



THE HORNET

The Newsletter of the 100 Squadron Association

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Association Website: www.100squadronassociation.org.uk

Newsletter 108 - February 2015

Dear Members,

With spring hopefully just around the corner it is time to be thinking about booking your place at this year's reunion which will be happening on 19th and 20th June with a visit to the RAF museum at Cosford and dinner at the splendid Buckatree Hotel (see pages 2 & 3 and booking form for further details). I hope that a good number of you will be able to attend what is a very enjoyable occasion and a chance to catch up with old friends and meet new attendees.

Nina Crane
(Editor of The Hornet)

An apology from the President.

John Holford has correctly pointed out that this really should be the February not the March issue. Last year, because we were waiting for final details for the reunion, Issue 104 was not distributed until March; I mistakenly advised the Editor that Issue 108 was due in March.

Norman Bonnor

Reunion 2015

At last year's AGM on 14th June at RAF Leeming, it was agreed that I should look into the prospect of holding the reunion in 2015 at a hotel near to the RAF Museum at Cosford so that a visit to the museum could be part of the reunion; the committee has agreed my plan which is outlined below.



Friday, 19th June: members to gather at the RAF Museum Cosford by 1200 for an early lunch; the museum has a good restaurant which offers a two-course meal for groups at £8:50. Visiting the museum is free, but they charge for parking - £2:50 for up to three hours and £3:50 for over three hours - we would certainly need the latter. We will visit the museum in the afternoon where volunteer guides are available.



Depart the museum at 1630 and proceed to the Buckatree Hall Hotel to check in and then gather in the Sir John Bayley Suite for pre-dinner drinks at 1900 for dinner at 1930. The hotel has offered a group rate for the Reunion Dinner, Bed and Breakfast of £50 **PER PERSON** for double/twin occupancy and £65 single occupancy for Friday, 19th June 2015.

This appears to be an excellent price. I stayed in the hotel earlier this year and can confirm that it is of a high standard and is situated in a country area close to The Wrekin, should anyone want a morning or evening walk. It has easy access from Junction 7 of the M54/A5. I will visit the hotel in the spring to agree a menu, which will need to be pre-ordered nearer the time.

Saturday, 20th June: take breakfast and then gather for the AGM at 0900 (probably in the Sir John Bayley suite). Hopefully finish by 1030 and depart. There are lots of places to visit in and around Telford itself, so people might like to go on to the Victorian Village at Blists Hill or other venues in the area before heading home.

For those wishing to have a full weekend break, the hotel is offering Bed and Breakfast **ROOM** rates for Thursday, 18th June and Saturday, 20th June of £65 for double/twin and £55 for single occupancy. To avoid any confusion and double-booking, the hotel would prefer that these additional nights are booked as a group, but the extra cost paid by individuals on check-out. I have therefore included lines in the Reunion Application form for these requests, but please don't send me any money to cover these additional nights.



Obituaries

Piet Kurvers

Piet Kurvers was born on January 3rd 1927 and died on December 9th 2014; he was almost 88 years of age. Piet used to tell me: "When I die Huub you must tell my story." I'm glad to do that for him, as is our English board member Pip Kay was glad to translate this story into English.

Piet Kurvers had a lot of faith in me and together we founded the working group for the aircraft monument in Grashoek. The purpose was to establish and maintain a monument to remember the crew of the Lancaster ED 973 of 100 squadron.

Piet grew up in North Limburg near Grashoek, a part of The Netherlands close to the German border. His passion was the Second World War, he had a great knowledge of the events and became a collector of World War II memorabilia. As a young man he got out of bed to watch the air battles between the German and English aircraft. He knew exactly where airplanes had come down and marked the places after the war with a pole. Piet was a witness when on the night of 15th June 1943 a 100 Squadron Lancaster crashed in the 'Belgenhoek' in Grashoek. He went there the next day on his bike, but the Germans chased him off.

Piet had suggested to me many times that we needed to place a memorial at the crash site so that the story wouldn't be forgotten. I agreed. An impressive monument was created by Wim van Ophoven and placed at the site. We contacted 100 Squadron and the monument was officially unveiled on 15th of June 2002 and later Piet was rewarded with honorary membership of 100 Squadron Association. He was incredibly proud of this recognition, and it was even listed on his memorial service sheet.

