



**Newsletter
January 2016**

The Mildenhall Register

15, 90, 149 and 622

**Bomber Squadrons' Association
supported by Friends of 75 (NZ) Sqn
and 218 (Gold Coast) Sqn**



The Roll Of Honour

Mr	W	Walter	Airey	Beckenham	XV
Mr	R	Ron	Brown		75(NZ) & 218
Flt Lt	M A	Nick	Carter	New Zealand	75(NZ)
W/O	W	Bill	Caster		75(NZ)
Mr	R J	Ronald	Catesby	Liverpool	XV/44
Mr	K	Kenneth	Chittock		622
Mrs	W	Winnie	Clark	Bedford	XV
Mr	R J	Roy	Collins	Frome	149
Mr	G S	Godfrey	Davies	West Malling	XV
Mr	R	Richard	Drake O.A.M.	Brisbane	149
Mr	E W	Ernest	Field	Bishops Stortford	622
Mr	H	Harry	Flowerday	London	XV
Mr	G	George	Green		218
Mr	A D	Alan	Hayden	Leatherhead	XV
Mr	J A	James	Hendon	Hailsham	622
Mr	W	Bill	Hickling	Wigan	622
Mr	S	Stan	Hurd	Halifax	218
Mr	D	Donald	Inglis		XV
Mr	P W		Lewis DFC	Haverfordwest	149
Mr	J	John	Maddy	St. Neots	XV/622
Mr	J F	John	Martin	Loughton	XC/XV
Mrs	E		Mason	Liverpool	XV
Mr	J	John	McFarland		75
Mr	D W	Douglas	Mephram	Hastings	XV
Mr	W W	Bill	Sievers	Kelso	622
Mr	T A		Skingsley		XV
Mr	D	David	Smith	Portsmouth	218
Mr	G	George	Stewart	Adelaide	622
Mr	R	Ray	Swift		218
Mr	R	Ron	Taylor	Westcliffe-on-Sea	218
Mr	D	Dennis	Tilling	Caerffynnon	Post War
Mr	S G	Stanley	Watson		XV
Mr	D R		Webber	Pershore	XV
Mr	J	John	Wortley		218

Front Cover At the heart of the International Bomber Command Centre are the Memorial Spire and Walls of Names. Designed by Stephen Palmer of Place Architecture, the Spire is formed of two wing fragments, tapering as they rise towards the sky, separated by perforated supporting plates which make reference to lightweight wing structures.

Chairman's Notes

I was told on various RAF courses never to begin a presentation or paper with an apology but on this occasion I must do so. For much of the past year our Secretary, Geoff Reynolds, has been indisposed because of various family problems and the administration of the Register has fallen to Smiley Mildwater, our Treasurer and to me. We have tried to deal with your enquiries and the work as best we can. The workload has affected the production of the yearly newsletter but hopefully it will reach you only a few days later than normal. I trust you will find the articles interesting and my thanks are due in particular to Martin Ford Jones, Howard Sandall and Alan Fraser, the Historians of XV, 622 and 149 Sqns respectively for providing copy.

In this newsletter you will read of last year's successful reunion. I was encouraged by the good attendance at all the events and do hope we get your support at this year's weekend, details of which may be found in the newsletter. We plan that the format will follow that successfully used over the past few years. The Saturday day visit will be to the Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Please don't be put off by the size of the site as a shuttle bus and wheel chairs are available to transverse the distance between the various attractions. January this year saw the 75th anniversary of the Lancaster's first flight at Manchester's Ringway Airfield and there will be the chance to inspect the Duxford Lanc.

The latest news on RAF Mildenhall's closure was made this week. When the base closes in 2020/2021 the MOD plans to sell off the land for housing, whether or not this is a practical idea is open to debate. In the meantime the USAF has indicated their great willingness to host the reunion whilst they remain at Mildenhall.

Many thanks to all of you who made generous donations to the Register's funds which enable us to continue with the newsletter - over 600 are posted across the World.

My thanks to the Committee and their wives for the support they have given me and hence the Register during the past year. This week I was pleased by the news that Geoff, our Secretary, is in a position to fully resume his duties, his return is most welcomed. Finally I send my best wishes to you all and hope to see many of you at Mildenhall in May.

John Gentleman

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Secretary's report

Well, as I sit here on a mid-January cold and frosty morning, I wonder just where the last twelve months have gone. It seems like only yesterday we were posting out the newsletters and had the 2015 reunion all planned. Unfortunately these past few months I have been engaged with some serious family matters that have kept me away from The Register work for so long. I'm getting back to work slowly and will catch up with all my outstanding work over the next few weeks.

What did happen last year? Well, the newsletter went out as planned and it wasn't long before the bookings for the reunion were rolling in to our Treasurer.

The reunion, by all accounts, was yet another great success. For this I have to thank your Chairman, John, and Treasurer, Smiley, along with their wives, and helpers on base who make it such an enjoyable time for all our attendees.

After the reunion came an enquiry about a former 149 Squadron member and a case of mistaken identity. With Alan Fraser's (149 Squadron historian) help The Register were able to assist in bringing about a re-dedication of this lost airman's grave and amend the war records. Some 149 Squadron family members and I were able to represent The Mildenhall Register on the day. (*See later story*).

Then in July came the sad news that dear Winnie Clarke, widow of our founder Don had passed away. Debbie and I represented The Register at the beautifully moving service in Bedford Crematorium before joining their wonderful family at a gathering afterwards. It was great to hear the old stories about Don and Win recounted one more time by those who loved and shared their lives.

With the summer well underway, my grandchildren were off to tour Europe with Mum and Dad. They called in at Lormaison and Beauvais to visit the grave of their great-great-uncle, Sgt Raymond Geoffrey Norris. It was the first time that any of them had been there. They found it very moving, as I had the first time, to look at the place where he'd crashed and know all on the plane had perished. Other visitors to the same sites were relatives of the pilot, Peter D'Ombra. There is a little piece about their visit further on.

I then walked a marathon distance along Hadrian's Wall for charity with my youngest daughter. Despite the training, it was extremely hard but we finished in just over 11 hours and raised over £1200 for Cancer Research. Whilst on the walk I learned that my father had been taken to hospital and from then on, even after his death, I've found it hard to get anything done for The Register at all.

My grateful thanks to all those who've kept it jogging along in my absence, answering my redirected e-mails, keeping Facebook going and all the other jobs I couldn't get round to

doing. Thanks too, to those who may still be waiting for replies. I'm coming back and with any luck, you'll have heard from me by now.

Happy 2016 and here's to many more get together.

Geoff Reynolds

Last Year's enjoyable reunion

Over the weekend of 15th to 17th May the 34th annual Mildenhall Register reunion was held. This years' event opened on Friday afternoon with a base tour enjoyed by some 55 members. This is the second time recently we've been able to arrange this in conjunction with our hosts, The USAF and its highlight was getting up close with the tilt-wing CV22 Osprey and crew. They currently operate from Mildenhall beside the regular KC135 tankers, heavy and medium transport aircraft and electronic intelligence gathering craft.



Inspecting an CV22 Osprey aircraft

This was followed in the evening with our meeting and greeting meal when we gather on base, this year in The Galaxy Club, for an informal dinner before holding our AGM. Formalities over, we were treated to an excellent and informative talk on The Godmanchester Stirling by Roger Leivers. Roger has spent many years researching the crew of this XV Squadron aircraft about which he has become very knowledgeable. For further information please see: - <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Godmanchester-Stirling/646100218819432> or contact Roger Leivers e-mail rogerleivers@yahoo.co.uk

We finished with a quick word or two from National Service (RAF) Association chairman John Magee who outlined the formation of this relatively new (2002) association

(<http://www.nsrafa.org/Default.aspx>) and his view that it might be a good idea to have National Service re-instated.

Following this, most of us retired to bed for an early start on Saturday morning



Briefing in the Thorpe Abbots "NAFFI"

when a coach was scheduled to take us to the former base of the 100th Bomber Wing at Thorpe Abbotts.

Housed in the original airfield control tower and other atmospheric buildings 100th Bomb Group Memorial Museum is a moving testament to the Americans who came to Thorpe Abbotts in Norfolk to fight alongside the allies during World War Two. The 100th Bomb Group or 'Bloody Hundredth', a name bestowed on them by other contemporary USAAF Groups, has strong ties with Mildenhall. The 100th Air Refuelling Wing currently stationed at Mildenhall is the successor of this illustrious unit and proudly wears the Square 'D' on its tail fin in their memory.

The trip to and from the base was accompanied by the Squadron historian, Texan Mark Howell, who regaled us with stories of the terrible losses suffered by the group and some of the more light-hearted incidents that they endured.

Back to hotels and guest houses to spruce up for the formal reunion dinner, again in The Galaxy Club on base, where we were treated to yet another wonderful meal by our hosts.

There were seven veterans and three widows of veterans amongst our 112 guests, representing five of our six squadrons. This included John Johnston from America, accompanied by his son Ian. John was a radio and radar technician with 149 Squadron. Further guests included Sqn Ldr Graham Thorpe representing 622 (R) Squadron, recently re-formed at Brize Norton, the Air Attachés of Australia, Canada and New Zealand and Col. and Mrs Bradford from the 100th ARW. Sadly, due to operational duties, we had no representation from XV Squadron. Our funds received a welcome boost from an excellent raffle and the fund to maintain the Bomber Command memorial benefitted from another, special raffle, of a signed photograph of the two Lancasters during their 2014 display season. A wonderful evening, which reluctantly had to be brought to an end so that everyone could be escorted off base by our US liaison officer and his team in case we got lost!



Our final act of the weekend was to attend a remembrance service in the little village church of Beck Row on the Sunday morning. This flint church is just outside the perimeter of the base and was regularly attended by the wartime service men during their time on base. As such it has very close ties with the personnel from the base and the church yard has a number of Commonwealth War Graves including that of Australian P/O Rawdon Hume Middleton VC, a former 149 pilot. Also laid to rest here is our former chairman Fred Coney a former MUG with XV Squadron.

The service was followed by a farewell buffet provided by the wonderful ladies of the church and village. There were instructions that no one was to leave unless all the food was gone! Despite valiant efforts by all, we were defeated once more and suitably sated all wended their often long tiring journeys home for yet another year. Initial reports from those gathered would indicate that it was yet another 'best yet'. We look forward to doing it all again next year. Maybe we'll see some of you there?

