



THE HORNET

The Newsletter of the 100 Squadron Association

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Newsletter 109 - May 2015

Dear Members,

With the reunion at RAF Cosford and the Buckatree Hotel now only about six weeks away, hopefully you will have made your arrangements to attend, and I look forward to meeting you all again. There are one or two changes to the original plan which are explained on page 2.

Once again thank you to those who have sent in most interesting articles and a special thank you to Sue Dent for the obituary of her father, William Howell Evans who served on 100 Squadron in late 1944 as a wireless operator/air gunner. I was pleased to get a letter from him in 2012 wishing me luck as the new editor and saying how much he missed coming to reunions.

Nina Crane

(Editor of The Hornet)

2015 Reunion Update

I visited the RAF Museum at Cosford and the Buckatree Hall Hotel two weeks ago to make some final arrangements for the reunion. The outcome is that I need to make some minor changes to the plan; nothing too major, but here are the changes.

Firstly at Cosford, I learned that they have changed caterer, and the new one now expects any visiting group to have a full two-course meal at £12 rather than a light lunch at £8.50. As we will be having a full three-course dinner later that evening, this seems too much, so I have not booked a group lunch and will leave people to get their own light lunch individually (soup and a roll is £6). On the day, I will refund those who have already paid £8.50 for lunch.

I have booked two guided tours of the Cold War section of the Museum at 13.30 and 14.00; each of these are for 12 people and last just under an hour. I shall be available to check you in from about 12.00 and allocate people to a time. You will then be free to visit other parts of the Museum; there's a lot to see in the other hangars particularly the test and trials hangar.

Secondly, the Buckatree Hall Hotel wants a full list of names and room bookings 28 days before the 19th June (i.e. 22nd May). I therefore have to change the deadline for applications to arrive with me by post or by e-mail (cheque to follow) by **Thursday, 21st May at the latest**. An amended Application Form is enclosed.

I have agreed a menu for the Reunion Dinner which involves three choices for each of the three courses. I shall send this out by post or by e-mail to those signed-up and ask that you annotate your preferences and hand it in at reception when you book in at the hotel. The dress for the dinner is jacket and tie.

To cover the cost of the tours at the Museum, and to raise funds for the 100th Anniversary, we will have our usual raffle so don't forget to bring a prize!

Norman Bonnor

Change of Command

As the Royal Air Force has reduced in size over the last 10 years, the opportunity to command a squadron has become even more valued for both career development and job satisfaction. There is very little hope of getting extended in post as there are queues of hopeful three-ringers just waiting their chance. Hence the time has come to say goodbye to Tony Cann, who has been such a strong supporter of our Association and become a personal friend to many of us. Tony will hand-over command to the new Boss - Andy Wright on 7th May.

Message from Tony Cann

I'd like to take the opportunity in this edition of the Hornet to thank everyone in the Association for the support you have all given me as OC 100 Squadron over the last two years and especially Norman for his hard work in the many roles he undertakes for the group. Having the honour to command such an illustrious Squadron has undoubtedly been the highlight of my career to date and having the chance to spend time with such an active association has made this tour even more special. I will not forget the friendship I have experienced and hope to remain actively involved with the Association in the future.

I leave the Squadron in fine fettle, manned by a fantastic team of pilots and service men and women. They in turn are supported by our excellent team of engineers from Babcocks Engineering who are very much part of the 100 Squadron family. The Squadron continues to fly in support of the Typhoon Force in the main, but the list of tasks and roles that the Squadron fulfils is impressive and certainly makes for an interesting and rewarding tour for all concerned. The new OC, Wg Cdr Andy Wright, is no stranger to the Squadron nor indeed to some of the Association having served as the Executive Officer in the past; I wish him and his family all the very best in what I know will be a special and memorable tour.

Thanks again, and I hope to meet up with the members of the Association again in the near future – at the 100 Squadron Centenary if not before!

Regards,

Tony Cann



Celebrating 100,00 flying hours of Babcock Support

Wing Commander Andy Wright MA BSc RAF



Wg Cdr Andy Wright's military career began at school, where he was a CCF (Fusilier) cadet and where he was awarded both RAF Sixth Form and Flying Scholarships. He joined the RAF in 1996, having spent three years on the University Air Squadron at Birmingham (UBAS), flying the Bulldog. Following flying training, he qualified as a Tornado GR4 pilot, and completed his first tour on 31 Squadron, flying over 30 operational missions during Ops RESINATE and TELIC 1 & 2.

After completing the CFS course, where Andy graduated with distinction on the Tucano, he joined 72 Squadron as a QFI and spent three years instructing fast jet trainees. Awarded A2 QFI status at an early stage, he was selected as the Deputy Sqn Cdr in his final year.

