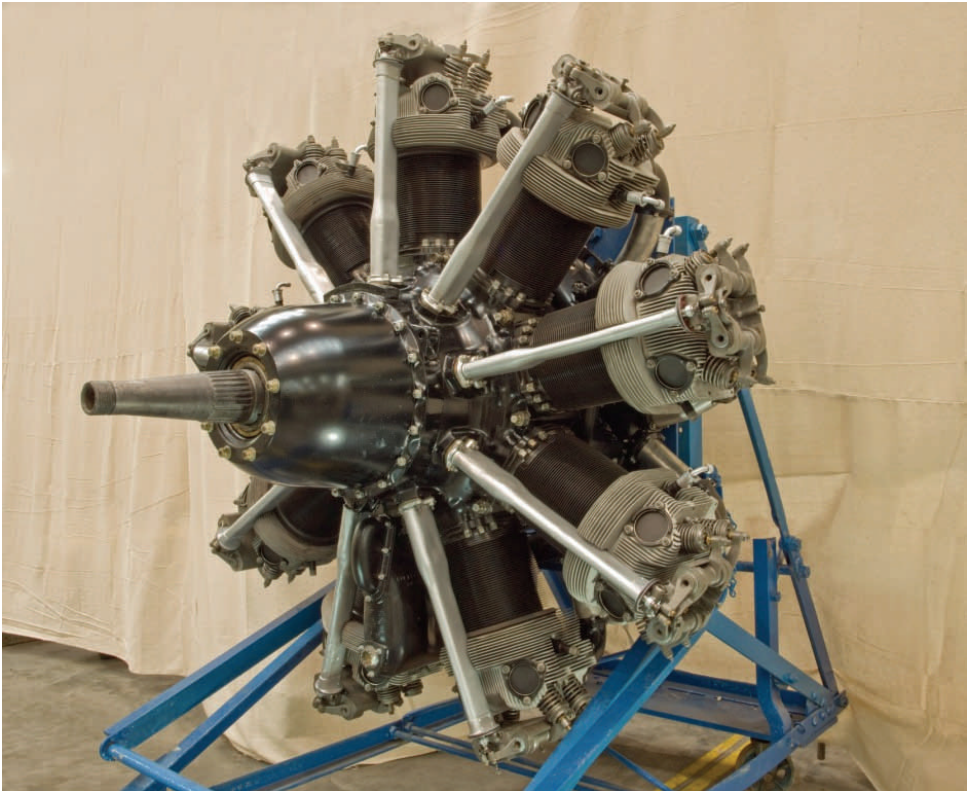


The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
May 2010 Issue 18



Photo; Courtesy RAF Museum, Cosford

**The beautifully restored Bristol Pegasus XVIII engine from Hampden P1344.
A progress report on the Hampden is included in this issue.**



In deze omgeving verongelukte op 16 december 1943 een geallieerde bommenwerper. De bemanningsleden van de Lancaster JB 545 vonden hierbij de dood. De algemene begraafplaats in Wolvega werd hun laatste rustplaats.

Zij gaven hun leven voor de vrijheid van anderen.

W.R. Day
B.J.V. King
W.T. Rees
R. Losa

G.R. Ratcliffe
E. Holloway
A.E. Marsland



IN MEMORIAM
M. A. White
WE WILL REMEMBER HIM

WELCOME TO:

NEW MEMBERS

Ewart Sullivan Gordon Golledge Dallas Payne

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Chris Stevens Michael Verinder Andy Eltis

NEW FRIENDS

Steven Cooke Rolph Wegmann

EDITORIAL

Can it really be four years since The 4T9er was first published in its present form? In that time our numbers have continued to grow and for the first time, to the best of my knowledge, total membership is topping three hundred. The most amazing thing is that the number of full Members, i.e. those who served with the squadron, has stayed relatively stable. Postings out have almost been matched by posting in. I am delighted to welcome Ewart Sullivan, aged 97, who is now, in years, our most senior member. As Sgt. E.J. Sullivan, Ewart was the wireless operator in F/O D.J. Whent's crew which was shot down 16/17th March 1945 during a raid on Wurzburg. There were four survivors on this their fourth operation.

Thank you to all who have sent donations, both in cheques and postage stamps. I am often asked why we do not operate an annual subscription system and my answer is always the same. Firstly it would add a further level of administration, we are an association not a government, and secondly what would be the result of say a veteran falling behind with his subscription? Expulsion? Over my dead body. No, if it ain't broke don't fix it.

Facing Page; In the February issue we reported on the unveiling of an information board at the Sonnega Memorial, Holland, to the crew of 49's Lancaster JB545. Photographs were not available at the time but we have since received a DVD from Hon. Friend Douwe Drijver from which we have extracted these pictures.

A huge thank you to those who have sent in their stories. I try to strike a balance between the various fazes of 49 Squadron's existence plus, when available but not often enough, the ladies' stories of the war or otherwise. Keep them coming. Just one request however, if you have typed your piece on a computer then the best way to submit it is as an e-mail attachment, preferably in 'Word'. I don't have to retype it then.

Sadly we must record the passing in March of Maurice White who was navigator in the crew of the late F/Lt. Jack Winter DFC. They commenced their tour on October 6th 1944 and finished with the raid on Berchtesgaden, April 45.

In addition to New Member Ewart Sullivan, welcomed on the previous page, we are also pleased to welcome two others. Gordon Golledge, who as 4180659 Corporal Technician G.R. Golledge, served with 49 Squadron at Wittering and Marham as an Air Radar Fitter (NBS). 49' was Dallas Payne's first squadron when he served between 1961/63 as a Jnr. Tech, engine fitter. Dallas says that he has nothing but good memories of his time with 49 and recalls, "... many years later on my return to Marham I helped demolish the tea bar that I had helped build in 1962 and found my name, along with others, written in pencil under the work surface."

New Associates, Chris Stevens, Michael Verinder and Andy Eltis are also most welcome. Chris is the 1st cousin once removed, of 19 year old, Sgt. Donald Nabe Stevens who was killed on February 20th 1944 when flying as mid upper gunner in the crew of F/Sgt. E. White. In 2008 Ed Norman received two enquiries regarding P/O P.A.Taverner who was killed 22/23rd October 1943. Phil Taverner was Ed's father's pilot and he realised that the two enquirers, Michael Verinder and Vivienne Mengham are related, sharing the same father but in separate marriages. Ed was therefore able to introduce the half brother, who lives in the USA, and sister to each other. (See issue 10). Andy Eltis' father, F/O Fred Eltis, completed 14 ops as pilot with 49 Squadron up to the end of the war. Tragically he was killed in November 1957 when, as Captain of Aquila Airways Solent class flying boat G-AKNU, he suffered engine failure when taking off from The Solent and crashed onto the Isle of Wight. Andy was four years old at the time.

Welcome too to new 'Friends' Steven Cooke and Rolph Wegmann. Steven is the son of former mid upper gunner Bill Cooke who was welcomed in issue 16. Rolph Wegmann, S/Ldr retired, Royal Swedish Air Force, was a J35 Draken pilot who, as well as being a serving officer, was deeply involved in spinning trials of that aircraft. Rolph's interest in 49 Squadron began in childhood when the famous photograph of LACW Lilian Yule expertly driving a small tractor hauling a very large Lancaster (DV238) caught his imagination. Coincidentally,

Rolph drove steam engines in Sweden after retirement from the Air Force and shares my passion for the former Somerset and Dorset Railway.

