

# The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine  
November 2007 Issue 8**



Photo; Barbara Parr

**The symbol of remembrance  
A Lincolnshire poppy field in June**

## IN MEMORIAM

B. Beard    G. Barnett

**WE WILL REMEMBER THEM**

### WELCOME TO:

#### NEW MEMBERS

**Ted Flavell   Roy Money   Bill Smith   George Cook  
Bill Claydon   Jack Jones   Henry Graham**

#### NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

**Sandy Fairhurst   Peter Jones  
Anthony Gawthrop   Terry Atkinson**

#### NEW HONORARY FRIENDS

**Colin Smith   Capt. Paul Petersen RCAF (Holland)  
Derek Vanstone   Dr. Theo Boiten (Holland)**



In September the Dutch Minister of Defence, Eimert van Middlekoop, visited the crash site of 49 Squadron's Hampden P1206 and showed great interest in the proceedings.

He is seen here discussing some of the finds with Capt. Paul Petersen, who led the recovery team, and Mayor Leonie Sipkes.

## EDITORIAL

As always, thank you to all those who have sent donations to the association funds. Thank you also to those who have taken time to write to us, we do enjoy hearing from you.

Being November our thoughts are more than ever concerned with remembrance. In July of this year I was reminded of the powerful meaning of the words, "They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old".

In the fifties and sixties I was riding at the same time as the great British cyclist Tom Simpson, give or take a month we were the same age. Some of you may remember that Tom died on July 13th 1967 whilst competing in the Tour de France. In 1997 Barbara and I made a pilgrimage to the memorial at the spot where he collapsed during the climb of the vicious Mont Ventoux. I had visited his grave on the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries of his death but had not returned since. However, this year, the 40th anniversary, I was in the vicinity of Harworth and decided to pay my respects to Tom. As I stood by his grave my eyes fell once again on, "Aged 29 years". I vividly recalled his boyish looks and infectious grin and there was I, in my seventieth year. Like Tom, all those who pass from this world at a young age, "...shall grow not old."

Sadly I have to record the passing of Barbara Beard and Geoff Barnett. Barbara was the daughter of Jack Ellenor, MuG in P/O Dickinson's crew, lost on the Schweinfurt raid 26/27th April 1944. Geoff was an electrician, posted in to 49 Squadron in September 1940. With his wife, Madeleine, this charming man regularly attended our reunions.

I am thrilled however to be able to tell you that our numbers are still increasing. At the time of writing, November 1st, we have a total in all categories of 283, an increase of 35 since January 16th. Remarkably, the number of full members has risen by 10 to 157 in the same period. It is also most pleasing to see the other categories of membership increasing and in so doing lowering the average overall age. Thus our future looks secure for some years to come.

We are delighted to welcome seven new Members. Squadron Leader E G Flavell was the captain of Valiant WZ366 which dropped Britain's first atomic weapon at Maralinga in October 1956. Roy Money was a sergeant navigator on Lincolns at Upwood until June 1951, his regular pilot was Sgt. Newphrys. Bill Smith is one of those lucky people who played with aeroplanes during his National Service. He was an Air Wireless Mech. during 1957/59 including service on Christmas Island. George Cook flew a 33 'op' Hampden tour with 49 Squadron before flying Catalinas with Coastal Command. George tells me that he was one of a rare breed, WoM/Ag. Bill Claydon was Flight Engineer in Robby Robson's crew 1944/46. Our thanks to 'Recruiting Sergeant', crew mate Jim Bridger, who tells me that Bill is also proud to have been a 'Halton boy'.

Jack Jones was a flight mechanic at Scampton. When 617 was formed he was posted to them but when they moved to Coningsby he was posted back to 49 Squadron at Fiskerton. Henry Graham was W/C Hubbard's driver during the time of Operation Grapple.

We also welcome new Associate Members, Sandy Fairhurst, Peter Jones, Anthony Gawthrop and Terry Atkinson. Sandy is the daughter of rear gunner Sgt Joe Dixon, one of three survivors of the Roussel Stark crew, shot down 7th March 1945. You may recall from the previous issue that Sgt Ralph Bairnsfather was the bomb aimer in this aircraft. Peter is the son of Tudor Jones, a pilot who flew with 49 Squadron during 1944. Anthony's father was Harold Gawthrop who was ground crew at Scampton on Hampdens and Terry is the nephew of Sgt Jack Ellenor, mentioned on the previous page.

We are pleased to welcome Derek Vanstone, Colin Smith, Paul Petersen and Theo Boiten, all of whom accepted our invitation to become Honorary Friends of the Association. Derek is the proprietor of Derek Vanstone Aviation Books and is a regular at Duxford airshows. He has been of great assistance to our chairman, Ted Cachart, in his promotion of books and pictures relating to the squadron as well as showing a keen interest in 49'. Colin is the proprietor of Vector Fine Art Prints, a company which publishes and markets aviation prints and books. I have had the pleasure of collaborating with Colin and artist Nick Trudgian (Hon. Friend) in the production of a superb pencil drawing, 'New Arrivals at Scampton'. (See page 22.) This has been released worldwide in a limited edition of 140 prints and in this issue you will read of the launch at Duxford Air Show. You will also read that Colin invited a number of WWII veterans from 49 SA to sign customer's books and prints at the same show. Paul Petersen is a captain in the Royal Netherlands Air Force and was in charge of the dig for Hampden P1206 and two of her crew. We are grateful that Paul has written a piece for us describing that operation. Theo Boiten is an authority on the Luftwaffe and has greatly assisted Colin Cripps in his researches.

I mentioned in the last issue that Bert Cole had kindly donated pieces of his Lancaster's wreckage to the Scampton Museum. F/L Gary Mennell has told me of his wish to take the relics to the BBMF at Coningsby in the hope that they will be able to assist in identification, a very interesting exercise I imagine.

Bert has also donated a picture entitled 'Remembrance' which depicts the BBMF Lancaster flying over St Paul's Cathedral. Eric Read has donated a framed display of Bomber Command Squadron badges and Eric Clarke has presented 'The Flight Engineer's Report'. We gratefully accept these items for display in The 49 Squadron Lounge in Fiskerton Village Hall.

