



The Hornet

The Newsletter of
100 Squadron Association

President: Air Commodor N. Bonner F.R.I.N. F.R.Ae.S RAF(Retired)

Chairman;	Treasurer:	Secretary:	Newsletter Editor:
Officer Commanding 100 Squadron Royal Air Force Leeming Northallerton N Yorks DL7 9NJ 01677 423041 Ext2047	JS Willis MBE 10 Orchard Close Harston Cambridge CB2 5PT 01223 872743	Sdn Ldr AC Wedderburn MBE 11 Bury Way St Ives Huntingdon Cams PE17 4SL 01480 461415	JW Holford 42 Merley Lane Wimborne Dorset BH21 1RY 01202 885905 hornet100uk@yahoo.co.uk

Newsletter 58 - August 2002

Dear Colleagues,

The summer is marching on and it is once again time for Judy and I to put the Hornet together. You may notice that it is larger than usual, because we have incorporated a supplement devoted to the Grashoek story. Those of us who attended the ceremony in June are still amazed by that weekend, and we wanted to set down not only a record of the events but also our individual impressions and emotions. We are grateful to Arthur White for his account, and to John (Ginger) Stevens for his contribution.

On a lighter note, thanks for the letters, calls and e-mails following NL57. I am still waiting for a Victor kit: there is a possibility that the company will re-issue it next year.

And finally, we are still apologising for our spelling mistakes. Mrs Dorothea Thurley is still hoping to contact WAAF colleagues. We'll try to get their names right this time! And thanks to Kevin Webster for pointing out the unforgivable...we have now learnt how to spell Commodore.

Best wishes to you all,

John Holford.

Corrections

Mrs Dorothea Thurley
3, Coastguard Station Houses
Drummore, Stranraer
DG9 9QX

Tel. 01776 840 595

Dorothea is hoping to contact: Jean LYE, Jean MARTIN and Joyce PELL.

Our apologies once again. Ed.

Reunion June 2002

The informal proceedings began at Elvington Air Museum, where we started to arrive soon after 10 30 am, congregating in the NAAFI [of course]! After catching up with 12 months' news and viewing of photos, we set off round the varied exhibits, many of which evoked old memories much to the amusement of our good ladies. We examined all the aircraft from BE2c thru' Canberra, and Buccaneer etc.: up to the Victor tanker, now proudly displaying the 100 Squadron skull and bones. Next came a quick lunch and off up the A1 to Leeming for the reunion proper.

A warm welcome was extended to one and all in the crew room in the squadron hanger, then out on to the tarmac for the big event. Soon we heard the unforgettable, evocative roar of approaching Merlins, and into sight came BBMF's Lancaster flanked by three Squadron Hawks in immaculate formation. After flying past together the Hawks then broke away to let the dear old lady pass once more. We watched, with hardly a dry eye as she disappeared from view, then with a mighty scream the three Hawks came at us across the airfield and performed a horizontal burst to equal anything the Red Arrows could do. After landing, the crews came to meet us, and explained just how difficult it was to fly a Hawk as slowly as the Lanc. An interesting display of Squadron memorabilia was on show after viewing which we departed to our accommodation to change for dinner.

Arriving back on base, this time at the Officers' Mess, we were welcomed with aperitifs, before being ushered to our appointed tables, each named after an aircraft flown by the Squadron at some time. Each table bore menus carrying a message from the Officer Commanding,

welcoming the "Old and Bold", together with the more youthful officers, those who had travelled halfway round the world and those who had come from around the corner, and not forgetting the ladies. Association members and serving officers sat together for a superb meal, a fitting tribute to the Squadron on its 85th Birthday. We expressed our thanks to all those concerned. The wines flowed freely and many were glad that transport was laid on back to the hotels at midnight.

We were back on the base at 10.00hrs on Saturday for the Commemoration Service at St. Bede's Church, and this was followed by the Association AGM, details of which are given elsewhere. The afternoon events commenced back at the crew room where an excellent barbecue was provided by the Squadron:, a dining area having been set up among the Hawks in the hanger. As we sat a group of young people came in and pushed one of the planes out of the door and down the tarmac. Hijack? No it was the local Air Training cadets preparing for the afternoon's big spectacle, a timed Hawk pull over 100 meters. Wagers were taken on the time for completion profits going to the RAF Benevolent Fund. The A.T.C squadron took up the ropes and ran down the marked track, taking nowhere near the 2 min 50 seconds which I forecast.

There were a number of aircraft lined up for us to look at from other Units. Finally the Association assembled for a photograph in front of the Squadron Hawk, after which we said our goodbyes and went our separate ways with cries of "See you next year!"



