



The Hornet

The Newsletter of 100 Squadron Association

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Newsletter 62 - August 2003

Dear Colleagues,

The reunion (report on page 4) although not as well attended as last year, did give us the opportunity to chat to some of our readers, and hear your views and comments. John Frey and Trevor Watson spent the weekend compiling a list of all the ground crew whose names they could remember from the fifties and early sixties at Wittering. They had a surprising number of names, and I'm still waiting for my copy!

This seems to be the season of the new knees. Stamper Metcalfe and myself are both doing well following our operations, although I have found myself wondering why these excellent devices don't come equipped with a grease nipple! Bill Banks is currently awaiting a similar operation in East Anglia: this is the NHS luck of the draw. While confined to the house, I've taken the opportunity to build my long-awaited model of the Victor bomber. Thanks to Norman Bonnor for the information regarding Squadron aircraft of the time. In the interest of accuracy, my model will bear the Wittering Wing crest.

Judy and I hope you enjoy what's left of the summer.

Best wishes to you all,

John

Correspondence

It seems we are still sending newsletters to wrong addresses...please accept our apologies, we will get the labels right in the end!

In response to our appeal for post-war items, we have received photos from Brian Meulbrouck taken at the time of the Coronation flypast, fifty years ago. He recalls the licence for low flying and how hot it was. Brian's photo appears on page 7. At the reunion, Tom Lee handed over pictures of the Lincoln era taken at Singapore about 1950, to appear next time.

Sqn Ldr Park, survivor of the Lancaster JB595 crash at Waltham, e-mailed to ask us to pass on his condolences via Roger Stephenson to any remaining relatives or friends of those killed there.

Mr Lawrence Stow wrote to us following the query about David Holford and we were able to pass the information on to his nephew Andrew Bartleet in Australia who is researching his family history.

We are pleased to receive the RAAF Beaufort newsletter, and agree with Arthur White's comment that the Aussie veterans are supported by their Department of Veterans Affairs in a way that our Government could well emulate.

Hendrik Cazemier from Eelde in the Netherlands sent two pictures from the German airbase at Wittmund. He would like to know the story behind the artwork from any members who were part of that era. (Also see next issue).

Alex has received a request for information from Mr G A Crofts concerning his cousin Flt Sgt WO AG John Edward Tipplestone, a crew member of Lancaster ED815 HW-P which took off from Grimsby at 1822hrs on 24th February 1944. His cousin baled out and was taken prisoner, and he wants to learn about the POW camp to which he was taken.

Mr Alan Barrow also wrote to Alex. He is a long - distance lorry driver who spends much of his time in Holland, and discovered a memorial site dedicated to Fg Off Gerald Hood of 100 Squadron and to members of the Dutch Resistance shot by the Germans close to Almelo. He is keen to

research the story of Fg Off Hood and we are happy to pass on any information.

There is also a request for volunteers to be interviewed for the Imperial War Museum, aiming to build an archive of personal recollections through interviewing and recording the stories of members of the forces. If any one would like to take part, please let Alex know.

The article which appears on page 8 was sent by e-mail from Tony and Lucette Davey in France.

Colin Johnson sent a copy of the Grimsby Telegraph of July 19th featuring the reunion of 550 Squadron at North Killinghome. This Squadron was originally based at Waltham, having been formed from C Flight of 100 Squadron in November 1943. Lancaster BQ-B 'Phantom of the Rhur' EE139 flew 32 ops with 100 Squadron before becoming part of 550 where it clocked up a total of 121 operations.

Finally, apologies to the person who sent a large e-mail about Lancasters which Judy accidentally 'emptied' from the files. Sorry!

Membership Subscriptions

A reminder that your subs are now due. If you don't already pay by Standing Order, please send your money to John Willis ASAP. Thanks.

Reunion 2003

Those of us who were able to attend RAF Wyton in June had a most enjoyable weekend. After Friday lunch in the Mess we departed for Duxford or Ickworth House by coach, eagerly comparing notes on the return journey. We returned to Wyton in good time to prepare for dinner. Guests included AVM Herrington, now happily improved in health, and Wg Cdr Mike Simpson and Chris Bulteel from the Squadron. After an excellent dinner Wg Cdr Simpson addressed the company and outlined the Squadron's activities.