Several years later in June 2007 we were invited to the 90th Jubilee celebration of 100 Squadron. I asked Piet "are you coming with me to England, we have been invited?" "No", Piet said "I'm not going, I can't understand the people, I'm too old and I don't know anybody there." For many many weeks I tried to persuade Piet to come with me, but he was adamant "No Huub, I'm not going!" Piet's son Sjors this chance again." Just when I had given up all hope of persuading

him one evening the telephone rang. "Hello its Piet Kurvers, I am going to go to England." And that was the end of the conversation, Piet hung up the phone. This was typical for Piet who was always precise and to the point on the telephone; he only ever said what needed to be said as it was far too expensive for chitchat.

A few weeks later we set off for England. Driving first to Rotterdam then taking the overnight ferry to Hull and driving for another 200 km to the base in North Allerton in Yorkshire. Traveling with Piet was quite an experience. We had quite a few beers on the ferry, and Piet told great stories to the other Dutch passengers on board. More and more people came over to hear his stories and within ten minutes close to a hundred people were all laughing their pants off.

The next morning Piet saw England for the first time and discovered that there was a lot of wild animal life, the old hunter's eyes were wide open. We drove past a field with as many as 100 rabbits. Piet was very excited and said that he had never seen that many rabbits in all his life. By noon we had arrived at the base and were welcomed in the Officers' Mess. Our British friend's quickly saw that Piet was a very special man.

That afternoon we went on a bus tour through Yorkshire. The female driver asked for Piet's name and asked him how he was. I had to translate the question for him. He replied 'good', a word luckily quite similar to the way they use in Holland. Piet remarked that the women were quite different to the ones in Holland. In the Green Dragon, the hotel in Bedale where we stayed, the 80 year old man had his eye on the waitress who served breakfast. He asked her to sit on his lap so I could take a picture. He wanted to show his wife, whom he was divorcing at that time, that he was still attractive to women. A few months later when I bumped into Piet's ex-wife she did indeed ask me what Piet had been doing in England with a woman!

That night there was a big party at the airfield. It was six o'clock and we had plenty of time so we went into the bar, which was very crowded. Piet thought there must be a fair going on, but an old customer told him that it was normal. Piet regretted that there were no such bars in Holland. When the other guests learned what Piet had done for the Squadron, he got lots of compliments and large pints to go with it. Afterwards at the party, Piet was put in the spotlight for

his contribution, and there was a standing ovation of the 500 people present. I told Piet that he should bow as the applause was for him. He couldn't believe it.

The day after there was a big open day on the base with an air show. The only still flying Lancaster in UK flew over. It was the same type of plane that had crashed in Grashoek. It landed in front of us; "I recognised the plane from the war" Piet said. "Great swarms of them and now there is one right in front of my nose!"

The following day it was quiet on the base. The Lancaster crew was preparing the plane for the flight back to its home base at Coningsby. I told Piet that I was going to ask if we could have a look inside the Lancaster. The pilot briefly hesitated and then invited us to climb in. Before we knew it Piet sat behind the controls. A dream came true, a very special moment and the highest point of our trip to England.

On our way back to the ferry, Piet said that life in England was more sociable than in Holland. Piet, who at first didn't want to come, now didn't want to leave. He told me that if he would be 30 years younger he would have stayed there. Piet's humour connected perfectly to the British humour. Although he didn't speak the language, there was a click, and he felt completely at home. He would have fitted in quite well. When three days later we got home I had lost four pounds from all the laughter. In my entire life I never met a more remarkable man than Piet. With him we lose a very special man.



A few weeks ago, on Sunday 9th November 2014, at the monument in Grashoek, Piet told about the crash of Lancaster ED 973 in front of a bus load of people who wanted to hear his story. Piet was the last survivor, who saw the crash as a young man of 16, at one o'clock in the middle of the night on the 15th June 1943. It was his last public performance. Let's just try to imagine, that those seven perished boys from the Lancaster are forming a guard of honour to welcome Piet in the eternal Kingdom. Who knows, well, only God knows, but that would be nice.

