



# The Hornet

The Newsletter of  
100 Squadron Association

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## Newsletter 57 - May 2002

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to start by thanking everyone who phoned, wrote or e-mailed me with comments about the last newsletter; bouquets or brickbats! They have all been noted. We have had so many contributions: please keep them coming as they will all be used (if the censor agrees!) My wife and I got very excited when we sat on the floor surrounded by envelopes ready to post, and we planned the ones we would deliver personally to save on postage - to Spain, South of France, Canada, Australia etc..... or we could just pop down the road to Ferndown here in Dorset!

We hope to meet up with as many of you as possible at the Reunion next month. (details in Newsletter 56) If you haven't sent your form to Alex there is still time to do so. Also if anyone fancies a weekend in Holland we have details of the Dedication of the Crew Memorial to be held in Grashoek on 15th June. We are all invited. Contact Arthur White about this and also about the "Waltham Extension" the day after the Reunion.

### An apology

My dear wife is house trained but not office trained. However, following the last newsletter, Stamper has given her a lesson in

keyboard terminology. She now knows what "Underscore" means, and so here is Stamper's correct e-mail address:

stamper\_m@yahoo.com

## **Can you help?**

I have received the following letter from Alastair McQuaid:

Recently Ian Reid showed me a photo of Lancaster LM739 HW-Z2 "Grog's the Shot" flown amongst others by Sqn Ldr Scott and crew, including my father Fg Off James McQuaid DFC, flight engineer. The photo showed the aircraft with vertical tail surfaces painted in a light colour. Dad recalled that on the Berchtesgaden raid on Hitler's Eagles Nest and accompanying SS barracks, flown from Elsham Wolds on April 25th 1945, they had been a lead aircraft and had painted yellow recognition markings to aid daylight formation keeping.

In the public record office I found a copy of the Group Form B Operational orders for the raid (PRO AIR 25/17.) This specified details of fuel load and bomb load. Time on target was to be 09.00 hrs for 5 Group aircraft and 09.45 for 1 Group. Recognition markings as follows:

Fins, rudders and wingtips of the Group leaders are to be painted yellow. No other aircraft is to be painted. As an additional means of I.D. the Group leaders will fire yellow verey cartridges and trail yellow pyrotechnic stars from the rear turret at 6 specified positions. Navigators from 13 Base in the leading vics should be the best available. Marking was to be undertaken by Oboe Mosquitoes.

The Elsham Wolds Op. Record Book Form 540 monthly summaries for April '45 (PRO AIR 28/255) contains a summary by the station OC which states that the 6 leaders of the attack were provided by 100 Squadron. This would indicate that 6 100 Sqn Lancasters were painted with the special recognition markings. The 100 Sqn ORB (PRO AIR 27/798) identifies that 16 100 Sqn Lancs were detailed for this attack with 15 bombing and 1 abort. Aircraft and crews were listed as:

LM739	Z2	S/L Scott	NG292	R2	F/S Darmody
LM688	X2	F/O Austin	NF978	Q2	F/O McTavish
LL952	W2	F/L Topliss	LM584	F2	W/O Rayner
ND458	A2	F/L Playford	NG328	G2	F/O Whyler
ME497	E2	F/L Johnson	LM346	C2	F/O Burrell
NN784	L2	F/L Butler	ND356	O2	F/L Brown

PB532 S2 F/L Lloyd-Davies RE118 N2 F/O Forbes  
RA592 M2 F/O Delloway LM672 K2 F/S Bullock (aborted)

Does anyone from these air or ground crews recall their aircraft bearing these recognition markings on the Berchtesgaden raid? If so, please contact me or Ian Reid (who is researching another book ) via the Editor. Incidentally, on page 113 of Garbutt and Goulding's book Lancaster at War 2 is a picture of a 166 Sqn Lancaster bearing the same markings, also specified for a raid on Nordhausen on 3rd April 1945.

Hope this jogs some memories.

### **Have you ever thought.**

Nothing is as embarrassing as watching someone do something that you said could not be done.

Middle age is when the lifetime guarantee runs out.

If you want an easy life, don't buy anything with a handle.

Considerate husbands rarely speak to their wives lest they interrupt them.

For a lady, the most popular labour-saving device is still a husband with money.

Your O.G. philosopher.

