



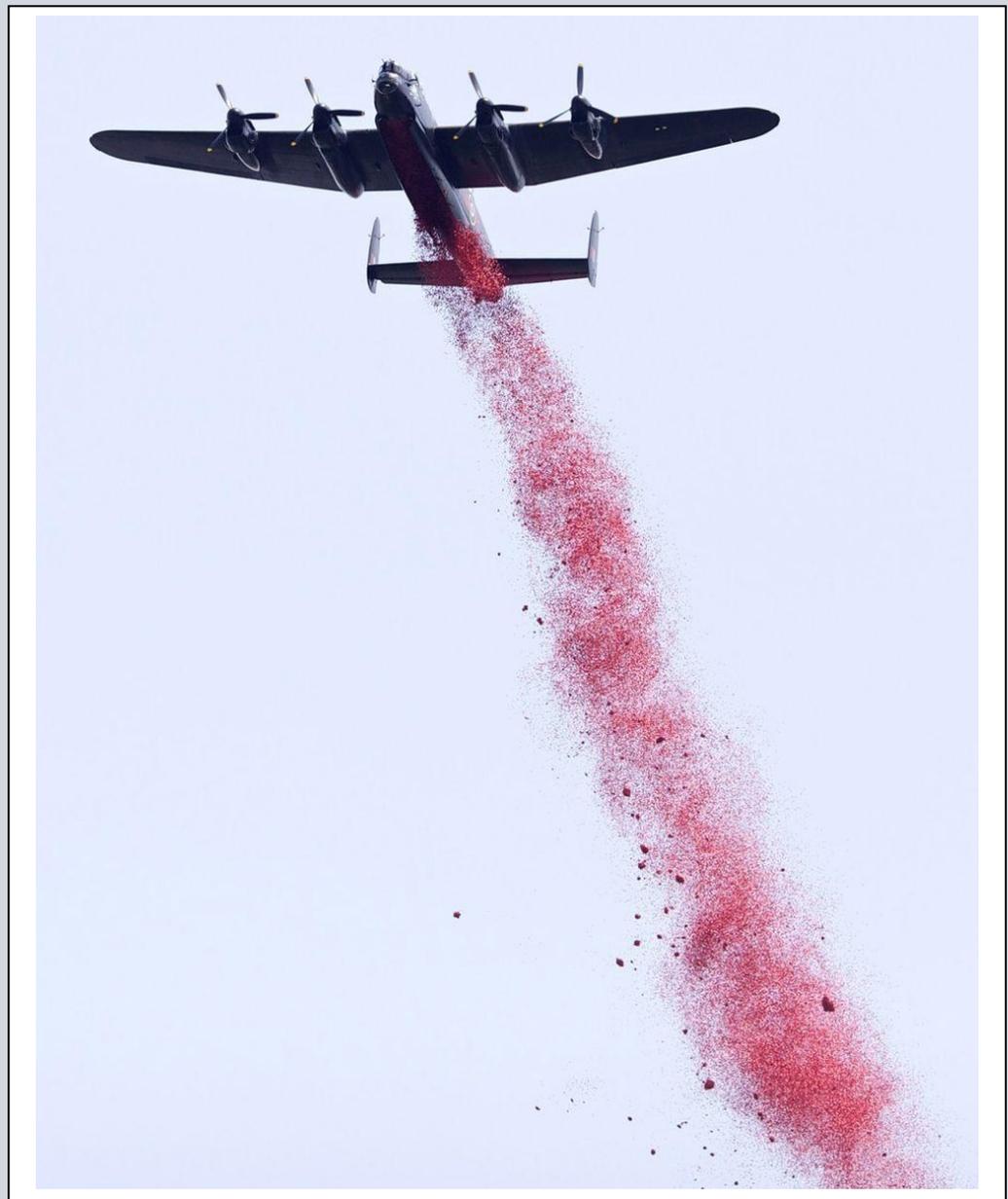
**Newsletter
Winter 2013**

The Mildenhall Register

15, 90, 149 and 622

Bomber Squadrons' Association

**Supported by Friends of 75 (NZ) Squadron
and 218 (Gold Coast) Squadron**



The BBMF's Lancaster Bomber drops thousands of poppies over the Bomber Command Memorial to mark the dedication of the memorial in Green Park London

Words from the Chairman

The past year has been a very busy and exciting time for the Register's members. Closely following on from the highly successful Reunion weekend in May was the dedication and unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial by HM The Queen. Then as the year drew to an end was the announcement that Bomber Command aircrew had finally won official recognition. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, said that Bomber Command veterans were to get a clasp. Details of the award are still somewhat sketchy and the clasp will probably to be worn with the Air Crew Europe ribbon. This brings our veterans into line with Fighter Command. More details can be found elsewhere in this newsletter and we will endeavour to keep our members in touch with the details as and when they are announced. The MOD has indicated it will be several months before the clasps are ready.

Your committee feel that with the passing of the years the active membership of the Register will fall. In the future we do see a problem in maintaining the membership and attracting adequate numbers to make holding a reunion feasible. We would like to extend membership of the Mildenhall Register to cover all those flying units that operated out of RAF Mildenhall and its satellite airfields. Over the past 12 months we have been in contact with other Squadron Associations that had war time connections with RAF Mildenhall. We have invited these Associations to develop some sort of liaison with the Register. As a result, No 218 (Gold Coast) Sqn will probably opt to join fully whereas the friends of No 75 (NZ) Sqn will maintain a looser association; keeping their own committee, newsletter and holding additional reunions. We hope other Associations take up our invitation.

In extending this invitation we do not intend infringing on other Associations current activities but see it possibly as a means of ensuring they (and the Register) carry on. For example, Squadron organisations that have joined could hold their individual events over the weekend -218 (Gold Coast) Sqn visiting Chedburgh whereas 90 Sqn could visit the Tuddenham memorial and 75(NZ) Sqn visit Feltwell and other places connected with the Sqn. Such events could continue on the Sunday of the Mildenhall Register Reunion or indeed at anytime over the weekend with Mildenhall being the hub of the weekend's activities. The Associations would come together for the formal Saturday evening meal and perhaps a Sunday Memorial Service.

May I give my thanks for all those who have contributed articles and stories for this newsletter. In compiling it I have tried to incorporate as many of these as possible whilst including items of interest gleaned from other sources. Please keep sending such news to me via the Secretary

Details for the coming reunion, to be held over the May weekend, are already well in hand, please find the application form enclosed with this newsletter. The programme will follow



The Chairman on Remembrance Sunday 2012 laying a wreath at the Register's Plaque at St John's Beck Row

that of recent years with the exception that this year the Sunday morning remembrance service will be held in St John's Church Beck Row, the home of our memorial plaque. The Committee will recommend that we alternate yearly the service at the Base Chapel with one at St John's. The provisional programme for the weekend follows the Secretary's report.

Two big words of thanks:

Firstly to your Committee which gives me such sterling support - Secretary, Geoff Reynolds, Treasurer, Smiley Mildwater, Historians, Martin Ford-Jones (XV Sqn), Alan Fraser (149 Sqn and our Web Master), Sam Mealing-Mills (XC Sqn) and Howard Sandall (622 Sqn), the General members who trouble shoot, provide advice and undertake numerous other tasks, Jim Coman, Clare More and Gerry Thompson and finally the support by wives Jill Gentleman, Valerie Ford-Jones, Cherry Mildwater and Debbie Reynolds

Secondly, thanks to all those who donated so generously to the Register's Funds. The production and distribution of the newsletter is a costly business and without your regular contributions there would be no newsletter.

622 Squadron reforms after 60 years

Just as we were about to go to press came the exciting news that 622 Squadron has been reformed at RAF Brize Norton where it will be known as No 622 (Reserve Aircrew) Squadron. Its mission will be to provide aircrews to support the Air Transport and Air-to-Air Refuelling Forces either on call-out in times of crisis and war, or to provide peacetime support to maintain the operational capability of the RAF multi-engine squadrons.

More about this action from the MOD web site :- the decision to reform goes back to 1994 when to support the Hercules Force, 1359 Flight was embedded on the Hercules Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) at RAF Lyneham for a 3 year trial period. Following the success of this trial, the Flight continued to expand and provide support for operations and peacetime tasking across the Hercules force. Further expansion followed with members supporting all the Air Transport and Air to Air Refuelling types currently being flown by the RAF. In June 2011, the Flight relocated to RAF Brize Norton with all the other units based at Lyneham due to the closure of the base. In recognition of the continued support given to the main Sqns, 1359 Flt was authorised by the Standing Committee of the Air Force Board to rebadged as 622 Sqn on 1 Oct 12.

I have made initial contact with the Squadron through the Squadron's Adjutant; as soon as possible I will speak to the Officer Commanding 622 Sqn. I hope the new OC will be able to attend the reunion in May. In the meantime the Squadron would welcome any memorabilia of 622 Sqn past to display in their crew room! Can you help?

Finally, may I wish you and yours, a Happy and Prosperous New Year. I look forward to meeting many of you at the May reunion.

John Gentleman

The Secretary's Report

Well, what an extraordinary year 2012 has been, with so many great highlights. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the Bomber Command Memorial, the Olympics and Para-Olympics, the atrocious weather and we have recently heard that Kate and William are to have a baby. Will it be a boy or girl? Finally, the great news has broken that Bomber Command personnel will at last be recognised by the issue of a clasp to add to their medals. More on that later.

The weather has seriously disrupted my hobby of model aircraft flying. I was supposed to have Pat Young, one

of our members, over to watch, but the unpredictability of the weather has meant that so far, he hasn't seen me fly. Oh well, better luck next year. I did manage to put on a bit of a show at a summer barbeque at our Chairman's house for the Mildenhall ACA, but other displays and weekends have been cancelled. Still, after Christmas I shall be getting another new aircraft, a SE5a of WW1 vintage and I hope for better weather to come.

The Register has flourished, especially with the increased interest generated by the BC Memorial (which has been voted No 1 London tourist attraction) and with the signing up of Mark Tilley, we have had 43 new members. Mark is a freelance researcher and has offered to carry out work for Register members. Anyone interested in his assistance should contact him through me in the normal ways.

Sadly, we have been advised of 30 deaths, some of whom were recorded on the Roll of Honour in the summer special edition, the remainders are recorded in this issue.

Our historians have similarly been kept very busy, to the extent that one has informed me that it will be the New Year before he gets round to answering some of the many new enquiries!

This is all very encouraging and will ensure we shall continue to remember and honour all those who have served with the Mildenhall squadrons.

John's report details the integration of 75(NZ) and 218 (Gold Coast) Squadron's Associations so it just remains for me to welcome them all warmly and we hope to see many of you at the reunion in May.

Details of next year's event are carried in another section of the newsletter. Please note the streamlining changes that we have made to the ticket and donation system for this year. The booking forms will have the Treasurers address printed on them for their safe return. There is a section on the back for those who cannot travel to the reunion, but would like to attend if



Geoff right with fellow committee member Jim Coman

only they had a means of getting there. A second section for those who would be prepared to offer transport to someone attending from their locality or on their route is also on the form. We hope this will mean that more members will be able to attend.

Finally, apologies to those of you who have written in with stories if they haven't yet appeared; but they are always welcome and we will get around to airing them in the future. So please keep sending them in, I love to read them all and hope, when they finally appear, that our readership is similarly entertained.

Best wishes to you all for a warmer and drier 2013, at least in the UK, Lincolnshire in particular.

Geoff Reynolds

Provisional Programme for 2013 Reunion

The 2013 Reunion will once more be based on RAF Mildenhall by kind permission of the Commander of the 100th Refuelling Wing of the USAF.

Friday 17 May:

1730 Welcome drinks in Middleton Hall

1800 Buffet supper served

2000 AGM followed by a short presentation on the History of RAF Mildenhall

Saturday 18 May

0915 Coach leaves Bird in Hand

0945-Coffee and view of the 149 Role of Honour at Methwold Church

1030 Depart Methwold for City of Norwich Aviation Museum, Horsham St Faiths

1200 Sandwich lunch and Museum Visit

1500 Depart for Beck Row

1615 Arrive Bird in Hand

1800 Pre Dinner Drinks Galaxy Club

1900 Formal Dinner

2200 Carriages

Sunday 19 May

1000 Register Remembrance Service St John's Beck Row

1045 Coffee and Cakes

1130 Farewells

Hotels and Guest Houses in the Mildenhall area

The Bell Hotel, Mildenhall - 01638583511. The Lord Mayor's Cottage, Barton Mills - 01638718947

The Riverside House Hotel, Mildenhall - 01638717274. The Golden Boar, Freckenham - 163872300

The Olde Bull Inn, Barton Mills - 01638711001. Flat 8 Mill Street Mews, Mildenhall - 1638711408

Walnuts Country House, Mildenhall - 01638714822. Worlington Hall, Worlington - 01638712237

Motels

Travelodge, Barton Mills 08719844296. Bird in Hand, Beck Row 01638713247

Premier Inn, Newmarket 08715279296.

The weekend coincides with a race day at Newmarket, so it is recommended you book accommodation as soon as possible.

Finally, War Heroes Get The Honour They Richly Deserve

As reported in the Daily Express

Bomber Command heroes finally won official recognition yesterday with the award of a campaign honour - nearly 70 years late. David Cameron told MPs that surviving Bomber Command veterans - thought to total more than 10,000 - are to get a clasp. They will probably wear it on their Air Crew Europe ribbon. This will bring them into line with Fighter Command.

Bomber Command veteran Harry Irons, 88, from Romford in Essex, who won the DFC while flying 60 missions as a rear-gunner, said: "This is fantastic news. They are recognising what we did at last. But they should have given us a medal after the war.

"I think the clasp should be given to all the families of those who were killed in the war or who have died since.

"All families who lost loved ones in Bomber Command should get the clasp first. Those young men who died got no recognition. Anyone who was in Bomber Command should get it. What they went through was terrible."

Bomber Command suffered the highest casualty rate of any British unit, losing 55,573 of its 125,000 volunteers, but after the war was denied a medal amid controversy over raids on cities such as Dresden.

Air Commodore Malcolm White, chairman of the Bomber Command Association, said: "The bravery and selfless duty of the Bomber Boys have at last been recognised."

The MOD said it would take a few months before the clasps were ready.

As and when more news becomes available the Register will place details on the web site. If members wish to receive details by post then please send a request together with a stamped address envelope to the Secretary, contact details inside the back cover.

We welcome receiving your memories of time spent in the RAF be it in war or peace time Membership of the Register is opening to both those who served at Mildenhall and on Squadrons with a connection to RAF Mildenhall. Also to those with an interest in Mildenhall and 3 Group, if fact we welcome all support from where ever it comes!