Many a heart skipped a beat when the news was heard of the Red Arrows collision. Thankfully both pilots escaped. One of them, Assoc 4T9er Mike Ling, e-mailed (22nd April) to thank us for the card sent on behalf of the Association and to say that he has returned home from Selly Oak Hospital. He is presently 'flying' an electric wheelchair loaned by the RAFBF, "...which affords me a massive degree of independence and I am able to do most things on my own even with my right arm as my only useable limb." I know that every 4T9er joins me in wishing Mike a full and speedy recovery.

No-one who attended the Reunion in 2007 will forget the RAF Guard of Honour at Fiskerton. Neither will they forget the parading of the Squadron Standard, without doubt for the last time, at the Service of Remembrance. Both of these events were arranged by F/Lt Gary Mennell, a Fighter Controller at RAF Scampton. Not long afterwards we were sorry to learn that Gary had been posted to High Wycombe. Since then his enthusiasm has been sadly missed but in April I was delighted to receive an e-mail from him saying that he has been posted back to Scampton. Welcome back Gary!

In the February issue I recommended that veterans should make a charge for their signatures. On reading this my brother-in-law emailed to say that a friend of his, an ex-professional footballer, had recently been paid £2 each for five hundred signatures. £1,000 for a morning's work. Food for thought!

On March 15th I was accompanied by new 'Friend' Rolph Wegmann on a visit to the open day at RAF Museum Cosford's restoration centre. By the time you read this the Fairy Battle should have returned to Hendon whilst the Wellington will have journeyed in the opposite direction. I understand that it will be a five year project to eliminate corrosion in the Wellington's structure and replace the fabric. Can you imagine the mind numbing job of thoroughly treating all the nooks and crannies in the geodetic structure? Good luck lads! The Hampden project has made good progress since our last visit in February 2009 and a report is included elsewhere in this issue. I must thank Project Leader Darren Priday for his courtesy and time spent in discussing the project with us.

Exciting news from East Kirkby as 'Just Jane' comes a step nearer to taking to the air again. Four crates containing undercarriage and engine bearer spares were delivered from Nanton, Canada, in February.

I must pay tribute to 'the crew' for their diligence once again. Sgt. Leonard Jardine was killed on January 25th 1942 and is buried in Locksbrook Cemetery, Bath, Somerset. It was discovered that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website listed him as being with 408 Squadron. The crew couldn't

reconcile with this and investigations with 408 Squadron Association, CWGC and RAF Records at Cranwell confirmed that Sgt Jardine was indeed a member of 49 Squadron and the CWGC have agreed to amend their records, something that they do not do lightly. Well done the 'Back Page Boys.'

Just when you think that you have witnessed the depths of stupidity to which humans are capable of descending some idiot comes along to remind you that, "You ain't seen nothing yet." In February I posted 225 copies of The 4T9er. Some days later four were returned to me, taped together, and all bearing labels stating, "Insufficient address detail." As we were using address data that had been used on numerous occasions previously this came as some surprise. However, the real dollop in the manure heap was that 'Brain of Britain' had removed all four of our address labels. I was not therefore able to identify the four members who had not received their copy neither was I able to find out what information, if any, was missing. A check of our label 'master' showed no obvious fault. Apart from making 225 phone calls there was no way in which I could find out. A trip to my local sorting office revealed that all four were in the same postal area but they couldn't tell me which. So, assuming that this copy is successfully delivered, if you did not receive February's issue please let me know. The whole matter was made even more frustrating as Reunion booking forms were enclosed. Finally, the next issue is due to be published before the end of August. If you haven't received it by then please let me know. I'm going for a lie down now!

I have recently been re-reading some of my old books. In the fifties I would regularly buy a paperback book from Moyers Exchange Library in Wigan Market Hall to read on the bus during the 45 minute journey to Chorley to do a bit of courting. These would always be about wartime flying and the system of part exchanging unwanted books meant that one finished with a collection of one's favourites. I have just finished re-re-re-...reading the book that is certainly in my top three and I will be hard pressed to name the other two. 'The Big Show' by Pierre Clostermann is one of those that causes one to say, "Just one more chapter then I'll lie down." My copy is a very battered fifty year old paperback so I don't know how readily available it is but if you get the chance to read it then do so. Clostermann flew Spitfires and Tempests for four years, flying 420 operations and was credited with at least 23 enemy aircraft. His survival when all around him were falling is truly amazing. The book is beautifully written and I am confident that you will enjoy it as much as I.

There are quite a few members who have undergone 'Heavy Maintenance' and we wish them all a speedy return to service.

'Til the next time.



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Monday 31st May VE65 Celebrations

Taxi 1.30pm & 4.00 pm

Wednesday 2nd June 11.00am & 1.30pm

Saturday 19th June Woodhall Spa Rotary Club Dance

Wednesday 23rd June Lincs Bike Night

Wednesday 30th June 11.00am & 1.30pm

Wednesday 7th July 11.00am & 1.30pm

Saturday 17th July Buell Motorcycle Meet

Taxi 1.00pm & 3.00pm

Sunday 18th July Rover Car Rally

2.00pm Lancaster engine run

Wednesday 21st July 11.00am & 1.30pm

Tuesday 27th July 11.00am & 1.30pm

Thursday 29th July 11.00am & 1.30pm

Wednesday 4th August 11.00am & 1.30pm

Saturday 7th August RAFBF Air Show

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JIM LOWE'S STORY

Part Two

As this went on to say that he became agitated was an understatement and he became more vicious by saying that if I did not answer him, he would have no option but to hand me over to the Gestapo, and that their method of getting answers to questions was far different than his.

This we had also been warned about. However, this outburst did not last long and he tried a totally different approach. "Surely", he said, "You have a girl friend?" "Yes," I replied. "And I am sure you would like us to let her know you are well". To this I said "Yes, I would like that, thank you very much." "Well," he said with his pen at the ready, "where can we contact her?" To which I replied, "You can contact her through the Air Ministry, Whitehall, London."

Off he went again, ranting and raving, but I was only twenty-one at this time and inclined to be a bit niggled from the treatment I had received. In fact the worse I was treated, the more it made me dig my heels in. I didn't care by this time how awkward or cheeky I became for by now I had had more than enough. Not only that, but after all he was the enemy, and I could not see any reason why I should make his job easy after the hard time he was giving me.

I wondered how much longer he would put up with my cheek and couldn't-care-less attitude, for all this time I was making inroads into his packet of Players. Once again he calmed down and became friendly again, so much so that he showed me photographs of his wife and two daughters, and for one fleeting moment I thought of asking him for his daughters' phone number - but I thought this would be pushing things a bit - but this was the state of mind I was in by now.

Again the questions - what Squadron, what aircraft, where stationed, etc.?

After a time when we were both getting nowhere fast he started pleading with me to help him to complete the form to satisfy his superiors. As we were once again on 'friendly' terms, I asked him if our roles were reversed, as a German officer and me as an officer in the R.A.F. trying to get the answers to the questions he was asking me, what would be his reaction. To which he smiled and said that he would most probably react in the same way, for he could respect a person who would not divulge any information, and as I would not help him, he would have to help himself. So saying, he got up from the table and went into the hotel leaving me sitting all alone once more in the middle of the lawn and I had again that uncomfortable feeling. Thinking of the guards I had seen in the bushes convinced me I should sit very still.

My interrogator returned after about twenty minutes carrying the largest book I had ever seen. It measured about 3 feet x 2 feet and the pages were of cardboard.

