

The 4T9er



**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
August 2010 Issue 19**



Photo; James Gelnar

H.M. The Queen arrives at the Royal Windsor Military Tattoo

IN MEMORIAM

**T. T. Jennings D. Harwood B. Taylor
M. Gosset F. Robinson**

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



The 2010 Reunion gathering at Fiskerton



**Former Members of 49 Squadron. L-R, Bill Cooke, John Fray,
Stuart Keay, John Dodkins, Ted Cachart, Eric Clarke, David Brady**

WELCOME TO:

NEW MEMBERS

Ron Mather Clive Cox

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Jake Almy Anne Bateson Penny Goodman Brenda Taylor

NEW HONORARY FRIEND

Rev. Peter Collins

GONE AWAY

Bob Drinnan

EDITORIAL

It is 20th July as I start this issue. Usually by this time the magazine is 90% complete but since the reunion I have been working twelve hour days to complete my model railway layout for its first exhibition. This took place at Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, on the 17th /18th and was, I am relieved to say, a great success. Now I have three weeks to complete this issue for the printer, and I thought that retirement meant stacks of spare time!

Thank you to those who have sent donations, your generosity is very much appreciated. I am also grateful to those readers who have contacted me. It is good to know that you are out there.

Our 73rd Annual Reunion was once again a great success, a full report appears in this issue. I am indebted to Associate 4T9er Dominic Howard who took over eight hundred photographs of the event. Unfortunately the resolution of many of those included here has had to be reduced to keep the file size within limits.

On the subject of photography there is a feature on the inside back cover of this issue on the Royal Windsor Military Tattoo in May during which there was a parade of Bomber Command veterans which included two ex 49ers, Ted Cachart and Lou Crabbe. We were sitting in the stand on the opposite side of the arena from the Royal Box and I noticed a gentleman sitting in front of me taking some excellent long distance photographs. I asked him if he would be prepared to send me some copies for inclusion in The 4T9er and he, Mr James Gelnar, kindly agreed for which I am most grateful.

Sadly there are five names in our In Memoriam this issue. Trevor Jennings has been ill for some time and passed away in May. He was rear gunner in the crew of P/O T Jones. His very eventful tour of 21 ops included; 'Damaged by flak whilst evading night fighter', 'Landed by FIDO', 'Rear turret damaged by flak', 'Engaged by a Ju88 and two FW190's', 'Shot down a Ju88', 'Pilot slightly injured by flak' and 'Bomb doors refused to close'. Don Harwood DFM also suffered a long illness and succumbed to prostate cancer in June. Don was rear gunner in the crew of P/O A.G. Edgar and according to his wireless operator, Alf Ridpath, "Was one of the best rear gunners in a Lanc in WWII." Don flew 19 ops with 49 Squadron before going on to 83 Squadron (Pathfinder) and 149 Squadron. Former Valiant nav/plotter, Brian Taylor died early in July. Brian was a Reunion stalwart and will be sadly missed. His 'Cold War' story appeared in Issue 16 of The 4T9er. Although gravely ill Brian phoned me just before the reunion to wish us all the best - A 4T9er to the end! Another Reunion regular, Midge Gosset, died in July. Midge attended with her friend Billie Watkins and the two former WAAF always proudly wore their ex WAAF blazers, skirts and berets to the Remembrance Services. Midge was so fond of 49SA that she joined as a 'Friend'. Her mischievous wit will be sadly missed. Australian Frank Robinson died some time ago but his passing has only recently been advised.

