



# The Hornet

## The Newsletter of 100 Squadron Association

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## Newsletter 64 - February 2004

Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year to you all! May the next 12 months be all you could wish for! At the end of our second year as editors of The Hornet, we would like to thank once more everyone who has responded to our request for articles, letters and photos: without them we could not function, so please keep them coming .

Your committee met at RAF Wittering in December (we don't just hibernate between reunions as you all suspected.) A full report appears inside. The main business was, of course the arrangements for the next reunion, the format of which, you will see is very different from previous years. We hope you will all approve anyway let us know what you think. An idea has just crossed my mind - if it took the guys from Leeming 10 minutes to fly to Wittering and me 5 hours to drive from Dorset, can we meet at Bournemouth Flying club next time and have the same journey time!

At the end of February, one of our members J T Watson is getting Married so if any of you have any anecdotes or potentially embarrassing photos suitable for the best man's speech please let me know as soon as possible. The groom will not get this last paragraph.

John

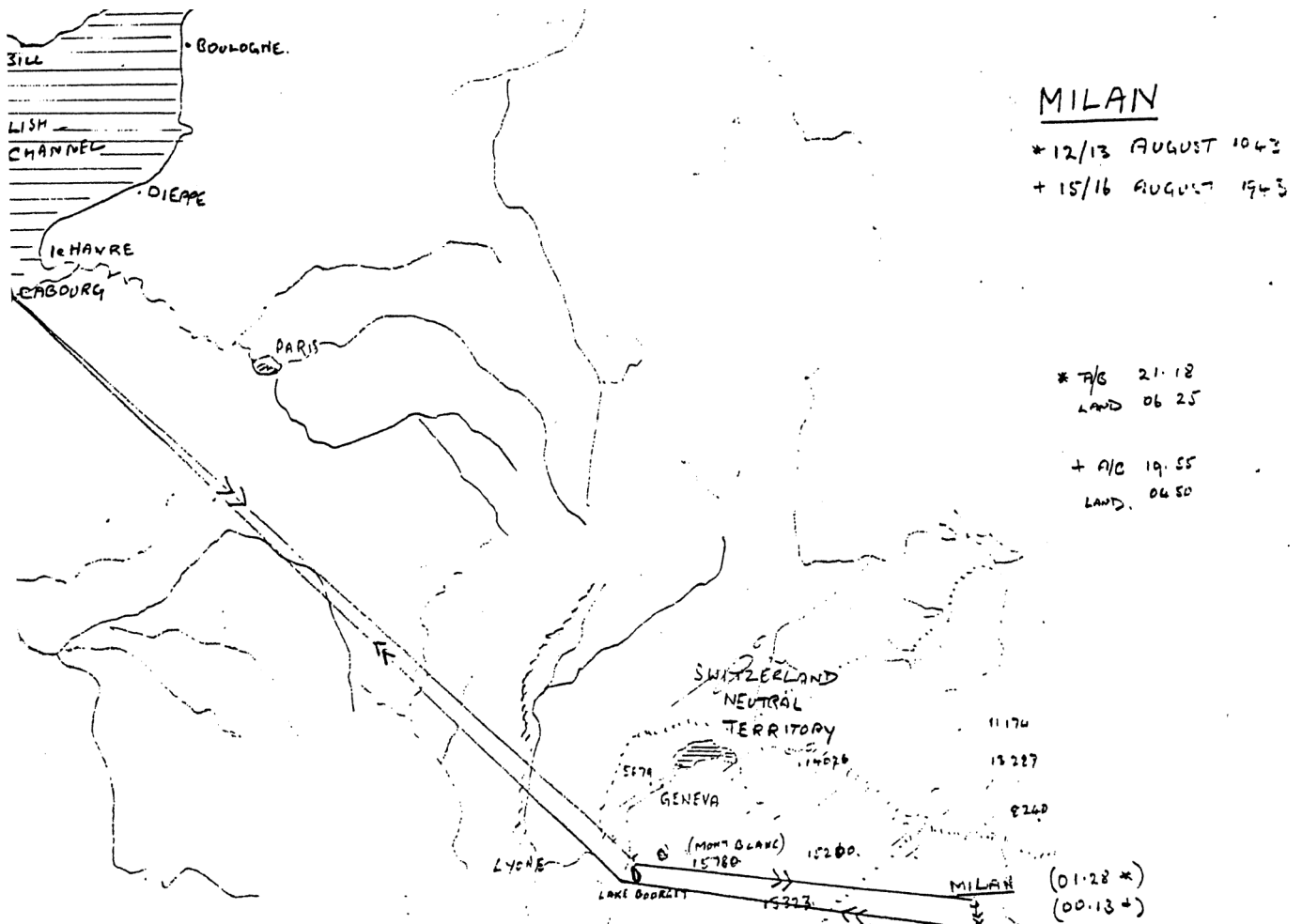


Chart of the route to Milan

## **Malayan Squadron is Back** **- with new Hitting Power**

Malaya's famous No 100 Royal Bomber Squadron RAF, royal because it has been granted a charter by the King in recognition of 25 years unbroken service, is back again in Malayan skies after an absence of eight years. As a heavy bomber squadron flying Lincolns, it is today hitting, and hitting hard, at Communist concentrations in the Malayan jungle.

One of the 12 RAF squadrons to be awarded a Royal Charter, No 100 has been linked with Malaya since 1933 when it came to Far East Command on loan and stayed nine years.

Now it is back again and in less than a fortnight has carried out seven strikes against the Communists. 100 Squadron has relieved 57 Squadron which was the first to operate against bandits in this country.

# Correspondence

You have obviously been much too busy with Christmas festivities to write to us; not even any complaints about wrong addresses.

However, Mr L Stow did respond to the question about using Lake Le Bourget as a turning point in raids on Turin and Milan. He writes: "I was in the raid on Turin on 12th July '43 as 'second dickey' - my first operational trip. On 12th/13th and 15th/16th August I took my own crew to Milan." He encloses a copy of the chart prepared from his Navigator's log which shows a turning point over Lake Bourget. We have reproduced the chart on page 3.

Robert Menzies sent cuttings from the Straits Times 1950, reproduced on page 3.

