



THE HORNET

The Newsletter of the 100 Squadron Association

President:	Air Commodore N Bonnor FRIN FRAeS RAF (Ret'd)		
Chairman:	Treasurer:	Secretary:	N/L Editor:
OC	M English	Sqn Ldr E Dawson	Mrs N Crane
100 Sqn	4 Forest Rd	Scarborough Lodge	Flat 48
RAF Leeming	Chalet Hill	Pickhill	Pine Park Mansions
Northallerton	Bordon	Thirsk	1 Wilderton Road
DL7 9NJ	GU35 0BH	YO7 4JN	Poole BH13 6EB
01677 423041	01420 489543	07808 760532	01202 376325
	mikej1947@	edawson.100sqnassoc	nina.crane1@
	hotmail.co.uk	sec@yahoo.co.uk	ntlworld.com

Association Website: www.100squadronassociation.org.uk

Newsletter 112 February 2016

Dear Members,

The New Year is already starting to fly by, and this year's Reunion will be upon us sooner than we anticipate even though it is later in the summer in August rather than the customary June. There is a good choice of interesting places to visit on the Friday afternoon so I do hope to see a good number of you there. Hopefully you haven't booked other holidays yet.

We have received a number of interesting contributions this time and thanks go to: Alistair McQuaid for his account of the late Jim 'Buck' O'Riordan's time on the Squadron and the many eventful raids he took part in, to Frank Ockerby for his memories of what it was like to be a wireless operator, and to Steve Hayton for his account of his taxi ride in 'Just Jane' and his moving poem about the Memorial Spire.

I must draw your attention to the Memorial Appeal on page 5 and encourage you to make a donation, however small. It would be appropriate if the site of the 100 Squadron Memorial were to have official war memorial status and protection from future building development as well as the Notice Boards, etc.

Nina Crane

(Editor of The Hornet)

Reunions

The Big One - 100 Years On

The Boss, Andy Wright - our Chairman, has started planning for the 100th Anniversary Reunion. The dates now set in the RAF Leeming Station Diary are **17th/18th March 2017**. So get those dates written into your forward planner.

2016 Reunion

Our Secretary, Sqn Ldr Liz Dawson, and I have had some problems trying to get a date and venue fixed this year, partly because of commitments on the Squadron at Leeming and partly the availability of the reducing number of RAF Officers' Messes! We have eventually managed to book Friday, 5th August 2016 at Wyton; later than usual so I hope this might fit with your other plans.

Alex Wedderburn and I met with the Mess Manager early this month and agreed that a similar format to the most enjoyable reunion we held at Wyton in 2013 would be very suitable. At this early stage, I cannot give you a firm cost per person, but I would hope to set the dinner cost at between £35 and £40.

In 2013, most of those attending spent a very interesting afternoon visiting the Shuttleworth Collection at Old Warden. Since then, the Swiss Garden, which is part of the Shuttleworth Trust, has received a major refurbishment having had a large grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. So that could be a suitable visit for any ladies attending while the lads could take another look at the Collection. It is also many years since we visited Duxford, so that could be contender. There is also a splendid National Trust property, Angelsey Abbey, within reasonable distance.

Can I please ask you to let me (bonnors@gmail.com or 01572 747658) or the Secretary (see front cover) know if you would like to attend the reunion so that we can start making a list and also which venue you might like to visit on the Friday afternoon. A full application form will be included in the May issue of The Hornet.

Best wishes,

Norman Bonnor
President

Linton Stephenson

Following Linton Stephenson's obituary (Hornet 108, February 2015), and the report on the special service held at the Terwolde cemetery on 2 September when he was reunited with his crew (Hornet 111, November 2015), we have now heard from his daughter Lorna that he published a book in 2013 entitled "Memories of a Tail End Charlie; I flew, I fell, I lived" A printed paper copy of this book (45 pages) can be ordered online at:

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/linton-stephenson/memoirs-of-a-tail-end-charlie/paperback/product-21299519.html> (price: £2.13 excl. VAT)

Wartime colour film of a Squadron Lanc!

Colour photographs of wartime Lancasters are rare and genuine wartime colour film footage of them is very rare. Therefore, imagine my amazement when, whilst browsing YouTube, I found a colour movie of a 100 Squadron Lancaster! The film was shot by an American airman, a crew member of the USAAF B-17 Flying Fortress "A Bit-o'-Lace" (famously represented by the markings of on an old Airfix kit). I believe it was filmed at Rattlesden, when several 100 Squadron Lancasters "landed away" at American bases after a raid on Wanne-Eickel on 18th/19th November 1944.

Amongst them was HW-V LM672, Flying Officer Fludder and crew. The footage comprises a walk around of the aircraft on the ground. I was surprised to see that it was equipped with a FN-82 rear turret, packing twin 0.50 calibre Brownings (like the East Kirkby Lanc') in place of the more usual FN-20 or 120 with four 0.303s (like the BBMF Lanc'). The centre Perspex is removed entirely, to improve the gunner's vision, if not his comfort! Previously, I was not aware that any 100 Squadron Lancasters were fitted with this turret. Were any others?

For detail fiends, the film also shows a 1 Group gas detection circle painted on the port side of the nose, the H2S blister beneath the fuselage and needle bladed props. The aircraft does not appear to have any nose art or a bomb log.

You can find the film on YouTube by searching for '447th Bomb group B-17 "A Bit O' Lace" Crew Film' or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BautxhjP2Uk>. The Lancaster footage starts at approximately five minutes in, although the whole film lasting 22 minutes, is worth watching with great scenes of bomb damaged London and formations of B-17s on raids.

