for further details on this.

Family and representatives were then invited to visit and read the names of those lost in the RAF Roll of Honour in the North Choir Aisle, where volunteers were on hand to turn the pages.

With this, the official part of the ceremony ended and people mingled, chatted and drifted around the displays and away, as their travel plans necessitated. John met RAF personnel from his past and I noticed Smiley enjoying discussions with other serving members.

For me, a quick chat with Sue, with yet another invite for her to join with us at The Mildenhall Register and goodbyes to the Kellett family and I was heading home. But not before I'd sought out Jack and congratulated him on a wonderful tribute to these 59 brave men, who, by their early sacrifice had changed the remainder of the bomber war.

Sadly, there were many more yet to lose their lives before our freedom was won. A further five Christmases would pass when families received that dreaded telegram, but the fledgling Bomber Command would learn from these lessons. Finally, the prophecy of the Bomber getting through would come to pass, but it was never ever going to be invincible. We can only pray that messages like this, instigated by Jack, of Remembrance, Reconciliation and Commemoration be fitting tributes to those 55,573 men.

The Brittany Airmen

During our first holiday to Brittany in 2007 we came across three Commonwealth War Graves in the village cemetery of Tregunc, two Sgts from 28th September 1940 and another Sgt from August 1943. Upon further investigation, on our return home, I discovered that the two 1940 Sgts, the co-pilot and the gunner, were from a 42 Squadron Beaufort crew, the captain being buried in the next village, Lanriec, and the wireless operator buried in the town of Fouesenant. Having had two tours on 42 Sqn they were 'family'. The third Tregunc Sgt was from a 166 Squadron Wellington X with three further crew members buried in the cemetery at Fouesenant but sadly the rear gunner was missing.

Both crews had been on a 'Gardening' sortie, laying mines in the approaches to the submarine pens at Lorient.

Having found this out, the next year we laid 'gerbes', the French equivalent of the wreath, on the graves. The following year, after laying RBL poppy wreaths on the graves, I was surprised to receive a phone call from the historian on 42 Sqn at Kinloss saying they had had a communication from a British ex-pat, Mike, a retired Sqn Ldr, enquiring as to the story behind the wreath on the Captains grave in Lanriec. I duly rang Mike and, during a lengthy chat, discovered that a retired French Naval Captain, François, an ex-Vought F8 Crusader pilot, lived in Lanriec and had seen the wreath, read the inscription and had his interest aroused.

The upshot of this was that, at the next September's Tregunc and Lanriec wreath laying, we were joined by Mike, his wife Peggy, François who was also the chairman of the local branch of 'Souvenir Francais' and his standard bearer. Over the years it has grown so that now we have about 40 people attending what has now become an annual ceremony, carried out on or as near to the 28th September as possible. Those attending include the chairman of the local branch of 'Le Anciens Combattants' (himself a very interesting chap having, as a lad of sixteen in 1946, flown from Madagascar to Marseille in a HP Halifax to join the French Air Force), some six or seven standard bearers, the local Mayor, a local historian who, as a boy of ten, attended both the Tregunc and Lanriec funerals, a number of villagers and reporters from two Brittany newspapers.

Both the French and British National Anthems are sung and speeches are made, mine in tortured and strangulated French.

After the Tregunc ceremony we move to Lanriec for a ceremony over the Captain's grave then, in true military fashion, some twenty of us repair to the local tabac for a libation or two.

Sadly, François Didier Hoff died suddenly of liver cancer in the spring of 2017. He is greatly missed.

Cherry and I lay the Fouesnant wreaths separately and also take a trip down to the Saint-Nazaire CWGC cemetery and lay a wreath on the graves of Flt Sgt Hannah and his crew, a 15 Sqn Stirling crew who also died on a Gardening sortie.

The story of the two crews, the local population and their insistence that the German forces allow proper burials is an interesting one but that is a story for another time and another place.

Smiley Mildwater

A Letter from Australia

In a letter received from Australia, Charmaine, Phillip Elger's daughter, said that, at the age of 97, he'd gone into permanent care these days.

However, he still enjoys reading the newsletters and remembering his time as a W/Op with XV Squadron during the war.

Phil was selected in 2014 as one of seven Australians to receive a D-Day Bomber Command award from the French government.

An ABC newspaper report from June 2014 quotes: -

The Legion of Honour went to former aircrew who each played a role in D-Day's aerial assault, which helped protect the troops who stormed Normandy's beaches and eventually liberated France. The other six men were Robert Cowper, Stuart Davis, Francis Evans, Ronald Houghton, Billy Purdy and Frederick Riley. The men, and two dozen fellow veterans from other allied countries, were awarded with the rank of chevalier, or knight, at the regional government headquarters in the town of Caen in Normandy on Thursday.



Phil receiving the Legion of Honour Medal

It is an award for those who uphold the ideals of France and is rarely given to foreigners.

As part of the complex strategy that went into the air and sea assaults of D-Day, Phil Elgar helped divert German planes from the landing sites for the allies 150,000 troops.

He says this award is a wonderful thing to be gifted at his age and is accepted with his many fallen compatriots not far from his thoughts.

"I'm 93 and I didn't expect any more," he said.

"I had seven in my crew, three Australians, four Englishmen and I'm the last one. Only the good die young."

We all wish you well Phillip. Congratulations.

Reminisces of RAF Mildenhall by an US citizen

Despite the numerous earlier reports about the base closing, we have been receiving regular updates from those working there. The latest estimate is taking us beyond 2024 and we are very pleased about this. It comes with the continued assurance that we, The Mildenhall Register, will be welcome to continue our reunions there for the foreseeable future.

Before this latest announcement I was contacted earlier this year by Former Staff Sgt. Sheldon Rice who now lives in Columbia, South Carolina. He wrote: -

Mildenhall memories

I lived in England from about 1979 to 1982. I am a high school graduate of Royal Air Force Lakenheath American school Class of 1980. Though I am thousands of miles away over here in the States, I share in the sadness of losing RAF Mildenhall ["USAF to leave Mildenhall, 2 other English bases," posted Jan. 9 on airforcetimes.com].

