



THE HORNET

The Newsletter of the 100 Squadron Association

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Newsletter 106 - August 2014

Dear Members

It was nice to meet all those who attended this year's Reunion in June and we were lucky with the weather for the Hawk flypast on the Friday (see Page 2 for further reflections). Many thanks to those who have sent articles for this edition especially Linda McAuley for her interesting account of her father's experiences on 100 Squadron and his life in general.

You will find on Page 10 details of the Remembrance Sunday service at Holton Le Clay. Hopefully a good number of you will be able to attend this annual event.

Nina Crane
(Editor of The Hornet)

Report of the 2014 Reunion



The Squadron put on a very enjoyable reunion for us at their home station, RAF Leeming. On the Friday afternoon, we were able to look round the Station's Historical Facility where we also had a short lecture about the history of RAF Leeming. The Hawk flypast was spectacular, and we saw the two Hawks with the Phantom of the Ruhr's bombs and ice cream cones marked on them (see above).

In the evening, we had a delicious meal in the Officers' Mess with a raffle and auction most ably conducted by John Willis to raise money for Association funds. Among items auctioned were a painting signed by the late Ron Clark DFC and a stunning photo of the BBMF taken at the Eastbourne airshow. It was great to see Frank Ockerby looking in such good health and also John Swales who was on the Squadron in Singapore as a Fitter/Armourer for the Wildebeeste in 1940. Hopefully, we can get him to tell us more about his experiences for a future article in The Hornet.

The following three items are taken from the Bomber Command Association - Spring 2014 - Newsletter, No. 67.

Herkenbosch 2013

On Thursday 27 May 1943 the Daily Mail reported, under the headline, '5 "Cookies" a minute by RAF pounded Dusseldorf for an hour in war's greatest bad-weather attack'; a raid that took place on the night of 25/26 May that saw the loss of 27 bombers.

On the 24 May 2013, a memorial was unveiled to the crews of six aircraft that came down in the vicinity of the village of Herkenbosch in the Netherlands. My father was the flight engineer on one of those aircraft, LM 320 of 100 Squadron. His aircraft was one of 758 that took part in the raid. The crew were Sqn Ldr P R Turgel (pilot), Plt Off Wynn (flight engineer), Fg Off D Harvey (air gunner), Sgt J Hudson (air gunner), Fg Off J Marnoch (wireless operator), Fg Off H Petts (navigator) and Fg Off Russell (bomb aimer). At the time my mother was told that the aircraft was downed by flak at 0136hrs on the 26 May 1943. The Germans would not allow anyone to approach the crash site, so he was reported as missing. It was not until April 1946 that he was confirmed as dead. He had been buried along with four other crew members, two of whom were identified and buried separately. However, we have since learned that his aircraft was not downed by flak, but was shot down by Hauptmann Manfred Meurer, who lost his life later in the war at age 24.

In 2012, I wrote to the relevant local authority as I had the intention of visiting on the anniversary. I was put in contact with a Dutch family from the village who have researched wartime aircraft crashes in Herkenbosch. My brother and I arranged a visit with our wives to what we thought would be a family remembrance event. However, we were astonished by the welcome we received by the Dutch family and the village residents. Their feelings can be summed up by this extract of an

e-mail that I received from the family:

'We would like to thank you on behalf of the whole community for what your father and his crew members did for us in 1943. Our nation, my parents and grandparents were living under occupation during the Second World War. The sound of Bomber Command aircraft above us was a vital hope that we would eventually be liberated.'

The family located the crash site using metal detectors and discovered parts of the aircraft. Unknown to us until a few days prior to our visit, Herkenbosch's community had got together to erect a memorial to honour the crews who were killed in all the aircraft crashes near the village. (*See photograph opposite - Ed.*) They obtained part of a Wellington engine from a museum and mounted it at the village entrance. The plaque shows the names of the 27 aircrew that lost their lives, with information about the aircraft and dates they crashed. My brother and I were invited to unveil the plaque at the evening ceremony on 24 May. The Exeter branch of the Royal British Legion provided me with an RAF roundel, which we placed alongside six other wreaths and floral tributes. We understand that an annual service at the site will take place with visits to the war cemetery at Jonkersbos near Nijmegen, where the crew members are buried.

The visit was an unforgettable experience, and in particular the warmth and friendship of the Dutch is something my brother and I will remember for the rest of our lives.

If there are any relatives of the crew of Lancaster LM 320 who would like to know more, please feel free to contact me.