A note from 218 (Gold Coast) Sqn Association's Historian Steve Smith

I think I can speak for the vast majority of the 218 (Gold Coast) Squadron Association members that we are delighted and honoured to now be part of the Mildenhall Register.

For 218 especially the last few years have witnessed the gradual decline in membership, the Grim-reaper is doing what it does best and taking from us in quick succession some of the characters of the association. These characters were the focal point of the association, "Harlow's Mob" the crew of Les Harlow DFC (the last fully intact crew to have survived a tour and together up until early 2005) the "Blenkin Bunch" the crew of Frank Blenkin DFC and of course "Happy Funnel" or "Funnells Fusiliers" the infamous crew of Flight Lieutenant Frederick Fennell DFC. Each epitomised the spirit of the association. Sadly only four of the twenty one



remain. Apart from the obvious two other factors have contributed towards the decline. The first and most obvious is the ill health of Margery Griffiths the association secretary, Margery was the driving force behind the success of the reunions. Her tireless work to organise the weekend activities, annual dinner, BBQ's and Lancaster flypast are legendary within the ranks of the association. The association held its last reunion 2010, just over 30 full members attended, plus guests. When I first joined the association in 2003 these annual reunions would witness over 100 plus members and their guests congregating at Bury St Edmunds, I think from memory, one year over 120 attended some from as far as Australia and Canada, a wonderful achievement.

The second is far less obvious but critical nevertheless. No.218 disbanded in August 1945, apart from a brief spell as a Thor Missile unit it never reformed and as such membership post war is practically nil.

So what of the future of 218 Association? It was apparent to me as the association historian that without a change in direction the association would very quickly be an association only in name. With Margery's health problems I was asked to take over the role of Newsletter editor/ writer / dispatcher, a role I was happy to take on. It was soon evident that with the reunions now finished the association was in a bit of a slump. Contributions to the newsletters were almost a trickle, 3 or 4 letters every 2 or 3 months, if I was lucky. The energy and passion which had made the association so successful in the past was missing, it appeared to me that the members felt that with no more reunions the association was finished. The association needed a life-line.

With the Squadron's brief stay at RAF Mildenhall a fact I asked a few members their opinion about the possibility of the association joining the Mildenhall Register. These likeminded members could see that joining the Register was the way forward. How could it not be with its main objectives being, "*To perpetuate the memory of those who died in service*" and "*to maintain the spirit of comradeship and interest among those with a common bond to these Squadrons*" This had to be the way of continuing the association for years to come. I contacted Alan Fraser Historian of No 149 (East India) Squadron for help and guidance; this was freely given along with his encouragement. It was now a case of explaining to the members the many benefits of joining the Mildenhall Register. Thankfully the 95% of the 120 plus members were in full agreement.

It is now up to the members of No 218 (Gold Coast) Association. The Mildenhall Register have given us the opportunity to continue the reunions and join in and maintain that spirit that was so evident only a few years ago. I truly hope that the 218 Association grasp this opportunity because like the Squadron motto the Mildenhall Register came along just **"IN-TIME"**

A brief history of No 218 (Gold Coast) Squadron

No. 218 Squadron was formed at Dover, Kent, on 24th April 1918, and about a month later went to France as a day-bomber squadron equipped with DH9 aircraft. It joined the 5th Group, working under the Dover-Dunkirk Naval Command, and during five months of operations made 117 raids on enemy targets in Belgium and France, dropped 94 tons of bombs and claimed the destruction of 38 enemy aircraft in air combat, Disbanded in 1919, the squadron was re-formed in 1936 and became one of the comparatively few bomber squadrons to serve continuously through the war against Nazi Germany.

No. 218 Squadron flew to France on 2nd September 1939, and made valuable reconnaissance flights and leaflet raids in Battle aircraft in the early days of the war. In June 1940, after having hindered the German advance into France by bombing the enemy's lines of communications and troop concentrations (and having suffered heavy casualties in the process) it was evacuated to England to be re-equipped with Bristol Blenheim medium-range bombers. Five months later, when it was equipped with Wellington long-range aircraft, it became a heavy-bomber squadron. Its targets were of the widest variety - from industrial centres, railways, Noball (V-weapon) sites and gun batteries, to the Channel ports, oil and petrol installations, and concentrations of troops



and armour. The squadron was re-equipped with Stirling four-engined bombers (the first of the real "heavies") beginning in December 1941 - three months after His Excellency the Governor of the Gold Coast and the peoples of the Gold Coast territories officially adopted the squadron - and the Stirlings were, in turn, replaced by Lancasters in the summer of 1944.

Immediately before the German capitulation in May 1945, when the heavy bombers' offensive ceased, the Gold Coast squadron dropped food supplies to the starving Dutch people, and subsequently its aircraft were busily employed ferrying liberated POWs to England from the Continent.

No. 218 Squadron's awards include a Victoria Cross (awarded posthumously) to Flight Sergeant AL Aaron for his "most conspicuous bravery" during a raid on 12/13th August 1943, 4 DSOs, 2 bars to the DSO, 109 DFCs, 2 CGMs, 1 MM, 46 DFMs and 1 BEM.

Deaths notified since the last newsletter

Mr Derek C Biggs DFC, Inverness, Navigator, 115 /149 Sqn
Mr Clifford Bradwell, Sheffield, Tail Gunner, 622 Sqn
Flt Lt Philip H Cope DFC, Leeds, Navigator, XV Sqn
Flt Lt J Brian Dutton DFC, Bath, Navigator, 149 Sqn
Mr William A Dyson, Poole, Navigator, XV Sqn
Mr Eric Johnson, Wigan, Bomb Aimer, 622 Sqn
Mr Roy Leard, Calgary, Canada, Navigator / Bomb Aimer, XV Sqn
Mr Harry Ludemann, Bolgart, Australia, Pilot, 149 Sqn
Mr R Oldmeadow, Holt Australia, 149 Sqn
Mr V Pearce, Cheltenham, XV Sqn
Mr Donald W Shellock, Sittingbourne, Gunner, 622 Sqn
Mr George F H Wright, Uxbridge, XV / 622 Sqn

Derek Biggs DFC

Geoff Reynolds writes:

It was with a great deal of sadness that I heard of the passing of Derek Biggs DFC. A couple of years ago he wrote to tell me of his wartime experiences, which I found most interesting. Some of these were published in our subsequent newsletters.

Following this, he wrote with pride to say that his church had seen fit to produce a paperback of the whole story, with some further additions, and it was for sale through them to raise funds. Just a few short months later he died suddenly, so not seeing the results of his literary endeavours.

Having read the whole of his memoirs in this very interesting and entertaining little paperback book entitled simply 'My War' I should like to recommend it to others.

The price was just £5 plus post and packaging to UK addresses and is for a very worthwhile cause.

Anyone wishing to order a copy should contact: - Crown Church, Kingsmills Road, Inverness IV2 3JT. Tel: - 01463 231140.

Flt Lt George F. Wright Wireless Operator No.XV & No.622 Squadrons

Martyn Ford-Jones, XV Sqn Historian writes:

George Wright was posted from No.1657 Conversion Unit to "C" Flight No.XV Squadron, based at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk, on 30th June 1943. Whilst with No.XV, he undertook four operational sorties.

On 10th August 1943, George and his crew were posted to No.622 Squadron, which was formed from "C" Flight, No.XV Squadron. Given that the new squadron was to operate from RAF Mildenhall, this meant that George and his crew only had to travel across to the far side of the

airfield to join the new squadron. It also meant that as battle experienced crews, there would be no settling-in period. The new squadron was on 'Ops' that same night.

Thirteen days after transferring to No.622, whilst undertaking an operation against Berlin, George's aircraft was attacked by two enemy night-fighters. During the ensuing battle the pilot of the Stirling bomber, Sergeant Gil March, was severely wounded in the back by the detonation of a cannon shell against his seat. The aircraft fell several thousands of feet before it was brought under control by the bomb aimer, who flew the bomber home and landed it at RAF Mildenhall. The bomb aimer, Sgt Jack Bailey was awarded a Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, whilst the navigator, Pilot Officer Richards, was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross.

On 4th October 1943, George Wright was commissioned in the rank of Pilot Officer. At the end of the same month, George crewed-up with Flying Officer Ken Stoddart, with whom he was to fly a further 27 operational sorties.

George Wright was classified 'Tour Expired' on 29th May 1944, having completed a total of 31 sorties. He was posted to No.12 Operational Training Unit, Edgehill and Chipping Warden, where he undertook wireless operator instructional duties. He was to remain in this posting until being demobbed, in the rank of Flight Lieutenant, during the latter half of 1945.

In later years, George, along with his wife Joyce, and accompanied by Gil Marsh (his first pilot) and his wife Amy, attended many of the Mildenhall Register reunions and the XV Squadron Association events.

Although too unwell to travel to London for the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial in London, on 28th June, George watched the event on television with Joyce by his side.

Having suffered ill-health over the last few years, George passed away during the early hours of the morning on Monday, 10th September.

Although George is no longer with us, he will not be forgotten. George's wartime memories, along with those of Gil Marsh and the rest of the crew, have been recorded in a number of books including, *'Bomber Squadron - Men Who Flew With XV'*, *"Oxford's Own"*, *"Stirling Wings"* and *"We Wage War By Night"*.

On a personal note, Valerie and I first had the pleasure of meeting George (and Joyce) back in the early 1980's at one of the Mildenhall reunions. George agreed to assist with information relating to a book and, as a result a friendship grew from that meeting.

I have much to thank George for, not least of which he introduced me to Asbach Brandy, following lunch at his home with Joyce. This German spirit has since remained a favourite 'tippie' of mine over the years. So, in saying "Goodbye" to George, I raise a glass of Asbach in salute to his memory.

Warrant Officer William A. Dyson

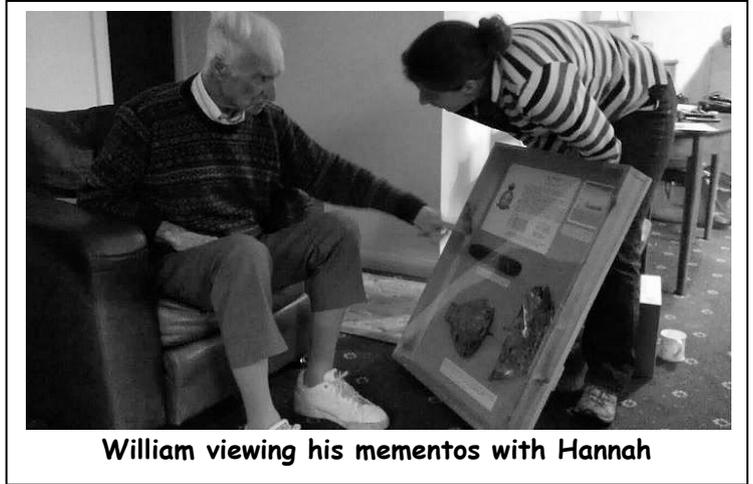
Martyn Ford-Jones, XV Sqn Historian writes:

The death of ex-Warrant Officer William Dyson, a former navigator with No.XV Squadron, was announced during May 2012.

William Dyson, who flew as navigator with Plt Off R. Watson and his crew, was posted to No.XV Squadron, based at RAF Bourn, Cambridgeshire, on 6th March 1943. He undertook his first operational sortie, a "Gardening" sortie (mine-laying), with his crew, five days later on 11th March.

On the 14th April, No.XV Squadron was re-located to RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk. As the Stirling bomber on which William was flying touched-down at the new base, the aircraft's tail wheel assembly sheared off. Fortunately, there were no injuries.

Two weeks later, on 26th April, William Dyson and his crew were detailed for an attack against Duisberg, Germany. It was the crew's 6th operational sortie. All went well until William's aircraft was approximately thirty miles inside enemy occupied territory, when it was attacked by a Junkers Ju.88 night-fighter. Although the enemy aircraft, piloted by Feldwebel (Sergeant) Heinz Vinke, of 11. /NJG1, approached the bomber from below, Flight Sergeant Bearnese, the rear gunner, had seen the aggressor and shouted a warning to his pilot. As P/O Watson made a banking turning, the Ju.88 opened fire, hitting the bomber in the bomb bay, resulting in some of the incendiaries igniting. With no hope of saving their aircraft the crew, including William Dyson, baled out.



William viewing his mementos with Hannah

Having made a safe landing, William was captured by the Germans and made a prisoner of war. He was issued with the POW number 1065 and incarcerated in Stalag Luft 6 (Heydekrug) and Stalag 357.

Many years later, during the late 1980's, a Dutch WWII aircraft archaeological group excavated the crash site of William's aircraft. They recovered the aircraft's engines and many smaller items. Some of the latter were presented to the XV Squadron Historian following a visit he made to the site. These items were often displayed at RAF related meetings and organised events, including the Bomber Command Annual Reunion Dinner.

During 2011, having received a request for information relating to William Dyson, the squadron historian prepared a dossier containing all known relevant information relating to the former navigator's service with No. XV Squadron. It was collected by William's grand-daughter, Flt Lt Hannah Brown. During the meeting the items recovered from the crash site were presented to Hannah, who took them home to show to William. It was the first time he had seen any items relating to his aircraft in 66 years.

Howard Sandall, 622 Sqn Historian writes: Two members of the same 622 Squadron crew have passed away within a few weeks of each other.

Warrant Officer Donald William Shellock- 1924- 2012

One of the founder members of the Mildenhall Register passed away peacefully in a nursing home in Sittingbourne Kent aged 88. Warrant Officer Donald Shellock a former member of 622 Squadron died on 29th October 2012. Don joined the RAF in early 1943 and underwent training to become an air gunner.

Don's training took him to No. 14 ITW at Bridlington then onto No.7 Air Gunnery School in Penrhos Wales for specialised air gunner training. From here Don was posted to No. 26 Operational Training Unit where he 'crewed up' with Wg Cdr G.H.N Gibson DFC, AFC who was destined to become the commanding Officer of the newly formed 622 Squadron. His training was completed at 1651 HCU at RAF Waterbeach.

Warrant Officer Eric Johnson

Eric Johnson passed away within a few weeks of being notified of Don Shellock's death. He was the bomb aimer in the same crew as Don and originated from the north of England.

Eric joined the RAF in 1939 and was posted to RAF Padgate. His aircrew training was eventful to say the least; he originally qualified for a pilot and commenced his training in Suther Field and Cochran Field Georgia. On a solo training flight he skilfully avoided a mid-air collision and lost his navigational maps when they were blown into the rear of the aircraft. Using his initiative he was able to land at Jacksonville Florida. Instead of being commended Eric was 'scrubbed' from pilot training and re-mustered as a bomb aimer completing the majority of his training in Picton Ontario Canada.

