

The 4T9er

LIVE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
May 2007 Issue 6



50 years on from Operation 'Grapple' Valiant XD818 enters the new
Cold War Exhibition at Cosford.

IN MEMORIAM

K. Smith (May 2006) G. Lee (USA) H. J. Bailey

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

WELCOME TO:

NEW MEMBERS

David Gibbs

Peter Velasco (Chile)

Jim (Robby) Robson (South Africa)

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Joyce Bailey

Jan Gambling

Matt Marshall

Paul McLocklin

Jack Scott (Canada)

NEW FRIENDS

Rick Rakshit

Anthony Stannage

NEW HONORARY FRIEND

Clifford Marshall



Three V Bombers in one shot.

Overhead, the bomb bay of Avro Vulcan B.2 XM598. Middle ground, Handley Page Victor K.2. XH672. Background, Vickers Valiant BK 1 XD818.

EDITORIAL

Would you believe it? My first year in office over already. It has been a most enjoyable and interesting time. I hope that you like our new cover, our thanks to John Ward for his artwork.

Thank you to all those who have sent cards, letters, messages and donations. I can assure you that the proceeds will be wisely spent in perpetuating the memory of 49 Squadron. Whilst I can't individually acknowledge in writing, I am attempting to make contact with all members whose telephone number we have listed. My new Tiscali Broadband deal now includes free (UK) calls at any time so this will not cost me anything. Our thanks also go to Ed Smith who has offered to act as our 'postmaster' for Canada and USA.



Particular thanks, and our congratulations, are due to Geoff and Jean Sacker who, on the First of March, celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary. Jean's brother, 748039 Sgt. Dennis Imber, was the pilot of Hampden L4129 which was shot down near Bordeaux, 16th October 1940, whilst serving with 49 Squadron. In his memory they asked their friends to donate to the Association instead of giving them presents. A most generous gesture, £95 was gratefully accepted.

WE ARE PROUD TO REMEMBER
Sgt. DENNIS IMBER.

We welcome three new members who served with 49 Squadron during the war. David Gibbs just missed it actually, being posted in on 13th April '45, great timing! David was a mid upper gunner in F/O Robson's crew. A few weeks later Jim (Robby) Robson himself joined. Jim flew one second dicky to Pilsen before the war ended. Peter Velasco was not so lucky however being posted in, December 1943, with Peter Harford's crew. After P/O Harford was grounded due to ear trouble Peter became spare gunner and was eventually the sole survivor when P/O D. Turner's Lancaster was shot down during a Frankfurt raid, March 22nd 1944. He finished up as a POW with Bill Carman in Stalag Luft 1, Barth.

New Associates Jan Gambling and Mat Marshall featured in Can You Help in the last issue whilst Jack Scott joins us as the son of F/O Jack M Scott who was the Navigator in Johnny Young's crew which, incidentally, also included our Chairman. Paul McLocklin's cousin, Sgt. Keith Blackham, completed his tour as Eric Jones' Navigator. Joyce Bailey is the widow of John Bailey. Sadly John was 'posted out' in February.

New 'Friends' are Rick Rakshit, son-in-law of member Ken Gibson whilst Anthony Stannage was introduced in February's issue as having commissioned the Christmas Island montage.

Finally, Honorary Friend Clifford Marshall is the chairman of The Bransby Home of Rest for Horses where he has been of great help in setting up the memorial and arranging remembrance services for the crew of Hampden AT129 that crashed in the grounds.

Sadly we have lost three veterans. Ken Smith died in May last year, H. John Bailey died on February 26th and George Lee, who moved to the USA after the war, died on March 10th. George completed 52 ops and was a member of the Caterpillar Club. Our deepest sympathy has been passed to their relatives.

I have read that the carpet makers of somewhere or other in the Middle East purposely weave a fault into the carpet as, 'Only Allah is perfect'. Whilst you may be forgiven for thinking that I follow this practice I must tell you that I do not. All my errors are completely unintentional.

'East is East and West is West and the wrong one I have chose'! On page 23 of the last issue I typed that Don Coomber did his square bashing at East Kirkby. This should have been West Kirby. Sorry, force of habit. (No there isn't a 'K' in that Kirby!)

In the February issue Bill Carman told of his return to Heusenstamm where his Lancaster came down. He tells me that there are plans for a permanent memorial to be set up next year in memory of those of his crew who died.

The new Cosford Cold War Exhibition was opened on February 7th by The Princess Royal. I went along for a look the following week and was most impressed. Just inside the entrance is 'Our Valiant', XD818 in which W/C Kenneth Hubbard and crew dropped Britain's first H-Bomb, near Christmas Island. Drawing mainly from his excellent book, Operation 'Grapple', I have written an article on this operation which appears in this issue.

All three of Britain's V Bombers are represented together with many other aircraft of the period. The exhibition is not limited to aircraft there being weapons, tanks and cars of the time as well as other 'hands on' displays. I have already sent out photos to those on e-mail and some more are reproduced in this issue.

Incidentally, with the Valiant going on display there are now three '49 types' at Cosford. Besides XD818 there is a Hind and a Lincoln housed in the other hangars. If you can get to Cosford I thoroughly recommend it.

In February I had a fascinating day covering early and late periods in 49 Squadron's history. In the morning I visited Alasdair and Elizabeth Campbell in their home in Bath. Alasdair was with 49 Squadron as Nav. (Radar) on Valiants. He then flew in both Victors and Vulcans before flying, "back seat", in Phantoms. Alasdair, who retired with the rank of Wing Commander, kindly donated a framed print by Michael Rondot of Valiant XD818 taking off. I have passed it on to Fiskerton Village Hall where it now hangs in The 49 Squadron Lounge. Alasdair tells me that XD818 appears in his log book.

In the afternoon I went to see Bob Carter in his home at Radstock where he told me that he remembers Scampton being built, flew as 'ballast' with Rod Learoyd in a Hind and remembers the first Hampdens arriving. He flew as an air gunner in the first leaflet raid of the war to the Keil Canal. His pilot was Sgt. Marshall. He went on to fly as F/E in Blenheims in North Africa. Bob joined 49 Squadron in August 1937 at Worthy Down and was posted out in 1940. At 90 years of age he still drives and cares for his invalid wife. Is he our earliest 49er? Equally fascinating for me as a steam enthusiast, he worked at Writhlington Colliery, which I am modelling, and he remembers the beautiful blue livery of the Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway trains.

It is early March when I am typing this paragraph and in my spare time I am reading Operation "Grapple" by W/C Kenneth Hubbard. This was presented to the Association Library by Alasdair Campbell during my visit and a very interesting read it is too. By coincidence I have received a letter from John Fray saying that the final, final, final reunion of the 49 Megaton Club is to be held at Cosford on May 15th. As previously stated, this will be the 50th Anniversary of 49 Squadron dropping the first British 'Megaton Range' bomb during the Christmas Island tests. Very sad, the end of another era, but I must find out how many of the 'Megatoners' are not members of our association where there is life in the old dog yet!

See Reader's Letters for more of John's letter.

On the back cover of this issue you will see that there have been additions to the list of 'officers'. David Boughton has for some time acted as 'link man' for post war affairs and has hosted a personal website on 49 Squadron. Malcolm Brooke has started preparing our own dedicated website. Malcolm is responsible for the www.bomberhistory.co.uk website which includes such 49 Squadron items as 'The loss of Lancaster JA691' and 'The Canal Raids'. An amateur military historian, Malcolm has also written articles for the 'After the Battle' magazine.

In order to agree the format of our site the 'officers' met at Petwood Hotel at the end of February. Malcolm took away with him the agreed structure and it is hoped that we will be up and running on the World Wide Web in August.

On hearing that we were in the area, Honorary Friends, W/O John May and F/L Gary Mennell invited us to visit Scampton. After an introductory talk on The Red Arrows and a walk round the maintenance hanger we watched one of the six daily practices. Yes! The Red Arrows practice six times a day during the closed season. That's why they are the best! I have been seeing red aeroplanes in my sleep ever since. The climax, for the ladies at least, was a group photograph taken with the pilots, a red Hawk was the backdrop. Some climax !