Following promotion to Sqn Ldr, Andy deployed to HQ ISAF as a part of the Air Coordination Element (ACE) in the NATO Joint HQ. Following his return to the UK, he refreshed on the Hawk T1, before joining 100 Squadron at Leeming. Having completed the tour as the Deputy Sqn Cdr, he was subsequently posted to the Joint Air Land Organisation (JALO), where he served as the Senior Pilot at the Joint Forward Air Controller Training and Standards Unit (JFACTSU) and as the staff lead for UK FAC training management. Here, he qualified as a Forward Air Controller (FAC) and was selected to complete the US Marine Corps Weapons Tactics Instructor (WTI) Course as an Air Officer, where he earned instructional endorsements as a JTAC Evaluator and TACP Instructor.

On promotion to Wing Commander, Andy completed ACSC16 where he was awarded an MA. He was then posted to the UK's Joint Force Air Component HQ (JFACHQ), as the Chief of Combat Operations. Leading a 15-man operationally focussed team, the JFACHQ required Andy to travel all around the world, including Malaysia, Singapore, France, USA and Germany. His operational role at the JFACHQ, meant that he had to deploy to Baghdad, at very short notice, in support of Op SHADER. Working from the British Embassy, he was the only RAF officer in the US led Land HQ in Iraq, and thus was the 'natural choice' to serve as the Military Assistant to the 2 Star US Commanding General!

Andy feels privileged to return to 100 Squadron as the Boss and is extremely excited to be reunited with his old unit, particularly as 'The Ton' approaches its centenary year.

Andy is married and has two young boys. He is an avid offshore yachtsman, who manages the Yacht-master training programme for the RAF Sailing Association. In his spare time, he supports the Air Experience Flight by flying young ATC cadets in the Grob Tutor. His other hobbies include skiing, running (with his dog), DIY, food, films and music.

Obituary

William Howell Llewelyn Evans

It is with great sadness we report that Bill "Taffy" Evans passed away aged 90 on 31st March in hospital after a short illness.

Born in 1924 in Hendy, a small village in Carmarthenshire, South Wales, he lived with his sister and parents, who kept the local post office. He had a very happy childhood and went to Grammar School.

He was 15 when war broke out and went to work in Clayton Tinsplate Works Offices. He had joined the Air Training Corps where he found he had an aptitude for Morse Code and was called up in 1942 when he was selected to join as RAF Aircrew.

After basic training, during which he had to overcome air sickness, he was posted to Yatesbury - a very happy posting as in nearby Chippenham, he met the love of his life, Pat. The RAF was thus responsible, indirectly, for a very happy marriage that lasted almost 60 years, when Pat sadly passed away in 2006.

Bill trained as a Wireless Operator and Air Gunner and served with Bomber Command, fortunately surviving 36 Bombing Operations over German Targets. On completion of the Tour, he flew as Radio / Radar Operator with the Bomber Command Instructors' school.

When peace was declared, he volunteered to be transferred to RAF Transport Command. After training, he qualified to be a Radio Operator and travelled extensively all over the World.

On his demob from the RAF in March 1947, Pat returned with Bill to his parent's home in Hendy Post Office and later moved to the neighbouring small town of Pontarddulais, Near Swansea. He became Personnel and Welfare Officer in Clayton works before transferring to the newly built modern Trostre Steel Works where he stayed from 1954 to 1981 when he took early retirement.

Bill and Pat were blessed with two children, Susan and Bobby, four grand children and three great grandchildren.

One of his early interests after the war was amateur dramatics, an interest which started as a young boy and rekindled after demob. He also enjoyed cricket. Playing Bowls was another interest.

After retirement he became a voluntary ambulance driver for the Pontarddlais, Hendy and District Disabled Ambulance with whom he continued to serve for about 14 years.

Bill had a real passion for choral singing. He was a founder member of a Concert Party, The Adrian Signers, who raised a great deal of money throughout South Wales for various charities. They performed from 1960 to 1972. It wasn't long before Bill missed his singing and he joined the renowned Pontarddlais Male Choir who have sung all over the World, and he remained a faithful member until 2012. Not content with this, he was also a founder member of the Senior Citizens Mixed Choir from 1995 to 2008.

Bill always loved his Church from childhood in Hendy. He attended regularly, was a choir boy, Church Youth Guild Treasurer, Communion Server and even pumped the organ when necessary. He has been a faithful member of St Teilo's Church where he has served as a Vicar's Warden and sat on the Church Council. He was also the Covenant and Gift Aid Secretary until very recently.

All the condolence messages and huge attendance at his funeral are a testament to how well loved and respected he was by everyone who knew him - a real gentleman who will be sadly missed.

He has written that during his four and a half years service in the RAF he learnt:

- Discipline
- Knowing right from wrong
- Camaraderie (as experienced with Bomber Command)
- Confidence in one's ability to undertake any task
- Humility
- Be a good citizen, prepared to help other less fortunate.

Obituary

Brian Auguste Meulbrouck

I heard from his widow Dottie that Brian Auguste Meulbrouck passed away peacefully at the Gloucestershire Royal Hospital on 12 March 2015. We have sent a donation as a tribute to the Bomber Command Memorial Fund. He served as a Flight Engineer on the Squadron with Lincoln B Mk2 at both Waddington and Wittering between 1952 and 1954. He clearly loved his time as a National Serviceman and wrote a number of articles for aviation publications. The following is the main text of an article he had published in *Aeroplane Monthly* in March 1975.