News of Members

Brian Hulme Brian has been diagnosed with a serious medical condition requiring surgery. He expects to have the op sometime in the next few weeks but hopes he can still make it to the reunion with Ann. He hasn't missed one for 20 years.

Frank Ockerby Frank is also waiting for an op but it was postponed when he had a fall and fractured his right arm. After a full arm plaster, some infection set in causing much swelling and plaster had to be removed. However, he reports that all is well once again. He sends his best wishes to everyone.

Bob Petersen Bob has been in touch with a long Christmas Letter. He celebrated his 90th birthday last August when all five children came home to Canada to join in the big party. One of his presents was a flight in two-seater, open cockpit Boeing Stearman bi-plane. He also visited the Bomber Command Museum of Canada at Nanton, Alberta and videotaped in the rear gun turret before being interviewed for Calgary Global TV. He had quite a birthday.

Joyce Sisson Joyce has been in touch and hopes to make the reunion again this year.

Bill Chisholm We heard from his daughter Susan that Bill and his wife now live in a retirement community where he is dealing with the slow progression of memory loss. Susan has agreed to take on Bill's role of forwarding The Hornet to our Canadian friends.



The picture shows Bill at the Remembrance Day ceremony held at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum at Mount Hope, just outside Hamilton, Ontario. He was interviewed by Anwar Knight of CTV News. The interview took place in front of the Lancaster. It had just returned from its flight to Toronto, during which it flew over the series of cenotaphs scattered between Hamilton and Toronto

100 Squadron Memorial Appeal

Shortly after Remembrance Sunday, I wrote to a number of people including the Chairman of Holton le Clay Parish Council to ask whether there was any possibility of erecting an information board in the A16 layby to explain why our memorial is there. While the Memorial shows the Squadron badge and inscription:

**Do not attack the Hornets' Nest
100 Squadron
Royal Air Force Waltham Grimsby
December 1942
April 1945
Honour the Brave**

tourists or walkers passing through the layby would have no real understanding of the devotion to duty over two years of dangerous operations that the Memorial represents.

I went on to explain that 100 Squadron lost 594 young men and 92 aircraft on 3,984 sorties flown on 280 separate operational raids. Awards to aircrew members included: two Distinguished Service Orders, a Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, 94 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 85 Distinguished Flying Medals and a Polish equivalent of the Victoria Cross.

A Parish Councillor has sent me a cutting from the Grimsby Telegraph of Tuesday, 2nd February which states that they are requesting official war memorial status for the site. The cutting says that, if so registered, the site would be safeguarded and protected from any building development. They hope to raise £100,000 to erect information boards, extend the paving and install more seating and picnic tables to encourage visitors to stay longer and understand the significance of the site where Lancasters were parked and taxied out to take off on operational sorties. The cutting included photographs of the memorial on a Remembrance Sunday sometime in the recent past, and Flt Lt Truman and his crew and groundcrew in 1945 with Lancaster NG292 showing the nose art of Ruhr Rover.

I'm reluctant to offer a donation from the relatively small sum in our Association funds, as we are saving this to help with the 100th Anniversary reunion next spring. However, can I please make an appeal for individual donations? Please make cheques out to the "100 Squadron Association" and send them to The Treasurer, but ensure that you make it clear that the donation is for "The Memorial Appeal."

Norman Bonnor

Obituary

Jim 'Buck' O'Riordan



The rather late and sad news has reached us from Mascot, New South Wales that Jim 'Buck' O'Riordan died on 16th December 2014; just a few weeks short of his 91st birthday. Jim was the rear gunner with Squadron Leader Hedley F. Scott DFC (OC 'B' Flight) during 1944-45. My late father, Flying Officer James McQuaid DFC was the crews' flight engineer. They were amongst the fortunate ones who came back; but now, with Jim's passing, they are all gone.

Pilot Officer J C O'Riordan RAAF joined Scottie's crew in May 1944, at 1656 HCU, 11 Base at Lindholme, having already done four ops with 576 Squadron, Elsham Wolds. From Lindholme, the Scott Crew went to a Lancaster Finishing School at Hemswell (1 LFS) for a few days before being posting to 100 Squadron at RAF Grimsby (Waltham) on 14th June 1944, where three crews had been lost during the preceding week of operations.

They knew they would not wait long before their own training and effectiveness as a crew would be put to the test. To gain experience of operations, 'Scotty' flew as 'second dickie' on a night operation to Vaires, a marshalling yard outside Paris, on 28th June. The next day, the complete crew did their first op' together in LM585 HW-S; a daylight trip to attack a V1 launch site at Domleger, during which their aircraft sustained damage from flak. Their second op' on the night of 30th June, was to bomb rail yards at Vierzon to prevent a Panzer division from making their way to the battlefield. 100 Squadron lost two of the 19 aircraft despatched, shot down by night fighters.

During July, they completed twelve operations. On the night of 18th/19th July 1944, in Lancaster BIII ND356/G HW-O, whilst attacking the Scholven synthetic oil plant at Gelsenkirchen in the Ruhr, searchlights picked them up flying straight and level on the approach to the target and held them coned for 17 minutes (5 minutes before and 12 minutes after the target); this was recorded in the Squadron ORB and believed to be a record at the time! After diving from 22,000 feet to 3,000 feet with the air speed indicator reading 385 mph, they finally made it home with only 29 holes, having survived a constant flak barrage. 'Scotty' was lucky when the butt of a shell came up through the bomb bay and cut through the canopy. 100 Squadron lost two aircraft that night, both to flak in the target area. There were no survivors.