### **Change of address**

Mrs G Overmeen  
Waterhoendreef 24  
7391 ED Twello  
Holland

# Hazardous Materials - data sheet analysis

Element: Woman

Symbol: Wo

Discoverer: Adam.

Atomic mass: accepted as 55kg, but can vary from 45kg to 225kg.

Occurrence: found in large quantities in urban areas with trace elements in outlying regions. ele-

Physical properties:

1. Surface normally covered with powder and paint
2. Boils at absolutely nothing, freezes for no reason
3. Melts if given special treatment
4. Bitter if used incorrectly
5. Yields to pressure if expertly applied

Chemical properties:

1. Affinity to precious stones and metals
2. Absorbs great quantities of expensive substances
3. Explodes spontaneously without reason or warning
4. Greatly increased activity when saturated with alcohol

Common use:

1. Highly ornamental
2. A great aid to relaxation
3. Can be an effective cleaning agent

Tests:

1. Pure specimens turn pink when found in their natural state
2. Turns green when placed alongside a superior specimen

Hazards:

1. Highly dangerous except in experienced hands
2. Illegal to possess more than one, although several can be maintained at different locations as long as specimens do not come into direct contact with each other

From someone's Internet explorations.

# Obituaries

## Flt Lt A Johnson BEM

In March we received word that A Johnson died early in February in his 95th year. After his retirement from the RAF he went on to 24 years in the Civil Service and joined the ROC. Together with Jimmy Holmes and Rolie Hardy, he was instrumental in the erection of the Squadron Memorial at Waltham. The Association has received a donation of £25.00 from his widow Muriel, and we extend our sympathy and our thanks to her.

## H.G. "Paddy" Topliss

From Bill Chisholm we have heard that Paddy Topliss of Vancouver died in his sleep in March aged 82. Paddy was a popular skipper at Waltham in '44. We hear that he had been planning a skiing holiday shortly before his death. Our condolences to his family.

## Wg Cdr John Whitlock OBE, DFC, RAF (Ret'd)

John died on 12th March. He was a WW2 Lancaster navigator and was a keen supporter of the Association. He met and married Muriel during his time at RAF Waltham. Alex attended his funeral. At precisely 1500hrs two 100 Squadron Hawks flew over the crematorium while mourners stood outside in the sunshine. A message of sympathy has been passed to his widow Mue and the family, and at their request a donation has been sent to the NSPCC.

## Mrs Miriam Crowley-Smith

Miriam, widow of Alistair Crowley-Smith died on 31st March. A letter of sympathy has been sent to her daughter

# Venlo

Research into the loss of ED973 featured in the last two newsletters, continues to bring home the true picture of the hazards facing the crews of Bomber Command. The latest concerns two books, as yet not translated from the Dutch, which details the history of the German night fighter base at Venlo in S.E. Holland. Currently being studied by a researcher, these books will be donated to Squadron archives in due course.

However, a cursory look at the appendix reveals a detailed list of every operation from Venlo with the names of the pilots and their list of "kills". In the course of WW2, a total of 543 RAF bombers were shot down by fighters from this base alone. Venlo guarded the approaches to the Ruhr including such regular targets as Dusseldorf, Duisburg, Dortmund, Essen and Cologne. The book records the sorties of every Luftwaffe pilot and it is a very sobering thought to discover that several of them are credited with shooting down four or more of our aircraft in one night!!!!

In view of this, it does seem strange that no concerted effort was made to destroy this base till 15th August 1944 when Venlo, along with other bases in Holland and Belgium, was attacked in force, followed by another large force on 3rd September. These attacks, in conjunction with the USAAF, were made in preparation for the renewed Allied air defensive against Germany. Earlier attacks, listed by Middlebrook and Everitt (Bomber Command War Diaries) were: 25th Jan 1942 (Army Co-operation Blenheims); 21st July 1942 (8 Blenheim intruders to Venlo and two other airfields); 28th Jan 1944 (18 Mosquitoes to Venlo and two other airfields); 22nd Aug 1944 (8 Mosquitoes to Venlo and two other targets) and 28th Aug 1944 (3 Mosquitoes).

Venlo was operational until the end of the war.

Remember that we have been invited to the dedication of the Memorial at Grashoek on June 15th. See Newsletter 56 and see p.13 this issue Ed.