Thanks to Colin Johnson for the photographs of the Remembrance Service last November. Unfortunately, we received them just two days after going to press. This has prompted us to enforce a deadline for copy. The deadlines in future will be the first day of February, May, August and November unless otherwise stated in the Hornet. (this time it was 19th January!)

Three members have contacted us with reference to an article in the Daily Mail written by Bob Pierson about Sally Lancaster who knitted dolls for wartime crew members at Waltham. 'Ginger' Stevens must have lost his copy and another was on an e-mail which unfortunately we could not read. However, at the eleventh hour Colin Johnson sent us a legible copy which is summarised on page 14. It is entitled 'Dolly bird of flight' and Bob Pierson is pictured proudly holding one of Sally's dolls.

Also at the eleventh hour, we were delighted to find that Norman Bonnor had sent us his memories from the Wittering days. We can promise you a good read as some of the tales are highly amusing.

'Yesterday' writes a Straits Times air correspondent 'I watched them return from a mission in the Province Wellesley area. One after another, the black giants landed at Tengah, each aircraft bearing the Squadron's Malay motto - Sarang tebuan jangan dijolok - which literally translated means "do not disturb the hornets' nest". The Squadron crest and motto is hand painted on each bomber by their own commercial artist, Wireless Operator P Carroll.

The Flight Commander Ft Lt J R Mason told the Straits Times that judging by their aerial pictures, the squadron had had more than a fair amount of success since its arrival.

"Perhaps today has been our best yet" he added with a grin. "We are using a new technique for which our commanding officer, Sqn Ldr D G O'Brian is responsible and based on the results this morning, it looks like being adopted regularly.

"We secured some beautiful direct hits right down the valley" he continued. Sqn Ldr O'Brian accompanied his bombers in a Dakota.

When 100 Squadron first came to Singapore in 1933 it had Wildebeest torpedo bombers - which probably accounts for the skull and cross bones in the Squadron's crest, indicating their link with the sea and buccaneers. From 1939 onwards it changed to Blenheim bombers.

The Squadron's adjutant Ft Lt G D Dixon told the Straits Times that he is keeping an eye open in the hopes of tracing some of the Squadron's mess property which was lost in Singapore in 1942. So far he has drawn a blank but he is still hoping.'

Thanks to Robert Menzies for this article.

Editor's footnote: In fact as we know, the Squadron received two Blenheims in 1940 for crew conversion only pending the arrival of Beauforts which proved to be unreliable. The Squadron therefore flew their Wildebeests until they were all wiped out by the Japs!