Life with the Lincoln

In 1952, the RAF was operating as its first line bomber the ageing Avro Lincoln BII aircraft, together with the borrowed American Boeing B-29 Washington, and was waiting patiently for the first of its jet powered bombers, the Canberra. Because Canberra deliveries were slightly delayed, the piston bombers had to soldier on a little longer, and a situation existed where crews had to be found to man them. In order to help meet this crew shortage, a very, very few lucky National Servicemen got the chance to fly as aircrew in these machines. I was one of them.

After the usual basic training, trade training followed and, in my case as a flight engineer, very concentrated training in all aspects of the operation and overall running of the Lincoln BII aircraft. This schooling was accelerated to such a degree that the course was reduced to a mere 12 weeks, compared with the 18 months taken to train engineers during the war. This was achieved by restricting the instruction to only one aircraft rather than the older practice of a more general course covering all types of machine. Trade training as a rule was a prelude to crew training at an OTU; in my case, however, this training occurred on a squadron due to someone being demobbed and, so led to my being screened for a few before being posted to replace him. It meant that, with less than six months in the RAF, I was on a fully-fledged engineer on an operational crew on an operational squadron. It was the start of months of intensive, sometimes exciting, often routine, but always great fun flying in the Lincoln.

Stretched from the Lancaster, powered by four Merlin 68As, capable of carrying a ten-ton bomb internally, with a range of 2,000-odd miles, and fitted with, for its time, reasonably advanced electronics, she was quite the thoroughbred. By today's standards it was real man's flying, the noise level was excessive, cold was intense, and, being unpressurised, oxygen masks had to be worn always at night and when flying above 10,000ft in daylight. Since one often went on a trip lasting 12 hours or more, the discomfort could be acute.

With only one pilot, the flight engineer doubled as second dicky and, in fact, on our squadron a minimum of four hours in the pilot's seat each month was a mandatory training requirement. I was blessed with an enlightened skipper, who let me have a go at the odd landing and take-off, so I felt after a while that I was quite an aviator. The flight engineer's main job was fuel and systems management, with secondary tasks of log-keeping and generally assisting the captain. As a rule, the flight engineer handled the throttles, propeller controls, flaps, undercarriage and engine switches, etc. To this day, I can feel a tingle of excitement at the memory of the skipper saying "Full power, throttles locked 18lb of boost", as he moved the levers up through the 12lb gate with my hand following his, and his saying tersely "Your throttles" as he got on with fighting the torque swing as we careered along the runway. This would be followed, long seconds later, by the command "gear-up" when safe flying speed had been reached.

Long seconds indeed, as control was impossible at this stage on three engines, and if one engine was lost at this critical period when the motors were most extended of all, a wheels-up slide into the overshoot area was inevitable. This, of course, was a very rare occurrence, and I can only remember seeing one case of engine failure on take-off as the Merlins were such wonderful motors. The Merlin 68A as fitted to the Lincoln was, by the way, rather a contradiction. Since the aircraft had been developed from the Lancaster with the Far East war in mind, the engines had been modified for hot climates, and inter-coolers were fitted between the two supercharger stages to avoid overheating of the mixture. Since, however, the Japanese war happily finished quickly, the Lincoln continued in European service, and after-heaters were fitted to warm the charge up! Special radiator flaps were used to introduce more cooling if an aircraft had to go tropical.

With take-off successfully accomplished, the machine had to be trimmed into the climb condition, and power reduced to rest the engines. At every change of power setting, my job was to synchronise the engines, and this was a task I personally found to be most difficult. The engines would be roughly set up on the rev. counters, and I would then have to look through the port windows, past the pilot, and, getting my eye in line with the propeller blades and using the constant speed unit levers, adjust the engine speeds until the propeller shadows merged. This use of the stroboscopic effect was very easy, but number three engine had then to be adjusted by ear until the beat merged with that of the two port engines. Number four was then adjusted stroboscopically in line with number three. This was a difficult enough job in daylight as described, but became even more difficult at night as all the four engines had to be synchronised by ear, and failure to achieve smooth running would bring the wrath of the crew upon one's head.

Since, as mentioned before, this had to be done at every change of power setting, and since a log entry was also mandatory at every change of power setting, one seemed to be continually fiddling with CSU levers and log books. For good measure, I had also to be able to reel off current fuel states, probable all-up weight and centre of gravity position for landing, look after issue of flying rations and generally monitor all temperatures and pressures.

Other tasks were regulating the supply of oxygen and, on radio-countermeasure exercises, dispensing of "Window" - metal-foil strips or chaff designed to interfere with ground radar. In my crew, I also used to help the navigators by setting data on the bomb-sight computer to save disrupting half the crew to get the navigator into the nose of the aircraft to do this job.

In spite of being kept so busy, one had ample time to observe the beauty of it all, and, particularly on moonlit nights when the coastlines were ringed with fire, to get that ethereal God-like feeling ground-born mortals never experience. I imagine that war-time fliers never experienced this beauty due to black-outs, and I am sure the tension they worked under must have precluded any serenity.