This he put on the table in front of him and then sat down again and as he began turning the pages over, I was amazed to see that at the top of each page in full colour was a Squadron Crest. He stopped turning when he came to the page with the 49 Squadron Crest, then he proceeded to fill in the form and answered the questions he had been asking me, 49 Squadron based at Fiskerton, flying Lancasters, where I had trained, etc. but what was more astounding was that he put down that Peenemunde was my 21st bombing raid, which it was.

The only two things he didn't know was, were we fitted with radar and what was the bomb load. Of course, I again was very vague and evasive and dodged the questions by going off at a tangent. He must have thought I was a bit dim to be aircrew from the answers I gave him, but he couldn't have been very concerned because he did not push me too hard.

Today, 37 years later, I could still give him the answer to those two questions: Yes, we were fitted with radar and our bomb load that night was two five hundred pound, six one thousand pound and one four thousand pound bombs, all high explosive, but I don't suppose he would be interested today.

After I had seen all this I was amazed to say the least, and his comment to me was that his job was easy for within twenty-four hours of a raid he had the complete battle order of the R.A.F. and all he had to do was to sit there and wait for us to come through. "We knew, of course, which Squadron you were from by the identification letters on your aircraft when it was investigated after it had crashed," "Yes," he said, "We have a wonderful espionage system, but," he added rather sorrowfully, "I wish we had yours."

With that he picked up his book and packet of Players which I had been smoking like mad, got up from the table, and once again left me sitting there. I did not have long to wait, however, before the now familiar pattern of the two armed guards once again motioned me to follow them. Once more I was returned to my little oven-like cell and locked in.

After about another four days of the treatment as before, I was once more collected by my two armed companions and walked about a mile away - not without a feeling of unease, as I did not know what was to happen - to another part of the camp where I was pushed into a compound and gates of barbed wire were locked behind me, but this time I was pleased to see that I was once again in the company of fellow R.A.F. aircrew.

This was the compound where we were herded together to await shipment to a permanent Prisoner-of-War Camp. I did not know at that time, however, that I was destined for the infamous Stalag Luft III.

I must say that once inside this compound conditions, though not good, were an improvement on what I had, up to now experienced. Never shall I forget the luxury of that first shave and all over wash, the first I had been allowed since being shot down about a month previously.

We were not locked in solitary confinement in cells but were now allowed to walk round the compound and visit other huts. How comparatively pleasant it was to be able to converse with fellow aircrew in English once again.

The improved conditions did not last long, however, for within three or four days we were once more herded together, counted again and again you would not think it possible to have so many re-counts for 44 bodies, for this was the total survivors of the 47 aircraft shot down on the Peenemunde raid.

Then, with approximately one guard to each man, we were walked to the local railway station and once more loaded into the ever-waiting cattle-trucks. We were becoming accustomed to this mode of travel by now. After about twenty four hours being locked in here, we eventually got under way. This was another nightmare journey of about a week's duration, although we were allowed out for toilet reasons occasionally, still under strong guard.

The reason the journey took so long was because we were continually being shunted into numerous sidings to allow other traffic to proceed and they continually took our engine away for other duties, for according to our guards, they were very short of engines due to the efforts of R.A.F. Mosquitoes running riot on their train busting sorties.

We had one rather disturbing episode on this journey when, for a whole day, we were kept waiting just outside the main station of Berlin and we were hoping that we should be moved before nightfall, as we had been expecting to raid Berlin any time at all. However, it was with great relief when about six o'clock that evening we started to move. Our fears had been justified for we had not been going very long when we stopped again whilst Berlin suffered one of the heaviest raids to date.

After a most uncomfortable journey under very cramped conditions, forty four in one cattle truck, the day came when we were once more shunted into a siding and the door was thrown open and we were confronted by a squad of armed German guards waiting for us to alight, in numbers again about one to each prisoner. With much shouting and pushing we were again lined up for counting, these guards did not seem very sociable, but I suppose after marching from the camp to the siding in full kit on a blazing hot day to collect a scruffy bunch of R.A.F. bodies was not conducive to good relations. Once they were satisfied with the count, we were immediately surrounded and started off to walk to the camp. This again was a rather uncomfortable time for not only did we have to contend with the surly attitude of the guards, which was rather explosive to say the least, but also the attitude of the civilian population who were definitely hostile. I was very glad to see that the guards did their job very well and kept them away from us because it was a very tense situation. Once we were clear of the town the tension was eased somewhat.

So we struggled on for about four miles then turned down a narrow road which

lead through some woods. It was not far into the woods when once more we came across the familiar barbed wire compound.

This was the entrance to Stalag Luft III.

First of all we were taken to the German administration block where we were ordered to strip off so that our clothes could be searched. Then came a most degrading episode when naked as we were, we were subjected to a very personal search of our bodies. Believe me, nothing could have got through that search. After these various indignities had been completed we were once more allowed to dress and, in the company of our guards, once more were taken outside and across the compound where another gate of barbed wire was opened for us and we were bundled through into the camp itself.

The huts of the camp were of wooden construction and were built on pedestals so that the floor was about three feet above ground level. This I found out later was to enable the German guards who were facetiously known as "ferrets" to crawl about underneath the floor, not only to listen to our conversation, but also to prevent holes being dug in the floor in an attempt to escape. As I was taking all this in we were surrounded by a great crowd of R.A.F. bods who were throwing questions at us left, right and centre to glean the latest news from home. I was very happy to see some familiar faces amongst them, chaps I had trained with, etc.

One in particular greeted me with, "What ho! Lowey". I knew who this was before I saw him, for I had had this same greeting when I walked into the Beaver Club at Admiralty Arch some two years previously. In fact, I never knew where next I would hear "What ho! Lowey", for after the Beaver Club I next heard it at I.T.W. (Initial Training Wing) for I was at Torquay at this time and as it was our half-day off on a Wednesday we used to go to Paignton to another I.T.W. who had Thursday afternoons off, and sit on the sea wall and watch the Paignton contingent marching to their various classes, in general to take the mickey out of them. They did the same to us on Thursdays. It was whilst sitting on the sea wall when a flight went past on their way to class once again I heard the cry "What ho! Lowey". Next time I heard it was when I was passing a flight office on an airfield in Canada and a window was flung open and once more I hear the by now familiar cry. Next time I heard it I was on leave from the Squadron and was walking through the market place at Dudley. How it was that Gerry Whitehouse always saw me first I shall never know, and now as I walked into Stalag Luft III, here it was again - "What ho! Lowey". Gerry Whitehouse again - he had beaten me there by about three weeks, but it was good to see him for I had seen his name on the casualty list when I was on the Squadron, as he had failed to return from an earlier raid. When I knew him back home, he had a lovely head of blond hair. Now how changed he was, for as I saw him now he was bald as an egg, and he told me that they were running up

on the target when there was a great flash and a bang and he woke up on the ground minus his hair which had burnt off. He did not recall bailing out, and how he got there from about twenty three thousand feet, he had no idea.

We had not been inside the gate many minutes when we were collected by a Squadron Leader and allocated to various huts. I was allocated to Block 6 and I was introduced to the chaps in the "Mess" with whom I was going to spend the next two years.

The "Mess" consisted of a small portion of Block 6 divided off from the rest of the hut by two-tier bunks and one locker per person. There were about twelve such areas inside the hut, each one itself a self-contained mess of about eight to ten persons, so as you can well imagine, it was rather overcrowded.