As I write this, in mid September, news has come in that human remains have been found during the excavation of Hampden P1206 in Holland. This is

wonderful news as this was the whole motivation for carrying out the dig. A full report on the recovery is presented in this issue.

In the August issue I said that Gary Mennell was to leave for Afganistan in September. I am delighted to tell you that this has not happened, and is unlikely to happen, in the foreseeable future.

A number of you have contacted me regarding Geoff Stuffins' Spitfire sortie (The 4T9er, issue 7). His two sons Carl and Vernon have now followed him into the cockpit but I understand that Mary was not too keen to do likewise.

Should you be interested in ultimate experiences and have surplus funds then take yourself off to Cape Town, South Africa, where for a mere 4,500 euros you can enjoy 40 minutes in a Hawker Hunter. If this does not empty your purse then how about 60 scintillating minutes in a BAe Buccaneer for 8,000 euros. If however you have really deep pockets then a 40 minute bash in an English Electric Lightning is a snip at 10,000 euros. I am jealously aware that some of our members were actually paid for flying in 'hot iron-mongery' during their RAF careers. As for me, I will never forget my trips in a Fox Moth off Southport sands in the 50's and more recently in a Tiger Moth from Leicester. As the old saying goes, "I didn't know that I could have so much enjoyment with my clothes on!"

Preliminary booking forms for next year's reunion are included with this issue. I am lead to believe that places for 2008 will be in great demand. The main limitation in numbers will be with rooms at the Petwood Hotel although alternative accommodation may be arranged at nearby hotels. However, places will be allocated on a strictly 'first come first served' basis so if you wish to attend do not delay.

The itinerary will generally follow that of previous years: Arrive Sunday 1st June with the Memorial Services at Fiskerton the following morning. A buffet lunch will be taken at the Fiskerton Village Hall before returning to Woodhall Spa for the evening banquet. A visit will be arranged for the Tuesday which I hope will be to RAF Station Coningsby but that is still in the melting pot.

Thanks to our Webmaster, Malcolm Brooke, our new website is now on line. I have looked over the site and, although there is much to be done, I congratulate Malcolm on a superb piece of work. When you study the Roll of Honour in particular, his dedication to the site is astounding. Every 49 Squadron fatality in WWII is listed and many graves have individual photographs. It is ultimately planned to include a photograph of every single grave. We also intend, where possible, to show a picture of the airman concerned. I must also extend our thanks to Malcolm's wife May, who toured Europe with him searching out cemeteries. What patience!

The address is; [www.49squadron.co.uk](http://www.49squadron.co.uk)

I read in 'Intercom' that a group of Canadian veterans have succeeded in having the wording of a placard in The Canadian War Museum changed. This questioned, '... the value and morality of the strategic bomber offensive....' According to Intercom the rewording led to the resignation of the CEO of the museum, Joe Guerts. Well no great loss there then!

Many of the Germans who died in Great Britain during or just after each of the two World Wars were exhumed and reburied on Cannock Chase near to where I live. There are more than five thousand graves, roughly two and a half thousand from each of the two wars. Each year German students stay in the area in order to tend the graves. (See photos page 19.)

Did any of you do your square bashing at RAF Bridgnorth? Earlier this year I went to see if the River Severn was worth fishing following the floods. I have visited the site of RAF Bridgnorth on a number of occasions but decided to drop in again and take photos of the memorial. (See page 19.) After 'Kitting out' at Penarth in 1943, my father travelled up to Bridgnorth by train, disembarking at what is now the north end of the preserved Severn Valley Railway. (Another reason why I make frequent visits to Bridgnorth.) He vividly remembers marching two miles from the station, up Hermitage Hill, with full kit, on a sweltering July day. Did anyone else experience this ordeal?

On the 18th October I was driving home from Spalding and decided to go via Leicester for a change when I heard on the radio that the Vulcan was due to make her maiden flight in preservation. A quick call to Lou Crabbe told me that the local radio had said that the flight was imminent. I dashed towards Bruntingthorpe and joined a crowd at the side of the road. I was told that she had headed east a short time before. Minutes later we spotted her to the south as she came round in a circle at 1500ft. Round over Bruntingthorpe she went then round again right over us before landing. How marvellous for all those who have spent so long putting her back in the air.

A petition has been running on the internet expressing anger at the decision to exclude The Red Arrows from the 2012 London Olympics as the military nature of the team might prove offensive to certain other countries. I have been informed by John May, Adjutant of The Red Arrows, and he should know, that there is absolutely no truth in the rumour whatsoever. Mind you, the fact that two hundred thousand people have signed the petition is an indication that we are able to believe anything of the PC brigade. By the way, there is no truth either in the rumour that the English Archery Team are to have their first two fingers cut off to avoid upsetting the French.

Geoff Brunton called to tell me that he, his son Michael, Michael's partner Nikki and Roger Bedford made their annual pilgrimage to the commemoration at Mailly le Camp in May. In addition they visited the graves of the Dickinson crew at Ugny sur Meuse.



The Duxford Airshow on October 14th saw the successful launch of our chairman's autobiography, 'Ted the Lad'. There to help were some of the 'Back Page Boys' and their wives. Left to right; Alan Parr, Secretary; Colin Cripps, Researcher; Pam Cripps; Ed Norman, Archivist; Janet Norman; Ted Cachart, Chairman; Barbara Parr.



Photo; Derek Vanstone

Ed Norman sent in a transcript of a broadcast made by Rod Learoyd on 19th August 1940 in which he describes the raid on the Dortmund – Ems canal five day's previously. As most of you know, this was the raid on which F/L R.A.B. Learoyd, 49 Squadron, won the first VC to be awarded to Bomber Command during WWII. We thank Mr James Nice of CD41 for giving us permission to publish it in our magazine. See pages 20 & 21.

Our Guinea Pig, Alan Morgan, telephoned with the sad news that this year's reunion is to be the last official event as the attendance has now dropped to 46. The usual dinner was held in East Grinstead and a visit made to RAF Benson. On a brighter note Alan and a group of his fellow Guinea Pigs are to organise an annual informal get together. Long may it continue.