Whilst returning from Keil on 23rd/24th July 1944, they encountered a Ju88 night fighter. Buck saw him coming in from the starboard beam but hesitated because about ten minutes before the target he had opened fire on a Lancaster going in the opposite direction through the bomber stream. Then he realised it was hostile and called to 'Scotty' to dive starboard. Simultaneously, the attacker opened fire, the stream of cannon tracer shells passing so close over the top of the mid-upper turret that 'Mac' mistook it for return fire.

On 17th September 1944, the Scott crew in Lancaster B111 ND356 HW-O 'Oboe,' attacked German gun emplacements on the Dutch island of Walcheren, in daylight. It was their 23rd op' together. They encountered very heavy and accurate flak over the target. Shrapnel wounded 'Sandy' Sanderson, the bomb aimer, in the arm and face. They took direct hits to the starboard inner nacelle, knocking out the

engine and to the nose, shattering the bomb-aimer's bubble. There were 115 other holes in the fuselage, tail and wings, only three engines, no hydraulics, the bomb doors wouldn't close and they still had a 1,000lb bomb aboard that would not release. On reaching base, they diverted to the emergency landing field at Carnaby, lowered the wheels manually and came in without flaps at 135 mph in failing light. As they landed the bomb fell out onto the runway but thankfully didn't go off.

Returning from Stuttgart on 19th/20th October 1944, the Scott crew encountered a Messerschmitt 109 that came up from underneath directly astern. 'Buck' had been watching him and gave him a couple of bursts as he started his attack. Instantly, he put his nose down then pulled back up, just off to the side and they watched each other for a while. Then, he waggled his wings a couple of times in salute and slowly rolled away. The Crew speculated that perhaps he preferred less alert prey; it was getting late in the War and so maybe he decided not to take unnecessary chances.

The enemy weren't the only danger. 'Scotty' was a great pilot in the air but his landings were notorious. Once at OTU he bounced twice, gave it full bore, stalled at about 80ft, came down with a crash and 'Buck' put his front teeth through his lip (his nickname, in true Australian fashion, derived from his prominent overbite; buck teeth!).

Jim was, by his own admission, "a nervous type" probably a desirable quality in a rear gunner! He completed his tour of 30 missions before the rest of the Scott crew with a trip to Merseburg with Flying Officer Conn and crew on 14th/15th January 1945, in 100 Squadron centenary ND458 HW-A "Able Mabel" on its 97th op'. (Flying Officer Conn and crew, along with a second pilot and bomb-aimer were all killed on their next op', their 24th, to Mannheim aboard PB572 HW-F).

'Buck' took an active interest in 100 Squadron for the rest of his life and in his old comrades and their families. He was also an honorary member of the 460 (Australian) Squadron Association (460 were based at the neighbouring Station at Binbrook, the 13 Base HQ). He came from a large family although he had none of his own. He was a fine feller and is sadly missed.

Alastair McQuaid



Flight Lieutenant Harry Widdup, who has died aged 90, was a flight engineer on a 322-aircraft bombing operation over southern Germany on April 27 1944 when a bomb fell from the flight above on to one of his Lancaster's main petrol tanks, totally draining it. Then a Sergeant with No 100 squadron, Widdup had already coped with several difficulties on his 14 previous sorties. Demonstrating exceptional fearlessness, he coolly manipulated all his controls with great skill to enable the transfer of fuel around the remaining tanks to maintain the aircraft's balance for the return home from the distant target of Friedrichshafen. This earned him an immediate Distinguished Flying Medal, and on completing his tour he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and sent to Canada to ferry new aircraft with No 45 Group to Britain and India.

After spending his 20th birthday flying from Aden to Accra, he trained on Douglas C54 Skymasters to join the elite No 232 squadron, which was charged with establishing a new air link between India and Australia. But, on being stricken with meningitis, he found himself grounded as an instructor with the Indian Air force and put in charge of local labour at the large base at Karachi, where he was the only man to speak Urdu in a Yorkshire accent.

Harry Widdup was born on 10th November 1924 at Barnoldswick, Yorkshire, where his parents worked long hours in the cotton mills. He wore clogs and was largely looked after by his two elder sisters, who would set the family fox terrier on him if he misbehaved. But while he

never remembered owning anything he never felt bored or unhappy. At 12 he became a delivery boy and then worked for a butcher, before learning to drive at 17 to deliver school milk. His boss got a job cleaning up after the Blitz in Coventry, where a banner hung over the cathedral declaring: "It all depends on me, and I depend on God." On his 18th birthday, Harry joined the RAF.

Returning home after the war he attended a technical college before working for Rolls-Royce on the Conway bypass engine. After marrying his wife Addie, who was to bear him a son and a daughter, he was offered a job through an old comrade as a milk grader at Waharoa in New Zealand, from which he retired only in 1999. While thoroughly enjoying it, however, he still considered his greatest time was in Bomber Command. In the 1970s, he started to compile a journal of No 232 squadron's little-known achievements. His researches at the Public Record Office and correspondence with former crew members took up considerable time, which his wife said kept him out of the pubs. They also led him to organise a memorial on the Cocos Islands to a crew of six who were killed on take-off.

When the New Zealand government proposed to take veterans to London for the unveiling of the Bomber Command memorial at Green Park in 2012, Widdup's request to join was refused because he had been born in Britain.

