



The Mildenhall Register

15, 90, 149 and 622

Bomber Squadrons' Association



Newsletter
Summer 2012



Statutes of aircrew in the Bomber Command Memorial

Words from the Chairman

Welcome to this special edition of the Mildenhall Register Newsletter which has been produced to cover the events of June 28, 2012 - the Dedication and Unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial. We have also taken the opportunity to print many of the stories and news which we have received from Register members over the past year. Please do not feel left out if your story is missing for we will eventually catch up with the backlog however, we still want to hear your stories and news so don't stop sending them in!

This year's reunion was again very successful in all aspects and a report is included with the newsletter. Many appreciated the dedicated service held in the Base Chapel which followed more conventional lines; indeed there is a strong feeling that we should hold the service at St John's Beck Row where our memorial plaque is located. However, others wish to maintain the link with the Americans and enjoy the contemporary service in the Base Chapel. I would appreciate your views which will help in planning next year's reunion.

I hope you find this newsletter interesting and trust you will enjoy what remains of the summer!

John Gentleman

The Secretary's Report

I'll try and keep my report concise so that we can get to the main point of this 2012 special summer edition, the Bomber Command memorial.

I think it was another successful reunion weekend and I hope that attendees were happy with the slight changes that were made to the meals and the Sunday service. From reports passed to me from 75 Squadron, their re-scheduled reunion over the weekend following the memorial unveiling was a great success and I have seen many photographs of the New Zealanders from the official party enjoying the camaraderie with their UK members.

We still have a healthy and growing membership despite the sad deaths reported later. Since the beginning of the year, we have a net growth of 20 members. Our website is the major source of new membership, with at least 75% of new members finding us in this way. Many younger family members have been taking an interest in what their older relations did during their war service and the Bomber Command memorial has sparked an even greater surge.

I was privileged to receive a large consignment of Don Clarke's memorabilia at the May reunion. This was presented to me by Sandra and Dave Crawley, Don's daughter and son-in-law. Many of Don's family had made the trip to be with us and it was great to welcome them all as they carried out their promise to ensure the Clarke dynasty is not forgotten.

Howard Sandall and I spent a very interesting day (10 in the morning 'til 6 that evening) sorting through a veritable treasure trove. Eventually, there were three major piles, over 30 lbs. of XV Squadron associated material for Martyn Ford Jones. Howard lugged home around 16 to 17 lbs. of paperwork about 622 Squadron and kindly took Martyn's to him the following weekend at a book signing at Duxford. Alan Fraser was not left out and I eventually posted

him a package weighing close to 15 lbs. There were smaller packages for Sam Mealing-Mills at 90 Squadron, Margaret Stillman at 75 Squadron (from when Don was their secretary), with a few items for 419 and finally 99 and 115 Squadrons.

I have kept a number of books along with some photographs that I shall bring along to the next reunion for members to peruse and maybe identify some of the people in the pictures.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at next year's reunion weekend.

Best wishes

Geoff Reynolds

The Mildenhall Register Reunion Weekend

Over 100 members and friends of the Mildenhall Register met at Mildenhall for the annual reunion over the weekend 11/13 May. The number included 20 veterans and in addition to the twenty there were a number of widows of past members. This year's members attending the reunion included veterans and relations from Australia and Canada plus several newcomers. (More details of attendees will be published in the January newsletter).

The weekend began on the Friday with welcoming drinks and chat followed by a buffet dinner in Middleton Hall organised superbly well by Janine Brown and her catering staff. The AGM then followed, nothing of a controversial nature was raised and the committee, were re-elected en block! The AGM was followed by Mark Howell, the USAF Historian, at RAF Mildenhall, who assisted by senior staff, gave a presentation on the activities of the USAAF's 100th Wing during WW2. The talk was very interesting and gave a good insight into the operation of the 100th Wing.

On the Saturday a visit was made to the Dad's Army Museum in Thetford, where Capt Mainwaring and Private Pike entertained the party at the Museum whilst others



Veterans with New Zealand's AA Wg Cdr Nick Olney



Bob Kendall and guest take tea with Capt Mainwaring

escorted the more athletic members on a town walk of the Dad's Army sights in Thetford. Lunch was taken at Methwold's St George's Church, home to the 149 Sqn memorial window and the Squadron's Roll of Honour where we were entertained by Beryl and Colin Neville assisted by our good friends at Methwold. The evening saw the Reunion formal dinner attended by the Air Attaches of Australia and New Zealand together with the Commander of the USAF's 100th Air Refueling Wing at RAF Mildenhall and the RAF Commander Mildenhall; the standard bearer of the Newmarket RAFA Branch paraded the RAF Standard. On display was an exhibition of model RAF aircraft staged by members of the International Plastic Modellers Society, Bomber Command Special Interest Group. On the Sunday morning, in a change of recent practice, we had a service dedicated specifically to the Register. This was a very moving remembrance service held in the RAF Mildenhall Base Chapel and conducted by Padre Bright of the USAF. This was followed by a cuppa and cakes kindly provided by American residents at RAF Mildenhall. The weekend concluded with a small ceremony at Tuddenham, the laying of a wreath on the 90 Squadron Memorial on the village green.



90 Sqn Veterans at Tuddenham

The weekend was a very enjoyable occasion; next year's reunion is planned for the weekend 17/19 May, put the dates in your diary now!

The Day it happened!

Many members of the Mildenhall Register attended the dedication and unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, London on Thursday 28th June. It was a very hot day and members were very impressed with the arrangements. London Taxi drivers gave free rides to all attending and the RAF's University Squadron members and ATC cadets from all over the country were on hand to escort and look after the needs of attendees. They must have handed out many thousands of bottles of water to the crowds and were readily on hand to provide support when it was needed. They were a credit to the youth of this country which all too often suffer from the actions of a small minority who make the papers.

Both before and after the dedication ceremony thousands seated in the "Salute" area were entertained to a programme, hosted by Carole Vorderman and John Sargent, of music, spoken words, film and interviews created by the RAF Benevolent Fund, as a tribute to Bomber Command. This programme was relayed, as was the Dedication and Unveiling ceremony, on a huge screen enabling all present to see.

Bomber Command veterans, their families and friends had waited 67 years for this moment to arrive, and when it finally came, none tried to mask their emotions. Tears flowed freely among the widows, children and comrades of 55,573 Bomber

Command airmen who gave their lives in the Second World War as the memorial in their honour was unveiled by the Queen.



The big screen with Carole

Their sacrifice might have happened a lifetime ago, but the response of those who loved them proved the pain of their loss remains raw seven decades on.

"Today is something which has been so long overdue," said one veteran widow, "It's been a perfectly tearful day because I'm so pleased they have got recognition at last."

Her daughter was born almost exactly nine months after her father died when his Lancaster crash-landed on its return from his fourth mission.

"It is a gap in my life, never having known my father," she said. "It means a lot to me that this memorial has finally been built."

Mixed with the tears of regret for lives cut so short were tears of frustration for the fact that it has taken so long for Bomber Command's heroic contribution to Allied victory to be commemorated with a national memorial.

One veteran said that "It's the end of a chapter," "Over the years we thought it was never going to happen, but we have been amazed by the response of the public after the appeal to raise money for it began."

More than 800 veterans, together with another 5,700 widows and family members, gathered in Green Park to see the Queen unveil the wonderful sculpture of the seven-man crew of a heavy bomber by the sculptor Philip Jackson which is the centrepiece of architect Liam O'Connor's Portland stone memorial.

Some had come from the other side of the world. Others lived just a bus ride away. New Zealand paid for 39 veterans to make the trip to London, where they were joined by 80

Australians, 54 Canadians, and others from France, Poland, Norway and Slovakia. All of them had one intention: to honour the sacrifice made by husbands, fathers and comrades doing their duty as they flew with Bomber Command.

The Duke of York, The Earl and Countess of Wessex, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, The Duke of Kent and Prince Michael of Kent were already in position before the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, and finally the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh arrived for the ceremony.

The Venerable Ray Pentland, Chaplain-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force, then led a service of dedication and remembrance, giving thanks for "those who laid down their lives in the cause of justice, freedom and peace".

"By the costly and sacrificial endeavour of their service the powers of evil and darkness were defeated and overcome," he added.

During the formal dedication of the Memorial, he said: "May it remind us, and all who pass by, of the freedom and liberty that was bought for us through the bravery and skill of the aircrew; and of the commitment of all those who supported them on the ground."



The Queen unveiled the statues, created by sculptor Philip Jackson

The honour of leading the congregation in a the traditional words of remembrance fell to Douglas Radcliffe MBE, a former wireless operator in Wellington bombers who, as Secretary of the Bomber Command Association, has been one of the backbones of the memorial campaign from the first day to the last.

Before the sounding of the Last Post, five Tornado GR4s, the RAF's modern-day bombers, flew overhead in formation, before the arrival of the one piece of machinery than can upstage even the Queen.

Britain's last remaining airworthy Lancaster bomber, the roar of its Merlin engines vibrating the ribcages of all those on the ground below, flew overhead and scattered Green Park with poppies in a fitting salute to the fallen.

All 125,000 men who served with Bomber Command were volunteers, with an average age of 22. They signed up for the bomber offensive despite knowing that they faced worse odds than any other Allied unit during the Second World War.

Almost half of those who reached operational squadrons would lose their lives, another 8,400 were wounded and 10,000 were taken prisoner. For every five men who volunteered, three would fail to complete a tour of duty. Yet they were never given a campaign medal, let alone their own memorial. Successive governments lacked the moral fibre to acknowledge the courage and sacrifice of the men of Bomber Command, preferring instead to distance themselves from the policy of area bombing that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians in the process of taking the fight to the Nazis.

The fact that such a profound wrong has finally been righted was down to the efforts of a small but stubborn band of veterans, encouraged by the Bee Gees singer Robin Gibb (a lifelong admirer of Bomber Command who tragically died just weeks before the day he had so been looking forward to) and backed by a British public who made donations ranging from the 2p a child donated from her pocket money to the £2 million given by the mobile phones entrepreneur John Caudwell.



A Lancaster Bomber dropped thousands of poppies over central London

The effort to raise the money needed to build the memorial has taken almost as long as the war itself; from an embryonic idea in 2007 to a full-scale fundraising drive that kicked off in 2008, boosted by more than £1 million from readers and owner of The Daily Express, whose support is acknowledged in an inscription on the Portland stone monument.

The fate of the crews and their aircraft is melded into the very fabric of the memorial; aluminium recovered from a Halifax bomber that crashed in Belgium has been smelted into sheets that line the roof of the monument, behind a stainless steel lattice that copies the geodesic fuselage construction of Wellington bombers. The architect Liam O'Connor paid such attention to detail that even the rivets holding the metal ceiling together are exact scale replicas of those used in bomber aircraft.

The bronze statues alone took the sculptor Philip Jackson more than two year to complete, during which time he borrowed original flying suits and equipment from the RAF Museum in Hendon, interviewed veterans and studied countless photographs to ensure every strap, buckle and harness was precisely recreated. The airmen have just returned from a sortie; five of them look to the sky, looking for aircraft that will not return, and two look down at the ground, reflecting on the ordeal they have been through.

Next to the memorial is a yew tree donated by the people of Germany, a reminder that they, too, owe a debt to Bomber Command for helping free their country from Nazi tyranny, as well as a symbol of remembrance for all those killed by Allied bombs.

For the 55,573 men who died serving with Bomber Command, a corner of Green Park in central London will forever mark a nation's gratitude.

Now follows a series of articles written by Register Members giving their thoughts and experiences about the Dedication and Unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial day

A Day to Remember - and to Recall Much More by Elisabeth & John Cox.

On 4th May 2011 the Foundation stone for the long awaited memorial to the lost 55,573 Bomber Command aircrew members was laid by HRH The Duke of Gloucester in Green Park, London in the presence of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham, President of the Bomber Command Association. One of those also present was former Lancaster pilot John L. Cox, DFC, of 622 Squadron, based at Mildenhall 1944-45.



John Cox meets HRH The Prince of Wales

Over one year later, on 28th June 2012, along with over 6000 other veterans, widows and family members, John found himself yet again in Green

Park - for the unveiling by H.M. The Queen of the impressive bronze statue, sculpted by Philip Jackson, of seven Bomber Crewmen and the dedication service of the surrounding monument of gleaming Portland Stone. What a moving and emotional day this was.

The atmosphere was warm and friendly. The sun shone. It was great to bump into familiar faces from Mildenhall, including John and Jill Gentleman, the late Peter Atkinson's son Tony, George and Margaret Thomson, and 15 Squadron's John Nichol (a visitor to the Mildenhall Register reunion shortly prior to the Iraq War). Numerous fresh-faced young air cadets from all over the country were there helping the elderly veterans, providing water and pushing wheelchairs. It was also a pleasure to meet other hitherto unknown attendees, with similar experiences and interests, from other bases and other squadrons. Many had come from as far afield as New Zealand and Australia to pay their respects. After the ceremony, H.R.H. Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall made a point of walking amongst the veterans, shaking numerous hands, including that of former Flt Lt Cox, and chatting animatedly to all whom they met.



John Cox's Crew

Titcher (A/B), Matthews (MUG), Gilroy, Hughes (F/E)
Shine (W/Op), Cox (Pilot), Taylor (Nav)

The last airworthy Lancaster flew over, dropping some million poppy petals, which were scattered afar by the strong wind. One bright young policeman gathered up as many as he could in his uniform helmet and offered them to some of the assembled veterans.

Memories of those long dangerous wartime flights over enemy territory returned and the sadness felt for those, who did not come home, was relived. John recalled his own faithful crew, now all deceased. They would have appreciated the memorial; they should have lived to see it. Why did it take so long to honour all those young lads who died for their country? There are only a few of us left to appreciate this fine memorial to those who never came back; but it will always be there to remind future generations of the great sacrifice made for their freedom.