It is not widely known that a civilian organisation, Hawker Hunter Aviation, operates from Scampton. Their main purpose is to provide aircraft to play the 'Baddies' in military exercises and to this end they possess 12 Hunters, a Buccaneer S.2B and an awesome Sukhoi Su-22 Fitter. Whilst some of the Hunters were away on deployment at the time of our visit we did get up close — to the 'Bucc' and Sukhoi. I didn't realise just how big the Buccaneer is and the Sukhoi, capable of mach 2, looks a brute. Compared with the single seat cockpits that I have seen before, this one is enormous! Russian pilots must be extremely broad across the beam.

After lunch at 'The Dambusters' in Scampton village we were shown around the Scampton Museum, which is housed in what was a 49 Squadron hanger, by co-curator Mervyn Hallam. It is proposed to dedicate a room to 49' and should you wish to donate any items then let Gary Mennell know.

Home tel; 01522 682903 Work tel; 01522 733243

Reunion time is drawing near and most arrangements are in place. There are still a few seats available at the banquet on June 4th. If all goes to plan the BBMF Lancaster will fly over Petwood Hotel on Sunday 3rd June and the Dakota is due to fly over Lincoln Cathedral during our visit on Tuesday 5th. If everything works out it will be a reunion to remember.

Some of you I know saw my letter to the Daily Express in February. Whilst the gist of it was appropriate it had been heavily edited. They were careful to omit my plea for their support regarding the Bomber Command Medal although they did mention that a medal has never been awarded. By the way, the reference to the V1 as a rocket was their mistake not mine.

Ron Eeles was also moved to write to his local paper in response to a letter slating Sir Arthur Harris and his tactics. This was written by an ex Bomber Command member whose letter ended; "I am unhappy to have to say that the reaction of some readers seems to me to be an example of the callousness too often peculiar to English self - righteousness". On the other hand Ron's letter ended; "I would not be keeping faith with the dead of Bomber Command if I failed to rise to their defence rather than denigrate their heroic efforts to defeat the enemy". Well done Ron!

Some of you have contacted me asking after the health of Dot Smith (nee Everitt) and Geoff Stuffins. Unfortunately Geoff's cancer has returned and he is undergoing further treatment. When I last spoke to him, Geoff was positive and his usual cheery self. Dot has made a good recovery from her various operations but cannot taste anything but salt. This I believe helps when eating Stan's cooking. She says that she is also unsteady on her feet. Gordons don't make bottled water Dot! Seriously though I wish you both, and all ailing 4T9ers, a speedy recovery.

In Issue 3 of The 4T9er I recommended the Large Model Aircraft Association website. As the summer is fast approaching I had another look recently and the Valiant that I mentioned has been repaired after a crash and there is a stunning shot of it on finals. The site gives the dates of the main displays during the 2007 season. I will be visiting the show at Cosford on July 14/15th where hopefully three 15 ft. wingspan Lancasters and the Valiant will be flying.

Eric Clarke, who I believe could be our least junior 4T9er, celebrated his 94th birthday on April 22nd. Eric did a tour at Scampton on Hampdens, Manchesters and Lancasters during 1941/42. He had been suffering depression after his wife of 70 years had to enter a home for the aged. I had the pleasure of spending a couple of hours with him just before his birthday and enjoyed hearing of some of his experiences. Eric asked me to tell you that, on returning home I e-mailed all those whose addresses I have suggesting that they send a message to Eric. Unfortunately there was insufficient time to contact non e-mailers. Eric subsequently phoned me to say that he is overwhelmed by the response and to say how he has been lifted by the experience. He said, "It is manifest, the warmth, affection and fellowship that exists within our Association. I am so happy". Thank you to all who responded.

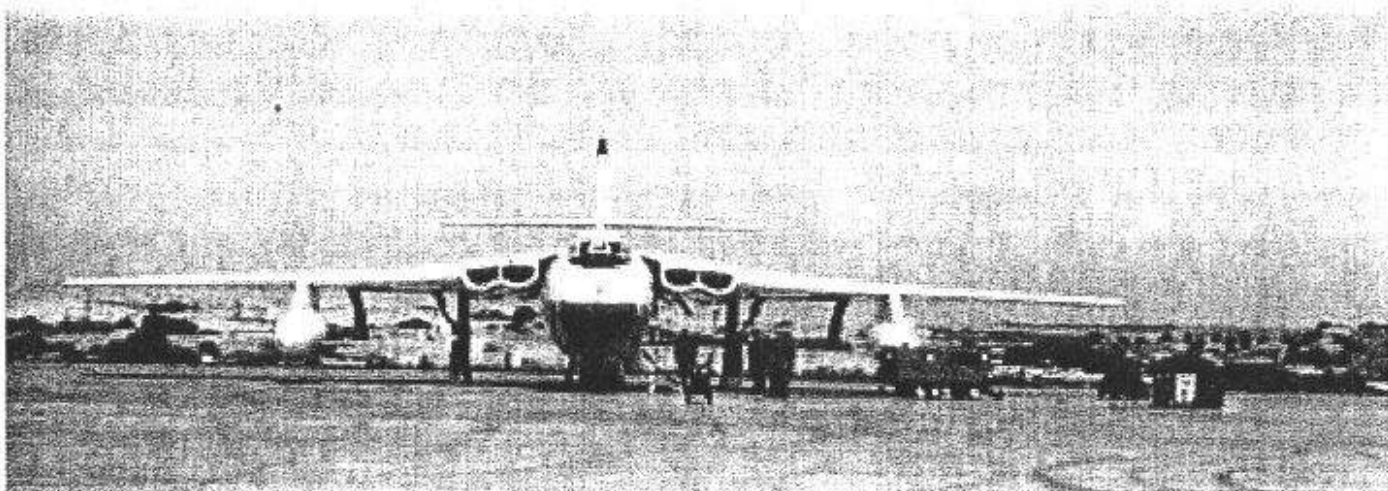
Geoff Brunton has told me, and I have received a letter from the Fulbeck Parish Council confirming, that The Parish Council has taken on the responsibility for the War Memorial at Fulbeck Airfield. I have written expressing our appreciation.

Those of you who are members of Lincolnshire's Lancaster Association, (BBMF) will have seen the excellent feature on Fiskerton in their magazine. I have received a number of calls from our members praising the article and I have e-mailed the author Tom Allett accordingly.

To commemorate 'Operation Manna' in 1945, when food was dropped to the starving Dutch people by the RAF, on 28th April 2007 the BBMF Lancaster is due to make a flyover of various locations in Holland. The planned itinerary is 28th April; Texel (Denbrug), Berkhout, Ursem, Bergen and Rotterdam (Manna Memorial). After staying overnight in Rotterdam the Lancaster will overfly Alkmaar and other cemeteries to Vlieland before returning home. Thanks to BBMF Operations Officer, F/L Jack Hawkins, a number of sites with strong 49 Squadron connections have been included. Jack, an Honorary Friend of 49 Squadron Association, was reading the last issue of The 4T9er when he noticed the significance of Berkhout and Bergen. Since then the operation has expanded to cover other sites. As I write this, April 23rd, the Lancaster still hasn't returned from its major overhaul. If not available it will be substituted by the Dakota subject to all the usual provisos.

As we are about to close for press, April 24th, news has arrived from Holland that the council of Koggenland has unanimously approved the expenditure of 950,000 Euros to finance the raising, commencing in September, of Hampden P1206 in Berkhout and a Liberator at Ursem. The former contains the bodies of Sgts. Kehoe and Mullinger of 49' (Issues 3 & 4). More news in August!

'Til the next time.