He pointed out that he had served in Bomber Command crews alongside Kiwis, Canadians, Australians and South Africans – then had paid New Zealand taxes for 50 years afterwards.

Flt Lt Harry Widdup, born November 10 1924, died November 2 2015

World War I Airfield saved

An airfield thought to be the last intact World War I airfield in Europe is to be restored thanks to a campaign by volunteers and a £1.5m National Heritage Memorial Fund grant. The requirement for an airfield at Stow Maries originated in the Government response to German Zeppelin airship and Gotha fixed-wing bomber attacks on the British mainland during the First World War. The first aircraft to arrive at the new airfield in September 1916 belonged to 'B' flight, 37 (Home Defence) Squadron, Royal Flying Corps. The Squadron was charged with the eastern aerial defence of the capital. The Headquarters Flight

moved into 'The Grange', Woodham Mortimer. 'A' Flight was despatched to Rochford (now Southend Airport) and 'C' Flight to Gardeners Farm, Goldhanger.

The first commanding officer was Lieutenant Claude Ridley. Educated at St Paul's School, London, he was only 19 years of age but had already seen service with the Royal Flying Corps on the Western Front winning the Military Cross and Distinguished Service Order (DSO) prior to arriving at Stow Maries. Following a period of organisation and training, the first recorded operational flight took place on the night of 23rd/24th May 1917 when Ridley (now promoted to Captain) and Lieutenant G Keddie were ordered aloft in response to a large Zeppelin raid targeting London.

Both day and night patrols are recorded in the following weeks, but it was to be 'C' Flight at Goldhanger that claimed the Squadron's first confirmed destruction of an enemy machine when, during the early hours of 17th June 1917, 2nd Lieutenant L P Watkins was credited with the downing of Zeppelin L48 at Theberton in Suffolk. This was to be the last Zeppelin brought down in Great Britain during the war. One of the airfield's busiest days was 7th July 1917 when aircraft were ordered after a formation of twenty-two Gotha bombers spotted heading to London. Stow Maries pilots engaged the enemy aircraft in a running fight and scored several hits. Fire was returned however, and the ground crews found a number of bullet holes in the returning aircraft.

In the summer of 1917, 'A' Flight was posted from Rochford to Stow Maries effectively doubling the size of the station. At the same time, Claude Ridley departed to form a new Squadron at Rochford.

Day and night patrols continued, but it was the fragility of the aircraft of the period and the inexperience of the young pilots that caused the loss of aircrew rather than enemy action. In June 1917, 2nd Lieutenant Roy Mouritzen from Western Australia was lost in a flying accident, and in July, Captain E Cotterill suffered serious injury when his engine failed. Captain B Quinan crashed at Woodham Walter on a training flight and was severely injured; he died in July 1918. The second half of 1918 saw more losses at the airfield; Captain A Kynoch in an aerial collision at night, Lieutenant E Nicholls in another flying accident on the airfield and finally 2nd Lieutenant C Milburn in an accident near the edge of the field. Lieutenant Nicholls and 2nd Lieutenants Mouritzen and Milburn

are buried in the churchyard of St Mary and St Margaret, Stow Maries, as is Stow's first commanding officer, Claude Ridley who died as a Wing Commander during the second World War, from natural causes.

Building continued and the airfield took on the familiar form it still holds today. The Headquarters Flight moved in from Woodham Mortimer, and Stow Maries became a very busy place. An RAF survey at this time recorded 219 personnel and 16 aircraft. 'C' Flight moved to Stow Maries from Goldhanger in February 1919 bringing the total staffing levels to around 300 personnel and 24 aircraft, the first time the whole Squadron had been located at one Station. However, it signalled the end for the Essex airfield, and the following month the Squadron moved to Biggin Hill in Kent, leaving the site empty. The airfield was closed in 1919 and the following years saw the buildings used for both agriculture and accommodation, until 2009, when the site was rediscovered by a group of enthusiasts. Of the 250 airfields built during World War I, Stow Maries is the only one to have remained in near-perfect condition of the ten that still exist. The site had been in danger of being sold for redevelopment, but was bought with backing from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Essex County Council, Maldon District Council and English Heritage. There are more than twenty original Grade II listed Royal Flying Corps operations buildings, including the officers' mess, other ranks' mess, blacksmith's, ambulance station and morgue. They are now to be the subject of a sympathetic restoration project to restore the airfield to its former glory.

The Stow Maries Great War Airfield Trust plans to restore the airfield to its wartime condition and open a museum commemorating the men who flew here. It will also host workshops, teaching the old skills of aircraft construction and repair.



A Wireless Op's War

By Frank Ockerby

It is 1400 hours on the 10th April 1945. I am sitting in the Sergeants' Mess at Elsham Wolds. I got to bed at 0300 hours after a trip to Kiel; the target, the U-boat pens. Unknown to me at the time the pocket battleship Admiral Scheer was hit and lay capsized in one of the dockyard basins. The Admiral Scheer was the sister ship to the Admiral Graf Spee which had been scuttled on the River Plate, Uruguay in South America.

I had been preparing for a night out in Scunthorpe and did not need my dear friend and navigator, Arthur, to direct me to my "target for tonight". However, the words "Ock, we're on the battle order for tonight" came through instead. "Damn!" I replied, or words to that effect!