Kathleen Reid was born on 15th September 1918 and died on 22nd November 2014. She served in the WAAF from 1942 to 1946 as an R/T:D/F operator at Cranwell, Waltham, Sculthorpe, Oulton, Swannington and Church Fenton. It was at Oulton where she met Sgt Ford Killin USAAF who was very much in love with her, and they corresponded when he returned to America. He wrote an article for his local newspaper about his time in England and said "My knowledge of English girls is limited but if they are half as nice as Cathy I nominate them as the world's best". In the end they did not get married but corresponded again in the 1990s. After the war, Katie led a very full life. She won a scholarship to the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and became an accomplished actress. She also taught drama and elocution in Leeds, Aylesbury, Glasgow and Stirling. In 1969, she became a Town Councillor in Stirling. In the 1970s and 80s, she ran a newsagents/post office in Scotland. She went to Cyprus for 10 years to teach English to Cypriot children and whilst there she also volunteered for an animal charity. In later years, she volunteered for the Stroke Association in Torquay and her final years were spent in Andover. Katie never forgot the time she served with 100 Squadron at Waltham, and visited there for many years becoming good friends with Roger Stephenson, the curator of the Windmill Museum. She obviously felt deeply about the fate of the airmen whom she saw off night after night on operations and often put pen to paper to record her thoughts.

The following is one of her poems.

Armageddon, Waltham

By the side of their kites they sit waiting,
Some in groups talking;
Some quietly apart.
We wonder what they think of,
As they wait out there to depart.

At the point of approach to the runway,
Where they turn off the peri-track,
We wait to watch each bomber go,
And pray that they'll all come back.

So cheerily they wave to us,
Give the 'V' sign or blow us a kiss.
As they race away down the runway,
Gaining speed, gaining height,
Over the farmhouse chimney,
With its warning red light.

As last they've all gone everyone,
Down the golden highway,
Of the setting sun;
Beyond the horizon out of sight.

With the fading hum of engines,
Breaking the peace of the country lanes;
We cycle back to duty,
To await the return of 'OUR' planes.



Katie at the memorial to the crew of JB596 at Hatcliffe Top; one of the losses on Black Thursday, 16th December 1943. Four on JB596 died that night and three were seriously injured. Katie was at Waltham at that time

Flight Lieutenant Walter Oakley Nobes DFC (Wally) died at home in St Andrews, New Brunswick on October 30th 2014 in his 97th year. In June 1941, he enlisted in the RCAF and, after flying training, was shipped overseas and assigned to 100 Squadron at RAF Grimsby, (Waltham). He flew 33 successful sorties between November 1944 and April 1945. The citation for Wally's DFC in the London Gazette of 21st September 1945 stated that "he completed numerous operations against the enemy in the course of which he displayed the utmost fortitude, courage and devotion to duty". After each operation he would shout back to the crew "Everyone OK? Let's get back to the beer" and they would all laugh with relief as they headed back to Lincolnshire. After the war, he and his wife Dorothy moved to Montreal where he eventually owned and operated Henry Marks Ltd (menswear). He also had a hobby farm where he enjoyed bee keeping, farming and raising assorted farm animals. He was a past president of 306 Wing RCAF Association.

Remembrance at Marly **24th February 2015**



Linton Arthur Stephenson has passed away peacefully at Calgary Foothills Hospital aged 94. Lint had a long life - well lived. Leaving the family farm near Girvin, Saskatchewan in 1941, he joined the RCAF to train as air crew and, in the spring of 1943, joined Sergeant Magill's crew of a new Lancaster MkIII ED 976 as the tail gunner. They flew three successful missions from Waltham, but were shot down on the night of 11th/12th June 1943 returning from a raid to Dusseldorf by an ME110 out of Leeuwarden.

Lint was the sole survivor that fateful night and went on to survive over two years in POW camps. The other members of the crew are buried at Terwolde Cemetery where Lint regularly attended to commemorate his fallen colleagues. Lint was a gentle, caring and thoughtful man yet one with incredible strengths of resolve, self-discipline and fortitude. He loved music, ice hockey, his friends and of course his family.



One Man's War

A ME110 fighter brought down ED976 which crashed, near to Terwolde in Holland at 0244 hrs. The Canadian rear gunner, Sergeant Linton Stephenson, was the sole survivor and became a POW. This is his story as related in Ian Reid's book "Lancaster Operations – one squadron's contribution to the bomber offensive."