David Wynn

01271 375351



Roy Chadwick honoured



Roy Chadwick, CBE, FRAeS (30 April 1893 – 23 August 1947) was an aircraft designer for the Avro Company. Born at Marsh Hall Farm, Farnworth in Widnes, the son of the mechanical engineer Charles Chadwick, he became the chief designer for Avro and was responsible for practically all of their aircraft designs in the 1940s-60s. He is famous in particular for designing the Avro Lancaster bomber, its follow-up Avro Lincoln and preliminary designs of the Avro Vulcan V-bomber. He also converted the Lincoln into the much-used Shackleton. His Avro Yorks carried one third of the entire British tonnage during the Berlin Airlift.

Roy was one of the aeronautical industry's most influential and prolific design engineers; he has recently been honoured by the Trustees of The Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Appeal. The decision has been made to name the planned Interpretation Centre at the Memorial after the designer of the iconic Lancaster bomber. The Chadwick Centre will house the collective story of Bomber Command.

The Centre will include a tribute to the 55,573 aircrew who died lying with Bomber Command, including those who died whilst in training; those crew members who were lucky enough to survive, including POWs; the ground crews and support staff whose essential work kept the aircraft flying; the command structure; the aircraft and engine manufacturers and an understanding of the effect of the campaign on the civilian population in continental Europe and at home.

The Centre will also contain a purpose-built educational facility supported by a dedicated education team enabling school classes to learn about the Command's contribution to the war effort. The designs, which have recently been submitted for planning, are based on the layout of a Lancaster bomber, following the elegant lines of the wing-span and echoing the crouching beauty of its form. In 1943, he was honoured with a CBE for his part in designing the modifications required for carrying the Barnes Wallis bombs used in the Dambuster's raid. In 1945, he was made an Honorary Freeman of the City of London. He is

considered to be one of the greatest designers of the 20th Century. In 1947, a crash caused by a servicing fault when aileron cables were inadvertently crossed killed Roy along with his test pilot.

The Trustees felt that Roy's influence on and connection with Bomber Command was of such great note that there could be no better name for the centre for the Interpretation Centre at the Lincolnshire Memorial.

Bomber Command Memorial

In November 2013, the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association (PMSA) awarded The Marsh Award for Excellence in Public Sculpture to Philip Jackson for his sculpture at the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park. The memorial was designed by Liam O'Connor, which has an opening in the ceiling that allows natural light to fall on to Philip Jackson's bronze sculpture of the bomber crew. The scale of the sculpture, and the Memorial's design, means that visitors will always view the airmen against a background of the sky.

The roof was built using aluminium from a Royal Canadian Air Force Handley Page Halifax of 426 Transport Training Squadron that had crashed in Belgium in May 1944.

At least four PMSA judges visited the sculpture and were quoted as saying: "This is magnificent - huge, dark, weighty - like a bomb. The figures are over life-size, with great attention paid to detailed realism as regards uniforms and equipment; we assume they're portraits - they all look alive without being mock-heroic. On the contrary, the facial expressions are realistically haggard, stressed and unhappy. It has such presence and draws you in to walk around the piece and admire the detail of the bomber crew themselves. Every inch of the piece seems to create interest."

The award was received by former Bomber Command Association chairman Malcolm White on Philip's behalf.



Philip Jackson with his model for the sculptures

Report of the Annual General Meeting

The 30th Annual General Meeting at RAF Leeming on 14 June 2014 was chaired by the Boss, Wg Cdr Tony Cann, with 24 members in attendance. After welcoming all those attending, he reported that the Squadron's main task continues to be "aggressor" support as "Red Air" for the four Typhoon squadrons and the OCU as well as maintaining similar support for Tornado and helicopter units. The Squadron has also flown "photo shoots" of new aircraft entering RAF service, such as the Voyager.

Overseas deployments have included fly pasts at Pegasus Bridge and attending the Commemorative Service for the crew of Lancaster JB 604 at Marly in France. Two pilots have attended an "Aggressors Conference" at Nellis AFB, Nevada, USA. Looking to the future, the Hawk T Mk 1 aircraft is currently lifed to 2020, when a new aircraft for the aggressor role will be required.

As agreed at the 29th AGM, the President had commissioned a new plaque for the 100 Squadron tree in the Far East section of the National Memorial Arboretum. (*Editor's note: See the report in this issue.*)

Air Cdre Bonnor had retained the duties of Acting Secretary, but nominations for the Secretary post are actively sought. Mike English, Greg Harrison, Nina Crane, John Holford and Damien English offered themselves for re-election as Treasurer, Historian, Editor of 'The Hornet', Distributor of 'The Hornet' and Website Manager respectively. These members were nominated and elected unanimously.