The training flights were best. A programme of tasks to be completed

each month was laid down, and provided each crew fulfilled this commitment of so many three-engine landings, so many overshoots, so many practice bomb runs etc. each month, the order in which these tasks were done was left to the crews to decide. Except for Command and NATO exercises, we tended to do one five-hour day and one five-hour night trip each week, and, unless the weather was quite impossible, this would be the pattern of things and all the practices would be completed.

Air-sea firing at a floating smoke bomb would be enlivened by flying at zero feet towards timber boats in the North Sea and zooming over them. The crews, never in evidence on the first run, would be lining the rails waving and cheering for any return beat-up. Fighter affiliation exercises were carried out at 20,000-odd feet and were quite a traumatic experience. A dot in the distance would become a Sabre or a Meteor, filling the wind-screen in a split second, and any hopes of evasion were scanty. After a few passes, the fighter would formate on the wing tip with the pilot grinning from ear to ear, almost stalling with nose right up in the air trying to keep down to our 145kt, and then give a final wave followed by a vertical dive into the clouds.

The monthly quotas of three-engine landings and ground controlled approaches would be carried out during these training periods, and one hoped that if a radio call to land at the nearest base because of fog came, one was near an American station. An enforced stay at an American base was always the excuse for a glorious binge and, as hosts, the Yanks were tops.

There was a more serious side to the training, with Command exercises and, usually once a year, NATO exercises. The Command jobs would, as a rule, be long trips right across Europe with a bomb drop on some remote range, perhaps in Germany or Norway, fighters to evade, radar to confuse, and often as many as six or seven hundred aircraft involved. The NATO exercises combined RAF aircraft with machines from all the NATO countries as well as ships and land forces. We spent many hours searching the Atlantic wastes for various fleets, and would make simulated "A"-Bomb attacks by dropping flares on them when discovered. Those NATO affairs normally lasted for a fortnight, and with strict security measures applied, round the clock flying and, as a rule,

very long trips, we would be very tired and pleased to see the end of them.

Air-sea Rescue stand-bys were a routine part of the life, and we would wait with an aircraft loaded with rescue gear, and hope that the need would not arise for us to be called out. We also had, on occasions, to fly ferry jobs, and these could at times take one to strange and far away places. One not very popular job was training in mine-laying. This involved flying at night over coastal waters at a very low altitude and, since often coastline hills were higher than the briefed mine-dropping height, we were always very conscious of the risk of flying into them.

We also flew on the Queen's RAF review fly-past at Odiham and, in fact, practised formation flying for some time before the big day in order to be able to give a polished performance before Her Majesty. This was a real licence to break all the low flying regulations, as we had to fly along a complex route, all over the UK, to be able to get 700 or so aircraft of different types and performances passing over the Royal Party in a non-stop stream. The slower types went first, and the fastest ended up the show; we, of course, were near the front of the stream and had to break away immediately after passing Odiham in order to avoid the heavy metal coming up behind us. This complex pattern was flown at a very low altitude, and the final run-in between two ground flares had to be accomplished with the most precise timing. In fact, the flares had to be overflown with only a plus or minus five second time tolerance to make collision avoidance practical. I think it is true to say that we pushed the low-flying aspects of this job rather further than the authorities intended, but the impact of the 200 or so machines in the Lincoln element of this show thundering over at very low heights was tremendous and we enjoyed it greatly.

There was a grimmer side to the flying game, however, and it was with very mixed feelings amongst the crews that the Lincolns were sent out to bomb the Mau-Mau in East Africa. The initial feeling was that it was a bit extreme to be using bombers against natives in mud huts. These feelings were dismissed when the machines got to Kenya, and crews experienced at first hand the dreadful atrocities being carried out by these very cunning and devious adversaries. The work was quite dangerous, as the targets tended to be at altitudes approaching the operational limits of these rather tired aircraft, and since these attacks

were often carried out at night, accidents occurred and lives were lost.

We had our fair share of accidents, some nasty others hilarious, but in fairness, remembering the low average age of the crews and the tendency towards skylarking, the Lincoln would seem on balance to have been a very forgiving aircraft. Most accidents were, in fact, attributable either to the nature of the work being performed or else to the elements, fog being the biggest single enemy. We did, however, have odd incidents like the aircraft which hit a beacon on a long low approach and wiped off the tailwheel. The crew, hearing the noise, went round again and proceeded to do the shortest friction-braked landing on record. Another crew mishandled throttles in a steep procedure turn at night, and succeeded in inverting the machine. Some very fast talking was needed on return to base to explain away a foot-battered instrument panel. This machine, incidentally, when examined in the cold light of day, was written off, as nearly every rivet in the airframe had been pulled as a result of this escapade. One crew on night flying practice managed to crash in bad weather into a chicken farm near the end of the runway. No crew members were badly hurt, but several thousand battery hens perished in the ensuing blaze.