"We were flying at 20,000ft over the Ruhr - the 'valley of hell' - between Cologne and Dusseldorf and turned left to bomb Dusseldorf rail yards and factories. These cities put up a solid wall of flak, which we had to fly through 'Running the Gauntlet'. We had just released our bombs when suddenly, the blue master searchlight picked out our aircraft and about 40 searchlights immediately coned us. Once this happens, flak shoots up the centre and pounds the devil out of you. One could read a newspaper at 20,000ft, be absolutely blinded by light and, of course unable to see the fighters coming in for the kill. Blinded like this I practically sweating blood.

We lost the port outer, which supplied hydraulic power to my rear turret, so I had to manipulate the four guns with my left arm and turn the turret by a small handle with my right hand. We eventually got away by diving, twisting, undulating and switching the IFF switch on and off. By this time, we were down to around 12,000ft and completely lost; the navigator had been hit and was very sick. As we headed towards Holland and the North Sea, we climbed to about 17,000ft on three engines but became separated from the main stream; we were alone.

A night fighter attacked us and scored hits on the starboard wing setting fire to both engines. Crippled, we were unable to manoeuvre so Alfred Magill, the pilot, ordered us to abandon aircraft. The mid upper gunner, Johnnie Lake, was badly hit and screaming for help. I immediately backed out of my turret to go to his aid. I put on my parachute but one clip was broken and would not engage the ring on my harness so I pulled off my oxygen mask and made my way towards the mid upper. I was sitting on a catwalk, about nine feet long and had two large, thick bulkhead doors to open and then to

climb over the toilet and then about twenty feet to where he was in trouble. I was still fighting my parachute and, due to no oxygen, I must have passed out and remember nothing until I woke up behind a Dutch house.

I buried my parachute in a ditch by the fence of a pasture with a cow in it. For what seemed hours I sat, in pain, behind the house, and I could see a man milking a cow in the front yard. A young man jumped over the fence and ran across the edge of the pasture; I expected him to spot me, but he didn't stop. Finally a man came over the fence, picked me up and carried me into the house. There was a housewife, a fairly large woman and, I believe, a lovely little girl about three years old. The housewife gave me a square of 'pig lard' and a glass of white wine. I could not understand the language, so I handed her my package of escape monies but, foolishly, I had thrown my food escape rations into the ditch with my parachute.

Incidentally, I had come down on one strap only as the broken one did not hold and remained tied to my harness. How lucky I was! Although in great pain, I thanked God for saving my life. On landing, I had smashed the vertebrae in my lower back, torn the muscles in my neck and shoulders - especially my right arm that I almost lost, sprained my knee and an ankle. My helmet had been ripped off my head, and I lost one flying boot.

The lady would not take the money, and I could see the sadness and fear in her eyes and felt very sorry for her. I never saw the man who had carried me into the house again, but a young blonde boy came running in asking when did I think the invasion was coming "About six months" I said. He said, "I cannot help you as there is a German garrison in the village about a quarter of a mile away. Don't tell them you have spoken to me." Then he disappeared. A young Dutch policeman came in but also refused the money and indicated that he could not help me and that the Germans would arrive soon. They arrived all right, a truckload of Hitler youth with an escort. I remember the first word that was uttered between the Dutch policeman and the German was 'Toogay'. Not knowing the language I presumed the Germans were likely saying, "Where did you find him?"

or "Where did he come down? The one reply was Toogay. The arrogant German youths took me to a small town where I was interrogated by a mean Nazi officer who pulled his gun on me calling me 'a terror fleiger' – killer of women and children. After two hours of this, he marched me back to a corridor of Hitler Youth who spat on me and taunted me for fifty feet or more. I was thrown into a large courtyard surrounded by a high concrete wall and escorted into a dark stone prison. I wrongly thought I was in Amsterdam but saw no signs anywhere.

For two days I was interrogated by the Luftwaffe Red Cross who wanted my name and squadron and the names of my crew. They had the mid upper gunner's name only and said they could not identify the rest of the crew. I said "Take me to the aircraft and I will identify them", but they said they couldn't do that so I surmised they were fishing for survivors. I was sure they had all got out, as I did, and maybe they would get back to England and the squadron. I insisted on seeing a doctor and finally, on the second day, they led me across the courtyard to a doctor's office. He did little for me and so I went back to my cell and tried to forget my pain and problems.