The President reported that Association membership stands at 204. Although we have two new Full Members, the total of Full Members is down on the year by 7 (7 deceased, 2 resigned); we have gained 3 new Associate Members in the last 18 months. The Treasurer reported that expenditure in 2013 was £3,244.99 mainly driven by the Reunion and Newsletter costs; Income was £3,711.70 mainly from subscriptions and Reunion payments. At the end of the financial year, the change of assets was a creditable surplus of £466.71. Association assets at year end totalled £5,098.71. The Treasurer explained that having presented the accounts to an auditor, the recommendation was that a full audit was unnecessarily expensive for the size of the accounts; an independent bookkeeper's overview and comments would suffice. This arrangement was agreed unanimously.

The Website Manager explained that the Reunion and Newsletter content are within a secure area of the site only available to members. His next aim was to expand the picture gallery on the site, so all additions are most welcome. The site is now linked to the Historian for questions and enquiries about 100 Squadron from the public. The Newsletter Editor described some of the letters of support she had received since taking on the editorship. She wished to encourage more inputs of personal experiences of members which help make The Hornet a good read.

The Historian described how contacts from the website were providing new information and personal stories of past Squadron members. His target for a re-write of "The Hornets' Nest" to send to a publisher is summer 2016. To this end, he was visiting and consulting the RAF Museum and The National Archive at Kew on a regular basis.

The President agreed to look into the possibility of holding the 2015 Reunion at RAF Wyton, or a hotel location near the RAF Museum Cosford, between mid-June and early July. When confirmed, the dates and venue will be published in The Hornet and on the website.

Remembrance Sunday

The Holton le Clay Remembrance Service will be held on Sunday, 9 November 2014. The lunch gathering will be held this year in the new Village Community Centre, Picksley Crescent (formerly the Etherington Arms Public House.) Colin and Jean Johnson have again offered to host us for lunch at a very reasonable cost of £6.

To help the Johnsons to cater for the numbers on the day,

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO ATTEND

N Bonnor

Secretary

Contact details on the front cover

National Memorial Arboretum

As promised at the Annual General Meeting, the President visited the National Memorial Arboretum on 19th June 2014 to check that the new plaque ordered for our memorial tree in the Far East Section was in place. The photographs below show the new plaque, and its associated tree.



If you are visiting the NMA in the future, our two trees are Tree Number 21-7 in the Far East Section, and Tree Number 17-101 in the RAF Bomber Command Wing.

Subscription Reminder

Just a reminder to those who pay by cheque to the Treasurer rather than by Standing Order; the Association's financial year started on 1 August 2014, so subscriptions for 2014/15 are now due. If you would like to change to a Standing Order payment, please contact the Treasurer at the address or e-mail shown on the front cover, and he will be pleased to send you the SO mandate form.

Memories of RAF Wittering 1954 – 1957

continued

Air Cdre P.J. (CHARLIE) GOULTHORPE CBE

Another Time

L P Hartley wrote the line, "The past is another country, they do things differently there." It comes to mind because Wittering in the 1950s did things very differently from the RAF of today. Perhaps the greatest change had to do with communication. We are so well-served nowadays by mobile phones, satellite services, computer messaging, video and data links that takes an effort to recall how things were managed without them. In the matter of telephones, I daresay RAF Wittering had fewer than 100 handsets all told, linked by fixed land-lines to a branch exchange where teams of telephonists would manually connect each caller to the extension or external line he requested. You could not dial the number yourself. Often the telephonist would be busy and take some time to respond with "Number, please?" As there were so few lines, it was then not unusual to find the required extension was already connected elsewhere and, unless the telephonist could be persuaded to interrupt it, there was no option but to "Call back later". There was no way to leave a message. External calls were even more tedious. There were military lines to higher formations where similar branch exchanges multiplied the frustrations. Calls to ordinary telephone numbers were viewed with suspicion by the telephonists who were under orders to ensure that the call was on service business and otherwise to bill the caller. There is a tale of an officer who had occasion to call Buckingham Palace, on some matter to do with royal visits. "Service call or private, Sir?" enquired the operator.

Squadron dispersals, such as 100 Squadron's, each a mile or so remote from elsewhere on the Station, had a single telephone handset. All the business of operating a dozen aircraft and managing some 70 personnel had to be carried on that single line. Efficient it was not. There was a period of several months while works were in progress when 100 Squadron was relocated to a dispersal with no buildings and

no telephone at all. An Al-tent, a small sheet-metal hut rather like a bell-tent, was scrounged to make do as office, crew-room and store, all within about 70 square feet of floor space. Pleas for a telephone were refused; resources to lay a new land-line were not available we were told. In desperation we borrowed a field telephone from the Regiment Officer and connected it illegally to the nearest land line. It worked quite well as a sort of party line. In fact we found that if the caller cranked the handle it really woke up the exchange and we got very prompt, if irritated, attention from the operator. No doubt that also gave the game away but, if so, some Nelson turned a blind eye to our signalling.