Waltham Extension

Although no definite figures are available it is a fair assumption that between 25% and 30% of Waltham aircrews, 1943 to 1945, were members of the RCAF together with a sprinkling of Australian, New Zealand, Rhodesian and Polish fliers they injected their own spirit of gregariousness and joie de vivre into 100 Squadron life, so much so that many bonds were forged between the villagers of Waltham, Holton le Clay and surrounding districts and the people of Grimsby and Cleethorpes. Not least of these are the brides they took back to Canada after the war.

Hence, it is not surprising that on special occasions in connection with RAF Grimsby and 100 Squadron there has been a proliferation of the Canadian Maple Leaf flags around. The tradition of a "Waltham Extension" to our annual reunion started at Wyton in 1987; the Cleethorpes Town Council laid on a magnificent reception for the Canadians at Cleethorpes Town Hall. About 50 attended and made the reunion part of a mini tour. This set the precedent for a quintennial get-together after the main reunion.

The next "big one" was in 1992 when, following the main event at Finningley, about 30 or so joined some of their RAF buddies at the "Jug and Bottle". A lively coach party led by Wing Commander John Pitts toured the old airfield and Squadron Memorial and Walter Nobes presented a huge Canadian ensign to the management of the pub, where, now carefully folded, it is framed and on display in the saloon. Was this the occasion when Sandy MacTavish, 47 years older, called out from the coach to an old lady: "I told you I'd be back!"?

1997 saw the Squadron at Leeming with about 20 visitors from Canada. Again, there was a nostalgic visit to Waltham and lunch at the "Jug and Bottle". By this time the old airfield was showing obvious signs of decay although efforts had been made to patch up the control tower but the Memorial had been renovated and Jean and Colin Johnson had leaned on the powers that be to smarten up the site.

June 30th, 2002, may well be the last of the "Waltham Extensions" as numbers are falling rapidly now. It was good to see Bill and Grace Chisholm and Joyce and Bernie Sissons from Toronto. Doc Watson had made the main reunion from Victoria BC but had to fly back home on

tithe Sunday. Nevertheless he had managed an evening with the Johnsons at Waltham before his return. 26 in total managed the afternoon at Waltham which followed earlier patterns with lunch at the recently refurbished "Jug and Bottle". There was time for a brief look at the control tower, but we couldn't get access to the main runway. Not a lot of comment was heard about the dilapidation of the base – "Well, it's getting like the rest of us." Was one comment! Following a visit to the Memorial, there was a new attraction for these occasions, a visit to the Waltham Windmill where Jon Moore had pulled out all the stops for his RAF Grimsby Exhibition.

Was that the end of an era? Or will some of us still be around for the Squadron's 90th? Phew!

Arthur

A Plea from The Treasurer

John Willis has asked me to remind you that your Annual Subscriptions are now due. It would make life much easier for him and for you if everyone could pay by Standing Order; John has the forms and would be happy to send you one.

Thank you.

A Non – PC Blond Joke.

A young lady was tired of being referred to as "dumb" so she set out to prove everyone wrong and dyed her hair black. The next day she met an old shepherd and offered him a challenge. "Do you fancy a wager?" she asked. "If I can guess how many sheep are in your flock, can I choose one for myself?" "OK" said the shepherd. The girl assessed the flock and said "173"

"Wow " said the shepherd" exactly right! Choose the one you want" The girl picked out an animal and put it in her car. Then the shepherd asked "How about another wager? If I can guess the real colour of your hair, can I have my dog back?"!!!

Correspondence

Tony Davey in France is also looking for a model kit, that of a Canberra B2. He also writes that he has written an article on Sir Frank Whittle, for the Swiss branch of the RAFA, and we may well use all or part of it in a future newsletter.

Jack Robinson, an associate member has completed a painting of Lancaster NG292 HW-R, the Ruhr Rover, and wonders if any readers would like a copy. The painting was done for the wife of his close friend Flt Sgt Jimmy Hedley, who passed away a few years ago. Jack worked as an engine fitter on Mosquitoes at the Central Gunnery School, RAF Leconfield.

Henry Hedley has written to us following NL57 and has given details of his part in the Berchtesgaden Raid. He was Flight Engineer to Flt Lt Playford in ND458, one of the six leading Lancs. They had the yellow markings mentioned and their place was in the second V. The crew consisted of five Canadians and two Britons. It was their 28th job.

Alec Wiseman wrote to us at length after recognising himself as the young airman pictured on page nine of NL57. This was in the Wildebeest, era and he is working on the Bristol Pegasus engine. He writes that on occasions when WOP Nobby Clark didn't feel like flying he "stood in" for him. In 1936, the Squadron flew up to Penang to take part in the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. That was when Alec got his first taste of beef cooked in garlic!