Geoff Reynolds

Secretary

XV (Reserve) Squadron began their centenary year in style

(Based on an MOD Press release)



In a classic case of history repeating itself XV(Reserve) Squadron, the RAF's premier Tornado training unit celebrated its formation one hundred years ago also in a training role.

Formed on the 1st March 1915 at Farnborough, the Squadron acted as a training unit supporting the Royal Flying Corps in the Great War. One hundred years later the modern incarnation of that unit, XV (Reserve)



Squadron, marked the start of its centenary year at RAF Lossiemouth with a formal parade in front of their families, colleagues and the head of the Royal Air Force's combat fast jet fleet.

The then Officer Commanding XV(Reserve) Squadron, Wing Commander Jon Nixon, led his personnel and the Squadron's standard, as they paraded before Air Vice Marshall Gary Waterfall, Air Officer Commanding 1 Group.

Wg Cdr Nixon said:

"Apart from family events, the parade today has been one of the proudest days of my life. To be able to lead such a famous squadron in to its centenary year is something I could never have dreamed of doing when I first joined the Royal Air Force. I'm honoured to represent the men and women of today's Squadron and those who have previously served."

The Squadron had a Tornado GR4 especially painted for their centenary in the Squadron's famous blue and red colours. This unique jet formed the impressive backdrop to the parade.



The Squadron's illustrious history has included service in both world wars flying both fighters and bombers most notably the Hawker Hind, Avro Lancaster and Panavia Tornado.

One of the most famous stories associated with XV(R) Sqn is the connection with the MacRobert family. The three sons of Lady Rachel MacRobert and her husband Sir Alexander MacRobert were all killed within 3 years of each other in separate flying incidents; the eldest of the three was killed in action whilst on missions during World War II. Lady MacRobert's response to her sons' deaths was to donate £25,000 to purchase a bomber for the RAF and asked that it be named "MacRobert's Reply".

This was the start of a tradition that the RAF has kept alive. A succession of RAF aircraft has since carried the name. The current "MacRobert's Reply" is a Tornado GR4 from XV (Reserve) Squadron, still identified by the cherished tail letter 'F'.

XV(R) Squadron Sqn Cdr's Report 2015

(From the XV Sqn Association Newsletter)

As I sit here with the nights drawing in, the wintery Scottish weather on the hills to the south of Lossiemouth and the mighty Tornado GR4 on the line, I look back on my first 6 months in Command of XV(R) Squadron. It has been a challenging time for the Squadron: the support to Operation SHADER - the air operations over Iraq - demand the Tornado Force's utmost attention. Our crew routinely are ferrying aircraft to and from RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, and our engineers are supporting the engineering commitment here at RAF Lossiemouth preparing the aircraft, and part of teams performing the major servicing on the aircraft in theatre. I am pleased to report that they do all that is asked of them, and more, to the



standards and excellence that anyone would expect from XV(R) Squadron. For those who were able to make the reunion dinner at the end of May, you will recall I was unable to attend as I was leading the Squadron on deployment to Bodo Air Base in Norway. We deployed there primarily to allow the Qualified Weapons Instructors Course (QWIC) to drop inert and live weapons against a variety of targets, and also to give some large force exercise training to crews from IX(B) Squadron. The team did a fantastic job and we achieved all that we had hoped. We are hoping for a similar exercise in the summer next year for what will be the last Tornado GR QWIC.

In July I was privileged to represent the Squadron with my new Officer Commanding Training Flight (Squadron Leader Mark Swinton), the Squadron Warrant Officer (WO Tam McEwan MBE), Chief Technician Guillou, and Sergeants Duns and Hope, at the annual memorial events in Vraux, France. We were hosted incredibly well, as we always are, and laid wreaths on the graves of fallen crews from XV Squadron. It was humbling, not least of all because the community welcomes us as old friends. We must not forget the effort the Squadron puts in daily to train the crews for the front-line. We have graduated 10 pilots and 14 Weapons Systems Officers, ab-initio and refreshers, all of whom have deployed on Operations since they left us. But it is not all work. The team have had fun as well, and raised nearly £12,000 for the RAF Benevolent Fund - our centenary target is £15,000 by 1 Mar 16! The money has come from sales of prints etc as well as some amazing sponsorship events: SAC(T) Scott and Cpl Zweig completed the Cairngorm to Coast Challenge (they were the only

team to finish out of 18 who started!); Flt Lt Law ran a 95 Mile endurance event; a team completed 100 holes of golf in 18 hours; and a few of us ran the Lossiethon! As I finish off, we are awaiting the announcement of the Governments Strategic Defence and Security Review. Despite the speculation in the media, it is a nervous time for the Squadron as the future of the Tornado Force will be decided in the review. I look forward to updating.



News from the interim OC 622 Sqn -Sqn Ldr Graham Thorpe

Major news for 622 Sqn is that we are now located in the 24 Squadron HQ Building sporting a very modern office, thank you OC 24.

The Sqn currently has 70 personnel but will, hopefully, soon be increased to 90 and with aspirations of doubling in size as a result of the recent Strategic Defence and Security Review. The review recognised and acknowledged the benefits of employing experienced ex-regulars to supplement the reducing number of regular servicemen and servicewomen within our Armed Forces. We have personnel ensconced fully within Eng Wg, Flight Safety Section, Ops Wg, MT, ATC and all flying Sqns. In addition to this the Sqn provides aircrew for Voyager, Hercules and C17 aircraft where they continue to provide experience and resilience. The Voyager Fleet is still heavily involved in OP KIPION flying to and from Minhad and one of our Cabin Crew has just completed her 60th Mobilisation in 5 years.



A C130 plugs in behind a RAF Voyager as seen from the MSO Console

As always on squadrons it isn't only about flying - a select group were involved in The Wimbledon Tennis Tournament, The Remembrance Festival at The Royal Albert Hall and the 75th Anniversary Commemoration Service for The Battle of Britain at Westminster Abbey. We provided Sqn representation at a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace and several of our members are involved on many sporting fronts including Hockey, Boxing, Skiing and Hang-Gliding.

A very significant event recently has been the arrival of our newest member Patrick our OC gave birth to a baby boy in October 2015 and both are making excellent progress. She hopes to be back flying in March and return to OC duties in April when I will eventually return to preparing for retirement!!

The next event in the Sqn diary is a Sqn lunch that we are holding in the WOs' and Sgts' Mess at Brize Norton in May this year where we will welcome again our Honorary Air Commodore Air Marshal Sir Timo Anderson and to which a number of veterans will be invited.

I am sure the future will continue to exercise our flexibility, and test our sense of humour and I am sure that the Sqn will respond in its usual inimitable fashion. We would like to thank all former Sqn members for the example that you set and wish everyone involved with The Mildenhall Register all the very best for the year ahead.

'V-Weapons- Bomber Command, Failed to Return'

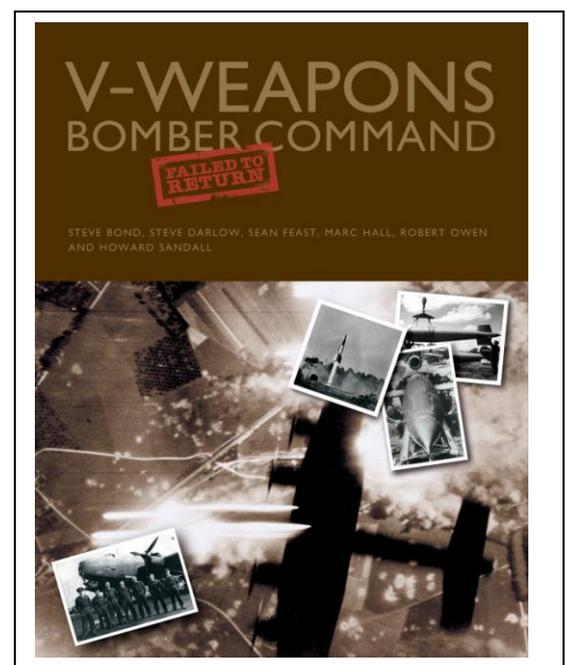
(The Book Launch at the Imperial War Museum Duxford)

It was with a sense of pride that my family and I attended the launch of '*V-Weapons- Bomber Command, Failed to Return*' at the Imperial War Museum Duxford on 19th & 20th September this year. I was invited as a contributory author by the publisher '*Fighting High Publications*', to sign copies of the book along with WWII Bomber Command veterans.

My chapter tells of the courage, despair, fortitude and resilience of a No. 622 Squadron crew shot down on their first operation over enemy territory in June 1944. Five young men became prisoners of war with two losing their lives and being buried in a French Churchyard.

The average age of aircrew was 22 years, young men who came from all regions of the Commonwealth, of their own free will, to unite under the banner of freedom and democracy. By the end of the war they had forged into one of the most formidable fighting forces in the history of air warfare.

Aircrews displayed exemplary bravery and courage on a daily basis far and wide across the country. The 'Bomber Boys' took the fight to Germany with 55, 543 aircrew losing their lives, the highest loss rate of any armed service during the Second World War. My research into Bomber Command originated from hearing tales of daring deeds from family members but has grown into more than a hobby over time.



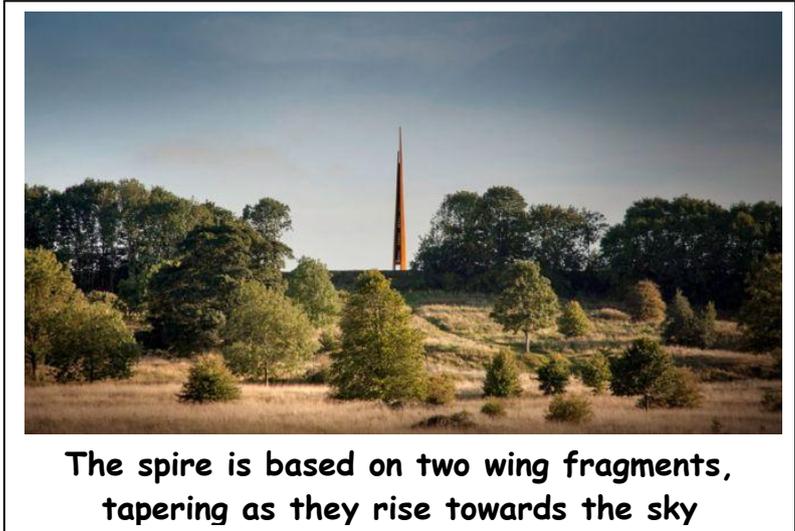
As the No. 622 Squadron (WWII) historian I was delighted to have my first book published in 2011 and have subsequently contributed two chapters to the publications in 2013 and now 2015. For my last two publications I have been fortunate to share my writings with other distinguished Bomber Command historians in collective editions.

