



# THE HORNET

## The Newsletter of the 100 Squadron Association

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## Newsletter 103 November 2013

Dear Members

Many thanks to those who have contributed interesting articles to this edition. Particular thanks go to Greg Harrison, the Association Historian, for his research into the wartime service of the veterans we have recently lost. As many of you will know my father, Ron Clark, was one of those. and I would like to thank everyone who sent kind messages of condolence and also attended his funeral in mid-October at the RAF Church of St Clement Danes in London. He attended all the reunions over the last 10 years or so and was proud of his association with 100 Squadron. It is also particularly sad that we lost Bob Hampson, Stamper Metcalfe and Ted Gordon in quick succession. My father met Ted at Coningsby a few years ago for the first time since WW2 (see Ted's obituary on pages 10/11).

Nina Crane  
(Editor of The Hornet)

## **Remembrance Sunday 2013**

Although cold, it was a fine, bright day for our annual Service of Remembrance at Holton le Clay on Sunday, 10 November 2013. A smaller than usual group of Association members. but a good number of local supporters were in attendance. As John Holford said last year, "sadly the number of older members declines each year, but those associated with us, sons, daughters, widows, and friends etc. are a very welcome hope for our future." The service was again conducted by the Rev. Chris Woadden assisted by Rev. Paul Salmon, and the Bugler was Mark Cuerton. The Squadron Standard Bearer was Flight Lieutenant Lee Hodgkinson and "The Boss", Wing Commander Tony Cann, laid the Squadron wreath accompanied by Flight Lieutenant Jonny Mulhall (our Liaison Officer). Frank Ockerby laid a wreath on behalf of the Association and others were laid by the Royal Observer Corps and the village communities. Your Committee was represented by current and past members: Alex Wedderburn, John Willis and myself.

Sadly, Colin Johnson was in hospital after a fall but, despite his absence, Jean Johnson yet again provided us with an excellent meal; this time at the Royal Oak pub in the village. We really cannot thank Colin and Jean enough for their efforts over so many years since the memorial was erected.

Jean hopes that next year we will be able to gather in the new Village Community Centre after the service. As you may already know, the old Village Hall at Holton-le-Clay is now out of use, and I believe the site has been sold. The Hall has been in poor shape for some time and deteriorated further when the Parish Council stopped spending money on it a few years ago because of their plans for a new Community Centre. That Centre is to be what was a redundant pub - The Etherington Arms - which the village had been raising money to purchase. They finally bought the building a couple of years ago, but it needed a significant amount of work to refurbish it to become their Community Centre. They made applications for various grants, some were successful others not, but progress has been slow and rather frustrating for all those involved including Jean, who is still a local councillor.

From the outset, the village have wanted to name part of the building

"The Hornets' Nest" in order to reflect the close relationship the village has had with 100 Squadron since 1943. After consulting the Committee when the idea was first muted, I said we should be delighted and would like to offer some appropriate memorabilia to display in the building. After lunch on 10 November, The Boss presented Jean with a Squadron badge wall plaque and a superb model of the Hawk as painted for the 90th Anniversary in 2007. On behalf of the Association, I presented Jean with three items all framed and ready to hang: a photograph of the Lancaster and two Hawks taken for the 95th Anniversary, the montage print of "Aircraft of 100 Squadron" produced for the 90th Anniversary, and the side-on print of the Hawk signed by all those serving on the Squadron last year.

Norman Bonnor - President

## **Reunion Plans for 2014**

The Committee has started planning the 2014 Reunion to be held at RAF Leeming on Friday, 13th and Saturday, 14th June 2014. Further details and an application form will be included in the next issue of The Hornet in February.

## **Request from Our Historian**

Our Historian, Greg Harrison, is continuing to gather material about the Squadron as part of his research. He is anxious that relevant personal reminiscences, texts and photographs may be lost to us as time passes. If anyone would like to help and send relevant items to him, he will photocopy or scan texts and photographs and return the originals. His contact details are:

Greg Harrison, 24 Dinas Street, Grangetown, Cardiff, CF11 6QY

E-mail: [greg@greg-harrison.co.uk](mailto:greg@greg-harrison.co.uk)



# From Excalibur The Magazine of RAF Leeming



## A Hawk on approach to Split Airfield, Croatia

During the last couple of months the Squadron has been involved in training new helicopter tactics instructors, photo tasking for the new Voyager aircraft, Close Air Support (CAS) for elements soon to be deploying to Operation Herrick, and night flying training at Coningsby for the Typhoon alongside our standing commitments. Our ability to respond to short notice tasking has also been tested by a week long detachment to Eindhoven to work alongside both the Royal Netherlands Army and the German Air Force as an aggressor unit conducting CAS .

## Obituaries

The last few weeks have been a very sad time for the Association; we have lost four of our WWII veterans. The obituaries below have been written with the help of Greg Harrison's research; please contact him at [greg@greg-harrison.co.uk](mailto:greg@greg-harrison.co.uk) if you would like more detail.