A veteran's view of the memorial ceremony by Hannah Finch

Bomber Command pilot Thomas Stafford Harris from Torquay met with royalty at the unveiling of the new memorial to fallen comrades in Green Park, London. Squadron Leader Harris, 90 from Wellswood undertook 48 operations as a pathfinder. He was accompanied at the ceremony by proud wife Audrey, 81. They were among hundreds of RAF Bomber Command veterans who were given a first look at the bronze statue of seven Lancaster airmen to honour the sacrifice of 55,573 of their comrades during World War Two.

Mrs Harris said: "We both felt it was so important for us to attend the unveiling for all the boys that were lost."

The couple were presented to Prince Charles and Camilla.

Mrs Harris said: "Camilla asked if we had travelled far and I said Torquay".

"She told me that wasn't too far because some had come from as far away as Australia for the event."

Sqn Ldr Harris, 90, undertook and led many missions, as a wartime RAF pilot. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for conspicuous courage and devotion to duty.

He had been posted to 156 Squadron, part of 8 Group Pathfinders and took part in important missions including the bombing of many strategic sites, oil refineries and the daylight attack on Heligoland, 18th April 1945, when a certain Flt Lt T S Harris was nominated as the Master Bomber.

Sqn Ldr Harris met with one of his former navigators, Gwyn Price, at the memorial unveiling after almost 70 years.

Mrs Harris said that they were pleased to have attended. "It was a remarkable day. There were so many times that Stafford had to limp home after losing some of his crew. We knew we had to come along to pay our respects."



Thomas Stafford prepares for flight

Sqn Ldr Harris enjoyed a 35-year career as a pilot. After the war, he went to the Empire Test Pilots School and served at Boscombe Down. His work secured him a job as a test pilot at Vickers Armstrong in Weybridge testing Valiant, Viscount and Vanguard aircraft. He retired aged 58 and the couple operated trawlers and pleasure cruisers in Brixham.

The Secretary's Memorial Trip by Geoff Reynolds

My wife Debbie and I booked into our favourite East End hotel as soon as the date for the Bomber Command memorial was announced. At that time, I didn't know if I would get tickets for us both, but I just wanted to be there.

Over the reunion weekend, a committee meeting was held and I asked if I might be allowed to lay a wreath on behalf of The Mildenhall Register. This was agreed and our treasurer kindly ordered me a special one with The Mildenhall Register logo in the centre. He also arranged delivery of seven small wooden crosses, that I may lay these at the feet of the sculpture to honour and remember my uncle and his crew.



The crowd in the Salute area

Imagine my surprise when I was finally lucky and got two tickets, only to be told I wouldn't be allowed to lay a wreath on the day. We had booked to stay for a couple of days, so we re-scheduled our Friday so that we could return to central London and get the jobs done.

So, on a very warm Thursday morning we made our way, with the morning rush of office and other workers, into central London via the Docklands Light Railway and underground. I think I may have appeared a bit of a strange site to some, with my uncle's medals proudly displayed on my right breast and my special tie; red, yellow and black striped; red for Britain, yellow for Australia and black for New Zealand (and mourning) the nationalities that made-up the crew who flew and died with my uncle. I had bought it especially to mark me out to a number of folk I was hoping to meet.

Arriving at Hyde Park Corner station we emerged into the light and heat once more. There before us, across the A4 underpass was the magnificent edifice of the new memorial. Looking for all its newness as though it had been there forever, it fitted so well into the surroundings.

Through the small park containing the Australian War Memorial, Wellington monument and arch we met Martyn Ford-Jones also on his way to the ceremony. We were slightly early and joined the increasing crowds at the end of Constitution Hill awaiting the barriers opening. I managed to talk with a veteran from Eastbourne who had served with 463 (Australian)

squadron based at Waddington and then spied the familiar figure of Group Captain Peter Woods the Australia Air Attaché in London. Shortly afterwards we were allowed onto Constitution Hill and made our way to the Salute area seating.

Everything was so well organised. The various Air Cadet Forces and other personnel were at hand to provide assistance to those who required it and water for those who needed it. We positioned ourselves towards the middle of the right hand section of seats and watched the early stage show before the main proceedings began. I managed to see Denise Boneham, who accompanied the 75 (NZ) squadron folks at last year's reunion and joined us at the Dad's



Geoff and George lay the Register wreath

Army museum and tour this year. I was tremendously pleased to meet with Jane Clarke, all the way from Australia, accompanying her Dad, Geoff Conacher, and his charming wife. Geoff was of course in the Memorial area. Jane and I had been in long e-mail conversations about getting funding for the Australian veterans, including her Dad, so it was finally great to put a face to a name. (By the way, I never did get that pint you owed me!) We saw the many veterans on the large screen, including John Cox.

Once the Royal party had arrived, the ceremony got underway. The view of the large screen was excellent from our vantage point and the sound, marred at sometimes by the police helicopter noise, was perfectly relayed to the audience.

The highlight, after the unveiling and most of the speeches, was the flypast by the Tornados and then the Lancaster dropping all those poppies. Sadly the high cross-wind did mean these ended up some ways off target, but a poignant moment nonetheless.

After the proceedings, Debbie and I and many others, enjoyed a bit of solace from the searing heat beneath some trees at the back of the park for a picnic lunch. We were joined by Howard Sandall and his wife Carol, before we all strolled down to look at the memorial close up. Along the way, we chanced upon Bob Kendall and a large contingent of his family making their way through the shade to the centre of everyone's attention, the sculpture of the crew.

Once able to get up close, the memorial is just superb. The stonework was so beautifully smooth and the carvings and engravings so crisply outlined. Through the huge columns it was possible to catch glimpses of the crew sculpture. It wasn't until I managed to squeeze through the crowds and the colonnade that I first got a good look at the men, so well captured by the sculptor, frozen, forever in historical pose.

People were just standing in wonder and awe, gazing up into the faces; others gently rubbed a boot or touched a leg. Many, like me, I assume, looking at the figures and imagining their father, uncle, relative, friend or indeed a whole crew, lost, but now remembered for ever.

As I wandered around taking photographs thoughts of the sacrifices made by all these men who are remembered here weren't far from my mind. The sight of so many veterans, standing proudly for pictures, a reminder to all that, despite those huge losses, many did survive. They too had come from far and near to witness and remember and pay tribute to their fallen comrades.

After a while, Howard and Carol had to return to Lincolnshire and Debbie and I made our way to a restaurant, before returning along the river to the hotel for the night.

The following morning we left it until after the rush-hour to return to the city. This time I carried the Mildenhall Register wreath and seven crosses to lay at the memorial, hoping that there wouldn't be another reason for not getting it done today.

We arrived to find quite a throng of people and much of the seating and structures from the previous day were well under way being removed. As I moved toward the crew sculpture, a hand grabbed my arm and a voice said, "You don't know who I am, do you" in a distinctly Scots accent. I turned and to my pleasure saw Margaret Thomson, closely accompanied by George. It was great to see Margaret and know that her health worries were dwindling since her scare before the reunion. Better still was the fact that I now had a veteran from the Register to lay the wreath with me. With Debbie and Margaret on the camera buttons, we posed for some shots before laying the wreath solemnly at the foot of the men.

We weren't the first, nor, by a long chalk, will we be the last to do so. There were numerous floral tributes, including other wreaths, written pieces, crosses and poppies.

I broke away from George for a few moments to lay my tributes in the form of seven crossed to my uncle and his crew. I had initially considered laying a cross at the foot of each crew member, but decided they should all be together and so it was.

Afterwards, George and I discussed who we thought might be the navigator (his crew job), as it wasn't easily obvious. Another reason for not laying my crosses at the feet of the individual men was the fear of influencing others.

However, on returning home and studying the pictures, and with further discussions with George, I have come up with my personal view of who I think they all are. So here is, and I stress this, my personal view: -



Poppy crosses, one for each member of Geoff's Uncle's crew

The pilot is obviously the guy at the back with the peaked cap. There is a controlled strain in his face, but he has brought the crew home once again and is quietly thankful.

The navigator is the one, front left with the thigh patch pockets for his maps; he is looking through shaded eyes for others who have yet to return.

The tail gunner is obviously the guy stood front right, he has had the most uncomfortable trip. The physical and emotional exhaustion is etched plainly upon his face.

The mid-upper is the guy to the pilot's right who has also spent a very long flight looking into the darkness for any slight change in the blackness that might mean a fighter was prowling. The flight engineer is the one on the pilots left side, forage cap perched jauntily on his head. He has nursed their plane home again, but it hasn't been too bad for him. An older man he displays his maturity, not his emotions.

Front and centre is the wireless operator who has a wistful look on his face. He has listened all through the flight to the hiss and click of his radio equipment, maybe hoping at first there will be a recall and later wondering if there was and he had missed it.

Finally, the bombardier is the guy on the far left of the back row. He looks up and to the left, replaying in his mind the holocaust he gazed down into over the target as he lined up to drop his bombs and add to the horrors on the ground.



**Another view of the Statues,
What is your interpretation of their roles?**

If/when you get to gaze upon this sculpture for yourselves, with your own personal views and memories, I'm sure you will put a different interpretation on what you see and remember. That, for me, is the great thing about this wonderful monument; it will be and mean a great many things for a large number of people. Let us not forget, it commemorates a tragic loss of life for which we should give thanks for the selfless sacrifices made and forever remember them.

George Worrell meets a 149 Sqn Australian from his brother-in-law's crew.

I cannot now remember what first led me to the Register but after my brother-in-law's death I got to see his Log Book and set about trying to track down his former crew. The register was so instrumental in providing answers that my sister, Bert's widow, went out to Australia to meet those of them who then still survived (by now there are but two). She had a great time.

This year the pilot, Russell Oldmeadow (92), accompanied by his daughter, were among the Australian contingent which came over for the dedication of the Bomber Command Memorial. My brother (also ex RAF) and I and our wives entertained them to lunch in the RAF Club. Later they travelled up to Newcastle to spend a long weekend with my sister and her (and Bert's) family who live there too. So Russell saw his rear gunner's widow for the second time and one of Bert's daughters and his two grandchildren (whom he never knew, unfortunately) for the first time.

Of course Russell had known Bert long before any of us ever knew him which lent added poignancy to the story. Furthermore he also met the mother of Bert's son-in-law who spent the war as a child in Hamburg! Full circle, eh?

As I say all these happenings are really down to the Register.

Other Members' Comments on Bomber Command Memorial day

Syd Merryfield (a XV Sqn navigator in John Whittingham's crew who was shot down by US AA after 36 ops. crash-landing at Juvincourt, by then in Allied hands). "Wasn't that a great day! So well organised and I felt it was some compensation for the disgraceful shabby treatment we received - shame it was so late - I'm now 90 and was lucky to be able to get there and enjoy it. I managed to link up with my skipper's widow - Margaret Whittingham. Sad that our rear gunner, Joe Warnock, has dementia and unable to travel - he and I are the only ones left from our crew".

Jim Bateman (149 Sqn) says he was on the official mission and was very happy with the attention and overall assistance they were given. He sent the Secretary a booklet with details of the selected veterans. Apart from Jim there was John.D.Crago (W/Op.622 Sqn) and Philip.H.Smith (XV/15 Sqn- W/Op in Tom Randall's crew May-Aug 1944). "Pip" as he was known got his photo taken talking to King George VI—Page 191 in "Oxford's Own". I was somewhere behind him at the time. Phil Dodd told me that Syd Merryfield was going to attend. Phil ended up with a medical problem and had to cancel his arrangements to go.

Tom Maxwell (622 Rear Gunner) recalls that; "I didn't see much, but felt the atmosphere and spoke to the many University cadets from all over the UK most of whom would have funded their own travel etc who were all smartly turned and extremely helpful. The down side was of course that most of these will be leaving University Air Squadrons soon because of cut backs to their Funding but primarily they all say that there will be no RAF to go into. I don't think Cameron et al realise what they are doing to the back bone of this Country and it is certainly not what I and others fought for. I will try and get down to London one day to see the sculptures close up. I had to get back. I had given up dialysis which should have



George with Russell and George's Brother Keith at the RAF Club

happened on the same day, so neither the Consultants nor I quite knew what to expect. I saw several my age, some faring better than me and several who were worse. Also a few who were absolutely alone so I was fortunate to have my elder son and a grandson whom I met up with at Green Park and without whose help I would have been lost. My taxi driver from Paddington insisted that Constitution Hill would be closed and dumped me at Hyde Park corner! Much worse was finding a Taxi to get back, it took nearly an hour with help and the family accompanied me back to Paddington. London just seems to get more difficult to handle so I will stick to the countryside and a few potholes etc! I am hoping that someone will produce a video of the event so I can fill the blank spaces when I had to seek refuge from the unusual heat. It took a massive piece of organising and I hope the Bomber Command Association won't get stuck with the large bill for too long. You may not have seen my letter in the Daily Telegraph suggesting that consideration should now be given to relocation the Arthur Harris statue from its present position in the Strand to the Memorial, where it will be with old comrades and friends. I am also wondering what has been done to prevent vandalism and damage, as happened to the strand statue, and also what if anything has been done (electronically) to deter the vaulted roof of the memorial becoming a pigeon loft!"

Ralph Skilbeck (Brother of Bob Skilbeck XV Sqn KIA) said I shall be thinking of you and your Uncle and the other Boys in his crew particularly on this occasion. Also I will be thinking all of Bomber Command and my wireless operator Brother Bob and the other six members of his crew and their Families especially Pat Wilson the rear gunner. The Wilson family were hit pretty hard because one of Pat's brothers from Yorkshire was lost in the Merchant Navy. We wrote to each other a couple of times. Bob was amused on one of their operations when he heard Pat asking in his Yorkshire accent " 028?". Which turned out to be "Have you got anything to eat?" I don't know how Bob worked it out, perhaps it was because our Great-Grandfather came from North Yorkshire to the Bendigo gold field's rush in 1850!

Please send in your photographs of the day which we will either try to publish in the next newsletter or put on our web site.