In 12 months the Squadron had flown 5500 hours, much of this as direct support of front line aircraft as aggressors. Many Squadron-trained navigators were deployed on operations in the Gulf and two of our pilots were sent to support operational planning staffs. Visits were made to USA, Gibraltar, Norway, France, Hungary and Bulgaria. Key events of the year were:

- Flt Lt Dave Harvey, who was selected as Strike Command Hawk Aerobatic Display Pilot, did the fly-past at the Windmill on 9th June.
- Flt Lt Gus Cullen has been posted to a fast-jet exchange posting to RAAF to fly F-111s.
- The Trenchard Memorial Trophy awarded to Navigator Training Unit.
- 4th May – Dutch Liberation Day – three Squadron aircraft overflew three memorials (as reported in NL 61) and Wg Cdr Simpson paid tribute to the Dutch Association members, to Arthur White and to Flt Lt Chris Bulteel for their excellent planning of this event.
- He concluded by reminding us of the importance of those who man the Squadron: groundcrew, aircrew and support services.

He again took the chair at the AGM on Saturday morning, attended by 19 members. Absent friends were remembered with a minute's silence.

The Treasurer confirmed that requests for financial help to travel to a Reunion would be considered in confidence

Remembrance Day Service will be Sunday 9th November at Holton le Clay.

Channel 4 are making a series of 3 programmes 'Britain's Super Weapons' featuring V-Force, to be screened later in the year.

Stamper Metcalfe was proposed for Honorary Membership.

The Committee will consider contributing to an Appeal to erect a memorial to the RFC Squadrons of WWI at St Omer.

The Reunion then concluded with the customary Service in St George's Church; farewells were said and we went our separate ways. It's hoped that the 2004 Reunion can be held at RAF Leeming with the Squadron.

Obituaries

Roy S Mager

From his widow Betty, we learned that Roy had died aged 86, in hospital after a short illness shortly after moving to sheltered accommodation at Dymock.

Roy served with the Squadron as a wireless operator on Vildebeests at Seletar until a short time before the Japanese invasion, and we are grateful for his accounts which appeared in 'The Hornet's Nest'. He was a founder member of the Association and a highly respected member of the committee which valued his meticulous approach to details on the agenda.

Throughout his post war career, he maintained contact with his Seletar colleagues both here and in Australia and New Zealand. In recent years, he was afflicted with deteriorating eyesight, but he never complained and was cheerful to the end.

He was cremated at Gloucester Crematorium on 16th July. In accordance with Betty's wishes, the Association has sent a donation to the St. Dunstan's Institution for the Blind. To Betty and daughters Pamela and Jean we send our deepest sympathy.

Eric Redshaw

Through a chance telephone call we learnt that Eric had died on 1st January of this year at the age of 84.

Eric had been a fitter on Vildebeests at Seletar and possibly on the 'Q' Flight Beauforts, and managed to get to Australia following the Japanese invasion of Singapore. He was repatriated to the UK and resumed his trade as a fitter on Lancasters with the newly formed 100 Squadron at Waltham and later with 550. His humorous account of 'The Lanc and the Steam Roller' is recounted in 'The Hornets' Nest'.

Eric had been in poor health for some years and was bereaved by the death of his wife three years ago, but he liked to keep in touch with Association matters and wrote regularly to the Editor.

His daughter, Honor Redshaw, as next of kin, would like to keep in touch with the Association. We send our belated condolences to Honor and Marguerite and to Eric's son Martin.



Lincolns of 100 Squadron on the Coronation flypast rehearsal 1953

Vercors Revisited

In 1940 Lucette's parents decided to send her to stay with relations in the Vercors - the German army was in Aix-les-Bains and this mountainous area was considered to be safer. Fortunately she only stayed there for a few months.

In 1944, a number of villages in the Vercors were completely destroyed by the Germans; men, women and children were shot or lost in the fires or taken away to concentration camps never to return.

The journey from Aix-les-Bains to the Vercors took us about 2.5 hours via Grenoble then climbing South and through gorges to the Northern Area of the Drôme Department and in particular the Plateau of the Vercors to the village of La Chapelle-en-Vercors.