The provision of transport was no better. Each dispersal had one 3-ton truck, canvas topped, to move personnel and stores, together with a small tractor for towing aircraft and ground equipment. That was all. The availability of MT was woefully inadequate both on the airfield and generally.

Then there was the paper-work. Urgent and operational matter went by teleprinter. The originator wrote out his message in long-hand on a signal pad. This was hand carried to the teleprinter section where it was typed in and dispatched by a teleprinter operator. On the whole this worked well and was fairly quick. However, if the message was highly classified, it had to be encoded before dispatch and then decoded on receipt. This laborious work required great care and concentration on the part of a trained cipher officer. The task often fell as a secondary duty to engineer officers. From time to time one would be dragged out of bed to decipher some important signal while senior officers sat drumming their fingers, impatient to know what it said. One simple arithmetic error would reduce the whole outcome to gibberish. It was a stressful situation and not a welcome duty.

Routine paperwork - typescript - was much less satisfactory. If more than a few carbon copies were required, and that was usually the case, the document had to be typed mechanically onto a stencil which was then attached to a drum and placed in a rotary printing machine. The arrangement for inking the drum was messy, as was the quality and appearance of the copies it produced. Indeed they were sometimes barely legible. The job of typing the stencil was best left to a trained

typist because correcting any mistakes was something of a botch. So it was usual for the originator to write out the document in long-hand, from which a clerk typed a draft, which was checked, amended and returned by the originator, then typed to a stencil, re-checked and finally run off on the printer. The copies were collated then went to the filing clerks and the mail room. It was anything but quick and labour-saving.

These poor means of communication reflected very noticeably in the wayward nature of Supply. Items demanded were late, or failed to be delivered in the right kind or quantity, or did not come at all. There seemed to be no help for this, it was simply the way things were. But I do not mean to imply that the RAF at that time was not a capable force. It was large in both the numbers of aircraft and men. Moreover most of its senior ranks had recent experience of war and knew how to wage it well in spite of difficulties. It was an experienced and confident force in which all but a very few of the National Service men took pride. If it leaves a lesson for us, it is to beware of total reliance on our clever means of communication. We might need to know how to manage without them.

Swirl Vanes

The early Avon 100-series engines, which powered the Canberra B2s, had a pneumatic system which controlled the angle of the swirl vanes. However, this system had limitations which made for a slow increase in engine speed when the throttle was advanced and, occasionally, allowed the vanes to hesitate or not rotate at all. Rolls-Royce had prepared a modification which replaced this system with an hydraulic one which was much more positive in action. Bomber Command was anxious to adopt it. However, as a clever economy, the new hydraulics made use of aircraft fuel as the operating fluid and one of the components in the system was affected in its operation by any variation in the viscosity of the fuel. Bomber Command wanted to be sure that the Canberras were free to uplift fuels of differing viscosity without prejudice to engine response, so a later modification was proposed to make the system less sensitive to viscosity by replacing a certain metering jet with a sharp-edged orifice. BCDU was tasked to evaluate its effectiveness.

I have good reason to remember what followed from a telephone call by a Group Captain engineer at Bomber Command. I was away from my office at the time and the call was taken by my armament colleague who failed to tell the Group Captain's PA that it was not I who was replying. When the Group Captain came on the line he asked what there was to tell him about the Sharp-edged Orifice Trial. My colleague said, "I've no idea but I should be very careful with it if I were you," and rang off. I never did succeed in mending my fences with that Group Captain.

I was in black books also with the aircrew concerned. A part of the trial required us to find what air temperatures would cause the Canberra's engines to 'surge'. The airflow through the compressor of an engine such as the Avon would suddenly reverse, i.e. to surge, when operating at high engine speed in very cold air. So I set up a task to wait for very cold conditions to be forecast in the upper air, then to climb a Canberra up into it at 100% RPM and, if there was a surge, to record the outside air temperature "Nothing much to it", I said. "Do it a few times to check". When the crew returned, they took me by the throat "If you want that done again, you find another crew and you go too". They had got an engine to surge at about 50,000ft. As it did so the aircraft yawed, whereupon the other engine surged and both flamed out. They immediately lost cabin pressure and heating. The aircraft came down like a stone while their ears imploded and they and everything in the cabin froze. Now Avon 100 engines would not relight above about 8,000ft and not always there, so they had to ride all the way down in some anxiety and much discomfort. All in all, they were not of a mind to repeat the experience. However we managed get an aircraft detached to tropical West Africa to continue with the trial. Perversely, it is in the tropics that the upper air is likely to be coldest. This arrangement seemed to revive the aircrew's enthusiasm for the task. Care was taken also to put one engine at a time, not both, at risk of surging and so the work progressed.