Now follows some articles about members of the Register's Squadrons

Sqn Ldr Phil Lamason RNZAF ex 218 and XV Sqs

Jack Trend ex XV Sqn wrote on the 4th May 2012 to say that from time to time he hears from an ex RAF philatelic friend in New Zealand. They exchanges cuttings etc and quite recently it had been about ANZAC anniversary memories and his friend sent a copy of a feature by Christine McKay in Hawk's Bay's Today newspaper featuring Sqn Ldr Philip Lamason, a former RNZAF pilot and pilot on XV Sqn, RAF Mildenhall in 1944. Jack was delighted to hear that Phil was still alive and thought other register members would like to know. Unfortunately Phil died soon after Jack's letter reached me, on 19th May this year. Phil married, in 1941, Joan Hopkins who died in 2009, and he is survived by their two sons and two daughters. His obit appeared in the Daily Telegraph on 31 May.

Sqn Ldr Philip John Lamason was born in Napier, New Zealand, on September 15 1918 and educated locally. He worked as a livestock inspector before joining the RNZAF to train as a pilot. In April 1941 he sailed for England, where he joined No 218 Squadron flying the four-

engine Stirling bomber. In April 1942 he took off on his 21st operation, an attack on Pilsen. On the return flight he was attacked by a night fighter, and his bomber was set on fire and the guns put out of action. Lamason coolly directed two of the crew to deal with the fire as he out manoeuvred the fighter as it closed in for another attack. He then nursed the badly-damaged Stirling back to his base, where he made an emergency landing. He was awarded an immediate DFC.

Lamason then spent six months training new bomber crews, during which time he was twice mentioned in dispatches. He returned to operations in early 1944 as a flight commander with No XV Squadron, flying the Lancaster. This was at the height of the Battle of Berlin, when Bomber Command's losses were at their highest. Lamason made a number of visits to the "Big City". Lamason was never afraid to speak his mind. On the night of March 30/31 1944, when 795 bombers were sent to attack Nuremberg, he was very critical of the route chosen, warning his Station Commander that heavy losses could be expected on the moonlit night. In the event, 95 bombers were lost, the worst losses on a single raid. He attacked some of the most heavily defended targets in Germany before Bomber Command switched its attention to France in preparation for the Normandy landings. Two weeks after Lamason had been shot down near Paris, he was awarded a Bar to his DFC.

The article as it appeared in the Hawk Bay Today follows:

***'Humble Bay Pilot - Flies 45 missions
Is shot down in 1944 - then saves the lives of 168 airmen'***

War isn't a romantic thing, Phil Lamason says. "Often during World War 2, they were very glum days," the former RAF squadron leader and prisoner of war says.

Mr Lamason lives quietly on his Rua Roa farm but his heroism, revealed in the documentary *"The Lost Airmen of Buchenwald"*, touched the hearts of many and stimulated a flow of fan mail. Squadron Leader Lamason flew an amazing 45 missions, an even more remarkable achievement when you consider the RAF toll- 96 per cent of those who served in the bomber squadrons were killed. His combat war ended when he was shot down over France on June 8, 1944. As the last man out of his bomber, he was hidden by the French Resistance for seven weeks before being captured by the Gestapo. After being sold out by traitor Jacques Desaubrie for 10,000 francs, the equivalent of \$120, Phil and fellow airmen were herded into cattle cars for the horrendous five-day journey to Nazi concentration camp Buchenwald, on the Ettersberg (Etter Mountain) near Weimar, Germany. Once there, "there was no way out except as smoke through the chimney", the now 93-year-old says.

Life in Buchenwald was hell, with a starvation diet consisting of sawdust bread and thin soup with maggots.



**Sqn Ldr Phil Lamason
DFC & Bar RNZAF**

"They tried to break our spirit too. We were told to move a pile of stones from one place to another. It was demoralising." Thirty-five thousand lost their lives in Buchenwald, but Phil was determined he and his fellow airmen weren't going to join them. At one stage, there were 20 guns aimed at him, but for some reason the officer didn't give the order to fire. But unbeknown to his fellow airmen, the Gestapo had given the extermination order. For several weeks Phil negotiated with the camp authorities to have the airmen transferred to a POW camp, but his requests were denied. Finally, at great risk he secretly got word to the under-ground of the Allied airmen's captivity and four days before their scheduled execution, the prisoners were suddenly transferred to Stalag Luft m. The German authorities had been informed that their captured airmen would receive similar treatment.

Phil had seen the extermination order, but didn't tell his "men" until a Buchenwald reunion in 1985. He'd saved the lives of 168 airmen - 82 Americans, 48 British, 26 Canadians, 9 Australians, 2 New Zealanders and 1 Jamaican. Fellow prisoner, American Joe Moser, later said it was Phil's quiet, strong but aggressive leadership which was a critical factor not only in holding up prisoner morale but in facilitating their eventual release.

After the war, Phil was often a guest of King George VI at Buckingham Palace where the then Princess Elizabeth liked to hold his hand and chat. "She'd make a beeline for me," he said. And the King had a special request, asking him to "buzz" the palace. Three Stirlings flew over Buckingham Palace. "I told the other boys to peel off and let me go for it," Phil said. In 1946, he was asked to be the lead pilot to test the flight paths for a new British airport. As part of the agreement, he was offered a farm in Berkshire.

However, family said he needed to go home instead and Heathrow Airport went ahead without him. When asked what he'd like on his return, his answer was quick.

"I'd like a farm in a warm place" and in 1948 he acquired 406 acres at Rua Roa.



Phil Lamason at home on his farm in Rua Roa

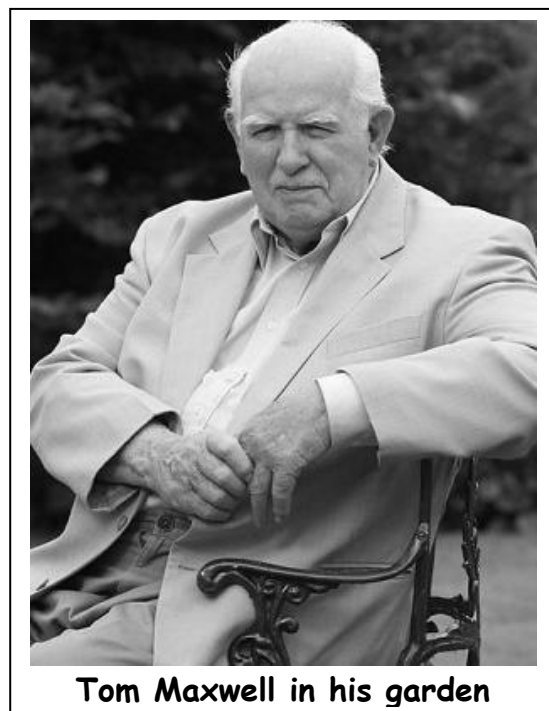
Seen not wearing a Cap by Tom Maxwell

Tom writes: Tonight I missed the television although I can do without it but this time I forgot to switch it on for a couple of hours as my intermittent focussing scanned the welcome Mildenhall Register Winter edition from cover to cover and revived several forgotten links of the past. Fortunately I email regularly with Howard Sandall and John Swallow so I knew something of what's happening at Mildenhall.

One of the most welcome sights during my stay with 622 was returning in the early morning with the sun just above the horizon and East Anglia dotted with pockets of early morning fog and picking up the red Mildenhall beacon flashing through the mist dash dash dot dot dot dot (MH), some things are never forgotten,

Although many crews actually socialised with others, the individual crew spirit was dominant and quite often one is asked "Did you know such and such and sadly the answer has to be NO!

Although I have been corresponding with Swifty for some time I did not know for example that we must have been at 26 OTU (Wing) at the same time with Pilot Peter Thomson. Three of that original crew are still on the planet: F/E Frank Harmsworth now a Canadian resident and Bill (Taffy) Peake living in Slough and myself. Much of my protracted correspondence with Howard over the years centred round the remaining crew who have all passed away but after many years of personal research the history of Bomb Aimer Doc Hyde remains a mystery after we reluctantly baled out of Lancaster LL828 near Paris coming up to March 16 sixty seven years ago. Naturally I was sorry to hear of Fred's passing.



I remember Dennis Moore though: we also must have been at Mildenhall about the same time, but on different squadrons but I met up with him whilst at 52 Squadron DumDum. I was the P and F guy at the time but flew with 52 whenever I could. (P and F a title now passed into history; Passenger and Freight, in the days when everything including the passengers had to be weighed and total weights calculated to find the C of G of every laden transport aircraft! Shortly after my stay a DumDum I was posted to RAF Changi (Singapore) and remember the landing of the first BOAC civil Lancastrian and the metal Summerfield tracking runway. This would be early 1945 and the day when an American C47 almost disappeared in a shallow hollow at the end of the runway. It transpired later, after an investigation, that British and Australian POWs taken by the Japanese who were used as forced labour to lay the basic substructure of the runway created hundreds of pockets of old paper and cardboard hoping that it would be effective in causing damage to a Japanese aircraft. At that time they never thought that the Japanese would in fact be the occupants in nearby Changi jail.

Whilst based at Changi, it was my duty to Meet and Greet arriving VIP's and I met many famous, mostly, military people including the Mountbattens (both) and the most wounded General Carton de Wiart a legendary character with his black eye-patch and empty sleeve and his VC DSO and a host of other honours and awards.

Of all the memory hits, my friendship with John Stratton was the strongest; I flew with him a few times but more importantly after the war. When I was at RAF Changi and John Stratton was flying with BOAC I met up with him. Certainly not at Changi because he was now flying boats, BOAC Short "Empire" flying boats.

I had at the time been selected from a cast of thousands (not strictly true) but several people wanted this particular task of checking Passenger and Freight facilities at several of

what were then known as "Staging Posts" opening up as facilities for BOAC (the National Carrier just after the war) to pioneer aircraft routes and landing facilities from the UK to Australia. One of my assignments was to inspect the facilities at Bangkok and I duly reported to RAF Kallang, a flying boat base in Singapore and was duly shown my seat amongst the other eleven passengers. Only one class (First), so easy to see why the task was sought after. I had never before flown in a flying boat, let alone been inside one. I was seated beside a taciturn Group Captain who seemed somewhat peeved that I had been allocated the window seat (which I had specifically asked for as I didn't want to miss anything of this new flying experience). After takeoff and climbing to cruising altitude I was looking out of the window and saw a tailored sleeve with four gold rings addressing the Group Captain with details of the flight and catering etc. My turn for the short briefing and we looked at each other disbelievingly. The sharp khaki uniform, gold wings and DFC threw me completely for a few seconds and eventually it dawned on us simultaneously "God! John", "Gee Tommy, great to see you". A discreet nod and equally discreetly I made my way to the flight deck for the remainder of the journey to Bangkok and alighting on the river almost in the centre of the city.

The story doesn't end there. Fortunately we were all based in the same hotel, Ratnakushind? and in the phraseology of the day went out on a "Bender"

A few months later I met up with John again when he was a passenger and he said *"Do you remember that night in Bangkok?" When I was on the return trip to UK I got a signal to report to the BOAC Managers Office on arrival" (Hurn) "I didn't know what it was about but soon found out. I was to be "carpeted" by the Manager. One of my passengers on the flight was an elderly lady something or other. She sent a telegram from the British Embassy where she was staying to the BOAC managing Director sometime later. It said that she had seen a BOAC Captain with what looked like a crowd of hooligans, singing in the centre of Bangkok and he wasn't wearing a cap!"*

The following article about Tom Maxwell appeared in the Telegraph the weekend before the dedication of the Bomber Command Memorial.

Tom Maxwell, 88 from Thorverton, Devon, was a rear gunner who flew in Lancasters. His story follows:

Tom Maxwell parachuted out over occupied France in 1944, got back to Britain and went on to fly 26 more missions. After the war, he became a schoolmaster, before returning to the RAF as an air traffic controller.

"I joined up in Belfast in the autumn of 1941 with three friends, all of us lying about our ages, smoking cigarettes and a pipe to make us look older. I was the only one to survive the war.

"I originally wanted to be a pilot but when it was decided by those who knew better than me that I was to be a navigator, I rebelled and tried to leave and join the Fleet Air Arm. The RAF was having none of it, though. The quickest way to get in the war was to become an air gunner, so I opted for that instead and found myself at Mildenhall, Suffolk, on 622 Squadron, in the spring of 1943.

"A rear gunner had to operate in an unbelievably small and lonely space. It was so cold that often the tear ducts froze into little pearls of ice.

"We did a couple of 'gardening' trips first in Stirlings, dropping mines in the Frisian Islands and a similar operation in Bayonne. Then the squadron converted to Lancasters in autumn 1943 and we flew another three missions: to Berlin, Augsburg and Schweinfurt. There were then two missions to Stuttgart.

"The melee over the targets was like Piccadilly Circus on a Saturday night, with a colossal mixture of aircraft - occasionally one going the wrong way - searchlights, clouds of fiery reds, orange and yellow, dotted frequently by the black clouds of spent flak shells.

"These black clouds were not a problem, though frightening to inexperienced

crews. It was said that crews never saw the one that got them, but we felt and smelt the stink of cordite - and really heard the one that got us, at 22,000 ft, on the second trip to Stuttgart, on 15 March 1944.

"It was obvious that we had taken a massive hit and a local parson would probably have failed to recognise the language. The first question was: "What the ---- was that?"

"One of the port engines had gone and we were losing fuel and height. We set a westerly course to get into French territory as quickly as possible. We kept going but it was decided we had no choice but to abandon the aircraft. We had enough fuel to get half way across the Channel, but there was no enthusiasm at all for that idea. It might have been different in daylight - but not at night.

"My departure from the rear turret into the pitch black night was not the dignified exit I had ever intended. I must have fallen about 2,000 feet before I managed to get the second parachute clipped to the harness. This was a great relief.

"It was peaceful and dark. I had a fair idea that I would be about 10 miles south west of Paris. One could only hope that power lines, rivers, trees, quarries and lakes could all be avoided, not to mention church spires. There were thoughts that an army of Wehrmacht would be waiting with bayonets.