## **Enclosure**

With this newsletter there may be enclosed an enrolment form for some of you to complete. Some of the original forms have been misplaced in the past changeover to Alex and, in order to bring the register up to date, would you please take the time to fill it in and send it to Stamper at 32 Moorwoods Avenue, Chapeltown, Nr Sheffield, South Yorks so that the register update can be completed. This has been a mammoth task, but it will make it possible to say who was on the squadron at any one time, at what age, flew a particular type of aircraft as well as many other details.

Stamper would be obliged if you would let him have them ASAP as he wishes to finish the task that he started by writing the computer program for the register last September.

Don't worry if there is no form; this means that Stamper already has your details.

### **From our Correspondents**

Dorothea (known as Dorothy or Dot) Thurley (nee Gebler) would like to contact the "three Jeans" in Flying Control Waltham 1942/44 - Jean Lyle, Jean Morton and Jean? Also Joan Cawdle and Joyce Pelt in Met. section. You can contact Dorothea at: 3 Coastguard Cottages, Drummore, Stranraer. DG9 9QX. Tel: 01776 840589.

Tony Davey writes from Aix-les-Bains in France:

He is reminding us that this year marks the 60th anniversary of the Halifax crash near Montcony, and the people of the village are putting on something special. If any members happen to be in the area around Sunday 27th October they would be most welcome. Tony unreservedly recommends Aix-les Bains as a holiday destination. If any one would like to know more, just contact Tony.

Walter Nobes (who among other things painted the name on "Jug and Bottle") writes:

From Newsletter 55, I note the piece on blowing the whistles on the way to the Mess for briefing. Maybe I can enlarge on the "ritual".

Having had our bacon and eggs "Ops meal", we gathered in the Mess to wait for transport to the flights. It was a MUST that we play two records before we left: MacNamara's Band and "Cuddle up a little closer". (This was confirmed by C.O.P. Smith in Vancouver, another Canadian skipper in "A" Flight.) The driver would have a "conniption" which is slang for panic or hysteria, while he was waiting for us as he was responsible for getting us to briefing on time.

Once on our way, we all blew our whistles going through the gates at the guard room and then again as we passed the C.O.'s office. It was a great way to break the tension before going on an Op. The new crews must have thought we were nuts!

Looking back, I can only say we had to young and nervy to take that Lancaster with an all up weight of 65,000 to 70,000 lbs down the runway and off into the night knowing we might never come back.

No wonder they gave us a shot of rum when we did get back! We usually got it from the Padre!

## **Airlife Publishing Ltd**

Alex received a letter back in September 2001 about a second edition of Harry Holmes' book Avro Lancaster - the Definitive Record. This book is available to Association members at a special price of £30.00 with free post and packing if you mention the Assoc. when ordering.

### **New Member**

Mr Neil Oakshot  
25 Yew Tree Lane  
Wednesbury  
West Midlands  
WS10 0BL





Neil was a member of 100 Sqn in 1986, and has letters and photos relating to the Squadron's history, mainly from the Wilderbeest era. These are destined for the Squadron archives.

# Operation Grapple

The following story unfolded as Ted Brewin researched Sqn Ldr "Bill" Bailey's role in the British "H" bomb tests in the 50's. As mentioned in "The Hornets' Nest", 100 Squadron played a supporting role as Canberra detachments made high level Met flights, taking air samples and flying them back to the U.K. and so were not directly involved in the tests themselves. We feel that members might be interested in this short version of events.

The tests were carried out at Christmas Island in the Pacific and Malden Island. For testing weapons of the yield involved in "Operation Grapple" the Australian proving grounds could not be used.

The Grapple series of tests employed detachments of 49 Squadron Valiants and crews from Wittering where they were based alongside 100 Squadron. A detachment of Valiants arrived at Christmas Island in early March 1957 together with massive logistical support. Practice bombing runs were made to exercise the support services, and practice weapons were released to ensure accuracy. This programme continued till early May.

Wg Cdr K Hubbard, OC 49 Squadron, selected the crews to be involved in the first three live thermonuclear drops around Malden Island.