XD818 on the pan at Luqa in 1961 during one of the squadron "Sun Spots". Seeing how low she sits, how did the armourers load large bombs? (Photo Tom Morris)

OPERATION 'GRAPPLE'

Tuesday May 15th, 2007 is the Fiftieth Anniversary of Operation 'Grapple', the testing of Britain's first live thermonuclear weapon, a device 70 times more powerful than that exploded over Hiroshima. The bomb was dropped from Vickers Valiant B1, XD818, piloted by W/C Kenneth Hubbard, Officer Commanding No. 49 Squadron based at RAF Wittering. This was the first ever live drop, from an aircraft, of a weapon in the megaton range by any country.

Previously, all British atomic tests had taken place in either Maralinga, in the South Australian desert, or the Motte Bello Islands off Australia's northwest coast. However, such was the yield from the weapons in Operation 'Grapple' that it was out of the question to carry out the tests here. The site finally chosen was Christmas Island, the largest coral atoll in the Pacific. It is commonly thought that the first tests were carried out on Christmas Island. This was not so. Although the island was used as the operational base the early weapons were exploded at Malden Island, 400nm to the south. This is a flat coral island approximately 5 miles by 4½ miles. Only in later tests was Christmas Island itself used as the dropping area.

Besides the modified Valiant B1s of 49 Squadron, Bomber Command provided Canberra B6s from 76 Squadron for cloud sampling and the Canberra PR7s of 100 Squadron for high level meteorological survey work. In addition, the RAF provided Coastal Command Shackletons of 206 and 240 Squadrons for Maritime Reconnaissance, Whirlwinds of No. 22 Squadron for communications, air rescue and insecticide spraying and Hastings from Transport Command.

As well as the Royal Air Force's contribution the Royal Navy and Royal Engineers played a huge part. This was truly a combined services operation of massive proportions.

The test procedure was as follows; From 45,000 feet the bomb aimer aimed at a marked target on the most southerly point of Malden Island. This started the programme which delayed the actual release for 10 or 11 seconds, depending on wind conditions, so that the weapon actually detonated 1½ miles from the aiming point. During this time the pilot had to fly the aircraft at Mach 0.76, with no variation in heading, altitude or airspeed in order that the weapon release would take place precisely where required. This was to ensure that the detonation occurred at 8,000ft and at the precise point on which the multitude of monitoring instruments were focused.

Following the bomb aimer's, 'bomb gone', the co-pilot thrust open the throttles and the pilot hauled the aircraft in a 60 degree bank to the left. This had to be carried out precisely at 1.7G, altitude 45,000 feet and Mach 0.76 through 135 degrees in order that the tail mounted cameras were pointing at the explosion point. After release there was a 50 second delay before detonation. As the foregoing manoeuvre took 40 seconds there remained 10 seconds before the weapon passed through the burst point by then the aircraft was 9nm away.

That then was the procedure calling for airmanship of the highest standard.

Prior to the live drop, there were a number of dummy runs. The dropping aircraft flew a flat oval course, the first leg of which was parallel to the bombing leg. First a 'navigational run' was made down the bomb line to enable the crew to clarify exact drift, calculate an accurate ground speed and feed in the appropriate time delay to achieve the 1½ nm overshoot, calculated from ground speed. Following a 30 degree bank onto a reciprocal course the aircraft was required to report it's position on this leg at five set points to HMS Narvik, the scientific monitoring vessel. A second run around the circuit was then made to allow the team on HMS Narvik to test the correct functioning of all telemetering and recording equipment in the aircraft and the arming circuit of the weapon.

Initially 100 lb. practice bombs were used and on the first practice session ten such bombs were dropped. The nuclear test bomb itself weighed 10,000lbs. and was similar in appearance to Barnes Wallis' Grand Slam. The first of the final phase practices was carried out by Valiant XD823, modifications were being completed on XD818, with a full scale inert weapon which was fitted with telemetering devices. This was followed over a three week period by three further drops using HE weapons.

Thus the stage was set for the test proper. It is appropriate here, I think, to touch on the subject of radioactive fallout. This consists of fine particles of bomb debris or of dust or water particles from the earth's surface which have been contaminated by contact with the fireball. These particles are drawn into the upper air by the rising gases and carried to heights exceeding 50,000 feet. Depending on their mass they fall back to earth over a wide area.

However, in the 'Grapple' tests, the weapons were detonated 8,000ft above the sea, and the fireball did not touch the sea or earth. Therefore, the fall out was limited to the bomb debris only and as these particles were extremely small they took a very long time to fall to earth.

They were therefore spread over a very wide area and their effect on the general background level of radiation was negligible. It was confirmation of this during the first series of tests that prompted the decision to carry out the later tests off Christmas Island itself.

Thus, on May 15th, 1957, Valiant XD818 dropped Britain's first 'Megaton' bomb and further live drops took place on May 31st and June 19th. The aircraft were piloted by S/L Dave Roberts and S/L Arthur Steele respectively. So successful were the three tests that the fourth was cancelled.

Further tests eventually took place as follows:-

November 8th	1957	'Grapple X'	S/L Barney Millett	XD824
April 28th	1958	'Grapple Y'	S/L Bob Bates	XD825
September 2nd	1958	'Grapple Z'	S/L Bill Bailey	XD822
September 11th	1958	'Grapple Z'	F/L Tiff O'Connor	XD827

In 1958 the RAF's V bomber force began receiving its first thermonuclear weapons and Britain's nuclear deterrent was in place.

49 Squadron had earned itself yet another place in history.

RESEARCHER'S ROLE

By Colin Cripps

Before I give you an insight into my position as Association Researcher, I would like to identify my connection with 49 Squadron. My Uncle was W/Op Sgt B.R. Cripps who was killed with the rest of his crew in EA-U ED584, on the raid to Bochum on the 12-13th of June 1943.

All of my Father's side of the family, excepting himself, were service personnel during the War. You would think that this would have rubbed off on me. However, when approached by Alan Parr to take on the roll of Researcher, I volunteered immediately, contrary to the old service saying of 'don't volunteer for anything'. I believe it was my own fault for telling Alan that I lived only 5 miles from the Public Records Office at Kew.

Having already carried out research in respect of my Uncle at the PRO, I was quite aware of what information could be obtained and where to find it.

Recently I have finished a large project for Douwe Drijver in Holland, he required copies of all the Bomber Command raid reports from mid 1942 to the end of the war. These raid reports could be up to twelve pages long and include raid route maps.

Just before D-Day, and to the end of the war, there was almost 24 hour bombing, with the Allies carrying out up to five raids per day including primary and secondary targets.

Whilst on the subject of the PRO, a brief insight into some of the files held there are as follows: Allied POW interrogation reports, air crew evader reports, obviously raid reports, POW camp aerial photographs and the bane of Uncle Will's life the Squadron Operational Record Books. Unfortunately, the reports are often carbon copies of the originals, and subsequently the carbon paper was heavily used and not replaced, probably due to the fact that, 'there is a war on!' More often than not photocopying these documents is a nightmare and bear in mind, a lot of these documents are also kept on microfilm which doesn't help matters.

It never ceases to amaze me whilst working in the PRO, how easy it is to be sidetracked. In a moment of madness, I found a file appertaining to the Lichtenstein airborne radar carried by German night fighters, and immediately photocopied it and ordered copies of the original photographs. Why I did this I do not know, but I am sure that it will have some use some day. Should anyone be interested in the workings of this airborne radar, I would be happy to let you borrow it.

Problem solving has also been part of my work as a Researcher for the Association. Recently Ted Cachart commissioned several paintings by John Ward depicting the loss of Ted's aircraft 'Nancy Pants'. One picture shows the collision of N-NAN with a second aircraft. Ted wanted to get his crew to autograph the bottom of the painting. The problem was that Len Crossman was killed in a motorcycle accident in 1945 and Jack Scott passed away in 1966.

I had recently obtained for Ted copies of his crews' POW interrogation reports, all service personnel on re-patriation to the UK completed these after the war. Ted then had a brainwave, he superimposed Len and Jack's signatures from the reports onto card at the bottom of the painting. Problem solved!