**Robert Herbert Beresford Hampson** was born on 28th March 1916 in Liverpool. He joined the RAF on 1 February 1939 as an Air Gunner and qualified to receive his "AG" brevet. At the outbreak of war, Bob was posted to the Far East to join 100 Squadron at Seletar as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. At the time, preparations were in force for the expected invasion, and high level bombing (HLB) practice and dummy torpedo attacks against Royal Navy ships were daily flying exercises. He was one of the aircrew featured in the painting "No 100 (Torpedo Bomber) Squadron goes to war." He was in Wildebeest (K6384) with Flight Lieutenant Smith and Sergeant Leslie with two other Wildebeests flying to the Far Eastern frontier at Kepala Batas, Kedah. Bob was promoted to Sergeant in late May 1940 and flew regularly with Flying Officer Tillott.

But on 30 April 1941, after spending some time in hospital suffering from an infected mosquito bite, Bob was posted off 100 Squadron to 205 Squadron also operating out of Seletar and in the process of converting from the Short Singapore to the Consolidated Catalina Mk 1. Towards the end of the year, 205 Squadron became engaged in locating Japanese naval forces on their way to invade Malaya and the Dutch East Indies and suffered several losses. When Japanese forces landed in Malaya in December 1941, the Squadron moved from its exposed base at Seletar to Java and eventually retired to Australia, where it disbanded on 31 March 1942.

Bob felt he was very fortunate to have escaped from Singapore just before the Japanese captured the island. He arrived back in the UK where he was later commissioned and served on the Catalina with a variety of squadrons for the duration of the war. He was "mentioned in dispatches" and retired as a Flight Lieutenant on 28 April 1947.

Like many ex-servicemen, Bob joined the emergency teacher training programme after the war. He was to become a head teacher first in Bedfordshire and then Derbyshire until his retirement. Bob was a very

active supporter of RAFA and the 100 Squadron Association and would attend reunions whenever possible but, unfortunately, ill health had prevented his attendance at recent events. He died on 24 September 2013 (aged 97). His funeral service was at St. John's Church, Aldercar, Langley Mill, Derbyshire on Monday 14 October; Air Cdre Norman Bonnor and Frank Ockerby represented the Association. A tribute donation has been sent to RAFA.

**James Ronald Clark** was born in 1921 in Cumbria, and saw the first part of his RAF service close to home when he attended Elementary Flying Training School at Kingstown flying the Miles Magister trainer in 1941. Ron continued his pilot training in the USA where he gained his "wings" on the 4 August 1942. After Advanced Flying Training at Little Rissington, he progressed to 28 OTU, Wymeswold where he flew the Wellington before converting to the Lancaster with his newly-formed crew at 1656 Heavy Conversion Unit, Lindholme. Following a short spell at Lancaster Finishing School, Ron and his crew were posted to 100 Squadron, arriving when the Battle of the Ruhr was in full swing.

Ron's crew made their first operational trip on the night of the 11th/12th June 1943; the target was Dusseldorf and the flight went as planned. However, on their second trip the following night against Bochum, the aircraft was "coned" by enemy searchlights as they started their bombing run. They were subjected to a terrific barrage of flak which rendered the rear turret unserviceable. Ron continued until all the bombs were dispatched before extricating the crew from their perilous position. It was to be the first time that "The Phantom of the Ruhr" would bring Ron and his crew home despite severe damage, but it would not be the last. Raids to Oberhausen and three trips to Cologne followed, before a trip over the Alps to Turin.

With the Battle of the Ruhr on hold, the Battle of Hamburg commenced, and it was to Germany's second city that Ron and his crew went on the night of the 24th/25th July 1943. A trip to Essen the following night was followed by two more trips to Hamburg and one to Remscheid. Nearly half way into their tour, they were now one of 100's "top crews" and were pressing home their attacks in an ever-more determined fashion. Their final raid against Hamburg was due to be on the night of the 2nd/3rd August. Thunderstorms and icing played havoc

with the aircraft on the outbound flight making "The Phantom" difficult to control, and Ron would have been justified in turning back. Instead they attacked Bremen, delivering their bombs into the centre of the city and receiving a well-aimed barrage of flak from the German gunners below for their trouble!

Six nights after a very successful raid on Peenemunde, Ron lifted "The Phantom" into the air for the first raid in the Battle of Berlin. Ron reported an uneventful trip against this most formidable of targets, with the only item of note being that they saw a Ju88 enemy fighter shot down. Berlin was the target again a few nights later, followed by trips to Mannheim and Hannover. Mannheim was again their target on the night of the 23rd/24th of September, but as they started the bombing run with the bomb doors open, they were "coned" by searchlights once more. The aircraft was subjected to an intense flak barrage causing severe damage before being attacked by a German night fighter. They managed to drop their bombs on target, and with assistance from the Ben Bennett, the flight engineer, Ron took evasive action. For this action in saving the aircraft and crew, Ron received a DFC and Ben the DFM. The Phantom was so badly damaged, it took a month to repair, by which time Ron and his crew had flown their final four ops with 100 and transferred to 625 Squadron, where they flew one final operation against Hannover and completed their tour.