In almost every incident involving sudden deceleration of the Lincoln, the flight engineer would collect an angled scar across the forehead from the vacuum pump change-over cock. These scars tended to be permanent, and whilst not actively sought after, would perhaps be worn with pride once received. We would on occasion have bad moments if the weather was really grim, but rarely lost aircraft, as it was usual to carry enough excess fuel to make diversion to another airfield possible. In fact it was not un-known for aircraft to land as far away as Germany if all UK bases were clamped down with fog.

All this, of course, is only a part of the whole atmosphere of squadron life, the social side was, for the times, quite sophisticated. With flying pay, even as National Servicemen, we enjoyed a very good standard of living, most of the time at permanent bases with good accommodation. All in all, they were two fabulous years, with the best of companions and interest-ing aircraft to operate. What would I give for the chance to do it all again.

The First Blitz

Part Two – The Demise of the Zeppelin

Raids against towns and cities in the midlands and the north started again at the end of January 1916, when 70 people were killed and 113 injured in an attack by nine Naval Zeppelins that stretched from Scunthorpe in the north, to Bewdley in the west, Huntingdon in the south and Norwich in the east. On the last night of March 1916, 32 soldiers of the Manchester Regiment were killed, and another 48 injured, when the church hall in Cleethorpes where they were billeted received a direct hit from L.22 which was attacking the town. On the same night, L.15 was hit by an AA crew at Purfleet as she made towards London. She started to lose gas and was spotted by an RFC BE2c on patrol, who dropped explosive darts on the airship, without results. Losing height and struggling to make the British coast, the crew radioed base for immediate assistance before throwing the wireless equipment overboard, along with just about everything else, in an effort to make the ship light enough to reach their Belgian base. But it was not to be, and with two gas cells empty and two more leaking very badly, the "Zep" broke up and crashed into the sea about 15 miles north of Margate just after 11:00pm. All but one of the crew, who drowned, were picked up by a British destroyer the following morning and survived as prisoners of war. But still the British public and media had to wait to see one of the raiders downed over home soil.

The night of the 2nd/3rd of April 1916 saw the raiders strike as far north as Edinburgh and Leith, dropping bombs but causing no casualties. And so it continued through the spring and summer, with the North East, Yorkshire, the East Midlands and East Anglia all being attacked, but with the Zeppelins staying well away from London.

At about this time the development of the 0.303 incendiary bullet for the RFC aircrafts' guns was well advanced, and trials had shown some considerable promise late in 1915, resulting in an order for 500,000 of them being placed by the RFC in the early spring of 1916. Before the end of the year, they would prove their worth.

On the night of the 25th/26th of April 1916, five German Army Zeppelins were detailed for an attack on London. Only one of them, L.Z.97 with Hauptmann Linnarz at the helm, came even close to attacking the city. At 10:45pm, he dropped 40 incendiaries between Fyfield and Chipping Ongar in Essex. By 11:00pm, he was over Barkingside where he dropped several more bombs, alerting the AA gunners to his position. They duly opened up and gave him something of a hot time. At the same time, two 39 (Home Defence) Squadron RFC aircraft from Suttons Farm were closing in on LZ.97. The first was flown by a certain Captain Arthur Harris, later to rise to C-in-C of Bomber Command in WW2. Twice Captain Harris got into a position to fire on the raider, and twice his incendiary ammunition jammed his gun. By the time he had cleared the second blockage, the "Zep" had disappeared from sight.

Meanwhile the second aircraft, captained by 2nd Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson, was following Captain Harris into the attack on LZ.97, guided by the searchlights which were illuminating her in front and above his aircraft. Three times he made good his position for an attack, and three times his guns jammed. Leefe Robinson then lost her in the darkness of the night. There would not be another Zeppelin over Britain for three months, but Leefe Robinson's name was one that would later become synonymous with the race to down a "Zep" over Britain.

An interesting entry in the RFC HQ War Diary at about this time makes mention of the possibility of forming squadrons for "the specific purpose of night bombing the enemy". Certainly the idea had been discussed at the highest levels of Government, with Churchill himself noting that whilst bombing (by day or night) may not win the war outright, it may be useful in persuading the enemy towards seeking an early peace treaty.

A raid by ten Zeppelins at the end of July caused virtually no damage – four returned early with mechanical problems (an issue which dogged the "Zeps" throughout their career). The raid is worthy of note for it was the first which featured the new R-Class "Super Zeppelins", longer and with more powerful engines than their predecessors. At the helm of one of them, L.31, was senior Zeppelin Captain, Heinrich Mathy, but not even he managed to reach London itself. At this time,

the RFC started taking delivery of new explosive bullets for the aircraft guns, a development of the incendiary bullets trialled the previous year.

A few weeks later, on the night of the 24th/25th August 1916, Mathy and the crew of L.31 did make London, with the first bombs falling just after 1:30am on the Isle of Dogs and Millwall Docks. Explosions followed in Deptford, Greenwich, Eltham and Plumstead, where bombs killed a family of three sleeping in their house. Nine civilians were killed in total, and another 40 people were injured, with material damage estimated at £130,000. All of these figures fell far short of the loss of life, injuries and damage caused in the raids of the previous year, and serve to highlight how much more difficult the AA guns and RFC aircraft were now making life for the German raiders.