Don, Eric and crew arrived at RAF Mildenhall just after 622 Sqn was formed from 'C' flight of XV squadron in the middle of August 1943. Almost immediately Wg Cdr Gibson was appointed as the new Commanding Officer and the crew members were sent back to RAF Waterbeach to team up with another pilot, Plt Off Denham (later Flt Lt). The crew were quickly on the Battle Order and completed five missions from late October to late November 1943. Targets included Manheim, Leverkusen and mining missions around the Frisian Isles.

Don remembered the mission when the target was Berlin over the 22/23rd November 1943 for two specific reasons. Firstly for when he was shot down and secondly being the mission when ACM Arthur Harris decided to remove the Short Stirling from front line bombing missions. The Stirling's losses could not be sustained any longer.

Flt Lt Denham and crew had just released their bombs and turned for home when they were coned by a searchlight and the German guns opened up on EF150, GI-E. Within a relatively short time their Stirling was struck by a flak burst in the port wing

setting the fuel tanks on fire. The ensuing chaos nearly claimed Don's life and as he sat in the rear fuselage of the doomed bomber he resigned himself to meeting his maker. F/O Carter the wireless operator shook Don out of his acceptance of death and pushed him towards the rear door. All the crew parachuted into captivity, both Don and Eric ended up in Stalag Luft IV at Muhlberg where they became POW's.

After nearly eighteen months in captivity the camp was liberated by Russian soldiers who treated the POW's with little respect and prevented them from leaving the camp. Eventually



the whole camp was marched towards Allied lines and joined up with the Americans at Halle. Don & Eric both left the RAF in 1946 in the rank of Warrant Officer. A regular attendee at the Mildenhall reunions, Don will be missed for his total support of the association and his unassuming gentle nature.

The full story of Don and Eric's exploits can be found in 'We Wage War by Night: An Operational and Photographic History of No.622 Squadron RAF Bomber Command by Howard J. Sandall available from most book sellers Editor

The Oldmeadow crew of 149 Sqn

The attached photograph comes to us from George Worrall. It shows the Oldmeadow Lancaster crew of 149 Squadron, probably taken at Methwold in early 1945. As reported in the summer edition, George met up with Russell Oldmeadow following the BC memorial unveiling in London earlier this year. Sadly we later received notification of Russell's passing. However, he was so glad to have been able to come over for the event.



The line-up is as follows: -

Back row (L to R)

Flt.Sgt. EJ "Ted" McCarthy ("Charlie") Navigator (A424326),

Sgt AG "Gordon" Duncan ("Scottie") B/Aimer (RAF)

Flt.Sgt. AJ "Allan" Read W/Op. (A24703)

Unidentified Ground crew

Sgt H " Bert" Taylor ("Bob") R/Gunner (RAF - 2209991). George's late brother-in-law who, at 18, was the youngest member of the crew.

Unidentified Ground crew, Leaning on the bomb - Two Unidentified Ground crew

Seated on the bomb -

Sgt B "Barney" Lowe Flight Eng. (RAF)

Extreme right

Fg. Off. RH "Russell" Oldmeadow Pilot (A419478)

Seated on trolley Left - Two Unidentified Ground crew Right -Sgt P Newton ("Fred") Mid Upper Gunner (RAF)

The only one of the crew known to survive is Allan Read (still a member of The Register today) who retired as a Group Captain. The significance of the slogan scrawled on the bomb is not known. Can anyone name the ground crew?

Denise Boneham of UK Friends of 75 (New Zealand) Squadron Association writes:

Sad news received in late December that one of our lovely Northern Ireland 75ers died over Christmas. A lovely bloke who will be much missed at the reunions, Norman Allen was well enough to attend the opening of the Bomber Command Memorial with his fab daughters for which I am now very grateful. RIP Norman you have gone to fly amongst the rest of the heroes in the stars. Will be thinking of you next time I go to the Memorial as well all our other brave boys xx.

The following article appeared in the Portadown Times following Norman's visit to the BC Memorial dedication

Norman sees Queen put right 'Bomber Command injustice'

Second World War hero Norman Allen from Loughgall was in London last week to see "a 67-year-old injustice being put right" as the Queen unveiled a £7m Bomber Command Memorial. A gunner on board a fabled Lancaster plane, Mr Allen (then 22) took part in 15 missions deep into Germany, bombing cities like Dresden, Wesel, Dortmund and Leipzig. He was the middle gunner on the top of the plane, one of seven crew who risked life and limb.

"I was one of the lucky ones," said 89-year-old Mr Allen. He reflected on a time "that was dangerous and exciting, and I have to admit I look back on my wartime service as among the most enjoyable of my life."

Strangely, Norman was a crewman in the 75th New Zealand Squadron of Bomber Command, which was based in Ely, England, his crew consisting of three Englishmen, two New Zealanders, a Scot and Norman. He recalled. "I was assigned to the New Zealand Squadron when I volunteered for the final two years of the war and after intensive training, Then I took to the air on the bombing missions."



Norman with his daughter Janet

He travelled across from Belfast City Airport in August - in a plane much more comfortable than his old Lancaster. On the bombing raids he was literally in a glass dome, with gun poked through a slit and a steel plate in front for protection, as the great bomber droned for nine hours at a time on the dangerous missions.

With him in London were daughter Janet Kells and daughter-in-law Margaret Allen. They travelled with the party of Belfast veteran John McFarland, also from Bomber Command. John's plane was shot down in April 1944 and he spent the rest of the war in the notorious Stalag Luft III, famous for 'The Great Escape'. But that was before John was incarcerated.

The Ulster heroes and families were among 5,000 who watched as the Queen unveiled the fabulous memorial at Green Park in the centre of the capital, designed by architect Liam O'Connor and sculptor Philip Jackson. Many senior royals were due to attend, including the Duke of Edinburgh, the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Cornwall, the Earl and Countess of Wessex and others.

The unveiling was the climax of a raging controversy in government circles, starting with Winston Churchill, who tried to airbrush Bomber Command out of history, on the back of the international criticism of the blanket bombing of many of Germany's great cities in the final furious thrust to defeat the Nazis.

The row ran for over six decades, with the modern governments riding on Churchill's coat tails and ignoring the men who, while carrying out controversial bombing raids, were, in Norman Allen's words, "simply carrying out orders".

A farmer in 'The Diamond' area of Loughgall, he still grows "a few apples", and recalled he had been in New Zealand four times since the war ended - twice to attend reunions with the Squadron, once in a private capacity and then as the County Grand Master of Armagh Orangeism.

A party of 80 travelled from NZ for the ceremony - 33 of them veterans and the rest carers and family - and others came from Canada, the US, South Africa, Australia and other Commonwealth countries.

The NZ Government paid all travelling and accommodation expenses for the 80, while the UK didn't pay anything, "keeping up the policy over the years," said Norman. "We've been very disappointed with their attitude, but this gesture by the Royal Family is obviously supporting us and that means a lot."

His daughter Mrs Kells, though, pointed out that the New Zealand Government had also tried to airbrush the bombing out of history, but the backlash was so angry and intense that they had a re-think and finally honoured their heroes.

It was nothing short of a miracle that Norman Allen came through all those missions unscathed, given the flak that roared up from the ground as they zigzagged their way to and from the under-fire German cities. He recalled his first mission when Squadron Leader Baigent - whose job was on the ground back in England - went along with them and they dodged flak from Frankfurt.

In the history book of the Squadron - one of Norman's prize possessions among his library of memories - the Squadron Leader wrote that their bombing missions of Dresden were a success, that smoke rose up to 16,000 feet, and that the flak was intense.

And while Norman Allen cherished those memories and the fact that he escaped with his life, he insisted that yesterday was all about the 55,000 who didn't come home - and about the families who still mourn them and wonder what life would have been like, had that devastating war never happened. He still attends the annual reunion in London to recall the actions of the 75th. But only single numbers go now. Most are in their late 80s and early 90s and unable to travel - and those numbers continue to dwindle.

"I'm so fortunate to see this injustice finally righted," said Norman. "So many survivors didn't live to experience this day."

Harry Ludemann RAAF, 149 Sqn

Harry Ludemann, who died on December 4, enjoyed a lifelong connection to historic farmland in Bolgart, north of Toodyay, Australia.

This connection was broken only when he took to the skies as a Royal Air Force bomber pilot during World War II.

He grew up in Wattening in the expansive Fernlea homestead which, in 1914, was established by his father shortly before Harry's birth. Harry attended Wattening School and, after three years at Northam High School, he returned to the land, farming with his father and, in March 1942, married Cardo Merino stud farmer's daughter and Wattening schoolteacher Adele Keamy. Despite the nuptials, it was a grim year. Singapore fell to Japan in February and the war effort was apparent in Perth. Harry and Adele's wedding breakfast at the Adelphi was initially cancelled because US military had occupied the hotel. The Americans relented on condition the reception ended by 10pm.

That October, Harry joined the Royal Australian Air Force, a precursor to flying training at Clontarf, Cunderdin and Geraldton, before heading to Point Cook in Victoria followed by a sea voyage to San Francisco and a train trip to New York. From there, he sailed to England and spent about a year in the seaside town of Brighton before embarking on sorties with No 149 Squadron RAF. He had left behind a pregnant wife.

Most pilots from No. 149 were from Commonwealth countries and aircrew were mainly English or Welsh. The selection procedure was an eye-opener. All crew were placed in a hall in groups of navigators, engineers and gunners and the pilot would then pick personnel based on gut reaction.

Harry, at 28, was the eldest in a very young crew - the second eldest was the 20-year-old navigator and others were in their late teens.

Apart from Harry, they were all English. They formed a close-knit group, wholly reliant on one another. They flew Stirlings and then Lancasters, surviving 18 operations over Germany, though Harry shuddered to think what would have happened to him if captured with his German surname.

Decades later in Perth, Harry met a fellow member of the same squadron who had also known Harry's rear-gunner John Parfitt.

Harry was left in no doubt about the high esteem in which he was held by his aircrew, in particular his rear-gunner, who reportedly said:

"We always got home because Harry never made a mistake."

Despite the respect he commanded from his men, Harry was only too happy to return to Australia after some 4 years away

When he arrived late in 1945 he set eyes for the first time on his 18-month-old son Geoffrey.



Harry Ludemann RAAF
149 Sqn

He returned to the land, building a successful career from progressive farming methods. In the 1950s and 60s when the Agriculture Department promoted ley farming - rotation of clover pastures with cropping in order to benefit from accumulated nitrogen in the soil- Harry proved to be a star. The department and fertiliser companies sponsored the West Australian Ley Farming competition for some 10 years, in which Harry was a triple champion and once runner-up. When he began, teams of horses powered farm machinery. He saw various tractors come and go and latterly was delighted to drive one guided by GPS.

Harry Charles Roy Ludemann was born in Toodyay Hospital on December 19, 1915, the youngest of three to Ted Ludemann and his wife Eve (Wheelwright).

Harry's paternal grandfather was from Hesedorf, near Zeven in Germany, and landed in Victoria aged 23 in 1856. Around 1880 he began farming at Kamarooka, near Bendig, but met an untimely end in his late-50s after a friendly wrestle in a hotel. He had sired 10 children; the fourth, Ted, was Harry's father. It was then customary for the youngest son to inherit the farm and so, in 1901, Ted moved with sisters Annie and Alice to Kalgoorlie and became an engine' driver on the Great Boulder mine. In 1903, he wed Eve Wheelwright, the pair deciding to leave Kalgoorlie before he and others got dust on the lungs. When Midland

Railways opened land for sale on Bolgart Estate, Ted and Annie bought a 500 acre block in 1906 and purchased a similar lot from Ted's Brother-in-law Charles Wheelwright who moved to Caversham. Ted built the homestead in 1914 from bricks made on the farm. Harry proved to be a fine custodian of the land, which had expanded to 5000 acres when he died. He was also a stalwart of St Augustine's Church in Bolgart, built during the Depression and consecrated in 1939.

Harry, a keen golfer, was once overheard telling the minister that sermons must be short so parishioners had time to get to the clubhouse to tee off at 1 pm. Harry won many golf trophies and many tennis tournaments, Fernlea having its own court. He was also a keen gardener and grew vegetables.

His war record impressed father-in-law Les Keamy, who wanted to buy a light plane for Harry to fly him to see clients. But Harry resisted. Nearly 100 years ago, a teacher began recording weather figures at Wattening, which the Ludemanns have continued.

Harry Ludemann died in Northam Regional Hospital. He was 96. His wife died in 2003 and he leaves son Geoff and daughter Denise, and grandchildren Caroline, Henry and Edward.



At home, Harry went from farming to flying and back to the land

Please return the application form for the reunion sent with this newsletter whether or not you will be attending in May. It assists us greatly in maintaining our records. If possible drop us a note on the back!

The Bomber Command Memorial - We Will Remember book launched

The Bomber Command Memorial - We Will Remember Them' is a beautiful book that tells the story of the Bomber Command Memorial, the book was launched at an event at the RAF Museum in November.

The journey from the initial idea to the unveiling of the memorial was long and complex. This book tells the story of the campaign, locating a site, obtaining permission, raising the funds, designing the memorial, and the opening ceremony.

This book tells the story of the whole complex campaign, from the initial idea through to locating a site, obtaining permission, raising the funds and designing the memorial, completing the story with a chapter on the dedication and unveiling ceremony which was held on June 28, 2012. However, that is not the only focus of the book's contents.

To highlight what the memorial is

commemorating it also cleverly intertwines the story of Bomber Command, includes information on a number of particularly notable operations, two last letters sent by airmen just before they were lost on operations, photographic vignettes of some who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving with Bomber Command and veteran aircrew profiles where those who are featured reflect on the wartime experiences they had and what the memorial means to them. The book is illustrated throughout with very high quality colour and black and white photographs.

If the book's excellent content is not enough to see it deserves to do well, then add to that the fact that the publisher is donating a very generous £10 from the price of each copy sold towards the Bomber Command Memorial fund, as fund-raising is still ongoing to reach the final sum needed for the memorial's continued upkeep. So it is a winning publication all round!



The front cover of the new book

News about the maintenance of the BC Memorial

During the afternoon of Friday 9th November, Valerie and I visited the RAF Benevolent Fund offices in Great Portland Place to conduct some business. Whilst there I made comment with regard to some of the views expressed, by various people, about the state of the memorial, due to rain sodden paperwork and letters etc deposited on the plinth by well-meaning families, relatives and friends of those the memorial commemorates.

In response to my comment, I was advised that, shortly after the unveiling of the memorial, a person was despatched, every Monday, from the Benevolent Fund offices to tidy up the plinth etc. However, given that over the last few months there has been an influx of visitors, making the BC Memorial the no 1 tourist attraction in London, the Benevolent Fund now despatches people three times a week. I was further informed that no photographs, letters, paperwork or

other items of memorabilia were destroyed or discarded. All such material is being gathered to preserve as much as possible for the future

Hope you find this news encouraging.