Frank Ockerby also writes in response to Alistair McQuaid's query in NL 57." In the early hours of 25.4.45, when Fg Off McTavish and crew reached the briefing room, someone was missing. WO Pierre Leveille had decided that he was on a stand-down. I was one of the duty crew at that time, and Sqn Ldr Scott suggested that I might join Sandy McTavish and crew for their early morning trip to Bavaria. We were in the third wave of Lancs to attack the SS Barracks; the first and second waves went round again. As we were approaching our "Aiming point" we heard "Portland 1 to Portland 2, I have Marked!" Consequently our bomb aimer Fg Off Bern Sissons was third to bomb. He remarked "Right in the f**** Barrel!" So we were first away from target. We eventually arrived back at Elsham Wolds after 8 hrs 20 mins and 1800 track miles.

Sandy, Bern and Frank remain in touch and were re-united at the 1992 reunion.

On the same subject, Mr E Ferris also remembers! "Our crew, recently arrived "sprogs" were excited to see our names on the Battle Order, but when we got to the Briefing Room the SP on the door told us we had been crossed off. We were crestfallen. Many years later I learnt that various Leaders – Gunnery, Bombing, Navigation etc. had got together to make up a crew and taken our place; for years I regarded this as a mean and dirty trick. They had taken our chance to do an "op". Now of course, I realise they must have done it from the highest motives to keep us from danger. I have often wondered who these gentlemen were, and whose idea was it in the first place? Seeing the list of Captains in the Hornet , I am bound to wonder after all these years which one it was, and which aircraft should have been ours? Would anyone know, or would they admit it?"

We had a letter from Mr J Fray about serving with Bill Bailey on 49 Squadron. "I was posted from trade training in 1955 to RAF Wittering. On my documents was printed BCDU, but after spending two days servicing ejection seats I was posted to 76 Squadron as they needed an armourer. 3 months later 76 moved to Weston Zoyland to re-equip with B6's, and I was moved back on to the armoury strength, looking after bombs and servicing bomb trolleys and other menial jobs like sorting bullets out of sand from the firing range - a cold job in a January frost." He was then informed that he was to report to BCDU offices at 100 Squadron. On arrival there he was greeted with the news that he was five months late and where had he been? A Landrover was summoned to pick him up so that he didn't get lost again! Of course the fault was with manning control. "I was on A Flight and then B Flight under Sgt "Tash" Knight., then many of us were posted to start a squadron re-equipping with Vickers Valiants with 49 Squadron. While out on Christmas Island we had 76 Squadron with their B6 Canberras for cloud sampling and 100 Squadron PR unit from Wyton with B2's, PR7's and by this time a B8."

Change of Address

Mr L G Emus
Brookfield Lodge
50, Wellington Road
Bromsgrove Worcs.
B60 2AY

Have you ever thought...

Nothing in small print is ever good news.

Don't fall out with your daughters...they decide into which home you go.

Memory is the moonlight of yesterday's sunshine.

Others do not want your opinion, they just want you to confirm theirs.

If the postman always rings twice, get a new hearing aid.

Your O.G. Philosopher

A Brief AGM Report

Sqn Ldr Simpson chaired the meeting.

A Silence was observed for Absent Friends.

Alex Wedderburn reported on the events at Grashoek.

The Raffle on Friday evening had raised £249.00.

The following definition of Membership was approved by the meeting:

Full Members (paid)

Honorary Members. (voted by the Committee)

Associate Members (non-voting)

New Honorary Members: Greta Overmeen, Wim van Ophoven, Huub Kluijtmans, Hendrik Cazemier, Pip Dorssers-Kay.

Thanks to: The Horizon Junior School, Grashoek, for their part in the Memorial. Arthur White for his hard work editing the "Hornet"

The Treasurer's report was accepted and approved. It was decided not to publish it generally, but copies are available on application to John Willis.

The Remembrance Parade at Waltham will be November 10th 2002

Ghost Stories - RAF Waltham

During the Second World War this base was home to many airmen and crew. The derelict base is now home to many unwanted visitors..

When 100 Squadron left Waltham, the Lancaster hangars were used for storage. Late one night, an employee for the storage company saw something strange during one of his late night shifts. He saw a figure of a headless airman dressed in full flying kit. The man said it walk up and down the hangar. When he saw the ghost he froze, but soon ran down the hangar screaming with shock.

By the time his colleagues had stopped him, his hair was stood on end as if he had been electrocuted. His colleagues called an ambulance. He stayed in hospital and made a full recovery after. The story behind that was, during the war, a Lancaster had crashed near to that very spot. One man had died in the crash.

In 1969, Miss Susan Burchell saw something so horrific that it forced her family to move house. She lived with her parents in a modern, recently built house in Waltham. Near to the house were some old concrete hard standings that during the war had Nissen huts resting on them.