A little over a week later, on the night of the 2nd/3rd of September 1916, Freggatenkapitan Strasser launched his biggest raid of the war against London. Four Army, and no less than twelve Navy Zeppelins set out from their European bases, but it was destined to end in disaster. Snow, rain, and hailstorms over the North Sea dispersed the attacking force, with towns as far north as Retford and Boston being bombed, and at least six of the Zeppelins bombed various rural targets in East Anglia. Of the initial sixteen raiders, only three found themselves in a position to attack London, approaching from the north over Hertfordshire.

The RNAS wireless listening stations had picked up a great deal of wireless traffic during the afternoon and evening, and had early warning that a large raid was underway. At 11:00pm, 39 (Home Defence) Squadron were ordered to put aircraft up to patrol. First into the night sky was 2nd Lieutenant Leefe Robinson, who had had such a near miss with L.Z.97 in April. At least five more RFC pilots took off between 11:00pm and 1:00am, one of them being 2nd Lieutenant Freddie Sowrey, who the following year would be one of 100 Squadron's first Flight Commanders. Sowrey was tasked to replace Leefe Robinson on his patrol, but Leefe Robinson wasn't finished yet. At about 01:50am, nearly three hours after taking off from Suttons Farm, he was headed back to his airfield when he saw a searchlight pick out Hauptmann Schramm and his crew in Zeppelin SL.11, dropping their bombs on Hornsey. The Finsbury Park AA gunners opened fire, and Leefe Robinson decided to give chase. On the ground, thousands

of Londoners, attracted by the intense AA barrage and searchlights, stopped and looked to the heavens and saw SL.11 illuminated by the searchlights and the AA bursting all around her. Then, in the searchlights, they momentarily saw Leefe Robinson closing in on the meleé, nose down and closing in on the huge airship. Flying lengthways along her from bow to stern, underneath, he emptied a drum of explosive ammunition into SL.11, but to no effect. He attacked a second time, emptying another drum of ammunition into the side of the "Zep", but again it had no effect. For his third attack, he positioned his aircraft behind the airship, and about 500 feet below, before flying under her and emptying a third drum of his explosive bullets into her belly. For a few seconds nothing happened, but then the whole rear part of the "Zep" started to glow, and as she started to fall. Leefe Robinson had to take urgent evasive action to avoid being struck by her. SL.11 fell to earth at Cuffley in Hertfordshire, a burning twisted mass. The thousands of onlookers on the ground, who had watched the drama unfold, erupted in applause. People danced in the streets, dock hooters sounded, bells rang, railway locomotives sounded their whistles. The "Zeppelin menace" was over, and the Army Zeppelins never again raided Britain. For his part in the destruction of the first Zeppelin over Britain, 2nd Lieutenant Leefe Robinson was awarded the Victoria Cross and afforded "national hero" status wherever he went. He would be tragically killed on the Western Front in 1917.

The Navy Zeppelins under Strasser, however, opted to continue the offensive, but the end was in sight. The same month, on the night of the 23rd/24th of September 1916, L.33 was downed when one of her gas cells was holed by an AA shell that exploded close to her over London, with fragments of the shell holing another four cells. She began to lose height and eventually came down in a controlled crash landing close to Chelmsford, with all her crew surviving. On the same night, Freddie Sowrey took off from Suttons Farm at 11:30pm, and just over an hour later sighted L.32. Throttling back his engine so as not to overtake the airship, he positioned himself below her and emptied a gun of explosive bullets into her, with no effect. Return fire from the Zeppelin crew meant Sowrey had to take evasive action, but he repositioned himself under her for a second attack, again with no effect. A third drum, however, did the trick, and L.32 started to glow red and burn.

She plummeted down and eventually crashed at Snail's hall farm at Great Burstead, close to Billericay in Essex.