Having been a Collator, or as they are now known, Local Intelligence Officer, with the Police has helped considerably with my position as Researcher. It has given me the ability to follow the smallest leads until I can produce a satisfactory answer.

The response that I get when I contact another organisation and introduce myself as Researcher often amazes me, compared to how I was treated when working as an individual. To overcome some of the problems I have a letter of authority from Alan Parr indicating my position within the Association.

One of the organisations I have contact with is the Aces High aviation art gallery at Wendover. They regularly have allied and axis aircrew at the gallery during weekends, to autograph books and paintings which people bring along or buy at the gallery. During March this year, I received a flyer stipulating that there would be an RAF Pathfinder signing event. Being away on holiday at that time, I did not pay much attention to it. After the event date, and my holiday, it was not until I was filing the flyer that I had a sudden shock. One of the names on the flyer was, in fact a person who I believe to be my old Headmaster from my school days. Subsequently I wrote to the gallery including my details, and asked them to forward it on to him, I hope my hunch is correct.

Another organisation that I am in regular contact with is the National Archives and Records Administration in Maryland USA. NARA holds a substantial amount of Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe records. After the war the Americans gathered all the German records together and then asked the Allies whether or not they wanted to peruse and take copies. Believe it or not, every other country said 'yes' except Great Britain who, after reading them, said 'no'. This is quite irritating because it can take up to six weeks to get a response from NARA for copies of documents.

I find it very rewarding working as part of a team for the Association, and to assist people to gain information in their search for a friend or member of their family who served with the Squadron.

By the time you receive this magazine I will have moved to Suffolk. No, not to get away from the PRO, that will still continue, but as a change of life. I am sure that the 4T9er Enquiry Committee will pun 'Constable Country'! It will then be my intention to discover more of the US Eighth Air Force as there is an interested historian living in the village. *(We wish Colin and Pam a happy life out in the 'sticks'. Ed.)*

Should any of you in the Association have any queries or just be inquisitive as to what information could be obtained, turn to the back of the magazine and get in touch with us, that's what we are here for. It's your Association.

In reading lies knowledge, In knowledge lies wisdom.

Memory of final flight preserved in painting

The crew driver who ferried members of 49 Squadron around during the Second World War has been given a commemorative painting of a crew's final mission. Dorothy Smith was the popular driver who would often skip lunch breaks to have a go in the planes and even made one of the crews a doll which became their mascot during flights.

Mrs Smith has now been presented with a printed copy of a painting depicting the group setting off for their last flight, from Fiskerton airfield in 1943. On that flight the squadron's Lancaster was involved in a mid-air collision in Germany. All of the seven crew members survived and were taken as prisoners of war.

Artist John Ward went to the site at Fiskerton so he could paint the skyline and then depicted the crew walking towards the plane.

The 49 Squadron Association, which today has 250 members, thought it appropriate that Mrs Smith should have a copy of the painting.

The 83-year-old, who lives off Mount Street in the Burton Road area of Lincoln, was proud to have received it. "It's smashing – it's a really professional painting," she said. "I was the last one to see the crew before they went off on that final flight." She added: "I had no idea they were going to present the picture to me so it was a great surprise. In one corner is the doll I made and in the other corner is the bus I drove the crew in. I have fantastic memories of my time with the crew."

Wireless operator air gunner with 49 Squadron Ted Cachart, now chairman of the 49 Squadron Association, presented Mrs Smith with the painting.

"Dot is one of the people I remember very well," he said. "For starters she was very attractive and before that last flight I had accidentally taken my wallet with me. You weren't supposed to take anything with you so I gave my wallet to Dot before I set off. When I was captured she took the wallet back to my parents. On the painting it so happens that the figure of me is based on a photo of me when I was 16. None of the figures were meant to resemble the real people but the artist has captured the same stance that I had in the photo."

The 49 Squadron Association will be holding its annual meeting in the county in June.



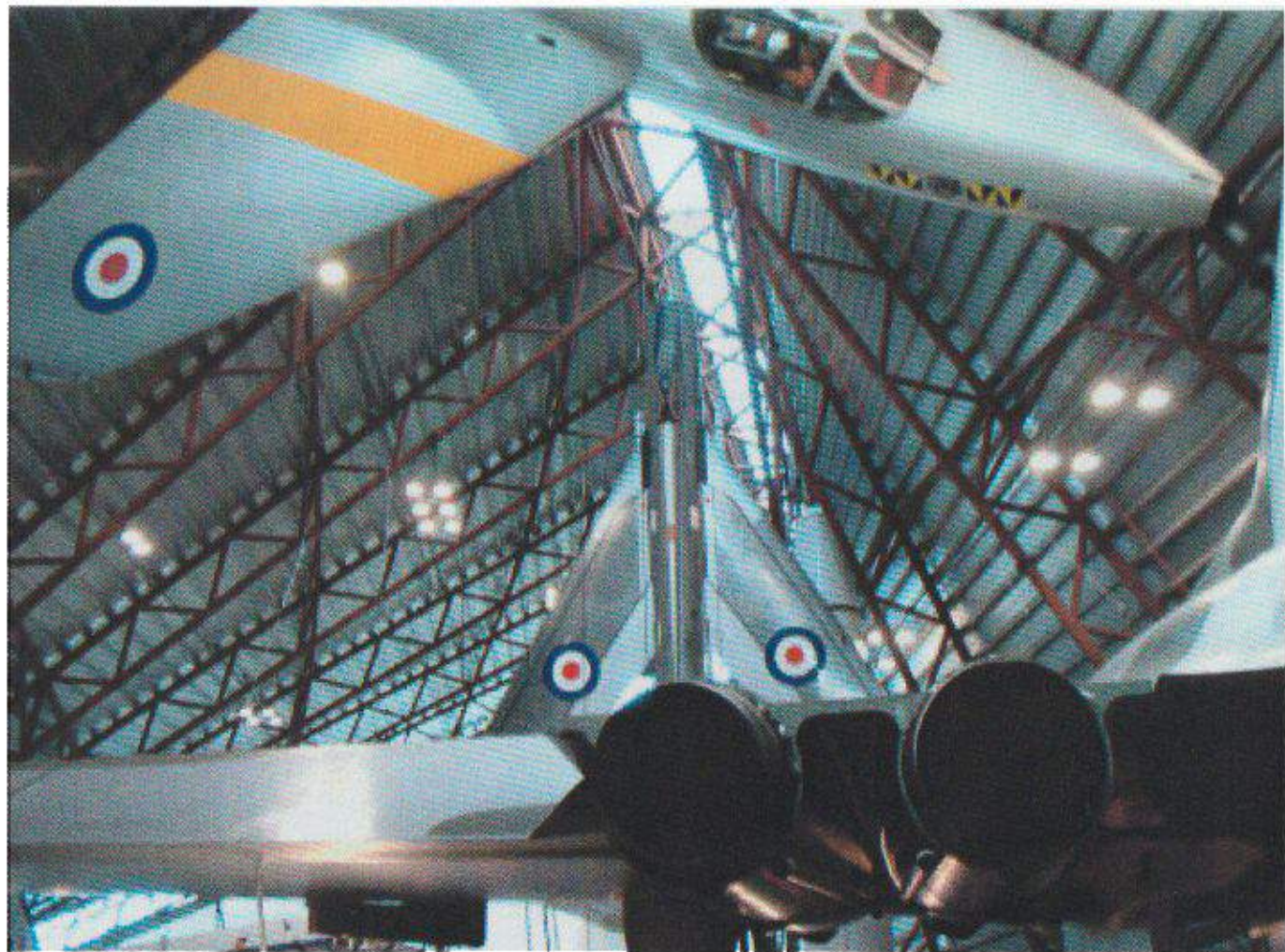
The Britannia welcomes visitors to Cosford in the spring sunshine.