Howard Sandall

622 Squadron (WWII) Historian

Bomber Command Memorial unveiled in ceremony

A memorial to the thousands of crewmen who served in Bomber Command during World War Two has been officially unveiled in Lincoln. The memorial spire and walls of remembrance are the first significant development in the creation of the International Bomber Command Centre. Lord Howe, Minister of State for the Ministry of Defence, cut the ribbon. The ceremony, presented by historian Dan Snow, was attended by 300 of the remaining Bomber Command veterans.



A number of flyovers by different aircraft were organised for the occasion, including the last flying Vulcan, a Blenheim bomber, two Tornados, three Hawks and the current MacRobert's Reply.

The memorial spire was designed by Stephen Palmer of Place Architecture, and is higher than the Angel of the North. It is 102ft (31.09m) tall - the wingspan of the Avro Lancaster - and the width at the base is 16ft (5m), the overall width of a Lancaster wing.

The spire was delivered to the site and erected in seven-and-a-half hours on 10 May this year, marking the 70th anniversary of VE Day. The walls of remembrance record the names of the 55,573 men who lost their lives serving in Bomber Command.

Tony Worth CVO, chairman of the International Bomber Command Centre Trust, said: " It was a momentous day both in terms of having reached this milestone in the creation of International Bomber Command Centre, which has taken eight years so far.

Our 622 Sqn Historian (WW11) Howard Sandall attended The Unveiling of the International Bomber Command Centre Memorial Spire and writes:

On 2nd October 2015, the sun shone down on the unveiling of the first phase of the International Bomber Command Centre Memorial and remembrances walls in Lincoln. The unveiling ceremony was a special day, 300 veterans gathered from far afield to remember and honour their comrades who had 'failed to return.' They consider themselves the lucky ones, they survived a full tour of operations in Bomber Command. Lincolnshire is considered to be Bomber County with its 27 bomber airfields assigned to No. 1 & 5 Groups. More aircrew were killed flying from Lincolnshire air bases than any other county in Great Britain.

My wife and I were privileged guests at the event, to walk amongst and meet, the gathered veterans was a humbling experience. 26,000 names are impregnated in the metal walls surrounding a tall spire, the exact height the wing span of a Lancaster bomber. The setting is wonderful to behold. The view to the North West focuses the eyes on the majestic Lincoln Cathedral, its tall spires were a distinguishing feature for crews, in particular navigators in the final stages of returning to base. Hearts would soar when the Cathedral came into view, it was another operation survived.



The walls of remembrance' will record the names of the 55,573 men who lost their lives serving in Bomber Command

The rows of alphabetical names on remembrances walls flow around the spire with regimented symmetry. This is the first stage on an ambitious project and one I feel sure will come to fruition.

Note:

The International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) is being created to provide a world-class facility to serve as a point for recognition, remembrance and reconciliation for Bomber Command.

The Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Trust, in partnership with the University of Lincoln, aims to open the Centre in 2017.

Lincoln has been chosen for the site as it provides a central point for all 27 bases that earned Lincolnshire the title of 'Bomber County'. Lincoln Cathedral provided a landmark for crews both leaving and returning from missions and, for those who failed to return, the Cathedral was often their last image of home. Lincolnshire housed over a third of all the WW2 Bomber Command Stations making it the ideal home for this commemoration of the bravery of the men of Bomber Command.

The IBCC will provide the most comprehensive record of Bomber Command in the world and will ensure that generations to come can learn of their vital role in protecting the freedom we enjoy today.

The story of John and Charlie and 'T for Tommy'.

How hundreds of Dutch children were educated about World War II

by Harry Bouwman from The Netherlands.

To introduce myself: I am a schoolteacher at a primary school and used to teach in Vaassen from 1980 till 2001. In 2001 my family and I moved to Steenwijk and since then I have taught the children in Oldemarkt, a small village in the northwest of the province Overijssel.

In Vaassen we teachers used to help the pupils to cross the main street. On the 2nd of May 1986 I had a chance meeting with two elderly British couples. Just arriving from England, because of a strike in the Harbour of Dover, they were looking for a toilet at half past eight in the morning. (This was a real coincidence; without the strike I would never have met them!) I invited them to come to my school. The men turned out to be Air Gunners, on their way to the Heidehof cemetery in Apeldoorn for a memorial, they were John Hardeman and Charlie Holderness with their wives. The two Air Gunners were to meet at the Cannenburg castle in Vaassen the other Air Gunners, who were coming from Dronten that morning. As there was some time left, I invited both couples to tell my class about the war. That was well received by both the British guests and the children. The children, who were well prepared because of the history lessons during the last two weeks, asked several questions that were answered by the two Air Gunners. This meeting resulted in an exchange of letters and the sending of Christmas cards.



In September 1988 the school was surprised by John and Charlie with plans to plant a friendship tree next to the school. This took place on September 15th of that year. A great event! The veterans were warmly received and in group six, seven and eight all the various questions from the children (aged 10-12) were answered. After the questions, the tree was planted along with a bronze plaque with the following text:

**The Air Gunner Tree
In Friendship
Vassen
Septemebr 1988**

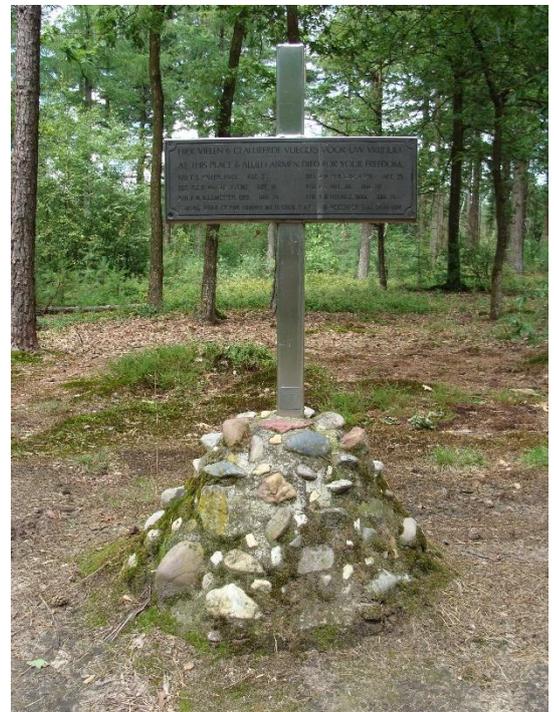
In 1991 John and Charlie came again to our school. The bond of friendship increased and the classroom wall slowly became decorated with all kinds of presents. The father of one of the pupils in group 8 told me the story about a bomber that had crashed in the woods near Gortel. On a rainy Saturday morning in January 1992 an ex-gamekeeper showed me the crash site, where still small remains of the aircraft can be found. With the help of Gerrie Zwanenburg, MBE, Recovery Officer (rtd) of the RAAF, I researched the story of this particular bomber. It was Stirling R9168 - T for Tommy - of No. XV Sqn RAF. The aircraft crashed after a raid on Diepholz, on the evening of 16 December 1942. Six men were KIA, the British rear gunner Sgt. Jim Perring was the sole survivor. That Saturday I got the plan to erect a new memorial and as the woods here are part of the Royal Forests special permission from Queen Beatrix was received to do this. Together with the gamekeeper and the pupils of my class we went to the forest to collect field stones for the monument. So every child could put his own stone into the base of the memorial.

The placing of the monument, on June 23rd 1992 was the beginning of many visits from the Air Gunners in the following years. I had collected many details of the raid of 'T for Tommy' so I decided to write a book about this bomber and its crew. One miraculous detail to tell is that I found an address in the municipal archives. It was a letter from the mother of W/AG Russell Holmes who sent a letter to the Mayor of Epe in 1945 to ask what had happened with her son. I wrote a letter to this 50 years old address in Canada and it was replied by Russell's sister, who still lived there in Marwayne. She sent me a photograph of her brother!

Next to the allied side of the story of the raid, I describe also the German point of view and what happened with the Dutch who were eye witnesses of the crash. Also all main records are included. In May 1993 the first edition of my book *'The last flight of T for Tommy'* was presented to the first group of Air Gunners who visited the monument. Unfortunately, John Hardeman didn't take part. He had recently deceased while visiting his son in New Zealand.

Another amazing detail of the research took place in September 1993. A Canadian friend of John Fenn, one of the Air Gunners from Ipswich who got my book in May, went to Marwayne to collect more details about the Holmes family. He entered the Drop in Center where just one old lady was sitting. He asked her if she could put him in contact with someone who would know the Holmes family. To his amazement she said, Russell Holmes was her brother!

It was surprising, that within a few months all 1.000 copies of my book were sold.



During the visits of the Air Gunners contact was made between children and veterans and friendships were formed. Many children kept in contact with 'their' Air Gunner for many years and a regular group of Air Gunners came back to Gortel every year. The Air Gunners who attended Gortel between 1993 and 2010, were guests in the municipality of Dronten. Since 1981 they took part in the memorial service on the night of 4th May at the Airman's Memorial in front of the Town Hall.

Every time when the British guests visited the school I prepared the children for this wonderful event. They asked questions, chanted songs and poems were read. One of the highlights of the programme was the performance of three young girls, who reinacted the Andrew Sisters. Many hand kerchiefs were taken by the Air Gunners! All memories came back by those songs.

The children showed a lot of interest asking many questions

- Were you afraid during a raid?- What was your age when you started to serve- Why did you serve the Royal Air Force?- What was exactly your place in the airplane?- What kind of function did you have?- At what height did you fly?- How many hours did a raid take? - Which targets did you bomb?- Did you ever have to fly for Special Operations or Operation Manna? And so on

In answer to the question from the schoolchildren whether they were afraid, the Air Gunners invariably replied that they were absolutely terrified: "We were scared to death." They felt like this just before departure but once they were underway, they were doing their job. The question of whether they had lost family or friends during the war, always yielded a moment of silence. There was never anyone who could deny this ... One of the statements from an Air Gunner was "Only birds and fools fly but only fools fly by night." Another Air Gunner said: "After the death of a family member who served in the RAF, I had to promise my mum I would not become a pilot. I kept that promise; I became an Air Gunner." At one of the memorial services a gunner told us: "It's a bigger honour for us to lay a wreath here in Gortel than one in London." Joy reflected in the faces of the veterans when they saw the children's interested glances. "We fought for their freedom," was the reaction from the Air Gunners, "and it was worth it". From Air Gunner Bill Tulip we got a wonderful text in a frame.