# **The Association Committee meeting held at RAF Wittering on December 8th 2003**

A reply has been received from Buckingham Palace acknowledging the telegram which was sent to the Queen marking the Squadron's 85th birthday.

The website was discussed, and it was hoped that an assistant could be found to help Kevin Webster to keep the site up to date. We hope that Kevin's health will continue to improve. If any member can help with this, please contact Alex.

There had been 4 new members and 6 deaths. Alex had received 8 queries from relatives and passed them on to the researchers.

We are grateful for the donation of £20 from Bill Chisholm in Canada towards NL's sent to members in Canada. In addition £100 had been received from the family of Eric Redshaw, and £50 from Mr McEwan. It was decided to use this as the basis for a welfare fund, perhaps to assist members to travel to the reunions. Please contact John Willis in confidence if you require financial assistance.

It was agreed that Alex should contact other RAF organisations with a view to publicising the Reunion and the Association.

The Committee approved a donation of £50.00 towards the erection of a memorial at St Omer.

A new Membership list is due to be published this year. Please ensure that John Willis has your correct details.

**AND ONCE AGAIN WE PUBLISH A PLEA ON BEHALF OF THE TREASURER TO ANYONE WHO MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN TO PAY THEIR SUBSCRIPTION FOR 2003!**

## **Memories and Anecdotes from 100 Squadron at RAF Wittering, 1964-66**

At the last Association Committee Meeting, I persuaded John Holford to take a digital image of a painting of a Victor Mk2 in the anti-room of the Officers' Mess for possible publication in our Newsletter. I recounted the story of how the Station Commander in 1964 announced at a General Mess Meeting that he had commissioned David Shepherd and that all officers would contribute £5 on their mess bills towards the cost. I don't recall that we had any chance to vote on this, so there were a few grumbles from the more junior members as £5 bought a lot of beer in those days. I certainly don't regret the cost, the painting looks magnificent. It depicts the aircraft landing in the rain with the large brake parachute deployed. The aircraft is in the all-white (80 calories/square centimetre) paint scheme designed to protect the aircraft from the radiations expected from the nuclear weapons it was designed to drop from high altitude. These were the early days of the Victor 2's service before Blue Steel was introduced and before the top half of the aircraft was camouflaged for low level operations.



I had joined 100 in Terry Austin's crew, via the Victor 2 Training Flight, after three years on XV Squadron with the Victor Mk1A at RAF Cottesmore. The Mk2 was slightly larger and heavier, and all the aircraft services and systems it offered were much improved over the Mk1A. But the really outstanding change was from the four Armstrong Siddeley Sapphires to four Rolls Royce Conways. More than double the thrust available meant a dramatic change in performance. It was the first time that I had flown in an aircraft where you couldn't apply full power with the brakes on or the tyres would rotate on the wheel rims and risk bursting. Climbing out from Cottesmore in a Mk1A, we would be well out over the North Sea before reaching 40,000ft; in the Mk2 out of Wittering, we reached 40,000 before Kings Lynn!

Of course, we were subject to the famous "4 minute" warning from the BMEWS at Fylingdales and regularly practised four aircraft scrambles from the ORPs (Operational Readiness Platforms) at the runway ends. It was a strange feeling to sit with only battery power, listening to the intercom and the Bomber Command tele scramble system that beeped every minute, and perhaps a skylark twittering above us, knowing that all hell was about to break loose. Suddenly the call would come: "This is the Bomber Controller ...."; we rarely waited for more; the simultaneous start system fired 6,000 psi air into all four engines, and we would be moving forward in seconds with the AEO desperately trying to get all the electrics up and running as we hurtled down the runway. My crew were often Number 1 in the stream, and I regularly timed us retracting the undercarriage in under a minute after the scramble call. Can anyone name a modern fighter that can match that? Having got airborne, flying the beast was a little fraught as the compass and instruments were still erecting so going IMC straight after take-off was a challenge. The three aircraft behind would take opposite sides of the runway to best stay out of the wake turbulence, which was the only limiting factor that prevented all four aircraft getting airborne in under two minutes. If one of the four engines failed to start, you went anyway - on two at first bringing power up on the third when you had aerodynamic control on the rudder. It took a bit longer to get airborne, but there was ample power on three.