I am happy to see that RAF Lakenheath will remain open and that many aspects of Mildenhall's mission will be transferred to Lakenheath inclusive of personnel. But once Mildenhall closes, so will the memories.

Back then I was one of the many military kids living abroad in the U.K. with my "Mum" and military dad and my brother and two sisters. For my dad, it was his job and he had to support the mission of RAF Mildenhall. For me, I was a long way from the United States and television, radio, clothes — so much stuff was different. Driving on the left side of the roadway and not insulting the royal family whilst a guest over in Great Britain. As the oldest, I could have opted to stay back in the States with relatives perhaps. But I hung in there with my siblings. And I had a lot of fun.

Such as all the trips to London on the bus or the tube. Really great television — I still rely on the BBC for the latest news around the world. And RAF Mildenhall was a neat place to live and call home. I can still recall when my Mum won a car playing Bingo at the Galaxy NCO Club. She won a white Mercury Bobcat. Our house was not far from the NCO Club and they parked it in our front yard and put a huge bow on it!

Then if you like to eat, you had Mickey's Tea Bar. During the day we kids could get a bite paying in American or British money or both. I still like fish and chips wrapped in the news and drenched in malt vinegar. Jaffa cakes and prime rib and Yorkshire pudding. And after we celebrate Christmas, my family and I still celebrate Boxing Day.

I can still see Shippea Hill tube station and my 10-speed bicycle that I spent many hours touring on and visiting Cambridge. Going to Liverpool to visit my friend. We worked many long and hard hours at the RAF Mildenhall Officers Club. And going to all the dance clubs with GI friends in Norwich, Liverpool, Cambridge, Lakenheath — and Mildenhall's was the best! Being invited to appear on East Anglia TV for a segment called "A Traditional American Christmas" with my church choir and RAF Lakenheath's church choir. Basketball games the Mildenhall Marauders played and taking the shuttle from one base to the other. The knowledge I gained and all my mates.



Sheldon enclosed this picture of KC135 leaving RAF Mildenhall together

Today I am medically retired from the Air Force police and 919th Special Operations group. I was fortunate to visit Mildenhall and Lakenheath with my wife in the mid-1980s when I was stationed in Hahn, Germany. It will be with much sadness when Mildenhall closes for the Brits and the Yanks."

An epic trip at the bottom of the world

Glen Turner, who some of you will know, (he attended the 2017 reunion) is the Secretary and Treasurer of the 75 Squadron Association (NZ). He is also a registered volunteer interviewer for the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) in Lincoln, and with their special recorder, he is recording the basic history of any veteran that is able and accepts to, for the IBCC digital archives. Early this year he undertook a massive journey of some 1500 miles around the South Island visiting all known veterans of Bomber Command. Whilst some of these were not Mildenhall people, I thought it only right, seeing as he'd taken the time to send us a write-up of the trip, to include the information he'd gathered about those from 75(NZ) Squadron and those from 115 Squadron, with whom we like to forge closer links. There is a chance our members may well remember some of these names from their service. So here is the (edited) version in his own words: -

Wg Cdr Artie Ashworth, RAF, DSO, DFC*, AFC*, mid, pff. On the Jan 8th Vince Ashworth emailed me asking for a 75Sqn representative at his family gathering in Alexandra for the interment of his brothers' ashes. Artie died in 1994 in England. His widow died last year. Artie's wishes were for his ashes to be bought back to NZ and included with the family burial plot. His youngest brother Vincent was completing that wish.

Taking my van, I drove to Dunedin - with ferry Jan 11th. Staying with **Neville Selwood, 75 (NZ) Sqn, Nav, Lancasters** - and taking him to Alexandra on the Saturday, we jointly represented 75 Sqn Assn. Neville seems okay, and enjoyed the company. I interviewed him for the IBCC archives, and scanned his logbook. And I invited him to be with us on the weekend of June 1-4 in Auckland. He was keen for that idea. Neville has given me his complete medal set for remounting.

Don Mackenzie, 75(NZ) Sqn, AG, died 18Dec2017 in Dunedin, after a long illness. Neville and I visited his widow, Lynley. My wife and I had visited them in 2011. Lynley has loaned me Don's Logbook for scanning. I will courier it back to her ASAP.

John Adamson, (RAF), 115 Sqn, MUG. I called John and chatted briefly with him and his wife Gwenda. John had been 'viciously mauled' by two milking cows kicking him several weeks ago, and is slowly getting better. "He tires very quickly" she said. John is a true Scot, very broad accent and came to NZ in 1950. They would welcome visitors, but I decided he was not well enough to 'interview' and did not visit him in Invercargill.

Jack Marshall, DFC, 115 + 7Sqn, AG. I called and made 'an appointment' to visit Jack and interviewed/chatted with him for several hours. Dave has interviewed him in the past for his website which he showed me. Jack is still driving a very nice car at aged 97+, showed me his latest driving test which he passed with high marks, has numerous grandchildren and his wife died some year or more ago. Funny, he an English teenager arriving in NZ late 30's, only

to join the RNZAF and fight in the early part of the war, and return to NZ. Lovely gentleman.

Roly Williams, 75(NZ) Sqn, AG, Lancaster. I have known Roly for many years, and he is always pleased to host me for a good chat. I visited Roly for four hours last Monday. Roly is so up with the world current events, military matters and I'm pleased to say supports President Trump as well so we had a great conversation. I interviewed him for the IBCC archives and scanned his logbook. His eyesight is at about 5% only!

Alan Davis, 75(NZ) Sqn, WO/AG, Amberley. I first visited Alan two years ago on his farm at the back of Amberley. Stopped in again and interviewed him on my way to Nelson. Alan - at 94 still has a small farm with a bunch of beef cattle to look after, and was doing his gst returns (like a VAT return - Ed.) When I arrived. He joined 75(NZ) Sqn in Jan 1945, but somehow was given the LdH without even applying for it. His NZDF trip to France some years ago for a commemoration service, may have been the reason. He just doesn't know.