On May 2nd 1995, the entire group of Air Gunners, who were guests at the Municipality of Dronten, came to Vaassen. As many as 110 Air Gunners came with their wives to admire the Air Gunners tree. After a brief tour of the school, a program was followed in the Reformed Church. The children asked their questions and 'The Air Gunners' Song' was chanted. I had written this Air Gunners' Song to which every year a few staves were added since 1991. It was composed on the melody of "My Bonny lies over the Ocean.",

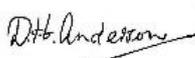
To Kosterstraat School, Vaassen, Holland

On many occasions while flying over Holland in darkness, we thought of those people down below us. Only their bravery and resilience kept them going, and after meeting their offspring fifty years later, we know our efforts were not in vain. Here's wishing Dutch youngsters a wonderful future with an everlasting peace on Earth. God bless them all.

Vliegend over Holland in duisternis gingen onze gedachten vaak uit naar de mensen daar beneden. Met dapperheid en veerkracht wisten ze te volharden. En nu, na vijftig jaar, ontmoeten we hun nakomelingen en weten dat onze moeite niet tevergeefs is geweest. Wij wensen de Nederlandse jongeren een mooie toekomst en een eeuwigdurende vrede op aarde. God zegene hen alle.



Bill Tulip R/Gunner



Dave Anderson M/U Gunner

166 Squadron
Kirmington
Lincs.

May 4th. 1994

Plaque presented by Bill Tulip

*How pleased we are that we met you,
that's already five years ago,
You came to our school and you told us,
you fought for us in World War Two, War Two.*

Refrain:

*Oh, dear Air Gunners,
We'll never forget all your names, your names,
Oh, dear Air Gunners,
we'll never forget all your names!*

The Air Gunners' Song

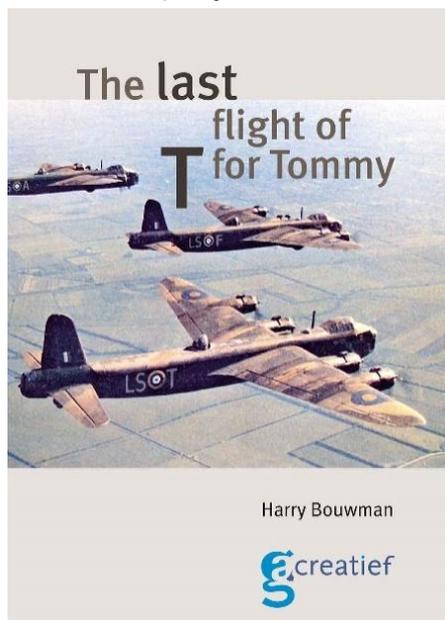
All the branches represented (from Ipswich, Norwich, East Sussex, West Midlands, Coventry, Manchester, York, Cleveland, Warrington, London, South Wales, West Sussex Kent and Hereford) received a commemorative certificate. There were also several paintings of a Stirlings presented to the English guests. For all ladies there was a paper daffodil made by the children.

Shortly before the impressive memorial at the monument in Gortel was declared open, the Lancaster bomber 'City of Lincoln' flew over us, escorted by a Spitfire. Especially for the Air Gunners this was a touching moment. However, there are not so many Dutch schoolchildren

who will get the possibility to see a real Lancaster flying at 300 feet. As one of the Air Gunners said: "He was on time, he was on course and low!"

At the request of Bill Tulip small sandboxes were placed in front of the monument, in which the wives of the Air Gunners and the children could place their poppy crosses. During each memorial the dedication was read out (in English and Dutch) by two children. Year after year, a delegation of veterans came to the school and the monument in May. A Prominent guest was often a mayor or the British military attaché.

In May 2001 the memorial ceremony couldn't take place due to the foot and mouth crisis and in the summer of 2001 I moved to Steenwijk. In 2005 the Air Gunners paid a visit to my school in Oldemarkt. Again, dozens of children were taught about their war experiences. I suppose during all those years more than 400 children had been educated about Bomber Command. The organizing of the commemoration in Vaassen was taken over by the Foundation Broken Wings '40-'45. In the spring of 2012, the monument was officially adopted by the school 'Het Mosterzaadje' (the mustard seed) in Gortel. In that year for the very first time there were no Air Gunners present at the commemoration to old age. I decided to publish a reprint of my book. The book has been completed with all headlines of World War II. As an education project it has been presented to 1.200 school children in the region. The English



version, published last May, hopefully will reach many schoolchildren abroad. I hope to get this book in foreign school libraries. Nice detail to tell: three weeks before closing the English manuscript, after reading the Mildenhall Newsletter of Summer 2012, I made contact with Mr. Ken Dougan in Canada. He crewed up with Frank Millen, T for Tommy's pilot! Whilst he was in hospital, Frank and its crew flew their last operation...Ken sent me the last photograph of the crew: a wonderful picture of Frank Millen, which completed my book! Also, after a message about my English version on Facebook I made contact with the granddaughter of the Air Gunner of F for Freddy. This Stirling went out for the same operation as T for Tommy that night, although badly

damaged this aircraft made a safe landing at Coltishall. The granddaughter read my book and donated a copy of it to the local school in New Zealand. Target reached!

The book has had many very good reviews; a number of pages can be seen at www.gacreatief.nu. It can also be ordered via the web shop of the International Bomber Command Centre: <http://internationalbcc.co.uk/shop>. Harry can be contacted by e-mail hvbouwman@gmail.com or writing to him at Meppelerweg 110, 8331 DA, Steenwijk, The Netherlands.

**902467 Sergeant Donald Payne. RAF.
Observer. 149 (East India) Squadron.**

Sergeant Payne was lost on the 9th September 1940 aged 19 yrs. He was the son of Squadron Leader and Mrs Daisy Payne of Andover, Hampshire.

Sergeant Payne had not been with 149 Squadron for long, having flown only three Operational flights before the final one - to Boulogne Harbour to attack the shipping and invasion barges massing there. On his first Operation as an Observer, he had navigated his way to Berlin and back for a successful trip.

On the crew's final trip their aircraft, Wellington P9245 coded OJ-W, had been hit by flack over the target and then hit severe icing on the return trip. To compound their difficulties and add a final twist of fate, the Port engine then failed - followed shortly after by the Starboard. They

were going to come down into the Channel. Squadron Leader Andrews, the aircraft's Captain, ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft, which three of them did - including Donald Payne. They were not seen alive again and were thought to have all been claimed by the sea. Sqn. Ldr. Andrews died when the aircraft hit the water and the 2nd Pilot, P.O. Parish, baled out.

The aircraft had landed in the sea around six miles off the beach at Clacton. In a feat of endurance and courage Pilot Officer Parish managed to swim to the shore and be rescued before fatigue and exposure claimed him.

Subsequently a body was washed up on the Essex coast. The only means of identification of the body was a name found on an article of clothing - Sgt Payne. This led to the body being identified as Sgt A.H. Payne of 53 Sqn RAF who had been lost at the same time as the Wellington. The body was claimed and interred by Sgt Alfred Payne's family, in the Quorn Churchyard, Leicester. Later research work by Mr Mike Speight, showed that the body was actually that of Sgt Donald Payne and Flt Sgt A.H. Payne had actually been buried near Lille in France in an identified grave. Mike Speight contacted the MOD and was referred to the new JCCC department - the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre who went into action. As 149 Squadron Historian I received an e-mail



Sgt Donald M Payne. RAF

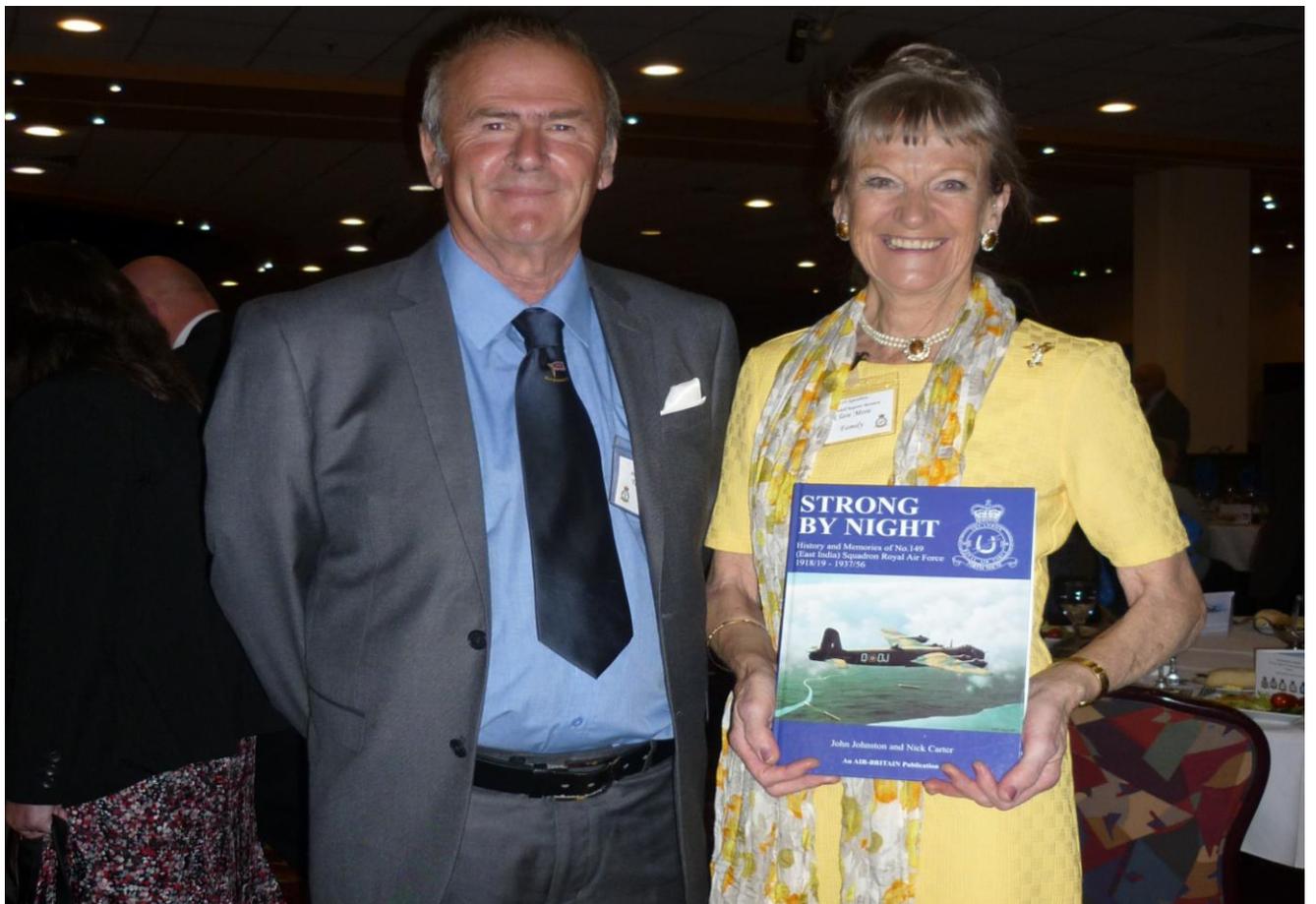


**Imperial War Museum
Photograph of OJ-W in early 1940**

Reunion 2015 Photographs 1



Our USAAF Guest of Honour Lt Col Noel Bradford & his Wife Christine with Chairman John Gentleman and Val & Mike Davis