I was sent to Dulag Luft at Frankfurt on Maine and was in solitary confinement for twelve days, being constantly interrogated by the Gestapo and Luftwaffe. They showed me a large book and told me they knew more about the Air Force than I did, which was true. They knew when I enlisted, which ship I came over on, my Commanding Officer and told me he'd got another gong which he had only two days before I was shot down. They also had the serial number of my aircraft which I didn't even know.

From there, I spent one year in Konigsburg, three weeks in Thorn, Poland and almost a year in Fallingbostel. The Russians approached so we were chased out of the prison camp, and the Germans death-marched us around Germany for 28 days with very little to eat. On May 2nd, we were liberated near the Elbe by the British Army and after walking back to our own lines, a whole day's journey, we were eventually flown back to England after three to four days."

News from the Squadron

An extract from Excalibur – the magazine of RAF Leeming – Jan/Feb 2015 issue



A new year, but the workload for the Squadron has remained high due to the operational tempo of the Tornado Force and the ever continuing growth of the Typhoon force. This has meant that a greater number of sorties and detachments are being tasked to us as the frontline units are unable to support them. Late last year, we hosted a very successful standardisation visit by three QFIs for a week; they flew with everyone either on regular tasking or dedicated trips. They were very impressed with the support we provide for the frontline.

Fit Lt Joe Murphy (Murph) spent two weeks in November with the Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) teaching Aviation English to Chinese fighter pilots. He was hosted in Xian PLAAF Academy which has about 5,000 personnel going through a 3-year officer college course; it is one of five in the country just for the PLAAF! The Aviation English that Murph taught was to enable the PLAAF pilots to fly outside

China speaking English on the radio and included all the basic phraseology to enable pilots to taxi, take-off, join an airway and then land. Even though the pilots Murph taught had over a thousand hours flying fighters, the PLAAF work differently and generally have a ground controller guiding them closely for the whole mission. The concept of operating with different ATC and GCI agencies was something new to them but something the PLAAF want to emulate to come in line with western procedures and tactics with the hope of participating in foreign exercises. Murph was hosted extremely well, visiting the Terracotta Army, Tiananmen Square and the Great Wall.

Fit Lt Chris Lyndon-Smyth (Smythie) led the Boss, Sqn Ldr Adam Collins (Cos) and Murph to Eindhoven in December for Exercise Purple Windmill. This was a Close Air Support exercise in support of NATO in the Netherlands that only lasted a week and was a good break just before Christmas. Sadly a layer of solid cloud meant that the Hawks were flown in circles and simulated dropping GPS guided bombs for the Dutch Forward Air Controllers (FACs). Superb support from the small Babcock engineering team meant that we provided a seamless service while Dutch F-16s and German Tornados all cried off due to poor weather. For most of the week, the weather diversion that the crews had in reserve was actually back in the UK and even then Hawk was still able to provide over an hour on task.

The Boss was away again with Sqn Ldr James Porteous (Badger) and Fit Lt Tim Clement to Las Vegas for Red Flag. The aim was to see how the USAF white force build a threat scenario and utilise their Aggressors to pose a significant and realistic threat for missions. They worked in partnership with 92 Squadron from the Air Warfare Centre to bring back the corporate knowledge and processes to plan and coordinate large red air packages in future exercises. Fit Lt Damon Green (Damo), Murph and Smythie took two jets away to Albacete, Spain for two weeks to provide red air for the Tactical Leadership Programme (TLP). This is one of NATO's largest Composite Air Operations exercises held throughout the year in which multiple nationalities take part. In the past, the main learning points have been the coordination and control

of the aircraft involved.

From the other side of the hangar, the Babcock team won an Ovation Award from Babcock for their excellent support of all our deployments at the back-end of 2014, particularly in supporting three European detachments back-to-back. During these exercises, such as Serpentex and TLP, the Squadron had a 100% serviceability rate, and it's all due to the effort of the Babcock team. Gavin Stapleton also won an Innovation Award for his management of depth storage facilities and tooling. In particular, Gavin designed and built a stand for the aircraft's fin which is being distributed throughout the Hawk maintenance facilities. Ian Wilson received the same award for his work in quality assurance as he has found new and productive ways of increasing our output.



Three of the squadron pilots have recently moved on: Sqn Ldr Simon Grieve (Grievey), Flt Lt Henry Salmon (H) and Flt Lt Jonny Mulhall.