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Wg Cdr K Hubbard and crew<br>Sqn Ldr B Millett and crew | Valiant XD 818<br>Grandstand Aircraft XD 823 |
| 2 | Sqn Ldr D Roberts and crew<br>Sqn Ldr A Steele and crew | Valiant XD 822<br>Grandstand Aircraft XD 823 |
| 3 | Sqn Ldr A Steele and crew<br>Sqn Ldr B Millett and crew | Valiant XD 823<br>Grandstand Aircraft XD 824 |

The Grandstand Aircraft crew acted as observer and flew 2.000 ft below and approx. one mile behind the live weapon carrier, starting its escape manoeuvre 11 seconds before weapon release. The three live drops proceeded as planned on 15th and 31st May 1957 and 19th June. A fourth drop was cancelled due to the success of the programme thus far and the detachment returned to Wittering.

The three crews were awarded AFCs in the Queens Birthday Honours of 1957.

In September, 49 Squadron was again ordered to participate in "Grapple X" in the Christmas Island area. This test aimed to detonate a weapon in the megaton range at 8.000 ft. above a target area only 20 nm from the airfield where 3.000 men were based.

"Grapple Y" was planned for February 1958. Its aim was to make a "blind" drop using Mk. 7 AA radar if a visual release was not possible. Departure from the U.K. was delayed till late March. The detachment included Wg Cdr K Hubbard and crew, Sqn Ldr G M (Bill) Bailey and crew, Sqn Ldr R Bates and crew and Sqn Ldr E Flavell.

A live drop took place on 28th April with Sqn Ldrs Bates and Bailey and crews in the Grandstand Aircraft. Bill's crew were scheduled for the next live drop, but on the following day it was announced that due to the excellent scientific results obtained there would be no further tests and 49 Squadron was to prepare to return home in early May.

Before leaving Christmas Island, three Valiants piloted by Ken Hubbard, Bill Bailey and Bob Bates performed a spectacular low level fly past of the area as a "thank you" gesture to all the other personnel of all the services involved in "Operation Grapple". The detachment was back at Wittering by 16th May, some 9.000 nms from Christmas Island.

By mid June, preparations had begun for "Grapple Z". This was to involve Wg Cdr Hubbard, Sqn Ldr Bailey, Flt Lt "Tiff" O'Connor and Sqn Ldr Tony Caillard and their crews. They were all on station by 31st July — the height of the monsoon season. The aim was to release a live weapon "blind". The first live drop was scheduled for 2nd Sept and even though the weather was suitable for a visible drop, the Task Force Commander ruled that the weapon should be released by the "blind" radar technique. Sqn. Ldr Bailey and crew had been selected for the drop with Flt. Lt. O'Connor and crew in the Grandstand Aircraft.

At 45.000 ft. Sqn Ldr Bailey reported ready to commence the blind run. Following a satisfactory report from the scientific team, the TFC gave permission for the live run using the radar. The bombing error from 45.000 ft. was a spectacular 95 yards ..... an absolute record which demonstrated first class teamwork and co-ordination between Sqn Ldr Bailey and crew and the radar plotting team.

The average error for Grapple drops was 245 yards!

The programme was finally concluded at the end of 1958 with a live drop by Flt Lt O'Connor and crew. Following this a political decision was made that Britain would not continue its programme of thermonuclear tests on Christmas Island.

Squadron Leader G M Bailey was awarded the Queen's Commendation on 31st May 1957 and the AFC in 1959.

This abbreviated account has used extracts from "Operation Grapple" Testing Britain's first H Bomb by Group Captain Kenneth Hubbard and Michael J Simmons. ISBN 00711015147. Published by Ian Allan, Shepperton

## **The Spell Checker**

Eye have a spelling chequer. It came with my pea sea.  
It plainly marques four my revue miss steaks aye can knot sea.  
Eye strike a quay and type a whirred and weight four it to say  
Weather eye am wrong oar write; it shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as thee missed ache is maid it nose bee four two long  
And eye can putt thee error rite - its' rare lea ever wrong.  
Aye have run this poem threw it, eye am shore your pleased too no  
Its letter perfect awl thee weigh. My chequer tolled me sew.

## **A Conundrum**

What's this difference between a New York Cabbie and the common cold?

One knows the blocks and the other blocks the nose!

Ed.