Ron was appointed as an Instructor at a variety of Heavy Conversion Units, before serving at the Bomber Command Instructors School in late 1945. Post-war Ron was seconded to BOAC to fly Sunderlands, Haltons, Yorks and the Canadair Argonaut. Ron retired from BOAC as a senior captain on the VC10. He died on 29 September 2013 (aged 92). His funeral service was held at St Clement Danes, The Strand, London on 15 October 2013; serving personnel from the BBMF and 100 Squadron attended, and Air Cdre Bonnor led a large group of Association members. A tribute donation has been sent to the RAF Benevolent Fund.

**Joseph Stamper Metcalfe** came from Settle in North Yorkshire, and "bunked off" Giggleswick school to volunteer, cycling to Bradford in order to do so, and apparently received "six of the best" from his head teacher for his troubles when he got back to school!! He was



eventually called up in June 1941, going to Cardington initially, and then on to St. Johns Wood for three weeks "square bashing". After a spell at West Kirby on the Wirral, he headed for Avonmouth near Bristol to sail, with several hundred other young recruits, to South Africa. On arrival, he attended the Initial Training Wing at Bulawayo, and then on to Elementary Flying Training School at Mount Hampden. Unfortunately, Stamper didn't quite make the grade for pilot, so he moved on to No 48 Air School at Woodbrooke, East London, to train and qualified as a Bomb Aimer.

On returning to the UK, Stamper attended 28 OTU, Wymeswold to crew up. Stamper and his newly-formed crew went to 1656 Heavy Conversion Unit at Lindholme, then Lancaster Finishing School before finally to 101 Squadron at Ludford Magna. At 101, Stamper flew 7 operational missions before he was struck down with malaria and confined to Station Sick Quarters. Whilst Stamper was sick, his crew flew with another bomb aimer and unfortunately went missing. When he had recovered enough, Stamper went back to 28 OTU at Wymeswold to crew up again, this time with Flight Sergeant Brown, and after another round at HCU and LFS, joined 100 Squadron.

The crew's first op was in daylight against German coastal gun batteries at Flushing on the 17 September 1944, as part of a small force of 25 Lancasters tasked to attack this precision target. Further raids against French targets as part of the "Transportation Plan" followed, before Bomber Command once again turned back to attack Germany in October 1944. Cologne, Dusseldorf, and various other targets in the Ruhr were attacked by Stamper and his crew, as part of the preparations for the Allied ground advance. Attacking Bochum on the night of the 4th/5th of November 1944, Stamper was lining up the Lancaster for bomb release, when the aircraft was hit by flak but fortunately not badly damaged.

At the time of the Bochum raid, the crew were not flying in their usual Lanc, LM723 HW-H, but in another as their regular one was being repaired. While on leave in early October 1944, their aircraft, now nicknamed "Hellzapoppin'" with nose-art painted by Stamper, was borrowed by Squadron Leader Dave Robb and crew, navigator Arthur White, for a daylight raid against Emmerich. At

14:23, the bomb aimer, Ed Mosure pressed the bomb release and the 4,000lb "Cookie" was dropped. But before the bomb release mechanism had time to countdown to release the canisters of incendiaries, the aircraft was hit by incendiaries from an aircraft above, and significant damage was caused to the wings, fuselage, tailplane, pilot's windscreen and the blind flying panel. While all this was happening, Stamper's crew mascot, a Golliwog, was lost from the aircraft and, when Stamper returned from leave, there were strong words between the two crews! But Stamper and Arthur White were to become good friends and founder members of the Association.

On 3 December 1944, the crew, minus their pilot, flew to attack the Urft Dam in daylight. In the pilot's seat was none other than the Squadron Boss Wing Commander "Hammy" Hamilton. Although the raid was abandoned over the target because of low cloud obscuring the Aiming Point, the Boss was reported to be very happy with the performance of what was now one of his most experienced top "Gen" crews. A daylight raid to Cologne on Christmas Eve passed without incident, then it was more of the same, with Operation Thunderclap in February seeing Stamper and his crew attacking Chemnitz and Dresden, until the last bombing mission of their tour in mid-March 1945, an evening trip to Misburg.

In all, Stamper flew 34 operations with 100 Squadron at Waltham, and 7 with 101, 41 trips in total. He could have screened himself after 30 but carried on so that his crew wouldn't have to do their last few ops with a different bomb aimer; something Stamper would have decided without a second thought. Young men, like Stamper, who flew under the skull and crossbones were renowned for their airmanship, courage and "press on" spirit.