Douglas Dakota IV KN645 and Gloster Javelin FAW.1 XA564 'fly over' Avro York C.1 TS798 and HP Hastings T.5 TG511



Amongst Ken Read's stamp collection is a remarkable section of eighteen stamps featuring Lancasters. Ken estimates that there are about twenty-two that have been issued. Those that he requires are; Bhutan (137), Anguilla (1029), Canada (1577), Grenadines and St. Vincent (MS 667). Can anyone help trace them?



Suspended from the roof above the Avro Vulcan B.2 XM598 are Hawker Hunter T.7 XL568 and EE Lightning F.1 XG337



Short Belfast C.1 XR371 towers over a Volkswagen Beetle, Austin Mini and Trabant



This very cheerful Valiant crew are; L to R - F/L Ernie Huntley, Co-pilot; F/O Tom (Taff) Morris, AEO; S/L John Cheesborough, Captain and Flight Commander; F/L Bob Weekes, Nav Radar; F/L Michael (Spike) Milligan, Nav Plotter

Tom Morris and John Cheesborough retired as Wing Commanders and 'Spike' Milligan as Air Commodore (AOC Gibraltar). (Photo Tom Morris)

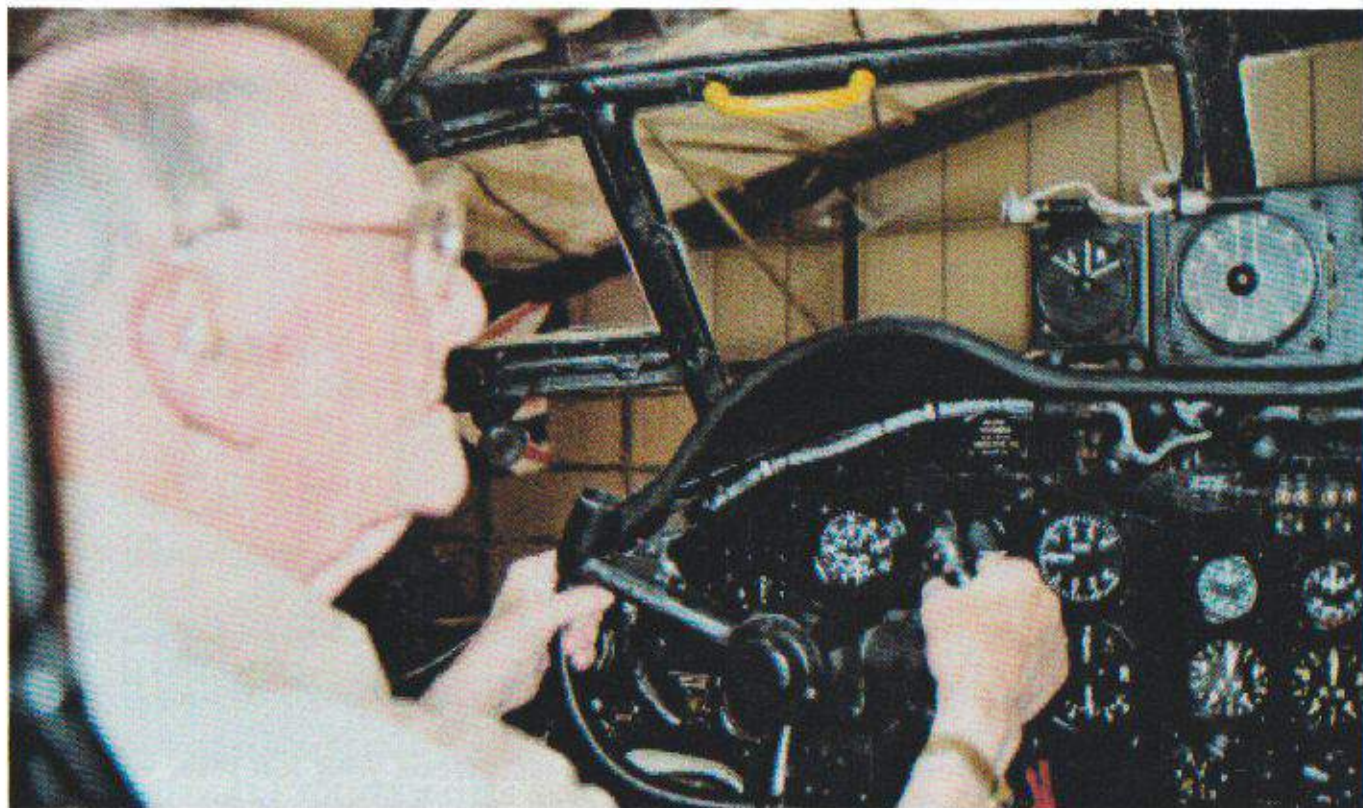
Tom, Bob and Spike are all members of the Association but does anyone know where the two 'drivers' are?

By the way chaps I don't think that you realise how dangerous your job was. When I asked if I could take a look inside XD818 I was told, "No, because of the radiation risk..... from the luminous dials." Honestly!



Jo Cockburn is offering the above framed print for sale.

'PER ARDUA AD ASTRA' by John Young illustrates the BBMF formation flying over Windsor Castle. This copy is number 467 of an issue of 495. The Certificate of Authenticity is available. Jo is asking for £150 of which she would make a very generous donation to Association funds. Carriage to be agreed.



'Uncle Will' Hay in the office for the last time. See Jorgen Jorgensen's letter, page 24

Checking back through my files I found the following letter from John Aldridge that I had misplaced. Sorry John;

I notice in your Editorial (Nov 2006) that you mention that you have a passion for steam engines. I was brought up to have a great love of steam engines since my father's business was concerned with steam threshing contracting and he owned about ten steam traction engines. My two older brothers drove engines and up to the age of about ten I lived for them and dearly wanted to become a driver but my father thought there were enough in the family business and he sent me off to a Grammar School to continue my education. He also had six steam rollers which were contracted to the local County Council. I still love to see them as they bring back lovely memories of my early years. I too was a great follower of the late Fred Dibnah.

Sixteen steam engines! I must go and have a cold shower! Ed.

Eric Read wrote;

It could be of interest to those of us who were at Heaton Park during the "dark days" that there is a available a good little book of some 40 pages with drawings and maps. I finally traced the author last year, after chasing elusive leads, to John R. (Jack) Sharp, who lives about a mile from me here in Wymondham, He lives at : 19, Holly Blue Road. Wymondham, NR18 0XJ.

Tel; 01953 601503 Well worth having. The title is 'Over the Wall'.

I have spoken to Jack Sharp who tells me that he 'runs these off' himself and therefore they are limited in availability. Ed.

John May e-mailed;

Thanks for the latest copy of the 4T9er; I was saddened to read of the passing of Air Chief Marshal (only one '1', old chap) Sir Lewis Hodges; when I was a sprog corporal in Holland he was the Deputy Commander of all Allied Forces in Central Europe based in Brunssum. As he was aircrew, we maintained his flying record which dated back to when he was first commissioned prior to the start of WWII; during his cadetship at Cranwell, I was intrigued to read the comment from one of his instructors along the lines of "Hodges, although a competent pilot, does not appear to have the officer qualities needed to progress to command rank"; how wrong can you be?

I met him again at Swinderby in 1980 when I was a sergeant; Sir Lewis was the President of the RAF Escaping Society and we hosted some extremely brave French, Dutch and Belgian people who had all been part of the network which helped downed airmen get to Spain. Incidentally, his grandson, Marcus, is a Catholic priest in the RAF and we served together at both Bruggen and Laarbruch.

Bill Carman e-mailed to correct an assumption on my part;

...On page 4 it states, I did a tour with 49, in actual fact we only did seven 'ops' before being sent to 83 Sqdn. But I'm proud of the fact that five of the seven were on Berlin and the last one, a 'SPOOF' with only 34 of us going in 'windowing' like mad to try to draw the fighters away from the main attack on Magdaburg. Jitters all the way. I would hate to claim for a TOUR I did not do. *My fault. Ed.*

As previously mentioned, John Fray wrote;

I was reading an article, that may be of interest to some of our members, about the Dutch Liberation Medal. The Dutch Government has issued a commemorative medal for all those who took part in the liberation of Holland in WWII. Those interested should apply to; W/O Dick Wip, Assistant to the Defence Attaché, Defence Department, 18 Hyde Park Gate, London, SW7 5DP giving details of their service record.