## **Further to the story of ED973 HW-D**

We now have a little more from Mr van Ophoven, the maker of the monument at Grashoek. He was 7 years old when the Lancaster came down that night of 15th June 1943, and making the monument has brought it all back. He began by making sketches and drawings of the Lancaster, then modelled some examples of the plane which he showed to Mr Huub Kluijtmans. He writes "He was very satisfied. I started to work in wood, chiselling and carving the Lancaster, then I made moulds of it all and cast the concrete.

"I made the monument on the street side of my house so that we would be able to move it with a crane and place it in the wood at the site of the crashed Lancaster. When I took the mould off the results were astonishing. The people in the surrounding streets all came to have a look what we had made, some even holding their hands to their mouths in amazement. They said "That's a nice monument" and for sure when I began to tell them how I had watched and seen how on the 15th June the burning Lancaster fell out of the sky."

The rest of Wim's story has already been related in newsletters 55 and 56. He ends by writing "I have told my story many times to the people who have passed me by the monument. Afterwards they say Wim, what you have started in this little village of Grashoek. Sometimes it is too emotional and that silences me, but life must go on"

## **From the Church Magazine.**

Miss Marlene Mason sang "I will not pass this way again" giving obvious pleasure to the whole congregation.

The cost of attending the Fasting and Prayer Conference is to include all meals.

Did you know.....13 people are killed each year by vending machines falling on them.

# **100 Squadron Association Reunion**

## **RAF Leeming**

### **Friday 28th and Saturday 29th June 2002**

Please return your application forms to Alex as soon as possible and not later than 21st June if you intend to join us. (See newsletter 56 for full details and accommodation.) The Squadron has arranged an Open Day for Saturday 29th following the AGM. There will be a barbecue lunch, a barrel of beer and the opportunity to meet Squadron personnel.

We also look forward to welcoming Canadian colleagues.

A reminder also about the "Waltham Extension" to be held on Sunday 30th June. Full details from Arthur White. Please enclose a cheque for £12.00 per head.

## **Ian Stringer (Researcher)**

We recently made contact with Ian following a query from a friend concerning the cubic capacity of a Merlin engine! He took a couple of days and came up with an answer. He writes that he is happy to deal with any requests for help from members. He has researched various aspects of the Squadron during its time at Grimsby and has extensive details of the planes and Operations with which the Squadron was involved. He has photographed graves of some of the Squadron aircrew and has gathered a considerable amount of other material.

Ian has sent us a fascinating article about Sgt Robert Theobald of 550 Squadron which we'll reproduce in the next newsletter. While researching this material he received this photograph from Mrs Peggy Smith showing her husband Flt Lt Ian Smith and his crew. Peggy was a wren who spent the war at Grimsby. She writes "As one can imagine, Grimsby was a very lively place to be. The town was packed with Naval and Air Force girls and boys, and we as Wrens used to be invited to all the aerodromes round about. I have very special memories of Grimsby, especially as that is where I met my husband."



Left to right - I G Smith, J Walsh, M Paff, ???, D Sykes, D Walters and H A Taylor. Ian and his crew successfully completed their tour of "Ops" from RAF Grimsby.

In the background is Lancaster LM584 HW - Q "Queenie", one of the many 100 Squadron veterans. This Lanc. Completed 84 "Ops" which included 9 aborts.

LM584 sadly faced the scrapman after being Struck Off Charge in October 1945.

Ian can be contacted on 01673 866311

or by writing to him at;  
12 The Pastures  
Welton Lincoln  
LN2 3FD

## **MEMORABILIA ETC.**

Squadron ties, blue or maroon: £12.50 inc p&p

Blazer Badges. (Specify King's or Queen's crown): £12.50 inc p&p

"The Hornet's Nest" – History of 100 Squadron: £12.00 inc p&p

Supplement to "The Hornet's Nest": £4.50 inc p&p

available from the Treasurer.

Cheques payable to 100 Squadron Association please.

Black Baseball caps. £7.00 inc p&p

From Flt Lt Percival or Flt Lt R Simpson, 100 Squadron, Leeming.

Cheques payable to 100 Squadron Aircrew Fund please.

"Bread and Butter Bomber Boys". £8.00 inc p&p from Arthur White.

Cheques payable to Arthur White please.

## **Editor's Plea**

Please can anyone out there help me to find a model kit of Victor Bomber (scale 1:72). I am trying to build models of all the Squadron's aircraft from 1917 onwards and this particular kit is no longer in production.

Thanks,  
John.