Clare More shows one of the raffle prizes - 149 Sqn History with a fellow guest

Reunion 2015 Photographs 2



One of our guests Lt Col Tressa Home, RCAF, talks with Jim Coman's son Colin



Our Treasurer Smiley Mildwater presents guest Wg Cdr Tony O'Leary, RAAF with his raffle prize. Smiley's wife Cherry is in the background

from Tracey Bowers, one of the ladies who is part of the "Commemorations Team", part of JCCC, MOD, who explained their role as, "to research unmarked graves and arrange "rededication ceremonies" as necessary". The Department had the details from Quorn Church in Leicestershire and planned to mark the grave with Acting Sergeant Donald Mayston Payne's details and arrange a ceremony in late June or early July. A new headstone was installed by the CWGC and the rededication ceremony was to follow.

Tracey had tried various appeals and investigations, but had been unable to trace any family members. Despite this, the Department anticipated a lot of interest in this ceremony. I asked a friend, Mr Dave Richardson to see if he could investigate and track

down some family connections - which he did in quick order, turning up relatives in Britain, Australia and California. Unfortunately none of the relatives could make the trip at what was such short notice, so the Service went ahead on the 30th June, 2015 at Quorn Church.

So one of those who had been 'lost' was now officially 'found', although his details remain on the memorial at Runnymede. Thanks are extended to: Mr Michael Speight, Ms Tracy Bowers, Mr Dave Richardson, Mr Chris Best, Mr Geoff Reynolds and all the others associated with the research and Service for Sgt Payne. Further pictures will appear on the Website.

Alan Fraser

149 (East India) Squadron Historian

An eye witness account of the day by Geoff Reynolds (who represented the Register at the service.)



The newly re-dedicated gravestone for Sgt Payne



At 15.30hrs on the 30th June 2015 Sgt Donald Mayston Payne was finally honoured when a new CWGC headstone was rededicated in a tiny Leicestershire cemetery.

This was to be the first rededication carried out by the JCCC on British soil since its inception over ten years ago. Prior to this each service dealt with their own personnel.

There was a good turnout of those who had heard the news and local dignitaries, bolstered by the local ATC, other RAF personnel, the RBL and the media.

We had asked for folk to attend who had connections with 149 Squadron so that the Register would be represented at the ceremony. Sadly, Alan, due to the distance involved and his continuing mobility problems, was unable to attend. I was joined by Jeremy Powell, whose father had once commanded the Squadron, accompanied by his friend Ivy Baldry. They were joined by Mr and Mrs Chris Best

So, on one of the hottest days of the year, we assembled in the Baptist church cemetery in the village of Quorn (renowned as having the oldest hunt in the country, by the way). After a few introductions and a little instruction on wreath laying for Chris and I, the ceremony got underway.

Rev Alasdair Nicoll RAF led the service with Rev Ian Smith of the Baptist church assisting. Group Captain Richard Pratley (Station Commander RAF Wittering) gave the first reading, a poem by Pilot Officer Gillespie Magee RCAF KIA 11 December 1941. The wording on the wreath from 149 Squadron read: -

From Veterans of 149 Squadron (East India) Squadron and their relatives. Rest in Peace Donald. You have re-joined us. 'Strong by Night'.

That from The Register read: -

For 75 years known only unto God. At last you've been found and reunited with family and friends. Your duty discharged with honour.

Following the ceremony we all adjourned to the local hostelry for some well-earned refreshments.



OBITUARIES

622 Sqn personnel by Howard Sandall

622 Sqn (WWII) Historian

Flight Sergeant Kenneth Chittock

Kenneth Chittock passed away aged 89 in September 2015 after a short illness in hospital. Ken was a former member of No. 622 Squadron within the crew of F/O D. Cohen acting as the flight engineer.

Little is known of Ken's training but it is assumed that his RAF training would follow the same path as other trainee flight engineers. After attending an Initial Training Wing he would have completed his training at RAF St Athan before joining his crew at an Operational Training Unit.

Arriving at RAF Mildenhall in early January 1945 he commenced operations on 13th January against Saarbrücken and would go on to complete 14 operations in total. On 7th March the crew finished their last operation with 622 Squadron against Dessau. Ken and his crew were recognised for their proficiency and posted to No. 7 Squadron, a member of the Pathfinder force.

Warrant Officer W. E. Hickling DFM

Warrant Officer William (Bill) Hickling DFM passed away on 29th August 2015 after a short illness in hospital. Bill a former member of No. 622 Squadron joined the crew of F/Lt Jim Campbell DFC RAAF as the rear gunner.

Bill's training took him to No.14 Initial Training Wing at Bridlington and then on to No.84 Operational Training Unit at Desborough where he 'crewed up.' Finally a spell at No.3 Lancaster Finishing School before arriving at RAF Mildenhall in early August 1944. They commenced operations with an attack on the fuel storage dump at Forêt De Lucheux and gradually ventured to all the major enemy targets. Perhaps the most memorable for the crew was on 29th August, target Stettin. Bill recalled flying alongside another Lancaster from the squadron when it received a direct flak hit and disintegrated. The force of the explosion shot debris into their Lancaster pushing them sideways with considerable force.

On 27th November 1944, Bill and his crew were congratulated on successfully completing 32 operations, two more than required for a full tour. For his heroic endeavours Bill was awarded the DFM along with Sgt Fallows in the mid upper gun position.

In October 2011 Bill Hickling attended the book launch of 'We Wage War by Night' the squadron's history at the Imperial War Museum Duxford. Bill was a considerable help to the author whilst he was writing the book and he never complained when phoned frequently and asked for his advice. I am delighted to say that Bill and his crew have a chapter dedicated to their exploits, a lasting testimony to their bravery!

George Stewart

George was a tail gunner on 622 Sqn. The following appeared in the newspaper in Adelaide after his death: - "In memory of another WW2 brave, but unsung hero. Departed for the Heavens, not in his Lancaster bomber, nor with his Aussie crew as a rear gunner, this time solo as the soul of George, a true and loyal Scotsman. The world is a sadder place for your passing George. Always remembered as a gentleman. Honoured to have been your mate."

XV Sqn personnel by Martyn Ford Jones

XV Sqn Historian

Donald Inglis

Sergeant Donald Inglis, an air gunner, was posted to RAF Mildenhall, along with his pilot and crew on 26th September 1944. Between 5th October 1944 and 15th January 1945, Donald Inglis completed a total of 29 operational sorties as well as one early return. The targets he and his crew attacked included Bottrop, Cologne x 3, Dortmund, Duisburg, Essen, Enkerschwick, Fulda, Gelsenkirchen, Heinsberg, Homburg x 4, Koblenze, Krefeld, Ludwigshaven, a Mine-Laying operation (Konigsberg), Nurnberg, Oberhausen, Saarbrucken, Siegen, Solingen x 2, Trier x 3, Vohwinkel and Wilhelmshaven.

Don Inglis passed away, aged 90 years on Saturday, 22nd August 2015

Flying Officer Alan D. Hayden

Alan D. Hayden, a former navigator with No.XV Squadron, passed away at the beginning of 2015. Having enlisted for service with the Royal Air Force, as an air gunner, on 21st November 1941, the Selection Board had other ideas and talked him into undertaking observer/navigator training. Following his training, which took him through I.T.W at RAF Bicester, Elementary Air Navigation School at Eastbourne, Flying Training School at Wigtown, Scotland and No.12 Operation Flying Training Unit at Chipping Warden, Alan Hayden was finally posted to No.XV Squadron, at RAF Mildenhall on 16th July 1941.

Unfortunately, the pilot, Sergeant Alfred Holden, whose crew Alan had joined and with whom he had gone to Mildenhall, was killed twelve days later whilst flying as 2nd pilot, on an operational sortie, with another crew. After a somewhat shaky start which included being posted No 1657 Conversion Unit, based at RAF Stradishall, Alan Hayden returned to Mildenhall as navigator to Sergeant Alan Amies and his crew. This crew flew a total of fifteen operational sorties before the pilot failed to return from an operation whilst flying with a rookie crew.

For two months, being without a pilot to head the crew, Alan worked with the navigation leader on ground duties. Eventually, Alan Hayden joined a crew led by Flight Lieutenant Walter Bell, with whom he would complete a further three operational sorties.

Unfortunately, whilst undertaking their fourth sortie, an attack against Homburg, their aircraft was attacked and shot down by an enemy night-fighter, piloted by Hauptmann Heinz Schnauffer.

Having followed the correct procedure, and following the orders of the pilot, Alan baled out of the stricken aircraft and parachuted into unknown territory. Regaining consciousness, Alan discarded his parachute and made a hurried exit to where he did not know. It became obvious to him, looking at the landscape, that he had landed in Holland, but could not find anybody who would help him. Eventually, an elderly couple showed him a safe place to hide overnight. The following morning, assisted by a young Dutch girl, Alan made his way to her home at Den Hout. The Dutch family cared for Alan, fed him, re-clothed him and let him catch-up on some sleep, before arranging for him to move on to another 'safe' location. After five days of being on-the-run, Alan was captured at Turnhout, by German soldiers, whilst travelling on a Dutch tram under the guise of being a French worker. He was taken to Antwerp where he became a guest of the Gestapo for two agonising weeks. Finally Alan was moved by truck, along with many other RAF men, first to Brussels and then on to Dulagluft, the Luftwaffe interrogation centre at Oberursel, in Frankfurt. Finally, having undergone much torment and hardship, Alan Hayden was sent to Belaria, a satellite POW compound to Stalag Luft III.