Tom Reed's letter read;

Although I left 49' in May '45, I had joined it as a Corporal Armament Fitter on 13th January 1941, I will always treasure my time with the squadron.

I worked on the Hampdens, and with the advent of the Manchesters and Lancasters I was promoted to Sgt. I/C Gunnery Section (Photo page 150 'the Dog' with W/O Spradbury on the right front of F/L Ken Rogers and myself on the left front of him). I can still remember the faces of all my crew but unfortunately can only name a few. (Anno domini!)

When I left 49' I was posted into Fighter Command and served as NCO I/C Armoury at RAF Acklington on the Air Fighting Development Squadron. I was commissioned, served as Station Armament Officer at RAF Laarbruch (NATO Base) and retired from A&AEE, RAF Boscombe Down as a Weapons Systems Trials Officer but my outstanding memories are the years I spent with good old 49'. I found the articles about the squadron history very interesting and hope we recruit many more members to fill in the gaps.

Well, we have some new members. This is Jim (Robby) Robson's introduction;

I understand from Ray Bridger that you have recently taken over as scribe for the newsletter of 49 Squadron, and you are looking for new members, particularly veterans with experiences to relate. Ray may have told you that five members of our Lancaster crew are still alive and in regular contact which I believe is a record. (No-one has come up with more, yet! Ed.)

We joined the squadron at Fulbeck on Friday, 13th April 1945, and I flew my 2nd dicky trip with F/L Milburn over Pilsen on the 16th April. On our return we were diverted to Boscombe Down and I think my crew had a momentary scare that I hadn't made it. Unfortunately (or fortunately which ever way you look at it) that was my only Op. before the war in Europe ended.

The Squadron was posted to Syerston on 27th April and a horrific crash occurred as a Lancaster "shot up" the airfield at Fulbeck, touched a wing on a hanger and pranged into a group of RAF Regiment on parade, killing its crew and passengers and a number of the regiment. My crew were waiting to be picked up by motor transport a few hundred yards away and the resultant carnage was awful to behold.

At Syerston the squadron prepared itself for further operations in the Far East but alas the war ended before we could make any contribution.

The squadron moved to Mepal where most of the crew completed their RAF careers.

Posted in on Friday 13th April! Perhaps more than a 2nd dicky would have been pushing it! Ed.

A letter from Trevor Jennings reads;

I read Bill Carman's story with a mixture of many emotions. (*February, issue 5*) I was at Fiskerton with Tudor Jones' crew from December '43 – May '44 and recall 'B' Flight pilot names at the time. Henley, Letts, Dickinson, Meggeson, spring to mind. With reference to the latter, I flew in Lanc, JB701 as Sgt. Meggeson's rear gunner on an operation to Berlin 1st January 1944. This affinity I can remember (*Beware of the Dog, page 293* refers). Suffice to say, the few words therein, mirrored a great deal of happenings. He engendered in full the real spirit of aircrew there at the time.

I'm sure the June reunion will be enjoyed by all present, and the '49' spirit will prevail throughout. As an 'Absent Friend', my thoughts will not be too far away.

An e-mail from our Archivist Ed Norman;

.....John (Beck) also has the dubious honour of having completed two 'ops' in a day! Ted actually pointed this out to John.

John was the F/E to Skipper John Barrie when they went to Givors on the 11th August 1944. Eight and a half hours later at 0507 they landed back at Mildenhall, but after debriefing, the Yanks had no facilities for them so they slept in J-Jig, LM 653.

They took off at 1220 for Fiskerton arriving 35 minutes later, probably reporting in just as 49' were asked to provide any available aircraft to support our armies in the Falaise area.

The armourers had 'bombed-up' for a sortie to Brunswick when... 'at very short notice, the Squadron was asked to put on any available crews to support the army in this area. 10/10ths cloud at target. Bombing is thought to have been accurate on markers. A commendable effort with such short time available for preparation.'

After a trip of three hours and twenty minutes they arrived safely back for a well-earned kip.

A letter from Phil Varvel reads;

I was very interested to read about the new member, John Gunn.

I used to service George Abbott's Lanc which was EA-W. When I was at Syerston and Fulbeck I flew with him a few times on bombing practice over Skegness, I think that the bombing range was at Wainfleet. F/L Abbott was a member of 49 Sqdn. Assoc, he died a few years ago. His home was Auckland, New Zealand.

It brings back memories, seeing the Lancs off and seeing them back again, filling them up with 2,000 galls of fuel, very cold in Lincolnshire in winter, bikes to ride around on doing daily inspections, signing the Form 700, climbing up the undercarriage to prime the engines, de-icing wings with a stirrup pump. It was really hard days, never heard of hypothermia then!!!

When I was at Syerston I was transferred to the Fleet Air Arm (Navy). Went to Manchester, handed over RAF uniform in exchange for Naval uniform. I finished up in Scotland, a place called Rattery Point, up past Peterhead in Aberdeenshire, doing inspections on Fleet Air Arm planes; Seafires, Barracudas, Wildcats & Avengers. I wouldn't have missed it though, good lot of comrades.

The following letter, applying to join the Association, was sent by Paul McLocklin;

Having recently been to an excellent talk by Ted Cachart on 49 Squadron I asked him if it was possible to find out about my uncle who also flew with 49 Squadron. His name was Kenneth Blackham and was actually my cousin but seniority gave him the name of uncle.

To my great surprise and delight Ted not only found him in the squadron records but also told me that his pilot Eric Jones is still alive and living in Poole, Dorset. I have since spoken to Eric who told me quite a lot about him and hopefully later in the year we will be able to meet.

As you can imagine I am delighted to have discovered all this information and would very much like to join the 49 Squadron Association.....

During Jorgen and Ingelisa Jorgensen's visit to the UK 2005, Jorgen visited the cockpit of 'Just Jane' and took a photograph of Uncle Will, once more in the pilot's seat. (See page 20). He subsequently wrote to Uncle on the subject of the main spar affecting emergency escape and Jorgen has emailed me with Uncles' reply;

"Dealing with your comment regarding our visit to the Lanc at East Kirkby;

In my time in 1944, on bombing operations, it was made even more narrow by the stowage of equipment such as the master compass unit, parachutes, axes, oxygen bottles, fire extinguishers and, in the cockpit just in front of the Flight Engineer, bundles of 2 types of "window", from floor to window level.

Baling out was a procedure that had to be dealt with as the situation demanded subject to these questions - Was communication severed? Was the aircraft on fire, if so where? Was there flak damage and any injury to the crew? What escape hatches were accessible? Was the crew still able to receive oxygen? How was the aircraft flying - in a dive or spinning? Hitting another aircraft or being hit by bombs from one above caused other problems.

Each man had to get out as best as he could from where he could. It was the duty of the pilot, if he was still conscious, to try to control the aircraft long enough for the others to bale out or break out with the axes, and count them out if possible, then try to get out from the hatch above his head. There were so many cases where the hatches, or door could not be opened due to damage.

Theoretically, there was a drill for baling out. The pilot, if able would give the order and in case the intercom was disconnected, flash the letter "J" or "D" for ditching which would be received by each crewmember on his light - used in case of lack of intercom. The rear gunner would try to reverse his turret and bale out backwards. The mid upper would go aft to check if the rear gunner had got out otherwise to help if possible. In many cases, the rear door jammed and they had to break out. Even this was not always possible. Pages 305/6 of our book "The Dog", illustrate what might happen.

In the front, the bomb aimer would have opened the front hatch in the bomb aimers position or, if he had been with the navigator working H2s and Gee, the flight engineer would perform this task and stand by to assist the others out. Each man would tap the pilot as they passed then he, after seeing them out if possible, would bale out through the hatch over his head.