While on the subject of scramble starts, and the problem that some systems couldn't wake-up from cold in the time available, one "bright"

spark of an engineer designed an automatic snatch-disconnect system for the power cable of a Houchin power trolley; if it worked, it would mean we could sit at 5-minute readiness with ground power available and have the compass and instruments ready to go. His idea was that the power lead plug would be retained in the aircraft socket on the side of the front fuselage by a pin attached by wire to a mooring point. When the aircraft began to move forward, the pin would be pulled out and elastic ropes also attached to the plug would pull it and the cable clear of the aircraft. In taxiing trials on a single aircraft, it all worked pretty well except for the cable thrashing away rather close to the crew chief! This was a very heavy cable some three inches thick designed to take a high amperage. Next came the scramble take-off trial with a large number of people watching. The engines started, the aircraft moved forward, the retaining pin was extracted BUT the cable plug refused to come out of the aircraft socket. Before the tower could call "abort", the aircraft was off down the runway towing the Houchin (about the size of a family car but probably weighing more) to a speed it was certainly not designed for! As the aircraft got airborne, the power cable severed at the trolley with a nice display of sparks, and the trolley hurtled off the end of the runway demolishing some approach lights and tumbling onward. Fortunately, the wind was from the West so this occurred at the Collyweston end; if it had been from the East, the trolley would have smashed across the A1. However, this wasn't the end of the story; not knowing what was happening behind them, the crew had continued the after take-off checks and tried to raise the undercarriage. Inevitably, one main bogie wouldn't retract because the broken cable was entangled with it. Fortunately, the story ended happily as the gear locked down okay, and the aircraft landed safely after burning off some fuel down to max. landing weight. It's a pity I wasn't in at the debrief to hear what the Station Commander and crew said to the "bright" engineer.

Early in the aircraft's introduction at Wittering, a tragedy occurred when Alex Galbraith's crew took off on a night mission and had an engine fire warning immediately after take-off. Sadly, the Board of Enquiry later proved the warning was spurious. In the struggle to shut down the engine and continue to fly the heavy aircraft in poor weather, they entered a stall. Alex ordered the crew to bail-out but, while the co-pilot used his ejection seat at the last moment - as was the standard in-



struction at the time (someone needed to come back to relate what had occurred), Alex stayed trying to get his rear crew members safely clear. None of them made it, and the aircraft crashed close to Barnack village. The surviving co-pilot went on to become Air Marshal Sir Benny Jackson and a member of the Air Force Board. This tragic incident put pressure on the MOD to improve the rear crew escape facilities. These included: quick-don parachutes, swivelling seats with an air cushion under the dinghy pack to force you to your feet under up to 3 or 4g. The rear-crew escape procedure was that the AEO released the cockpit door, the three crew would ensure their quick-don shoulder straps were in place and tight before swivelling their seats to face the door and firing their air cushions. The final touch was that a knotted nylon rope was attached to the door surround (clipped on after closing the door before engine start) and, when the door opened, this pulled out of housing in the cockpit roof to form a rigid towline which you were meant to haul yourself along to escape through the open door. One night an aircraft was climbing out of Wittering when the normally reliable door locks failed at 30,000ft. The cabin pressure blew the door open and straight off its hinges; however, it was still attached to the nylon rope which pulled down from the roof housing and went very, very taut! For the next hour before they could land, the rear crew kept their heads down while the door banged about on top of the port wing and fuselage, and the nylon rope threatened to break at any minute and decapitate the crew. A later mod. introduced a weak link on the rope attachment.

When Blue Steel was introduced, any sortie flown without a live or a training missile loaded was rather a waste of effort for the nav team as all our training goals involved practising operation of the missile systems. On these occasions, we would plan to fly high level navigation legs using astro. On a particular Winter's night, we started a 1,000 mile leg up the North Sea and then across Scotland towards Iceland. The auto-pilot was in, of course, and we started taking a series of sextant shots. We cleared Scotland and relaxed as there was still some 300 miles to go to the first NTP (Navigation Terminal Point) off the North East coast of Iceland. I kept myself busy using the H2S radar to look out for shipping. In the calm night, with all cockpit lighting dimmed, I noticed that the Nav Plotter and the AEO were fast asleep. I reported this to the two Pilots with a laugh and got no reply; suddenly I realised that, if I had dozed off, we would have ended up at the North Pole very short of fuel! I raised hell and made sure that nobody on my crew ever fell asleep

after that.