We have some 49 Squadron lapel badges in stock. These are available in two sizes; large (30 mm high) and small (19 mm high). Prices are £4 & £3.50 respectively plus postage. Please order from me. Cheques to; 49 SA Petwood.

To those of you who are not enjoying the best of health our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Once again I express my thanks to Barbara and the 'Back Page Boys' for their unstinting support. Together with them, Barbara and I wish you and yours a very Happy Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

**'Til the next time**

## 4T9ers 'STAR' AT DUXFORD AIR SHOW

Saturday 8th September saw the launch, on the Vector Fine Art Prints stand at Duxford Air Show, of Nicolas Trudgian's latest pencil drawing, 'New Arrivals at Scampton'. Nick, world renowned artist and Honorary Friend of 49 SA, chose as his subject a 49 Squadron Hampden with three of its crew surveying the arrival of the Manchesters which, unfortunately, were to become their aircraft for the next two months. See page 22 for an illustration.

Nine 4T9ers, including two Hampden men Eric Clarke and George Cook, were present to sign customer's books and prints. Eric's tour also included Manchesters and Lancasters and George went on to Catalinas with Coastal Command. The issue copies of Nick's drawing had already been signed by three Hampden stalwarts; pilots Jim Flint and Francis Lowe and wop/ag Allen Drinkell, making this a rare opportunity for customers to obtain five signatures of former 49 Squadron aircrew closely associated with the type. The other seven signatories present were all former Lancaster men; John Dodkins, Geoff Easterling, John Aldridge, Alan Morgan, Bert Cole, Ken Read and Lou Crabbe. There were to have been twelve attending but sadly three reported sick.

A steady stream of signature collectors of all ages filed past during the three hours that our gallant band were signing. One of the 4T9ers guessed that he had signed more than three hundred items in all.

At 1300hrs the party moved to an enclosure at the rear of the marquee to enjoy an excellent buffet lunch before watching the air display in style. Without doubt the BBMF Lancaster was the favourite and brought the veterans to their feet spontaneously applauding. It was very noticeable that more than one eye held a little excess moisture.

Before departing, each of the nine was presented with copies of Nick's drawing by Colin Smith, Proprietor of Vector Fine Art Prints. On behalf of RAF Scampton Museum I accepted from Colin a copy of the drawing (Issue no.1), together with a signed print of a portrait of Rod Learoyd VC, both of which I have passed on to Gary Mennell for display in The 49 Squadron Room.

The overriding impression that our 'boys' formed was of the courtesy, respect and gratitude shown to them by the collectors. As some of them remarked, "We hear all about the yob element of today's youth but without exception the attitude of the many youngsters who attended today was exemplary".

Whilst all this was happening, on the Derek Vanstone Aviation Books stand, another 4T9er, Ted Cachart, was promoting his autobiography, 'Ted the Lad'. This was launched at the next Duxford Airshow on October 14th.

On a warm late summer day the lamp was kept swinging and it would be hard to imagine a more enjoyable occasion for all concerned.





Above: Artist Nick Trudgian

Below: 94 year old Eric Clarke looks pensive as, to his left, George Cook signs a print. To George's left is John Dodkins



Above: From the camera; Lou Crabbe, Bert Cole, Ken Read, Alan Morgan.



Above: Ted Cachart signs a visitor's book on his 'Ted the Lad' stand.



Above: Geoff Easterling studies a copy of 'Lancaster VC's'. John Aldridge is sitting to his left.

Below: Ken Read shares a joke with a collector



**The recovery of the remains, in September 2007, of two 49ers is probably the most important news that has involved the Association for many years. In the following pages we bring you the story of the excavation.**

Photographs relating to the two following articles were provided by Eric Molenaar and Paul Petersen

## **P1206 AND LOST CREW MEMBERS 'BACK AGAIN'**

By Eric Molenaar

'Leaving on a jet plane, don't know when I'll be back again'. It's a song used as background music for a news item about the start of the excavation of Hampden P1206, on the internet. It has everything to do with the reason why the wreckage was exhumed.

Not because of building plans in the area, the reason most of the excavations of warplanes in Holland are carried out. Also not because of the danger of explosions. Officially that's one of the reasons but that's because the financial participation of the government plays an important role. After all, the costs are hundreds of thousands of pounds.

No, the real reason is the request of the Irish, Mrs. Margaret Walsh (88), to be able to rebury her brother John (Jack) Kehoe in consecrated ground. To get him 'out of that potato field'. She wants her brother, who left on that plane on the 8th of November 1941, to be back again to fulfil her mother's dying wish. It is the formal request of the next of kin, supported by the Irish Embassy, that set things in motion, in 2005.

I became involved as a reporter of the regional newspaper in November, as the foundation of DARE wanted to get things public because, at first, Mayor Leonie Sipkes wasn't keen to cooperate. Since then, very much has happened. I wrote over eighty articles, and made a website ([www.wkdankbaar.nl](http://www.wkdankbaar.nl)) to publish them and all the background material I could lay my hands on mostly thanks to DARE, which is a group of people who study the history of the air battle above Holland.

They came in touch with the Irish family by coincidence, because landowners, Dick and Anett Schilder, tried to locate family of the crew of P1206. They wanted to give them photos of the little monument they have on the site. The sister of Jack Kehoe knew the plane was crashed near Berkhout but not exactly where.

Until 2005 the Mayor didn't want the field grave to be disturbed. She said the permission of the family of the British Stanley Mullenger was required. I contacted colleagues at The Sun newspaper and they managed to find a nephew of Mullenger within a day. He wrote to ten other family members to let them say yes or no to the excavation.

The possibility of British blocking the Irish wish of the next of kin lead eventually to the involvement of members of the parliament. Even a letter to our crown prince was written. Luckily the British family said yes unanimously.

In the end, the community council decided to set aside 950.000 euros for a 'clean sweep'. The excavation of two plane wreckages (also the remains of an American Liberator) and two separate bombs that didn't go off. Council members made it clear that the wish to give the two lost aviators a dignified burial, "as they gave their life for our freedom", played an important role in their decision.