The "Mess" to which I was allocated consisted of a selection of all aircrew trades and equally diverse civilian occupations. One of them was Pete Watts, one of the most colourful characters I have ever met. He was a Flight Lieutenant with 35 Squadron, a Pathfinder outfit, and he had the D.F.M. It was a long time before I found out how he earned it. It was in 1939 when he was a corporal photographer, and as was common in those days, aircrew was a secondary trade. His job in aircrew was that of air gunner and it was one day prior to the fall of France that he was flying as a gunner in a Lysander, when suddenly at tree-top height, they were attacked by three Me109s and Pete, in the rear cockpit with a single Lewis gun, took careful aim and allowing the correct deflection, as calm as if it was a practice exercise, shot down the three attacking aircraft, even though they were far superior aircraft to the Lysander he was flying in. On returning to base he was granted an immediate award of the D.F.M. and commissioned in the field, and knowing Pete Watts, this was well within his capabilities.

I would add that it was not Pete that told me this but the pilot he was flying with at the time.

Later on I was to be very thankful for knowing Pete Watts, for much later, as I had quite a rough time with domestic troubles back home which, in my present predicament I could do nothing about and this was getting me down, I was very seriously considering ending it all. This was quite easy to do, for all that was necessary was to take a run at the wire surrounding the camp to try and climb it, and the guards would immediately open fire. However, there must have been some tell-tale signs that things were not as they should be and Pete, being the type of person he was, picked up these signs and as slight as he was, gave me the hiding of my life which brought me to my senses. So without any shadow of doubt, I consider by his action he saved my life. Funny thing was that some time after this episode, we were fooling about and I knocked the stuffing out of Pete, but of course, by now things were different.

To be continued.

In issue 13 of The 4T9er we reported on a visit to RAF Cosford by a group of 49 Squadron Hampden veterans. The purpose of the visit was to view the restoration work being carried out on their Hampden P1344 which was recovered from Iceland. We are grateful to Project Leader Darren Priday for gaining permission for us to reproduce this progress report.

HAMPDEN NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2010

Sad news

Unfortunately, in 2009, we lost two much cherished friends of the Hampden Project. On 12th May Wing Commander Peter McDermott DFC DFM passed away. For those who have read the Hampden Squadrons book they will no doubt be aware of Peter's heroics whilst flying in the Hampden. When Peter visited the Project he kindly donated a pilot's mirror, borrowed, as he called it, from AE143 which he carefully parked in someone's back garden in Little Driffield!

On the 4th November Corporal George Shepherd passed away; he was 92 years young. George was onboard our Hampden and survived the crash along with the pilot. George and three generations of his family last visited the Project on the 4th December 2008. He provided us with detailed information about the flight and his captivity, some not previously known to his family. It was George's wish that he did not want flowers at his funeral and any donations should be sent to the Project – we have recently received a large donation that will be put to good use and provide a fitting tribute to him. The funeral was attended by four members of staff from the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre (MBCC), where they met with many of his family and friends. One topic of conversation that kept coming up was a visit to the MBCC to see the restoration. We have since had notification that a 52-seater coach will bring a group to visit during the next MBCC Open-week. We look forward to showing them around the aircraft and passing on to them the full story of what happened on the night of the 4th/5th September 1942 and the subsequent war years.

Both Peter and George will be dearly missed.

New team Members

The team has had three new members join the Project during the year. First was David Dickens, a Cosford Society Member. David has taken on the time-consuming task of restoring the surface finish to the inside of the aircraft which is now about 80% complete.

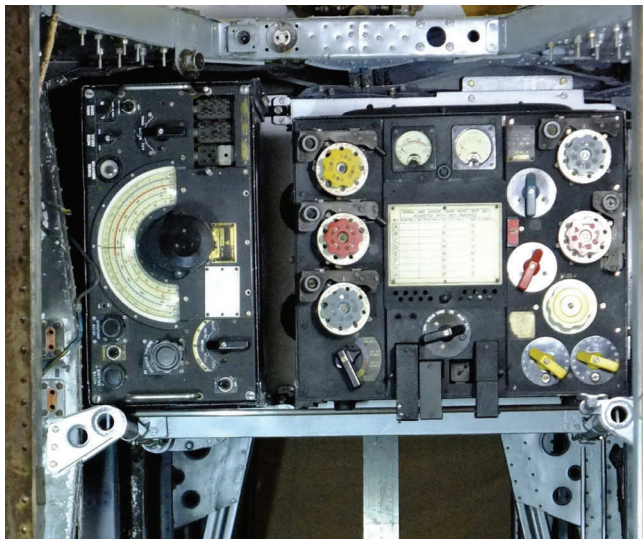
Next to join was Paul Gennoe who is also a Cosford Society Member. Over the last four months, Paul has taken our Hampden related communications and archived them for easy reference. Paul has also spent a lot of time producing documents relating to 144 squadron and 455 (RAAF) squadron and the Russia detachment. His in-depth work has proven to be extremely useful and brought to

light a lot of relevant information that may have been missed!

Our third new addition is Martin Purcell-Shaw who has recently started on the RAF Museum apprenticeship scheme. After spending his first couple of months gaining basic hand skills, Martin has been tasked with completing the structural rebuild of the rear fuselage floor. This will include manufacturing new parts so will be a good test of his newly acquired skills.

Progress

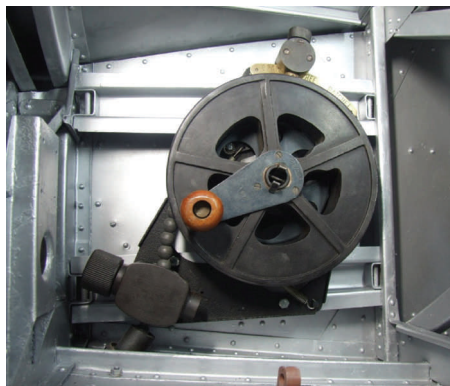
Initially at the start of 2009 progress was slow as team members were tasked



with building a bomb rack for the RAFM FE2b; production has since picked up in the second half of the year. The most noticeable development in the last year has been the fitting of the external skins. Only one skin remains to be fitted and with a few other minor tasks outstanding, means the area from the wing upwards is nearing completion. A considerable amount of unseen

internal work has also been going on. The T1154 and R1155 radio sets [*above*] are installed as is the trailing aerial [*below*] used with the sets. The trailing aerial mechanism is mounted back on the port fuselage, between frames 18 and 19. Apart from the cable drum the winching mechanism is all original fitted parts except for one new spring; it operates as if straight off the manufacture production line! Notable other internal furnishings fitted include an Aldis lamp obtained from the RAFM reserve collection at Stafford and the fitting of the rear table for the TR9F unit.

Another important task has been completed by Kyle Anderton; namely the structural strengthening of frame 24. He spent a considerable time designing and producing plates and brackets to



ensure that this known weak area is up to the task of once again supporting the tail boom.

Before Martin started on the floor structure he restored the rear bomb carrier to full working order, once again all parts are original fitted items.

Visits

Visitors to the project and public interest in the project remained steady throughout the year. We met the families of three of the crew onboard. First to visit was Patricia Slator and family; Patricia is the daughter of Pilot Officer Perry, the Captain of the aircraft. Next we met James Morton-Robertson, son of the Wireless Operator/Air Gunner of the same name. The third to visit was Robert and Barbara Howard. Robert is the nephew of the Navigator Flight Sergeant Miller who travelled all the way over from Canada.

All three visits helped us to further understand the events that took place during the final flight of P1344. We are now only missing contact with the family of Air Gunner, Sgt Garrity.

We have had far too many other visitors to mention by name but all have been most welcome and have provided us with detailed information about the aircraft manufacture, squadron life and POW internment. All information has been gratefully received and once again thank you.