Just before dawn on 28th January 1945, what was to become known as 'The Long March' commenced, with Alan and the rest of the camp inmates setting off on foot through the biting cold and deep snow. During the late afternoon of 3rd February, the half-mile long column of humanity boarded a train, which was to take the prisoners of war to Luckenwald; sleep in the over-crowded cattle wagons was impossible.

Between 5th February and 12th April 1945, Alan remained at Luckenwald along with the rest of the prisoners, however, on the latter date they heard they would all be transported south to Munich. Again, the journey was to be made by cattle wagon, with approximately 40 men in each truck but, due to the track being blocked the Germans were forced to move their charges back to the camp at Luckenwald.

On the morning of 21st April, the prisoners found their guards had all disappeared; they also heard that Russian troops, and the battle area front line, were very close to the camp. The following day Russian tanks and lorries entered the camp.

After a period of uncertainty and concern about food, accommodation and the future, allied forces began to arrive and alleviated some of the problems the prisoners faced. Towards the end of May 1945, Flying Officer Alan Hayden was repatriated to England by an American Dakota aircraft. On arrival in the U.K., he was debriefed and then sent home on indefinite leave.

Flying Officer Stanley G. Watson

Stanley Graham Watson was born in Burntisland, on the north side of the Firth of Forth, Fife, Scotland, on 8th January 1921. As soon as he was able, young Stanley enlisted for service with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Having undertaken his training, and qualified as a wireless operator, Stanley was promoted to the rank of sergeant and posted to an operational training unit. He then moved on to a heavy conversion unit, where he became acquainted with the intricacies of the Lancaster bomber. At the end of August 1943, having been declared ready for operational flying duties Sergeant Watson was posted, along with his pilot and crew, to No.620 Squadron, based at RAF Chedburgh, Suffolk.

A few nights after his arrival at Chedburgh, on 5th September 1943, Flying Officer Johnny Crozier, Stanley's pilot, was detailed to fly as second pilot with Flight Sergeant P. G. Quayle on an attack against Mannheim. Unfortunately, the Stirling MK.III bomber, serial EH931, coded QS-O, on which Johnny Crozier was flying, was attacked by an enemy night-fighter and shot down. Four of the crew were killed, whilst the remaining four, including F/O Crozier, survived and were all taken prisoners of war.

Being without a pilot to lead them, Stanley Watson and the remainder of the crew were re-mustered pending the arrival of a new pilot. Within two months of losing his original pilot, Sergeant Watson reported for duty at RAF Mildenhall, as a member of the crew headed by Sergeant Alan Amies.

With No.XV Squadron undergoing conversion from Stirling bombers to Lancaster bombers, the months of November and December 1943 were taken up with training flights and various flying exercises. It was not until 14th January 1944, that the squadron was declared ready for operational flying. That same night, Sergeant Watson undertook his first operational sortie with No.XV; an attack against Brunswick. This was to be the first of fourteen such attacks that Stanley Watson participated in, flying with Alan Amies. The targets they attacked, between January and April, included three raids on Berlin, two sorties against Stuttgart, Aachen, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Madgeburg and Nuremburg. During March/April, Stanley Watson was promoted to the rank of Flight Sergeant.

By the beginning of May 1944, Alan Amies had become both an experienced pilot and a popular member of the squadron. He had also been granted a commission and promoted in the rank of Acting Flight Lieutenant. On the night of 11th/12th May 1944, Flt Lt Amies was instructed to participate in an attack, with an inexperienced crew, against Leuven. Unfortunately, the aircraft was shot down by a night-fighter and crashed with the loss of the whole crew.

Seven days after the loss of his pilot and friend, Stanley found himself flying with another very experienced pilot who had been awarded a DFC very early in his operational career. It was with Flight Lieutenant Oliver Brooks DFC that Stanley would fly further operational sorties; a number of which were in preparation for the D-Day landings. Apart from two mine-

laying sorties, and three against further Germany cities, Stanley also flew against targets at Bolougne, Le Mans, Lisieux and Trappes.

When Squadron Leader Brooks completed his 'tour' of operations, Stanley Watson and the rest of the crew flew with Squadron Leader Pat Carden, DFC, another experienced pilot and former flying instructor. Under Pat Carden's guidance, Stanley completed a further seven operational sorties, all but one being against targets in France, where German troop resistance caused problems for the advancing Allied armies.

Later, having been posted away from No.XV Squadron, Stanley joined No.75 (New Zealand) Squadron. He was granted a commission in the rank of Pilot Officer, received promotion in the rank of Flying Officer and was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross; the latter being gazetted on 26th October 1945.

Stanley Watson, described by his family as a quiet, thoughtful and courageous man, died on 29th October 2014, two months after his beloved wife Margaret, whom he had married 1945. His funeral took place at Whitley Bay Crematorium on 21st November 2014.

The Mildenhall Register offers its' most sincere condolences to Stanley's son Richard, and the rest of Stanley's family including his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Flying Officer William 'Bill' Sievers, RAAF

William "Bill" Sievers was born in Gladstone, Queensland, Australia, on 6th June 1920. When he became eligible, Bill enlisted for service, as a pilot, with the Royal Australian Air Force. On completion of his training in Australia, he embarked for England and was attached to the Royal Air Force.

On 15th March 1945, shortly after he had arrived with his crew at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk, Bill was granted a commission in the rank of Flying Officer. Two days later, Flying Officer Sievers flew on his first operational sortie, an attack against Dortmund, as second pilot to Wing Commander Nigel Macfarlane. The latter, as Officer Commanding, No.XV Squadron, made it his policy to fly with every new crew posted to the squadron.

Bill Sievers and his crew went on to undertake operational sorties against Hamm, Bocholt, Altenbogge, Kiel, Potsdam, Heligoland and Bremen. He also flew on two 'Manna' operations, when food parcels were dropped to the starving Dutch people and also three 'Exodus' operations; the latter being the repatriation of British prisoners of war from Germany, when twenty-four former prisoners were flown home, 'seated' in the fuselage of each Lancaster bomber.

On completion of his 'tour of duty', which coincided with the end of hostilities, Flying Officer William Sievers was re-attached to the Royal Australian Air Force and sent home.

William "Bill" Sievers died on Friday, 28th August 2015.

George Yull Mackie, CBE, DSO, DFC. - Lord Mackie of Benshie

George Yull Mackie was born in Scotland, on 10th July 1919. Following the outbreak of World War Two, during February 1940, the young Scotsman enlisted for aircrew training, with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. He undertook his training at RAF Lossiemouth on Vickers Wellington bombers, the same type of aircraft on which he was to carry out his initial war sorties.

On qualifying as an Observer/Navigator, George Mackie was commissioned in the rank of pilot officer and posted, during February 1941, to No.XV Squadron, based at RAF Wyton. During the period, February to mid-April 1941, P/O Mackie undertook operational sorties with Flying Officer



Wellington 1C at Wyton 1940

Curry and Sergeant Alington. It was with the latter pilot that George Mackie and the rest of the crew were posted, on 16th April 1941, to No.148 Squadron, based in the Middle East. Apart from the two aforementioned squadrons, George Mackie also saw service with No.149 Squadron, with whom he flew on Short Stirling bombers, and No.115 Squadron, with whom he flew on Avro Lancaster bombers; he completed a total of three full operational tours of duty.

On 11th February 1944, whilst serving with No.115 Squadron, the award of Distinguished Service Order was gazetted in the name of Acting Squadron Leader G. Mackie. Eight months later, the award of a Distinguished Flying Cross was gazetted to this same officer, again, whilst still serving with No.115 Squadron. The final part of Squadron Leader Mackie's war was as a member of the Air Staff.

On returning to civilian life, in 1945, George Mackie returned to his pre-war occupation of farming in Kirriemuir, in the county of Angus; he was to retire from this vocation in 1989. During the same period, he entered politics, including the European Parliamentary elections.

On 1st January 1971, the New Year's Honours List recorded that George Mackie had been appointed a Commander of The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Just over three years later, on 10th April 1974, George Mackie, CBE, DSO, DFC, was elevated to a life peerage. Baron Mackie of Benshie died on 17th February 2015, age the age of 95.

Sergeant Douglas Mephram, DFM

Sergeant Douglas Mephram, a flight engineer, reported for duty, along with his crew, with No.XV Squadron, based at RAF Bourn, Cambridgeshire, during the latter half of 1942. His first operational sortie was a mine-laying operation in the Gironde area, with Sgt I. Renner (later Pilot Officer) at the controls of Short Stirling bomber, R9168, code LS-T.

On his third operation, an attack against Mannheim, and his fourth operation, a mine-laying sortie in the Frisian Islands, Douglas Mepham flew with Flying Officer Brian Ordish, a very experienced and highly regarded pilot with XV Squadron. Returning to his regular crew, Sergeant Mepham went on to fly against many of the toughest targets in Germany including, Berlin (3 times), Cologne, Essen (twice), Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich, Rostock, Stuttgart and Turin, in Italy.

Following completion of his 'Operational Tour of Duty', 573933 Sergeant Douglas Walter Mepham was recommended for the non-immediate award of a Distinguished Flying Medal. The recommendation, which was made on 15th May 1943, was based on Douglas Mepham's skill and devotion to duty, which were recorded as being of a high order and keenness. The award was approved and was gazetted on 13th July 1943. At the time the recommendation was made, Sergeant Mepham had completed a total of 29 operational sorties and had accumulated a total of 180 hours 48 minutes flying hours.

His duty done, Douglas W. Mepham, DFM, died on 13th January 2015.

Douglas R. Webber, Ground Crew XV Sqn

Douglas R. Webber, to use the terminology he and his former wartime colleagues would use about themselves, "*Was only ground crew*". It is as a result of this almost self-criticism that not much is known about Douglas. He chose not to attend the reunions, especially those held at RAF Mildenhall as, in his words, "*I would rather remember it as it was in those days, and the friends I knew and lost*".