On 30th May Lou Crabbe (I believe that Jim Flint was also present) attended a ceremony of dedication to two Lancaster crews who perished on January 12th and 29th 1945. Both were from 5 Lancaster Finishing School at Syerston. Three hundred people attended the ceremony and it was here that Lou met former 49er Ron Mather who was wop/ag mainly in the crew of F/L R. Williams flying 28 ops. between 16th June 1944 and 8th April 1945. We are pleased to welcome Ron as a new Member. Interestingly one of the Lancasters had serial number LM308, interesting because LM306 flew with 49 Squadron from mid June 1943. LM308 was therefore over eighteen months old when it crashed, an unusually long life for a WWII Lancaster. LM306 was also a long lived aircraft flying 33 ops with 49', with thirteen different crews, before being transferred to 44 Squadron with whom it was lost on 18/19th March 1944 after completing 493 flying hours. New Member Clive Cox was a corporal electrical fitter air, part of the ground crew on Valiant XD824. He joined 49 Squadron when it was reformed and left when posted to Aden in 1960. He did three trips to Christmas Island.

We welcome four new Associate Members. Australian, Jake Almy, is the great-nephew of wop/ag P/O Stanley Way who, with his Hampden crewmates, perished during the vain 'Channel Dash' attack, 12th February 1942. Anne Bateson and Penny Goodman are the nieces of Sgt Stanley Mullinger who died in the crash of Hampden P1206. Brenda Taylor becomes an Associate Member

on the death of her husband Brian.

Regrettably our appeal for information on the whereabouts of Canadian Member, Bob Drinnan, has brought no reply so we must reluctantly list him as 'Gone away'.

The second issue of the second edition of 'Beware of the Dog at War' is now available. This issue has followed the process of updating and correction that has made it arguably the best historical account of any squadron. As this is written total sales approach thirteen hundred. Copies are available from Ted Cachart whose contact details are to be found on the back cover of The 4T9er. Ted tells me that sales of his autobiography, 'Ted the Lad', now exceed one thousand which is a remarkable achievement for a privately published book. Both Ted and John Ward are to be congratulated.

Our warmest congratulations go to Paul Petersen of the Royal Netherlands Air Force on his promotion to Major. Paul's tireless work in heading the recovery team that returned Hampden P1206 to Scampton is well known by most readers.

I understand that work on the East Kirkby Lancaster, Just Jane, is to commence at the end of this year's season to return it to flying condition. The process should take eighteen months. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Fred and Harold Panton and all at East Kirkby for maintaining this most tangible of memorials to those who flew and died with Bomber Command.

Australian Associate Member Graham Inns and his wife Chris spent a few days in London during their European Tour so on the 23rd May some of the 'crew' met them at the RAF Museum Hendon. Barbara and I, Colin and Pam Cripps with Ed and Janet Norman met them for a very pleasant day out. As each of us has a relative who was shot down by either a Ju88 or Bf110, thanks to the kind co-operation of the Curator I had arranged for us to get up close to these aircraft.

On Saturday & Sunday 11th & 12th September Fiskerton Parish Church will be hosting a Lincolnshire Heritage event, 'Lincolnshire at War Through the Ages - The Fiskerton Links'. They are borrowing our life-size, walking, talking version of Ted the Lad for the two days so if you can go along and support him, by the close he'll probably need it!

In July the Sunday Express ran a full page feature on 49SA's own Red Arrow. Associate Member F/L Mike Ling was injured in the collision over Crete on March 23rd. The article was headed 'Red Arrows hero who won't let a crash keep him out of the skies.' Mike is still undergoing treatment at Selly Oak Hospital but will eventually return to his role as a fast jet pilot. We wish him and Natalie all the very best.

'Til the next time.

JIM LOWE'S STORY

Part 3

Another thing that happened almost as soon as I got in the hut and started talking to my new companions was that Pete Watts said "You're a Brummy" to which I replied most emphatically "No I am not" and proceeded to tell him in no uncertain terms that I was from Dudley and Dudley, I would have him know was twelve miles from Birmingham, but of course, I was now labeled and for the rest of my stay in Stalag Luft III Jim Lowe did not exist but in his stead was a chap known to all as "Brum". In fact this stuck so hard it was quite a novel experience when I came home to answer to Jim once again. But of course, many moons were to pass and I was to have many more experiences before this was to be.