"I was, to say the least, uncomfortable. But my arrival in France at 1.30am was unheralded and I was suddenly surrounded by recently ploughed fields and an eerie silence, except for a noisy sleepless cockerel in the distance.

"I did exactly as the escape manual said: I hid the parachute, Mae West [lifejacket] and harness in the ditch. I turned my battledress jacket inside out to hide any insignia and set off walking in the direction of the pole star, passing a sign that told me Bézancourt was less than a mile away.



Tom outside the barrack block

"I walked slowly and cautiously but brisked up when someone approached in the opposite direction. We exchanged mumbles and nods - it was a German soldier but he had no interest in me.

"I came to a farm with large buildings where the lights were on. Inside, two women and one man were milking cows and I stood there and said - in awful French - 'Good morning, can you help me?'

"They let me stand there for a good ten minutes, ignoring me. It must have been extremely difficult for them. I didn't have an inkling until later that there was a German army signals unit only 200 yards away. The farmer later told me that he was really frightened as the female helper with him also cleaned at the camp.

"Thankfully, they took me in and hid me in the top bedroom of the farmhouse. I was told the next day that they would help and they confirmed that a Lancaster had crashed about 12 miles north of Bézancourt and some of the crew had been taken prisoner. I later found out that two others had managed to get back to Britain, three others became POWs and one stayed living in France.

"I stayed in the area for about ten days before being moved once to another farm and back again. Sometimes I saw - from a small window - German officers at the door of the farmhouse. I was concerned they were asking about the missing crew member from the aeroplane, but they had only come to buy eggs, bread and cheese.

"Then I was taken by train from Bézancourt to Paris. I did not know the guide - he sat several seats away and followed several paces behind. Indeed, throughout my travels in France, I made a point of not knowing who was who, and I invented names of helpers. This proved a problem when later I tried to track them down.

"In Paris, I was taken to a priest who spoke English and was given an identity card, before being moved to a more desolate and extremely poor farm. They had almost nothing. I was being helped at great sacrifice.

"I was then taken to St Lazare Station in Paris and put on a train to Pau in the Pyrenees. Whilst waiting to board, I smoked those awful Gauloises cigarettes and a Luftwaffe airman approached and held up his unlit cigarette for a light, which I offered. The only word spoken was his "danke".

"On the train, two German soldiers came over and indicated by pointing that they wanted the seats next to me. I nodded - amazing how much communication can be effected by gestures. Once they sat down, I just pretended to be asleep.

"I had a helper on the train, but he naturally wouldn't sit next to me. I had also been told that there were other escapees on board. You could recognise some of them by their odd-fitting clothes and boots that were too big for them. And then you'd get the odd wink or nod from them. The train stopped at Toulouse, and the Gestapo in their black leather coats did some random checks but I wasn't approached.

"When we got to Pau, I found my way out through the goods yard with an American I had hooked up with. We spent a night in some woods and went to the cathedral the following day, as we had been told to do.

"You could tell from the people milling around there that it was obviously a collection point for escapees. People were dotted here and there. It was the first mass of the day and by a devious system we, the earnest praying folk, were soon paired up by winks, nods and raised fingers and left at intervals with the priest's blessing to stay overnight and prepare for the journey over the border, to take place the following night.

"Our Basque guide was like a mountain goat and set a fast pace that I expected he thought the aircrew - a group of around 30 - could maintain. He was wrong: our feet became sore and blistered and some struggled at the considerable height without oxygen.

"The normal routes through the mountains were well worn and frequented by Germans looking for groups like us, so we took some difficult climbs. Occasionally, when we were at about 7,000 feet, with snow up to our knees, we could see German patrols down below and that gave us a lift. We waved to them and they waved back - little did they know.

"When we got into Spain, we were immediately set upon by the local police and taken to a shack police station where we remained all day, before being taken to a questionable hotel. None of us could sleep and most left the beds untouched.

"Soon we had our first contact with an embassy official, who appeared well-versed in what to do. We were taken to a decent hotel in Pamplona and then on to deserted factory in Lekunberri where we spent about ten days.

"Generally, the Spaniards treated us with indifference but were not aggressive, except for the first ones, who couldn't believe they had 'captured' such a haul.

"We were taken to the British embassy in Madrid and whilst we there were given tickets to attend a concert given by the Berlin Philharmonic with Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting. We had no qualms about standing - on one foot - for the German national anthem. We also went to the Alhambra, as guests of the Spanish Air Force.

"Then we went on to Gibraltar and put on a DC3 back to Britain, landing at Whitchurch, near Bristol, for a breakfast of horrible dried egg on cold toast and a speech by a bowler hat from the Air Ministry, who said that 'he was supposed to welcome us back'.

"My first duty back at Mildenhall was to see the girls who had packed my parachute and give them my accumulated collection of rationed chocolate coupons. I slipped back into the squadron routine, first flying with any crew who needed a spare member and then with a permanent place. I completed a further 26 operations between July 1944 and Christmas, when I was posted to the Far East.

"After the war, I tried teaching for a bit, before returning to the RAF as an air traffic controller until I retired.

"I have never considered that anything that came my way during the war was extraordinary. If there are any tributes left to be paid, they should include the RAF ground crews, now forgotten - but not by the aircrew they supported."

From one Historian to Another by Martyn Ford-Jones

Whilst refreshments were being served in the church hall at St John's, Beck Row, on the Saturday afternoon of the 2011 reunion weekend, I was introduced to Mark Howell, who had expressed a desire to meet me. Mark, who is the Historian to the 100th Air Refuelling Wing, had hoped to make contact with me during my earlier visit to Hanger 538 back in March, but time then prevented us from getting together. The introduction having been successfully made on this latter occasion, Mark immediately invited me across to his office, but again time was against us.

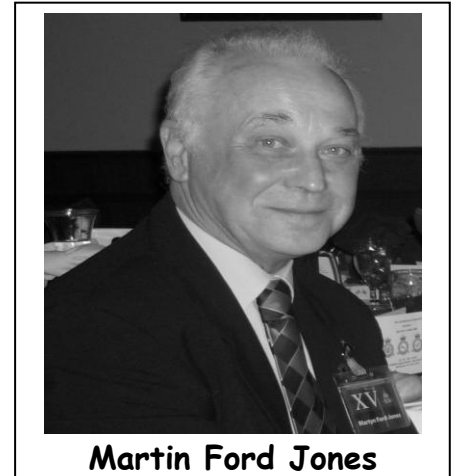


Mark Howell

The reunion at Mildenhall was tinged with an element of sadness for Valerie and me, as we knew we would have to return to the area three days later to attend the funeral of a friend whom we had known for over forty years. However, we were able to arrange with Mark to see him later on the Wednesday, after we had paid our respects to our dear departed friend.

It was around 3.00pm when we reported to the Pass Office at the main gate, to go through the process of being confirmed as harmless, English peasants, wanting to enter that area of land that is America. With that little chit of paper, which allowed us to stay on base until 23.59 hours, we drove with Mark to his office, situated across the way from the Base Chapel.

Mark made Valerie and I feel very welcome, and he immediately started pulling out packets of photographs, books and all sorts of documentation. Although Mark carries the title Historian, his work is much complex than just recording the historical side of RAF Mildenhall. His duties include accumulating material relating to current aspects of all the Unit's serving on the base, giving lectures and talks and responding to public requests for help. Mark prides himself in the fact that, even with all his official duties, he can still respond to a 'plea for assistance' in twenty-four



Martin Ford Jones

hours. The historical side of Mark's work also includes knowing the history of the 100th Bomb Group stationed at Thorpe Abbots, the former USAAF airfield near Diss, Norfolk. Virtual every element of the USAAF based in the area during World War Two is known to Mark.

There was so much information flying round, both on computer and in original hard copy format that I did not know where or what to look at first. I felt like a kid in a candy shop with free access to all the goodies. Mark very kindly 'burned' some information, relevant to my research, onto discs for me, so that I could review it at my leisure.

The afternoon had gone by the time we left the base, although our visit was not yet over. Mark took Valerie and me back to his home, where we had the pleasure of being introduced to his wife Tina who, unfortunately, was still feeling 'jet-lagged' following her very recent return from Texas, where she had been visiting family. However, Tina made us feel very welcome and provided coffee whilst we chatted. I was honoured to be taken in to Mark's study during our visit to his home. I say honoured as, apparently, nobody apart from Mark is allowed to enter the room. Security, I think, is tougher than that on the base.

It was just after 7.30pm when Valerie and I finally said, "Goodbye" to Mark and made our way into the 'Bird in Hand' to acquire a room for the night.

Meeting Mark was one of the highlights of my visit to Mildenhall this year. And, as we have unfinished business, Mark has invited me to join him again in his office for another opportunity to delve through his files and photographs.

I have to say, from one historian to another, I 'take my hat off' to you Mark. Mark's eagerness and keenness is amazing, and nothing was too much trouble for him. I look forward

to my next visit to RAF Mildenhall, when I will spend the whole day in an 'Aladdin's cave' of RAF/MILDENHALL/USAFE history. I cannot wait.

News and Stories sent to the Secretary

218 (Gold Coast) Squadron

As we go to press, there has been news that this squadron association has ceased its annual reunions. An approach has been made for their membership to join us at our annual reunions. Their members were asked their views in their January newsletter. The outcome of this was quite favourable and plans are afoot to incorporate them into the reunion next year. As with 75 (NZ) Squadron, they will retain their individual autonomy, their own secretary and newsletter.



The Fairey Battle one of the most notorious aircraft of WW11 (visit www.historyofwar.org)

No. 218 Squadron began the war as part of the Advanced Air Striking Force, making it one of the first squadrons to be sent to France. The Fairey Battle suffered very heavy losses during the Battle of France. By the time the squadron was evacuated to RAF Mildenhall on 13 June 1940, not one of No. 218 Squadron's aircraft remained intact, and the squadron would never reequip with the type. Instead it operated the Bristol Blenheim from July-November 1940, carrying out attacks on the German invasion barges. Its time at Mildenhall was short lived for in July it was posted to Oakington. After a variety of stations, Marham, Downham Market, Woolfax Lodge and Methwold it finished the war at RAF Chedburgh.

We believe that the way forward is to include all other squadrons, associations and personnel that have had any connection with Mildenhall over this base's many years of service. Only in this way can the memory and sacrifices made by those who served be preserved and perpetuated.

In the meantime, we shall be very pleased to host any 218 (GC) Association members who wish to join our reunion weekend.

Searching out their results

At the 2011 reunion, John Healy, a 90 Squadron mid-upper gunner, thrust a piece of paper into my hands. It was a photocopy of an Operations Record Book pertaining to 90 Squadron at Tuddenham. It detailed three raids, but the important one for John and his bomb aimer, who had gone to The National Archives in Kew with him, was the attack on Nuremburg on 2nd January 1945.

They had obtained the photo-flash image for their load that night too. From his obvious pleasure at being able to do this, I would say the results were rather good.

*On a number of visits that I have made to the PRO, as it was, I was amazed at the information stored there and the ease (once you learn a few facts) with which much of it can be looked at and copied. It is a marvellous resource for historians and others with an interest in the past. I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone doing research into family who have served in the forces and for genealogy studies. **Secretary***

A Rear Gunner's Story

Michael Coles, tail-gunner in Flt Lt (later Group Captain) A Brignall's crew of 622 Squadron, wrote from Devon to say *"Very many thanks for the Mildenhall Register (newsletter), full of news and awakening of memories, much appreciated. I cannot make the reunions these days, but happy memories of times at the Greyhound with my mid-upper gunner"*.

He believes he is now the only one left of the seven in his crew. He went on to recount his very quick tour from May '44 to March '45 which started with a low level, 20 aircraft operation on Calais on Sunday teatime, and his last being leader of a single file of aircraft attacking Wesel in the hope of keeping the enemy's heads down whilst the allied troops were crossing the Rhine in their boats and barges.

He says: *"we were Master Bomber/Group Leader on some of the daylight missions where G H techniques were used. Much to the chagrin of the bomb aimer who became just a front gunner because the navigator dropped the bombs."*

He spent the end of his RAF service in Flying Control at Turnhouse with a Polish fighter outfit. This he enjoyed as, being a senior NCO, he had a room in the Sgt's mess and shared a batman. He had a 'B' release as his pre service skills of making up passenger trains meant he was more useful to the railways than flying control once the war in Europe was over.

Squadron Leader Norman Walter remembers

Norman arrived on 622 Squadron at the very end of the war, only completing 4 operations to Germany before the cessation of hostilities. On one of these to Cologne the crew were surprised to look down on the devastated city. Although usually escorted by Spitfires and Mustangs their losses were far less than the 40 - 60 from raids earlier in the war. But on the raid in question, the flak was very heavy and accurate. He lost a friend, whom he had trained with, in a Lancaster that had its wing blown off. Norman was involved in both Manna and Exodus operations. He remembers similar scenes to Mr Kearns (Winter edition newsletter) as they flew low over the Dutch countryside. The farmers marked out their fields with "Thank you RAF".





The Bomber Command Memorial viewed from Piccadilly



The Royals attend the dedication

On the Exodus operations they would cram in up to 26 ex prisoners. Some having been in captivity since Dunkirk, they didn't mind, they were going home.

At the end of the war Norman was commissioned and transferred, via a very long and arduous trip in a brand new York, to Don Muang at Bangkok's main airport. Here he found the Japanese military prisoners guarding the huge fuel dump in the middle of the RAF station. They had organised themselves into their own camp, armed themselves with big sticks and ferocious dogs and did an excellent job keeping the local thieves away. Norman found them to be very subservient, with few speaking English. His biggest worry when acting as Duty Officer was the great number of snakes there were about!

Various other Far East posting followed before de-mob in April 1948. With no firm plans Norman spent a short while with the Exeter police (working for, not a guest of) before re-enlisting. After many postings around the UK, the Mediterranean and again in the Far East, he finally retired with the closure of RAF Hartlebury which he describes as "the saddest time of his career".