At 1500 hours, I am in the main briefing room waiting for the curtain to be removed from the board to reveal the target. I have already had a word with the ground crew and know that we have full tanks of petrol, some 2,100 gallons; therefore, a long trip was planned at 0.9 to 1.1 miles per gallon dependent on how good the flight engineer is. Sure enough, we're being sent to Plauen on the Czech border, not far from Dresden. I collect my log for the trip, colours of the day and parachute handed over with the usual remark: "Don't bother to bring it back if it doesn't work."

At 1640 hours, I am airborne in Lancaster "Q" Queenie and immediately tune my receiver to No 1 Group control frequency at Bawtry. At 1700 hours I receive their first broadcast xB3 followed by a code letter to prove that I was in fact listening, all to be recorded in my flight log. I will receive a broadcast every 30 minutes. It could well be: "return to base, ops aborted". In that case, it will be safe to cross the coastal defences. If, however, we have say, engine trouble and have to abort and return early and not with the main force, I would switch on the auto transmitter: IFF (Identify Friend not Foe). Hopefully we would then not receive friendly shells from coastal defences.

We are now through the window curtain (metallic strips dropped by aircraft flying along the enemy coast to confuse the German radar operators) so they now know where our main force of some 400 planes is located. It is too late for them to bring their fighter aircraft from

Norway or France.

I have now switched on my fishpond radar screen scanning below the aircraft. I can see several small blips travelling at our speed. These represent other bombers. It could well be that a smaller blip travelling faster than the others, representing an enemy fighter, comes onto screen – and seems to be heading for us. I press the button to show the distance at every 100 yards. The small blip is now 500 yards below us on the port side: "W/Op to Pilot. Corkscrew port Go!" The aircraft dives to port and then climbs to starboard, repeated several times. The rear gunner reports that the tracer bullets have stopped indicating that he's missed us and going on elsewhere. There are plenty of other aircraft to target.

By now I have also tuned into a German radio frequency. I back tune my transmitter to this frequency so that as soon as messages are being sent to their fighter aircraft I depress my Morse key and jam their transmissions; we now total some 400 transmitters and receivers over German cities.

We proceed on our way. It is now 2030 hours, and I receive a Group broadcast, "270-30" which is the bombing wind i.e. 270 degrees at 30 mph. I inform the bomb aimer who feeds this information into his bomb sights. Ten minutes later I am due for another longest minute or so of my life: flying straight and level with plenty of ack ack shells from below, the bomb aimer has taken over: "left, left, steady, right a touch, steady, steady, bombs away!" I know this already as the aircraft leaps, having just shed some 5-6 tonnes of high explosive and incendiary bombs. We continue straight and level and record our aiming point, all to prove that we did come to Plauen and not bombed the North Sea.

We now set a course for the return trip, again plenty of ack ack fire from below. Bang! Clang! "Ah! That was a near miss!" – or words to that effect! We continue to dodge the ack ack and the fighters and are presently over the coast and then the North Sea. I now tune my receiver and transmitter to a low wave frequency which is the one also used by ground operators in the UK, one in the north (N), one in the midlands (M) and one in the south (S) of the country. In England "N" gets a bearing on us of say 130°, "M" a bearing of 90° and "S" a bearing of 45°. Where the readings cross indicates our position: important as it could still be that we are attacked and will have to ditch

in the North Sea.

In my mind I rehearse the drill: I break radio silence, SOS HW (Squadron letters) Q. I then clamp the key for some six seconds. Air sea rescue will have been alerted and will be on their way to us as the pilot has successfully landed the aircraft on the sea. I have managed to climb through the astrodome and jump onto the wing, released the rubber dingy in which we now all wait with me rotating the handle of a small transmitter to give our position for rescue. However, rehearsal is all that is required tonight, as in fact, we continue to travel on our way.

What actually happens on this night is that the navigator reports that his equipment is unserviceable, and I have to break radio silence to control at Elsham Wolds requesting a QDM, a magnetic bearing, on which to fly. This I receive and inform the pilot. For the next hour or so I continue to receive bearings from Elsham.

At 0110 hours, we see the lights of the runway and gratefully land at the airfield: 8 hours and 40 minutes since take off. Our WAAF driver, Gladys, is waiting with the crew bus and we are then questioned by the Intelligence Officer on tonight's raid whilst sipping a measure of rum with some raisins. I have a meal and then slip into bed around 0200 hours. Last thoughts: "Scunthorpe tonight!".



The Crew in training

Back Row: Colin Gowans - Air Gunner, Bob Mellows - Bomb Aimer, Jim Wallace - Air Gunner.

Front Row: Frank Ockerby - Wireless Op, Eric Richard - Pilot, Arthur Rose - Navigator.

They were later joined by Arthur Jackson - Flight Engineer.

Just Jane – The Taxi Run

by Steve Hayton

Many of you will have heard of or even visited the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirkby near Spilsby, the main attraction being a MKVII Lancaster Bomber NX611 named after the wartime cartoon pin-up, 'Just Jane'. My brother and I were among those lucky enough to experience a taxi ride around the old airfield just recently and what follows is my appreciation of the day.

I began the day's adventure thinking about my uncle who, at the age of 20, was lost without trace on a raid to Berlin as a Lancaster rear gunner, and indeed I took with me his photo so he could be part of my experience in some obscure way.

The lack of room to manoeuvre inside the aircraft brought it home to me how difficult their task was and by the end of the afternoon my respect for the men and boys of RAF Bomber Command is boundless.

Arriving at the NAAFI, where we booked in for our experience, we discover we are included on the first of two taxi runs but beforehand we must attend an important briefing in a nearby Nissan hut.