It is a wonder to me that anyone was ever able to jump. Seeing aircraft on fire, going down directly in flames, spinning or exploding made me realise that there was very little chance, but it did happen as my records often show: -

"There was a blinding flash and the next thing I knew I was coming down by parachute with the handle in my hand. I have no recollection of opening it!" Or - **"There was a blinding flash and I ..."**. After the war, our Group Captain told me what happened to him - **"There was a blinding flash and the next thing** I knew was that I was lying in the Dortmund Ems Canal with a badly sprained ankle and other minor injuries. I have no idea how I got there. Fortunately, you had drained it". He then related what happened after that - quite a story!

Yes, it was Jessie's first sight of the inside of a Lancaster. She found it hard to believe that the crew could carry out their duties in such a confined space, and it was extraordinary that they could endure so much discomfort for such long periods."

Laurie Highman said, in his letter to me;

.....Looking through the Membership List I tried to find the names of my brother Arthur's crew with "49" but no luck. All may be now "passed on". Arthur volunteered to stay on in the RAF after the war as a "WOP" instructor, but was sadly killed in a collision on his first flight at RAF Topcliffe, North Yorkshire in 1948. After a successful tour at Fiskerton how ironic!

Arthur Highman's crew were; P/O JH Simpson, Sgt RH Mowen, F/S D Hiscock, Sgt RP Wheeler, Sgt DE Walker, Sgt C Winterburn. 'A' Flight 1943/44 Ed.

In The 4T9er, February, Issue 5, we reproduced Don Coomber's letter to Flypast magazine relating his experiences with 49 Squadron in Kenya. Following is the end of that letter which Flypast did not print;

....In addition did anybody hear about the Airman's strike during 1954 by NCOs because of the disgusting catering? Bigwigs from all over Cyprus and Aden with their "scrambled egg" and thick braids eventually agreed with us and this improved. What about the locust swarm in 1955 that caused aircraft to land in panic. It was a mile wide, two miles high and took an hour to pass Eastleigh. And what about our local hypnotist – this was an LAC equipment bod who had the knack and often had a shed full of men and women all with their arms in the air and singing songs they didn't know. He had me chasing Marilyn Monroe around the block, dead certain she was for me! We also had some magnificent shows for which I was a back stage assistant, there was Jimmy Edwards, six of the TV Toppers (Remember them?), Peter Butterworth, Janet Brown, Ronnie Ronalde and a lovely lady from Australia, Lorraine Desmond who I was happy to meet again when I was in Vietnam in 1970. Them were the days!

In his covering letter Don remarks that the hypnotist's name was Harrison and asks if it was our Dave Harrison from whom we have received and published a number of pieces on Eastleigh. Ed.

CAN YOU HELP?

The Chairman e-mailed;

Responding to the question of 'Bullseyes', what were they?

Answer; A longer than usual navigation cross country with a 'target' that one bombed with a camera. If successful, you only did the one. (No comment about the one with THREE in his logbook !!!!) I got the question and answer after a talk that I gave last night. (Feb.)

I'm relieved that it was bombing with a camera as Harry Cowan did two on St James's Park. Ed.

An e-mail from Ed Norman reads;

I have been chatting to John Beck who recalls:

“We were returning from a daylight raid and had been routed to fly around the outskirts of Paris. While over the large marshalling yards at St Denis, one of our Flight Commanders was brought down but parachuted safely down into the yard in broad daylight. Needless to say, he ripped off his ‘chute and ran like hell – difficult to bury a ‘chute under a railway line! Turning a corner, he bumped into a girl who spoke perfect English and who took him to one of the nearby tenements and hid him from the Germans. He was passed onto the ‘Comet Line,’ an escape route handled by the resistance, and made it back to Fiskerton in just six weeks.”

Can anyone remember the name of this Flight Commander and when and where the target – John thinks it may have been late (probably August) 1944?

Ken Manning responded with;

Re letter (February issue, page 26, Can you Help?) from Josephine Williams, daughter of Owen Williams, I was WOP/AG in F/O Norman Alty’s crew. We joined 49 Sqdn. at the same time as F/O Cannon and I recognised the photo of Owen. We spent the same time on ops as his crew so knew them very well. Only my rear gunner, Dave Millet, and myself are still here! I agree we had some wonderful times as well as the other kind!! With best wishes to Owen.....

Ron Eeles wrote regarding John Beck’s Oxford query;

The reference on page 27 of the magazine (*Issue 5*) re Airspeed Oxfords was interesting. What I can tell you is that as a young A/G of 19 years I wanted to acquire as many flying hours as I could and when at Fiskerton (31st January – 2nd May ’44) there was an Oxford based there on Beam Approach training.

I asked the pilot if I could fly with him and a colleague which he agreed to.

The under mentioned extract is from my logbook :-

7th March ’44	Oxford HN485	Duty	Beam Approach
	Pilot F/S Richmond	Duration	(Night 50 minutes) x 2

I remember my pilot being very impressed with my initiative but having said that we were a very keen crew and to this day and beyond I think of them daily.

On the same subject, Geoff Brunton wrote;

In answer to John Beck’s question re the 49 Squadron Oxford; I did make six flights in this aircraft. The dates are taken from my logbook. I have included three stories that could be of interest. I would also like to explain why I flew with F/L G. Lee and F/L L. Hay – Uncle Will.

I completed my tour of ops. with George Lee on 11-12-44. George and I were retained on the squadron, George as staff pilot and myself as staff engineer. Our job was to give crews an “Initial Check” followed by a 10 to 20 minute sortie check.

George managed to get permission from the Station Commander to use the Oxford to take Officers on 72 hour passes or 7 days leave.

We, George and I, continued to work together 'till George was posted to Germany. It was at this stage that Uncle Will completed his tour of ops. and replaced George.

Oxford flight dates are as follows;

DATE	SER. No	PILOT	DESTINATION	Hrs.
22.1.45	VN4197	F/L G. Lee	Base to Ford and return	3.00
11.4.45	ditto	ditto	Base to Bardney and return	1.30
13.4.45	ditto	F/L L. Hay	Circuits and landings	1.15
30.4.45	AB763	ditto	Chedburgh and return	1.00
13.5.45	ditto	ditto	Base to Boreham and return	1.50
12.6.45	ditto	ditto	Base to Coningsby and return	0.55
TOTAL				9.30

Three stories relating to these flights are as follows;

22.1.45 George and myself delivered F/O..... to Ford airfield for leave. Because I originated from Worthing, 10 miles east of Ford, I asked George if we could fly along the coast and turn on a northerly course over the town to a suburb called Broadwater. My parents and sister lived in this area. George agreed but we soon discovered that the cloud base over Worthing was down to 200–250 feet. We were in and out of the cloud base when I spotted Broadwater Church. I said to George, "I have seen the church, we had better climb quickly because the South Downs rise to 600 feet in a couple of miles". We must have cleared the highest point ok or I would not be relating this story.

13.4.45 This was a familiarisation flight for Uncle Will, under instruction from George Lee. Uncle rolled the Oxford down the runway for take off, no problems encountered. George landed the aircraft at Bardney. After doing whatever we had gone to Bardney for, Uncle took off again. On return to Fulbeck, George said, we will do a few circuits and bumps. On one approach I noticed that we were too low. Uncle, being an excellent pilot, put more power on and we touched down at the beginning of the runway. We taxied to the dispersal point, switched engines off, did the normal internal checks then left the aircraft to do the external checks. To our dismay, there was a strand of barbed wire straddling both undercarriage legs. Another close shave!

13.5.45 Uncle and I had taken an Officer to RAF Boreham, Essex. Whilst taxiing round the perimeter track to make the return flight to base, Uncle asked if I had taken an aircraft off. I said "No". His reply was "About time you did". Uncle asked Flying Control for permission to take off and received the required answer. Uncle turned the Oxford onto the runway and lined it up for take off. He then said "OK, It's all yours. If you have trouble take hands and feet off and I will take over".