On a night in late 1969, Susan woke up to see what appeared to be somebody standing at the foot of her bed. She switched her bedside lamp. There she saw a young airman with ginger hair who had one sleeve pinned to his shoulder. "He appeared to be looking directly at me. I was unable to shout or move and after many seconds the phantom moved slowly towards my wardrobe and disappeared into it." As soon as the phantom disappeared, Susan called for her parents. Shortly afterwards, a search was made of the house and garden. Nothing was found, but legend has it that in one of the Nissen huts close to Susan's house a young airman had killed himself with a hand grenade. Susan's parents sold the house.

The memorial in Waltham to all in 100 Squadron who died is supposedly haunted. In 1982, a couple were startled by the sudden appearance of a phantom airman who after a few seconds, vanished.

This article was written by Emily Simpson, daughter of Wg Cdr Simpson. Emily did a school project on Waltham as part of a school assignment.

OBITUARY

Mrs Pamela Pirie died on 17th May 2002. Pamela was the widow of Sqn Ldr Pirie, Station Navigation Officer at Waltham, 1943/45 who died in 1986. Pamela was a keen supporter of the Association and had hoped to attend this year's reunion. In the early post war years, she and George were the nucleus of get-togethers of ex-100 members at reunions in London. Members may well recall her newsletter article on "MacNamara" and other snippets of 100 Squadron lore. We offer our condolences to her son Roderick and the rest of the family.

Service of Remembrance, November 10th **Holton-le-Clay**

It would be helpful if anyone wishing to attend could let Alex know by 31st October whether they will require the Buffet Lunch at £5.00 per head. Payment can then be made on the day.

Late News

Air Commodore Norman Bonnor sent us an e-mail about the H2S simulator at the Pitstone Museum, Tring, Herts. Norman Groom has rebuilt a Lancaster cockpit from scratch with working replicas of instruments, including an H2S Mk 4 simulator and made it work so that it shows pseudo-ground returns. Apparently he is a mine of information!

And Finally...

A man consulted a psychiatrist because he was worried about his wife. "She's got this terrible fear of having her clothes stolen," he told the doctor.

"How can you tell?" he was asked.

"Only the other day I got home early and found that she had hired a man to stand in the wardrobe and guard them!"

GRASHOËK

**A SUPPLEMENT TO
THE HORNET**

JUNE 2002

One of our aircraft is missing

On June 9th 1943 a young Lancaster crew, fresh from completing their conversion course on heavy bombers, was posted to 100 Squadron based at Waltham. They were Sgt Robert Edmund Stanley Weddell, the skipper from Tottenham, Sgt Alfred Boydell - flight engineer of Leigh, Lancs., Sgt Alfred Robert Veitch - navigator from Newcastle on Tyne, Sgt Douglas Gordon Oldfield from Leigh on Sea - mid upper gunner, Sgt William Cram - bomb aimer from Whitburn Tyne and Wear, Sgt Geoffrey Adams Mason - wireless operator from Hornsea and Flt Sgt Edward Barnes Stevenson RCAF - rear gunner from Toronto. Six days later they were all killed.

At 23.30hrs on 14th June 1943, Sgt Weddall and his crew in Lancaster ED 973, HW-D "Dog" took off, along with another twenty 100 Squadron Lancs. to bomb a target at Oberhausen in the Ruhr. The total force consisted of 197 Lancasters and 6 Mosquitoes. From their various bases in Lincolnshire they joined up somewhere near Southwold for their first leg over the North Sea to Holland where they would alter course for the target.

From the outset, it was to be a hazardous operation. Not only was there the constant peril of enemy fighters and flak but on this occasion, there was thick cloud along the route. As the bombers struggled to obtain the operational height of 20,000 feet, ice formed on the wings and fuselage affecting lift, rudder and elevator controls. Engine air intakes were blocked and instruments and radios were affected forcing several aircraft to abandon their mission.

Nevertheless, after a flight of about 285 miles, ED937 was about to alter course for the last 45 miles to Oberhausen when, at 01.11hrs on 15th June, it was attacked by a German night-fighter piloted by Major Radosch from his base at Venlo. Planes from this base, incidentally, were responsible for shooting down 543 RAF Bombers including five from 100 Squadron during the war. Wim van Ophoven takes up the story: "I shall never forget that night. I was seven years old and lived with my family on the edge of the wood at Grashoek in the South of Holland. That night we all heard an overwhelming noise and the incredible roar of aeroplanes. We all went outside and looked up at the sky and watched what was unfolding. My elder brother Piet

was first out the door and told us he had seen the Lancaster firing and fighting with the Germans. Suddenly the Lancaster burst into flames, and I saw the plane come spiralling down from the sky. The closer it got to the ground the harder it burnt – the woods and surrounds were lit up by flames. The approaching noise and the drone of heavy engines I shall never forget.