Since then, DARE and their British counterparts informed all of the next of kin of the four crew members (pilot Chris Saunders and navigator James d'Arcy were buried in Bergen in 1941). The twin daughters of Saunders and even the fiancée of Kehoe were found and informed, thanks to the investigative work of British solicitor Alan Walker. Her daughter, Sheila Hamilton, has already visited Berkhout a couple of times and become friends with the Schilder family.

The excavation operation has already ended. In October, one 500 lbs bomb was found elsewhere near the village (nothing to do with P1206) and is recovered. But first, in September, the British bomber was excavated. Most of the aluminium shell seems to be taken away in the fifties by iron traders, but the engines, a propeller, guns and part of the landing gear were found. Even the dinghy came out. The clay has preserved everything very well.

The community will place a monument at the Westeinde in Berkhout, near the crash site, with information about the plane and the four crew members. The found propeller probably will be incorporated.

A special identification unit in Soesterberg is examining the remains of Kehoe and Mullenger, that were found within days. The Irish family was told, by embassy secretary John Gilroy, it would be impossible to separate the two men. "They will be buried together in Bergen Cemetery, in the spring of 2008", a British official said.

It's difficult to describe the public opinion about the excavation. Some people say you



don't have to exhume something that was there for 66 years. They compare it with a burial at sea. Others find it important to give the crew members a proper grave. They compare it with victims of an accident that are found ten years later in their car in a canal. There are even people that want to excavate every single one of the more than 400 plane wreckages with human remains in it still resting in Dutch soil or in the IJsselmeer. They think it's our obligation to the brave men who risked their lives to defeat the enemy.

Because of the costs, it's highly unlikely it will ever be possible to get everyone back again who left on a (war) plane.... But I'm glad for everyone involved it was turned out to be possible for P1206. In fact, I heard most of the found parts will be returned to Scampton. So even the plane will be 'back again'.

## **A VERY SPECIAL JOB**

By Captain Paul Petersen  
Salvage Officer, Royal Netherlands Air Force

I am very pleased that 49 Squadron Association asked me to write something about the excavation of the Hampden P1206 in Berkhout, The Netherlands.

It started in 2005. The community of Koggenland had two planes to recover and to search for two dropped bombs. The last task is executed by the Explosive Ordnance Disposal of the Royal Netherlands Marine. They found and dismantled one 500 lbs. bomb. After a long period of planning and organising with the community of Koggenland, the salvage team did actual start on September 3rd 2007 with the excavation of the Hampden P1206. The excavation of the P1206 lasted for four weeks, thereafter we started with the second excavation: a B24 Liberator in Ursem. The Aircraft Salvage Team consisted of the following crews:

- A specialized civil contractor with machinery and equipment
- Recovery & Identification Service of the Royal Netherlands Army
- Aircraft Salvage Team of the Royal Netherlands Air Force
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal of the Royal Netherlands Air Force

Thirteen people were daily involved with the excavation of P1206, the salvage of which was a very special excavation due to the missing crew members and the close relation with the next of kin. As a team we contribute to a very important chapter in the lives of the next of kin which makes our job so gratifying.

In November 2006 was my first opportunity to meet the next of kin. On Sunday, September 2nd, a day before the actual start of the excavation, I met

Mrs Carmel McGrath, Margaret Tracey and Sheila Hamilton at the residence of family Schilder. We had a very good conversation about the days ahead of us.

My priority was to provide them with the needed information and show them that the salvage team is well prepared and trained to do this very special task. That Sunday afternoon we visited the site and I had the opportunity to explain more in detail about the excavation process and the equipment that's used. We passed all steps of the salvage process and they could ask everything. After dinner I showed the ladies a presentation with pictures about the excavation of a Lancaster last October 2006. This finally completed the whole excavation process and I hoped that it will gave them a good impression about the things that will happen in oncoming weeks. That Sunday was a very nice day due to the good communication we had and the spoken confidence in our work.

Prior the excavation there is a kick-off meeting. The crew is briefed about the plane details: i.e. human remains, bomb load, ammunition and safety procedures. During the excavation process the site is a restricted area and isolated from sight. After working hours the area is under surveillance.

The excavation of a WWII airplane is a fully controlled process. The soil is carefully removed and inspected inch by inch. During this process a special protected machine will remove the soil. He will do this in close communication with the crew at the spot. During the removal of the soil, the crew will check the area manual by probing for explosives and foreign objects. At this stage we do our primary check of the removed ground.

The removed ground is transported to a upgraded sifting machine. At this stage of the process we perform our secondary check. The removed ground will pass through a sift that will separated the very small particles. The "bigger" ground parts are transported through an inspection unit where a crew of four inspect for foreign objects. Everything will be closely inspected by hand and inventoried.

The salvaged aircraft parts are transported to the cleaning unit. They are pressure cleaned to remove dirt and oil and to inspect for the presence of smaller items. The cleaning unit is fitted with a special floor that will collect all small items so nothing of the P1206 is lost.

The salvaged parts are in an extreme good condition. The parts are not corroded but are well preserved due to the Dutch soil (clay) in the western part of Holland. This clay will isolate the wreckage area. We found several fully loaded ammo boxes and a VGO-gun from which the most parts are still working.

The nicest part is likely the emergency raft and the packages of Dye Marker. The yellow dinghy was, after so many years, in an "excellent" condition. It was





Above; Paul Petersen explains the recovery procedures to Sheila Hamilton, Carmel McGrath and Margaret Tracey.

Below; He shows them the equipment that will be used.



Above; The tyre looks as though it is capable of inflation!

Right; A Vickers Gas Operated machine gun in remarkable condition. There were normally five such guns in a Hampden.

Below; A number of loaded magazines were found.





complete with pump and wooden plugs to stop air leaking. After 66 years in the ground the dye did her job and coloured the ground water into a bright green colour. An eye witness of the crash told me that he had seen the bright green colour at the crash location. He never knew what it was until now...During the excavation process there's a lot of publicity of local newspapers and TV. Even the Minister of Defence and the Secretary of Internal Affairs paid the salvage of the P1206 a visit.