That wasn't the end of his long career in aviation though. He continued by serving in both the Royal Saudi Air Force and a five year spell in the Sultan of Oman's Government working as the Secretary to the Tender Board for all Military Supplies.

The article closes with the words 'Norman and his wife enjoy a peaceful retirement in Devon'.

More from the West Country

Arthur G Clarke, a navigator with 149 Squadron, who is in his 91st year, sent in a piece from 'Dartmoor' magazine that had been written to mark the end of a number of eras.

The story begins by looking back to the night of 21st March 1941. A 49 Sqn Hampden from Scampton was returning from an operation over France. They were seriously off track and, on breaking cloud over land and not sea flew into Hameldown. This rises to over 2000ft, which was above the cloud base at that time. All the crew perished. The mother of the pilot visited the site and suggested that a suitable memorial, bearing the crews initials and the date, be erected. Just one year after the date this was achieved. Every Armistice Day poppies were placed at the base of the monolithic stone in remembrance of the price they paid.

In 1991, 50 years after the crash, Torbay and District ACA organised a

Service of Commemoration and Dedication. There were over 500 people present. Eighteen aircraft were lost on Dartmoor during operations and training during the war. A plaque was attached to the original stone which read: -



A Hampden Bomber

**On 21st March 1941
A Royal Air Force Bomber
of 49 Sqn Scampton
Crashed returning from
Operations over France
The 4 crew were lost**

This memorial bears
their Initials and Squadron number -
Commemorating their selfless courage
and that of Fellow Airmen
who perished on Dartmoor 1939 - 1945
Their Sacrifice helped us to Maintain Freedom

The Aircrew Association 1991

In 1996 a large contingent of the T & D ACA attended to lay a wreath on the 5th anniversary of the re-dedication.

For the 10th anniversary of the re-dedication and the 60th anniversary of the crash, just 35 members of the ACA set off across the moor. They were joined by a young German couple for part of the walk. It was pointed out the purpose of their walk and as there were 7 known German crashes on the moor during the Battle of Plymouth, this was a poignant moment for all.

By 2006, after taking many groups across the moors on guided walks, including 23 visits by the ACA to the memorial, as the article says "anno domini" had caught up with them. The continuing fall in numbers had brought an end to these varied expeditions.

The final ending of an era came with the worldwide dissolution of the Aircrew Association which brought about the closure of the Torbay and District ACA.

*A very sad end to a great tradition, we just hope that with the number of folk that are still drawn to this beautiful area to enjoy the wonderful walking and fresh air, some will pause as they come upon this solemn monument and contemplate how and why it was placed there. If so, the memory of all these young men will not be forgotten. **Secretary.***

From even further West -

From Canada to be precise and not the close side, right across on Vancouver Island. Ken Dougan wrote me two amazing letters, considering he has macular degeneration to the point he cannot see what he is writing. A friend reads his mail and the newsletter to him.

He tells me that he has had a lifetime love of flying and the Air Force. Having graduated as an observer, he was re-mustered as a bomb aimer for operations. He crewed up with Frank Millen at No.22 O.T.U. Wellesbourne Mountford. They converted to 'heavies' at Waterbeach before joining XV Squadron at Bourn. This was on Stirlings and he has been told by 'persons in the know' that he should be dead! Luckily, he survived, considering his early operations and experiences. After their first 6 operations together, he was promoted to Flt Sgt. There then followed a crash during take-off.

Ken recalls "a wild swing on take-off. Heading towards the tower where a group of visiting top brass were watching, they took off in all directions. Just short of the tarmac, a screeching crash and the undercarriage collapsed. I wound up on my rear, between the seats in the cockpit with both legs that wouldn't work."

Someone grabbed him by the shoulders, out of the cockpit and slid him down the wing where a waiting ambulance took him to 47 Squadron sick bay. He spent a few days in bed with a cage over his legs, and then he was taken for an X-ray. There were no breaks, so they returned him to the squadron where he hobbled around with a 'street' stick and talked the M.O. into making him 'fit to fly'. After two or three more ops, some of the crew went off to Liverpool to visit rear gunner Jim Perring's family. Standing at a bus stop, his left leg rose up and wouldn't go back down. He was admitted into a civilian hospital where, after a week or so, a doctor took an instrument and took out some very unpleasant fluids. The squadron M.O. would never tell him what it was. On his return to base he was treated as a newcomer. He was also told that Frank Millen was reported missing. Re-crewed with Craddock crew, who's Bomb Aimer, had gone with Millen.

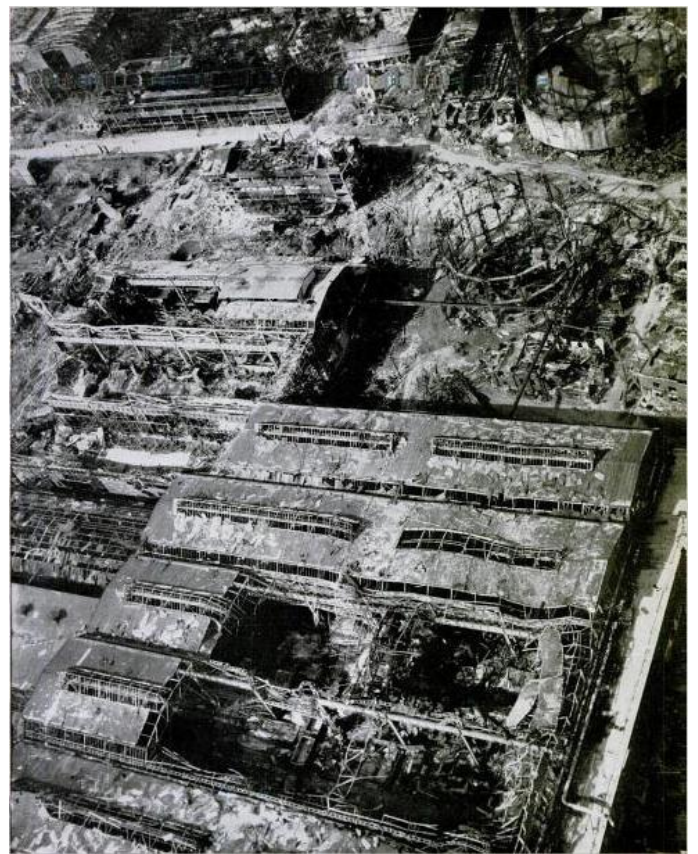
He was promoted to Pilot Officer on Dec 6th 1943. About 11 operations after that they brought back an aiming point

photograph of the Krupps Werk (Essen) in the Ruhr. After that 'Deek'? Craddock became known as 'Aiming Point Craddock'. They were then sent off a couple of times with a load of incendiaries and told they were first in to mark the target - probably a diversion with P.F.F. on the main target.

During a 'Wings for Victory week', a veteran Stirling was stood next to Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square along with a 500lb GP bomb. The sign on the bomb said "Stick your savings stamps on me and Bomber Command will personally deliver it for you." Ken and crew were picked for the job and were filmed and photographed. The film was shown in all cinemas, they were given some stills and a photo of Deek and Ken showing the bomb being loaded was in the Illustrated London News.

His time at XV Squadron ended June 6th 1944 with a promotion to Flying Officer.

Following 6 months screening Ken was granted a re-muster to pilot training - back to Canada. He became one of about 12 to be doubly qualified and has a 7 X 9 picture of the moment his wings were pinned over his Observers brevet. He had hoped for an intruder squadron posting, but the end of hostilities resulted in his being a staff pilot until his eventual release and return to Canada.



The Krupps Munitions Plant after bombing
in March 1945

A new member looks back on an enjoyable time

Mrs Pauline Atkinson, widow of Peter, 622 Squadron navigator on 'Jock' Walker's crew, introduced Peter Pearce, the crew's mid-upper gunner. Known as Tom in those days to avoid the confusion of two Peters, Pauline still knows him as Tom.

Peter (Tom) wrote to say that Peter had been a 1st class navigator, safely guiding them home on all operations. He admits to being very lucky at times, especially missing the Nuremburg trip as they had been sent on leave after just 4 operations and were still very much a 'Spog crew'.

Having completed their 30th operational tour Tom was posted to Feltwell, helping instruct new gunners who were finishing their training on Lancasters before going onto operational squadrons.

He continues "In February 1945 I was invited to join a crew who were testing a new bomb-sight. This crew was based at Tuddenham, flying Lancasters. If and when the trials were satisfactorily completed we would be using the bombsight in operations."

The new sight was supposed to be very accurate and could be used at all heights up to 30,000ft. With pilot Flt Lt Claydon and navigator Sqn Ldr J H Day in charge of the trials, we flew many hours, mainly cross country, both day and night. However, the war ended and the bombsight was never used.

"After that I was posted to RAF Fayid, Egypt with 214 Squadron. It was a pleasant place to be. We became part of the Canal Defence, flying white Lancasters. We flew to many interesting places and spent quite a lot of time in the W/O and Sgt's Club on the banks of The Great Bitter Lakes."

"On 6th August I was told I had been posted home for demobilisation on the next day. I managed to get my clearance over in time for a party in the Sgt's mess. I left Fayid the next day to travel home. This was by train to Alexandria, troop ship across the Mediterranean, where we had a terrible storm, across France by train, ship across the Channel, finally reaching England after 3 long days.

To finish the story Tom adds "I managed to get a grant to study Dentistry at the London Hospital in Whitechapel. I retired at 65, which is now about 24 years ago."

"Looking back on my RAF days I now realise how much I had enjoyed them"



Pauline, a great supporter of the Register pictured with Elisabeth Cox another Register stalwart

Data Protection Act 1998

Shortly before the mid-term committee meeting last year, we were contacted by the RAF asking how our records are kept and stored.

The MoD has come in for some very unpleasant flak over their handling and storage of personnel records. It is now their duty to find out what veterans associations and other similar groups are doing with the records we hold of all our members.

I would just like to say that since Andrew and Sue took on the joint secretaryship of The Register all our records have been computerised where possible. I am currently the custodian of the computer records and these are securely backed up electronically. All paper records, as in correspondence and booking forms, are stored safely in my house under lock and key. I will never give out personal information to any enquirer without your express permission and will always take steps to protect the information I hold on all our members. This seems to have satisfied the RAF as there has been no further contact and I hope this is satisfactory to all our members.

Out of the frying pan, into the fire and back again

Stan Wheeler, ex XV and 622 Wireless Operator Mechanic, wrote in to say that, having been interned in Spanish Morocco in 1942 he eventually made it to XV Squadron as a Corporal in April 1943. He continued with them until September '43 when he transferred to 622 Squadron.

Having been selected for aircrew training as a W/Op/Ag, he was posted for gunnery training in December that same year.

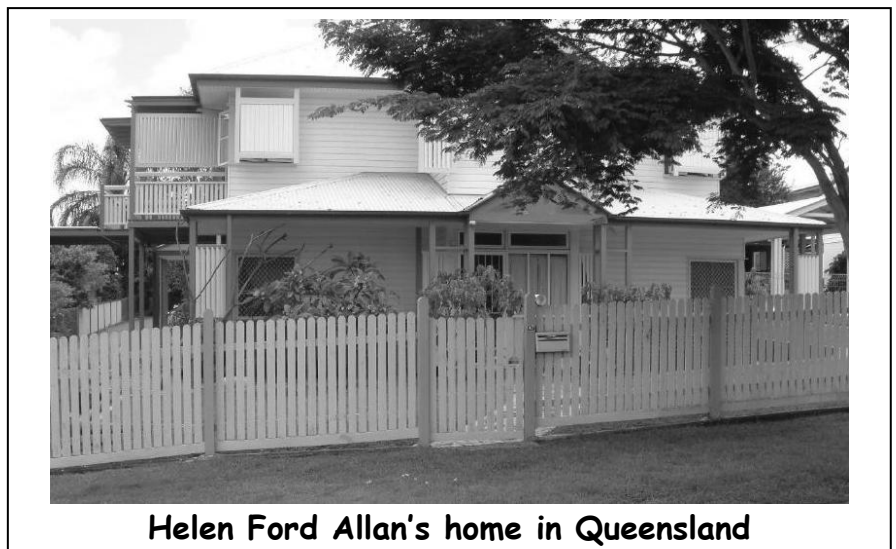
Having completed the training he then moved into Coastal Command with 160 and 203 Sqdns in the Far East. Hew didn't return from there until 1946. Back in the UK he completed his service career as an instructor on 236 O.C.U. until November 1949.

From the other side of the world

This picture accompanied a short e-mail exchange I had with Mrs Helen Ford Allan, widow of Fg Off Thomas Raymond (Ray) Allan. Ray flew with both XV and 622 Squadrons, completing two tours.

At the time we were communicating, Brisbane (where she lives) and a large part of Queensland was under many feet of water. Luckily, her house was spared. It was where Ray was born and his father planted a 'bottlebrush' tree in the garden when he had come home from WW1.

Helen had hoped to attend the memorial ceremony at Beck Row, but was unable to in the end. She hopes to visit one year as she would dearly like to see the places that Ray had always talked of.



Helen Ford Allan's home in Queensland

She told me "I thought I'd share a small part of Ray so you'd put a person into the number you have at present and perhaps realise even more why a memorial is so appropriate."

"His father was a digger with the Australian forces at Gallipoli, the Somme.... and other places. We still have the letters he sent home." "He was gassed so was never well after he came home and died young. His widow never remarried and Ray was their only child. Imagine

Ray's mother's feelings when long after her husband's death her only son went to war 'over there' after her husband had come back so damaged."

"Ray did 2 tours of duty. I asked him once why he signed up for a second tour when the Aussie death rate for Lancaster crew was so dreadful (60% of the Australian Lancaster aircrews were killed) and he could have come home and saved his mum much heartache. His answer, verbatim, was: *'The poor sods had nothing and no-one, but were so gutsy, so brave and never whinged. They were ordinary folk like you and I Helen and just got on with it so how could I possibly have left them to go it alone'*

Helen says she knows this was the sentiments of many who came to our aid.

Letter from Don Woon OAM

I was very pleased to receive your letter quite recently and was quick to say that I would be able to send further details for the Register.