Valiant Endeavours

BCDU undertook a number of trials with the first of the Valiants to arrive at Wittering. One I remember well was to measure the fuel

consumption during different types of operational sorties that were being considered for the aircraft. A preliminary was to find means to measure accurately what quantity of fuel had been put into the aircraft before flight. To that end, we needed to calibrate the flowmeter in one selected aircraft refueller which we intended to use solely during the trial. The company which manufactured the flowmeter agreed to send an engineer to Wittering to assist. He brought with him a large cylindrical tank which stood upright on a tripod; the upper end of the tank was conical and a narrow glass tube extended upwards beyond the top of the cone. At the bottom of the tank there was a valve through which it could be filled with fuel and, at the top, a line was engraved around the glass tube to register a capacity of exactly 100 gallons. The whole stood about 10 feet high.

Now the high pressure refuellers delivered fuel very rapidly - some 150 gallons a minute as I recall - and it was necessary to calibrate the flowmeter at this rate. Our plan was to fill the test tank at full flow and to record the time taken for the fuel to reach the engraved line on the glass tube. We foresaw that the fuel level would be rising rapidly in the tube and that it would then be necessary to stop the flow very promptly. The high-pressure refuellers were impressive vehicles with powerful pumps. The delivery from them was controlled from the back of the vehicle through an array of levers, knobs and dials. Ordinarily they were operated by a specialist from the tanker pool, but I had always wanted to have a go myself and this seemed to be my opportunity. I convinced the tanker pool that they could not spare a man to attend to our trial, and I got their flight sergeant to check me out on the procedure.

The company engineer and I connected a hose to the test tank; I manned the vehicle and he stood by with the stop watch. I began the full flow delivery, waited for fuel to rush up the glass tube and then slammed down the lever to shut off the flow. All would have been well if I had used the correct lever. As it was, flow continued apace and we had a magnificent fountain. I cannot be sure how high it was, but it would have been worthy of admiration in any city square. The engineer reacted first and dived under the tank to close the valve

there. Sadly he was not quick enough to retreat before the first of the fall-out from the fountain overwhelmed him. He emerged soaked to the skin, shoes squelching. The poor chap was half a day's drive from home. I got him to a shower and lent him some overalls to wear, but he still smelled like a serious fire risk. I wondered where I could possibly take him for lunch, but he met my difficulty by declaring that he felt too nauseated to eat or drink, ever. I did not see him again. After some correspondence with his company, they sent another chap to continue the job.

BCAS

The arrival of the first Valiants brought also to Wittering the Bomber Command Armament School, purpose built at the far western end of the airfield, surrounded by much barbed wire and many Service Policemen. Entry was strictly controlled. If one asked what was taught there, the response was "Special Weapons", together with a hard look which made plain that one was not to enquire what was special about them. All concerned with the school took themselves very seriously. Except one perhaps; a young armourer whom I came to know well. Eddy had come late to his National Service after completing a PhD in bio-chemistry. We imagined that the RAF had wondered what to do with him but had linked bio-chemistry to chemistry, chemistry to explosives, explosives to armament and decided to make him an armourer. When asked, he would say with a smile that his PhD had involved growing some experimental beans in a cellar. However, he was a bright young man and scientifically literate (among the armourers anyway) and had found his way into the BCAS as an instructor.

I was told that one day he was showing a party of VIP's round the school. Such groups of very senior officers and grey-haired civilians, all with very grave faces, would tour the facilities from time to time. The party were passing a large building of unusual proportions when one of them asked about it. "We call it the elephant house", said Eddy, "Not only is it big enough for elephants but also it's a white one". Happily his CO, who was escorting the party, was quick to find just the right words to turn away wrath. He was good for an armourer. There was also an occasion when Duggy helped to lighten up BCAS. He was engaged in what was called the crow patrol. Its purpose was to drive off the flocks

of birds, especially lapwings, which liked to roost on the airfield and which posed a 'bird-strike' hazard to aircraft. The patrol had a Land Rover and a shot-gun. When the weather was good it was a popular duty with the aircrews. Duggy was a keen shot and especially enjoyed it. One autumn day he saw a pheasant in the rough near BCAS and went after it on foot. The service police patrolling the BCAS perimeter became very agitated when they saw a crouching figure, evidently armed, scurrying towards the wire. Whistles were blown and forces turned out. The first SP to reach him was taken aback to find the intruder dressed as a flight lieutenant. "Stop!" he said, "Sir, Stop". Duggy waved him back and said "You go round that way and see if you can flush him up". Neither man got his quarry.