In the second and third week of the salvage we planned several open days. Everyone was welcome on the site and we tell them about the Hampden and the excavation process. We showed them the cleaned and well preserved aircraft parts.



We also invite elementary schools on the site and tell them about the WWII and why we do this work after so many years! Its great to tell children about the things we do. They have some very clever questions like: " why are the pilots still in the ground?" and "why are the bombs still in the plane?"

P1206 parts are to be brought back to the UK and are being displayed in the 49 Museum at Scampton. I think this is the best thing that can happen: Bring the P1206 back to Scampton where it left 66 years ago with four brave young men to serve the nation.

They paid the highest price for our freedom. Several parts stay in a Dutch museum as a remembrance to the crew and their mission during WWII.

**We will never forget them**







Clockwise from top left; An engine is found at 4.5 metres; Only one cylinder remains from the Bristol Pegasus engine; Capt. Petersen gives a talk to local school children; Some of the finds on the cleaning deck; During the 'Open Days' the local populace showed great interest; The dinghy is in remarkable condition after 66 years in Dutch clay; A dinghy on the wing of a Hampden in the early forties; Centre; The cleaning deck in operation.



## 4T9ers REMEMBER

The Association's Acts of Remembrance commenced on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> November with the planting of a cross in The Bomber Command Association plot at Westminster Abbey.

On Remembrance Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> November, the service at Fiskerton Church was led by Rev. Clive Todd and attended by thirteen 4T9ers and their relatives. Ted Cachart laid our wreath on the Church Memorial and another at the Airfield Memorial. Individual crosses were then planted. As last year the Scouts formed the Guard of Honour and the Stuffins family prepared the area in their normal immaculate manner. Our thanks to all of them.

At Scampton Church Eric Clarke laid our wreath, one of seven laid here. Sheila Hamilton and F/L Gary Mennell were also present.

Stan Smith did the honours at The Bransby Memorial as Dot did not feel able to stand for long periods. We hope that you are soon feeling stronger Dot.

Meanwhile, Lou Crabbe with Nora laid our wreath at Fulbeck. Here they met local farmer Peter Hare who has taken it on himself to maintain the grass and hedges. I will be writing to him soon.

At the Runnymede Service our wreath was laid by Evalina Lowe. She was accompanied by husband Ian.

In Denmark, Marilyn and Hans Nissen planted crosses on the 49ers graves in Aabenraa Cemetery and on the memorial to JA691.

I am confident that 4T9ers were involved in many other acts of Remembrance.

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Above and Left: The boiler house chimney now forms the memorial at the former site of RAF Bridgnorth.



Above and left: It is late summer at the German Cemetery on Cannock Chase, Staffordshire and the heather is in full bloom.

Each stone bears two names on each side.

It is said that this area was chosen as it is similar to the forests of Germany. It is located just a few miles from the former site of RAF Hednesford. Were any of you stationed there?

## **F/L R.A.B. LEAROYD V.C.**

### **Quoted here by courtesy of James Nice of CD41**

“Our target on this raid was the old aqueduct carrying the Dortmund-Ems canal over the River Ems north of Munster. This canal is of great importance to the industrial area of the Ruhr. There is also at this point, a new aqueduct. When that was blown up as a result of a previous raid, the Germans had diverted all traffic to the old one. The operation had been most carefully planned – five aircraft detailed for the bombing were to slip in and carry out their work. Two of the five, I’m sorry to say, never got back. Timing was an all-important factor, for a reason which I cannot mention, it was imperative the five of us should all attack within a very short period.

“At 3 o’clock in the afternoon we were told that we were going, and at six that evening we were given the details of the operation. Aircraft from two squadrons were taking part. Having been there before, most of us knew the place pretty well. The actual briefing of the crews took about three-quarters of an hour. The whole plan was carefully gone through with special maps. Zero hour was timed for 23.15 hours; that is to say, a quarter past eleven. We synchronised our watches and clocks in the aircraft before starting. Everybody got away right on time. Just before we took off, I saw one of the others in the air, but we soon lost sight of him. The timing had been worked out so as to allow us a ten-minute margin in case we got slightly off our course or had any trouble getting into the target area. My navigator did a very fine job of work and we arrived at a point north of the target with about ten minutes in hand, so we circled round there for a bit.

“Going out, there hadn’t been any excitement – we were not looking for trouble anyway. There were clouds on the way over, but they cleared beautifully just on the edge of the target. The moon was about half-full. We were relying on the moonlight reflecting on the water to give us the direction of our run-up.

“We, being the last of the five, were due to go in at 23.23. Two minutes before that time we came down to about 300 feet. We were then still several miles north of the target. Gradually we lost height as we came along the canal, following its course all the time. The navigator was in the nose of the aircraft doing the bomb aiming.

Everything was quiet until we got to a point where the canal forked just before the two aqueducts. I was doing the run-up to this point, then the navigator was taking over the directing.

“We must have gone off a bit to the left because he called out: ‘Right’ and immediately after, when we turned a bit to make the correction, he called out: ‘Steady!’



“Then suddenly, everything started at once...?...and anti-aircraft fire. It was unfortunate from our point of view of course, that the enemy knew pretty much the direction from which we must attack. They had disposed their defences so that they formed sort of lanes through which we had to pass. It seemed to me they had strengthened these defences a great deal since the first raid.

“The searchlights were blinding and we were flying entirely on the bomb aimers instructions. I had my head down inside the cockpit trying to see the instruments but the glare made even that difficult. Our instructions were not to rush it too much because of the need for extreme accuracy. Before we started, the rear gunner had asked if he could fire at something or somebody and he was shooting at the searchlights as we went past.

“Almost at the same moment as we bombed, I felt a thump and the aircraft lurched to the right. A pom-pom shell had gone through the starboard wing and then another shell hit the same wing between the fuselage and the engine. They were firing pretty well at point-blank range. It was all over in a few seconds. The navigator called out: ‘O.K! Finished!’ Then we turned away again. Ground defences were still after us, but the tracer was dying out a bit by this time.

“When we had got away and set course for base, the rear gunner reported oil coming into his cockpit. Then the wireless operator reported the flaps were drooping. I tried to raise them but found they wouldn’t come up. What had happened was, that the hydraulic system had been damaged. We discovered too, that the undercarriage indicators were out of action.