Firstly, Philip Panton, co-owner of Just Jane, welcomes us and gives us a potted history of the airfield and its wartime story; indeed more than 800 men were lost from this base alone. There is a safety briefing basically telling us to be careful when making our way along the aircraft and - in particular - a warning about not banging our heads. Of course I did bang my head, difficult not to and those of you who have been inside a Lancaster will identify with this.

Andrew Panton will 'pilot' the aircraft today and takes us through what will happen from engine start up to the end of the run. Following this, we are given an animated appreciation about Bomber Command from Liz Dodd who makes us laugh as we learn more about the experience we will have; she will be our guide inside the aircraft. At last it is time to climb aboard 'Just Jane' and get ready for the taxi run!

My first ambition is to climb into the rear turret position, quite difficult to get into, and once there I wonder how I could have sat there in full flying gear for up to eight hours, exposed to the elements and a chasing enemy. I have such pride in my uncle that he did this. I take up my position for the ride in the mid upper turret and the engines are started up one by one until we begin to roll and that is when I have to

admit I had more than a tear or two in my eyes.

As we rolled past the control tower, I thought about the late Katie Reid whom we met in 2012. She had been a WAAF in flying control at Waltham and was likely on duty the night that my uncle and his crew left for the final time. She and her colleagues would witness the airmen preparing to depart, kicking their heels etc., looking nervous. She said she remembered thinking at the time, "Thank God their mothers are not here to see this". She or one of the others would write a time of return later on the ops board or simply the word "missing".

The aircraft trundles off the tarmac apron onto the grass airfield and we begin our journey. Several runs up and down the airfield, and I wish just for a moment we could take off and fly around instead! It is pretty impossible to take photos due to the bumpiness and vibration. I trust my brother up the front of the aircraft is having a better opportunity as he films the experience. So many times we have visited over the past few years and seen many a taxi run, never imagining that we would get our chance one day but here we are, it is almost surreal. As mentioned earlier, the lack of space inside is the most defining aspect of the experience but what a fantastic one it is. We roll back to our starting position and stop, then having the chance to look around the parts of the aircraft we have not yet seen.

As I make my way forward, climbing and stretching and bowing my head, I see the positions that would have been occupied by the wireless operator and navigator. I clamber over the main spar and reach the pilot's position and I get to sit in his seat and operate the controls. I look out of the pilot's window and have my photo taken; am I really doing this?

Climbing down into the bomb aimer's position below the pilot is next and I kneel on a soft cushioned area and peer out of the Perspex dome at the front of the aircraft, imagining what it would have been like to lie there in wartime waiting for the target to appear, marked by coloured flares dropped as target indicators by the Pathfinder force. In short, if the aircraft was on fire and spinning out of control, how would you get out? There are so many places where you have to climb it would make escape almost impossible.

What a great experience this was, especially to sit in the rear turret as my ill-fated uncle had done all those years ago. Prouder than I was an hour ago? Definitely.

MEMORIAL SPIRE

by Steve Hayton

Commemorate and educate
Reach a little higher
Two hands reaching up to heaven
Memorial spire.

Discover and remember
This is no funeral pyre
Mark this place with all their names
Memorial spire.

To some it's all too late
But better late than never
Here to stand for generations
In every kind of weather.

Swear I heard them moments ago
Above a heavenly choir
Distant Merlin engines
Memorial spire.

Remember to educate
Educate and remember
Nineteen hundred and forty three
Friday the third of September.



The BBMF Lancaster over The Memorial Spire on 2nd October 2015

The Handley Page Bombers of WWI

by Rob Langham

At the outbreak of the First World War, Frederick Handley Page, head of Handley Page Limited of Cricklewood, North London, offered the services of his company to the War Office and the Admiralty, as did many other aviation firms. Prior to the war Handley Page had manufactured a number of aircraft to its own designs, including the Handley Page Type F, a two-seat monoplane, which was entered into the Military Flying Competition run by the War Office to find a suitable aircraft for the Royal Flying Corps but was damaged on its second flight and forced to withdraw. There was also the Handley Page Type H, which was a promising potential design for a two-seat biplane for use as a scout aircraft by the Naval Wing of the Royal Flying Corps until it was destroyed in a fatal accident.

The War Office declined Handley Page's offer – unsurprising following its experience in 1913, when Handley Page had been awarded a contract to build five BE2 aircraft which were designed and also built by the Royal Aircraft Factory at Farnborough. Handley Page had been hoping for a larger contract, but the results of this small contract did nothing to improve the chance of getting one – the specification for the BE2 included a specific type of high tensile steel, which was of high cost for a relatively small amount which the ever-frugal Handley Page was reluctant to pay. As well as this, Handley Page rather cheekily informed the War Office that he would not accept further contracts unless they were significantly larger! Of the five BE2's contracted with Handley Page, two were built in 1913 and the third delayed until 1914 – the frustrated War Office cancelled the final two. However grim they may have looked at the outbreak of war, Handley Page's fortunes would soon change, thanks to a highly enigmatic RNAS Officer.