Another member of the Mess to which I now belonged was a Canadian by the name of Roy Wood who was a navigator with 35 Squadron, a little tubby fellow with a most jovial disposition, who in civilian life was a tailor. He told me that one day his girl-friend who was a French Canadian, was due to be shipped back to France to a convent. To prevent this they were married and Roy was only sixteen years old at this time. "In fact", he told me, "when my first son was born I was out in the street roller skating". This same son was later to become aircrew whilst his father was in prison camp.

We had not been in the camp long, a couple of days at the most, when all of us new kriegies were told to report to the Admin. Block of the camp where we were once more subjected to an interrogation by one of our own R.A.F. officers and could we find anyone in the camp who could vouch for us. Of course, this was easy in my case, having already met Gerry Whitehouse who was called in to identify me and give the necessary clearance. I wondered what this was all about but after it was proved that I was bona-fide R.A.F. I was told that in the past the Germans had tried to slip one of their own men into the camp as a spy and of course, the screening was to prevent this. I found that after I had been cleared the tension that had been felt between myself and my new colleagues was greatly eased and I was then accepted.

I did not take long to settle down to the routine of camp life, for apart from two parades a day for the purpose of being counted, our time was our own. In fact it was a great effort to find something to do or the great bogey of boredom would take over.

Even the parades, or as the Germans said "Appel", were an event for it was during these times we went as far as possible to cause as much trouble as possible, much to the annoyance of our guards. It would start off by one of the "Goons", which was our name for the uniformed guards section of the German

camp staff, striding through the hut making as much noise as he could, shouting "Rause Rause: Appel! Appel!" to which he was answered by a various assortment of unprintable remarks from the occupants of the hut who, nevertheless, gradually rolled from their bunks or put away whatever books they were reading and slowly made their way outside where they ambled over to an open patch of ground, still within the confines of the barbed wire, and slowly, amid much shouting and bawling of the guards, proceeded to form up in ranks of five deep in blocks representing individual huts.

It is amazing how such a simple instruction can be messed about if you wanted it to. Of course, a lot depended on the weather as to how we behaved. If it was a wet and miserable day one would think it was a regiment of guards on parade, for as soon as we were in line the count started, numbers checked and we were dismissed to once more return to the comparative comfort of our respective huts to carry on passing the time as before.

If, on the other hand, it was a fine, sunny day, we would mess things up as much as possible to keep our guards occupied as long as possible. After all, we weren't going into town, so we didn't see why they should. This was achieved in several different ways, one of the most effective was the use of "rabbits". These were the smallest chaps in the hut who positioned themselves in the centre of the five ranks at the end where the count started. As soon as they had been counted they ducked down between the ranks and quickly scuttled to the other end where they beat the checker to that end and were counted again. This was a very useful ploy for when we knew the count was short, for escape purposes, this would make all appear correct. Of course, when we knew all was in order, this was done to make the total more than it should be, which of course resulted in a re-count. By doing this we could make a fifteen minute count last three or four hours, it didn't matter to us. One thing we had plenty of was time.

Sometimes it happened that the guards would have a reprisal session and whilst we were all out on parade, another squad of about thirty guards would march into the camp, surround one of the huts to prevent anyone getting back inside and then proceeded to carry out a most thorough search for anything they considered contraband, or bits and pieces which could be used for escape purposes. Of course, at times we would leave "hidden" where we knew full well they could find it, certain pieces which we considered they would take great satisfaction in confiscating, so that they would then miss the things we prized more. Whilst all this was going on, we would be standing around the guards outside the hut and playing them up as far as we dare go. That is until we heard the click of a rifle bolt and we were once more the most impeccably behaved crowd you could wish to see until the tension eased and they calmed down again. After all, they were giving us a rough time so we didn't see any reason why we should stand idly by and make their job any easier. And so the days

passed - slowly, oh so slowly.