Alf Bannan, 75(NZ) Sqn, W/Op, Lancaster. Graham and I visited Alf in his care home. I initially met Alf in Greymouth eight years ago. He had a stroke three years ago, and cannot talk. His wife had died just before Xmas, which his daughter had just emailed me that detail. Alf's son called in and we had a brief chat. So, I sat with Alf (with Graham) in his room for an hour or so and told him what the RNZAF and aviation scene was doing now. Lovely gent, so frustrating for him he cannot talk back. Alf's other crewmate still alive is - **Norm Macdonald** living in Te Puke. I put in for the LdH for both Alf and Norm in late 2016. Norm was posted his medal last year, Alf is still waiting for his from Paris, so I have asked the Medals Office to chase up Alf's medal.

David Knight, 75(NZ) Sqn, Nav, Lancaster. I have known Dave for many years, and he put me up for Wed night and I interviewed him for the IBCC, and scanned his logbook. Dave has 16 grandchildren (??), and is in contact with all of them and family on his iPad every day. He is very healthy and has a lovely home. Dave's wife Margaret died late last year after a long illness, with Dave looking after her. Now he has much more free time he is busy every day with Probus, and is always out.

Buzz Spilman, 75(NZ) Sqn, Pilot, Lancaster. I've known Buzz for many years too, and last time I visited I was aware his hearing was a huge barrier to normal conversation... even some early dementia. Buzz was in his room, and he lit up when I arrived. We chatted for several hours, but he was not able to be interviewed. Buzz's only crewmate alive is his WopAg, Gerry Abrahams living in Kent, England. They managed to meet briefly when in England in 2012 he tells me."

There were about a dozen others that Glen called on and some were interviewed, so he had a very busy week. Thanks for sharing mate and I hope this list of names will ring some bells with our members over here.

A question answered (well almost)

Some time ago I was contacted by Ian Prescott. He'd found that a relative, AC2 Robin Mabbott, was buried in a Commonwealth War Grave in Beck Row churchyard. Interested to

find out more and listening to family lore, he understood that Robin had died due to enemy action.

This intrigued Ian to the extent he began a long and involved search for the true answer. Our historians tried to help, but as is often the case ground-crew records are very thin. We even got the American base historian, Bob Mackey, involved. Just finding enemy action around the time of Robin's death proved elusive. Ian takes up the story: -

"My first enquiry was at Kew as I had been given AIR 28/553 as a reference but this mostly concerned itself with RAF Mepal 1943-1945 although there were some RAF Mildenhall references it was chronologically too late for my purposes.

The relevant ORB for RAF Mildenhall turned out to be AIR 28/546 which covered 1st October 1934 to 31st December 1942.

The only events listed close to the date of Robin's death, 5th Feb 1941, were:

27/11/40 - 33 bombs dropped on Mildenhall and Newmarket.

18/01/41 - Visit by their Majesties the King and Queen.

2/02/41 - Raid by Do 215 dropping ten bombs with some references i.e. F.5.B5 and F.5. B.4.

It also refers to the 1/02/41 and also 30/01/41 F.4 B3. So, it looks like a series of raids)

3/02/41 - Newmarket satellite Airfield attacked by Do17, "Report HQ Form F.3. Appendix B.6. (This is only two days before his death so I wondered if there could possibly be a connection but there is no mention of any casualties).

On the date of his death there were the following entries -

5/2/1941 a Weather report and posting details viz - 13 Airman posted from No 2 Wing West Kirby wef 4/2/1942 and 17 Airman posted from RAF Honington wef the same date.

So none of this shed any light on the matter."

Undeterred Ian continued searching, obtaining Robin's service records. These were also very sparse in detail, ending with: - Died 5/2/41. Not very helpful. The Air Historical Branch at RAF Northolt went a little further with their digging, finally admitting that "...we have what appears to be the least amount of information ever held on an AHB 'RAF Casualty Card'.

Usually there is two cards, one under surname and one under the date, but in this instance there just seems to be one under the name only. So still no further. Ian continues again: -

"My next and most recent step was inspired by the suggestion on the form that a Hospital could be involved so I applied for his Death Certificate.

This duly arrived and contained a revelation;

When and where died - Fifth February 1941, RAF Station, Mildenhall Rd

Name and Surname - Robin Mabbott

Sex - Male

Age - 20 years

Occupation - An Aircraftsman 2nd Class in the Royal Air Force

Cause of Death - Died from Status Epilepticus

Signature, description and residence of informant - Certificate received from Thomas Wilson, Coroner for the Liberty of Bury St Edmunds.

Inquest held 8th February 1941 and by adjournment 27th February 1941

When registered - Fourth March 1941

According to Wikipedia - "Status Epilepticus (SE) is a single epileptic seizure lasting more than five minutes or two or more seizures within a five-minute period without the person returning to normal between them. Status epilepticus is a life-threatening medical emergency particularly if treatment is delayed."

"So, I suspect that the Cause of Death was shown as "unknown" on the RAF Form as the inquest had not been held when the Form was completed nor had the Death Certificate yet been issued. I now know what caused of Robins Death, however there are still some questions here.

Was his Epilepsy known and what might have triggered the fatal seizure?

Where was he when it happened?

Could it be connected to the stress of the Air Raids on the preceding few days finishing on the 3rd Feb? This remains an open question as the family oral history has always linked his death to an enemy attack.

Is it unusual that there is so little official information available and that he ended up in a CWGC near the airfield?

Some of these questions could perhaps only be answered by his parents who are of course long since departed.

So that's where I am with my research to date."