One of those friends that Douglas Webber lost was Flight Lieutenant Alan Amies, who was killed on the night of 11th/12th May 1944, whilst taking a new crew on their first operational sortie. Douglas, who had been preparing the aircraft, Avro Lancaster bomber LL752, during the day ready for its night-time operation, waved the aircraft off at 10.36 pm that night. He watched as the bomber climbed into the darkened sky and disappeared from view; that was the last he saw of the Lancaster and its crew. Although as a member of ground crew Douglas knew the loss of an aircraft was something to be expected, he was so moved by the loss of this particular aircraft and crew, he immortalised their memory on canvas. The image, which he called, '*Evening at Dispersal*', depicts the crew and others with their aircraft, at dispersal, shortly take-off on the evening of 11th May 1944. Douglas wrote, "*The faces [of the*

With increased postal charges and production costs the Register spends nearly £2 to send the newsletter to UK members and nearer £4 to those outside of Europe. The Register would be grateful if you are able to make a contribution, however, small, to help meet these costs. If possible please send your contribution to the Treasurer at the address on Page 3 of this newsletter. We will continue, whilst funds allow, to send the newsletter to all members regardless of whether or not they have contributed

crew] in the painting are blurred out of respect for their next of kin". part from the original artwork, copies of the painting were known to be displayed in the XV Squadron crew room and at an Air Museum in Sussex, near the home of Alan Amies. Although Douglas did not attend the reunions, back in the late 1980s when the XV Squadron historian was writing his first book based on the reminiscences of former air and ground crew, Douglas assisted by submitting eighteen, handwritten pages of memories; some were one-liners and some extended to a whole page or more. Unfortunately the Squadron was not made aware of when



XV Sqn B Flight RAF Mildenhall 1944/5

Douglas Webber actually passed away and, as is the case with all former members, it would not like this sad occurrence to go unrecorded. Douglas may have left us, but his handwritten notes are still in the archive to remind us of his time as a highly regarded member of XV Squadron

Sergeant Harry Flowerday

Sergeant Harry Flowerday's tour of operational duty was, compared to some, a relatively short one. Harry reported for duty, with XV Squadron, at RAF Bourn, Cambridgeshire, during March 1943; he was an air gunner, flying in the mid-upper turret, on Sergeant W. McLeod's crew.

They commenced flying operationally on 28th March, with an attack against the German occupied port of St. Nazaire, on the French coast, which was followed-up with a second attack on the port on 2nd April. Between 4th and 28th April, Harry and his crew participated in

attacks against Kiel, two raids on Duisburg, Frankfurt and a mine-laying operation. During this same period of time, on 14th April, No.XV Squadron redeployed to RAF Mildenhall, where it was to remain until the end of the war. Naturally, Harry and his crew also made the move to the Suffolk airfield.

During the evening of 4th May, The crew took-off in Stirling bomber, HK658, for an attack against Dortmund. At approximately 1.04am the following morning their aircraft was attacked by a night-fighter piloted by Uffz Karl-Georg Pfeiffer, of 10 Gruppe/Nachtjagdgeschwader 1 (10./NJG1). As cannon fire ripped through the bomber, the rear gunner was killed, whilst three other crew members sustained injuries, including Harry Flowerday who was wounded in the leg. Although injured, Harry managed to bail out of the stricken aircraft along with all the surviving members of the crew.

1269263 Sergeant Harry Flowerday, was captured by the Germans, given the prisoner of war number 1130 and incarcerated in POW camps L1, L6 and L4.

Harry Flowerday died on Monday, 26th January 2015

Sergeant Stanley "Stan" G. Watson, DFC

Stanley, known to all as "Stan", was posted, from No.1651 Conversion Unit to No.620 Squadron, at RAF Chedburgh, on 2nd September 1943. His stay at the latter was a very short as he was soon posted to No.1657 Conversion Unit, based at RAF Stradishall. On 4th November, Sergeant Stan Watson was posted to No.XV Squadron, at RAF Mildenhall, as wireless operator/air gunner, with Alan Amies, his pilot, and the rest of his crew. November, December 1943, and the first two weeks of January 1944, were spent converting to Avro Lancaster bombers, with which No.XV Squadron had re-equipped a month prior to Christmas. The crew's first operational sortie on the new aircraft occurred on the night of 14th January, when they attacked Brunswick. Between 14th January and 22nd April, during which time Stan was promoted to the rank of flight sergeant, he flew a total of 14 operational sorties with Alan Amies and his crew. On the night of the latter date, 22nd April, another pilot on the squadron, F/L Oliver Brooks, lost two of his crew members due to the a heavy flak shell exploding immediately underneath his aircraft; this tragedy was soon to play a part in Stan's future.

On the night of 11th May, F/L Alan Amies was detailed to fly with a "rookie" crew who, for whatever reason, were without their pilot. Unfortunately, both the aircraft and its crew failed to return. For just over a month, Stan Watson, and the other members of his now pilotless crew, filled in time at RAF Mildenhall with non-flying duties, until the 19th May, when he joined Oliver Brooks' crew as a replacement wireless operator.

Stan Watson flew a total of thirteen operational sorties with Oliver Brooks, before the latter was declared 'Tour expired'. Although Stan had completed a total of 27 operational sorties and only had three more to complete his own 'Tour', he opted fly a further seven

operations with Squadron Leader Pat Carden. During September/October 1944, Stan was commissioned in the rank of pilot officer, and posted away from No.XV Squadron. Following a period during which Stan undertook training duties, he was posted to No.75 (New Zealand) Squadron with whom he flew further operational sorties. During the summer of 1945, Stan was recommended for the award of a Distinguished Flying Cross, the recommendation was approved and the award was gazetted on 26th October 1945.

Pilot Officer Stanley "Stan" G. Fisher, DFC, died on 29th October 2014.

Leading Aircraftman Godfrey Davies

Godfrey Davies served with No.XV Squadron, at RAF Conningsby, during his period of National Service, between 1951 and 1953. Holding the rank of Leading Aircraftman, he was an instrument mechanic, with specialist knowledge of navigation systems. Godfrey's quiet manner and demeanour hid the depth of that knowledge, but he would explain to anyone who had an interest in the subject, in his own quiet way; by comparison he was never known to talk about himself. Godfrey attended many of the reunions and would, more often than not, turn up on his own. The fact he was, as far as is known, the only representative of the Washington aircraft era to attend reunions, never deterred him from attending. Unfortunately, not a lot is known about this quiet former member of XV Squadron. Sadly, we do know, that he passed away, in West Malling, Kent, on 2nd August 2015.

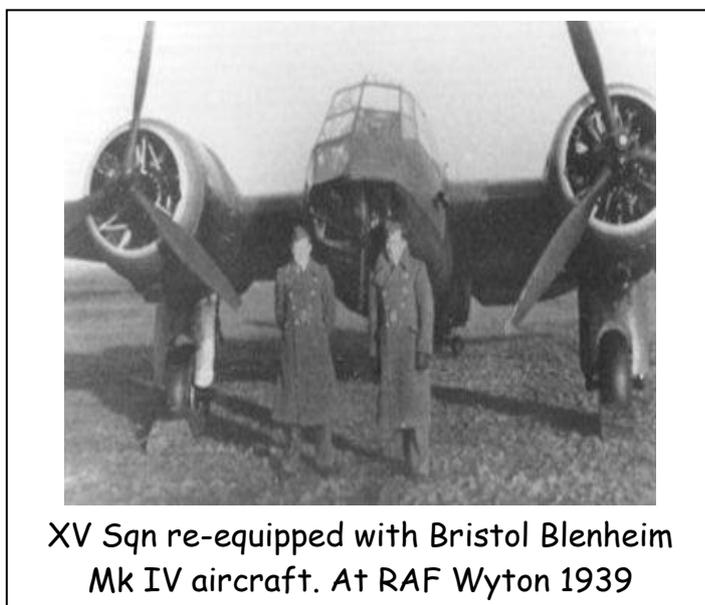
Sergeant T A. Skingsley

Sergeant T.A. Skingsley was posted to No.XV during August 1940, in the unenviable position of an air gunner, flying on Bristol Blenheim twin-engine bombers. Although they record the names of pilots, the official records are very sparse for this early period of the war, with regard to naming other members of aircrew.

However, Sergeant T.A. Skingsley is known to have flown on four occasions, operationally, with Squadron Leader, Stansfield, on two occasions, operationally,

with Sergeant Chipling and on one occasion, operationally, with Flight Lieutenant W. Morris.

On 1st November 1940, No.XV Squadron converted to Vickers Wellington bomber, and the name of Sergeant Skingsley was shown as being a member of 'A' Flight. The whole of this month was given over, not only to learning how to fly and manage the new aircraft in flight but, for the pilots especially, to come to terms with the fact they were now in command of five-man crews instead of the three-man crew they were used to on Blenheims.



XV Sqn re-equipped with Bristol Blenheim Mk IV aircraft. At RAF Wyton 1939

Sergeant Skingsley is known to have flown with Pilot Officer Bagguley on at least five operational sorties, before having been posted to the Middle East, as part of Sergeant Tricklebank's crew, on 16th April 1941.

Sgt T.A. Skingsley died on 21st December 2014.

149 Sqn personnel by Alan Fraser

149 (East India) Sqn Historian

Richard Drake OAM

Richard "Dick" Francis Drake OAM died Brisbane 20 Feb 2015. He was Ex Navigator 149 Sqn (RAAF No.426433) after doing 30 Ops was posted to No.27 O.T.U. Dick was born in Melbourne and followed his Father into a clerical position at the Commonwealth Bank in 1938. At the outbreak of war, he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force, training as a Navigator in Australia, Canada and the UK. Dick and his crew served a full tour with 149 (East India) squadron during 1944. He served on the crew of V W Bemrose, a New Zealander. Post war, he studied Medicine for six years, combining it with representative sport for various Universities. After training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, he completed his studies at R.C.O/G in London and delivered the first quintuplets in Australia in 1967. In 2002 he was awarded the 'Order of Australia Medal' (O.A.M) for his services to obstetrics and gynaecology. He died on the 30th of January, 2015 in Brisbane.