After the war, Stamper became a secondary school teacher. He was the Association's Treasurer for the first twelve years after we formed. He died on 12 October 2013. His funeral service was held at Grenoside Crematorium, Sheffield on 29 October 2013. Flight Lieutenant Lee Hodgkinson represented the Squadron, and Air Cdre Bonnor led a large group of Association members. A tribute donation has been sent to the RAF Benevolent Fund.

**Edward Gordon** completed his initial training at Scarborough after "square bashing" at Lords Cricket ground, and went to No. 9 Air

Gunnery School in Penrhos, North Wales, to learn his trade. From there he went to 30 OTU at Hixon in Staffordshire, where he crewed up as a mid upper gunner with Barney Magee, then onto 1662 HCU at Blyton for conversion to the "heavies".

Ted arrived on 100 Squadron's "C" Flight on the 28th of August 1943. This was a critical time, Bomber Command was about to embark on the "Battle of Berlin". Ted's first operation was against Berlin on the night of the 23rd/24th of August 1943, but this wasn't with his own crew, but with Ron Clark and crew in "Phantom of the Ruhr", whose own mid upper gunner was unable to fly that night. Ted's first trip with his own crew was a week later, on the 30th/31st of August, to the heavily-defended Ruhr town of Monchengladbach. Two more trips to Berlin followed, on the second of which the power system of Ted's turret failed and would only rotate part-way. Whilst they would have been fully justified in turning back in the circumstances, they elected instead to carry on to the target, so establishing for themselves an early reputation as a "press on" crew. On a trip to Munich on the 6th/7th of September, one of the engines developed a coolant leak and had to be feathered, but once again the crew pressed home their attack, adding their 12,000lbs of ordnance to the significant amount of high explosive dropped on the city. Hannover, Kassel, and Stuttgart were all visited by the crew over the following few weeks as they settled into their tour.

On 13 October 1943, "C" Flight was ready to form 625 Squadron, and Ted and his crew moved to Kelstern as founding members of this new Bomber Command unit. Hannover, Dusseldorf, and Modane were all visited by the squadron in the second half of October and early November 1943, but then as the nights drew longer so the focus turned back to Berlin. Ted and his crew did no less than four trips to the German capital on the nights of the 18th/19th and 22nd/23rd of November, and the 1st/2nd, and 2nd/3rd of January 1944. On the last trip the crew experienced severe icing of their aircraft, which became so bad that the instruments froze up and the aircraft went into an uncontrolled dive. The skilful actions of the skipper, aided by the flight engineer who jettisoned the bomb load during the dive, recovered the aircraft at just 2000 feet, but severe damage had been sustained by the aircraft - so severe in fact that even this "press on" crew decided to

abandon the mission and made a landing at the emergency airfield of Woodbridge. On the 16th/17th December 1943, when skipper Barney Magee was confined to sick quarters to have a piece of flak removed, the rest of the crew flew a trip with the Squadron Boss, Wing Commander Preston. This was the infamous "Black Thursday", when bad weather "clamped in" many of the 1 Group bases as the bombers returned and, low on fuel, many aircraft crashed as they struggled to find their airfields in the gloom.

Brunswick was visited by the crew on the 14th and 15th of the month, followed by another trip to Berlin on the 20th/21st of January. A trip to Magdeburg on the 21st/22nd of January was followed by two to Berlin on the 27th/28th and 28th/29th January. During this last flight, Ted's electrically-heated flying suit failed, but he said nothing to the rest of the crew who completed the operation. For Ted it was to have dramatic consequences; on landing back at Kelstern, he was rushed to Station Sick Quarters and diagnosed with pneumonia. The rest of the crew carried on with a variety of mid upper gunners until they completed their tour in early March 1944 and were posted to a variety of training establishments for instructor duties. Ted spent some time in hospital before being sent to Harewood House to convalesce. In all, Ted flew 26 operations before pneumonia put a stop to any more combat flying. Of those, no less than 11 were to Berlin, the most feared target amongst Bomber Command crews.

After the war, Ted worked in production management at various companies in the Sheffield area. He was a keen golfer and worked to promote junior golf in Yorkshire. Ted was a strong supporter of the 100 Squadron Association. He died on 30 October 2013 (aged 89), and his funeral service was held at Grenoside Crematorium, Sheffield on 9 November 2013. Air Cdre Bonnor led a group of Association members. A tribute donation has been sent to the RAF Benevolent Fund.

**Douglas Hudson** was another WW2 veteran from 100 Squadron who died recently. Although never a member of the Association, we mourn his passing.