One further point of interest on this huge amount of research that Ian has done was that Dave Gilbert at the IBCC was involved. He is trying to come up with a cause of death for each and every service personnel connected with the RAF during WW2. Of the 57800 casualties identified, he still has about 1000 more to uncover. He wrote: -

"I'd like to go at least a little further than your historian has suggested by saying that he died of Status epilepticus at RAF Mildenhall. I will also mark the relevant column as 'natural causes'. If any further concrete information comes to light, I can always include it later. The reason I want to include the exact condition is that I am trying to get to a position where I know the cause of death of every serviceman. Obviously for those killed on ops it's easy, but for the rest it can be torturously difficult. I'm certainly getting there, although there are still around 1000 of my 57800 total that I don't yet know. Once I have them all I'll be able to do some really interesting analysis and with a bit of luck that will lead to my PhD. Please keep me updated if anything further comes to light. In the meantime, please accept my sincere thanks for your help so far."

There have been no further updates, but I think Ian has been extremely tenacious in following this all up. If you ever want a job Ian, please contact us, we'd be only too pleased to have you as a researcher and so would the IBCC!

Another Plea for Help

Member Liz Waller saw this online and posted it on Facebook. I, in turn referred it to Alan Fraser, the 149 Squadron historian in the hopes we can help.

From an entry in the Jersey Evening Post 3rd December 2018: -

"The discovery of debris from a Second World War bomber has started a search for the family of a Jersey-born airman who was killed when the aircraft was shot down 77 years ago. Sergeant Air Gunner William George Marett (seen right) was 23 years old, and serving with 149 Squadron, when the Wellington was brought down close to Sevenum, a small village in south-east Holland.



He is buried in Jonkerbos War Cemetery in Nijmegen.

The crash impact left a crater, which has recently been investigated by aviation archaeologists Piet Snellen and Gérard Huijs, who have examined nine Second World War allied aircraft that crashed in the area on their way to bombing Germany's industrial heartland in the Ruhr Valley.

They were brought down by night fighter aircraft based at Fliegerhorst Venlo - the largest German military airfield outside Germany.

'This spring Gérard and I started an investigation into plane crashes in nearby very inaccessible high moorland where five British planes crashed in the Second World War,' Mr Snellen said.

'When we visited a crater in March, it was filled to the top with water. When we went back in July, taking our metal detectors with us, the extremely dry summer had made the wet moorland around the crater easily accessible, and we found several parts of an aircraft in and near the crater.'

By searching on the internet, and publishing their finds on Facebook, they established that the remains were from a Wellington bomber, which they subsequently identified as belonging to 149 Squadron, based at RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk.

From that they were able to identify the seven crew members, including William Marett, who all died in the crash.

His service record shows he lived in St Helier before the outbreak of war and was born in 1917, the son of Mr and Mrs W G Marett.

He died on 14 March 1941 when the Wellington was shot down with a full load of bombs by a Messerschmitt after it was caught in searchlights.

By contacting local newspapers in the UK to help his research into the Wellington's crew, Mr Snellen is in touch with the families of three of the members.

'I hope that this article will make it four,' he said. 'All these families knew hardly anything about what had happened to their beloved, and we were able to give them detailed information for which they all were very grateful.'

Sadly, this came too late for Howard and I to pay our respects to William and his crew when we visited Jonkerbos back in October.

Post Script However, having contacted Piet as soon as I'd seen this post, I was very pleased to know that his search had already been successful.

Piet posted "The day after the publishing of the article, family of William George Marett contacted me. We have now found the families of all six crew members of the Wellington L7858 OJ-A of 149 Squadron from RAF Mildenhall.

A very special and warm thank you is for Mary Ghrist and Dave Moss of The Stirling Aircraft Society, who have helped us tracing the families. Without them we would not have been able to trace all six families. We owe them our respect and sympathy for their work.

Next spring a large information board will be placed near the crash location so that passers-by can read what happened there on the evening of 14 March 1941. Gérard Huijs and I are also very grateful for the help we experienced from Joop Hendrix and Sjaak de Veth of "Planehunters Recovery Team Belgium" for their help in finding and analyzing the parts of the aircraft.

Our next aim will be a memorial for the crews of five British bombers, which crashed in the same nature reserve called Mariaveen in Sevenum in the south east of The Netherlands.

Gerard and I visited the graves of the crew at Jonkerbos War Cemetery Nijmegen to bring flowers and to pay our respect."

Further research on the web found this entry on 'aviation-safety net' describing the loss: - "On March 14th 1941 Vickers Wellington L7858 with call code OJ-A left RAF Mildenhall at 7.50pm on a bombing mission to the Gelsenkirchen Oil Refineries.

The Gelsenkirchen authorities reported serious damage to the oil refinery after a raid by under 100 aircraft on this 14/15 March 1941. One of the 149 Squadron participating crews was not able to attend debriefing. The Wellington MK 1c L7858 (Call code OJ-A) was tracked by the ground radar and caught in a searchlight cone. Once coned, it was intercepted by an early 'Expert' of the Nachtjagd; Hpt. Werner Streib of 1/NJG1 Venlo (Nachtjagdgeschwader) and became his 11th confirmed kill. The aircraft (which, according to the Middlebrook/Everitt Bomber Command War Diaries, was the only aircraft lost on this raid) crashed in Sevenum near the border with Helenaveen in a swamp area at 10.32pm.

There were no survivors from the crew of Sgt Hawley. In the exchange of fire Streib's Bf 110 was badly damaged by a burst from the rear gunner of the Wellington, Sgt Ward. Streib's 'funker', Oblt. Josef Schnauster was seriously injured in the leg.

Crew of Vickers 416 Wellington 1c, L7858, code OJ-A

Sgt/Pilot Leslie Richard Hawley,

Sgt/Pilot Charles Barrie Rogers

Sgt Air Observer Edward Guy Prettyman

Sergeant. Wireless Operator Ernest White

Sgt Air Gunner William George Marett

Sgt Air Gunner Clifford Godfrey Harry Ward

With our founding member being a member of ground crew, I thought it would be fitting to include this little ode to the men who kept the great bombers flying. I'm sure it still rings true today.

An Ode to Ground Crew

Through the history of world aviation
Many names have come to the fore,
Great deeds of the past in our memory last
As they're joined by more and more

When man first started his labour,
In his quest to conquer the sky,
He was designer, mechanic and pilot,
And he built a machine that would fly

But somehow the order got twisted.
And then in the public eye
The only man that be seen
Was the man who knew how to fly.