Don Woon is my name. I registered in Australia and left our country for the UK having finished my wireless air gunners' course in Australia in July 1943. Some or most of our airman had to travel by train and in my case our group travelled by train through the state of South Australia from Adelaide to Melbourne to pick up others - then on to Sydney (one night) then again by train to Brisbane in Queensland, after music in the streets of Sydney where the group joined in. Some music out of buses in the blackout (Now is the hour).

An American Malsom Line ship embarked us and dodging subs went to Auckland in New Zealand where we disembarked for a night out in Auckland. I'd never been on ships before and this one was dodging subs! My mate Bob Denholm and I slipped out on deck and slept well in a boat (full) of Carey Floats. Through the Equator and then to San Francisco where we disembarked and were taken to Angel Island where there were hundreds of US troops white and black.

Thence out of San Francisco for 3 or 4 nights travelling through the USA hinterland. We were mobbed by American girls on our marches down streets in the prairies. We were put off the train for embarkation in New York and had leave for 2 or 3 days. We were hosted and mobbed wherever we went through the monstrous buildings of New York. We travelled on the 'Queen Elizabeth' for three or so days to the Irish coast & thereon to Greenock in Scotland. The RAF officers were high ranking. A wonderful line up on deck, spoilt for several of our group by the gulls. On the train through Glasgow and out of Scotland through the major cities where particularly in the London area great damage had been done. On to Brighton and the beach hotels. The beach was more pebbles than sand and the pier had been broken to avoid the enemy. Brighton was our unit on the coast.

Several weeks passed by, but we had not been isolated. We were spread over airfields and major stations as we adapted to our position in mainly British stations, with Canadians. Australians adapted to their various postings, mostly to Bomber Command.

During our training I was crewed up with the pilot who, in our case, picked the crew:-

Pilot Lou Marriott (Aus)
Navigator Ewan Lumsden (Aus)
W/Op Donald Woon (Aus)
Bomb Aimer LR Dane (Canadian?)

Engineer Jim Wyllie (Scottish)
Mid upper gunner Tom Kite (English)
Rear Gunner Peter Ferbrücke (France)

We operated from Mildenhall on XV Squadron and flew over the continent. We finished the tour with 30 operations in our crew - I did 31 operations as a W/Op in a crew that had a sick Rear Gunner. I was in the Lancaster and finished the tour on the night that our CO, Wing Commander Watkins took the squadron as Bomb Aimer and leader of XV squadron to the target.

On my return in our plane I went into our crew's quarters, but they were in the 'Bird in Hand' pub. My arrival was a surprise to them as they had heard the plane had got the chop and they were celebrating my getting the chop - the lovely rascals.

Our tour of duty had concluded on 13th January 1945 when we bombed Saarbrücken dropping our bomb load of 11,000lbs from 20,000 feet and were diverted from base to Predennick. This brought me very close to my Cornish ancestors.

In later years I returned to the UK & Europe several times with my wife and in time 3 daughters who have all gone to England & the European continent.

Our skipper Lou Marriott was decorated with a DFC and the Navigator and I had been commissioned and I finished my duties as an instructor at RAF Lichfield & Church Broughton and flying in the dear old Wellingtons. We returned to Brighton RAAF base and I returned to my cricket on good turf pitches in Surrey.

Home from Liverpool on the liner 'Andes' through the Panama Canal to New Zealand where our troopship allowed us a days leave at Wellington.

Tears in the eyes of most of us as we watched the entry to Sydney Harbour and the welcoming throngs. My skipper had been with me all the way but got his wife away from my group. We were put into carriages on trains going to every state. A day and a half to Adelaide and my train pulled into Adelaide Railway Station. My younger sister looked lovely with aunts and uncles and cousins on the platform.

I shall conclude this rather shaky hand - a result of my 87 plus years. My wife passed away 2 years ago; we had a wonderful marriage with 3 lovely daughters all married and no sons, but my 3 grandsons are fine young men.

I don't think the flak helped particularly with my now very shaky hand. This only began some 3 or 4 years ago in force.

Kind regards

Don Woon



**The Bird in Hand now still the HQ of the
reunion weekends**

In early February last year, the Secretary was sent a wonderfully informative letter from Mr Geoff Mudle of Cranleigh in Surrey. It was very interesting and the salient points are reproduced the below.

How it all began.

Dear Geoff,

Thank you for your recent letter and I enclose your questionnaire.

I was not a member of 15 Squadron or any of the later additions to your Register. In the late '70's I replied to an advert Don Clarke put in an aircraft magazine for anyone in Bomber Command with Lancaster experience to contact him. I was one of a few who initially did and you know the eventual result!

I did attend a couple of the reunions, as did Don to my initial dinner of The Wickenby Register (12/626 Sqdns) at Honnington in '79, (See photo.) but my 91 year old eyes cannot pick out Don. (I was able to recognise Don, 4th from left, but partially hidden behind those in front of him. Ed)

However, since those days I have always received your most interesting newsletter. My own 30 year old Wickenby Register (12/626 Sqdns) is closing down after our last reunion this September (2011).

Please remember me to Don and Win and I hope they are as well as can be expected at our ages.

Thank you for the longstanding connection and best wishes to you and all those carrying on.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Mudle. RAF '39 -'45. Bomber Command '42 -'45.

Ps A lifetime of aircraft thanks to the RAF!

Retired from BAE 1984 (Flt Development) on Hunter, 1127 (Kestrel), Harrier and Hawk aircraft.

HONNINGTON - WERE YOU THERE?



DEREK BIGG an apology and advert for book

In the newsletter posted in January, we unfortunately got the name of one of our contributors very wrong. Against the two excerpts from "My War" by Derek Bigg DFC we inadvertently led you to believe this was written by Mr Cyril Biggs.

Derek pointed this out very quickly and graciously accepted my excuse and apology by sending me a copy of the complete works. He wrote: -

"I look forward to reading the rest of the newsletter. I would be glad to receive future copies by post, as I am impressed by the quality of the publication.

*Please ensure that your website attributes it to me; **Derek Bigg DFC.***

I am now going to surprise you. The Church which I attend wanted to publish "My War" for their profit. I agreed and revised the wording for a general readership, and added photos and other data and it has been on sale (@ £5 a copy) since 6th January. It is selling well, and I am happy to donate a copy to your organisation."

*Having now read the complete works, I can heartily recommend it to all. **Secretary.***

To purchase copy, write to the address below, with your address. Make your cheque payable to "Crown Church, Inverness" and they will post a copy to you.

Prices for copies are £6.30 to UK, £8.50 to Europe and £10 to the Rest of the world.

CHURCH SECRETARY
CROWN CHURCH,
INVERNESS
SCOTLAND IV2 3JT

A Second Apology

It would appear we made a second mistake, also with a Scot. This time with the name of author and 149 Squadron historian, John Johnston. On his return from a recent trip to Japan he wrote: - "I did get the newsletter, congratulations on a great job, and I see that you have me in twice! Clare dropped me a note to let me know too. But keep the spelling right, it's Johnston with a't', or I'll look like two different people. I'm a Scot. Without a't' is Scandinavian.

A keen flyer recounts a funny incident.

Alex Lamb contacted me from Stirling in Scotland. He has been a very keen model aircraft enthusiast for much of his life.

Beginning model flying at the age of 5, he was forced to curtail this when he entered the RAF. He eventually saw service with XV Squadron at Mildenhall where he finished his

operations on every one of the Manna operations and some Exodus trips. Alex holds one of the Dutch medals struck for this achievement as a 'Thank you from the Dutch people'.

Once hostilities had ceased he continued on in the service, but was again able to begin his model flying with other like minded personnel from the squadron.

He remembers entering a national competition held at Eaton Bray with a team of service personnel from Mildenhall. They and their models needed transport from Mildenhall to the event and Alex took it upon himself to ask the C/O if they might borrow a lorry from the transport pool to take them down. His request was denied point blank, but followed by a question from the C/O.

"Have you got a pilot amongst you and enough people to make up a crew?"

"Yes sir" Alex replied smartly.

"Well take a Lancaster then man" replied the C/O. So they did. They flew down to Wing and then scrounged a lift to the venue.

The team won all the prizes. At some point they acquired a large number of toilet rolls which they stashed in the bomb bay. On arrival back overhead at Mildenhall, their 'cargo' was distributed across the airfield. He doesn't recall any official back lash to this, so they must have got away with it.

Sadly, he is severely visually impaired these days, which finally brought an end to his model flying for good. He says he is still in contact with the Navigator, Mid Upper Gunner and Flight Engineer from the crew in which he was the Tail-end Charlie. His skipper has died and he lost touch with their W/Op after leaving the RAF.

Alex is a very active member of the ACA Scotland, Saltaire branch. (And had lots of model aircraft regalia to get rid of when I spoke to him)

Article on 75 Sqn

Last year we were pleased to welcome 75 (New Zealand) squadron members to our reunion and to join us as members for the future. They will maintain their identity by retaining their newsletters and their own separate reunion in the wintertime.

They sent me a copy of their newsletter earlier in the year and I have enclosed a couple of snippets from it that may well be of interest to some of our readers. It starts with this poem which echoes the bond felt between the New Zealanders and their fellow aircrew. I hope they will feel a similar welcome here at The Mildenhall Register as we move forward together.

The Ancient (Kiwi) Brits of 75 New Zealand Squadron 1939- 45

Every airman who joined the squadron
Were invested right away
They became an honorary citizen
Of New Zealand from that day
And through the years that followed
This title they bore with pride
Two flags, two lands, one people
That half a world divide
In mind and heart one nation
No loyalties ever will they split
For the right to be called till their dying day
AN UNNATURALISED KIWI-BRIT

Ken Moore wrote this poem years ago and even after all the years that have passed I know that the UK members of the 75 NZ Squadron still feel the same about New Zealand. Please don't put this to the test at NZ immigration they would look at you as if you were from another planet.

This is followed by Margaret, their secretary's, write up of the first shared weekend: -

Our summer reunion was held in Mildenhall and it was a huge success. We all had dinner Friday night (22 of us *(at the Riverside)*) then Saturday morning we went to the church in Mildenhall for the unveiling of a plaque on the side of this quaint church for all the squadrons who flew out of Mildenhall during the war. There were representatives from Australia, Canada and our New Zealander Wing Commander Ian McPherson. The service was well attended with the church



Wing Commander Ian McPherson RNZAF at the Feltwell marker

overflowing and as usual in England the ladies of the parish put on a spread fit for the Queen.

We then all proceeded to Feltwell where Joe Koziar an American had arranged for an old Sergeants Mess to be renamed the Jimmy Ward Centre, our first New Zealander to win a VC. The Americans really did themselves proud with everything done beautifully. The cakes, yes there were 3 cakes remembering the day are a credit to the chefs on the base. Thankfully our Ian McPherson made a speech on behalf of the Squadron. We then took the opportunity to visit the Feltwell Cemetery where 13 Kiwis are buried and put flowers on their graves then to our marker. I must say that Ian was gob smacked at what he saw and kept saying "Who did this?" For those who haven't seen the Feltwell marker it is worth a visit.

Saturday night we then went to the Mildenhall Base for dinner, this time with all the other Squadrons who flew out of there during the war. Once again a very enjoyable evening. Sunday we were back at the Base for the church service, Dan Engle tells me he was there when they opened the chapel and Prince Charles did the honours. I was surprised to see our tiki and Ake Ake Kia Kaha in a stained glass window in the chapel. What a great weekend but as someone said we no sooner say Hello and it's time for goodbyes.

Web search uncovers wartime love letters

Love letters written by a bomber command pilot to his fiancée in the days before he was shot down have come to light after a chance search on the internet.

Guy Trevor Taylor, nicknamed 'Chick', was shot down on a Bomber Command raid near Bremen, Germany, piloting a Short Stirling Bomber with XV Squadron RAF, in August, 1941.

Now he and his 55,572 fallen RAF comrades have been honoured by the new memorial in London's Green Park.

Guy's nephew, Trevor Taylor from Wellswood in Torquay, said: "The opening of the memorial by the Queen filled me with pride, and it brought closure to a long wait for this well-deserved recognition."

Chick was listed 'missing in action' for three years, before officially being listed as killed in action. It was his second operational mission.

His grief-stricken fiancée Kathleen Jones spent years searching for him in the vain hope that he was captured as a prisoner of war.

Now, seven decades on, her treasured love letters from Chick, his medals and school cups have been unearthed.

One written to his sweetheart says: "The more I see of you, the more I am absolutely convinced that you are going to be Mrs Kathleen Taylor before the year is out."

Mr Taylor said: "I am so grateful that after all these years I have got to know and greatly admire my uncle who gave his life for us all at such a tender age."

The cache of family treasures came to light when Kathleen died last year.

Her son Christopher Jackson, from her later marriage, and his wife came across two shoeboxes when sorting through her personal effects.

Kathleen only spoke of the romance just before her death.

She told her granddaughter about it for a school project.

Mr Taylor said: "Kathleen's family put a message on a missing person's website to find Guy's family saying 'this is a long shot'."



Kathleen and Chick in happy days

"I happened to be searching for details of my uncle's war grave when I came across the message."

Trevor, his brother Michael, sister-in-law Grace from Abbotskerswell and niece Hannah met Kathleen's family in Salisbury to pick up the letters.

Trevor said: "It was a very moving day. Since I was a youngster in Torquay I, and my family, always wondered about him and what he was like, but all we had was a photo of Chick and his fiancée, and a few personal possessions.

"It was amazing that by following a remote lead; we were able to meet Chick's fiancée's son and wife and were kindly given the treasure trove of letters."

Chick is one of the 55,573 fallen RAF Bomber Command who have been honoured by the new memorial in London's Green Park.

Many veterans who attended the event said that the memorial was long overdue.

They felt it had become a political issue because of the large scale bombing by the RAF at the end of World War Two.

Mr Taylor said: "It had always angered me that the men who fell in Bomber Command in WW2 were not given proper recognition.