We thought it would crash on our house and we all ran to the underground bunker and then it crashed in the woods. I can clearly remember the heavy droning and resounding thud followed by the cracking sound of wreckage as it fell all around. A little later there was an incredible noise and then the really incredible explosion of the bomb – the earth shook and dust and sand came down through the roof.

A few days later, when the Germans had cleared everything up, my brothers and I went to look at the site of the tragedy. In a heath field we saw a pile of sawdust which the Germans had used to cover the blood stains of an airman who had fallen out of the sky. He had fallen on his back with outstretched arms and legs leaving an imprint 7cm deep in the ground. You could clearly see the imprint of his body – head, shoulders, hands, heels and fingers. Maybe at that time I did not realise the significance of this because I could not resist tracing the outline with my hands.

In the following years, I returned many times to this site – nothing grew where the body had lain and you could still see the impression. About 20 years later, I returned and I pulled back the heath and the soil and yes, you could still see the impression. Later the land was ploughed and now there is nothing left – only my memories and those I will never forget.”

From another eye witness now living in New Zealand we learned “One parachuted to death, one was thrown 25 metres out of the plane, two were burnt, one of them very badly, and one was not found for three days as he was hidden among the potato crop.”

The bodies were interred locally by the Germans with all due military honours, three in individual graves and four in a communal grave. This may well be because the remains were unrecognisable. After the war, the crew was re-interred at Jonkerbus War Cemetery, Nijmegen in seven separate graves.

58 years later, Wim van Ophoven has constructed a concrete monument to the crew. It is in the form of a lectern with a stainless steel plaque bearing the names of the crew and the words (English translation): "Please stay for a moment and let go your mind to remember these young heroes who gave their lives for our freedom"

On the front is an engraving of a Lancaster flanked by the Union Flag and the Canadian Maple Leaf. Children from the local school will care for the monument and so various pieces of 100 Squadron memorabilia will be sent to the school. Brian Hulme has donated a picture of "100 Squadron-Operation Manna"

Since last September efforts have been made to trace relations of the crew in order to invite them to the dedication ceremony on the 59th anniversary of the crash, 15th June 2002. A cousin of Sgt Boydell and nephews and great nephew of Flt Sgt Stevenson in Canada have been traced.

The monument has now been erected on the site of the crash.

Friday 14th June 2002

In the small village of Grashoek in SW Holland, Pip Dorssers- Kay, who has played a leading role in the organisation and preparation of the ensuing ceremony, greeted Paddy and Arthur White at an hotel at Sevenum and took them to the De Horizon school. The senior class are to be entrusted with the care of the monument. The class teacher had already briefed the children and had filled a blackboard with key words and their Dutch translation before Arthur addressed them. In a relaxed and informal atmosphere, Arthur expressed the gratitude and appreciation of the Squadron and the Association at being invited to the ceremony. Referring to the forthcoming dedication he asked the children to express our thanks to their parents and grandparents for their appreciation of the work of Bomber Command. He stressed how deeply moved we all are at the display of gratitude to this 100 Squadron crew shown by erecting this memorial to them. Presenting a Squadron plaque and a framed Squadron Crest to the school, he outlined the history of the coat of arms and of 100 Squadron since 1917.

With his closing remarks he presented the children with a copy of "Lancaster" for the school library and a tin of Quality Street which was

received with delight!

Next, a brief visit to the Anchorplaat Community Centre where final touches were being made for the big day to follow. There, after 90 e-mails, Athur met Barrie Starbuck for the first time although they live just a few miles apart. Barrie was the key link between Grashoek and the UK and wasted no opportunity to hassle newspapers from Newcastle to Essex in his attempts to trace relatives of the crew. Back at the hotel they met the three Stevensons who had just flown in from Canada. Over dinner they filled them in on what was to follow.

That night there was a thunderous downpour. Is that what it was like 59 years ago?

Saturday 15th June

Where to begin? On a glorious day over 100 people had gathered outside the Anchorplaat by 1.0'clock. The building was festooned with flags and outside fluttered the banners of many local organisations. This was "getting to know you" time. Our contingent consisted of Flt Lt Steve Wright from the Squadron, Greta and Alex Wedderburn, Judy and John Holford, Sheila and John (Ginger) Stevens and Paddy and Arthur White. Pip introduced us to two of the principals of the Grashoek Monument Committee: Huub Kluijtmans and Wim van Ophoven who had designed and constructed the monument. Alex, Eddie and Sandy Stevenson were there to honour Flt Sgt Stevenson, the rear gunner killed in the crash, and they were joined by Mrs Jean Lewis, a cousin of Sgt Boydell the flight engineer.