Ron Clark after unveiling "The Phantom" at BBMF  
- 27 April 2007



Stamper Metcalfe & Ted Gordon with  
Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Cornwall at the  
new Standard Presentation - 2 November 2010



Bob Hampson

## **Woodhall Spa - 11 September 2013**

Douglas Percy Cannings is a Bomber Command Lancaster veteran, and 11 September was his 90th birthday. He was a mid upper gunner. He decided sometime ago that he would like to find out if any members of the two crews he flew with, on 100 Squadron and with the Pathfinders of 97 Squadron, were still alive. His family set about researching and trying to find details of his crews. Sadly, despite all their efforts to trace surviving members, there were none still alive although they did manage to make contact with many family members and arranged to meet them all. Sharon and Sandy, his two daughters, have been filming all or most of their research to enhance their Father's wartime story.

We visited Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire to see the premiere of their film at the famous "Kinema in the Woods", a renowned local film theatre where they have been showing films for almost as long as Percy has been alive. Percy flew 22 operations at Waltham with 100 Squadron before being seconded to the Pathfinder Force with 97 Squadron at Bourn in Cambridgeshire.

Before the film, we were treated to a short talk by Sean Taylor from the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirkby about bomber crews and what they had to endure. It was particularly interesting for us as most of his talk was based on the tail gunner position, that occupied by our ill-fated Uncle back in September 1943.

It's a heart warming and at times emotional film as his daughters researched his wartime comrades. We saw the various families all meeting for the first time in a gathering at East Kirkby. We strongly recommend that you see this film if you can.

Following the premiere at precisely 2 pm we heard the unmistakable sound of approaching Merlin engines, and the Lancaster performed three passes over the Kinema and set off all the car alarms!!!

Before we left Woodhall Spa, we took the opportunity to stop in the village and view the famous memorial to 617 Squadron and the Dambusters. Nice to visit it in person at last, a very fitting end to our day.

Steve Hayton

## **A Memorable Trip To The South Wales Airshow**

In a previous edition, I wrote about "The Story of Griff & May". Flying Officer Oscar Griffiths [known as Griff] of Gowerton, Swansea, and LACW May Ledson, [my Mum] had met at RAF Walney Island - Air Gunners School and had become sweethearts before Griff was posted to RAF Waltham where he served as a pilot on 100 Squadron. On 24 December 1944, on their 30th operation, Griff and all his crew lost their lives over Cologne in Lancaster ND 388 HW-G.

Last year I wrote to the South Wales Evening Post in an attempt to find anyone who may have known Griff. As a result of the article, numerous people got in touch and have remained in contact since then, including Bill [Taffy] Howell Evans, wireless operator on Lancasters with 100 & 550 Squadrons, who was also in the skies on the night of Christmas Eve 1944. Eirlys Sims, sister of James [Jim] Islwyn Morgan, the other Swansea crew member lost with Griff that night, and Griff's school friend Gordon Dennis. In February this year, Howell made the trip to Liverpool to meet May and our family and encouraged us to come and visit Swansea. So when we discovered that The South Wales Air Show would be taking place in Swansea on 13-14 July, with the BBMF displaying over Swansea Bay, we felt that it would be a lovely tribute to Griff to visit the city of his childhood and watch the Lancaster fly over his native Swansea Bay, and of course meet all our new Swansea friends.

Our family were invited to be VIP guests on the day together with Howell and his family, and Eirlys and her daughter. Gordon was unable to be with us on that day due to the very hot weather. We all chatted with Squadron leader Albie Fox and Mike Ling, [Red 10 of the Red Arrows] who enjoyed hearing our story. During the Red Arrows display, a beautiful heart was formed with vapour trails in the sky, and over the loud-speakers, this was dedicated to May. But the highlight of the day came when the three BBMF aircraft, Lancaster, Spitfire and Hurricane were spotted flying over the headland at the far side of the beautiful seven mile span of Swansea Bay. As the Lancaster drew nearer, May, Eirlys and Howell rose to their feet and waved in tribute to their loved ones and all who were lost. The Lancaster tipped her wing towards them and continued her elegant display, and a few tears were



shed by all.

It was truly a memorable event for all who attended. A follow-up article and photographs appeared in the South Wales Evening Post a few days later. We hope to remain in touch with the lovely people we met during our stay, and to visit beautiful Swansea again.

Barbara Huxley

## **Memories of my Father - James McQuaid**

In Issue 100, Barbara Huxley asked for information about Flying Officer Griffiths's original tail gunner. I am able to help.

The Griffiths crew's original tail gunner was Flight Sergeant Charlie "Paddy" Nelson, who came from Ireland (or was of Irish extraction). The crew of 23-year old Griffiths, with 19-year old Fred Compton in place of Paddy Nelson as tail gunner, were lost over Cologne on Christmas Eve 1944 in Lancaster HW-G on its 92nd op' and the final op' of the Griffiths' tour. They are buried together in Rheinberg War Cemetery, Germany. After the loss of his usual crew, Paddy Nelson joined the crew of Squadron Leader Hedley F. Scott. "Scottie" was the Officer Commanding B Flight, in charge of the air crew and ground personnel responsible for flying and maintaining half of the Squadron's aircraft. My Father, Flying Officer James McQuaid DFC, was his flight engineer. "Scottie's" own tail gunner, Pilot Officer Jim "Buck" O'Riordan from Australia completed his tour before the rest of the crew, on 14th/15th January 1945 with Flying Officer Conn and crew, to Merseburg in ND458 HW-A "Able Mabel" on its 97th op'. The Conn crew went missing on their very next op', their 24th, to Mannheim on 1st/2nd February 1945. They had with them a second pilot, Flying Officer Dukelow and bomb aimer Flying Officer Blackburn on their "second dickie" trip. All of the nine men aboard Lancaster PB572 HW-F were killed.