"They were bravely obeying orders sent down to Bomber Harris from Churchill himself, and they flew across the channel knowing full well that they probably would not come back that day, or that night."

Bomber Command Memorial and a New Book - Lincoln Shaw.

This has been a nostalgic week, full of memories both happy and sad. Fuelled by a ceremony in London and a new book

I have never been one for looking back. Life is too short. But I have to admit having a lump in my throat last Thursday when the memorial to Bomber Command was unveiled by the Queen in Green Park. The statistics are staggering. More than 55,000 airmen lost their lives, including quite a few of my friends.

Just how many has been a question of doubt (and hope) for 68 years. The early part of 1944 was a time of heavy losses. We knew many of those who were reported missing but, except in a very few cases, had no idea whether they lost their lives or had baled out and become prisoners of war

We flew from RAF Mildenhall and in July 1944 King George arrived for what was termed a Field Investiture Ceremony, presenting medals to men of 15 and 622 Squadrons. I have a



Lincoln's crew minus Frank,
the bomb aimer
—he said it was unlucky to be
photographed.

photograph of the then Princess Elizabeth and the Queen Mother chatting to a group of airmen. Right at the back, modestly hanging back, is yours truly.

Memories that were becoming very fuzzy are now crystal clear again with the publication of our 622 Squadron history, a labour of love by Howard Sandall whose uncle flew with us and survived. "We Wage War by Night" has many stories of bravery with a Roll of Honour of all who lost their lives - over 300 men who were with the squadron from its formation in August 1943 to the end of the war. Including quite a number I knew well.

There is a photograph of our own crew in the book with the 18 year old Shaw perched on the shoulders of our skipper, Flight Lieutenant Alex Taylor who was awarded the DFC at the end of our tour and well deserved it. Just below us is my special pal Bob Johnston, the wireless operator. We called him "Ten Tenths" because he always had his head in the clouds, earphones on, oblivious to the hell going on around us.

Bob and I were the teenagers in a mature crew that kept changing, partly because of a bad crash during training in which a couple were injured. We had three different navigators (the original one was discarded because he could never find his way back to base).

I am the only one of us still alive and I recently had the sad privilege of writing a tribute to my pal Bob which was read out at memorial services in South Africa and in Zambia, where he was a successful businessman. He came to Devon with his daughter a few years ago and we had a wonderful time looking back on those scary but enjoyable days.



The Queen, then Princess Elizabeth
and her Mother, Queen Elizabeth and RAF Mildenhall

After a spell as a gunnery instructor I joined a second crew and we joined Tiger Force ready to fly out to Okinawa to continue the war against Japan. While everyone else went wild on D Day we were fairly miserable, having just been inoculated ready for the flight out East.

Then they dropped the atom bomb and we didn't have to go. Someone up there was answering our prayers once again.

A Knight's War by Ron Knight

I joined the RAF in November 1941 and was posted to RAF Padgate, Nr Manchester. There I was issued with my uniform plus cleaning materials for my uniform [i.e. Buttons, Cap Badge, and White Belt.] Boots, and a shaving kit and hair brush for me. I was also issued with a small piece of white cloth to put in the front of my cap to denote I was an Aircrew Trainee.

Then I started my foot/rifle drill [another word for square bashing] I was there for about six weeks then posted [that was the actual saying, and they couldn't afford the stamp so we went free] up to RAF Blackpool where I did the rest of my square bashing along the lovely promenade. I also started my wireless operators training learning Morse Code.

All the time I was there all the trainees were billeted with ordinary families and they looked after us with just normal rations for each of us maybe a little bit extra in some foods. I can't remember exactly how long I was there but it was quite a while. Then I was posted to the big RAF Radio Training School at Yatesbury, Nr Calne Wilts. I was trained how to operate the wireless sets [Transmitter/Receiver] and know the different parts and what to do if they broke down. At the end of our training we had take to take written and practical exams. I failed the written exam and had to take it again a week later but passed the practical one with good marks.



The entrance to RAF Padgate

So came the passing out parade and we were presented with our wireless operator badges which we sewed on the right arm above the elbow, it was a hand clasping two flashes of lighting. The trouble was later I didn't save that badge when I became a Warrant Officer in 1945. I saved my Air Gunners Badge as it was transferred over to my new uniform but not the WOP's badge.

I was then sent to RAF Barrow in Furness Air Gunnery School where I started to be trained as an Air Gunner. We first started off learning all about the Browning machine gun, and its different parts, and how to strip them down {No they didn't have the music to go with it} then how to fire them etc. Then we started to fly in one aircraft and fire at a moving target being towed by another aircraft. I passed with good results and was promoted with my Air Gunners Badge and Sergeants stripes thereby graduating as a fully fledged Wop/Ag.



An Oxford Trainer

While I was there I went into a competition for clay pigeon shooting and surprisingly won it with a score of 19 out of 20. The reward for doing that was a full packet of twenty Players cigarettes which was a good prize in those days, as they were one of the top brands.

The next stage was going to RAF Little Rissington [Advanced Flying School for Pilots] where I was the W/Op to the trainee pilots who were learning to fly twin engined Airspeed Oxford aircraft. They went up first with an instructor [and me] doing what we call circuits and bumps then going up solo {with just me} to do the same thing plus a bit of navigational flying.

I was there in case they got lost and I had to get what we call a fix of where we were and a course back to the aerodrome. The hardest job I had was the winding out/in of the aerial each time we took off and landed. Heaven help you if you forgot as you can guess what would happen if you did.

I then went on to doing the same thing at RAF Llandwrog, Caernarvon, North Wales; which was at the foot of the mountains surrounding Mount Snowden.

It was very treacherous navigational flying around there, especially at night and there were quite a few crashes into the mountains, due to the thick mists which formed around them. We flew in Avro Ansons, then a much better aircraft than the Oxford.

I almost forgot to mention that there was one compensation for flying among the mountains and that was we used to go to the local farm and have a lovely fried breakfast of everything, all of their own produce etc. It was probably about twice a week, but it was luvverly jubbly.

Now that I was fully qualified for air crew I was sent to an Operational Training Unit [somewhere in Suffolk] to start training/flying in the Wellington Bomber. [These were being built by Vickers Armstrong at Weybridge, and that was where my Dad was working as a Security Guard at the time].



A Stirling being loaded

All the various grades of air crew were gathered together in this big room and all the Pilots then went round picking various members for their crew. Our skipper selected us and the full crew was: -

Pilot; Laurie [Aussie] B/A; Les [NZ] F/E; Ken [London] Nav; Tim.[Reading] WOP/AG; Myself [Worcester] MUG; Jack [Cheshire] Rear/Gnr; Harry [Tyne and Wear] He was my closest friend and we kept in touch right up until he died of cancer. He was a real Geordie and I very often had to be his translator due to his broad accent. We commenced our training doing circuits and bumps, with an instructor; after that it was flying solo. We then started doing bombing training with all the crew, with the exception of Jack as there was no Mid Upper Gun turret on a Wellington but he did his training on the ground while we were doing our training in the air.

During our training on Wellingtons we went on a navigational exercise over Versailles, France and dropped propaganda papers stirring up the resistance and population to carry out any action against the Germans to disrupt them such as blowing up railway lines, telephone lines etc anything to hold up their defence preparations [This was all prior to D-DAY Landings June 6th 1944]. We flew there and back without even encountering any ack-ack fire let alone night fighters so that was our first so called baptism of fire.

We then got posted to RAF Stradishall, Suffolk where we continued our training in a Short Stirling four engined Bomber. It comprised of doing navigational and bombing exercises and

also what they called Fighter Affiliation. This was when we were attacked by a fighter aircraft from every direction and we had to take evasive action. The gunners then fired their guns at the fighter [using blanks] All done to prepare us for the hard times ahead. Believe me that hard training stood us in good stead.

We then got posted to a Lancaster Flying School at Feltwell, Suffolk where we were trained to fly our future operational aircraft the Avro Lancaster and it was a lot easier this time despite being a different aircraft. In case you were wondering, I was not just sitting there and enjoying the beautiful view, I was busy sending/receiving Morse Code messages from ground/to air. Only now and again did I get the chance to look out of the Astrodome which was situated just above my head.

It was during one of our Bombing practice trips at LFS we hit what they call turbulence [very strong air currents like underwater currents you get in the sea and river] and we dropped suddenly about 3,000 feet. I was standing up looking out of the astro-dome [which was situated above my position in the plane]. Of



A pair of ME Bf-110 the main German night fighter in 1944

course I was thrown off balance falling down and hitting my head against the wireless operating position. Luckily I was wearing my leather flying helmet otherwise it could have been more serious than a headache I received. I just shook my head [just to make sure it was still on] and carried on with my duties. Tim the Nav had noticed all of this and when we landed asked if I was all right and that I must have a head like a rock. After that I had the nickname of "ROCKY" for the rest of the time I was in the RAF even up to the time I worked for The Post Office Overseas Telegraph Service as an Overseas Telegraphist [more Morse Code] until 1970 I still use it now and again when needed.

Now that we were a fully trained operational crew the next move was being posted to a Bomber Squadron which was XV Sqn at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk. We were there for just six months completing our full tour of 30 operations.

Before we started our actual tour our skipper went with an experienced crew as second pilot to experience the dangers etc of flying over enemy territory and conditions he would meet when we start our tour. You can bet what we were thinking and praying while waiting for his return, which he did quite safely and unscratched.

So then the next night we started our first bombing operation which was over the city of Cologne Germany. As we approached the target, Harry shouted out "ME110 [Night Fighter] corkscrew port!" which the skipper did. Meanwhile Harry was firing his guns at the fighter and eventually drove it off. We then carried on to the target and bombed it despite very heavy ack-ack fire [anti-aircraft guns] so I suppose you could say we had a very good baptism of fire on our first bombing operation.

After that we bombed various cities with their industrial factories, mostly in the area called The Ruhr.

On Sept 8th & 12th we had to bomb the port of Le Havre to help our troops who had surrounded the port. The Germans were putting up stiff resistance. So to reduce casualties on our side we bombed their defences and them. After the second raid they surrendered, suffering very heavy casualties, but as is always the case in bombing raids there were a lot of casualties among the French population, which couldn't be helped. We carried out our bombing at a height of about 4,000 feet [which was very low as our usual bombing height was 22000/23000 feet] and after dropping our bombs [which was our big "Cookie" a 4,000 pounds and eight 500 pound bombs] we flew low over the fields. We saw a farm worker who waved to us, just then there was a loud twang but nobody knew what it was, the aircraft flew ok, so we carried on back home. When we landed there was a coil of telephone wire wrapped around the tail wheel, so that meant that we had interrupted someone's telephone calls then and for some time to come.

The longest flight we ever had was to Stettin on the German/Polish border which took about 8 hours. We had to fly over the southern part of Sweden [who was neutral during the war] to avoid the heavy concentration of ack-ack guns around Northern Germany. We even lost some planes over Sweden from their guns as we were over their territory which was not allowed. It was a very successful trip but we were very tired by the time we landed. After debriefing [which was giving our report on the bombing and any fighter activity etc] we were glad to have our cup of hot tea, with a dash of rum in it, then a nice plate of bacon and eggs [which we got after each trip] then into our beds.

The shortest rest we ever had was our bombing trip to Dortmund [The Ruhr] when we bombed in the morning then after about six hours we were back again at night and the fires were still fiercely burning from the morning's raid.

We had some very hairy experiences during our tour of operations which we completed in December 1944. I had been promoted to Flight Sergeant in November 1944.

We were going on a mine laying trip over the North Sea, around the coasts of Germany and Denmark. We had about six long mines and a full load of fuel [over 1,000 gallons] on board. The C.O. of XV Sqn was trying out an experiment of how many aircraft could take-off in a certain time and it finished up with twelve aircraft taking off, all in about ten minutes. There was one taking off right at the top end of the runway, one half way down the runway, and one just starting at the beginning of the runway. We started our take off and reached a height of about 300 feet when we hit the slip-stream of the aircraft ahead of us. The next minute we were heading for the ground with the skipper and bomb aimer pulling back on the controls trying to get us back to normal height. They managed it somehow just as we started to brush the top of the trees. Talk about a wing and a prayer. The really funny part of all this was nothing untoward happened during the rest of the trip. Needless to say the CO didn't try that experiment again.

Another time fate took a turn was when our usual aircraft W for William was unserviceable so we had to have Q - Queen [which was seen as the jinx aircraft of the squadron]. All went

well and we got back with no trouble, but we found out that our usual aircraft "W" had been repaired and that the CO had gone in it with another crew and had been shot down by ack-ack fire, bailed out by parachute, and became a POW [Prisoner of War].

On our 27th operation we started to use a new system of bombing called Gee(?), where the navigator could see on his screen the full outline of the ground and buildings and gave the Bomb Aimer instructions when to release the bombs. While approaching the target it was the job of the gunners and B/A to make sure there was no aircraft above or below your aircraft. We were approaching the target when one of the gunners shouted "aircraft above!", so Laurie pulled our aircraft up level with the other aircraft [which had been flying at the wrong height].

We had completed our bombing run and were turning for home when there was a tremendous explosion and thick black smoke. Laurie said "What was that?" and Harry replied "It looks like a scarecrow". [These were ack-ack shells used by the Germans to make out they had shot down aircraft] We carried on coming home and landed safely without any further trouble. We then attended the debriefing by the Intelligence Officer. Then Laurie noticed that his Australian mate Peter's crew was not amongst those being debriefed and so enquired why. He was told that Peter's aircraft had been hit from above by another aircraft's bombs and had been blown up. [So that was the explosion we had seen; an aircraft's bombs from above plus his own bombs, as he was on the run in to drop his own bombs]. You can just imagine the effect it had on us, especially Laurie. In fact he never got over it right up to when we finished our tour of ops. three trips later

It was only about four months later when Laurie himself was killed. After he finished his end of tour leave he was posted to an RAF Station to fly Spitfires and do Fighter Affiliation [This is what we had done during our Pre-Operational Training]. On March 24th 1945 Laurie was flying through cloud prior to making an attack on a Trainee Bomber Crew and he came out of one thick cloud and crashed straight into another aircraft [not the Trainee Bomber Aircraft] and was instantly killed. He is buried in the Commonwealth Cemetery next to the big American Cemetery Cambridge Harry and I have been to pay our respects a couple of times. So in a macabre way they came together again but I don't think that either of them deserved that kind of fate. They both were good honest, straight forward men and I still pray for them. Thinking on I suppose we will always be back together again as a crew in the clouds, because I think I am the only one left, as Harry died August 2008 from cancer.