Sadly, we will soon be saying goodbye to The Boss - Tony Cann; he will be handing over to Andy Wright on 8th May. Andy has served on 100 before as a junior pilot, as well as JFACTSU at Leeming before serving on 31 Squadron flying Tornado GR4 recce missions during Operation Telic over Iraq.

The First Blitz

Part One – The Zeppelin Raids

In the early evening of 19th January 1915, a young man standing about one and a half miles inland of the sea at Ingham in Norfolk saw what he likened to “two bright stars” moving slowly in the night sky. These “stars” were the navigation lights of the German Naval Airship Zeppelins L.3 and L.4, captained by Kapitan-Leutnant Johann Fritze and Kapitan-Leutnant Magnus Frieher von Platen respectively. Departing from Fühlsbüttel Naval Base in Hamburg earlier that day, they had originally numbered three Zeppelins, but Oberleutnant Trench von Buttler-Brandenfels in L.6 had turned back whilst crossing the North Sea having experienced trouble with the Maybach motors powering his machine.

The target is believed to have been Humberside that night, but aerial navigation by day, let alone by night, was poor in those embryonic days of flying and the raiders made landfall much further south on the east coast. Bombs started to drop on Great Yarmouth shortly after 7pm that evening, and at 8:25pm Sam Smith (a shoe maker from the St. Peter’s Plain area of the town) became the first British civilian to be killed in an air attack on Britain. By the end of the raid, another man and two women had been killed, and a further seventeen people, including three children, had been injured. What is beyond doubt is that this cold, foggy winter’s evening marked a turning point in the way war was prosecuted, and ultimately led to the formation of the first night bomber squadrons in the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in early 1917, the first of course being our own 100 Squadron.

Although this wasn’t the first raid against Britain (a German aircraft had dropped a single bomb in the sea off Dover on Christmas Eve 1914, and the following day another German aircraft doubled the effort by dropping two bombs in the Thames close to Erith) it was the first one where civilians had found themselves on the front line by being attacked from the air. Surprisingly, that first raid didn’t cause

anywhere near as much of a public outcry as might have been expected, possibly because the target was away from London (the Kaiser had strictly forbidden Zeppelin raids on the capital) although it did make minor headlines as far away as America. The following month the Kaiser authorised Zeppelin attacks on the London docks, but the German crews carrying them out were expressly forbidden to make attacks west of the Tower of London – i.e. only the dockyards and naval installations were considered to be legitimate targets. The Kaiser was also concerned about causing distress (or worse) to his family living in Buckingham Palace!!

It was another four months before the sound of Maybach motors were heard above Britain again, but during the evening of April the 14th 1915 Kapitanleutnant Heinrich Mathy, Germany's leading airship captain and whose name would later become intrinsically linked with 100 Squadron, dropped 31 bombs on Tyneside, killing no-one but injuring four civilians. The 1st Battalion Northern Cyclists at Cambois on the Northumberland coast returned fire with their rifles, but Mathy was flying too high for their bullets to have any effect. Once again, a German Zeppelin had raided Britain with impunity, dropped her payload, and made off unscathed.

The British political and military response to the Zeppelin raids was, at best, half-hearted and in reality was one of inter-service confusion and rivalry. The Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) has responsibility for guarding the coastline of Britain, and to achieve this had a number of wireless "listening stations" and aircraft ready to counter any airborne threat along the east coast, along with a few more aircraft dotted around the perimeter of London. These aircraft were slow and unstable, were only intended until now to be used for daylight operations, and found the hitherto untried business of flying at night to be difficult at best, and really rather dangerous at worst!! RNAS pilots rarely sighted raiding Zeppelins, and when they did, the airships' superior rate of climb ensured that they quickly escaped. RNAS pilots were often killed in landing crashes. The RFC had the responsibility for

"Home defence" but were chronically short of aircraft, and training machines aside, everything they had was on the other side of the English Channel, engaged in the action on the Western Front. A small number of guns were also allocated to London for anti-aircraft (AA) activity, but were of very poor performance. In the finest traditions of British politics, a committee was set up to consider the Zeppelin attacks and how best to counter them, but for the most part no defensive action was effectively planned or implemented in those first few months of 1915. The only real damage against the German airship armada was by the RNAS in a number of attacks they made from France against the airships in their sheds at Fühlsbüttel and Nordholz.