Engine Restoration Completed

A few years ago, the two original engines (Bristol Pegasus XVIII's) were sent to Medway Aircraft Preservation Society (MAPS) in Kent, to have the port engine restored. After many years of painstaking research and dedication the engine has been handed back to the Project with the port unit looking like new! Whilst picking up the engine the Project managed to get some air-time on the local ITV channel – Darren even got a talking role! Thanks go to Lewis Deal and the team at MAPS for the excellent job they have done.

PowerPoint Presentation

Now that the team has gathered so much information about the Hampden, covering a diverse range of subjects, we have decided to put together a PowerPoint presentation. A shortened version was used at the recent RAFM Cosford volunteers Christmas get-together and went down very well. Darren has agreed to do a talk for the Handley Page Association on the 12th June.

Michael Beetham Conservation Centre Open-week

The MBCC is open to the public in 2010 on the following dates:

15th – 20th November

Opening hours: 10:15 to 13:00 daily, admission is free of charge.

Please note that both open-weeks include Saturdays. For further information on Museum opening hours and events, please check out www.rafmuseum.org

If anybody has any comments or information, please contact Darren Priday at the MBCC. 01902 376234 or darren.priday@rafmuseum.org



A SON'S PILGRIMAGE

By Richard Bartlett-May

Part 2



Photos; 49 Squadron Association Collection

I had always said that one day I would visit my father's grave in Nairobi. It was a journey I knew I had to make but for a myriad of reasons never made any hard and fast plans to accomplish. With the additional information I now had and knowing the location of Githunguri where the crash occurred, everything seemed to become time critical. It was 54 years since the crash and the prospect of finding anyone still alive that knew of or witnessed the event was diminishing. It became abundantly clear that there was no better time to take that leap and find closure to the past, regardless of the outcome. They say that you can't find peace until you find all the pieces, and I still had pieces to find.

I knew no one in Kenya, but through the power of the internet and friends who knew friends, I had an offer from a Bryan Harris in Nairobi to be our guide. Bryan's father was ex RAF stationed at Eastleigh prior to the emergency period. Bryan grew up in Kenya and was at school there in 1955. Bryan and I spoke and e-mailed each other in the days leading up to my trip. He also went to the newspaper archives of the East African Standard in Nairobi and photocopied the newspaper articles of February 20th and 21st 1955 regarding the crash for me.

My wife Donna and I flew to Kenya from our home in San Diego, California via Detroit and Amsterdam in July of 2009. Our flight time with layovers was 32 hours, five of those in Amsterdam. As we started our descent into Nairobi the daylight was fading, I looked down from the KLM 747-400 while over the Aberdares knowing that my father had looked down on these same mountains 54 years ago. My mind wandered and imagined him sitting in the rear turret thinking of my mother and I back in England, just as I was now thinking of him.

The airport arrivals lounge at Jomo Kenyatta airport was a sea of people pushing and shoving each other trying to locate their arriving passengers by holding up cardboard signs. We walked up and down the line looking for one that said Bartlett. Fortunately we soon located our driver and loaded our luggage into a modified long wheel based Land Rover. We then sat in dusty stop and go traffic inhaling exhaust fumes all the way to our hotel on the outskirts of Nairobi nearby the Muthaiga Country Club.

We met up with Bryan the next morning and over coffee planned out the next two days before heading towards City Park Cemetery. The short 6 mile drive from our hotel to the cemetery took one and a half hours in the most appalling traffic. The population of Nairobi has increased to roughly 3 million from around 200,000 in 1960. Unfortunately the road system and infrastructure hasn't changed since the British left. The road surfaces were full of potholes and in many places the tarmac had completely disappeared. The main mode of transportation for the masses in Kenya are minibus taxis called Matatus. "Matatu" comes from the Swahili word for "three." It used to cost 3 shillings to ride in a Matatu. Kenya law dictates that there should be only one passenger per

seat, but every Matatu we saw appeared to be loaded to the hilt. The Matatu drivers are well-known for their reckless driving and we experienced multiple examples of this everyday during our stay.

City Park was an area in the 1950's where families spent time picnicking and enjoying the park. Today it is a high crime area with transient families living in makeshift dwellings. It has also become an area convenient for people to dump rubbish. Due to the crime in the area, Bryan paid someone to keep an eye on his car and we headed off with a cemetery worker to find the squadron's grave site.

As we walked down the tree lined dirt road towards the cemetery, I had waves of varying emotions flowing over me. In some ways it seemed unreal, after a lifetime of talking about making this trip, here I was walking along the road that I had walked along in my mind countless times. The road that still looked the same as it did in the funeral procession photos sent to my mother by the RAF over five decades ago. As I walked with my father's wreath in my hands I felt like I was travelling back in time. I had no idea what my reactions would be when I got to my father's grave and was a little concerned. Even though I had never been to Nairobi before I seemed to instinctively know where to go and located the graves of the crew of SX984 without any directions from the cemetery worker. My wife and Bryan both said it was eerie how I walked straight up to my father's grave.

The cemetery was somewhat unkempt. One family had even built a house from sticks and corrugated sheathing in the middle of it. The British Military Graves were to some extent tended to and distinguishable from the other graves. I had brought a stainless steel container with a letter I had written to my father. I also included photos of my family, my parents' wedding and a couple of my father holding me as a baby. I had the cemetery worker bury the container next my father's grave. We placed wreaths on my father's grave and the grave of Sgt. North. After this I asked my wife and Bryan to give me a few minutes alone, I knelt next to my father's grave and told him about my life and his grandchildren and how much I loved and missed him. I didn't realise it at the time but looking back it was very cathartic. This journey wasn't only for me but also fulfilled an unspoken promise to my late mother and my father's entire family. . . You can't find peace until you find all the pieces and I had located another piece.

I filled a small container with soil from the grave, placed it in my pocket and rejoined my wife and Bryan. We gave a small amount of money to the young family living in the cemetery and asked that they take care of the graves when we left. We then drove across town to Wilson Airport and the East African Aero Club. There we met Colin Davies with African Air Charters who would accompany us the next day. Colin grew up near Githunguri in the 1950's and he remembered seeing the Lincolns flying over the police station there on their way

Right; Next to me is a lady called Peris Ngendo who witnessed the accident, we are standing on the spot where SX984 crashed. The gentleman to the right of me is Colin Davis who lived in Githunguri in 1955. His father was an engineer installing a water pipeline in the town. He remembered seeing the Lincolns fly over on their way back from the Aberdares but didn't witness the accident.



Left; With my wife Donna. The trees in the background behind the school are where the rear turret and my father were found.

Photos on this page;
Donna & Richard Bartlett-May



‘...I have peace and serenity now...’

back from the Aberdares.

The following day we drove to Githunguri. Fifty-four years ago it was probably no more than a village but today it is a sprawling, unattractive but substantial town. We found the police station identified by the Kenya Police flag fluttering on the town-side of the hill. We met with the desk sergeant who took us to meet the current Chief of Police, one Kingsford Nyaga. He invited us into his office and he listened while I told him the story of SX984. He had only been at the station for a year and had no knowledge of the event, but he offered to show us around and take us to the top of the hill which we readily accepted. After spending some time with us he left to go into the town and find an elder who might remember the accident. While he was gone I stood at the top of the hill and tried to envisage where SX984 approached from and which direction it headed after striking the building. Being it was the third pass when it hit, it was impossible to tell. If it had struck on the first pass one would assume the aircraft was heading south towards Eastleigh but after that I had no idea.