It was a pleasure to meet Hendrik Cazemier who organises an annual remembrance ceremony for the crew of ED555 shot down at Eeldewolde 20th October 1943, and Mrs Janssen Huijskens who is organising a memorial to the crew of LM320, shot down over Vlodrop 26th May 1943 and not least Mrs Greta Overmeen, the lady who loved the sound of Lancasters and who has cared for the graves of the crew of W4989 lost over Terwolde 12th June 1943 since she was a young girl.

Meanwhile, a strange collection of ex-WW2 American army vehicles was assembling outside the Anchorplaat. There were troop carriers, a half-track with mounted machine gun, personnel carriers, ambulances and jeeps, some of which had been rescued and rebuilt. They belonged

Mayor A. M. P. Kleijngeld for the "Gemeente Helden"
Mr M. Mason, British VIVE Consul, Amsterdam
Major E. Charron, Canadian Defence Attaché Office
Representative Royal Dutch Air Base De Peel
Flt Lt W. S. Wright 100 Squadron RAF
Sqn Ldr Alex Wedderburn MBE, 100 Squadron Association
Mr A. White RAFA
Sqn Ldr B. D. Davies DFM (Ret'd) on behalf of Ken Hodges Waltham
Airfield
Mrs Jean Lewis, cousin of Sgt Boydell, Flight Engineer ED973
Messrs. Alex, Edward and Sandy Stevenson, nephews of Flt Sgt Edward
Stevenson, rear gunner ED 973
Mr J. Strik, Mr G. Drissen, Dorps Raad Grashoek
Mr P. Kurvers, Mr W. van Ophoven, Grashoek Monument Committee
Mrs G. Overmeen
Mr E. Muijsers, Historical Work Group, Venlo
Altar assistants Holy Heart of Jesus church
De Horizon Primary School, Grashoek.

After the last wreath had been laid, the poem "Luck" by Wg Cdr D McHarrie was read by Sqn Ldr B Davies DFM (Ret'd) and in Dutch by Mr E Muijsers, followed by the Dutch National Anthem.

There was a brief lull and then we heard the soulful sound of bagpipes playing "Flowers of the Forest" as Piper W. Steenbakker, in full regalia, emerged from the depression of the crash site and advanced to stand beside the memorial. This was the cue for Flight Lieutenant Steve Wright to make the Dedication:

'They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old; age shall not weary them nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we shall remember them.'

All responded: "We shall remember them."

Following the playing of the Limburgs Anthem, the ceremony ended and there was now the opportunity to view the masses of flowers; to inspect the memorial itself and ponder over that beautiful inscription etched in stainless steel at the top of the lectern dedicating the memorial to our fallen comrades. There was time to walk over the springy forest

to an organisation in Venlo called "Santa FE 45." Just before 2pm those who felt they couldn't walk to the memorial site were invited to board the vehicles and at 14.00hrs precisely they led off, followed by a local brass band and several hundred villagers.

What followed we will never forget. On this glorious summer day the tree lined streets of this lovely village were festooned with Dutch, British and Canadian flags. People sat or stood outside their homes waving flags and clapping and cheering the procession as it passed. Little things stick in the mind like the beautiful mare galloping round its paddock with her young foal seemingly glued to her side and determined not to be left behind.

Near the village, the procession turned off down a track to the heart of the woods. Despite the heavy overnight downpour the ground had absorbed most of the rain and the sun sparkled through the trees. Already assembled in the clearing were several dozen people who had arrived of foot or by bike to add to the procession now entering the area. It was estimated that 1,500 people attended the ceremony. Facing the memorial were rows of chairs for the invited guests. The monument itself was covered by a blue shroud and at each corner pole stood a youngster from the school.

At 3pm precisely, a stillness fell over the clearing as Mr Huub Kluijtmans and Mr Piet Kurvers spoke words of welcome translated by Pip and then the official unveiling by the Mayor A.M.P. Kleijngeld....a wonderful moment as the four youngsters gently pulled on the chords to raise the shroud which unfolded slowly over the monument as our National Anthem was played...and our Squadron motto was revealed... SERANG TEBUAN JANGAN DIJOLOK, embroidered in deep red on the front of the canopy. After a few moments the Rev. Father Verdonschot of the Holy Heart of Jesus Church in Grashoek performed the blessing of the monument. Then the Last Post was followed by the Silence.

Exactly on cue we heard the sound of aero engines and looking up, we saw a flight of four light monoplanes approaching the clearing. There were cheers and applause as they passed directly overhead in salute and returned to make another pass. They were the EDAMBUSTERS of 1077 RAFA Amsterdam, in "Missing Man Formation". Wreaths were then laid as follows, each being escorted by two pupils from the school:

floor to view the hollow where ED973 had finally exploded and to attempt to visualise the scene of carnage and destruction when the crew of ED973 finished its first "Op".

