

The Mildenhall Register

XV, XC, 149, 218 and 622 Bomber Squadrons' Association

Supported by Friends of 75 (NZ) Squadron

Chairman: Squadron Leader John Gentleman (RAF Ret'd.)



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting: 17th May 2013 held at Middleton Hall, USAF Base, Mildenhall

Present: John & Jill Gentleman, Smiley & Cherry Mildwater, Geoff & Debbie Reynolds Clare More, Alan & Yvonne Fraser, Martyn & Valerie Ford-Jones plus guests.

Apologies: Howard Sandall, Steve Smith, Swifty Swallow and John & Elizabeth Cox.

Smiley presented John with a gavel engraved with the names of all 3 Chairmen's, so he can keep order at future meetings! John thanked Smiley and then welcomed everyone to the AGM with a bang of the gavel.

- **Minutes of the AGM on 13/5/2012** - These were agreed by all. Martyn Ford-Jones proposed that they be accepted and this was seconded by Cherry Mildwater.
- **Matters arising** - none
- **Chairman's Report:** John said it had been an interesting year with the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial, the summer newsletter and the Bomber Command Clasp. There was the sad passing of Jim Coman, a veteran & committee member. He was always very active and answered any queries. Six of us went to his funeral. We are very pleased to see Jim's son Colin here tonight. Jim has left £500 to the Register for a round of drinks. Doug Kebbell has died and Smiley went to his funeral recently.
Saturday: Coach will leave The Bird at 9.15 & go to Methwold for refreshments and a look round. It will then continue on to the aviation museum at Norwich. There will be a sandwich lunch which has been arranged by Smiley & Cherry. Visit includes Vulcan & Nimrod tours, costs are to approx £15 per head. A collection will be made on the coach. Evening dinner will be run the same as last year. Gary Wenko has arranged for the modellers to display again with a Dam Busters theme. Committee to be on hand to meet & greet etc. There will be a special raffle in aid of Bomber Command Memorial Fund. 75 sqdn will be with us again. There will be 107 people at the reunion dinner.
Sunday: There is a church service at 10am at Beck Row Church. All Air Attaches etc will be in uniform. There will standards on parade. Smiley will read the lesson & Geoff will do the Act of Remembrance. Orders of service have been printed. Service will last 40 minutes. Refreshments will be served afterwards in the Church Hall, a donation will be given to the church for this. John thanked the committee everyone for all their hard work over the last year, especially Smiley & Cherry and Jill.
Martyn Ford-Jones stood up and advised that he had been to Brize Norton to meet the new 622 squadron boss. They are waiting for an honorary air-commodore. An invitation will be extended to all Mildenhall Register veterans to visit.
- **Secretary's Report:** Geoff read the following out - Well, it's been another great year, tinged with sadness following the death of our esteemed colleague, committee member and great friend Jim Coman. Both I and our historians have been kept busy with a steady trickle of enquiries. A number of which do not necessarily relate to The Register, but to other squadrons, who for one reason or another have never been members. We do our best to help wherever we can. We have brought family members of crews together whose relatives were lost and have brought closure to folk who never knew what their relative, be it grandfather, uncle, cousin etc had done during the war. These enquiries often lead to new membership and are a worthwhile way of broadcasting who we are and what we do. With that in mind, our web page owned and run by Alan Fraser, our Facebook page, run by a few likeminded folk and other computer sites are

a valuable asset. As they are free to use both for The Register and those searching for information, that is even better.

New membership in the past year has overtaken the sad losses. Last year at this time we had 443 members, to date, we have 470. Family and new enquirers being the greatest of these although I am waiting to hear from an Australian gentleman who had not been heard from for over 5 years, whose son contacted me a while ago. Apparently they had moved and not let us know, so they will be coming back into the fold.

I believe there will be 17 veterans with us tomorrow night and some more (3) from 75 NZ who join us once again. We hope they will make this an annual event. Sadly, the union between the MR and 218 Sqdn has not been such a smooth transition. Steve Smith, who took over has had an uphill battle getting the membership enthused about joining us at this re-union. His poor health has meant that he is unable to join us and there is sadly no representation from their ranks at this year's event. He and I are continuing to try and whip up enthusiasm and we hope for better things next year.

It would be remiss of me not to thank the other members of the committee who work so hard behind the scenes to make this event successful every year and without whose help I couldn't continue to do my job. This includes our wives who put up with everything with little complaint. I hope you enjoy the weekend, with its changes as much as in previous years, and for our newbies/first timers, I hope it will be an experience you would like to repeat. John thanked Geoff for doing all the nitty gritty stuff.

- **Treasurer's Report:** A/cs have not yet been audited. The balances are current account £6797, deposit a/c £2003, there are cheques outstanding of £271 and funds due to be paid in of £1675. Thus making a total of £10204. Once reunion expenses have been paid, there will be approx. £5500 to carry over to next year. Donations so far this year have totalled £2036 (2012 totalled £2700). John said the Register was very grateful for the donations to keep it afloat & they covered the magazine costs. John thanked all who have donated. Smiley confirmed that there will be no need to increase costs next year. Smiley had a prize for Pauline Atkinson for being the first person to tell him that the wrong dates were on the tickets!
- **Website update:** Alan has been away a lot & has not been able to update the website as much. He thanked everyone who has passed him info. There have been 19000 unique visits to the website. A unique visit is someone coming to look round and then leaving. If the same person looks at the website 5 times, it only counts as 1 unique visit. More stories, info and pictures are required and will be put on the site. Alan hopes it can continue to grow.
- **Election of Officers –**
 - a) John stood down and handed over to Geoff. Geoff asked if John was prepared to stand again as Chairman. John said he was. This was proposed by Martyn Ford-Jones and seconded by Alan Fraser & George Thomson. Geoff then handed back over to John.
 - b) John said he would like to continue working with Geoff as Secretary, Smiley as Treasurer, Robert Oakley as auditor and the historians: Martyn Ford-Jones, Howard Sandall, Alan Fraser & Sam Mealing-Mills (all ex-officio) along with Clare More as a committee member. John asked if any veteran would like to serve as a committee member, there were no volunteers. George Thomson & Tom Payne proposed all these posts en bloc and John then asked for a show of hands to confirm, this was passed unanimously.
- **The Future –** A discussion took place about the AGM. It was decided to investigate the possibility of holding the Friday night meal and AGM off base. Many were not happy with the meal this year (cold food). Numbers are declining. A decision would need to be made before the December newsletter went out. Clare More stood up and said we need to re-organise and change; it would be a good thing. The possibility of moving the AGM to the Saturday was discussed but would then mean a shorter reunion weekend.

A show of hands confirmed that people wanted an event on the Friday. A new venue will be looked at for Friday night next year by the committee.

- **Next Year's Reunion:** the dates will be 16th – 18th May.
- **AOB:**
 - a) Smiley spoke to RAF benevolent fund people; they asked him to let people know about the 2 hotels they run with trained medical staff in them. If anyone wants to use them for a break away, they will organise it. Facility is there to be used. Details will be in the magazine. The cost should not deter people as that will be taken into account. This facility is for veterans and partners. Details will be printed in the newsletter.
 - b) Martyn thanked the officers and committee for their hard work.

The AGM closed at 9.15pm and was followed by Gary Wenko's presentation.