The Chief Inspector returned and told us there was an old gentlemen living just a few minutes away who had told the story of the plane crash for many years. He then got into our vehicle and showed us the way. When we arrived we met the gentleman's daughter-in-law, a Margaret Munene. She took us to meet her father-in-law but warned us that he suffered from dementia. When we met him he shook my hand and greeted me but he could not remember anything about the accident. Encouraged by Margaret we tried to jog his memory speaking to him both in Swahili and English but to no avail. We thought we had come to a dead end. Margaret, however, had another idea. Her mother-in-law was in the town at a funeral but she could call her and see if she could help. She couldn't remember if her mother-in-law was married at the time of the crash but felt sure she knew the story really well.

Her mother-in-law, Peris Ngendo, arrived a few minutes later with four other ladies. When asked if she remembered a plane crash, she responded with "February the 19th 1955, it was a Saturday!" She was only 22 years old in 1955 and had actually witnessed the plane flying over the Police Station three times before striking the chimney and crashing in flames within a hundred yards of her house. She took us to the spot where the crash occurred and spoke of her neighbours, the two women and two children who were burnt to death by the fire and explosion. Her next statement totally took me by surprise, riveting me to the spot and I started to tremble when she said, "One man from the plane was thrown far away over by some tall trees," as she spoke she pointed past the crash site directly away from the police station towards the Kiambu road. "He was thrown, way over there by one wing of the plane." The man she was referring to had to be my father and the wing had to be the tailplane and rear turret.

She then went on to explain how her brother-in-law Paul Kuria carried this

man on his shoulders to the Githunguri Police Land Rover and was then driven to Kiambu Hospital. She said they learned later that day that the man had died. I informed her that the man she spoke of was my father. Then followed a most poignant moment when Peris and her lady friends all put their arms around me and hugged me saying how sorry they were for my loss. I was deeply touched and amazed as they spoke as if my father had died but a few short days ago.

In the space of less than an hour my lifetime of seemingly unanswerable questions had been answered. It all seemed very surreal and difficult to comprehend. I kept saying to my wife, "If only I had done this journey years ago." But as she rightly said, without the internet we wouldn't have found the information we did. We may have come to Githunguri and not found Kingsford Nyaga who was most helpful locating Peris, her husband and daughter-in-law. It was as if all the planets lined up on that day. Some might say "Is it odd or God!"

But it didn't stop there, within a couple of weeks of returning to the USA I received an e-mail from an Arthur Williamson in Cambridge who informed me that he was Chief of Police in Githunguri at the time of the accident. He went on to say that although he was up country chasing the Mau Mau on the 19th a gentleman by the name of Richard Mathews who now lived in Australia was the District Officer and local magistrate at Githunguri and had photographs of the crash site and damaged buildings. Then a Fred Stringer, an ex Githunguri policeman, sent an aerial photo of the police station taken shortly after the crash showing the damaged rondavels. I also received an e-mail from a Tony Shepherd who worked at a saw mill just north of Githunguri and visited the crash site the following day. He still lives in Kenya and informed me that he took a small piece of the wreckage as a keepsake which he still has.

My search for additional information continues, however I have peace and serenity now in the fact some 55 years after the event I have finally managed to connect the dots. My biggest concern was that I would never find answers, never get to Nairobi and visit my father's grave. I have now ticked those boxes and can move forward and on to another issue.

I discovered that Sgt Holland and my father's headstones have been switched. It would appear this happened in 1957 when the temporary wooden crosses were replaced by Portland Stone. After months of correspondence with the War Graves Commission (who only took over the graves in the 1980s due to reports they had fallen into disrepair) and the Service Personnel and Service Agency MOD UK I gave them my photos and records from Kenya. They have finally agreed that the headstones have been incorrectly placed and are making plans to correct this. These plans have currently stalled until they can get verification of this from the British Embassy in Nairobi.

I have no other news at this time but will update one and all when this event takes place as it is my intention to be present in Nairobi to witness this.

Lancs to Lincolns

By Noel Callon



I went into the R.A.F. on April 7th 1949 doing my square bashing at R.A.F. Bridgnorth before going on to R.A.F. Cosford, the R.A.F. Technical Training School. There I learnt about hydraulics, pneumatics, brakes, tyres and aircraft controls such as rudders and ailerons. I also studied the repair of skins of the wings and fuselage as well as riveting and plating repairs. It was a good job that I had been a garage mechanic before I was called up. We were all very keen although we were mostly National Servicemen.

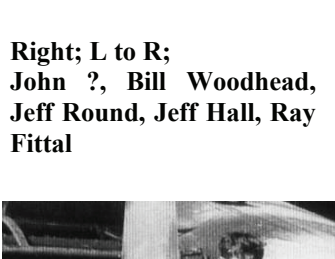
I was posted to 49 Squadron at R.A.F. Upwood on completion of training. We were a fully operational squadron on duty most of the days and nights. Also at Upwood were 214, 148 and 7 Squadrons but '49 was the best one.' At first all the squadrons were equipped with Lancasters which were used for practice bombing by day and night on the Bombing Range at Whittlesey near Peterborough as well as over Europe, mostly Helligoland. The aircraft also did Air Sea Rescue duty with a lifeboat slung in the bomb bay but with the doors open. We were on duty most of the time doing inspections, repairs and servicing of our aircraft. We didn't have time to get fed up or bored and very interesting times were had by us all.



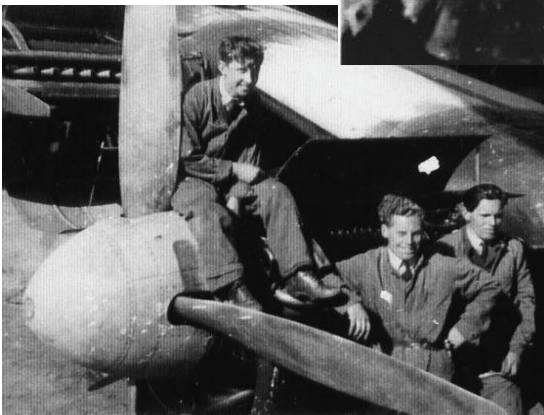
R.A.F. Upwood. Main Gate



Left; L to R;
 Brian Bailey, unknown,
 ‘Stumpy’ Hawkesworth,
 unknown, ‘Ginger’ Morris,
 Brian Grover



Right; L to R;
 John ?, Bill Woodhead,
 Jeff Round, Jeff Hall, Ray
 Fittal



Below; Front Row L to R;
 Jeff Round, Bill Woodhead
 (Airframes) Ray Barret,
 Bert Spires, ‘Taff’ Bowden
 (Engines)
 Back Row; L to R;
 ‘Clarkie’ (Radar) Simy & Fittal
 (Sparks) Jeff Hall (Engines)
 Finlan & Jonas (Wireless)

Above; L to R;
 Me, Norman ‘Nosey’ Parker,
 ‘Taff’ Bowden.

49 SQUADRON GROUND CREW

Photos; Courtesy
 Noel Callon



Us Riggers (Airframe Fitters) also did the most technical of jobs, that of emptying the Elsan toilet which was situated in front of the rear gunner's turret on Lancs and Lincolns. Fortunately our aircrew were very good and didn't use it too often.

During my time we went on detachment to Shallufa by the Suez Canal doing bombing and fighter affiliation exercises over the desert, Red Sea and Mediterranean. It was a very good experience for us and we got a nice suntan. Bill Woodhead [4T9er] didn't go to Shallufa but had a temporary posting to the Royal Navy, sailing on first a destroyer and then an aircraft carrier. That must have been terrible for him, cruising the Med. (Lucky *****!)