To say that Duggy was a keen shot is to understate the case. Early in each year he would sit down with his flight commander to detail the brief periods in his diary when he would be available for duty. Here were his two weeks at Bisley, there was the inter-service team's visit to France, the whole of August after the 4th was out of course, and so it would go on. In the intervals, Duggy could be counted upon to have a Canberra on some remote airfield in the Highlands at the weekends and to provide the Mess with sundry dead animals on his return.

The Mess

Ahead of the review in 1957 which brought conscripted service to an end and looked forward to all-regular forces, service pay was meagre. Most of my colleagues among the junior officers could ill afford to partake of the fleshpots in the neighbouring towns and took most of their leisure on the station, in particular in the Mess bar where the beer was cheap. But the society there was good and the Mess was comfortable and well run. Each room had bathing service to keep it orderly and to make up the coal fire. The food was plain, as it was generally in Britain at that time, but it was ample and served at table. There was a billiards room, a small library and daily papers in the ante room. There were tennis and squash courts adjoining the Mess.

Stories of riotous times there are legion. One that comes to mind concerns a group of 100 Squadron conspirators who took down a stuffed moose's head from the wall of the bar where it was mounted and put it into the bed of their flight commander. They then removed all the bulbs

from the lights in his room. Their plan ran its course when their flight commander retired. Exasperated by the failure of the lights but too heavy of head to bother with them, he climbed into bed in the dark where he encountered the moose. To general delight, his sudden and very noisy exit from his room was matched by the appearance in the corridor of a visiting and rather senior civil servant, who had been accommodated overnight in the adjoining room whence he emerged complaining loudly that, "This is too much. Noisy people have been tramping along this corridor all night, moving furniture and keeping me awake. Will you go to bed and be quiet?"

However in many respects the conduct of the Mess was then more formal than is the case today. No flying clothing or other working dress was permitted; No 2 uniform was the minimum standard of dress during the day. On weekday evenings, members were required to wear a suit, collar and tie, or No 1 uniform throughout the public rooms. No cash was accepted in the bar where, even at weekends, a jacket and tie were the rule. Ladies could be invited to the bar on Saturday evenings or to the Ladies Room on Wednesdays but were not admitted to any of the other rooms except by invitation to a Ladies' occasion of some kind – a ball, a formal reception or dinner

Mess bills were sent to Mess members each month and had to be settled by the 10th of the next. They accrued the bar account and a small daily charge to supplement the official ration allowance, together with charges for mess functions and some minor items. One of the latter was a contribution to a fund to provide for presentations from the Mess to members or visitors to mark special occasions. In this way, I received a gift as a wedding present from the Mess members. The following month I was surprised to see that my mess bill contained a much larger charge than usual for 'Presentations'. I questioned this with the Mess Secretary and was told "The chap we sent out to buy you a Wedding Present overspent what I had approved so I have put the balance on your bill". I still have the cigarette box and the memory.

LABS

But just as Soviet long range surface-to-air missiles were denying wide areas of the upper air space to the Canberra force, so Soviet short range missiles were being introduced to provide point defence at low

level around the bombers' targets. This further development threatened any low flying aircraft which passed directly over its target, as a Canberra would need to do to release its bombs. While work was proceeding to provide the RAF with air-to-ground missiles which would allow its bombers to stand off safely at some distance from defended targets, some more immediate tactic was needed.

What emerged, jointly with the USAF, was the Low-level Attack Bombing System (LABS). This required the bomber to fly at low level and high speed directly toward its target and to pull up sharply when some distance short of the defended area. The bomb would be released when the bomber was climbing at some 45° to the horizontal. In this way, the bomb would be hurled forward into the target, like a mortar bomb, while the bomber would be free to turn away from the defences. As a tactic this required much skill and practice to deliver the bomb accurately. In due course, a special bomb sight and release mechanism was developed for the purpose and at that point the tactic became truly a system. But from the beginning the necessary training was taken up enthusiastically by the Canberra crews. Their aircraft was well suited to the task – apart that is from its susceptibility to turbulence – by reason of its compact, lightly loaded wings which made it highly manoeuvrable. The contemporary USAF bomber was the B47 that had sharply swept, long and very flexible wings with underslung engines – similar to those on the much larger B52. I imagine it was less well-adapted than the Canberra to low-level high-speed manoeuvres. Whatever the truth of that, a B47 brought about the death of Wittering's Station Commander, Group Captain Woodruffe. He was visiting an Air Force Base in USA during a bombing competition and was invited to fly in a B47 with the Base Commander. The aircraft broke up in flight, killing them both. It is widely supposed that the accident occurred during a LABS manoeuvre. Group Captain Woodruffe's death was felt keenly throughout the station. When the news came I was one of a group in the Mess. We were joined by Wing Commander Flying who had just been to call on Mrs Woodruffe to tell her. I have seldom seen a man so deeply affected.