Martyn Ford-Jones, XV Sqn Historian

The following article appeared in the Sunday Telegraph towards the end of 2012

A wartime love that never died revealed at Bomber Command Memorial

Lord Ashcroft, a driving force behind the new Bomber Command Memorial, uncovers the poignant story behind a note left there.

They were just 17 words dispatched with four kisses but, once I had read them, I could not get them out of my mind: *"In loving memory of Monte Shute. Beloved husband of Grace Ethel Parsons, now 91 and still remembering xxxx."*

I had found the handwritten message on a card at the new Bomber Command Memorial in central London during a visit in August. That night I looked at the note - which I had photographed - again and again, continually repeating five of the words under my breath: "Now 91 and still remembering."

The indications were that Monte Shute had been a member of Bomber Command and had died during the Second World War. And here was his widow still mourning his death nearly 70 years on. What truly wonderful people they must have been - one to have deserved such devotion, the other to have given it.

I had been at the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial by the Queen on June 28. In fact, I had been partly responsible for the memorial being built: disappointed and angry that the bravery of the men of Bomber Command had never been properly recognised.

It seemed that Monte Shute was just the sort of courageous airman I believed ought to be remembered. And his widow was just the sort of relative that I was thinking of when I wanted the families of the dead to have a special place to honour them.

But who, exactly, was Monte Shute? And who is Grace Ethel Parsons? I had mixed feelings: I did not want to intrude on private grief but I was intrigued to know more about them.

After weeks of inquiries, including a nationwide television appeal, a new lead enabled me to trace and meet Grace. Just weeks short of her 92nd birthday, she is 5ft 4in tall with near-white hair. But she still has a sharp sense of humour and a twinkle in her eye.

Born in 1920, in Reading, Berkshire, she was the second youngest of five children. Her father was a steel industry manager and her mother had been a housewife.

When the Second World War broke out, Grace was working in the accounts department of a biscuit factory in Reading. She volunteered for the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) because she wanted to serve her country in its hour of need.

In early 1943, while Grace was based at RAF Upwood in Cambridgeshire, she met the man who would become the great love of her life.

After completing an operational tour in Blenheim bombers from Malta, the heavily targeted island whose inhabitants were later to be awarded a collective *George Cross*, Flight Sergeant Montague Shute had been posted to RAF Upwood for a rest.

Handsome in his RAF uniform and 27 years old, Monte, a navigator, had met Grace in the sergeants' mess at the RAF base. Asked if it had been love at first sight, Grace laughed and said: "There was certainly an immediate mutual attraction." In fact, Grace was engaged to another man at the time but she ended that relationship when her feelings for Monte grew.

"It didn't take us long to fall in love. Of course, we knew that Monte would probably be sent back on another tour and that, of course, is exactly what happened."

Grace remembers his positive approach to life. "Monte had a carefree attitude: he was always smiling and enjoying himself.

"Like most of the aircrew, they put on an act that nothing ever bothered them when, in fact, they must have been worried about the dangers of their next tour. Aircrew were always different to everyone else."

After a three-month romance, the couple married in Morden, south-west London, on June 26, 1943. "It was a lovely day - a small wedding," she says. "My parents were there - my Father gave me away - and Monte's parents were also there. We were very much in love."

The newlyweds enjoyed a weekend honeymoon at the Lygon Arms in Broadway in the heart of the Cotswolds. Under a wartime scheme, their break was paid for by the RAF.

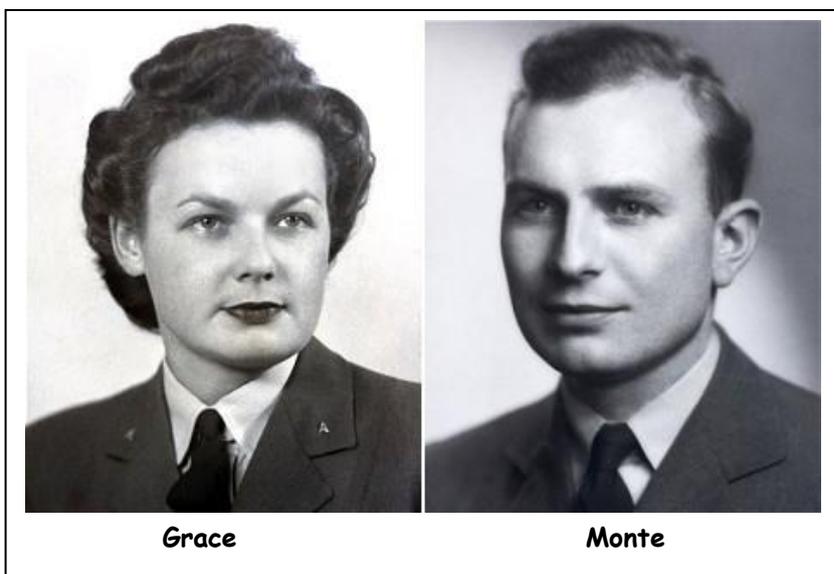
They then had a few precious weeks of married life in a guesthouse in a village outside RAF Upwood.

"We both had bicycles and we used to cycle into camp together," says Grace. "But, like so many other couples at the time, our happiness did not last long - just three months - and then the powers that be decided to send my husband on a second tour of 'ops'. After many weeks spent converting to Lancasters, he was posted to 622 Squadron at [RAF] Mildenhall [Suffolk].

"From then on our only time together was brief weekends and the occasional seven days' leave. By this time he had received a commission [to pilot officer] - but I was still a sergeant and living in my little village. The months passed and, although the subject was never discussed between us, I felt sure my husband must be getting near the end of his second tour."

However, it was not to be; the dreaded telegram arrived on July 25 1944 to say that he had failed to return from a bombing raid of Stuttgart. It was his 60th trip - and would have been his last of the tour.

"It was six months before I had any further information," says Grace, "but while no news came through, there was always hope that he had bailed out over France and would eventually get



back through one of the escape routes. Every time the telephone rang, I thought it would be for me to say he was safe." In fact, after her long wait, Grace was told definitively that the Lancaster, containing her husband and six other men, had been shot down and had crashed at 2.30am on July 25 1944, near Essey-lès-Nancy, killing all the crew. Monte was 28 years old, and on the day he died the couple had been married for one day short of 13 months.



The wedding of Flight Sergeant Montague Shute to Grace Sherwood on June 26, 1943

"It was still hard to believe - just a piece of paper saying he was dead, but no other proof. Even when all his personal belongings were returned to me, it still didn't seem possible that he wouldn't return and need them."

Grace also revealed that during their short marriage she had suffered a miscarriage. "It was all very sad," she says, holding back her tears.

After the war, Grace worked for the Control Commission in Germany, which was responsible for reconstruction in the war-ravaged nation. While there, Grace drove from Dusseldorf to Avrainville in France to visit the graves of her husband and the rest of the crew. They had been buried in an orchard in a small village and the locals had tended their graves, always keeping flowers on them. "At last I was able to accept that my husband would not come back."

It was while working in Dusseldorf that she met her second husband, Philip Parsons, an Army major, whom she married in Germany in 1947. They were happily married for 56 years, until his death in 2003, aged 85. The couple had two daughters, and Grace also has four grandsons and a great granddaughter.

"My sister and I are very proud of mum, and of Monte too," says Liz, one of Grace's daughters. "We think what he did was incredible. I am quite sure Monte was the love of her life."

Liz's family has also stayed in contact with Simon Shute, Monte's nephew, who still has his uncle's Caterpillar Club badge and certificate (the result of a training accident), awarded to anyone who was successfully bailed out of a stricken aircraft.

Mr Shute, 64, also visited his uncle's grave in France a few years ago. "Monte was always the popular one and my father, Leonard, who also served in the RAF, named his middle son - my late brother - Montague, as a tribute to his own younger brother."

I donated to the Bomber Command Memorial appeal because I wanted it built while some flying veterans, now in their late eighties and early nineties, are still alive. Bomber Command consisted of about 125,000 volunteers from Britain, the Commonwealth and Allied countries. They had to endure some of the most terrifying combat conditions of the Second World War. The average age of the aircrew was just 22 and the youngest were only 18. Three out of every five airmen

became casualties: 55,573 men were killed, 8,403 were wounded and 9,838 became prisoners of war.

For me, the remarkable story of Monte Shute and the devotion of his wife, Grace, have brought a human face to these grim statistics. "I was so pleased and proud to see the Bomber Command Memorial unveiled by the Queen," says Grace. "We all were as a family. For those of us who lost someone, we will never forget."

Lord Ashcroft is a Tory peer, businessman and philanthropist. His new book, 'Heroes of the Skies' (Headline), is available from Telegraph Books at £18 + £1.35 p&p. Call 0844 871 1516 or visit books.telegraph.co.uk. All the author's royalties are being donated to the RAF Benevolent Fund, the custodian of the Bomber Command Memorial

Restored Lancaster to fly 'in months'

Avro Lancaster NX611 Just Jane is set to take to the air again within months, thanks to the delivery of a fourth Merlin engine to the restoration team at the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre (LAHC) visited by Register's members during the 2009 Reunion

Owners Harold and Fred Panton from the LAHC aim to get the aircraft flying once more, after purchasing the aircraft in 1983.

The fourth Merlin engine arrived on 12 December and work is now underway, with Fred Panton saying that now the whole restoration will take only months, rather than years as originally expected.



Avro Lancaster NX611 Just Jane

The Panton brothers are restoring the aircraft in a tribute to their elder brother, Flight Engineer Christopher Panton who was shot down in a Lancaster in WWII.

The aircraft is cleared to taxi and thousands of pounds have already been raised for the restoration through offering taxi rides to paying customers. The Lancaster has also been featured in Dr Who and raised money from other TV work. NX611 last flew in 1971. Currently, there are just two other airworthy Lancasters: PA474 of the Battle of Britain Flight at nearby RAF Coningsby and the other in Canada at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, Ontario.

Campaign to save 'last intact' Second World War Bomber Command airbase

Campaigners are trying to buy RAF Bicester - the nation's best preserved Second World War airfield of its kind- from the Ministry of Defence, so they can transform it into an aviation museum. It is a time capsule of Bomber Command, the unit that has seen its role overlooked since the end of the conflict.

Now following the success of the memorial to the unit which was unveiled by the Queen in central London last month, the Second World War airbase at RAF Bicester could become a

permanent museum to honour the courage of the bomber crews. The 348 acre airfield, which contains 19 Grade II listed buildings and 12 scheduled ancient monuments, has been put up for sale by the Ministry of Defence. Among those looking to take on the airfield is Bomber Command Heritage (BCH), a group of volunteers, who are planning to convert it into one of the country's foremost aviation museums. The organisation has already secured the support of the local council and have launched a campaign to raise enough money to buy the site in Oxfordshire.

Because it became a maintenance base and depot after the war and was later mothballed, the buildings have hardly been altered since the bomber crews moved out. According to English Heritage, it is "the best preserved bomber airfield" of its type. Among buildings the organisation has listed are the control tower, hangers, workshops, ammunition stores and guard house. The scheduled ancient monuments include pillboxes and trenches. However, the structures have been left to gradually deteriorate and are in a very poor condition, with 18 of the buildings placed on the organisation's "heritage at risk" register.

Dean Overton, chairman of BCH, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity because this is the last, intact Bomber Command station left. Not only are all its important parts still there, its vistas are still there as they were at the end of the Second World War.

"We now have a Bomber Command memorial in London which opened last month, but people want to hear more about the stories behind Bomber Command. And this is the last remaining chance to tell these stories."

The group, which consists of around 50 volunteers, believe the site will cost at least £2 million to buy, with a further £35 million to restore the buildings and convert the site into a visitor attraction.

It has already identified some Bomber Command aircraft which it believes it could bring to the site and plans to open to the public right from the start - for limited periods - so it can begin raising further funds for the gradual restoration process.

The work will then be carried out in four stages, over 20 years, meaning the group would be required to raise around £1.75 million a year - through ticket sales, fundraising events and donations.



Control Tower Bicester

Under the plans, the site would be kept intact and a gliding club that currently rents part of the area, would be allowed to continue to do so, providing a further income stream.



The Thetford tour party by the Thomas Payne Memorial



Cyril Badol is signed up by Capt Mainwaring at the Dad's Army Museum



Our Treasurer with his Lady raffle ticket sellers in the Galaxy Club



Albert Miller ex 149 Sqn receives his raffle prize from Howard Sandall



Relatives of our late President, Don Clarke, at the Reunion Dinner



Two wonderful Ladies at the Dinner, Edna Anderton and Renee Bysouth,

Mr Overton, who runs a local recycling firm, said he hoped that once the group had purchased the land, it would be able to speed up the restoration process by securing grants from groups like the Heritage Lottery Fund, with which it has already held talks.

The group was established around 12 years ago, with the aim of finding a location somewhere in the UK to build a museum to commemorate the men of Bomber Command.

The unit suffered the highest casualty rate of the British Armed Forces during the Second World War but its veterans have felt their contribution has historically been overlooked, because of disquiet, after the war ended, about the loss of German civilian lives.

But interest has increased in recent years, culminating in the unveiling of the Bomber Command memorial last month.

RAF Bicester first became operational when the Royal Flying Corps took it over in 1917, and at the outbreak of the Second World War it was home to No. 12 Squadron, which was relocated to France for the first nine months of the war, then became an operational training unit, with thousands of crewmen passing through its gates. The Halifax heavy bomber also made its maiden flight from the base.

One of those to be based there was Leslie Valentine, a bomber pilot, who spent around five months there in 1943, training on Bristol Blenheims, before moving onto a squadron flying Boston Bombers. He flew a total of 60 operations, all in daylight, and was awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French government.

On D-Day, he flew his aircraft as low as 50ft along the beaches laying smoke, to protect the invasion fleet.

Mr Valentine, 94, who is originally from Glasgow, but now, coincidentally, lives in Hethe, a village near Bicester, said: "Bicester was a very well run station and did it's just job well - turning out a lot of good pilots.

"I can remember all of us - pilots, navigators and gunners - all going into a big hanger and being told to sort yourselves out into crews. I walked around and listened to accents and finished up in an all Scottish crew, which I then went on to fly with."

He added: "This sounds like a very good scheme and it would be a fitting tribute to Bomber Command.

Mr Overton said there was a threat that the group could be outbid for the site by developers.

"We have got a fight on our hands. There are developers who could scupper all of our plans. They could buy up the airfield and hold it for 25 years - maybe by then the listed buildings will have fallen down, or there may be political changes which help them get the right planning permission."