The pilot was everyone's hero,
He was brave, he was bold, he was grand.
As he stood by his battered old biplane
With his goggles and helmet in hand.

To be sure, these pilots all earned it,
To fly you have to have guts.
And they blazed their names in the hall of fame,
On wings with bailing wire struts

But for each of these flying heroes
There were thousands of little renown.
And these were the men who worked on the planes
But kept their feet on the ground

We all know the name of Lindbergh
And we've read of his flight of fame.
But think, if you can, of his maintenance man,
Can you remember his name?

And think of some wartime heroes.
Gibson, Bennett and Scott.
Can you tell me the names of their crew chief?
A thousand to one you cannot.

Now pilots are highly trained people,
And wings are not easily won
But without the work of the maintenance man,
Our pilots would march with a gun!

So when you see mighty aircraft,
As they mark their way through the air,
The greased stained man with a wrench in his hand,
Is the man that put them there!

Following on from the Ode to Ground crew piece.

I was sent a lovely enquiry from Gill Barnard. She wrote to say: -

"Both my parents were stationed at Mildenhall during WW2 and I would very much like to find out what squadrons they were both in. My Mum was Elsie Joan Plum and she joined up at 18 and I believe she worked in the armoury section. Dad's name was Harold 'Rick' Wooldridge. He was a leading aircraftsman."

He is seen in this photograph, second from left with his hand on the nose of the 'cookie'.

Gill continued: - "Dad had a friend, Don Clarke, at Mildenhall, he lived in Bedford after the war."



Well, armed with these meagre facts and the little information from the photograph, I asked the two most likely historians, Martyn Ford-Jones for XV Squadron and Howard Sandall for 622 Squadron. I thought it most likely would be Martyn would come up trumps as Don, our founder, had worked as an armourer in 'A' Flight, XV Squadron, although he knew an awful lot of people with whom he'd served. I was very intrigued by the uniforms of the other personnel in the picture. They didn't seem to be standard RAF issue.

Nothing came from Martyn, and it was left to Howard to solve the mystery and came forward with the following information: -

"I'm afraid that the records of ground crew personal are not great, every squadron kept Operational Records books (ORB's) and Squadron records however, ground crew did not feature and there are no records of postings in or out for any rank lower than an Officer. Regarding the photo, I can absolutely state that this was taken in May 1944 when the American Air Force visited the station on a friendly visit, I attach another publicity photo that shows the same subject.

Same Lancaster in the picture F for Freddie."

So, there was the answer to both Gill's and my question. Definitely 622 Squadron and yes, the uniforms were American.



I wonder if anyone can name others seen in the pictures or remember the event. Just who is the cheeky erk seen in the bomb-aimers bubble in Gill's photograph, possibly the same one seen in the cockpit window in Howards? But who was he? Please do get in touch.

A second enquiry came in from a former (post war) ground crew

WAAF. Mrs M Count. Formerly 721043 M Hopwood. She wrote: -

"I joined the WAAF in 1947 and after basic training was posted to Mildenhall which was then 3 Group Bomber Group HQ and the Group Major Servicing Unit. I had joined up as an U/T Electrician and was soon posted to Scampton for further training. After this I was posted back to Mildenhall GMSU where I was taught my trade (well almost)! It was a very happy station and although we worked hard on the rather elderly Lancasters, we enjoyed the work. Sadly though, the American Forces took over after a few years and all the WAAF personnel were hastily posted. I went to RAF Wyton"

She goes on to hope that someone might remember her, although at a young 88 years, she very much doubts that.

She finishes with: - "It is good that we should be remembered."

(Well, if anyone does remember the name, please contact me and I'll be sure to pass on your details to Mrs Count. Ed.)

An old newsletter follow up

It's always nice when I can follow up some of the old news stories that have appeared over the years. I have a number of early copies of Don's newsletters which go back to 1988, more than ten years before I became a member and almost 20 before I assumed this role. One day I'll get them all digitalised and onto the website for everyone to read. If anyone has any older than this, I'd be grateful to add them to the pile.

So, there I was scanning through them looking for the article about the Heligoland battle when there was this piece in the November 1998 edition about The Mildenhall Register making a donation for a tree and plaque to be implanted at The National Memorial Arboretum. Now I've been there on a couple of occasions, but new nothing of this, nor had I seen it. So first of all, here is the article written by Frank Diamond as it appeared: -

Donation to National Memorial Arboretum

"A National Memorial Arboretum is being created on 150 acres within the National Forest at Alrewas in Staffordshire "as a tribute to the wartime generation of this century". It is being funded by £1.5m from Millennium Lottery funds and a similar amount is being raised from other sources.

A legacy received recently from the estate of John (Red) Rumsey DFM who flew with 622 Squadron has enabled us to make a contribution of £300 for a tree to commemorate and honour our three squadrons. Bob Munns, Fred, Don and I were unanimous in our opinion that Members would wish to have a donation made on their behalf. Furthermore, that we should also bring to the attention

*of Members the provision for trees to be planted by relatives or associates to commemorate individuals (for which the suggested donation is £50)**

Areas have been taken by the other Services, and an area has been set aside for ours. A chapel, where a Book of Remembrance will be kept, is also planned for the site together with a visitors centre.

In order to describe the memorial as it concerns us, I quote from the papers I have received but, should anyone wish to have full details and a plan, these can be obtained from: The Director, The National Memorial Arboretum, PO Box 10, Tisbury Wilts, SP3 6TH(I believe this is now well out of date and would*

Tisbury, Suggest anyone wishing to make a donation or

dedicate a tree or monument should refer to the NMA website at www.thenma.org.uk

Where clearer instructions can be found. Tel: 01283 245100 is the current phone number.