The arrival of the new Station Commander calls to mind an incident during his first day or two in post. A Canberra from one of the other

squadrons had an undercarriage malfunction after take off – it would not lock down. The aircraft was circling for several hours to burn off fuel before committing to a wheels-up landing on a grassed area beside runway 09. Word spread in advance and a good many personnel lined the adjacent taxiway to watch. The aircraft touched down and came to rest in good order but with its nose well embedded in the soft ground. The fire and rescue vehicles rushed out to the scene, preceded by our new station commander who leapt from his car and attempted to open the cabin door. At the same time a crew-man was trying to open it from the inside but, realising that it was obstructed, he jumped on it hard with both feet. Bursting open, the door took the Station Commander full in the chest and flattened him into the mud. No great injury was done, except to his dignity, but there was much amused speculation among the many onlookers that perhaps he had learned to leave responsibility to those to whom he had delegated it.

Happy Days

Recollections of times long gone are chiefly of events which went awry in some way. I daresay they stay in mind with the hope that the memory of our mistakes will keep us from repeating them. Certainly they seem to predominate in what I have recalled of my life at RAF Wittering and to suggest perhaps that I was less than happy and fortunate there. Nothing could be further from the truth. It was the happiest of times for me. I made lifelong friends within the splendid fellowship that I enjoyed in my work and in the Mess. I met my wife in nearby Stamford and married her there.

It was the best of times.

Glyn Jenkins

My father, Glyn Rowland Jenkins was born in Neath, South Wales on 1st August 1922. He joined the RAF and was called up for duty on 17/11/1941. He qualified as a W/Op on 10/2/43 after training at Warrington and Blackpool. He made Sgt W/Op at Manby on 12/3/1943.

Glyn was posted to an RAF training unit and trained on Dominies, Proctors and Ansons and received his WOp/AG and Navigator's Certificate on 13/5/1943. He practised on Halifaxes and Wellingtons (known as Wimpies) from May to July 1943. It was at the OTUs that the aircrew trades sorted themselves out into bomber crews. He was approached by Tommy Heyes, an RAF pilot, and accepted the position of W/Op. At the Lancaster conversion course, the crew of 7 were chosen and trained to carry out operational bombing.

The crew were then transferred to 100 Squadron No 1 Group, RAF Grimsby (Waltham) air base on 8/8/1943. They completed 30 missions together although some were very dicey. One was on 7/10/1943 when the plane was hit by a lot of flak over Stuttgart and flew back with "the hydraulics u/s, d/r comp u/s, bomb doors open, 10° flap down, Starboard inner faulty", and my father's comment on the raid was "sticky".

Another was on the return flight from Berlin on 16th/17th of December 1943, which became infamous as "Black Thursday", when there was atrocious weather with heavy fog and drizzle which covered such a vast area of England making it impossible to divert. The fuel gauges read almost nil as Tommy desperately tried to locate the runway, calling out to hang on as it was likely to be a controlled crash. Luckily it wasn't, and they stopped a few metres from the end of the runway. Not all Lancasters were so fortunate that night. Two collided and two more flew too low and crashed. The lives of 22 airmen were lost on the night and the other 6 were seriously injured, one of whom died a few days later.

There were many mishaps over the next six months, but my father was one of the lucky ones. He didn't talk much about his experiences but one thing I remember him saying was that the worst thing was at

breakfast the morning after a raid, seeing all the empty chairs of the missing men.

Glyn was posted to Lichfield on 7/3/1945 and gave lectures on Marconi tuning and other subjects. He then joined 246 Sqn and flew Yorks until June 1946. In that time he flew to Malta, Cairo, Shaibah, Karachi, Calcutta, New Delhi, Castel Benito, Maripur and Luqa.

He married Joan in October 1945 and settled back in Neath. In May 1949, he joined the Cardiff Reserve Flying School and flew Ansons, Dakotas and Hastings. Glyn was also a very active member of the ATC in Neath and also a life long RAFA member.

Later he joined the family business and became a transport manager. He had many hobbies and interests, mainly fishing, watch repairs, photography and horse riding. When he retired in 1987, he and my mother moved to Southport, bought themselves a narrow boat and cruised the waterways of England and Wales, once going past the Houses of Parliament until a police boat stopped their fun!