We stayed in the Hôtel Bellier ** - third generation owners - like all the buildings, except part of the church, destroyed in the evening of 25th July 1944 and now rebuilt in a chalet style. From our bedroom window we could see, in the grounds of the hotel, La Chapelle St. Antoine where the bodies of 16 young men were taken after being shot in the courtyard of an adjoining farm. The remains of the barn and the courtyard are now one of many Memorial Sites to the Résistance in the

Vercors; by chance we were among the small number of local people who, on May 8th, attended a ceremony at this site known as "La Cour Des Fusillés". Here we met Madame Jeanne Barbier, 91 years old, who played an important part in the Résistance and wrote a small book in 2001 about the events of July 1944.

La Chapelle-en-Vercors 945m, with 650 inhabitants about the same now as in 1944, has everything! Three hotels, chemist, outdoor swimming-pool, post office and bank, a state school with boarders, even police, fire station and tax-office! Lucette did not recognise the house where she stayed in 1940; it had been rebuilt in 1948. With the help of a friendly butcher's wife, we found the building and her distant cousin who had moved to the tranquillity of village life after a busy life in Paris.

The Vercors Résistance Memorial at 1300m overlooks Vassieux-en-Vercors. From the viewing platform, it is easy to appreciate why this plain was used by the Allies in June 1944 to parachute supplies to the Résistance and why, on the 21st July, the Germans used it as a landing area for their gliders. The Memorial is also a museum depicting the tragedy of the Vercors; commentaries are in several languages.

The Memorial Garden situated in the old cemetery of Vassieux next to the rebuilt church commemorates the death of the village people with seventy-three glass plates of various sizes instead of the usual grave head stones. The Résistance Museum is nearby. I found it strange to see the metal frames of German gliders acting as "gate guards" to the church and cemetery.

On the 27th July 1944, the Germans found La Grotte de la Luire, near St. Agnan-en-Vercors, which was being used as a hospital. They shot twelve of the wounded, seven of the nurses were sent to concentration camps and two doctors and a priest were shot in Grenoble. As we were the only visitors, the young pot-holer guide gave us a fact sheet in English to read about the "hospital" before his guided tour of the cave.

Lucette also stayed for some time with the family of the mayor of the village of St.Agnan; he owned a farm and café. She was sure it was opposite the church. St.Agnan suffered little damage during the war, and we had been back there about 30 years ago, but we could not see

the café or the barn of the farm. The cook, in the Auberge, where we had lunch, explained that a stone built house had replaced the café and the barn was converted into a house.

Our final visit was to the ruins of Valchevrière, completely destroyed, except for the church, on the 22nd. and 23rd. July 1944. The village is in a valley at the end of a track. We looked down on the white stone walls of the buildings from the Memorial viewing site. This very moving experience in the middle of a beautiful forest was quickly changed by the arrival of an old car rally; it was the 8th. May, V-E Day, a public holiday.

Very Brief History! The plan was to turn the Vercors into a military fortress, from which thousands of Allied paratroopers, assisted by the Maquis, would attack the German rear as the Americans landed in the South of France. It did not happen; the plateau was occupied by German troops, who could no longer tolerate the 4,000 "terrorists!"

Practical Tips. The road from Pont-en-Royans had been blocked for some time by a landslide so we took the road from Sassenage - narrow roads in both cases through gorges. We saw a number of attractive Gîtes and Auberges - we can recommend our hotel. We brought back to eat - ravioles, caillettes and pogne. The area is a paradise for cross-country skiing and walkers and not too many tourists!

We bought two small books

"ICI, JADIS, ETAIT UN VILLAGE DE FRANCE by Jeanne Barbier.

"LE VERCORS MARTYR" booklet bought in La Chapelle Church.

Our grateful thanks to member Tony Davey who now lives in the South of France with his wife Lucette for the above reminiscences, which have been published in the Swiss RAFA journal.

Ian Reid reports on the Dedication of the memorial to JB576 - 7th June 2003

A lovely warm and sunny afternoon greeted those that had gathered at the Waltham windmill to commemorate the loss of those killed flying JB576: Flt Lt Robert Proudfoot, Sgt Sidney Viggers, Sgt John Bamford and Sgt Bernard Heaton. Other crewmembers included Sgt Noyes, Sgt Phillips and Sgt Taylor.

Recalling the events of that fateful night on 16/17th December 1943; seventeen crews had carried out an operation to Berlin, and returning to the Waltham area found low cloud and fog lingering, which meant that many crews were struggling to locate the airfield. As a consequence, four 100 Squadron crews were lost locally that night due to those terrible conditions.