As so often happens after such a solemn occasion there was a strange reflex action as the gathering returned to the present. Smiles and greetings as the Grashoek villagers recognised their Canadian and British guests with informal little groups chatting away like old friends. Then it was time to board the army vehicles for the drive back to the Anchorplaat.

Now, with bars both inside and out the building, there was an air of exhilaration at this superlatively planned ceremony being so successfully completed. There were more chats with the principals who filled in some of the gaps in the saga; there was time to chat with Association's friends Hendrik Cazemier of Eelde, Mrs. Janssen, Vlodrop and the indomitable Greta Overmeen of Twello who cares for the graves of three other 100 Squadron crews lost over Holland.

Inside the Anchorplaat, a large room had been set aside for the exhibition which was dominated by a large model of a Lancaster suspended from the ceiling. The exhibits, too numerous to detail, include photographs of the crashed ED973, Major Radusch and his Me110 who shot it down, Venlo airfield and its planes in 1943, searchlights looking for British planes, crashed Lancasters from 49 and 460 Squadrons, "Windows" fluttering in the night sky, battle scenes from November '44, refugees and evacuees being helped by British soldiers.....and dozens more.

At 7pm the guests assembled for a celebratory buffet dinner which was literally a feast for the eyes laid out as it was on enormous silver platters – you name it, it was there! It seemed a shame for the waiters and waitresses to disturb the display! It was delicious and the wine flowed freely! As part of the fund raising efforts children from the "Class of 2002" sold memorabilia packs of a commemorative T shirt, corkscrew, yo yo and a cigarette lighter depicting ED973 HW-D.

At the end of the meal Pip called the gathering to order and presented each of the overseas guests with a framed photograph of the memorial and a handsome ballpoint and pencil set inscribed "Gemmente

Helden" (Helden Council).

And so came to an end a day that we shall never forget. We can but express our congratulations and appreciation to the organising committee – Huub Kluijtmans, Wim Van Ophoven, who constructed the monument, Piet Kurvers, Mayor Kleijngeld, Father Verdonschot, the Old Commandos and Marines of Venlo and surrounds who provided the guard of honour Piper Steenbakker, the "Edambusters" Santa Fe '45 and the Historical Work Group, Police, First Aid workers, the Anchorplaatz Committee, the Fanfare Semper Avanti Band. The Class of 2002 De Horizon Primary School. The People of Grashoek whose cooperation and financial support made it all possible.

And to "Pip". Since last September, besides helping to run a stable of fine Arab horses and look after her family she has been the key link between all those mentioned above; she has attended dozens of committee meetings and acted as interpreter in all their deliberations between Holland and the UK; she has harried and cajoled Mayors, Vice-Consuls, Military attaches; she has sent out all the invitations, organised flowers, wreaths, accommodation and a large part of the ceremony itself. Through about 80 e-mails (some quite candid) she has finally got Arthur semi-computer literate. Congratulations and many thanks to you, Pip, you did a great job!



Some thoughts from John (Ginger) Stevens

The feelings I experienced as we drove back from the ceremony.....

“As our army truck turned away from the clearing to return to Grashoek, the rectangular opening at the rear, with flaps thrown back from the tubular surround, formed a perfect frame for the slowly receding picture of the beautiful and appropriate setting where we had shared such a moving tribute.

As our truck bounced along the uneven farm track leading from the site, it seemed to unroll a ribbon of rust-red earth to guide visitors unerringly to the sacred spot, while the tall, straight spruce, which stood like sentinels guarding the crater and the monument, held centre stage against a back-drop of a bright blue sky, mottled only by irregular blobs of cotton wool, and were surrounded by an ever expanding carpet of soft, bright green maize.

It etched an image in my mind and my heart which will never be erased, for the stillness and the beauty of the scene were so movingly symbolic of the freedom for which our young friends had made the ultimate sacrifice.”.....





“Going to Holland for the weekend? How nice. The bulbfields?” “No, a dedication ceremony, actually.” “Oh.” We really didn’t know what else to expect as we set off very early in the day to travel to Dover and meet up with Alex and Greta Wedderburn who would drive us to Grashoek. Having crossed the channel, the first thing we learnt was the Belgian for “Diversion”, but we made it out of Ostend and as far as Antwerp before getting lost again. By the time we left the motorway, Grashoek had obviously moved, but we tracked it down and arrived at the meeting place. By then our friends had met and gone away, but the friendly barman gave us a drink and a slice of the fruit pie for which the area is renowned. We were then greeted by a petite blonde lady covered in paint, who turned out to be Pip, organising genius of the whole affair.