The next Zeppelin raid was just over a week later, when eleven Zeppelins were tasked to attack London and the Midlands. Seven eventually crossed the English coast, three attacking Lincolnshire, one attacking Hitchin, one the East Midlands and one dropping bombs on Norwich. The final one, L.31, commanded by the experienced Heinrich Mathy, is the one we will concern ourselves with. He crossed the east coast at Lowestoft at 8:00pm and at 10:00pm was over Harlow. At about the same time, 2nd Lieutenant Wulstan Tempest was ordered into the air from Suttons Farm. Mathy, meanwhile, headed for London, but the AA guns at Temple House unnerved him, and he abandoned the idea of an attack on the capital and headed north, unloading the majority of his bombs at Chesthunt in Hertfordshire. Then the searchlights caught him, and some miles away patrolling over south west London, Tempest caught sight of the Zeppelin, a few thousand feet below his own height of 14,500 feet. He immediately pointed his BE2c north and with as much speed as he could muster, he flew towards L.31, passing through the bursting shells of the AA fire as he did so. In an effort to avoid the AA fire, Mathy had steered L.31 south, and he and Tempest were now flying towards each other across London. Suddenly, Mathy caught sight of Tempest's aircraft, and in an effort to get away, dropped all his bombs in one volley and turned northwards again, climbing rapidly as he did so. Tempest was in hot pursuit, but five miles from the "Zep" his fuel pump broke, necessitating him operating the hand pump with one hand while flying the aircraft with the other. At such a height, with the air thinner, this exhausted Tempest, but he stuck to his task. He soon drew up on the airship, and still being above her, dived down firing his explosive ammunition at her as he did so. He banked his aircraft around and approached L.31 from beneath and behind, passing underneath her from stern to bow, firing at her again as he did so. As he passed underneath, he noticed the beginnings of a red glow – she was burning. According to Tempest's own report, the Zeppelin shot up about 200 feet, before roaring down, a burning mass, upon Tempest and his aircraft. Tempest put down the nose of his aircraft and dived for all he was worth, the Zeppelin roaring down after him, before he side-slipped out of the way. From his aerial vantage point, Tempest watched L.31 fall to earth and

crash at Potters Bar. Heinrich Mathy, the senior Zeppelin commander, was dead, and with him died the dream of Strasser and his Zeppelins.

Tempest, exhausted from his exertions and feeling sick, crashed his aircraft on landing, but earned himself a Distinguished Service Order for his efforts that night. Today, in Potters Bar close to where L.31 crashed, a road is named "Tempest Close" in his honour. The following year, alongside Freddie Sowrey, 2nd Lieutenant Wulstan Tempest would be one of 100 Squadron's founding flight commanders, bringing a wealth of night flying experience with him.

The Zeppelins only ever made sporadic raids on the British mainland after the death of Mathy, and never again raided London deliberately (although in October 1917, one Zeppelin dropped bombs in central London after getting lost attacking Northampton), leaving that task instead to the new aircraft that were now being operated by the Germans. In total, there were only another twelve Zeppelin raids on Britain in WW1, which concentrated mainly on the North East, Yorkshire, the Midlands, and East Anglia. Only one more Zeppelin was downed over the British mainland (L.48 in Norfolk in the early hours of the 17th June 1917), although L.34 crashed in the sea off Tyneside in November 1916 after being attacked during a raid on the north east. Strasser himself was killed when the Zeppelin L.70 was attacked on the 5th of August 1918 over Yarmouth and later crashed in the North Sea. Never again did a Zeppelin approach the British coast.

Of just five Zeppelins downed over British soil, two were bought down by men who would later serve as Flight Commanders with the fledgling 100 Squadron the following year, and one of whom (Tempest) would later command the squadron. It is a fact of which those of you who have served with 100 Squadron, and those of us with a special affection for it, should be justifiably proud.

100 Squadron spearheaded the night-bombing action on the Western Front in 1917 and claimed some notable successes against military targets on the German side of the lines. Many of the founder members of the squadron had come from the Home Defence squadrons in Britain, and were well-versed and experienced in the art of flying by night. Later that same year, RFC (and later RAF) "Independent Force" was formed with 55 and 100 Squadrons RFC, and "A" Squadron of the Royal

Naval Air Service. Their job was to attack German industry. The rest, as they say, is history.

Another part of this article will deal with the later raids on London, from the summer of 1916 onwards, by the German "Gotha" and "Giant" aircraft. Any member wishing to learn more of the German air attacks on Britain in WW1, or who has questions about this article, is welcome to contact me for further details.

Greg Harrison

Sources:

Various files from the CAB, AIR, and POL classes at the National Archives, Kew, London.

"Zeppelins over England" by Kenneth Poolman (pub. Evans Brothers, London, 1960)

"German Air Raids on Britain 1914-1918" by Joseph Morris (pub. Sampson Low, Marston & Co, 1925)

"London 1914-17, The Zeppelin Menace" by Ian Castle (pub. Osprey Publishing Limited, 2008)

"The Baby Killers – German Air Raids on Britain In The First World War" by Thomas Fegan (pub. Leo Cooper, 2002)

Request for Information

1. Information is sought by Greg on Flt Lt Curle and crew, lost on the squadron's first operation after reforming on the night of the 4th/5th of March 1943. In particular, if anyone has any photos of the crew, or their Lancaster ED559, he'd be grateful to hear from them.

2. Information is also sought by Greg on the crash on take-off of Lincoln RF335 on the 20th of January 1954 at RAF Eastleigh, Kenya. He believe this aircraft was written-off after the crash, which occurred as a result of a swing as the aircraft gathered speed down the runway. Does anyone have any photos? The aircraft was skippered by Sgt G. Scripps.

The Development of the FE2b

By Greg Harrison

As many of you will be aware, I have been working on re-writing, updating, and expanding Arthur White's excellent history of 100 Squadron, "The Hornet's Nest", for publication to coincide with the Squadron's 100th birthday in early 2017. Recently I have been working on the World War 1 period and, whilst I was working on the formation and equipping of the squadron, I was surprised to discover that the first aircraft type to equip the squadron, the FE2b, or "Fee" as it was affectionately known to the crews, had its origins in a design that had been tested as early as August 1911 as the FE1.