I opened both throttles, the aircraft moved forward, gaining speed then began to drift to the right, I put opposite rudder on, applied the hand brake and nothing happened. We continued towards the edge of the runway. Uncle could see I was in trouble, so he said, "OK, I have control". We eventually took off from the grass approximately 50 feet from the runway. A few minutes after getting airborne, Uncle said, "What happened at the start of the take off"? I replied, "The hand brake didn't work". He reached across to the hand brake on my control column and discovered that he couldn't work it either. I then made a closer examination of the brake lever and noticed that it was connected to a Bowden cable – brake cable on a bike. I came to the conclusion that the cable had seized up through lack of use. However, my attempt to take off was quite an experience!

Non pilots like me may be wondering why one should apply the hand brake when swinging on take off. Geoff explained that when rudder is applied a diverter valve causes the hand brake, when applied, to operate on the wheel on the same side as the rudder application. Yep! That figures when taxiing. By coincidence I was reading Eric Jones' memoirs the evening of my conversation with Geoff and Eric wrote, "On the 12th, 18th, 19th November I succeeded in bursting an undercarriage tyre. Three in a week! I was new to Ansons and apparently the thing not to do was to turn the aircraft with one wheel locked whilst taxiing. Do this and sooner or later it will result in a blow out." Eric subsequently told me that one didn't dream of turning something as big as a Lancaster with one wheel locked but an Anson.....well! Ed.

Alan Harris emailed the following enquiry from South Africa;

Archie Watt, who lost his life with 49 Squadron on 28th December 1941, is named on the WW2 Memorial in my former home town, Marandellas, Southern Rhodesia. (now Marondera, Zimbabwe)

I am keen to obtain a photo of each of the twenty servicemen honoured as well as biographical details.

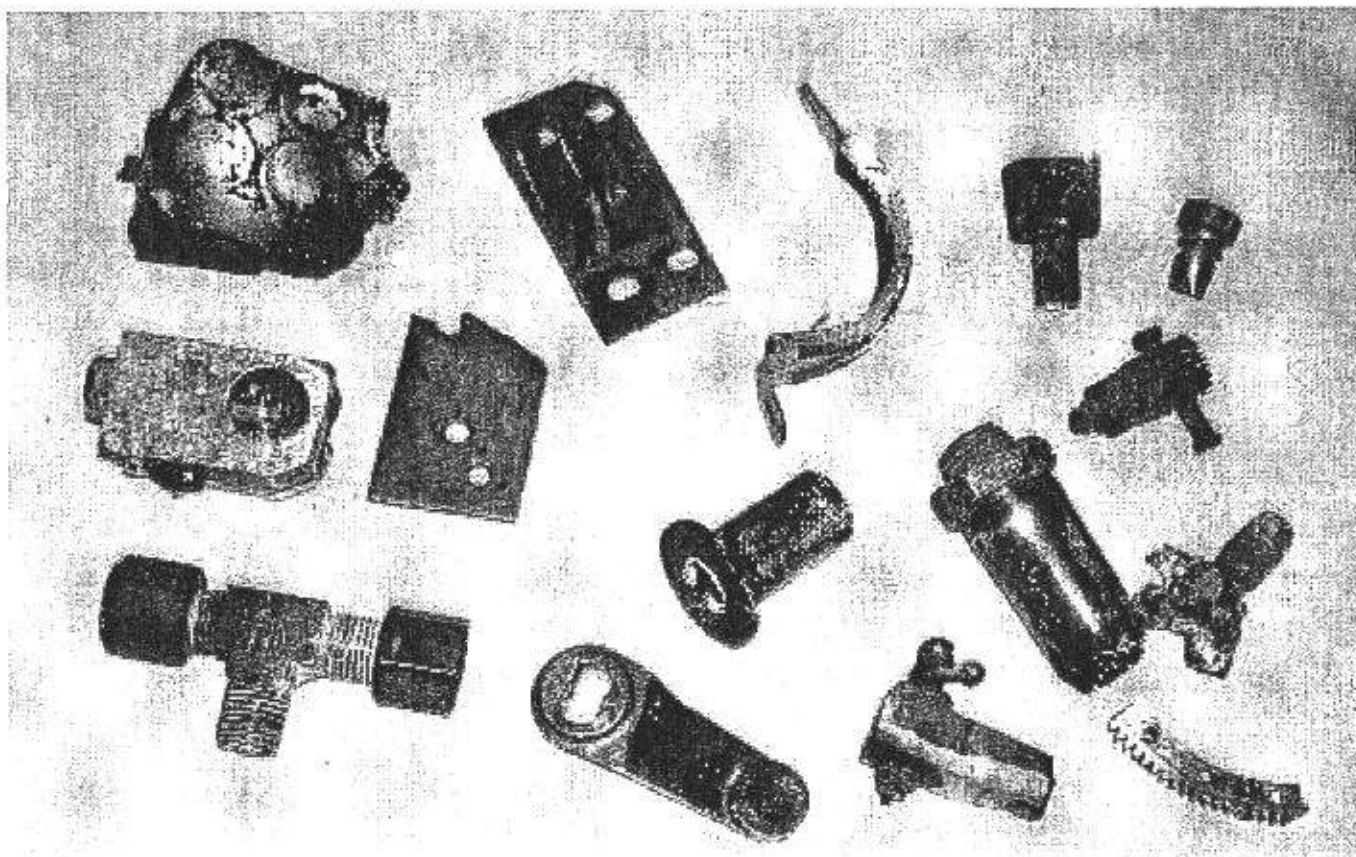
Archie was in Hampden AE419 and I wonder if any of your members have a photo of this aircraft. I do have a photo of Archie in uniform should your archivist be interested.



The Chairman asks;

In a Lancaster, behind the pilot's sheet metal 'bullet proof' plate there is a yellow circular patch. Does anybody know what it is for? Someone mentioned 'Gas detector' but the pilots didn't have eyes in the back of their heads. !!

Andrew Macdonald sent a photograph of relics from his Great Uncle's Lancaster ED497. Can you identify any of them?



4T9er CHUCKLES

"Though I Fly Through the Valley of Death, I Shall Fear No Evil. For I am at 80,000 Feet and Climbing." -

At the entrance to the old SR-71 operating base Kadena, Japan

"You've never been lost until you've been lost at Mach 3."

Paul F. Crickmore (test pilot)

"There are more planes in the ocean than submarines in the sky."

From an old carrier sailor.

"If the wings are travelling faster than the fuselage, it's probably a helicopter and therefore dangerous".

"Five second fuses only last three seconds." - Infantry Journal

"No combat-ready unit has ever passed inspection."

"Any ship can be a minesweeper. Once."

"Don't draw fire; it irritates the people around you. - Your Buddies"

Trabant Factory; "Hello Herr Schmidt. I am ringing to tell you that your new Trabant will be ready in 10 years' time, on October 14th 1994."

Delighted customer; "Fantastic. Can you tell me whether it will be delivered in the morning or afternoon?"

Trabant Factory; "Are you crazy? I said it won't be ready for another ten years".

Delighted customer; "Yes, I know, but I've got the plumber coming that morning".

Due to the shortage of pressing quality steel in East Germany the Trabant body shell was moulded from resin impregnated cotton. During a business trip to Germany in the early nineties I remember seeing one and my German companions saying that they are called 'cardboard cars' in the West. They didn't rust of course but the smoke that they trailed was reminiscent of an F111 taking off. They enjoy cult status now and I believe that over eight million were built.



This is the Trabant that is housed in The Cold War Exhibition at Cosford.
Yes, East Germans really did face a ten year waiting time for delivery!



Edited by Alan Parr

Produced by Ted Cachart

Photographs by Alan Parr unless stated otherwise

All enquiries to the Association Secretary.

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REUNION SOUVENIR

June 3rd - 6th 2007



Photo; Alan Parr















Photos; Pam Cripps



Photos; Pam Cripps



Photos; Pam Cripps



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