However, Barry Wood, the Conservative leader of Cherwell District Council was more positive. He believes the listed buildings would make development very difficult, while the council's own local plan for the area also rules out any residential use. "I am very confident about the project," he said. "The one thing that can't be done on the site is residential use because the

buildings are listed in the context of their setting and their vista. You can't just keep them and build on the grass airfield itself. That should mean developers are put off. "That's why we are anxious to encourage Bomber Command Heritage. We see them as the only sort of body that is likely to have a chance to develop that site at all. Otherwise it will fall to bits.

"For years, it has been in custody of the MOD who have done nothing and it is falling down. We are anxious to help Bomber Command Heritage in any way we can." The authority, which is not currently committing any funds to the project, has entered a "strategic partnership" with Bomber Command Heritage and has set up its own a steering group to assist with the scheme.

The sale is being handled by the MOD's marketing agent, BNP Paribas Real Estate. A spokesman for the department said that there was no guiding price and that there had already been expressions of interest from "a range of parties".

How Bob Smith RAAF ex 15 Sqn re-discovered the Register

Just found great news with a simple Google search "the Mildenhall Register". I joined the register in about 1986 and had regular correspondence with Don Clarke up until 2006-that was the last newsletter I got--just dropped off the radar screen. There were concerns at the time that the register might have to take-off and not come back to land. I did have contact at Christmas with Doris Mc Fadden in Arizona USA (widow of Don "Ike" McFadden- our R/G) and she said she had received a newsletter about the 2008 reunion. Must say that notice of Don Clarke's death has put a dampener on the good news-but then again that is the scheme of things in life.

As a reminder-my name is Robert W. (Bob) Smith. RAAF 425992. - Ex-XV/15 Sqn. I was the Nav. in Fg Off Ron Hastings crew and after we were declared tour expired on 3 Dec 1944, I was kept on the Sqn as Navigation Assessment Officer and among other things made O.I.C of the ORB. I had been doing this over the latter part of our tour, taking over from Mac Mayne (RAAF 422607) who was Mick Morrissey's Nav.

I note that Secretary Geoffrey Reynolds is a nephew of W/Op. Sgt Raymond Geoffrey Norris who was killed on night of 31/ 5/1944 along with the rest of the crew of Plt Off. Peter Dombain (RAAF) There were 3 other Aussies in that crew-Arthur Long (Nav), Stan Nystrom (M/U/G) & Frank Reid (R/G). We arrived on the squadron 4 weeks later to be greeted by Flt Lt. John Moore and learn that he was the first Aussie to complete a tour of XV Sqn and break the Hoodoo.

I am in regular touch with Don Woon , Des Mc Fadden, Lorne Watkins (son of Wg Cdr. Lofty Watkins) to whom a copy of this e-mail is being sent (explanation later) and Phil Dodd (son of Grahame Dodd W/Op in John Whittingham's crew) who has after a lot of effort and research completed a tribute to Grahame's life and record of Air Force service and put an up-dated version on line(copy also sent to him to save me time in front of the computer screen.. Working on the computer is now a bit of an effort as I am not a touch typist, have no sight in my right

eye as result of injury received in training at OTU and a cataract in my left eye that the Eye-Specialist is nursing along with eye-drops and deferring any operation until absolutely necessary= but such is life-still a lot of blessings to count.. Age does weary us-the price of the bonus years.

I note you are still relying on donations to cover administration fees etc. Let me know your Bank account name and number as well as the bank branch name and number and I will arrange a T/T. next time I call into my bank or do you accept donations via Visa or MasterCard.

Explanation re Wg Cdr. Lofty Watkins. A Google search on "Lancaster PB137" will come with some comments on the loss of this aircraft and some correction is needed. I was personally involved at the time. In the first battle order issued for that day our crew was detailed to fly in PB137 LS-U for Uncle which was armed with target indicators and Wg Cdr Watkins was to fly with us as Master Bomber. At the briefing for the raid on Heinsberg our crew and that of Flt Lt Fred Sanders (RNZAF428796) sat together. I was a good friend of his Nav. Fg Off Charles Stevenson (RNZAF) and we both completed our flight plans together. I still have mine (log & chart) in my possession. While Chas & I were busy on the flight plans Lofty and the rest of the crews were having a discussion, the result being that Fred Sanders and his crew would transfer to "Uncle" and take the C/O as Master Bomber and we would transfer to NF957 LS-X for X-Ray. I have prepared a submission to correct the record and Lofty's Son Lorne is now vetting it with his brothers before we proceed further. It could be that we make a factual statement on our first-hand knowledge, keeping it as brief as possible and then do a more detailed tribute to Lofty probably on the site "War Times Memory Project-the Second War- No.XV Squadron" on which a wonderful tribute now exists for A Flight Commander Sqn Ldr Phil Lamason (RNZAF)

who was incarcerated in Buchenwald Concentration Camp , along with others including a very good friend of mine Flt Sgt. Keith Mills (RAAF 425954) for a period before being rescued by Luftwaffe personnel and transferred to a Stalag Luft. It appears that Lofty's flying log book was lost when we were shot down, but I understand that Martyn Ford-Jones has given Loren a lot of detail to assist with the recording of Lofty's outstanding war record.

Mildenhall has a great record in the history of the Air Force. In My time it knew Air Cdr Andrew "Square" McKee, 32 Base Commander, (later Air Chief Marshall Sir Andrew McKee K.O.B, O.B.E, D.S.O, D.F.C, A.F.C RAF (Ret'd), Wg Cdr W.D.G. "Lofty" Watkins DSO, DFC, DFM



Air Marsal Sir Andrew McKee (1902-1988), OC 32 Base RAF Mildenhall 1943-44

Born in New Zealand and educated in Christchurch, he travelled to England in 1926 and joined the RAF in 1927.

(OC XV Sqn and Wg Cdr. Ian "Blondie" Swales DSO, DFC, DFM (OC 622 Sqn). Where are the men of this calibre to-day,-certainly not in our seats of power.

I was surprised to note that Eric Willis came to the 2008 reunion. Eric lives only about 25 Km from me. Phoned him a few years ago now and we were going to make arrangements to meet but never got around to it. Made hard by the fact I had to surrender my driving licence.

Ron "Rockie" Knight's 90th

On Saturday, 10th November 2012, Ron "Rockie" Knight thought he was going out to lunch, at a local restaurant with members of his family, in order to celebrate his 90th birthday. However, on the way to the restaurant, the vehicle he was travelling in pulled up in the car park at the Murray Hall Community Centre, Loughton, where he was told another member of the family was to receive an award.

On entering the venue, the World War Two veteran found himself face to face with over sixty people comprising of other members of his family, his grandchildren, great grandchildren, neighbours and friends who instantaneously burst into a chorus of "*Happy Birthday to You*".



Matthew Knight, knowing his father had been a wireless operator/air gunner, who flew on Lancaster bombers with No.XV Squadron during 1944, and that he still is a member of the XV Squadron Association and the Mildenhall Register, contacted the squadron to see if it was possible for someone to attend. Given that Valerie and I have known "Rockie" for over twenty-five years, and were able to get to the venue easily, it was agreed that we would represent the Squadron.

Having received ample notice about the forthcoming party, Flt/Lt Sarah Shekhdar, Secretary of the XV Association, arranged for a Tornado aircraft print to be signed by the officers and members of aircrew of the current day Squadron. The print was then forwarded to me for presentation to Ron.

The presentation was made, following a lavish, cold-buffet lunch, fit to feed a King, let alone a Knight. The gift was received by Ron with much surprise and gratitude. The assembled group of family and friends, who had gathered around Ron for the presentation, were equally taken aback.

As a personal gesture from Valerie and me, I presented Ron with a dossier containing copies of all the bombing operations he undertook during 1944, details of the aircraft he flew on and copy images of RAF Mildenhall and contemporary aircrew based there at the same time as Ron. Both items received much perusal and interest, not only from Ron but also by those in

attendance. Needless to say, the clicking of camera shutters could be heard for many minutes after the presentation.

The calm that followed the clicking of camera shutters was however short-lived, as a 90th birthday cake was carried into the hall. In keeping with the theme of "Rookie's" wartime service, the cake was surmounted by a Lancaster bomber made of icing sugar, supported on icing sugar clouds, with the top of the cake coloured to look like the ground below. It seemed a shame to cut it.

Needless to say, Ron, Valerie and I managed to reminisce about some of the 'old days', including visits to RAF Laarbruch, reunions at RAF Mildenhall and the Squadron's 85th anniversary celebrations at RAF Lossiemouth. It was, without doubt, a great afternoon, one filled with emotion, enjoyment and much chatter. *'Happy Birthday, "Rockie"'*.

In conclusion, I must acknowledge the fact that, knowing the Tornado print was being presented to a No.XV Squadron, WWII, Bomber Command veteran, Aces High Aviation Gallery at Wendover, Buckinghamshire, near RAF Halton, waived their fee for the cost of mounting and framing the print. This was a very generous gesture and one that is very much appreciated.

Martyn R. Ford-Jones XV Squadron Historian

A Royal View. By Bob Smith from Australia.

The article on the demolition of the XV Squadron hangar in the 2012 newsletter of the Mildenhall Register brought back some memories which I must record.

They relate to a visit by King George VI, the Queen and Princess Elizabeth on 5th July 1944, just a week after I joined the squadron, to perform a field investiture ceremony. This was held in the XV Squadron hangar.

We were instructed in the protocol to be observed. The hangar was duly prepared and made to pass any inspection, floor cleaned and stones around the garden along the side freshly whitewashed.

After the ceremony the Royal Party mingled with the squadron personnel in the area in front of the hangar before retiring

to the Officers Mess for lunch, where we duly observed the protocol as instructed.

When we retired to the lounge area of the mess after lunch, myself and 3 or 4 other Aussies gathered by the window closest to the entry to the Mess, thinking we would be out of notice, but this not work because when the King and his Aide came into the room they immediately came to our group. Our dark blue uniforms were a giveaway. At that time we were completely unaware of his speech therapy with an Australian. In fact he showed no signs of any impediment



**King George VI, the Queen and Princess Elizabeth
visit RAF Mildenhall**

when talking to us and his Aide mentioned to us later that when His Majesty was among fellow airmen and navy men he was at ease and spoke freely.

While with our small group we noticed him looking over towards the hangar and someone remarked "What has your attention Sir?" He replied that it would be good to be in a position where he could wander over to the hangar and see if those stones had been whitewashed underneath. As you can imagine this won instant acclaim from the Aussies.

When the King moved on to speak with others the Queen and Princess Elizabeth joined us to enquire about our mail from home. It was then time for the Royal Party to leave and return to London, but not before the King was given the opportunity

to point out "Kings Regulations" applied to him and the problem of wearing gloves while saluting and shaking hands left him with no choice but to not wear gloves'.



King George VI, making a presentation

Helping hands

Andy Hubbard, a new member from Beck Row talks about working with the Commonwealth War Grave Commission as he cares for four RNZAF airman's graves of 149 Squadron in St Mary's churchyard Watton:

We've attached some photos of St. Mary's Churchyard at Watton. As you can see, they were in a pretty poor state of repair. I've sent a few as they show the before and afterwards.



Before



And afterwards

Some of them sit right under large trees so the stones do not get much sunlight and consequently get very dirty.

Unfortunately the four airmen from 149 Sqn are under these trees so I managed to get a grass seed and feed that was for dark or shaded areas and now after 4 years the ground around has grown really well. Some of these photos don't really show that as they are a few years old.

From Left to Right they are: -

Sgt L J Warren

Sgt K G Mc Kenzie

Sgt H I F Connelly

Sgt H C Whitwell



said they did not want flower beds planted again but by doing this we can still bring a bit of colour to the graves without upsetting the CWGC. Every now and then I do attempt to clean the headstones and to be fair the CWGC did treat them last year and they do look very good. There are approx 45 graves at St. Mary's, mainly WW2 but there are a few WW1. The Saturday before Remembrance Sunday we hold a short Service with the local army and air force cadets attending together with the RBL. I usually read out all the names of the fallen and then have the Last Post played; it is a really quiet and moving moment.

Without this dedication these graves would, sadly, have remained in the poor state that Andy found them. Grateful thanks should go to Andy and other volunteers around the country who strive to help the CWGC keep our war graves in good order.

John Johnson then gave this information about the loss of these four airmen and the fate of the rest of the crew in which they served.

No 149 Squadron based at Lakenheath had converted from Vickers Wellingtons to Short Stirlings early in 1942, moving over from Mildenhall, where its grass runways couldn't take the weight of this new four engine heavy bomber. The Stirling, flying slow and low, proved to be very vulnerable, with a high rate of loss. So, as the Handley Page Halifax and Avro Lancaster came more and more into service, the Stirling was gradually replaced. Its role as a heavy bomber was also gradually diminished. One minor task assigned to the Stirling was in SOE (Special Operations, Executive) operations, dropping supplies to the Partisans, but a much bigger task was mining the entryways to the harbours and rivers off the European coast. Originally this was a low altitude task but No 149 Squadron developed a technique to accurately place the mines from high altitude. Laying mines was known as 'gardening' and all of the sites for mine laying were given code names, mostly flowers and vegetables. There is a list in Appendix VIII of the No 149 Squadron history book of the various major drop sites and their code names.

October 1942 wasn't a good month for No 149 Squadron when it came to mine laying in that they lost three of their Stirlings that month, two on operations and one crashing following take-off.

The Stirling, a Mk I, which crashed following take-off was coded OJ-P, Serial No BF348 and piloted by Flight Sergeant H.J.Hart, taking off at 6.52pm. They were scheduled to lay mines in the Gironde Estuary on the 10th of October. This site had the code name Deodar and the estuary led to Bordeaux, with its multiple reinforced concrete U-boat pens and a major home for the raiders of the convoys crossing the Atlantic. However Stirling OJ-P ran into technical difficulties immediately after take-off, so the pilot decided to make an emergency landing at Watton airfield, close to Lakenheath. Sadly he hit the trees three minutes later and crashed at Great Cressingham in Norfolk.

Only one of the seven crew survived, that being Sgt B.R.Batrack and he was injured. Four of the crew are buried at Watton, who you know about. The pilot, Flight Sergeant Hart, and Sergeant A.W.Corker, being British, are buried elsewhere in Britain at their family's wishes. The others are all from New Zealand and remain in English soil.

Letters to the Secretary

A Humorous Incident, but not for the Squadron Leader As I sit at my desk working away at the computer I have only to glance up and look at a framed print of a painting by Keith Aspinall, kindly given to me by Martyn Ford-Jones.