When I returned from my end of tour leave the rest of the crew had been posted to other RAF Stations. I was posted to a Pilots Advanced Flying School who were flying Ansons doing their Navigational Training. I was the W/Op assisting them in their navigation by getting what we called fixes of our position at the time and a course to set for base. I was there until September when I was posted, on compassionate grounds, to Uxbridge. I thought that it would have been at the big wireless station there but no, I finished up in the Station Warrant Officers Office right next door to the Group Captains Office. I was given the job of being W/O Coleman's assistant, a very important one, dealing with leave/weekend passes and other important papers.

In the November I was promoted to Warrant Officer and just after that Mr Coleman went on two weeks leave and left me in charge. It was a good job that it was not the Sundays for church parade which was for the whole Station otherwise I think I would have had kittens. It was a very responsible job for the Station Warrant Officer as he had to deal with the marching and parading of the entire personnel.

I finished my six months compassionate leave then got posted out to the Middle East [Egypt] and went out via what they called The Medloc Route. I and several other RAF bods went over by ferry to Calais then by an overnight train to Marseilles where we stayed awhile waiting for a ship to go to Egypt. We left eventually and arrived in Cairo about ten days later. The streets of Cairo were quite a surprise with little boys pestering you for a shoeshine or an introduction to a pretty girl [The expression was "Shufti Bint"] but otherwise it was quite interesting walking around the streets and markets.

From Cairo I was taken over the desert road in a covered lorry with flaps at the back for protection from the glaring sun and swirling sand. The temperatures reached over 40 degs in the daytime, but very cold at night [plus mosquitoes and the other the insects]. I arrived at RAF Station Devesoir which was situated by the Great and Little Bitter Lakes at the top end of the Suez Canal. There were still the three Italian warships, captured at the beginning of the war, [the crews of course being made POW`s] in the Great Bitter Lake. So it was quite an impressive sight to see them out on the waters with the desert surrounding it all.



RAF Devesoir from the Air

There was a Squadron of Mosquito aircraft at Devesoir and during the time I was there as ground W/OP I got to know some of the Pilots and Navigators and we exchanged our operational experiences. Then one day I had the pleasure of being taken up for a fly around and boy did I enjoy it. It was like going from a Bentley [Lancaster] to an Alfa Romeo [Mosquito] it was fast, over 350mph, and he flew it all over the sky and at about 100 feet above the desert. So I can say I have flown in two of the most famous aircraft of the RAF at that time

At the Devesoir Camp there were some German POW`s captured during the big desert campaign after El Alamein. They generally cleaned up around the camp and kept the accommodation [Nissan Huts] clean. There was one chap called Kurt [who had been in the artillery, manning the most famous and deadliest 88mm guns. Originally used as ack-ack guns, then used as anti-tank guns with deadly effect] He used to brush and clean my best uniform, buttons, cap badge etc even press it sometimes. Whenever I wanted to send a food parcel home he would get a cardboard box, pack it, then wrap a sacking cloth round it, write the to/from address on it, [in fact I think if you chucked it in the sea it would have floated, it was such a perfect job]. At the end of all this he was quite happy to accept a tin of 50 Gold Flake cigarettes which we were issued with each week. They were very good workers and caused no trouble at all. Now and again, when I got the opportunity, we had a little chat

about ourselves. Officially we were not allowed to fraternise with them, but we did at times; after all we did not want to be inhuman despite who they were.

The only trouble we had was with the Arabs, they liked to take things that didn't belong to them. One night one of them tried to help himself to something that belonged to an officer but he picked the wrong person because the officer happened to have a German Shepherd Dog in his accommodation. Well I think you can guess the result, needless to say he didn't do any more stealing not on that camp anyway.

Well we set off on our demob journey in the same covered lorries as before, with plenty of heat, dust and discomfort. After about three hours ride we arrived in Cairo but there was no time for sightseeing, just to go straight on board a welded Lease Lend ship from the USA called the "Empire Windrush" [This same ship was used in the 1950's to bring immigrants from the West Indies to the UK] We



The Empire Windrush

started off on voyage towards the port of Marseilles, and were making very good progress when the engine broke down. So there we were slowly drifting back with the current towards the North African coast with no means of heating, lighting or cooking hot meals. Eventually they had to start throwing some of the perishable foods overboard from the cold storage as it was unfit to cook or eat. We did manage to eat some of the fruit before it got too ripe.

To have something hot we lit a fire on deck and roasted some potatoes. To drink we had to get a bucket and take it from the pure water tank direct. After about a day and a half a British destroyer came and towed us towards our destination. We arrived in port eventually after a very slow and uncomfortable voyage. [That is why I have only been on one cruise since!] We set off on the rest of our journey on The Medloc Route train along the South West Coast of France up to Calais then across to good old England. We then proceeded by train up to the Demob Centre at Oswestry. I got measured up etc and issued with a Trilby, Jacket, Waistcoat, Trousers, Shirt, Tie, Socks and Shoes, all put in a nice little suitcase. We were allowed to wear our uniform for the next two weeks during our demob leave. I also had my discharge reference book stating my conduct during my service in the RAF and of course all the necessary food etc coupons. I was not actually completely out of the Air force but on the Reserve list. They did ask me before if I would like to sign on for a further three years, but as I had a young family waiting I declined. Well I got home to my family in Worcester and it was quite a reunion, and another one when I went up the road to The Virgin Tavern and met up with some of Grandma's relations and my old golfing mates etc and to top it off was to have a good glass of beer. I finished my demob leave then started back in my old job on the Great Western Railway and trained to become a Carriage and Wagon Examiner [known as a Wheel Tapper] a very important job.

Well that is my RAF Story so I hope that it has been interesting as it has been for me to tell it. Each part seemed to fit in like a jigsaw puzzle as I told it. I even surprised myself in remembering so much after 63 years.

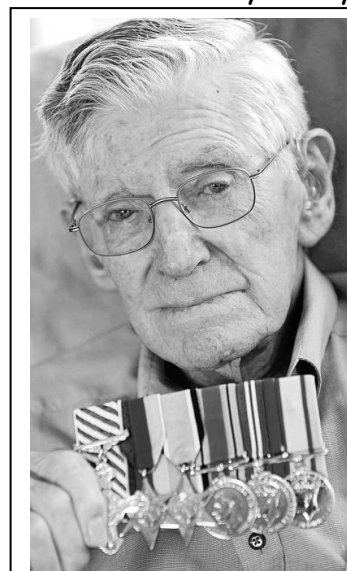
Deaths notified since the last newsletter

Mr Wally Bishop, Burleigh Waters, Queensland, Australia, 622 Sqn
Mr Ken J Boulton, Bolwarra Heights, New South Wales, 149 / 622 Sqn
Mr A Max Bourne, Booragoon, Western Australia, Fg Off, 622 Sqn
Mr Alfred Chapman, Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, ex Armourer RAF Mildenhall
Mr Frank H Dengate, Tamworth, New South Wales, Australia, Pilot XV Sqn
Mrs Natalie Ebbs, Tuddenham, Suffolk, a supporter of XC Sqn since WW2
Flt Lt R T A Hodgson DFM, Wellington
Mrs Margot James, Dunstable, Bedfordshire
Mr Maurice Johnstone, DFC, RNZAF, Pilot, XV Sqn
Mr George Kirkpatrick, Preston, Lancastershire, 622 Sqn
Sqn Ldr Phil Lamason DFC & Bar RNZF, Pilot, XV Sqn
Mr James O'Rourke, Rhyl, Ground Crew 149 Sqn, RAF Mildenhall
Mr Frank Palmer, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 149 Sqn
Mr Wes K Perry, DFC, Hampton, XV Sqn
Mr Frank Savage, Leeds, Yorkshire, 149 Sqn
Mr George Stamp. Spalding, Lincolnshire, Plt & Flt Eng 149 Sqn
Mr Thomas Sumner, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire. Pilot / Flt Eng, XC Sqn
Mrs Joan Talbot, Bundaburg, Queensland, Australia, Sister of Flt Sgt Nystrom
The Ven Canon 'Ted' Wells, Ipswich, Suffolk, 89 MU, Padre Mildenhall
Mr K 'Timber' Wood, Hungerford, Berkshire, 622, 189 & 9 Tiger Force

Flt Lt Frank Dengate

Frank's wife Margaret wrote to say that Frank died aged 89 years on 2nd February this year. The following article appeared in the Tamworth Northern Daily Leader:

Relatives and friends of Tamworth's Frank Dengate are mourning the loss of a kind and generous man. A well-known member of the Tamworth community, Mr Dengate, 89, passed away on Thursday. As a young man, Frank trained at the Tamworth Aero Club as a pilot. He was training to become a carpenter with his father when he was called up to join the air force and received his wings at Point Cook. He left Melbourne on the New Amsterdam on his 21st birthday December 5, 1941 bound for England via the US. Mr Dengate flew with the Royal Air Force in 15 Squadron, flying Lancaster bombers, and began operational flying in December 1943, bombing over Germany and France. He was later awarded the Distinguished Flying



Frank with his medals

Cross for his military service and later returned to Tamworth to work for the family's Dengate Joinery.

In 2003, Mr Dengate was named Tamworth City Council's Citizen of the Year. He was an active member of the Rotary Club of Tamworth for 43 years, Legacy for 42 years and the Peel Masonic Lodge for 60 years. He was awarded the Long Service Award for Legacy in 1998, a certificate for his contribution to the Australian effort in World War II, and was recognised in the early 1990s for his 50 years of service to Freemasonry. Mr Dengate is survived by his wife, Margaret.

Frank's crew was very close knit and meet on several occasions after the war, more than once with Sir Arthur Harris. His mid upper gunner was Frank Coney, our past Chairman.



Bomber Harris with Frank Dengate's crew before dinner in the Grosvenor House Hotel Frank in on the far left

Mrs Natalie Ebbs

Harry, her husband, wrote with the sad news that Natalie had died on 5th December 2011. She was in her teens when 90 Squadron were operating from Tuddenham and met members of the squadron when aircrew were billeted with her parents. Among them was Plt Off Jonny Greenwood, whose wife, Eve, a Canadian WRAF, was found to pregnant when he failed to return. The baby was born in Tuddenham and mother and baby were looked after by Natalie's mother. Eve was repatriated to Jonny's home country of Australia to be with his family, but it did not work out and she returned to Canada. Natalie's grandfather and father had both helped in the building of the airfields at Tuddenham and Mildenhall, being employed by the Air Ministry. Natalie supported the 90 Squadron reunions from their inception and Harry and



Natalie with Charlie Woolford At Mildenhall's 75th Anniversary

her house hosted members of the squadron up to last year, providing free bed and breakfast, evening meals and lunches over the weekends. Friend Charley Woolford said she will be sadly missed. Natalie was a regularly attendee at Reunion dinners.

The Revd Canon Edward (Ted) Wells MBE,

Canon Ted Wells died peacefully on July 26th after some months of declining health. Ordained for 53 years Ted has served the St Edmundbury and Ipswich's diocese since 1960 and many will remember his ministry as Hospital Chaplain in Ipswich. During the World War 2 Ted served with the RAF at Mildenhall between 1942—44. He was then sent to France after the invasion of Europe and then on to the Far East. During his time at Mildenhall he assisted with services in Beck Row Church and conducted services for the Register. He was disappointed that ill health prevented him from attending the memorial dedication in 2011.

More Tributes for Don Clark

Betty Richardson wrote in to say how sad it was to hear of the loss of Don.

Betty shared the same surname of Clarke, spelt with an 'E' at the end because her mother insisted it looked unfinished without. Don and she had a few laughs about it over the years.

Eileen Silver WAAF ground to air W/Op at Stradishall and Mildenhall wrote in to say how sorry she was to hear that Don had passed away.

Jack Trend whilst mourning the loss of so many familiar names, he particularly will miss Don, his first contact with The Register.

Mike Coles was one of 'Nobby's originals' and is sorry to hear of his loss. Has enjoyed some excellent reunions with all.

Mrs Betty Hearne is so sorry to hear of the passing of Don Clarke. She clearly remembers their first meeting. It was outside the Bell Hotel in Mildenhall. She and 'Basher' (her late husband) had arrived with others for that very first reunion. Eddy and Thelma Orchard had managed to come over from Australia, which was wonderful.

Jim Hendon was very sorry to hear of the passing of "our founder and President Don 'Nobby' Clarke MBE". Jim continued: - "He will be sadly missed by all members!"

Jim knew him well, especially during the war when they were both Cpl. Armourer's, Don on XV, and Jim on 622 Squadron. Jim thanked all for their efforts in keeping the Register going and holding it all together.

Mrs Marie Pollen was saddened to hear of Don's death.

Mr Doug Kebbell wrote to say thanks to all for the item in the newsletter re Don. He was in the same flight as Donald Clarke and they used to wave to each other to show that they were OK out on the flight-line and they had a drink in the Mess afterwards. They closely resembled each other and were often mistakenly identified.

Contacts

For the time being please send all correspondence to

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Tel: 01638507211

Also visit our web site at www.mildenhallregister.stirlingpilot.org.uk

And the Facebook page: The Mildenhall Register

PHOTOGRAPHS OF REGISTER MEMBERS AT THE DEDICATION AND UNVEILING OF THE BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL



Ken Thomas, 622 Sqn with son Graham



Bob Kendall XV Sqn with son Peter



John Cox, 622 Sqn with wife Elisabeth



Jim Coman, 90 & 149 Sqn with daughter Tina