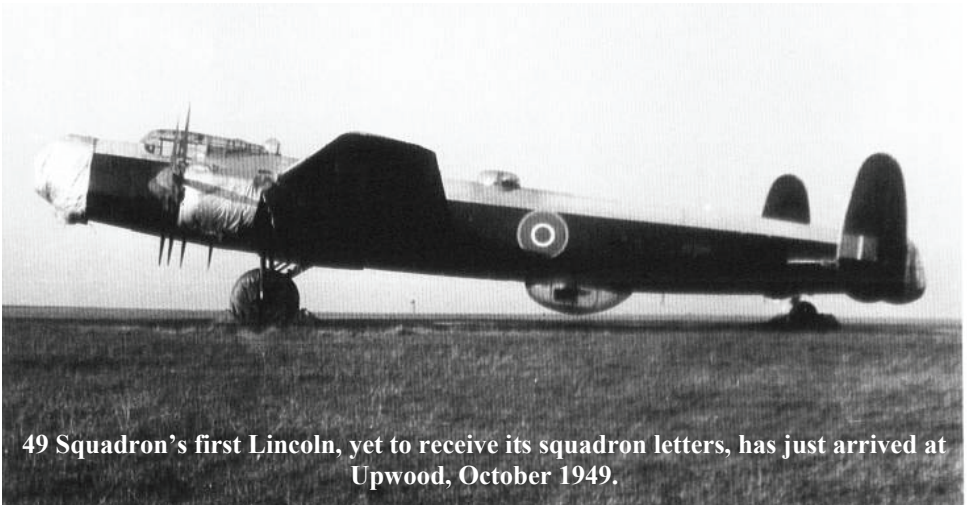
After our tour of Egypt we returned to Upwood for our normal squadron activities but we were kept on the alert because the Berlin Airlift had just ended but the Cold War continued.

I also wish to mention that super 49 Squadron were awarded the 'Laurence Minot Trophy' for best in Bomber Command precision bombing. It was, I believe, 1950.



Bullst baffles brains. 'Ready for inspection Sir.'**

One thing stands out in my mind about our weekends at Upwood. Some Saturday nights we went to the British Legion Club in Peterborough. The first time that we went there were four of us and it was quite quiet until Norman 'Nosey' Parker saw an old piano under a cover in the corner. He asked the barman for permission to play it. "Yes, if you like." came the reply. 'Nosey' opened up with a few scales then let rip with 'Roll out the Barrel'. It was marvellous, he played so well yet none of us knew that he could play at all. Soon all four of us were singing our hearts out and the locals joined in as well.



We all got a free pint and as we were leaving later in the evening the club stewards asked if we would come back again which we did on many Saturday nights. We sang round the piano and had quite a bit of free hospitality. The British Legion Club doubled its attendance and on the following Sunday morning we had all lost our voices. Happy memories!

I was just a National Serviceman but was proud, as were all of us who joined 49 Squadron at R.A.F. Upwood in 1949. I finished my service in the R.A.F., the very best years of my life, as a LAC in 1951, a better man for it.

**49 Squadron finally said goodbye to the Lancaster in March 1950.
N-Nan was one of last.**



Over the past three years The 4T9er has followed the story of the recovery of 49 Squadron Hampden P1206 and the burial with full military honours of its crew. In March a film of the proceedings was premiered in Holland. There to represent both himself and 49 Squadron Association was 96 year old Eric Clarke who flew from Scampton at the same time as the ill fated Hampden.

MEMORIES IN MUD

By Eric Molenaar

He proudly wears his medals, the British wartime aviator Eric Clarke almost 97 years and Guest of Honour at the world première of a documentary about the emotions behind the excavation of warplanes. He was part of R.A.F. 49 Squadron, just like the crew who died when their plane crashed in Berkhout, in Northern Holland. They were killed, he came back from 26 operations, "I probably had two little angels on my shoulder."

"We were fighting for our country, for its survival, for our existence. Later on we were fighting for Europe." Eric places his hands five inches apart, "Even now many people do not realize that we came that close in 1940 to being taken over by the Germans. We were that close to going the other way."

Eric flew in Hampdens, Manchesters and 'the beautiful Lancaster'. Later on he was an instructor, teaching young people to do the job of wireless operator. He still puts much energy into keeping alive the memory, in and outside of Britain.

He is one of the last surviving veterans who were part of the Allied war machine in World War II. A war that demanded over 55,000 lives among bomber crews alone. 49 Squadron lost 907 people.

Eric has them in his mind, every day. "In those days, statistically, the life span of bomber air crew was six to eight weeks. I was on the squadron fourteen months! What can I say? I have always said, I am a very lucky man. Luck was with me all the time."

The documentary 'Memories in Mud', on which Raoul de Zwart and Arthur van der Starre have worked for nearly five years, highlights the human drama and the emotions behind the salvage of the twin-engined Hampden bomber in Berkhout from all sides.

The film had its world premiere at the International Film Festival in Breda, in the presence of relatives from both Ireland and England and other people who were involved.

It has become a poignant document.

Impressive not only because the emotions are recognizable but also because one realises that even today, in various places in the world, people die and relatives are left behind in despair.

The makers of the documentary have chosen not to use voiceover or

explanation texts. They arranged the scenes - historical footage makes it exciting - in a way that 'pulls' the viewer into the story.

The story shows a glimpse of the usually hidden craft of excavating warplanes, but soon switches to the emotional side when it concerns the families involved.

One by one they appear on the screen.

Margaret Walsh, the now 90 years old sister of the fallen Irish air gunner John Kehoe, determined to fulfil the wish of her mother by burying him in consecrated ground.

His British fiancée Mary Irving, who never forgot him ("I adored him.").

Mary's daughter Sheila Hamilton, who started an investigation to find out where the missing 'Paddy' was.

The twin daughters of pilot Chris Saunders, who relived the grieving process because of the excavation.

And the mayor of Wester-Koggenland, who honestly admits that she was first against disturbing the 'field grave'. She explains that she changed her mind when she found out how long the Irish family had been trying to locate the plane wreck with John Kehoe and how important it was for them to see him buried in a proper grave.

Pictures of the memorial services in the meadow where the wreck was - holy water on the grass - and the funeral with full military honours in Bergen make it complete.

Eric Clarke survived. He has a role in the documentary, although he didn't know John Kehoe and the other three crew members of the Hampden P1206 personally he belonged, with them, to a group of 20/25 wireless operator/ air gunners who were deployed in the bombers at RAF Scampton, in Lincolnshire. All bomber crew were volunteers. Eric: "I was five or six years older than the average. The younger people were around 20 or 21. For some it was a great adventure. But the older, more mature bomber air crew, they were more serious. We were professionally trained to resist the enemy."

"The Germans had bombed our cities, 23.000 civilians were killed before I even started bombing. I was professionally trained and I was now going to do to them what they were doing to us. No, it wasn't a great adventure. We were fighting for our country's existence. I had a mission."

In the film he shows how a gunner was sitting who had the unlucky fate of being appointed to the place in the 'tin', the bottom dome of a Hampden. The feet together, knees up. "In this position we sat for five hours, sometimes nine." Immobile, the Vickers machine gun in his hands, in pitch dark to Cologne, Essen, Wilhelmshaven. In a cumbersome bomber that was a relatively defenceless prey for the German night fighter who were led to their goal by radar stations.