It depicts a night scene over Germany and shows five Lancasters, a Messerschmitt Me 410 and a Focke Wulf FW 190. The main Lancaster in the picture is XV Squadron's LS - A. Some of you may recognise this description as the painting used for the cover of Martyn's book, 'Oxford's Own', a History of XV Squadron.

Imagine my surprise to get a letter from **George Rushton**, the navigator on that very aircraft. He recalls an incident when his crew were converting from Stirlings to Lancasters. His letter continues: '.....and for our initial introduction we had a Squadron Leader pilot to put 'Shorty' Fleming (our pilot) through his paces.

Unfortunately, on leaving our dispersal point the Squadron Leader hit one of the wing-tips. This necessitated asking for transport to take us to another aircraft.

The transport arrived and we climbed in while the Squadron Leader was bemoaning his fate saying "I will get my ba**s chewed off for this accident".

He then realised the WAAF driver, a very pretty young lady, heard his comments.

He immediately said "Oh, I'm so sorry my dear, I didn't see you there".

She responded with a lovely smile and said "It's alright sir, that's one thing they can't do to us".

There is a footnote to the letter saying that pilot 'Shorty' Fleming is still alive and living in the USA. He and George are the only survivors of the seven man crew today.

Most squadrons served on? Flt Lt W R Hughes wrote in to offer his 'sincere thanks to all those who were keeping alive the tribute to those less fortunate than himself'.

He tells me that he completed '73 missions successfully between 1940/41'. He was crew for Sqn. Ldr. Heather. Even more amazing was the list of squadron's that he had served with. As with the lottery, I present them in numerical order; 9, 12, 23, 50, 70, 148 and 149 squadrons.

He is now 90 and he and his wife, whom he cares for, are both housebound. He concluded with his best wishes for all those fortunate enough to attend. **So that's 7 squadrons, do we have anyone on The Register who has served with more?**

Mr Alan Cross wrote in from Colchester to say that he had served on 419 (Moose) Squadron as a Radar/ Wireless Mechanic. The Canadians didn't actually have wireless mechanics, only W/Ops, so he and another 'erk' joined their Signals Section instead. He worked on Wellington Mk I and II's until 419 Sqn were moved into 6 Group in August 1942. Alan was eventually posted to Italy in June 1944.

He continues that "at 90, he is running out of steam, so can't make the reunions".

Geoff Hancock wrote in to say thank you for the newsletter and to say what a splendid piece of work it was. He is sure it will bring pleasure to many. He continued by saying that he is sorry he can no longer come to the reunions, it would have been nice to talk over old times. He believes he is the sole survivor now of L J Drummonds, 149 Squadron, crew from 1942/3. He kept in touch with his skipper for many years out in New Zealand, but has no reply for over a year now and his enquiries have proved fruitless. Geoff was the only Englishman in a crew of 5 Kiwis and an Irishman. They were all good chaps he recalls.

Ted Smith, of XC Squadron, wrote from Tunbridge Wells to correct the article about his service with the squadron. He says that he completed a tour of 32 operations in the last **four** months of 1944. His first operation was to Le Havre on the 5th September. This was some 10 days after joining the squadron.

His last operation was on the last day of 1944 to Coblenz. Most of these were daylight raids as he only completed **six** night operations, rather a shame when all he ever joined up to be was a rear gunner in a Lancaster at night!

Apologies for those errors Ted, but only repeating what we had on our records. These have now been amended. Ted would like to hear from any other XC folk; so I would be happy to put people in touch with him. (Secretary)

Ronald Catesby wrote to apologise for not attending the reunion this year as he would be attending the 44 Squadron event being held on the same day. He hoped to be laying a wreath on their memorial to commemorate the men of three squadrons (44, 463 and 467) from Rhodesia and Australia.

He added some background to his service career. He had been an armourer with Don Clarke at both Wyton and Alconbury, having joined XV Squadron at Wyton on 9th May 1941. They had to go on to Alconbury after October 1941 to bomb up Stirlings as Wyton didn't have concrete runways. They had been issued with one plate, which they had to carry around everywhere with them. After Xmas dinner they all went outside to wash up the plate, only to find everything frozen, so they used snow. So much for hygiene he says.

Around Feb 1942 he was posted to Kirkham to do a bomb armourers course. Having been trained as a full armourer he was posted to Waddington bomb dump in May '42 and Dunholme Lodge one year later.

Just five months later he was returned to Waddington where he remained until Nov 1945 narrowly missing a posting with Tiger Force to the Far East.

I had an e-mail from **Pete Lewis**, ex engine mechanic on B29's when 149 Sqn was re-formed in 1950. He says he doesn't class himself as one of the men who served through WW2, so is quite happy as he is. **We are very happy you are a member, Pete. Anyone who has ever served at Mildenhall or her associated bases, aircrew or ground crew and other support staff are always welcome.**

Pete asks if I would consider his attachment and photograph, which I am very happy to put on show. He continues: -

"At the outbreak of WW2 Harry **Ludemann** left the family 50,000 acre farm in Bolgart, Western Australia to join the RAF. Little did he know at that time that his wife, Adele, was expecting their son, soon to be called Geoff.

Harry served as a pilot with 149 Sqn, flying from Methwold during the war. His rear-gunner, the late John Parfitt, said that Harry never made a mistake and always got them home safely.

The Ludemann family welcomed me (Pete Lewis) into their homes 15 years ago and this year I was able to pay them another visit.

When I first met Harry he said

he was too old to join The Register, but at a grand old age of 96 he is still going strong. The mind is as keen as ever although the legs do not get him about too well. Thankfully Harry has a very caring family.

Over the years I have forwarded the magazine and it has been 'family reading' so Harry and his family are up to date with Register matters."

Pete wonders if anyone remembers Harry.

Since this was written we have 'signed up' Geoff, who now receives the newsletter by e-mail, ensuring the family are really up to date. (Secretary)

Very sadly, no sooner had the Secretary finished writing this article when he received an e-mail from Pete Lewis to say that Harry had passed away. His name appears in the Roll of Honour. Pete has asked whether Harry was the oldest, at 96, surviving member of 149 Squadron or indeed the whole Register. Our condolences to the Ludemann family in Australia who love being kept informed of Register business. Harry's obituary appears elsewhere in the newsletter (Editor)

We are very pleased to welcome **Mr C E Barclay** as a new member to the Register. Howard Sandall had introduced him. Mr Barclay wrote in to say that he had completed 26 operations as an air-gunner with 622 Squadron before having to bail out on his 27th. Luckily they were over friendly territory. However, on his return he was grounded and never saw Mildenhall again.



Harry as he is today, superimposed above the crew
LEFT to RIGHT: -
Ron Calvert (MUG), Ted Ward (W/Op), John Parfitt (R/G),
Harry (Pilot), Don Warrener (B/A)
Mike Stern (Nav), Ted Williams (F/E) at Methwold 1945.

Sadly, these days his age prevents him ever returning, but we welcome him warmly as a member after all these years.

Reunion pens

Almost a full set of pens from the previous reunions was amongst the memorabilia handed over to our secretary by the Clarke family.

The gaps are 1983, 1990, 91 & 92, 1995, 2004 and 5.

Can anyone fill the gaps?

Reg Heffron wrote from Australia about an article in the last winter edition, which started with the obituary of Fg Off Max Bourne, Reg's skipper. Reg was the mid-upper gunner in the crew.

What interested him was the mention of the taxing accident on P.13. Reg says this was not, as stated, a flight test, but was prior to an operation to Duisberg. It was their second operation that day.

He says that no mention of the second aircraft is made, either in the newsletter or in the book "We Wage War by Night", which also describes the incident. Reg believes the other Lancaster was in fact GI-A, but admits it was after darkness fell that evening and that only minor damage was done to both aircraft.

Reg would like to know if we can verify this from some other sources and maybe identify the crew for him.

He closes by sending his best wishes and thanks to all at The Register for all the good work.

Thanks for your kind thoughts Reg, maybe someone can answer this for you (Secretary)

Fg Off F W 'Freddie' Limer MBE, former B/A with 149 Sqn Methwold Dec '44 to June '46 then BBU at Martlesham Heath 1946 - 48 sent me an article that had appeared in 'Oddbods' magazine on how the past had caught up with him. He continues: -

"At the end of the war several squadrons of Bomber Command were involved in dropping food to the Dutch people. Our crew of 149 Squadron did two drops in a field outside The Hague. On the second trip I decided to collect the crew's rations, plus a few items from the NAAFI and encased these in a waterproof bag. I made a parachute from a large piece of cloth and duly dropped it down the 'window' chute over the same area that we had been on the previous day. I included a little note with my home address.

Several years later my Mother told me she had just received a strange letter that she could not understand as she did not know anything about the drop. The letter said: -

The Hague, March 1948. Dear Madam, strange as it may seem, this is the answer to your little note that was dropped by the RAF over The Hague in 1945. Through an accident the note was mislaid and it only came into my hands now. I want to thank you very, very much for your kindness and always will think of you with great respect. Hoping that this letter will find you and your family in the best of health. I remain sincerely yours. Arie Timmins".

Tommy Knox wrote from Australia to say that he had "joined 149 Squadron on 15th March 1944 as a flight engineer in Hugh Coventry's crew at Lakenheath. They moved to Methwold to make way for the Yanks 8th Air Force and did 22 trips and when the squadron converted to Lancs, they moved 199 Squadron, 100 Group on specially equipped Stirlings with an extra W/Op to operate the jamming gear.

He completed 40 trips by November '44, by which time the crew was split up and he went to be a draughtsman in 30 M.U. at Sealand and finally a parachute jumping instructor at No 1 PTS, Upper Heyford, finishing his time at PTS Palestine.

Tommy migrated from Scotland to Australia in 1950 and met up with Hugh, his old skipper, in Queensland who passed away about 4 years ago. He is still in touch with Dave Skewes, their W/Op, who lives at Milton, on the coast south of Sydney.

He enjoys the newsletters and urges us to keep up the good work."

Lancaster of 622 Sqn commanded by Flight Lieutenant J Watson shot down 27/28 April 1944

A Short Story- by Mike Hayes (Mike and his son from Canada attended the 2012 Reunion)

Back on the night of 27/28 April 1944 Lancaster R ND 781/G of 622 Sqn RAF out of Mildenhall, England commanded by Flt Lt J Watson RCAF, was on a bombing mission to Friedrichshafen Germany, when it was attacked and was under continuous fire from enemy fighters and shot down in flames. The pilot kept the aircraft aloft so that the rest of the crew could bailout. There were 323 aircraft on this mission, 15 from 622 Sqn and 18 Lancasters were shot down that fateful night on that mission. The crew consisted of seven personnel, three being Royal Air Force (RAF) and four being Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF)

This story is from notes of my father Ron Hayes, who was a member of this crew, as Mid-Upper Gunner. (MUG)

Dad's Story

"On the 27th of April 1944, 622 Squadron, RAF Bomber Command was detailed to attack Fredrichshafen, Germany, flying at about 20,000 feet and bombing the target with high explosives. The aircraft was approaching our turning point before the run into the target when it was attacked from dead astern under. The attack was a complete surprise, there was no moon, just complete darkness. The aircraft was equipped with H2S radar equipment which transmits pulses and the crew and Intelligence was not aware at the time that the Germans were able to home in on the signal. The first attack came from dead astern and under the tail, by three Junkers 88's night fighters.

. As the aircraft was attacked, from the rear thuds were heard and flashes and the port elevator was badly buckled. The rear gunner was out of communications and could not direct the pilot on evasive manoeuvres, so the Mid-Upper Gunner took control of directing the pilot with evasive direction. From the bursts of fire, they were under attack by at least two attacking aircraft and the gunner could not see them, so he decided to have the aircraft keep on course, rather than attempting to dive away from the attacking aircraft, which was what the attackers would be expecting. A second attack from dead astern upper, hit the starboard elevator and starboard inner undercarriage which burst into flames. As the attacking aircraft was closing in from the starboard quarter level and at about 350 yards the pilot was directed to corkscrew to



From Canada Mike Hayes and his Son Daniel at the 2012 Reunion

starboard. The immediate evasive action by the pilot, even with the badly buckled port elevator showed that this experienced pilot had the aircraft under full control. His response to evasive direction was magnificent, but the aircraft was hit about the starboard inner engine and a second later this portion of the wing burst into flames. The first impression was that the starboard inner engine was on fire but from dialogue between crewmembers in the cockpit, it was determined that the fire

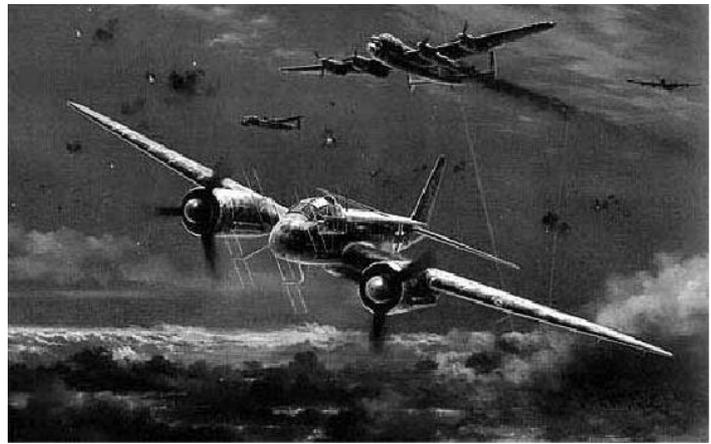
extinguisher system had been activated.

The pilot was in full control of the aircraft, but the fire did not die out as was hoped for by the crew. The danger of flames was increasing all the time and the captain side slipped the aircraft to keep them away as much as possible, as the aircraft kept losing height.

The flames were causing the seam aft of the starboard inner engine to melt and the pilot was informed of this, who then ordered everyone to collect their

parachutes. The aircraft continued to lose height flames enveloped most of the wing and half of the seam had melted. The pilot was informed of this and he ordered everyone to bale out. I then plugged into the intercom system and informed the pilot that I was bailing out and that the rear gunner was still in his turret but he would let him know we were getting out. The captain's last words to me were "Yes, OK, but hurry, we're at 4,500 feet, if he's not hit he might make it. So long Ron, good luck." I then opened the bulkhead door leading to the rear turret and saw the rear gunner turn his head towards me, I patted my parachute to indicate that we were bailing out and he understood. The aircraft was now at about 4,000 feet as I bailed out. The pilot had the aircraft under perfect control, it was still losing height in a sinking fashion and the flames had enveloped the fuselage alongside the burning wing.