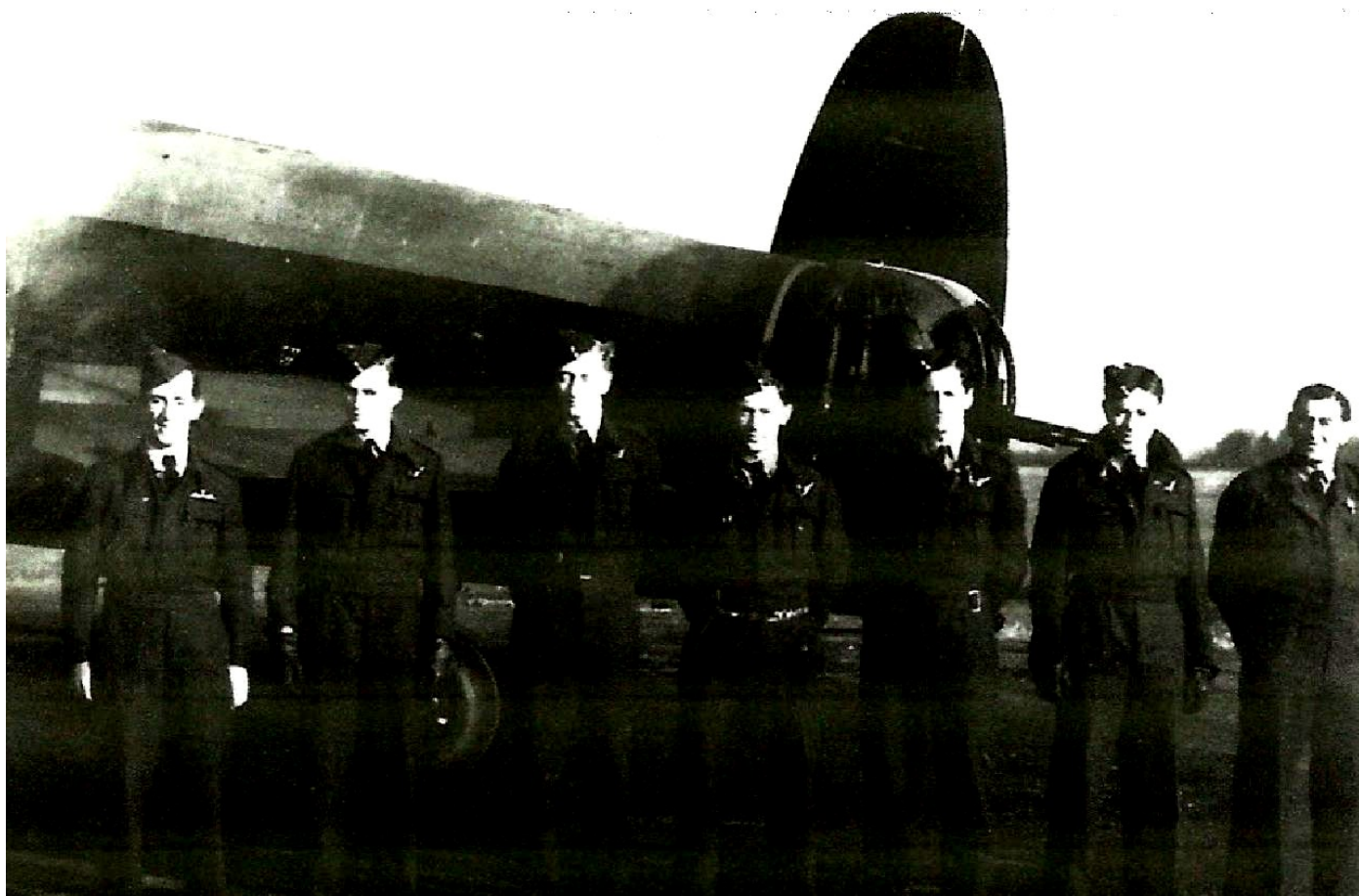
In 1987, the five remaining crew members met at Waltham: Glyn, Peter Ashenden, Sid Emmett, Ken Kemp and Bill Kondra (from Canada).

In 2004, Glyn was asked by Keith Ellis to speak at the 50th Anniversary Memorial Service at Pulverbatch, Shropshire about his pilot, Tommy Heyes, who was killed in a flying accident there in 1954. Tommy was a most skilful and courageous pilot, and he was a member of the RAF auxiliary. One day he took a Spitfire up to do a weather check. He radioed the control tower that he was experiencing engine trouble and was going to bail out. But he never bailed out. The consensus was that he looked down and saw he was over a village school and crashed his plane into a field, narrowly missing the school.

Glyn died on 29/9/2008.

Linda McAuley

The crew members are shown below (left to right): Tommy Heyes (pilot), Peter Ashenden (flight engineer), Sid Emmett (navigator), Glyn Jenkins (wireless operator), Bill Kondra (bomb aimer), Ken Kemp (mid upper gunner) and Jock Ross (rear gunner).



Obituary

We have heard from her daughter that Marguerite Smith, Associate Member and widow of Ian George Smith, sadly died on 17 July. Ian died in 1997; he and Marguerite were regular attendees at reunions before then.