Ed)

The Royal Air Force Grove is enclosed by an avenue and the curve of an enormous circle of trees. The designer has made use of the shape available to create an enormous pair of wings, based on an eagle wheeling in flights Within the wings will be planted a collection of Birch trees one for each participating Squadron. The Birch has been chosen because, in a strong wind, its fine branches will stream out like a bird in flight. The ground below will be planted initially with bluebell but later with low spreading Ceanothus, the Californian Lilac, to give a

contrasting 'sky' of blue below the white of the trunks and the sweeping wing of their foliage. At the centre of the wings will be a large walnut tree, a plant from whose wood aeroplane propellers were once made, and from this tree three beds will form the Badge of the Aircrew Association whose members are sponsoring this particular plot. Surrounding the ethereal wings will be a Glade of more substantial trees; Beech and Hickory representing Air Stations and other Major Units. In autumn these trees will add a red foliage to the white and blue of the Wings.

Trees for RAF Associations, and other like bodies, will be planted around the curving perimeter and where this meets the Aircrew Association Plot will be a special planting for the Women's Auxiliary Air Force Association. For this planting the designer has taken the essential letter 'W' and linked it to the constellation Cassiopeia, which forms that shape in the sky close to Polaris. Cassiopeia herself was a beautiful, legendary Queen, so the image seems appropriate. To continue the imagery the trees selected for this plot will include *Prunus stellata*, *Magnolia 'Galaxy'* and *Magnolia stellata*. **Frank Diamond**"

So, it was, that armed with this information, I was determined to find this plaque during my visit in July when I took some people from my village to the NMA to explore the Burma Railway exhibition.

Once there, it wasn't quite the easy task I'd imagined.

(The map, courtesy of Google Earth, shows the area where these plaques can be found. X marks the spot) The trees are spread over quite a large area and are quite dense in places. They are in concentric rows, so I eventually hit on a plan to start at what I'd call the front and work back and forth around the curves until I found the correct one. Yep, you've guessed it, it was almost the last one when I hit the jackpot! Although it is no longer bright and shining blue, it still clearly shows the RAF Mildenhall badge and that of the three Squadron's that at that time, 30 years ago, made up The Mildenhall Register. I don't think it has stood the test of time too badly.



Two plaques were of particular interest to me, on the left is one commemorating the Officers and Men of XV Sqn who lost their lives in the service of their country. Whilst on the right is one to those who served at Nos 2 & 3 Radio Schools at Yatesbury, Compton Bassett, Cherhill and Townsend.



Especially those who gave their lives for their country. Both are of particular significance to me as my Uncle was posted to No 2 RS at Yatesbury on the 12th May 1943. He eventually passed out on 17th September 1943 to take up a posting at No 11 OTU. Less than eight short



months later he and the crew he attached himself to at OTU, where posted to XV Squadron at Mildenhall. One month later to the day (1st June 1944) they were all killed by a night fighter attack over France. They had completed a mere seven operations.

Geoff Reynolds

No one was ever safe, even after hostilities had ended.

This story comes courtesy of Robert (Bob) Whymark, son of 149 Squadron Air gunner Sgt, later Flt Sgt and eventually Flt Lt John Percy Whymark DSO DFC who was lost on 4th October 1945 whilst flying in Lancaster PA278 (from the same production run from which PA474, the BBMF Lancaster, is a survivor) during Operation Dodge. (My thanks also to some websites which Bob recommended for additional material.)

Bob wrote; "He was killed aged 25 on an Operation Dodge op - (Google PA278 4th Oct '45 for my info on it, if you wish. I did; Ed.) He'd joined in 1938 as a mechanic and did Northern France mid '40 with AASF on 17 Sqn Hurricanes. Chased out through the Channel and went Air Gunner for - as he put it according to family legend 'For personal safety reasons'. He was 20 when he joined 149 for his first tour. He did 40 ops with 149/8 as it was 200 hours a tour in the early days. They split 149 and formed 148 which went to Suez Canal & Malta in '41. He was a rear gunner on Wellingtons for that.

His second tour was with 101 Squadron early '44, doing 30 ops in less than 3 months and finished his second tour with 60 ops in his log the night I was born! I can't remember him and I'm now 73.

He was at Elsham Wolds on his 3rd Tour in '44 / '45 as Gunnery Leader, which began on 20 May '44". Bob wrote in a second e-mail about this as no one has been able to tell him exactly how many operations his father finally, where he says "on this 3rd Tour in early 1945, the AOC called him down to RAF Bawtry HQ from Elsham and grounded him.

The S/L who flew him down was in the room. Dad was Flt Lt DFC and they were now both on 103 Sqn at Elsham Wolds. Dad was Gunnery Leader of 103. AOC said; *'Whymark, you've done enough, even GOD can't make you do 3 Tours'* Dad replied *'Sir, if one of my lads is sick, I'm flying in his place!'* As Dad was JUST 25, the term 'lads' struck AoC & S/L as humorous. Basically, interview ended with AoC muttering *'Oh, all right, just don't let me find out about it!'*

The S/L showed me his Logbook & as a Captain he'd logged all the crew. There were four more ops than in Dad's Logbook and Ken Butler assured me he knew of at least two other crews where dad had done similar amounts." That is how his father came to be flying that fateful day. (The following comes from Wikipedia, although other sites contain very similar information and are worth a read. Ed.)

On 3 October 1945 the weather was poor and low cloud base precluded flying for much of the day. Eight Lancasters of 103 Sqn were available for "Operation Dodge" and took off for Italy starting at 23:30 hours GMT. Two aircraft returned with engine trouble, one crew borrowed an aircraft from No. 100 Squadron RAF and took off again at 01:30 hours GMT. Two aircraft, including PA278 "F for Freddie", landed at RAF Glatton near Huntingdon to embark passengers who were commencing service in Italy or were returning from leave. PA278 was flown by Geoffrey Taylor's experienced crew who had flown together on some of the last bombing attacks of World War II during April 1945, although obviously their bomb aimer was not required and on this occasion the rear gun turret was manned by the squadron gunnery leader Flight Lieutenant John Wymark, who had been decorated with the Distinguished Service Order and Distinguished Flying Cross for his bravery in three tours of duty.