Soon our hosts arrived to collect us. We were to stay with Eddy and Lotta, a delightful couple who spoke excellent English. It was so easy to chat over a delicious meal, and the talk roamed through folk music, dogs, builders and broken legs to Belgian beer. They had no more idea than us what to expect on the morrow.

After a trip to buy essential Dutch cheese on Saturday morning, we all wandered back to the meeting hall. A fleet of WW2 vehicles was drawn up along the road, the band was tuning up and the whole of the village and the local school had turned out to take part. We chatted to the media; this occasion was obviously going to be big news. At two o'clock we were invited to board the vehicle of our choice to be transported to the site of the memorial. I chose to travel in a jeep with Glenn Miller music blaring forth (I didn't know they had cassette players in WW2 jeeps). The people lining the route smiled and waved and we felt like royalty. It was a humbling experience indeed.

The dedication ceremony was both moving and amusing. It has been reported more fully by Arthur, but we have to make mention of the lads in their back-to-front baseball caps who were acting as escort to the wreath layers. Pip had told them "Just wear what you would wear to tea with Granny" so there you go! We were so impressed by the whole scene; Pip's husband had that morning climbed the trees to remove overhanging branches that might obscure the view of the flypast, expected guests had named chairs awaiting them, and a Portaloo had been erected at the site. The flowers were stunning, the children were delightful, the music was stirring and even the weather was perfect. At the close we boarded an ambulance to return to the village centre.

Again, Arthur has given an account of the evening that followed and the thanks and presentations. Our own evening ended with a joke-telling session and lots of laughter with our hosts and their neighbours. On Sunday we invited our hosts out to lunch. Accordingly, two English couples, three Dutch and one Belgian and two dogs set off in convoy through the countryside around Maastricht. Our destination was the pretty village of Mechelen in the south and from there we went to the point at which Holland, Belgium and Germany meet. We ascended the tower giving views over the three countries and took photographs to the accompaniment of further hilarity. The day ended with a superb meal at a restaurant overlooking the river.

We were so sorry to leave on Monday. We came as strangers and we left as friends. We believe that friendship is a legacy from the crew of ED973, HW-D, fifty nine years after their tragic deaths.

Judy Holford

The Main Spar by Audrey Grealy

After you've eaten your bacon and eggs
And crammed yourself into your gear,
Heavily padded with leather and fleece
(About six foot square from the rear)
And carefully inserted yourself into the truck
And waddled from that to the plane,
And after you've managed to scramble on board
With never a chance to complain,
I'll never know how you got over the bit
That rose like a dirty great bar,
That bumper of shins, that scraper of skins,
That horrible dreaded main spar.

I tried several ways at a furious pace
That was matched by the glint in my eye,
I fractured my tights and my temper as well
As I swore I would do it or die.
At last I discovered the knack of the thing,
As easy as pie once you knew it,
But when you were lumbered with all of your gear
How on earth did you manage to do it?
And when you were only half way to Berlin
And regretted that last cup of char
It must have been sheer desperation which made
You climb over that dreaded main spar.

And when you have finished life's long tour of ops
And you get to the end of your flight
And hand in your log to St. Peter himself
At the gates that are pearly and white,
He'll issue your halo and fit on your wings
As you ask where the Lancasters are,
And he'll say "Sorry, mate but you'll have to climb up
And over that dreaded main spar!"

This poem was written following a visit to the BBMF Lancaster "City of Lincoln". It was chosen as part of the display at Grashoek.

Luck by Wg Cdr Dennis McHarris

I suppose they'll say his last thoughts were of simple things,
Of April back home and the late sun on his wings..
Or that he murmured someone's name
As earth reclaimed him sheathed in flame.

Oh God! Let's have no more of empty words,
Lip service ornamenting death!
The worms don't separate the hero.
Nor can children feed upon resounding praises of his deed.

"He died who loves to live." They'll say,
"Unselfishly so that we might have today!"
Like hell! He fought because he had to fight,
He died, that's all, it was his unlucky night.

One final thought that all the post war critics of Bomber Command would do well to ponder on is the story of an elderly Grashoek villager recounted after the reception:

"I was a young boy at the time....I think it was in October 1944. The sky (pointing east) was a huge red glow for days - we could see the smoke - we cheered!" The fires were caused by "Operation Hurricane" when Bomber Command attacked Duisburg twice within 24 hours with over 1000 bombers on each raid."

We can now fully understand what "Liberation Day" means to the people of Holland.

We have a few copies of the Dutch newspaper bearing an account of the weekend's events courtesy of Pip Dorssers Kay, together with a translation. If anyone would like one, let us know... John.

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

All the above are 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.