Commander Charles Rumney Samson of Eastchurch Squadron, Royal Naval Air Service, was involved in the Siege of Antwerp in 1914, which included the use of not just RNAS aircraft but also the fleet of armoured cars his unit had built, originally from Officers own private motor cars and later purpose built. Amongst other suggestions, he requested a large aeroplane capable of aerial bombardment of the enemy forces – supposedly requesting a 'bloody paralysers' of an aeroplane. Winston Churchill, ever keen for new ideas, leapt on the idea and the Admiralty drew up a specification for a proposed design. Handley Page soon entered talks with the Admiralty, drawing on their experience of the

Handley Page Type L, still under construction at the outbreak of war, which was a design for a twin-engine biplane to cross the Atlantic ocean. Four prototypes for an aircraft with a crew of two and capable of carrying six 100lb bombs and a speed of at least seventy-five miles per hour were ordered in February 1915. The aeroplane that emerged from Handley Page's Kingsbury factory in North London on the night of December 9, 1915 was unlike anything seen in Britain before. The large boxy fuselage began with an enclosed, glazed cockpit – very unusual for the time – as well as armour plating for the crew, the pilot being sat on a large wicker chair centrally in the fuselage with control wheel in front of him, a roof hatch behind and above him for the crew member to use the sole defensive armament, a Lee Enfield service rifle. The upper wing had a span of one hundred feet – hence the name of the aircraft, the Handley Page O/100 – with a shorter span of the lower wing. The entire aircraft has covered in undyed off-white linen. Powering the aircraft were Rolls Royce Eagle II 250hp engines, in nacelles mounted between the two wings. Outboard of the engines, the wings were jointed near the trailing edge, folding backwards to allow the aircraft to fit in the small (in comparison) hangars in use at the time. The bomb bay within the fuselage could carry sixteen 100lb or 112lb bombs, hung vertically by a lug on the nose on four racks of four. Originally small bomb bay doors were fitted for each individual cell, but these later proved difficult to maintain, and a simpler method of just pasting over the holes with paper once bombs were fitted was soon used instead.

The aircraft was moved by men of the Royal Navy, with Frederick Handley Page there to oversee the move. Despite prior planning there were still plenty of obstacles, undercarriage tyres bursting several times, street lamps having to be removed and even, on occasion, Mr Handley Page himself climbing up trees in local resident's front gardens to cut off any branches that were in the way. The journey to Hendon aerodrome took five hours, and then a further week was spent adjusting the rigging and fine tuning the engines before the first flight was undertaken on the afternoon of December 17, 1915. The glazed nose of the prototype was unpopular with pilots, and the second prototype was finished with a new design – the pilot was now in the open with a small aero screen like on other aircraft in front of him, and a longer nose in front to compensate for the removal of the armour plating and weight of the glazed cockpit. The extended nose provided a perfect opportunity to fit a revolving Scarff ring position for one or two Lewis machine guns. As well as the change of the nose, other

improvements and necessary changes were made to the design. A crew position to the rear of the bomb bay was also provided, with two pillar mountings for one Lewis gun each to cover the top sides of the aircraft, and a mounting for a Lewis gun below to cover the undersides and rear. In practice, this position seems mainly to have been used for firing at targets of opportunity on the ground, particularly searchlights, and sometimes a stock of 20lb Cooper bombs kept handy to be thrown out at will! With a defensive armament of five (or six, depending if the additional Lewis was fitted on the Scarff ring on the nose) Lewis guns, the Handley Page was capable of looking after itself if it came under attack from an enemy aircraft, although this was a rare occurrence.

The Rolls Royce Eagle II engines were replaced by the Eagle III giving an extra 70hp each, and the nacelle was re-designed to make it more streamlined. Supply of Rolls Royce Eagle engines was an issue that would hamper Handley Page production for the rest of the war – alternative engines were trialled but none entered widespread service.

The first Handley Page O/100's flew over to France in November 1916, but embarrassingly before they had taken part in operations, the Germans already acquired one – HP 1463 got lost crossing the Channel and mistakenly landed twelve miles behind enemy lines on January 1, 1917. Although unfortunate, particularly for the crew, it did mean the new design did not have to be as heavily censored in the press, who were more than keen to publicise the use of the Handley Pages, particularly during the devastating Gotha bomber raids on London from mid-1917 onwards. It was also frequently (but incorrectly) claimed that the Gotha was a copy of the Handley Page.

As a Royal Naval Air Service aircraft, understandably it was put to use attacking naval targets. The first Handley Page O/100's to see service were part of No 3 Wing at Luxeuil, deep in France, attacking railways but also steelworks which were producing material for U-boats which were causing heavy losses to the merchant fleet at the time. No 3 Wing was disbanded on April 1, 1917 and the two Handley Pages with the unit joined 7 Squadron at Coudekerque, near Dunkirk. Despite the size and relative slowness both in speed and manoeuvrability compared to the smaller single engine aircraft which operated at daytime – and therefore their increased vulnerability despite having an impressive defensive armament - 7 Squadron was also using their Handley Pages on daylight reconnaissance along the Belgian coastline. This did not last long – on April 26, four Handley Pages reported dropping bombs on German destroyers off Ostend, but one was damaged by a German seaplane, forcing it to ditch in the North Sea. One of the two FBA flying

boats attempting to rescue the crew were shot down, and following this, daytime operations for Handley Pages were stopped. Targets now mainly focussed on German naval bases along the coast – U-boat bases and harbours/docks, destroyer/torpedo boat bases and seaplane bases, and visited under the cloak of darkness. The crews gained experience, and more aircraft arrived, eventually setting up a second squadron, 7 (N) Squadron which later became 14 Squadron. A third Handley Page squadron was set up, A Squadron (later 16 Squadron) which operated the Handley Pages as part of 41st Wing, Royal Flying Corps together with 100 Squadron and their FE2b night bombers and 55 Squadron with the Airco DH4 day bombers – the two RFC squadrons being the most experienced in their field. 16 Squadron suffered from lack of experienced crew and getting spares, but proved themselves as 1917 ended and 1918 began. Together with the other two bomber squadrons, 16 Squadron targeted industrial targets as well as the enemy's railway infrastructure, taking the fight to Germany in response to the German bombers over London.