I do not know why Paddy Nelson did not fly the fateful mission to Cologne with his regular crew on 24th December but understand that after their loss he decided to keep flying in order to avenge them, even though he could have been screened from operations. He completed a further four ops with "Scottie's" crew between February and April 1945, including the Berchtesgaden raid on 25 April 1945, for which the crew were a Group formation leader in LM739 HW-Z2. This aircraft is

represented by the markings of the Lancaster 1/72 scale plastic model kit, released by Revell a couple of years ago. I'm afraid I do not have any further information about Paddy Nelson or know if he is still living. He did not keep in touch with any of the other Scott crew members after the War and as far as I'm aware has not been a member of the 100 Squadron Association. If anyone does know anything more I would be grateful if they would get in touch via 'The Hornet.'

An exchange of Christmas cards with Jim "Buck" O'Riordan in Australia brought the very sad news that another of my late Dad's old comrades had gone. "Jimmy" (or "Knocker" Johnson, as he was affectionately known) was the mid-upper gunner in "Scottie's" crew. He died last Autumn. Nothing has been heard of Reggie Jones (wireless operator) for a while and so, with the loss of "Jimmy" Johnson, it seems that "Buck" is probably the last member of "Scottie's" Crew still living. Going back a few years, I was immensely privileged to be shown around what's left of Waltham by "Jimmy" and his lovely wife Pat (his wartime girlfriend), along with Ian Reid, whose knowledge of the Squadron and of the remaining buildings on site was fascinating. Sadly by then, my Dad had died but walking around the deserted remains of the airfield with "Jimmy" listening to the tales of the fun and fellowship they shared during dark times gave me comfort. Against the odds, luck was with Jimmy; he never fired his guns in anger and completed his tour unscathed. However, his story of how, during a "close call" daylight raid on Walcheren on 17 September 1944, from his vantage position in the mid-upper turret he had watched flak holes appearing all over the wings and fuselage was hair-raising; a reminder that I might never have been born. I suspect that "Jimmy" was secretly rather proud of the small bluish frostbite scars on his face; caused by the reverse sides of the brass studs for the oxygen mask on the inside of his leather flying helmet being in contact with his skin; permanent reminders of his war-time service. Dad kept his flying helmet, we still have it and can see that he taped over the back of the studs with sticking plaster; maybe he learned from his crewmate's experience.

For many years, Dad was not in contact with his old comrades-in-arms but when they got together towards the end of his life, the strength of the old bonds was clear to see. "Jimmy" and Dad first met at a Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) in 1943. The nucleus of the crew came together

at an Operational Training Unit (OTU) flying the Vickers Wellington. They were Canadian J.S. Sanderson (BA); J.H. Harwood (Nav); C.A. Johnson (MUG); J Horner (WOP); H Deuss (RG) and I. Dyer-Matthews (pilot). They were posted to 1657 HCU, 31 Base, RAF Stradishall and its satellite at Chedburgh to convert to Stirlings and were joined there by my Father, J.B. McQuaid (FE) on 9 October 1943 from 4 School of Technical Training, RAF St Athan where he had been since April 1943. Flight engineers joined crews last, after being awarded their Brevet. On completion of their course on Stirlings, they went to Lancaster Finishing School (3 LFS, 31 Base at Methwold, a sub-station of RAF Feltwell) on 28 February 1944 to accustom themselves to the Lancaster and then were sent for operational duties to 12 Squadron at RAF Wickenby, on 14 March 1944 following a few days leave. All of the crew arrived except the pilot, Dyer-Matthews. After a couple of days they learned that he was ill, in hospital in Uxbridge, and they were all posted to 1656 HCU, 11 Base at Lindholme, on 17 March 1944, equipped with the Handley Page Halifax. There, a Flight Lieutenant Bellingham became their new pilot. Unfortunately, on completion of the HCU course Bellingham was declared unfit to fly because of a problem with his ears, leaving the crew without a pilot once again. The tail gunner, Harry Deuss and wireless operator, Jack Horner had the opportunity to join another crew and were posted to 625 Squadron (where they survived to complete their tour.)