“Not having landed without flaps before, I didn’t like to try it that night with a crew aboard; so we cruised around for a bit doing a few local cross-countries for about two and a half hours. We waited till dawn, then we came in alright.”

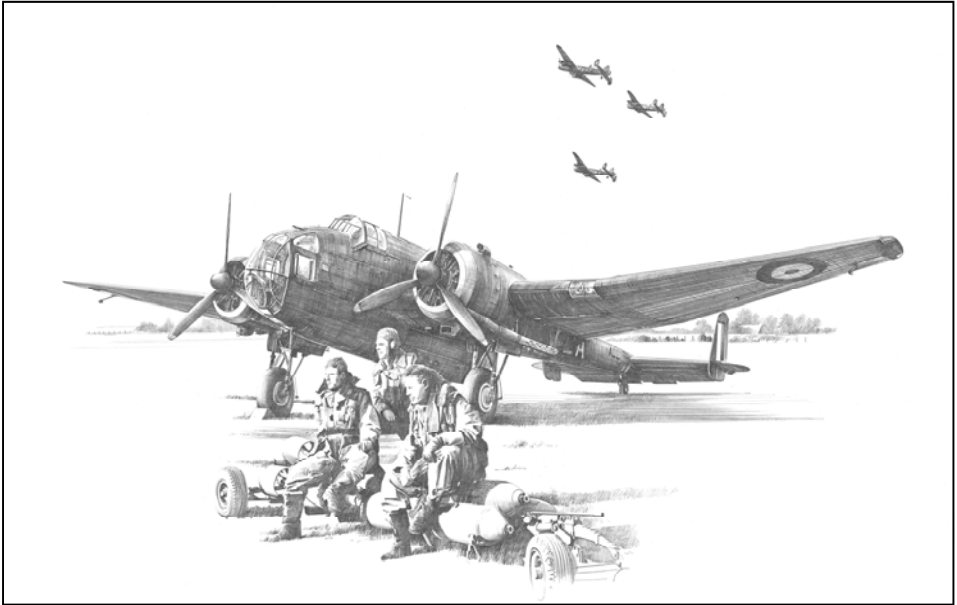


1986 ACA Annual Service at St Clement Danes RAF Church, London.

L to R; Bernard Browning, Paul Smith, Roderick Learoyd VC, Eric Jones, Jack Winter

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## READER'S LETTERS

*John Aldridge sent the following account of a tense Christmas;*

“On the 21st/22nd December 1944 the Squadron were briefed for an attack on the Politz oil plants on the Baltic. Our crew (F/O Lee) were reserve but not called upon. Of course, as most people know, the whole squadron was diverted to Dyce (now Aberdeen Airport) due to the fog and frost. We who were left at Fulbeck were stood down on Christmas Eve, with the fog and frost still very much in evidence.

“As Christmas Eve was my birthday, Tom Gatfield and myself decided to have a celebration night in Nottingham as during daylight the fog was a little less dense. After a good evening in the hot spots of Nottingham, we were offered a lift back to Fulbeck by Willy Williams (Flt/Lt Williams), a pilot on 49 who was one of the few people who owned a car.

“By the time we left Nottingham and took the A46 towards Newark, the fog was thicker and the road very icy. Willy had a hell of a time trying to see any distance ahead and Tom and I walked in front with a torch. Progress was slow and, as it was now in the early hours, Willy decided we should call in at Syerston and ring Fulbeck in case ops might be on. We went to the Officers' Mess and phoned Fulbeck. No ops on thank goodness! “We plodded on to Fulbeck and arrived about breakfast time on Christmas Day. Anyway, we served the airmen their Christmas dinner. One or two crews had come back off leave but there were very few airmen around. We had our Christmas dinner later in the mess and had a great party in the evening-plenty of drink for the few of us there! We staggered back to our beds and sleep.

“At about 4 o'clock in the morning there came a banging on the door and we were told that breakfast was at 5 o'clock as ops were on and there was briefing at 6 o'clock. You can imagine how we felt, hoping the fog would persist and ops would be scrubbed. At this time of course, The Battle of the Bulge was at a critical phase and the Continent T.A.F. Squadrons could not operate due to the weather. Our target was to be St. Vith, where a lot of German armour was concentrated, and any aircraft that could take off had to go.

“10 o'clock came. 10.30 and still no sign of the fog lifting. I think it was about mid day when ops were finally scrubbed-thank God! As many of us were not in a good state to carry out such an operation, I know that we felt great relief on hearing that ops had been cancelled. However we also felt sympathy for the ground crew, who in freezing conditions tried to keep the aircraft clear of frost.

“P.S. In fact within a week we visited the battle area when we attacked a bottleneck in the German supply route at Houffalize. I remember that it was difficult to see the markers due to cloud and Ken Lee went down to 6000ft so I could pick them up (silly beggar!).

“If you travel up to Liege from Luxembourg you look down this valley at Houffalize from the motorway.”



*Left:*

*In the November 2006 issue of The 4T9er we carried a letter from the late D W 'Nobby' Clarke describing how the uniform of his Aussie skipper, F/O R J Branch, came to be at East Kirkby. This is that uniform in service in the watch tower.*

*Sometime ago I asked Air Commodore 'Spike' Milligan about his career and one of the interesting items that he mentioned went as follows;*

*"....Incidentally, I was one of a handful of people who were operational on all three V-bombers. Lots ( in 3 Group) did Valiant and Victor Mk 1 & 2, but the Vulcan force were 1 Group, and never the twain shall mix! So when I arrived on a Vulcan Squadron as a Squadron Leader, I was viewed with huge suspicion as a 3 Group interloper! In later years there was some cross-fertilisation of the Vulcan Mk2 and Victor Mk2 guys, but by that time the Valiant was no more. (There never was a Valiant Mk2)."*

*Our chairman, Ted the Lad, has e-mailed asking that his thanks be passed on to all those who purchased his autobiography. He wishes to particularly thank those who have contacted him with appreciative comments.*



Above: John Aldridge recalled his childhood when on Saturday 20th October he visited the footplate at Ilkeston Fair. See Reader's Letters, The 4T9er, May, Issue 6.