In 1965, our crew and others at Wittering were selected to train for the SAC Bombing Competition, which was to take place at Spokane in Washington State. My crew was tasked with some trial flights to check the Victor's performance with JP4 fuel as against our usual AVTUR. On the first sortie, all went as planned during start up and taxi. As we approached the runway, we were cleared to roll, and the pre take-off checks were completed. One of these was to pressurize the fuel tanks; however, unknown to us, a breather valve on one of the wing-mounted slipper tanks (holding some 2,000 gallons) failed to close and, as we took off, it emptied itself along the runway. Being a wide-cut fuel, the JP4 was ignited by the heat of the Conways' exhausts, and the resulting fire followed us down the runway. While we were blissfully unaware of the fire behind us, a senior controller in the tower probably saved us from a nasty incident by shouting to his colleagues "don't tell them to abort!" We rotated and climbed away and so broke our link with the advancing fire.

Having started training for the SAC Bombing Competition, and getting excited about the month we would spend in the USA, our participation was withdrawn by Bomber Command. The Victor fatigue specimen at HSA Woodford had shown some cracks which gave serious cause for concern, particularly after the metal fatigue problems experienced by the Valiant. Although the specimen was many cycles and hours ahead of even the highest flown Victor 2, caution was undoubtedly the sensible option. Our training targets were dramatically changed from the original ones based primarily on hours and sorties to new definitions based strictly on training value. We were allowed no more than six sorties a month, and each one had to be packed with high value training. The senior staff at Wittering thought this would lead to a drop in morale among the crews, but far from it. We no longer flew without a missile, or had to carry unserviceabilities; we also had priority on range bookings over our colleagues in No 1 Group flying the Vulcan; each sortie became a challenge to get best value. A typical example would include climbing out to the North Sea, starting an 800 mile high level nav stage including fighter affiliation with Lightnings from Coningsby or Leuchars, descending to join a low level route over Scotland ending in a simulated Blue Steel attack at a Radar Bomb Scoring Unit over Newcastle or East

Anglia which included a test of the AEO's reaction time to jam the RBSU as it attempted to lock-on to the aircraft at the start of the attack. If fuel permitted, a second Blue Steel attack would be made over Glasgow or Manchester before recovering for no more than a couple of ILS or GCA approaches at Wittering.

The story will be continued in the next issue.....

Norman Bonnor  
President

## **Time for Research**

Squadron researcher Greg Harrison has asked for your help, hoping for a few personal memories.

The crew in question was lost on the night of 24th/25th March 1944 in Lancaster ND642. They were on their ninth operation. With the exception of David Harris, all the crew were Welsh, coming from South or South-east Wales. Greg is hoping that on the 60th anniversary of their death in March this year, he can get his local paper in South Wales to run a feature on this crew, so anything you can recall would be gratefully accepted to add colour to the piece that Greg is currently putting together. The crew was posted onto the Squadron on 6th February '44 from 1656 HCU.

Pilot	Alrfyn James Jenkins.
Flight engineer	William John Moore
Navigator	George Arthur Saunders
Bomb aimer	Gilbert Pearson
Wireless operator	Roy McStuart Ross
Mid upper	David George Harris
Rear gunner	Forrest Alan Luigi Forrest Farr

Anyone with recollections can contact Greg on 02920 394030 or e-mail [greg@greg-harrison.co.uk](mailto:greg@greg-harrison.co.uk) or we'll pass on any information that you send to us.

## **News from Canada**

Bill Chisholm expresses his disappointment that Arthur and Paddy White had to cancel their trip to Canada last October. Arthur was to have taken a copy of video tape from Greta Overmeen in Holland entitled "Salvage Vickers Wellington HE 727 NA-K" Bill has now received his copy by mail.

He quotes from a letter from Don Lennox: "I have sad news to report. Jack Scholey (his pilot) died suddenly in Ottawa in October. Jack is survived by his wife Anne. Earlier in the month he was predeceased by Allan ("Temp") Templeton, the Wireless Operator in Jack's 100 Squadron crew. Jack Willis the rear gunner died last January. A year ago there were five of the crew surviving and now there are only two.

We in Britain add our condolences.

## **Another Plea for Information**

Chris Stuttard is seeking information about a relative of his, Robert Smith.

Robert was part of the crew of HW-O, JB 594. The pilot was Flt Sgt Jameson. The plane went missing on the night of 23rd/24th December 1943 while on a Berlin raid; all were lost. If anyone can help Chris to piece together the details of what happened to the plane please contact him at 7 Eskdale Avenue, Royston, Oldham O12 6SP, or by telephoning him on 01616 249243.