The remaining crew members, still at Lindholme, became a full crew again when they joined up with a new pilot, rear gunner and wireless operator in May 1944. The new pilot, Hedley Scott from Cheltenham had been recently posted from instruction duties in Canada, where he had completed his own training. Australian Rear gunner, Jim "Buck" O'Riordan had already done four ops with Ken Newman on 576 Sqn at Elsham Wolds, before the crew was split up by a vindictive senior officer. Ken survived the War, the officer didn't. "Buck" and another gunner were "spare bods" at Lindholme. He joined "Scottie's" crew, the other gunner joined another crew, all lost on their 21st op'. Wireless operator, Reg' Jones had been detached from the crew of Warrant Officer Sheffield when Reg' became ill, requiring hospital treatment. The Scott crew, now complete, were despatched to 1 LFS at Hemswell and then finally, on 14th June 1944, to an operational squadron, 100

Squadron at RAF Grimsby (Waltham). To gain experience of operations, "Scotty" flew as "second dickie" to Pilot Officer Mortimer on a night op' to Vaires, a marshalling yard outside Paris on 28 June. "Scottie's" bomb aimer "Sandy" Sanderson and mid-upper gunner "Knocker" Johnson went along too – their first op'. The next day, June 29th, the complete crew did their first op' together, a daylight trip to attack a V1 launch site at Domleger, followed by another op' on the 30th, bombing rail yards at Vierzon to prevent a Panzer division from making their way to the battlefield. Scottie and crew continued on operations until the end of the War in Europe, during which time they had become the "oldest" crew on the Squadron.

### **In Five Words – Too Late in the Day!**

My father, Bob Petersen, is an 87-year-old Canadian RCAF WW2 veteran who flew in RAF Bomber Command – a tail gunner in a Lancaster, one of the few who survived, and of those, fewer who are still alive. Eleven thousand young Canadian men, mostly around 20 years old, in bomber crews, died – about one in every three who fought.

As you all know, Her Majesty the Queen unveiled a new war memorial in Green Park last year to Bomber Command and the almost 56,000 young men who gave their lives for their country, for freedom. This was 67 years after the war ended. What in the World were they waiting so long for? The event was not highly publicised - especially in Canada. My father only heard about it through his contacts, very shortly before the unveiling.

I know that he felt very un-acknowledged in Canada as the unveiling of this sculpture, so close to his heart, went unnoticed in his country. He was also angry about the farce that meant that these young airmen didn't get their well-deserved war medals. I guess that the families of the other 11,000 Canadian men who died may feel the same if they knew about it as well as the other many, many, more thousand who survived.

A couple of years ago I wrote a song based on my father's bombing experience called "Can I Just Make It through Tonight" which was published in the last issue of The Hornet. I realized after how important it was for me. All through our childhood we went to the

crew reunions, but I don't think I ever really felt very deeply. I never let myself really understand or imagine what it would have been like if it had been me sitting there, young and cold and scared to death in the rear turret, wondering if I would live through this night, this war.

I travelled to Green Park earlier this year and sat taking in the power, the beauty and the many meanings of this massive bronze sculpture of bomber crew before me, on a beautiful summer afternoon. It was very moving. I found myself in tears or close to tears most of the time I was there. Like some of the other family and friends I wrote a simple note of thanks to my Dad and his crew for their sacrifice and placed it at the base of the sculpture with the flowers and many other notes and had my picture taken to send to my father back in Canada. I knew it would mean a lot to him. My father is the only one left from his crew, and that is a lonely place.

I sat on the bench opposite the sculpture watching as people stopped and stood looking up to this bomber crew frozen in time. A woman, in her mid-seventies, sitting nearby, asked me about my thoughts. I told her about the sadness that overwhelmed me as I read the cards and notes that lay with flowers at the feet of the bronze bomber crew that family and friends had laid and how I had written a card to thank my father and his crew. I asked her what she was thinking. She said "Five words – too late in the day!"

She was a young girl when the bombs were dropping on London. She was really angry that this was built so late – so long after most of the young men who survived had died. And there, carved in stone, the false words of Winston Churchill praising the bombers – the same Winston Churchill she said, who decided not to give the airmen of Bomber Command their well-deserved medals - to try to appease German anger at the many civilians who died at Dresden. She was sad and angry that so little thought and care had been given to these brave young men. And to build this beautiful sculpture when so few of the war's survivors were still alive was a crime, a travesty and a tragedy. She was right of course. And except for those like her and me, and the others who were touched in some way through their families by this war and these bomber, this beautiful bronze statement may just appear as another sculpture in the park.

Sol Petersen

## **The Stark Facts of the Bomber Offensive**

Of 125,000 Bomber Command aircrew, with an average age of just 22, all of whom volunteered; 76,765 became casualties; 55,573 of them died, of which 41,458 have no known grave; many disappeared without trace, simply logged as "missing – no news after take-off." A further 9,974 were shot down and taken prisoner, 8,403 were seriously wounded. During the Battle of Britain, 544 Fighter Command airmen were killed in action. On just one night, 30-31 March 1944, 545 Bomber Command aircrew were killed attacking Nuremburg. During the period after D-day, Bomber Command was routinely losing more aircrew than the army was infantry in Normandy. They made up only 2% of Britain's armed effort but over 10.7% of British war dead. Of any combatant force, only the German U-Boat fleet and the Japanese Kamikazes suffered higher loss rates (around 32,000 of approximately 36,000 U-Boat men in action, I don't have figures for the Kamikazes).