The documentary shows touching scenes of a plane like the Hampden of

Berkhout that is shot in the belly by a Messerschmitt and crashes in a sea of flames. Weren't the crew members scared? Eric: "Everyone had a form of anxiety. You had boys of nineteen who ate their nails. Tough guys who wrapped their fear in bravado. But I can not say I was afraid. I never ever had any doubts somehow. I'd been trained to do a job, I was lucky and did my job well. You didn't think about it. You just went. Bombing Essen, bombing Milan. Some boys in aircraft were saying the Lord's prayer before they went. The catholics were crossing themselves all the time. I'm not catholic, I was Church of England, but I couldn't reconcile that. I could not ask God to forgive me for going to kill somebody. So in a way, you can say that in the war, I lost my faith as such. I recognise Christian principles and stick to the ten commandments. Yet I could not pray while around me I lost close friends and colleagues. They were killing my people, destroying my cities and I had to do what I could, to stop them."

As the credits of 'Memories in Mud' are shown, there is a long silence in the cinema. Eric Clarke congratulates the makers of the movie. He thinks it has become a special document. "It is wonderful, marvellous and important for the future. In fifty years time people will still be able to see this movie. History has been recorded."

On his return from Holland Eric wrote to your Secretary/Editor as follows;

"At no time do we glorify war but we honour and remember those who served and this was made manifestly clear to me when I visited the Memories in Mud Film premiere of the Hampden P1206 documentary on March 25th at Breda.

"The kindness and respect of the Dutch people throughout my visit with my splendid escort and carer Sheila Hamilton [*Assoc 4T9er*] was truly heart warming, altogether a wonderful experience, from the touching down at Amsterdam Airport and leaving two days later. The DVD of the Film and the subsequent newspaper reports with translations certainly paint a lasting picture of the occasion for us and posterity.

"The reception of honoured guests, dignitaries, sponsors by the Film maker Arthur van der Starre and Raoul de Zwart along with their Staff, was indeed an occasion to treasure, and the sincerity of the welcome, with its very kind hospitality; was almost overwhelming, and I was proud and honoured to represent our 49 Squadron Association.

"Throughout the occasion, before and after the Film, people addressed me with, 'We are so grateful for all you did for us.'

"The gratitude and respect by the Dutch people was so manifestly sincere.

"I look forward to my next visit in May for the Dutch "Liberation Day" celebrations where I shall lay a wreath at the Bergen Memorial and remember, again, my fellow 49ers."

CAN YOU HELP?

We have lost touch with Canadian Member and former 49 Squadron bomb aimer, Bob Drinnan. Do you know his contact details? He was last heard of in Saskatchewan.

A French group are planning a Ceremony of Remembrance to the crew of 49 Squadron Lancaster EA-M, ND533 lost on 9/10th June 1944. This will be held on June 12th at Lyons La Foret. They are seeking relatives of the crew; F/O B.E.Bell, Sgt S.C.Holmes, F/O D.MacFadyen RAAF, Sgt J.Holden, F/O H.D.Clarke, F/O P.D.Hemmens, Sgt J.J.Reed.

Claire Britton is seeking a crew photo for EA-D, JB679 lost on April 26/27th Schweinfurt. P/O R.Montgomery, Sgt R.J.Boyce, F/S S.Smith, Sgt T.Parkin, Sgt R.J./Mitchell (Evader), P/O R.F.Cluff RCAF, F/S J.Baker RAAF.(PoW)

READER'S LETTERS

Assoc. 4T9er, Rodney George, who's father was a 49 Sqdn. pilot e-mailed;

"ANZAC DAY was well attended in Sydney even though it rained for the Sydney Dawn Service and for a while in the beginning of the march.

"The enthusiasm of the crowds lining the way was electric and does us all proud. Although always the same distance, it seems to get longer as each year passes.

"My unit had about 20 or so marching as a unit reunion was being held in Darwin which drew off some of our group.

"All in all it was a good day where we had the particular opportunity to remember those who are no longer with us due to war loss or the passage of time.

"We had the chance as we do each year to raise a glass to remember those no longer with us."

Hon. Friend, F/Lt Gary Mennell sent the following e-mail;

"Just thought you might like to know, that I took Eric [Clarke] flying a couple of weeks ago. I hadn't realised it beforehand, but as we touched down at Scampton, Eric told me that it was almost 66 years to the day since he had last landed there on his final operational mission. When we flew back to Scampton, I let Eric take the controls and at 96 I'm sure that makes him the oldest pilot around at the moment.

"There was an article in the RAF News, entitled 'You can't keep an old dog down', they gave us nearly a full page spread!

"On the return trip, Eric recalled the story of how he had arrived at Scampton in World War II. On completion of his training, Eric was posted to RAF

Waddington. He reported for duty and was told to visit all the sections on the station, obtaining a signature from each, to complete his arrivals chit. The final section was the Administrators at Station Headquarters who duly informed him that he was posted to Scampton and he must revisit all those sections with a clearance card – Some things never change.”

Roger Bedford e-mailed;

“...it is the obituary [*in The Times*] of Sir Henry Lawson-Tancred described as ‘Pioneering designer who built the first large wind turbines used in Britain in the 1970s’.

“Please bear with me - for there is a relevant point!

“Within the text is a paragraph that starts :

‘Henry Lawson-Tancred was born in Harrogate in 1924. He served in the RAF’s Bomber Command at the end of the war, flying several missions in Lancasters over occupied Europe and Germany. After his older brother, Andrew, was shot down and killed in 1944, Henry inherited the Lawson Tancred baronetcy.’

“I looked up Andrew Lawson-Tancred on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission web-site. Their records show that he was a pilot with 49 Squadron.

“An interesting connection I thought.”

Former 49 Squadron Lancaster pilot Eric Jones, himself a holder of the DFC, sent this interesting letter concerning the career of an earlier recipient. He also outlines a little known fact about the original medal;

“I have known for a long time that the father of Hilary Harding, a good friend of Barbara and myself, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross during the First World War. Hilary is the proud owner of this Decoration and only recently showed it to us along with the following information only some of which I was already aware.

“The Royal Flying Corps became the Royal Air Force on the 1st April 1918 and shortly afterwards on the 1st June the Distinguished Flying Cross was promulgated for acts of gallantry.

“Unlike the present day D.F.C. the ribbon stripes were horizontal and it was not until July 1919 that the stripes were changed to a sloping format.

“Eleven hundred D.F.C.’s were awarded before the end of the Great War in November 1918.

“The display of medals and Observer’s Brevet, [*facing page*], belonged to the aviator in question, Lieutenant George Thomson.

“George Thomson, a Canadian, came to England at the age of 18 years and enlisted in the Army joining the King’s Own Scottish Borderers. He rose to the rank of full Lieutenant and maintaining this rank he was seconded to the Royal Flying Corps joining 22 Squadron as an Observer on the 19th March 1918.

“Whilst flying as an Observer Gunner in the rear cockpit of the famous Bristol

LETTE, 21 SEPTEMBER, 1918. 11255

Lieut. George Thomson (King's Own Scottish Borderers).

A brilliant and intrepid observer in whom his pilot places implicit confidence when engaged in action. He has personally accounted for nine enemy machines. - On one raid, when acting as escort, 15 enemy aeroplanes were encountered; of these this officer shot down two, which crashed, and one out of control.

F2b Lt. Thomson shot down nine enemy aircraft.

"For this feat, in July 1918 he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross attending Buckingham Palace on the 2nd August 1919 to receive his award from HM King George V.

"After being made aware of his award Lt. Thomson

went on to shoot down a further five enemy aircraft making a total of fourteen enemy aircraft destroyed.

"His citation appeared in the London Gazette on the 21st September 1918 and shows his pilot's high regard for his Observer's ability."