218 Sqn personnel by Steve Smith

218 (Gold Coast)Sqn Historian

Ron Brown,

A Flight Engineer Ron died in March 2015. He joined 218 Sqn in May 1944 while based at RAF Woolfox Lodge. His crew skippered by Flt Lt Henry Sheldon joined "B" Flight notching up 10 operations before the crew minus the pilot were posted to No.75(NZ) Squadron based at RAF Mepal. The crew now pilotless crew were posted to "B" Flight of No.75(NZ) Squadron based at RAF Mepal. Ron's crew was taken over by the determined and experienced New Zealander, Squadron Leader Rodgers. Over the next four months, Ron attacked some of Germany's most hotly defended targets, Essen, Cologne, Homburg, Dortmund and Duisburg. Ron carried out his 30th and final operation on January 13th 1945, the target was Saarbrucken. Ron Brown, Flight Engineer operational flying hours totalled an impressive 129 hours 50 minutes, his total flying hours was 204 hours 5 minutes.

George Green

A Rear Gunner George died in April 2015. He joined 218 Sqn on January 1st 1945. His skipper was Flt Lt Alan Kemp, allocated to "C" Flight commanded by Sqn Ldr George Allardyce the crew participated in all the key operations from January until May 8th 1945, including the "MANNA" operations.

Flight Sergeant John Wortley,

John Wortley, a Flight Engineer died in April 2015. He had a long history with 218 Squadron. He had previously served as a corporal fitter at Downham Market and was part of the ground crew of FS Arthur Aaron VC DFM. Also he was assigned to Short Stirling N3721 HA-P the Stirling attributed to have flown the highest number of main force operations. John applied for Air Crew in 1943 and on completion of his training was posted back to 218 Squadron where he joined the crew of Flt Lt George Blenkin DFC in November 1944, completing their tour in April 1945.

Pilot Officer Ray Swift

Ray passed away in August 2015. He joined 218 Sqn as a Mid Upper Gunner in December 1943, while still operating from RAF Downham Market. He flew a total of 37 operations, 25 on Stirlings, the remainder on Avro Lancaster's. His pilot was Flt Lt Jack Coram DFC RAAF, and they completed their tour October 1944.

Bits and Pieces

The Godmanchester Stirling Project

Roger Leivers, our guest speaker at last year's AGM tells us that he has been urged to repeat last year's successful open day event.

He confirms that this will be held at The Comrades Club, Godmanchester on Saturday 26th June this year. This is a bigger venue and with the guests he has planned to invite they will need it. They will include:

- **Johnny Johnson**, of Dambusters fame,
- **Eric Quinney**, who flew 'P for Popsie' in the Dambusters film,
- **Donald Jeffs**, XV Sqn, the only survivor of the MacRoberts Reply Stirling crew and who crashed in both MacRoberts aircraft. He was the only survivor of the second crash and then became a POW
- **Sqn Ldr Ian Blair** who piloted a Blenheim home after the pilot was killed, went onto become a Spitfire pilot and was shot down twice.

Others names will be added as the event approaches. Roger aims to have at least 12 Bomber Command veterans there.

All are welcome. Besides raising money for the Godmanchester Stirling project (memorial and book) this year Roger hopes to raise some money towards the recovery of a Stirling that was shot down over Holland and more importantly the bodies of the crew men who are still buried at the site.

The Bomber Command Clasp

A note, with photographs attached, from Michael Wells reminds us yet again about the above award. His was issued to him for his Uncle, Vernon Ivor Michael, who served with XC Squadron before being killed in January 1945.

If any of our readers, veterans or family members, still have not heard of this award or been able to get their hands on one, please let the secretary know and he will supply the necessary forms.

They waited so long for this acknowledgement of their service; it would be a great shame if every veteran's medals were not adorned by this overdue award.

Epitaph for all those killed whilst serving their country in far off lands.

Jeremy Powell brought this ancient script to the Secretary's notice some while ago. Following a meeting earlier last year, we have resurrected it as it applies very well to many of those lost on active duty, especially our airmen.

Each one, man by man has won imperishable praise. Each has won a glorious grave. Not that sepulchre of earth wherein they lie, but the living tomb of everlasting remembrance, wherein their glory is enshrined. Remembrance that will live on the lips and will blossom in the deeds of their countrymen the world over.

For the whole earth is the sepulchre of heroes. Monuments may rise and tablets are set up to them in their own land; but on far off shores there is an abiding memorial that no pen or chisel has traced. It is graven not on stone or brass, but on the living heart of humanity.

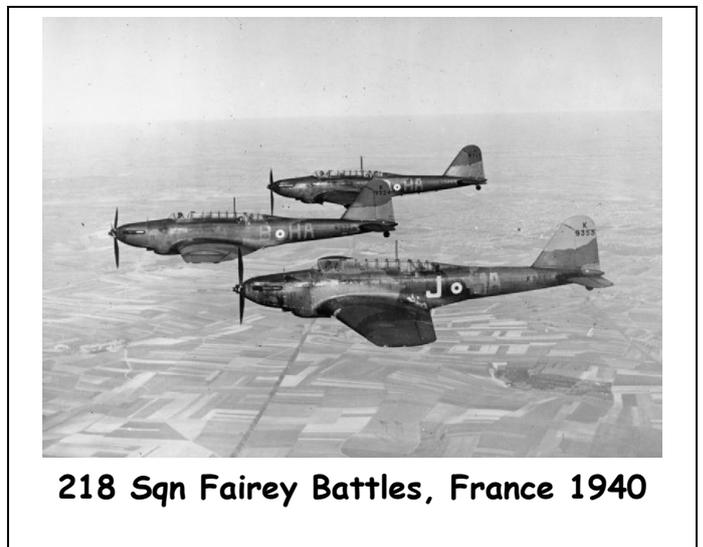
Take these men for your example. Like them remember that prosperity can be only for the free, and that freedom is the possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it.

Extract from Pericles

Notes from Steve Smith 218 (Gold Coast) Sqn Historian

In May 2015, the town of Bouillon paid tribute to the Fairey Battles of 218 Squadron that were shot down near Bouillon on May 12th 1940. A lovely memorial was erected in the crew's honour. The commemoration took place on Friday May 8th, 2015.

Recently I have been actively involved in a new & exciting project at RAF Downham Market. The Downham Market Memorial Appeal was formed to raise funds and awareness of a new 80ft long x 6ft high memorial wall of black



218 Sqn Fairey Battles, France 1940

marble to be erected on this former station. The wall will honour all the crews who operated from and were lost from the airfield, including 218, 623, 214 and the Path Finder's 635 and 608 Squadrons. We also intend to erect a memorial in honour of the Ground Crews and WAAFs, estimated unveiling, September 2016. To coincide with the unveiling of the memorial, Chris Coverdale, 635 Sqn and Path Finder Historian and I will be producing a memorial book which will give an in-depth description of the airfield and the losses suffered. On this point if anyone can help please with 218 or 623 Squadron photos, I would be grateful.

Lastly, on the back of my 218 Squadron book, I have produced a 270 page history of No.623 Squadron, which was formed from 218 in August 1943. The book was published in August this year and titled "A SHORT WAR". All proceeds from both my books will be given to the Downham Market Memorial Appeal.

Imperial War Museum Duxford - the venue for this year's Saturday visit

The Imperial War Museum near Duxford in Cambridgeshire, is Britain's largest aviation museum, The museum's large exhibits, including nearly 200 aircraft, military vehicles, artillery and minor naval vessels are in seven main exhibition buildings. The site also provides storage space for the museum's other collections of material such as film, photographs, documents, books and artefacts. The site accommodates several British Army regimental museums, including those of the Parachute Regiment (named *Airborne Assault*) and the Royal Anglian Regiment.

Based on the historic Duxford Aerodrome, the site was originally operated by the Royal Air Force (RAF) during the First World War. During the Second World War Duxford played a prominent role during the Battle of Britain and was later used by United States Army Air Forces fighter units in support of the daylight bombing of Germany. Duxford remained an active RAF airfield until 1961. After the Ministry of Defence declared the site surplus to requirements in 1969 the Imperial War Museum received permission to use part of the site for storage. The entirety of the site was transferred to the museum in February 1976.

In keeping with the site's history many of Duxford's original buildings, such as hangars used during the Battle of Britain, are still in use. Many of these buildings are of particular architectural or historic significance and over thirty have listed building status, The site also features several purpose-built exhibition buildings, such as the Stirling Prize-winning American Air Museum, designed by Sir Norman Foster. The site remains an active airfield and is used by civilian flying companies, and hosts regular air shows. The site is operated in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council and the Duxford Aviation Society, a charity formed in 1975 to preserve civil aircraft and promote appreciation of British civil aviation history.



The Airspace Exhibition Duxford



The American Air Museum Duxford

Programme for the 2016 Reunion

Friday 13 May

- 1300 hrs. Depart Bird in Hand for Base Visit
- 1330-1615. Visit (possible sections visited ATC, Fire Section, view KC 135 & CV-22 Osprey aircraft and the Base Chapel Stain Glass Windows)
- 1730 hrs. Meet Galaxy Club, RAF Mildenhall for pre supper drinks
- 1830 hrs. Buffet Supper Galaxy Club
- 2000 hrs. AGM
- 2030 approx. A short talk by Sqn Ldr Kevin Dalley on the "Pathfinders"

Saturday 14 May

- 0930 hrs Depart Bird in Hand for visit to Imperial War Museum Duxford
- 1100 - 1500 Visit Duxford and take in a picnic lunch etc.
- 1100 - 1400 St Georges Church, Methwold, open for inspection of the Roll of Honour TBC
- 1500 hrs Return to Bird in Hand ETA 1600 hrs approx
- 1815 hrs Pre-dinner drinks Galaxy Club, RAF Mildenhall
- 1900 hrs Reunion Dinner Galaxy Club,
- 2200 hrs Carriages

Sunday 15 May

- 1100 hrs Reunion Memorial Service at St John's Church Beck Row
- 1145 hrs Coffee and Cakes St John's Church Hall
- 1200 hrs Farewells until next year!

Notes

Base visit itinerary to be agreed.

Friday evening talk entitled "The Pathfinders", an interesting talk given earlier to the Mildenhall Branch of the Aircrew Association.

Saturday visit to the Imperial War Museum Airfield at Duxford. Flat charge of £12 per head to include entrance and picnic lunch. To be paid on the day. Disabled facilities available including a shuttle mini bus service to the various areas and a few wheel chairs for booking. Please let us know any requirements ahead of the visit.

Any queries on the weekend to the Chairman:

Tel: 01638507211 or e-mail jjgent@waitrose.com

Reunion 2015 Photographs 3



The Beck Row Vicar - Rosemary Rycraft welcomes Register members to the service



Generations of Paynes - Tom Payne with his Family