In addition to the human cost, the resources involved in the bombing campaign were immense. 7,377 Lancasters were produced, each took approximately 8 weeks to build, cost £58,974 excluding guns, bombsight and radar equipment and contained over 7 miles of electrical cable. Of these, 3,814 were lost in enemy action, not including accidents. On average, a Lancaster completed 20 operations before being lost, although 34 aircraft are believed to have completed 100 ops or more. At its peak, Bomber Command equipped 55 operational squadrons with the Lancaster, plus other training units. Lancasters flew 156,308 operational sorties, dropped 608,613 tons of bombs and consumed 228 million gallons of fuel. Today, 17 survive of which two are airworthy with a 3rd example hopefully being restored to airworthy condition.

100 Squadron was considered a "Lucky Squadron" but nevertheless, during Dad's tour of operations at Waltham and Elsham Wolds, 25 aircraft and crews went missing, representing more than a full turnover of the Squadron's strength. Between December 1942 and the War's end, 100 Squadron flew a total of 3,984 sorties comprising 267 bombing raids and 13 minelaying operations at the cost of 560 aircrew lives, 92 Lancasters lost in combat and 21 destroyed in crashes. In 1943, the Squadron lost 56 aircraft and in 1944 it lost 45.

Quite realistically Dad didn't expect to see 21. He knew the odds. Of every 100 airmen who joined Bomber Command, 45 were killed, 6 were seriously wounded and 8 became prisoners of war. Being shot down in a Lancaster was usually fatal. Only 18% of Lancaster crew members who were shot down survived. This means that for every 7 man crew attempting to bale-out, on average 1.3 men would survive. Pilots had the lowest survival rates. We can never know the extent to which this grim fact resulted from selfless heroism as doomed pilots wrestled to control stricken aircraft long enough to give their crew precious seconds in which to try and escape as they plunged earthwards.

Bomber Command expected and accepted a 5% loss rate on operations, although it frequently rose above that. On the face of it, a 95% chance of surviving combat sounds high. However, when repeated for a tour of 30 operations the picture is very different. The chances of completing a tour fall to 21%. More starkly put, for every 100 men, only 21 could expect to survive. The odds of completing a second tour of 20 ops' were 7.7%. Fate did not respect experience; statistical analysis showed that crews were as likely to die on the last op' of their tour as on the first, although not many got that far. Against the odds, a few individuals managed to complete high numbers of ops. On the night of 16th/17th January 1945, Bomber Command attacked the Braunkohle-Benzin synthetic oil plant at Zeitz Troglitz near Leipzig. The five 100 Sqn aircraft taking part had been detailed as Pathfinder Force supporters to provide additional target marking. One Lancaster from 100 Sqn failed to return; PA189 HW-P on its second operation with the Squadron. There were no survivors. The flight engineer was 30-year old Flying Officer Herbert Otto Berger DFM, previously of 101 Sqn, on his 98th operation; he had been determined to reach 100. Dad thought he may have been Jewish which, if true, may have influenced his motivation.

Flying on operations took a lot of guts. Although good crews kept busy, the hours spent in the air on the long journey to a dreaded, well-defended target gave plenty of opportunity to contemplate what awaited them and reflect on the slender odds of survival. The terrible sight of aircraft going down in flames or simply exploding in mid-air was all too frequent. Dad said he felt insulted by the fiction,

perpetuated to protect morale, that these were special “scarecrow” devices launched by the Germans. Vacant beds in huts and empty chairs in the mess, along with the absence of old faces and the appearance of new ones, were constant measures of the grim “chop rate.” Some men coped by resigning themselves to their fate, but carried on regardless; others convinced themselves it would never happen to them, despite the reality. Few claimed to be fearless; all were brave.

A total of 8,953 bombers failed to return from Bomber Command operations. In addition to the 47,268 Bomber Command aircrew killed in these aircraft, a further 8,303 died in flying or training accidents. All who flew with Bomber Command recognise the efforts and sacrifices of those on the ground; without whom, the campaign would not have been possible. It is a significant but frequently overlooked fact that 1,363 male ground staff and 91 WAAFs died while serving with Bomber Command. However, only aircrew who served with an operational unit for 60 days (unless killed or captured) and flew on combat operations are entitled to the Bomber Command clasp. It is regrettable that the Government has chosen not to acknowledge all who served.

So here’s to you Dad and to all the others – God rest your souls and bless those who are still with us.

Alistair McQuaid