PA278 took off from RAF Glatton at 00:30 hours GMT on 4 October 1945 flown by Flight lieutenant Geoffrey Taylor, (pilot) aided by Sergeant Richard Steel, (flight engineer) leading the second transport aircraft into the air. It carried its crew of six and was scheduled fly to Naples with 17 female soldiers of the Auxiliary Territorial Service under Staff Sergeant Jessie Ellen Semark, Senior Matron Gertrude Irene Sadler of the South African Military Nursing Service and Nursing Sister Jane Simpson Annand Curran, of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service.

The passengers sat in canvas folding seats down the length of the fuselage beneath where Sergeant William Kennedy, sat in his sling seat in the "Mid-Upper" gun turret, but no heating or parachutes were available for them and there was no oxygen supply for passengers so the aircraft flew at 2,000ft (610m).

The prescribed route was directly across France and over the Mediterranean coast west of Marseille. Flight Sergeant Jack Reardon, (navigator) gave the correct course out over the sea but sometime afterwards, approximately 30 miles north-north-west of Cap Corse, Corsica, Flight Sergeant Norman Robbins, (wireless operator) radioed the other aircraft reporting some engine problems and advising that "F for Freddie" would be turning back to land at Marseille. The partner aircraft continued onwards for Naples but noted a flash of flame at 04:40 hours GMT.

Nothing further was heard of PA278 or her crew and passengers and no wreckage was sighted during the air-sea rescue operations. On the outward flight every aircraft reported poor weather in the vicinity of Corsica.

The bodies of the 19 passengers and six crew of Lancaster PA278 were never found. With no known graves, the RAF crew are remembered on the Runnymede memorial, (*far left*) Senior



Matron Sadler of the SAMNS is remembered on the Cassino memorial (*centre*), whilst those of the 17 ATS ladies and Nursing Sister Curran of the QAIMNS are remembered on the Brookwood memorial. (*far right*)

Operation Dodge

From 3 August 1945 there were many heavy bomber squadrons participating in Operation Dodge in which soldiers of the Eighth Army were flown home from Italy and the Central Mediterranean. An embarkation centre was established at Bari airfield, on the Adriatic coast of southern Italy and at Pomigliano near Naples was also used for geographic convenience. This had the impressive slopes of Mt. Vesuvius on the landing circuit, making it quite daunting.

It was a six-hour flight back to England and normally a maximum of 22 soldiers would be transported home as the internal confines of a Lancaster were not really suitable for passengers. Often the return trip to Italy saw aircraft transporting essential members of services out to Italy.

103 Sqn usually despatched between six and ten aircraft for Operation Dodge several days each week, the aircraft and crews would stop overnight in Italy and return with their passengers the following day or the day after that. Most of the trips were uneventful although squadron records do show that Warrant Officer Francis flying Lancaster "B for Baker" and Flying Officer Leigh flying "G for George" both had to land at Marseille in France due to engine failure, on 19 August 1945 and 5 September 1945 respectively.



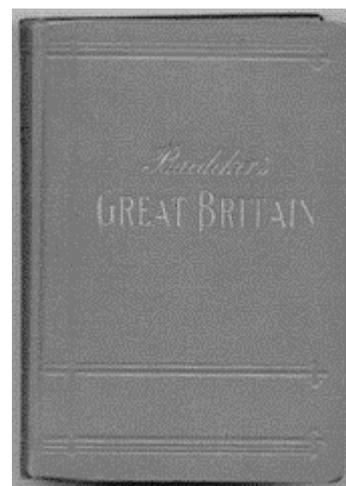
The landing site at Pomigliano 1945

Baedeker and Exodus Flights and Lancaster OJ-B

Towards the end of the war many squadrons undertook Baedeker flights with ground crew aboard. Karl Baedeker was a German publisher of travel guides and these were rumoured to be used by German bomber crews in the early part of the war to navigate to their targets. Some squadron Operational Record Books referred to these flights as 'Cook's Tours' in reply, although many used the 'Baedeker' title.

These flights were, in effect, tourist trips, with the ground personnel flown over 'safe' areas which the squadron had bombed. Designed to let the ground crew see what their efforts had made possible, the flights sometimes had dire consequences. Some 'tourists', and indeed Bomber Crews, were so affected by the devastation they saw beneath them that they became mentally disturbed and plagued with guilt. A heavy price to pay - later exacerbated by Churchill's shunning of Bomber Command.

Exodus flights were specifically to transport ex-POWs back to the UK. 149 (East India) Squadron mainly flew from Juvincourt and to this end ground crew personnel were detached and operated from Juvincourt to ensure the serviceability of the squadron's Lancasters. Wartime flying was never 'safe', but Lancaster aircraft PP673, coded OJ-B was a more unusual incident. Fg. Off. Tottle and his crew had carried out a series of 'Exodus' flights and it was time to return some of the detached squadron personnel to RAF Methwold. PP673 was transporting some of these personnel back from Juvincourt when it suffered an accident. When flying with another aircraft at approximately 2000ft it suddenly entered a steep dive. Although the exact reason for this is not known, the Captain of the other aircraft and the AIB investigation concluded that it was probably autopilot failure. During recovery from this dive, the aircraft suffered a major structural failure at the starboard engine and wing junction - it fell near Arras in France on the 5th June 1945 killing all but one on board. The deceased rest in the Southern Cemetery, Lille, France.



The 1937 Baedeker book

On board were:

Fg Off P Tottle	Pilot	Flt Sgt J Dyer	Wireless Operator
Flt Sgt K Hird	Air Gunner	Flt Sgt L Jones	Air Gunner
Flt Sgt E Paige	Bomb Aimer	Flt Sgt P C Wyatt	Navigator
Sgt R E Tilley	Flight Engineer	LAC W Spark	Ground crew
LAC W H Wardle	Ground crew	AC2 W Quinn	Ground crew

LAC Farley, ground crew, a Fitter II (A) survived, though injured and burned. He had swapped positions with the rear gunner, Flt Sgt Hird, after take-off and was in the rear turret position when the aircraft crashed - He revisited the crash site in June 1995.