I landed hard in an open field, landing on my right foot and fell or was pulled onto my right side and dragged some distance by my open parachute canopy until it collapsed. This hard landing can perhaps be explained by the low level bale-out from the disabled aircraft, the delay in the spontaneous deployment of my parachute (due to infrequent servicing) and the lack of instruction in the use of a parachute. (no training) The action with the German fighter aircraft, the difficulty in evacuating our aircraft and the bale-out and hard landing in the dark were very stressful experiences, and the right side of my body and lower back was aching. I experienced some dizziness, so I rested for a few hours where I had landed, out in the open. With daylight approaching, I stood up to walk in



Lancaster being shot down by JU-88



In Turret: M. MacKinnon (R Gnr)
L-R: S. Berry (Nav), Ron Hayes
(MUG), Jimmy Watson (Pilot),
Roy Eames (Flt Eng)

search of a hiding place, for a wood or an isolated barn, but experienced disabling pain and only managed to make it to a nearby ditch, where I was discovered, by a man, an Alsatian and taken to a village, Guernar, it was about 0100 hours on the 28th of April 1944. In this village I was interviewed by a young girl who could speak a little English and I was then taken to the village hall.

Here I met a French Schoolmistress, Mme. Lousie Strohl, who gave me tea, biscuits and tobacco, and she told me that Flight Lt. Watson had been found dead at the controls of the aircraft. She went to some length in describing him, even saying he was a Canadian and that he had two stripes on his epaulettes. This lady was sympathetic and wanted to cheer me up and make me feel at home, even though she could not help me escape. The village hall had become crowded with the local inhabitants who might have helped me escape if it was not for their fears of the Gestapo. From here, I was taken by two Luftwaffe Intelligence Officers to Colmar, where I was interrogated. After the usual questions, I was asked if I could help them in identifying the belongings of a dead pilot. The items in an envelope were those of Flight Lieutenant Watson consisting of his identification bracelet and a ring. I knew that the ring had been given to Jimmy Watson by his father. The Germans said that they had taken the articles from a dead pilot, who was found dead in the pilot's seat of a Lancaster. I said nothing to them for fear that it might be the beginning of a long interrogation and I also knew that the identity bracelet was sufficient.

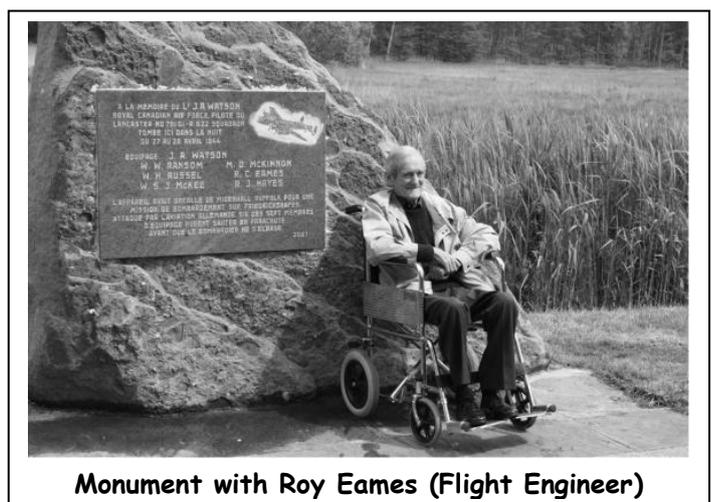
At Colmar, I thought about it and formed the opinion that the pilot, had died in an attempt to save the rear gunner and had attempted to execute a crash landing. Here, I saw Russel, Ransom and Eames, from the crew, but they did not speak to each other thinking that the German's might be listening. Eames and I were taken to Stalag Luft 6, while Ransom and Russel, being officers, were separated and there was no opportunity to talk in quiet. On the way to Stalag Luft 6, I learned from Eames, the Engineer, that he had seen MacKinnon the rear gunner arrive the day before and had received quite a shock because both of us thought that he had also been killed in the aircraft. "

In Dad's log book on Friedrichshafen operation is a note - *"FAILED TO RETURN"*.

As a POW, Ron was promoted to Flight Sergeant and then in April of 1945, he was liberated and returned to England. During his time as a POW he was in 4 different POW Camps, turned 20 years of age, celebrated Christmas to name but a few of his experiences. He was promoted to Warrant Officer and demobilized by the end of the year 1945, returning to civilian life.

In 1946 and 1947, five members of the crew put forward recommendations for the

Victoria Cross to be awarded to Flight Lieutenant James Watson but he ended up with a Mention in Dispatches only. In 1951 Dad moved to Canada, mainly because of his wonderful experiences with his Canadian crewmates, especially James Watson the old man of the crew at twenty-one years of age. Sometime in the early 1950's Dad visited James Watson's parents in Hamilton Ontario.



Many years later in 2004 in the small town of St Hippolyte France, the father and son team of Gerard and Alban Bagy, were gathering information for the 65th anniversary of the ending of WW2 and specifically of the shooting down of the Lancaster on the night of 27/28 April 1944. They managed to first contact William McKee, who was the Bomb aimer in London Ontario who travelled to this small town in 2006 and was introduced to the town mayor. Discussions of a monument began and the marble plaque was made and engraved in 2007, in anticipation of a Monument dedication to be held in 2009 to mark the 65th Anniversary of the end of European hostilities.

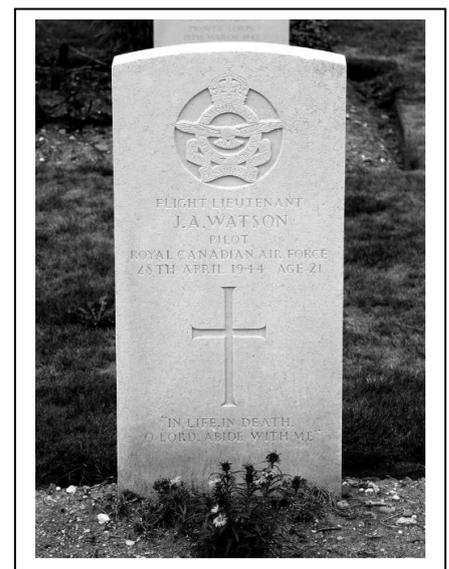
A call had gone out to find members of the crew and /or families and Barry Ward, my uncle in England, found this notification on the Internet and forwarded it to Mom back in 2007. We started corresponding with the team in France and making plans to attend whenever the event would occur.

In April of 2009, just after my return from Afghanistan, we finally got notification that the monument would be dedicated on 8 May 2009 in St Hippolyte, France and we made arrangements to attend this event. As we arrived in France for the dedication we meet Roy Eames who was the Flight Engineer on that fateful trip back in 1944 and some of his family. At the dedication there were two nieces of James Watson, four members of the Eames family and five Hayes family members. Prior to the monument dedication, the Bagys took us up to Koenigsbourg castle which overlooks the valley, describing that fateful night with the Lancaster on fire twisting through the valley below, avoiding towns and allowing the crew to bailout, until it finally crashed in a field, killing James Watson. His sacrifice not only saved his crew but probably many people on the ground from being hit by a burning aircraft as it crashed.

There have now been members of 4 different families from the 7 members of this crew who have been to St Hippolyte and the site of the Lancaster crash, which is now the site of the monument since 2006, which in itself is remarkable. This monument dedication was the beginning of a quest for information on my Dad's WW2 history as he was only 19 years of age when shot down all those years ago. Unfortunately Dad was long gone by this time, as he would have been the best source of information, if we had only written everything down years ago.

As I continued my research, his RAF days were becoming relatively easy to get info as was his time as a POW, but his time in the Merchant Navy and Home Guard prior to joining the RAF, was a different story and the lack of headway had me put everything on the backburner until early in 2012.

There was an article on Sun news TV in Canada about veterans that had photos and included one of my Mom holding Dad's photo in RAF uniform from article after the 2009 monument dedication and this started me looking again. The item that was holding me up had been finding what I thought was a little boat that he served on to get troops out of Dunkirk, which was actually a Steam Ship and this error had



caused me frustration and to put things on hold, Ron was only 15 at the time. Finding this subtle difference allowed information to start flying in and I found the Mildenhall Register in the Spring of 2012 and began correspondence. I found out that a reunion was planned for May 2012 and I made arrangements to attend this reunion with Daniel our youngest son, who had also

been to the monument dedication in 2009 and was 19 at the time of the reunion, the same age Dad was when he was shot down.

At the reunion at RAF Mildenhall and since a wonderful amount of information has continued flowing in on Dad's RAF and POW time and ideas on moving forward on Merchant Navy and Home Guard history has started filling in the gaps. This research will eventually lead to the publishing of a book on Dad's WW2 history as a teenager from Liverpool who really never had the chance to be a teenager because the War got in the way. The wonderful assistance from Howard Sandall the Historian of 622 Sqn has been invaluable in my quest.

Flight Lieutenant James Andrew Watson RCAF, died on 28 April 1944 at the age of 21 and is buried at Choloy War Cemetery at Meurthe-et-Moselle France, IA B23. Son of Robert Scott Watson MC and Mary Kathleen Watson of Hamilton Ontario Canada.

Because of James Watson's sacrifice six families have been able to have three generation's that they never would have had if he had not kept the aircraft aloft that fateful night so long ago.

Post War The following account of post war XV Squadron operations comes from member Don Hiller, who is also a member of the Maily-le-Camp group. He was a JEngO at Cottesmore when this happened and he knew the crew. Wg Cdr Matthews was a well-liked and respected Sqn Cdr.

Jump! Jump! The Final Flight of Victor XH613 by Clive Richards RAF Museum Hendon

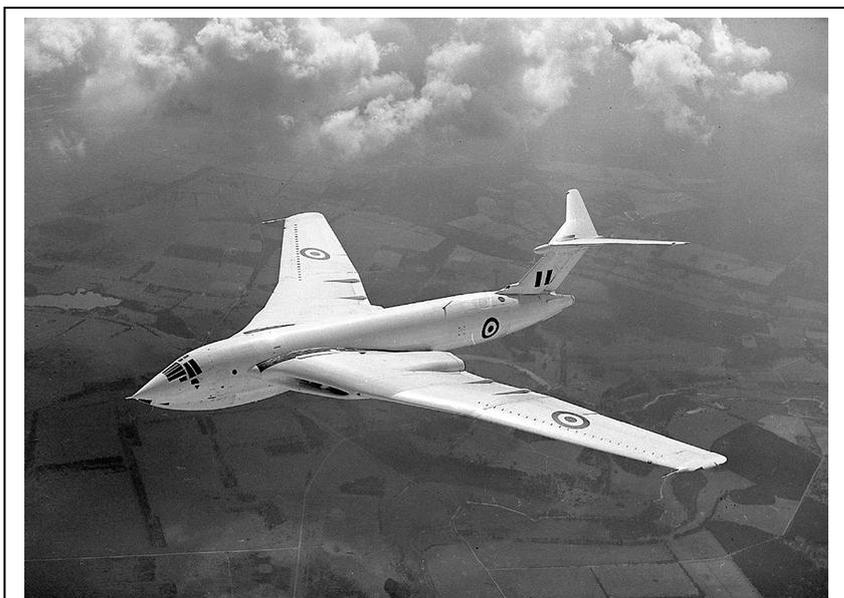
Multiple engine failures in flight are rare. Few, therefore, have been confronted with the situation that faced the crew of Handley Page Victor B1A XH613 - *the sudden failure of all four engines on the approach!*

The survival of XH613's crew is a remarkable testament to their coolness and presence of mind under extreme conditions - and to the importance of thorough training and practice in emergency procedures.

The Handley Page Victor was one of the three jet medium bomber designs that formed the backbone of the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent force - the 'V-Force'. Manufactured as part of the second Victor production contract, following modification to B1A

standard, XH613 was taken on charge by No XV Sqn, then based at RAF Cottesmore.

On 14 June 1962 XH613 departed Cottesmore to participate in an exercise. The Captain was the CO of No XV Sqn, Wg Cdr J G Mathews, AFC - a vastly experienced officer, with more than 4,100 flying hours to his credit. Flying with Wg Cdr Mathews were Fg Off W B Lowther



Victor B1 in flight 1960.

(Second Pilot), Flt Lt G B Spencer (Nav Plotter), Flt Lt E W Anstead (AEO) and Flt Lt B H Stubbs (Nav Radar).

Returning to Cottesmore some four hours after take-off, XH613 was five minutes from touch-down on a PAR (Precision Approach Radar) when the crew were suddenly confronted with the unexpected; at 2,000 ft and 160 kts IAS (Indicated Air Speed), with undercarriage down and flaps set at twenty degrees, all four of the Victor's Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire engines stopped!

Recognising that any attempt to save XJ613 would end in failure, Wg Cdr Mathews immediately gave the order to abandon the aircraft - a procedure complicated by the fact that the three rear crew members did not have ejection seats. For the Nav Plotter, exiting the stricken Victor was to prove less than straightforward:

"I clamped on my mask and reached for my "bone-dome" but hit it out of my reach, and saw it roll towards the door. I stood up and 'vaulted' out over my nav. bag, between the AEO's seat and my own, and stood on the floor at the top of the steps holding the left strut in my left hand. After deciding not to try and retrieve my 'bone-dome' which was 'burbling' around on the lip of the opening, together with the fuse panel cover, two ration boxes and, I think, the boost gauge, I tried to kick the lot out of the door. I eventually had to hold on with both hands and use both feet to get them out. This seemed to take so long that I decided not to spend more time locating and fitting a static line, but to use my manual override, I put my right hand on the knob, moved to the bottom step, crossed my left arm over my right, tucked in my head and rolled out".

By contrast, Flt Lt Anstead experienced comparatively little difficulty in leaving the aircraft. Last of the trio to parachute to safety was Flt Lt Stubbs; initially impeded by the Nav Plotter's seat, he was further delayed by the blackout curtain dividing the Victor's cockpit which prevented him from advising the pilots that the rear crew members had successfully bailed out. Unable to tear the curtain down, the Nav Radar finally managed to signal the Captain by touch and left XH613 at approximately 1,500 ft.

With the rear crew clear, Fg Off Lowther ejected at 1,200 ft and Wg Cdr Mathews at 1,000 ft.

Left to its own fate, XH613 dived vertically into the ground and exploded some five miles from Cottesmore.

An investigation into the loss of XH613 concluded that the crash had resulted from fuel starvation, although the cause of such a catastrophic failure was never established. The loss of XH613 was of particular significance within Bomber Command as it represented "the first occasion on which the complete crew escaped successfully from any kind of 'V' Bomber". In his analysis of this incident, Flt Lt B W Rig old of ABASE hailed the actions of the crew of XH613 as "almost a copybook example of what a good escape should be".

Three factors stood out as central to their success:-

1. The absolute calmness and precision with which the Captain issued only two unequivocal commands; 'Put on parachutes, prepare to abandon aircraft' and 'Jump! Jump!', interspersed with a 'Mayday' transmission".