***I was recently clearing out some of the 346 messages in my 'Inbox' when I came across the following e-mail from Bob Weeks that I had previously overlooked (Sorry Bob);***

"I enjoyed the magazine and the article about Grapple; I'm sure that a TV programme inferred that the tests weren't as successful as we were led to believe. It said the first drop due to a malfunction was a fairly low yield, the second drop was in fact the largest atomic explosion and the third drop was successful. I presume only the scientists could tell us the truth. It was amusing about the radioactive story relating to the dials in the Valiant at Cosford, I believe our sampling Canberras on 76 Squadron were quite "hot". As yet I don't glow in the dark and haven't suffered any ill affects but as there isn't a thriving 76 Squadron Association I can't speak for any others."

*Bob is referring to an article in The 4T9er, May, Issue 6. In the same issue I made a flippant comment about the luminous dials in XD818. It appears that the matter is rather more serious than I thought as I was talking to a jeweller recently who said that one of his lady customers died as a result of working on the luminous dials of clocks although her exposure was rather longer than a quick shufti inside the Valiant. Ed.*

***I don't normally publish complimentary sections of letters for fear of appearing to practice self aggrandizement however, in this case I include the majority of Jim Bridger's letter in order to keep it in context;***

"Very many thanks once more for your magnificent service to the 49 Association and especially for the magazine. It was really great to see the Hawker Hind on the last issue— if my memory serves me right the Hart/Hind (fairly early creations of the brilliant Sydney Camm) were, when first put into service, able to outpace the rest of the world's fighters!

"However the comment below the photo re Neville Chamberlain "winning" a further year of peace by appeasing Hitler is certainly more than a little controversial. I happen to possess the massive 6 volume "History of the Second World War" by Winston Churchill—who was there at the time! If you feel like asking your local library to get Volume 1, entitled "The Gathering Storm" for you to delve into, you will find a totally different interpretation of the events of that time!"

*Thanks for the kind words and for bringing that to my attention Jim. I must admit to a bout of carelessness. To my regret I haven't time to study a 'massive' volume but I have no doubt that Churchill would describe it as anything but 'winning'. Perhaps inverted commas around the word would have been more acceptable. (FlyPast recently described Munich as, 'A pragmatic result.') However, a little controversy never did a 'Reader's Letters' section any harm. By the way, I have since read that, in 1937, or was it 38, Churchill wanted the RAF to be equipped with Defiants rather than Spitfires but Chamberlain and others prevailed. Thank goodness for that! Ed.*

***In the November 2006 issue we published a request by non member, Tony Regan, for information on popular former 49 Squadron Flight Commander, John Woodroffe. This was followed, in the Christmas edition, by a photo of him standing outside the 'Petwood' with W/C Guy Gibson and G/C Evan Evans. Tony e-mailed as follows;***

“A few interesting things, we are going to the Petwood Hotel in the first week end in November and combining a reunion with a visit to RAF Coningsby. I plan to get a photograph of the place they were all standing during WWII. A large percentage of our members were No 617 Squadron. As it is 50 years since John Woodroffe lost his life, the Orlando Sentinel are doing a spread on the subject and two ex Crew Chiefs were there at Pinecastle (Orlando) AFB for the competition so between the three of us we have given them all the facts. The USAF Colonel McCoy, who lost his life along with John Woodroffe and the crew, was flown in a Vulcan B1 by S/L Donald Howard who had the terrible experience at London Heathrow in a Vulcan with Harry Broadhurst. He was the demo pilot on the Vulcan and with a reduced fuel load he put the aeroplane through its paces. We surmise that this must have been in McCoy's mind when the B47 came to grief.”

***Following the service at Scampton in May (Issue 7, The 4T9er) when we remembered the crew of Hampden P1206, John May's e-mail concluded;***

“....I spoke to the crew of the Dutch C130 who watched the whole event from the air traffic control tower; they were amazed when I told them the story of P1206.”

*Coincidentally the C130 was visiting Scampton on the day of the service. Ed.*

***Ed Norman, our Archivist, e-mailed to pass on his appreciation to John Whiston for searching his loft for his National Service photographs and to John's daughter Susanne for scanning and e-mailing them.***



In the August issue we told of The Large Model Association's display at RAF Cosford. Above and on page 31 are some pictures of the highly successful event.



***Colin Cripps, our Researcher, e-mailed;***

"LICHTENSTEIN RADAR..... When I advertised [?] the researcher's role in 'The 4T9ER' issue 6, I made mention of being sidetracked at the PRO and copied a file complete with photos' on the Lichtenstein airborne radar. Well I had a phone call from 4T9er Lawrence Clarke, he says; 'As a 49er (National Service) and being an ex Air Radar Mechanic, I was rather interested in your article re German Night Fighter Radar. If you send me your copy by registered post I will return same post haste. Just wanted a peep! Your research wasn't in vain after all.' Posted it to him today, [29th Sept. Ed] I knew there was a reason for copying it."

***Janis Gwynn, partner of new Associate Member Tony Gawthrop, e-mailed;***

"....Incidentally, after receiving The 4T9er, August magazine I contacted East Kirkby and arranged a Spitfire flight for Tony which took place last Saturday [6th October Ed.]. What a day we had with lots of wonderful pictures. Paul Day was the Spitfire pilot. No doubt you know of him, what a wonderful man he is. Tell you about it when we eventually meet up."

*Hm! Time for a bit of commission I think! Ed.*

***You may remember Ralph Gray who flew over from America for the reunion then flew straight back afterwards well he e-mailed this little item;***

"....On the radio on the way back to Heathrow, a commentator was talking about the British institution of "the Club".....saying that Britons have by far the highest proportional numbers in the world of organizations and societies of mutual interests. You just have to see how strong and meaningful a group we have in the 4T9ers though based upon relatively small numbers to see the strength of this institution."

***We received this e-mail from Margaret Treacy, daughter of Margaret Walsh;***

"Margaret Walsh and her family would like to thank everyone who helped to bring about the excavation of Jack and Stanley in Berkhout in September. We would especially like to thank Dick and Anett, Loek and Erica Schilder and their families for their kindness to ourselves, and the respect they showed to the crash site, the prayers and flowers they left at the cross.