In the meantime, the German raiders kept coming back. Various targets in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex were attacked later in April 1915, with Ramsgate and Southend being added to the roster in May, fortunately with only light casualties and one death in total. By this time the Kaiser had given his blessing to the bombing of London beyond The Tower and in early May 1915 Hauptmann Linnarz left his Zeppelin shed in Belgium with London his target, but was driven back at Canvey Island by a lucky British AA shell which burst close to his airship. However, with a dash of typical Teutonic arrogance, he threw out some cards, one of which was later found. It read: *"You English. We have come and we will come again. Kill or cure. German."*

The English didn't have to wait long. On the night of the 31st May / 1st June 1915, the Germany Army Zeppelin L.Z.38 with Hauptmann Linnarz once again at the helm, crossed the coast between Ramsgate and Margate, sailed up the Thames Estuary, and then turned north at Brentwood. The north eastern area of London fell victim to his bombs, with the first explosions shattering the night shortly after 11:00pm in Stoke Newington. A house at 16 Alkham Road belonging to Albert Lovell, a clerk, received the first hit and the upstairs was soon ablaze. His wife and children, along with two guests, all escaped unharmed but undoubtedly shocked. Hauptmann Linnarz then

continued south, dropping bombs and incendiaries as he went, passing over Dalston, between Shoreditch and Bethnal Green, and then turning eastwards over Whitechapel. Linnarz then turned north eastwards over Stepney, Bow and Stratford, before dropping the last of his 91 bombs over Leytonstone and heading for the coast and making good his escape. Between dropping his first and last bombs, barely half an hour had passed, and he had not been troubled over London by defending AA or aircraft, despite 15 RNAS machines taking off to try and find L.Z.38. In the city, seven people were dead, 35 were injured, and the damage was later calculated at costing £18,596. The Fire Brigade attended to 41 fires, with the public taking it upon themselves to extinguish a number of others. The German Government in Berlin claimed that their "Zep" had bombed the docks. In Britain, the Government, fearful of panic amongst the population, imposed an immediate restriction on press reporting of Zeppelin raids. But it was too little too late, and public anger in Britain was rising at the way the Zeppelins now seemed able to raid and bomb with impunity, without ever being in danger of being shot down by British aircraft or shells.

In an effort to keep the momentum going, both the German Army and Navy attempted further raids on London within a week, but poor weather thwarted them. On the morning of the 7th, Flight Sub-Lieutenant Warneford of 1 (RNAS) Squadron earned himself a Victoria Cross when he successfully destroyed L.Z.37 as she prepared to dock in her shed at Gontrode after she had failed to reach London the previous night. But the British public wanted to see a "Zep" in flames and downed over Britain, not Belgium.

London escaped the attentions of the Zeppelins during the light nights of June and July 1915, but Kent, Essex, Hull, Grimsby, Tyneside, Goole, Lowestoft, and Dover all received the attentions of German raiders during the period, resulting in 65 deaths and 165 injuries. All the raids took place without the German crews ever feeling the heat of the British defences. The Zeppelin crews had their tails up, and with the delivery of newer, bigger, and faster airships to the German Naval Air Service in particular, a large raid was planned on London. The

Chief of the German Naval Airship Service, Fregattenkapitän Peter Strasser, was keen to redress the ignominy of the German Army claiming bragging rights as a result of being the first to attack London. His chance came on the night of the 8th/9th of September 1915, when weather conditions were perfect for the journey across the North Sea as well as over the target.

Three Navy "Zeps" took off from bases in Europe that night tasked with attacking London – L.13 with Lieutenant Commander Mathy at the helm, L.14 (Lieutenant Commander Böcker) and L.11 (Lieutenant von Buttlar.) In the event, only Lieutenant Commander Mathy reached London after the others had encountered engine trouble, leaving Strasser's plan for a massed attack on the capital rather low in numbers. But Mathy was not one to disappoint his Commander, and he more than made up for the shortfall. He made landfall at Kings Lynn and headed south west towards London. At 10:40pm, he dropped the first of his bombs on Golders Green. Continuing towards the centre of London he passed close to Euston station at a height of 8,500 feet and dropped the next of his bombs in Bloomsbury at 10:45pm, dropped several more just east of the British Museum, continued in a roughly south-eastward direction dropping more bombs as he went. Gray's Inn, Farringdon, Smithfield Market, onwards past the Guildhall, and past Broad Street and Liverpool Street stations he flew, dropping bombs and incendiaries as he went. Outside Liverpool Street station one of his bombs scored a direct hit on a bus, killing the driver and eight passengers. One of the bombs he unleashed was a massive 660lb explosive, christened the "Love Gift" by Mathy. It was the largest bomb dropped on Britain up to that point and fell close to "Barts" hospital, blowing a hole eight feet deep in the ground. All across central London there was chaos and destruction. Fires raged out of control, houses had been blown apart, pubs had been reduced to rubble, and people lay in the streets dead and wounded. The AA guns had been very active, but their shells had burst off-target and for the most part, lower than the height at which Mathy was flying,