The Handley Pages had proved themselves potent night bombers, and improvements were being made on the original design. The new Rolls Royce Eagle VIII engine gave 375hp and gave a much improved performance over the earlier types. The Eagle VIII and its smaller engine nacelle was the main visible difference between the O/100 and the new O/400 which entered production in early 1918. There were other differences too, including additional fuel tanks above the bomb bay. Late production Handley Page O/100's had a higher nose position to allow for mounting of the Davis shell gun, a six pounder recoilless rifle that was fitted on some aircraft for use as an aerial artillery piece. Although used in action, it was not found worth the effort in mounting it and carrying the ammunition for it, and although it didn't enter service the higher gun position stayed on early production O/400's which was unpopular with the crews as it made night landing – difficult enough already – even harder owing to the high nose obscuring vision. Some Handley Pages had the forward gun positions modified in the field to the lower position.

The use of Handley Pages was not solely on the Western Front. In 1917, it was decided to use a Handley Page O/100 to do what the Royal Navy couldn't do in 1915 (leading to the disastrous Gallipoli campaign) – attack Constantinople. Constantinople had already been bombed in April 1916 by an RNAS Royal Aircraft Factory BE2c by Flight Commander Savory, who also piloted the O/100, 3124, on this mission, starting in Britain and flying via France, Italy and Salonika before

arriving at RNAS Mudros. The mission itself succeeded in hitting the Turkish capital on July 7, 1917– although the main target, the formerly-German and now Turkish owned battlecruiser the SMS Goeben (by then known as the Yavuz Sultan Selim) did not appear to be hit and the damage caused was nothing major, it was a fantastic propaganda coup, especially for Frederick Handley Page. 3124 remained at Mudros and undertook a number of bombing sorties before being shot down off the Gallipoli peninsula whilst attempting a second raid on Constantinople, the crew, including John Alcock of future Transatlantic Vickers Vimy fame, being taken prisoner.

Seeing how successful the Handley Page O/100 was, the Royal Flying Corps started to request them too. 97 Squadron and 115 Squadron Royal Flying Corps were set up in late 1917 but did not receive their Handley Pages until after the formation of the Royal Air Force in 1918. By the start of 1918, despite the first Handley Page having arrived in France over a year before, there were still only three operational units – 7 Squadron and 14 Squadron RNAS in Northern France focussing on naval targets, and 16 Squadron RNAS down in the mud at Ochey with 41st Wing (soon to become VIII Brigade in February and later joined by two DH9 squadrons). 15 Squadron RNAS was formed in March 1915 at Coudekerque alongside 7 and 14, but after the formation of the RAF on April 1, 1918, re-numbered 207 and 215 returned to Britain for a short while to re-equip with the Handley Page O/400.

June 6, 1918 saw the creation of Independent Force, RAF – Trenchard's strategic bombing force that aimed to deal heavy blows on German industry with the expected influx of day and night bombers, especially the Handley Page O/400's. In the North of France, the ex-RNAS squadrons were still targeting the U-boat pens (unsuccessfully, as apart from only temporary disruptions to U-boat operations from damaging canal lock gates, it appears there was only one U-boat 'kill' from the day and night campaign against their Belgian bases – the concrete U-boat pens did their job, and only one U-boat, already damaged whilst at sea, had its damage exacerbated during a raid and was left there for the allies to find when the Germans withdrew.) As well as strategic targets aiding the Army such as railway junctions, the Independent Force squadrons raided German industrial targets but again also targeted railways, and enemy aerodromes were frequently visited by all Handley Page squadrons through to the end of the war.

To be continued in the next issue.

ASSOCIATION MEMORABILIA

Squadron Association Ties, blue and maroon	£12.50
Blazer Badges (specify King's or Queen's crown)	£12.50
"The Hornets Nest" History of 100 Squadron	£12.50
Supplement to above	£4.50
"Aircraft of 100 Squadron" Montage	£5.50
DVD "100 at 90"	£5.00

Postage and Packaging is included in all of the above. Please make cheques payable to "100 Squadron Association". To order any of the above Association Memorabilia, please contact the Treasurer.

100 SQUADRON MEMORABILIA

Cloth 100 Squadron crest badge	£5.00
Cloth skull and bones badge	£3.00
100 Squadron crest zap	£1.00
Skull and bones zap	£1.00
100 Squadron print (blank)	£5.00
95th Anniversary Squadron print (signed)	£10.00
100 Squadron shield (wooden)	£33.00
Framed embroidered crest	£33.00
Mini hip flask	£5.00
Skull and bones baseball cap	£7.00
100 Squadron T-shirt Skull or Hawk (state size)	£10.00
100 Squadron polo shirt (state size)	£14.00
(Sizes of T-shirts and Polo shirts are S, M, L, XL and XXL)	
100 Squadron cummerbund (blue-yellow check - other side Skull and Bones white on black) (state waist size)	£33.00
100 Squadron bow tie (blue-yellow check) S, M, L	£15.00
100 Squadron engraved tankard	Price on application

Please make cheques payable to 100 Sqn Aircrew Fund. To order any of the 100 Squadron Memorabilia, please contact the Secretary.