## **Weather Forecasting**

At the height of the gale, the Harbourmaster radioed the coastguard on the spot and asked him to estimate the wind speed. He replied that he was sorry but he didn't have a gauge. However, if it was any help, he added, the wind had just blown my Landrover off the cliff!

(Aberdeen Evening Express)

## **Dolly Bird of Flight**

When I was with 100 squadron at RAF Waltham as a rear gunner on Lancasters, I would visit the Kings Head public house in the village, as did many other aircrews.

As I remember, next to the pub was a row of small houses and in one of these lived a family called Lancaster. Inevitably, such a name created interest among those based at Waltham, and it wasn't long before Mrs Lancaster was taking in washing for some of the lads.

Mrs Lancaster had three sons and a daughter Sally. She was about fourteen at the time and disabled. When any of us passed the house she would be there with her sweet smile to give us a wave. We heard that she was a knitter so one day I called in to see her and found her knitting small patriotic dolls in red, white and blue. They were about three inches long and soon were taken up by the aircrews as lucky mascots.

I carried mine all through my bombing missions, pinned to the underside of my battle dress tunic. I survived 23 operations and lived to tell the story of the lucky mascot. It did exactly what Sally intended it to do, it kept us safe. I never forgot that girl and often wondered what became of her.

Fifty years went by and I was reading Maximum Effort No 3 by Patrick Otter of the Grimsby Telegraph. There I came across a reference to the Lancaster family and the name Sally. Could this be the same little girl that I had been thinking about all these years?

I phoned the Kings Head who gave me a possible address in Grimsby. I wrote, and two days later I received a call saying there was a young lady wanting to speak to me. It was indeed Sally the "dolly bird" and in 50 years I was the only person who had contacted her to say they still had the doll.

Sally is still in a wheelchair but still has the red hair that I remembered from 1944.

The little girl is of course by now a senior citizen! I recently had the pleasure of meeting her again and found her as cheerful as ever, delighted to see one of her dolls again. There may be others out there who still have their mascots and remember Sally and I would be delighted to put you in touch with her.

I hope that this story shows that there were some joyful moments and brave people like Sally who made it possible for those who had to go to war to forget the dark side for a while.

Written by Bob Pierson and published in the Daily Mail, 31st December 2003.

## **Seen on a tea towel**

The horse and mare live 30 years and do not know of wines or beers.  
The goat and sheep at 20 die and never tasted Scotch or Rye.  
The cow drinks water by the ton: at 15 life is almost done.  
The dog at 14 years packs in without the aid of rum or gin.  
The modest, sober, bone dry hen lays eggs for years and dies at 10.  
But sinful, ginful, rum soaked men survive till three score years and ten  
And some of us – the mighty few – stay pickled till we're 92!

## **The Blonde Detectives**

Three blondes were training to become detectives. They were each shown a picture for five seconds then asked how they would recognise the man.

"Easy," says the first blonde, "he's only got one eye." The policeman says "Well that's because the picture shows his profile." He turns to the second blonde who says "He'd be easy to catch because he only has one ear!"

"What's the matter with you?" says the policeman, "of course only one eye and one ear are showing in a profile!"

Turning to the third girl he says "Think hard before giving me a stupid answer."

The blonde replies "The suspect wears contact lenses."

The policeman is speechless for a moment, then he leaves the room in order to check on the suspect's file. He returns moments later with a broad smile on his face. "You were right" he tells the girl. "Good work, how did you make such an astute observation?"

"Easy" says the blonde. "He can't wear ordinary glasses because he has only one eye and one ear!"

## **A Poem for Computer Users over 50**

A **Computer** was something on TV  
From a science fiction show of note  
A **Window** was something you had to clean  
And **RAM** was the father of the goat.  
**Memory** was something you lost with age  
A **CD** was a bank account.  
And if you had a **three inch floppy**,  
You hoped no one would find out!

**Log On** was adding wood to the fire  
**Hard Drive** a long trip on the road  
A **Mouse pad** was where a mouse lived  
And **Backup** happened to your commode.  
**Cut** was what you did with a penknife  
**Pasting** you did with glue  
A **Web** was a spider's home  
And a **Virus** meant the flu!

I'll stick to pen and paper  
And the memory in my head  
No one's yet died in a Computer crash  
But many wish they were dead!

## **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.

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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.

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

Cheques payable to Arthur White please.