causing significantly more damage on the ground than to the raider. Only three RNAS aircraft had taken off to try and intercept L.13. None of them found her. 22 people were killed in the raid, 87 were injured, and material damage estimated at £530,787 was caused. It was the deadliest and costliest raid on Britain to date.

MPs demanded answers and the newspapers (who dubbed the night "Murder by Zeppelin") wanted to know why the Zeppelin had managed to cause so much damage in such a short time. From the public, the response wasn't the fear predicted by the German High Command, but anger that Germany was indiscriminately targeting women and children in their homes. Every section of the community, from MPs to the newspapers to the ordinary working people bearing the brunt of the attacks, demanded a swift and resolute response to the Zeppelin attacks.

Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, summoned Major General Henderson, Officer Commanding the RFC, to his office in Whitehall and demanded to know what Henderson was going to do about the raids. Henderson quite properly pointed out that the defence of London was the responsibility of the RNAS, but Kitchener was having none of it and told Henderson that if the next Zeppelin raid on the capital was not countered by the RFC, then he would hold Henderson personally responsible. With commendable zeal, Henderson set to work immediately and had soon acquired suitable land for aerodromes at Suttons Farm, Joyce Green, and Hainault Farm on the north-eastern edge of London, the direction from which raiding Zeppelins normally approached.

In the event, Henderson's new "Home Defence" aircraft wouldn't have to wait long for their first encounter with the "Zeps". During the early evening of the 13th/14th of October 1915 four raiders crossed the Norfolk coast bound for London. The RFC airfields received a warning of possible Zeppelin activity at 5:30pm, and at 6:55pm they were ordered to put aircraft on stand-by. An hour later they were ordered for take-off, six of them climbing into the night sky shortly afterwards. The Zeppelins, meanwhile, continued towards London

unabated. At 8:45pm, with the RFC machines still making height, the AA battery at Broxbourne in Hertfordshire heard L.15 (Kapitänleutnant Breithaupt) overhead and opened fire. The crew of L.15 replied with three bombs and scored a direct hit on the gun crew, a sad but extraordinary stroke of luck. She continued towards London and opened her bombing of the capital above Charing Cross at 9:35pm. One bomb damaged part of the Lyceum Theatre, killing one person inside. Direct hits were subsequently scored on the Royal Courts of Justice as L.15 turned north towards Lincolns Inn, scoring more direct hits there. Gray's Inn was struck, before L.15 turned east and bombed Farringdon and then Aldersgate stations, passing just south of Liverpool Street station, dropping bombs as she went. Another bomb fell on Aldgate High Street close to Fenchurch Street station, with two more falling close to Cable Street as she continued her journey. Further east, the Royal Artillery Barracks and dockyards at Woolwich were subject to an intensely heavy attack by Lieutenant Commander Mathy in L.13, whilst south of the river Croydon was subject to an attack by Kapitänleutnant Böcker and his crew in L.14. Much damage was done to the railway yard there.

Further north, across London and the dockyards, there was carnage and destruction on a scale not seen in any previous raid, with 71 people killed and 128 injured, the highest of any raid so far and which wouldn't be exceeded until the Gotha and Giant raids of 1917. But the British response had been the most robust yet. Although none of the RFC aircraft had made contact with a Zeppelin, the AA guns had been very active across the city and the docks, although none had really caused any real concern to any of the "Zep" Captains. With the German raiders firmly on the front foot as far as raiding London was concerned, the biggest surprise was that they did not return to the city for nearly a year, and it was to be four months before they returned to Britain at all. It gave the British Home Defence organisation the time it needed to perfect their tactics.

Greg Harrison

(To be continued!)