"To Ed, Jan and Hans of DARE for their tenacity and help, without them it would never have happened. To Mrs. Sipkis, her Council and the people of Holland for their generosity. To John Gilroy, Eric Molenaar, Michelle Callinan, Alan Walker, Sheila Hamilton and David King for their contribution, without their combined effort the men would still be in a potato field. Thanks also to Paul Peterson and the recovery crew. Lastly thanks to the 4T9ers, for allowing us to say thanks to all the good friends we have made, yourselves included, over the past very eventful few years and including our trip to Scampton.

"It has been an emotional time for all of us so all of your help has been greatly appreciated."

## CAN YOU HELP?

***In the previous two issues we have asked about the yellow disc on the pilot's armour plate without reply. Graham Bairnsfather e-mailed;***

"I may have solved the question re the yellow disc on the pilot's seat. I have a CD-rom entitled 'The Lancaster Explored' put out by Flyingzone Publications in England where they have photographed extensively 5 Lancasters & 1 mock up in England & given detailed explanations of how a Lanc is put together and operates. There are over 130 photos of the cockpit alone with details of controls, levers, switches, startup etc.....Apparently there have been a number of conflicting reasons given but Duxford maintain that the disc would change colour from yellow to green should gas be present. There are also two smaller discs in the navigator's compartment."

*As we have not received any replies from ex Lancaster bods one can only imagine a member of the crew saying, "Oh look! The skipper's seat has turned to a pretty green. I wonder why, aaaaaaaaargh". Ed.*



### ***From the Editor;***

In the August issue we asked about the 'gas disc' on the nose of Lancasters and also the sacks on the score board. The above photograph was sent by Graham Bairnsfather and shows his uncle, Bruce Bairnsfather

in the cockpit of a 460 Squadron Lancaster. This excellent photo shows clearly the disc and the sacks. (Why the cross?). It has been suggested that the disc was a warning to the ground crew that the Lanc had flown through gas and the sacks relate to Operation Manna. Are there any more ideas?

### ***From the Editor;***

Among the many items that I inherited on taking over from Tom is a Movietone News video featuring the manufacture of the Lancaster. This is followed by a programme which illustrates the personnel involved in keeping a Lancaster operational. The latter, I believe, was filmed at Scampton and certainly features an early Lancaster EA-? (R58..). Does anyone know the full identity of the aircraft and its crew? The third film shows newly liberated PoWs interviewing each other. I believe the camp is Fallingbostal.

***In the last issue we asked why 49 Squadron Valiants carried the King's Crown on the squadron badge even though Queen Elizabeth was on the throne. John Fray phoned with this answer;***

“The signwriter at Wittering had painted the badges on 138 Squadron's aircraft and 49's C.O., W/C Ken Hubbard, asked him to do theirs. This he did but, as with 138's aircraft, he painted the King's Crown.”

***Non member Joe May sent the following e-mail re Sgt. Jimmy Kelly;***

“I would be grateful for your assistance in respect of any further information concerning the service history of the above individual originally from Dublin, Ireland, who was killed while serving with 49 Squadron in February 1943. Jimmy Kelly was a close friend of my late father and I am interested to learn something of his career and service history with the RAF. I understand that Sergeant Kelly originally qualified as a sergeant pilot, may have had service in the Merchant Ship Fighter Unit and according to my father had parachuted from a stricken aircraft on at least one occasion. It is my assumption, from reading John Ward's excellent history, that he later transferred to 49 Squadron, and while serving with this unit, was killed in a raid on the U-boat pens at St. Nazaire on the night of 28th February/1st March 1943.

“I was originally prompted to find something out about Kelly following a request from my father's old school Belvedere College (Dublin) to honour those past pupils killed in the cause of freedom and had assumed, incorrectly as it turned out, Jimmy had attended the same school when I queried why his name was not mentioned. I would like if possible to find out the school he attended and to see if his sacrifice is remembered.”

***An e-mail from non member Martin Gleeson asks;***

....if anyone remembers A/C Howden who was a member of the crew of Hampden L4045 which landed (15/16 May 1940) on The Curragh, Dublin, after a raid on Dortmund. A/C Howden did two ops as wop/ag presumably being a radio mechanic who volunteered for flying duties in the days when crew composition was a very ad hoc affair.

***An e-mail from Eric Clarke via Ed Norman asks;***

“Something I don't remember, at least not precisely. I know that I joined the Squadron in September 1941, and that I did first my Op on October 12th, and one or two more, in brass buttoned uniform. Looking at the photos relating to Brian Hunter I notice they are in battle dress, so when was battle dress issued? Brian joined the Squadron in 1941 and was lost on the Channel Dash.”

***An appeal by the 'Back Page Boys';***

We are constantly working on improving our records in order to be better able to help people with their enquiries. As most aircrew logbooks show either serial number or individual letter, but rarely both, we have difficulty in cross referring them. Is your logbook an exception that shows both references?

*Non Member Adrian McCaldin asks, on behalf of the daughter of P/O H J Carrington RAAF, if anyone remembers her father or his crew. He was operational with 49 Squadron during May 1944 going to Mailly le Camp on his first op, May 3rd, before being KIA on his seventh, Duisburg 21st May.*



Back Row; Sgt. Bob Berry, MuG; Sgt Harry Hales, Nav; Sgt. Ron Coleman F/E;  
Sgt Harry James, B/A;

Front Row; Sgt. Larry Foulkes, R/G; P/O Harry Carrington, Pilot; Sgt. Ron Hill, Wop.  
It is likely that this photo was taken at HCU as Carrington is a sergeant and James did not serve with 49 Squadron. The B/A then was F/S SA Silver RAAF, the only survivor.  
Bob Berry of East Ham was just 19 years old.



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Some more shots of The Large Model Association's display at Cosford.  
Top: A 17ft wingspan Lincoln. This did not fly but was impressive nevertheless.  
Middle and Bottom: The 15ft wingspan Lancasters made a splendid sight.