The actions of Wg Cdr Mathews were said by the other members of the crew to have been crucial, for "without this clear-cut command to act as a switch their subsequent instinctive courses of action might not have gone so smoothly.

2. The thorough training in escape drills received by the crew, as a consequence of which the Captain's orders "acted as a stimulus to an automatic chain of actions".
3. The ability of the crew to think clearly and react rapidly to the unexpected difficulties that can be expected during any emergency - events which are almost inevitably dominated by Murphy's Law!

On 14 June 1962, decisive leadership, discipline and training saved the lives of those aboard XH613 - factors as important today as they were thirty-four years ago.

One very bedraggled Anson and other stories

Tony Smallish, who lives in Stamford, wrote in with his recollections of his time at Mildenhall as an airframe fitter. He begins: -

"My time at Mildenhall started in 1958 when, as a corporal airframe fitter, I obtained an exchange posting to 3 Group Communications Flight."

"I did this as I was recently married and my wife was pregnant and we thought we would have a more settled life in Suffolk.

Before I got married I had been a relative gipsy, working all over the UK on repair and salvage, most types of aircraft in the previous 6 years.

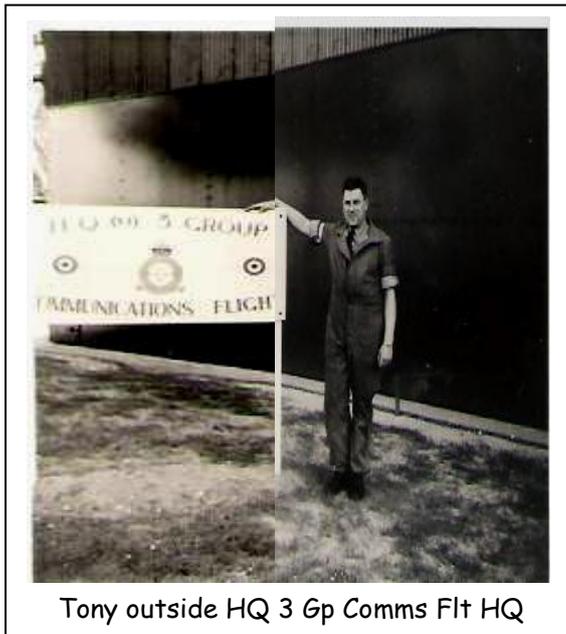
The flight I was posted to operated 4 Avro Anson's and 2 De Havilland Chipmunks. These were used for

continuation training for the officers of 3 Group HQ. We were located in the hanger I last saw as a Crisis Management Centre at the last USAF flying display in 2001. The unit was commanded by a Master Pilot Leggett, a very dour Scotsman.

One of the aircraft we operated was a Mk12 Anson TX172, which was the A O C's personal aircraft. I cannot remember the actual date, but I was asked to partially re-spray this aircraft (silver) and paint two red stars below the cockpit.

Unfortunately, on its first flight after the re-spray it flew through a very bad storm and came back looking very bedraggled so I had to do the whole job all over again!

During my time with the flight I managed to wangle a few flights. One was to RAF Finningley (now Robin Hood Airport) and the pilot was a USAF Major on



exchange posting. On the way back from Finningley, the aircraft started icing up quite severely which I pointed out to the pilot who immediately dived to a lower level and we got back OK. Another trip I did was from RAF Lakenheath. One of our aircraft had hit a floodlight and the tail-plane was damaged. M/P Leggett said 'Grab a tin of dope and some fabric and we were off to Lakenheath. After dopping a large patch on the tail-plane we flew back to Mildenhall. Of course, then I had to do a proper repair.

During my two years at Mildenhall one task I remember is a flypast over the American Cemetery at Madingley, Cambridge. I can't remember what the occasion was, but boxes of Sweet Pea petals (real ones) were delivered to the aircraft which then flew very low over the cemetery. The petals were thrown out of the door, which had been removed before flight, by our ground crew.

My other recollection of Mildenhall is having to push aircraft across the airfield past rows of USAF aircraft. We did not have a tractor and to refuel, the aircraft had to taxi to a static bowser. The USAF aircraft I saw at Mildenhall were B47's, B36's, C133's and C124's.

My time at Mildenhall finally ended in 1960 when I was posted to Mamfe in what was then Southern Cameroon to operate Twin Pioneer aircraft on behalf of the United Nations. (but that's another story). I ended my RAF service as a Flt Sgt in charge of 111 Squadron at RAF Coningsby" Tony finishes by saying that although some of his memories are a little hazy, there maybe someone out there who remembers him or similar times and would like to get in touch. If so, please contact your secretary by post (61 Salem Street, Gosberton, Lincs, PE11 4NQ), telephone (01775 841585) or e-mail (mrsecretary@hotmail.co.uk), who will put you in touch with Tony for a reminiscing session.

If there are any more stories lurking out there you would like to share, please use one of the contact methods above and we will be pleased to air it for all to enjoy.

A message from Down-Under

We were very pleased to receive the following message:

From the Staff and Cadets of 622 Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets, Murray Bridge, South Australia, to the members of Mildenhall Register - in particular members of 622 Squadron RAF. Best Wishes.

Please find enclosed some information regarding our Organisation and in particular, our Squadron. Bellamus Noctu.

History of the Air Training Corps/ Australian Air Force Cadets

The Air Training Corps (A.T.C), now the Australian Air Force Cadets (A.A.F.C), was established on the 11th of June, 1941. It was started as an educational arm of the Empire Air Training Scheme to provide pilots for Commonwealth Air Forces during the early stages of the Second World War. It later expanded to include other aircrew and ground staff, and it played an important role throughout the war. It was continued at the end of the war as a youth organisation.



A 622 Sqn cadet receiving an award from Air Marshal Binskin

In August 1974 the A.T.C was disbanded but was reintroduced two years later as the Air Training Corps (AIRC). In 1982 girls were allowed to attend for the very first time. In 2001 the A.T.C were renamed to the Australian Air Force Cadets, reflecting the support received from the Royal Australian Air Force (R.A.A.F). The A.A.F.C shares the R.A.A.F organisational model, its rank structure and R.A.A.F uniform of the day. Some activities that the A.A.F.C undertake include Flying, Field Craft, Bivouacs, Firearms Safety Training, General Service Training, Drill and Ceremonial, Service Knowledge, Navigation and Gliding.

The aims of the A.A.F.C are to foster qualities that will enable cadets to become responsible young adults, who will make a valuable contribution to the community. No matter what career chosen, the AAFC provides a foundation of knowledge and skills that will assist you towards your future.

622 Squadron AAFC Murray Bridge

The Murray Bridge community has welcomed our Squadron to this rural city in January 2010. Participation in the AAFC gives interested youth an opportunity to become better equipped for life, fostering initiative, leadership, discipline and loyalty. The AAFC has structured programme that builds on these values to foster an interest in the RAAF and all aspects of aviation. Joining as an AAFC cadet will build interpersonal skills, confidence and the experience could make finding a job easier.

Our Squadron last year has had many activities with some being; Recruit Training weekends, Cadet Non-Commissioned Officer Training weekends, General Service Training Camps, Pre-Promotional Course Preparation weekend, 70th Anniversary Parade of the A.A.F.C, the End of Year Parade, LINK Training, Helicopter flying with 603 Squadron Berri and our End of Year Bowling Night.

A plea for the return of a copy of Sing High

A plea for help came from Mrs Gail Phelps, daughter of the late Eric Charles Richardson who was Chairman of the old 90 Squadron Group. He was also responsible for making the steel sundial for the 90 Sqn Tuddenham Village Green Memorial.

Gail is searching for her late Father's copy of Sing High written by David Dorrell; Jim Munro; Christopher Paul. This was a much treasured book about the history of 90 Sqn and was inscribed either with her Father's name or had a dedication to Eric from the authors. Eric lent it in the late nineties to 2000 to a family or friends of a Register member. As often happens, it was not returned and the loss of the book caused considerable distress to Eric towards the end of his life. Despite considerable efforts Gail has been unable to trace the copy but the search continues. Can you help? The family bear no grudge, but would very much like to have the book back as it is very precious to them.

Please let the Chairman know if you can shed any light on this matter and hopefully the book can be returned albeit anonymously through the Chairman,. Contact details inside the back cover.

The Register has no joining and annual membership fees. We rely on those in a position to do so to send donations to the Treasurer in order that we may continue to produce the newsletter and respond to requests for information.

If you are able to donate then please contact the Treasurer, details inside the back page. We are very grateful for all donations however, big or small.

Do you visit the Register's Facebook page and Web Site?

Have you visited our web site and facebook pages? If not, you should or at least get either your children or grandchildren to do it for you! Both are an excellent way of keeping up to date with the Register and related matters. The website contains far more information than can be placed in one single newsletter; it is a real hive of information. The Facebook page allows anybody registered (and registration is easy!) either to make comment or post information and news that might be of interest to the Register's members. I have picked a couple of pieces from the facebook pages:

Andrew Macdonald (London) writes: *"Have had a really good chat with a terrific bloke that flew operations from RAF Mildenhall in 44-45. His name is Rex Kimlin and he has written a book about his experiences....his book is called "How Lucky I Was" and is available on Amazon. I'm no relation, nor am I involved in advertising....but this is such a good story. and Rex is an absolute legend... thought I might spread the news....Rex turns 90 in March."*

Prompted by this posting, I found an interesting comment on the web from a Les Chambers who edited Rex's book. He said, "I'm currently editing a book by Rex Kimlin on his experiences on Lancaster bombers during the Second World War. Rex flew 35 missions and lived to tell the tale. Here is one of them. It may interest those who feel we really can't put credible numbers on risk"

Quote from the book, "On one Op, when we landed back at base; we saw the ambulance pulled up alongside one of the planes. The rear gunner was dead. One piece of flak had traversed the plane from nose to tail, gone through the turret doors, and killed him. It was the only piece of flak to hit the aircraft. If your number was up, that was it. Ray Jones (a member of the damaged bomber's crew) said that they received a hit from a flak explosion, and the nose cap of the shell finished up embedded in his tabletop. He picked it up, and there was a number printed on it, 426348. His RAF number was 426349. He reckoned his number wasn't quite up!"

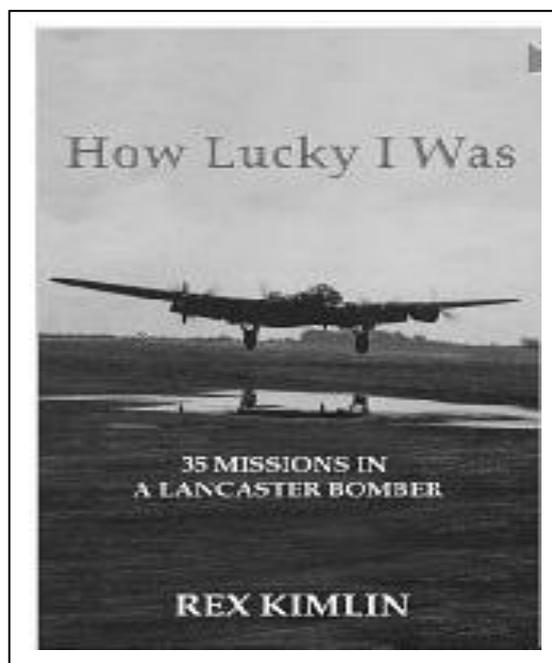
Ed - Rex Kimlin's name does not appear in the Register's membership list. Does anyone remember him?

Another posting on our Facebook page is from Alan Logue of (Adelaide) Australia: *"Just found and liked your page - really happy to find it. My late father flew Lancs with 149 Sqn out of Methwold - he was with the RAAF. You will be hearing more from me in the near future. Happy New Year to all those I don't even know yet!"*

Our Facebook page and website are very popular and have led to several people joining the Register.

Facebook can be found by signing up via Goggle and following the instructions! It is easy, our address, is the Mildenhall Register.

Our **web site** can be found by entering: www.mildenhallregister.stirlingpilot.org.uk/



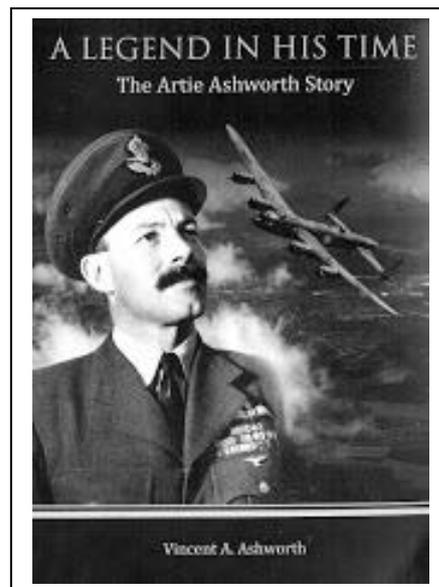
A Legend in his Time - The Artie Ashworth Story, by Vincent Ashworth is a biography of his distinguished brother who served in the RAF from 1939 to 1967. Artie had obtained a short term commission in the RAF in 1939 but first trained and obtained his wings with the RNZAF in New Zealand.

He went on to serve two tours with No. 75 (New Zealand) squadron based at Feltwell. In between he did a tour with 38 and then 216 Squadron, first in Malta and then in the Middle East. After completing his second tour with 75 Squadron, he was posted to the newly formed Path Finder Force HQ where, according to a number of authors, he played a prominent role in designing the early Pathfinder tactics. It was while stationed at Wyton that he became one of the few Bomber Command war time pilots to have flown his damaged Wellington Bomber back to England singlehanded after having ordered his crew to bale out of their blazing aircraft during an attack on the German city of Saarbrücken.

After Wyton he was seconded to the RNZAF in New Zealand where he first served as a Staff Officer at the RNZAF HQ in the Pacific, and then served a tour with 17(Fighter) Squadron flying Corsair fighter bombers in the Pacific. He returned to the UK in late 1944 where he was posted to 635 Pathfinder squadron based at Downham Market. His official RAF service records state that he somehow survived 110 operations over enemy territory.

After the war he took a permanent commission in the RAF where he served with distinction until his retirement due to ill-health in 1967. He commanded 139 and 59 squadrons as well as serving at the RAF HQ in London. He was awarded the AFC for his work as a test pilot and for his service at the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment. He was awarded a second AFC for distinguished service in command of No, 139 (Jamaica) Squadron.

The book is soft cover, includes 33 chapters in 10 Parts plus appendices. It is well illustrated. It is retailing the book in New Zealand for NZ\$40 (£21) plus postage. The book is a limited private publication and is not available in bookshops. It may be purchased by contacting the author by e-mail - vashworth@clear.net.nz



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Mildenhall Register
trip to Thetford
2012

THETFORD
COUNCIL