It appears that JB576 struck rising ground at Hatcliffe Top as it circled looking for the airfield. It clipped the roof of a farm cottage with its starboard wing then some pine trees with its port wing before finally hitting some ash trees in front of the aircraft, coming to rest and burned out; it had travelled approx. 300 yds. Four of the crew were killed outright, whilst the others were seriously injured and suffered severe burns.

The memorial, which is on private land, is set at the base of those pine trees, and the party of around 36 people arrived at the site via a coach. The local press were on hand to speak to a number of personnel particularly those who remembered the events. Kate Reid was an R/T operator who was close to Bernard Heaton, and there was Roy Upton who was the pal of the surviving mid-upper gunner, Sgt Phillips.

Arthur White spoke a few words describing the conditions of operations at that period. The Padre, Ian Shelden then blessed the memorial before Wg Cdr Mike Simpson, current 100 Squadron Commanding Officer, laid the wreath followed by Jon Moore and Kate Reid. Frank Ockerby recited "They shall not grow old as we who are left grow old....."

All agreed that the location setting was a tranquil spot and very appropriate, the pine trees still bearing the scars of where JB576 had struck.

Roger Stephenson had done a great deal of work, not only in organising the event, but also preparing the area and the memorial stone and 'Thanks' must be recorded for his single-minded devotion to record the events of this particular crew.

Roger has also created a small diorama showing the resting place of JB576; the damage to the cottage and the location of the memorial stone, and this is now on show at the Windmill museum. Returning to the windmill, wine and nibbles were served up and with that, an emotional day came to an end.

Ian Reid June 2003



This is a shortened version of a message from Pip Dorssers-Kay
in Holland for all of us.

Grashoek - 4th May 2003

100 Squadron should be aware that, in a sunlight speckled wood, many Dutch people grabbed their dogs, kids and Grandmas, and came by foot or bicycle to the monument. They came for many reasons; to see the planes or to pay homage to 7 guys they have never met. Children left the TV and came for the crew of ED 973, HW-D. These kids are proud of their monument and are learning that the price of any war is too high. They are learning about courage. They have an idea of history, but to see three planes swoop out of the air from nowhere to show themselves for a few moments of black, shiny metal and then disappear...that's real stuff. That brings 7 dead men out of thousands to mean something real.

You did a good thing for a lot of people: men in planes didn't just happen years ago, it's happening now. The men in the planes are now just there to thrill, they are there to protect us, the little people.

I want to thank the men serving past and present of 100 Squadron who made Sunday happen, to thank the pilots and support guys for zipping over the right bit of wood at the right time. I hope they knew about all the people who came to remember. I thank you all and wish you blue skies and soft landings. Pip.

Before we close the subject; the Holfords and the Stevens were invited back to Grashoek in June to further the friendship which began at the Dedication last year. We had time to reflect on the wide-reaching effect of the sixty year old tragedy, just one among so many stories. Ed.

New Member

Mr FW Borgne
'Wilvic' 58 Mabledon Avenue
Ashford Kent TN24 8BL
Tel; 01233 631077

Terrible jokes from our friend William

When a clock is hungry, it goes back four seconds.

A bicycle can't stand alone because it's two-tyred.

The man who fell into an upholstery machine is now fully recovered.

Some films produced in Wales;

- Cwmando
- An American in Powys
- The Wizard of Oswestry
- Cool Hand Look-you
- Haverfordwest was won
- The Magic Rhonddabout
- The Magnificent Severn

and finally; well almost...

- The Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwymdrobwillantysiliogogoch that Time Forgot !!

And finally...

Tony Blair is visiting a hospital in Scotland. He greets the first patient, who replies; " Fair fa you honest sonsie face, Great cheiftain o' the pud-din race..."

Blair is confused and moves to the next bed. The patient responds "Some hae meat and canna eat, and some wad eat that want it, But we hae meat and we can eat so let the Lord be thank it."

Even more confused, the PM moves to the next patient who begins to chant; "Wee sleekit cowerin' timrous beastie, thou needna start awa sae hastie...."

By now seriously troubled, Blair turns to the doctor and asks " What is wrong? Is this a mental ward?"

"No" replies the doctor, "This is the serious Burns unit!"

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 Chris Bulteel (Fund Manager) or Sgt Higginbottom. 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.