Unfortunately, I have no contact with any relatives of John Farley.

There is some confusion about the records of this flight in the books which mention it. I hope that clarity has now been brought with this piece. The aircraft crew had successfully

completed many flights with the squadron. Operation Manna, dropping food to the Dutch at The Hague and Gouda, and Operation Exodus, ferrying up to 24 released POWs at a time from Juvincourt to the UK. They had been with the Squadron less than two months.

Alan Fraser 149 (East India) Squadron Historian.

A hymn found

622 Squadron vet, Bill Gould was over the moon the other day when I rang him to tell him that Smiley had managed to locate the hymn that used to be sung at the annual reunion Remembrance services. This had been composed by former Air gunner Rodney Pope of XV Squadron.

Rodney became a vicar post war and Bill firmly believes this was very much due to the amount of time he spent cooped up in the tail turret, a very lonely position, throughout his service life.

We are going to be using it as part of our Remembrance service this year, and future years, as a fine tribute.

Besides other hymns, I understand he also wrote a book entitled 'Andrews Field: First United States World War Two Airbase in Europe, with a Short History of Great Saling'. This is where he used to live. For those who might remember it from those services before it was lost in the mists of time, and those who may not be sharing the service with us this year, I've reproduced it here. It is set to the tune 'Oh Valiant Hearts' and is called '**Hymn of Remembrance**'.

O God our Father, hear our humble prayer	They gave their lives that others might be free,
For those we loved who rest within thy care:	Count what they gave as offered unto thee,
Give them the fullness of thy joy and peace,	And, as at Cavalry, love saved through thy Son,
Where life, and love and praise shall never cease.	So, may they share the victory he has won

When we remember them before thy throne?
Grant that our hearts, with them, may be as one
Their prayers may aid us in this world of strife
Still bound by friendship on the path of life

Love, hope and faith and sacrament we share	May we no more be called to take the sword
With them, ourselves committing to thy care	Teach us to trust the power of thy Word
O bring us all thy eternal light,	So that the victory, hardly fought and won
Out of the darkness of this mortal night.	May found the Kingdom of our Lord, thy Son.

Stop Press! – New Year Honours Award for Dee

Wonderful news, our very own Dee Boneham has been made an MBE in the 2019 New Year's honours list which was awarded particularly for her unstinting charity work, especially with veterans.

In a congratulatory letter to Dee, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier states that the award was in recognition of Dee's work within the wider local, national and Commonwealth community. He notes how Dee has motivated and empowered young airmen and airwomen to gain qualifications in a range of practical academic and life skills. He also mentions her involvement with 1109 Air cadet Squadron and her association with the New Zealand Bomber Command Association. He states that Dee should be justifiably proud of her wide-ranging contributions.



In the picture she is at East Kirby on the day the two Lancs flew over in 2017 with veteran Rusty Waughman who was a pilot on 101 Sqn.

Many congratulations from all at the Mildenhall Register Dee on your very deserved award!

A Plea from the Committee

With this newsletter is a plea from the Secretary for your help. As mentioned in the newsletter, your committee is desperately trying to preserve the steadily dwindling funds that had accumulated over the many years that The Register has been in operation. These were initially from membership fees, long since discontinued and we'd rather not go back to them. Your generous donations annually, for which we are always very grateful, and the small amount we make with the raffle at the reunions helps enormously.

Year on year we continue to send out newsletters, at an ever-increasing cost. We request replies to know that you have received these. Sadly, in many cases, we don't get these replies. This has led us to believe we may be sending newsletters to a number of you who no longer wish to receive them or to addresses you no longer occupy. To this end, we would urge you to reply to Geoff's letter sent with this newsletter or we shall, regrettably, have to stop sending you a copy of the newsletter.

We sincerely wish The Mildenhall Register to continue in its current form in memory of and to honour of all those who are no longer with us. We want to preserve those memories and provide a solid base where future generations can discover what their sacrifice was for. You can help us in a number of ways as detailed in the Secretary correspondence with this newsletter. Please do repond.to his request

Draft Outline of Reunion 2019 Programme

The Reunion will once more be based on RAF Mildenhall by kind permission of the Commander of the 100th Refuelling Wing of the USAF.

Friday 16 May:

1300 Coach leaves the Bird in Hand for Base Tour
1600 Return to the Bird in Hand
1730 Welcome drinks in Middleton Hall
1830 Buffet supper served
2000 AGM
2045 Short talk subject TBN

Saturday 17 May

0945 Coach leaves Bird in Hand
1045 Arrive at Cambridge American Memorial Madingley
1100 Presentation and Tour of Cemetery
1200 Picnic lunch followed by time for private viewing
1400 Depart for the Bird in Hand
1800 Pre-Dinner Drinks Galaxy Club
1900 Formal Dinner
2200+ Carriages

Sunday 18 May

1045 Wreath laying ceremony at the RAF Mildenhall Plaque, St Johns Beck Row
1100 Register Remembrance Service St John's Beck Row
1145 Refreshments in the Church Hall
1130 Farewells

Hotels and Guest Houses in the Mildenhall area

		Dist from Base approx
The Bird in Hand, Beck Row	01638 713247	1/2 mile
The Bell Hotel, Mildenhall -	01638 583511.	4 miles
The Lord Mayor's Cottage, Barton Mills	01638718947	5 miles
The Riverside House Hotel, Mildenhall	01638717274	4 miles.
The Bell, Barton Mills	01638713625	5 miles
The Walnut Tree Worlington -	01638 713345	5 miles
Worlington Hall -	01638 712237	5 miles
Travel Lodge Barton Mills -	0871 984 6006	5 miles

The Mildenhall Register Officers with Contact Details:

Hon Chairman	Hon Secretary	Hon Treasurer
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Cheveley	Gosberton	Haddenham
Newmarket	Spalding	Ely
CB8 9DG	PE11 4 NQ	CB6 3TW
Tel 01638 730761	Tel 01775 841585	Tel 01353 749509

Pictures of the 2018 Reunion