Development of that early design, which was powered by a Gnome rotary engine, continued apace until the type that we would recognise as similar to that flown by 100 Squadron in 1917, and carrying the serial number "FE2" flew for the first time a year later. For various reasons development of the aircraft, then under the stewardship of the Army Aircraft Factory (AAF) at Farnborough and being flight-tested by a certain Geoffrey De Havilland, seemed to stall (no pun intended!!) towards the end of 1912 after problems with stability – the aircraft was reported by de Havilland to be very "tail heavy".

The following Spring, the AAF received a request for an armed aircraft which, before the invention of interruptor gear for fuselage-mounted forward-facing machine guns, meant a "pusher" design, and the FE2 concept was resurrected. A new aircraft was built (curiously also carrying the serial "FE2"), now powered by a 70hp Renault V8 engine and featuring the twin-boom tail design and "bath tub" type cockpit that we know so well from the FE2b operated by 100 Squadron a few years later. Initial design drawings show a gun mounted on the front of the "bath tub", although it appears that this fitment was never carried through to the actual aircraft. Flight testing commenced but on the 23rd of February 1914, just a few short months before the outbreak of WW1, disaster struck when FE2 crashed at Wittering, injuring the pilot and killing the passenger.

Despite the loss of the prototype, design work continued and a new

design based very much on FE2, the "FE2a", was developed. Assigned the serial "2864", it was initially powered by a 100hp engine manufactured by Green, but this proved to be too heavy, and it was soon replaced by a 120hp Porsche-designed engine made under licence by Beardmore Limited. 2864 first flew on the 16th of March 1915 and was so successful that it was soon transferred to France for active service with the British Expeditionary Force in May 1915 and saw service with No.6 Squadron, downing at least one enemy aircraft in September 1915.

Design improvements to the FE2a soon saw the arrival of the FE2b and production was undertaken by a number of manufacturers to satisfy the demands of the RFC who were using them in ever-increasing numbers as a day fighter on the Western Front. First-equipped was the previously-mentioned No.6 Squadron, with Nos. 16 and 20 Squadrons following soon after. In the event, No. 20 Squadron would become the longest-serving FE2b day fighter squadron, remaining equipped with the type for nearly two years.

A further development of the FE2b, the FE2d, saw a 160hp Beardsmore engine fitted, which increased performance and service ceiling from 9,000 to 11,000 feet. The type was, by late summer 1916, also being used in the day bomber role such were the improvements in load-carrying ability. One famous example of the type being employed in this role took place on the 23rd of November. Twelve "Fees" from 25 Squadron bombed the village of Brebieres and on their return, whilst battling 30mph headwinds, were engaged by no less than twenty enemy aircraft. The "Fees", led by Captain A. W. Tedder (who rose to later become Lord Tedder, Marshall of the RAF) and Captain R. Chadwick, successfully engaged the enemy aircraft and sent several down out of control, with one destroyed.

As 1917 dawned and fighter aircraft on both sides of WW1 were becoming more advanced, the "Fee" was becoming outclassed as a day fighter. However, its incredibly forgiving and stable flight characteristics made it ideal for use as a night bomber and after some minor modifications to the airframe, including the fitting of bomb racks and luminous dials, it entered service with our own 100 Squadron in April 1917. Such was the affection for the type that when it was replaced on 100 Squadron by the Handley Page O-400 in the late

summer of 1918, there was much regret at seeing their beloved "pushers" leave the unit.

Eventually, over 1,900 "Fees" were built, and the type was still in production after the end of the war in November 1918. It is a testament to the design that although it was conceived as a day fighter for the RFC, that by 1917 when it equipped 100 Squadron, it was found to be an ideal platform with which the RFC could launch its fledgling night bomber offensive.

Sources: -

Various files in the AIR1 series of historical records at the National Archives, Kew, London

"The FE2b/d and Variants in RFC, RAF, RNAS, and AFC Service", various authors, published by Cross and Cockade 2009

"Royal Flying Corps Communiqués 1917-1918" by Chaz Bowyer, published by Grub Street 1998

"Royal Air Force Communiqués 1918" edited by Christopher Cole, published by Kimber and Co Ltd. 1969

"The Royal Flying Corps in France – From Bloody April 1917 to Final Victory" by Ralph Barker, published by Constable 1995

"War Over The Trenches – Air Power and the Western Front Campaigns 1916 – 1918" by Ted Hooton, published by Ian Allan 2010

I also acknowledge the invaluable help given to me by my fellow researchers at www.theaerodrome.com and www.rafcommands.com

The above article is an abridged version of the text I have written for the updated version of "The Hornet's Nest", and I hope readers will look forward to reading the more detailed version of the "Fees" development and service in the book when it is published. I would be delighted to hear from any member who can add any detail to any part of our Squadron's history for me. I can be contacted on 029 2031 6779 (home) / 07872 069462 (mobile), or

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