I often joked at one time that it would be nice to have a job where there was no working between meals, but when I had one as I had there, it was sheer purgatory. The position we were in of enforced idleness was the most soul destroying circumstance I have ever known - but it is also well-known that the devil finds work for idle hands.

The first and foremost thought in anyone's mind was that of escape and as this was the prime objective, all worked towards that end in a very highly organised manner, with all activities controlled through the escape committee.

The system was that if an individual came up with an idea of how to get away, he first approached the escape committee and put his idea before them. It was then thoroughly checked re feasibility and that it did not cut across any other activity that was going on at the same time. When all this was cleared then all talents that were available in the camp, and there were many, were alerted to provide all necessary equipment and were utilised to the full. Items as were needed such as compasses, maps, timetables, etc. were acquired in the initial stages by bribery, which was the job of another group of kriegies. As one can imagine, all articles so acquired were strictly contraband and had to be very carefully hidden from the guards.

To ensure that all escape activities could go on as efficiently as possible, it was most important that at all times we knew the number and whereabouts of all German guards within the camp, so it was a job of major importance that all German activities were very accurately logged. This was done on a rota system of "duty pilots" whose job it was to sit at a window in front of the main gate, in fact the only entrance or exit to the camp, and keep it under constant surveillance, and note all comings and goings of the guards who were referred to by nicknames such as "slim", "popeye", etc.

The first thing that was done as soon as the huts were opened in a morning was to have a scout round and find out who and how many were already in the camp. This information was passed to the "duty pilot" who promptly entered it in the log-book at the same time noting the comings and goings of other guards and noting the time they entered and left, so that anyone engaged on escape activities only had to call and see the "duty pilot" and knowing who was about, could assess the element of risk involved. In fact this job became so involved that even the German staff would at times come and check the log to such an extent that there was many a guard had reason to be antagonistic towards us when by our book it could be proved that he was missing, when he should have been in the camp, and punishment was administered accordingly.

Another method we had of warning of impending danger was that as soon as a guard appeared in the doorway, a shout went up from the first person who saw

him "goon in the block". This was taken up all through the block and in the space of seconds all were aware of his presence. This again became so familiar that the guard himself would sometimes stand in the doorway and shout "goon in the block".

It was not unknown for us to get rid of a guard who was persistently making a nuisance of himself and would not co-operate in some small way. This again was a very highly organised operation and it was brought about by a kriegie who belonged to the section briefed to look after the guards, and he went out of his way to make a "friend" of the unpopular guard, even to the point where he would appear to fall out with his roommates, who obviously were also in on the plot, but at least it looked good to the unsuspecting guard, who would then be carefully "nursed" by his new-found "friend". Of course, this would not happen overnight and it may even take a couple of months before the time came to strike. In the meantime, the mutual "friends" would chat together, pass from one to the other such family photographs as were available for perusal and comment. The odd cigarette would be passed to the victim which he would at first refuse, and then reluctantly accept, so the "friendship" flourished. He would be given little snippets of useless information which would cause another "row" between him and his roommates, staged of course.

The day came when the friend learned of when the victim was going on leave. The friend would then meet the victim secretly, by arrangement with his roommates, of course, and slip the by now well and truly brainwashed guard a couple of hundred cigarettes and a couple of bars of chocolate "for the kids" for when he went home, with strict instructions that he must, under no circumstances, let it be known to the other kriegies or his "friend" would come unstuck.

The trap was now ready to be sprung. As soon as the guard left the room with the cigarettes secreted about his person and feeling well pleased with himself, his "friend" would stand at the window and blow his nose. Another kriegie would be looking for this signal from a carefully pre-arranged position and would close the book he was reading, another kriegie would see the book close and bend down and tie his shoelace. This would then alert the kriegie standing idly by the gate who would then very "confidentially" let the gate guard know that "Shultz", who it was known he was not on very good terms with, was open to bribery. "But for crying out loud, don't let on that I told you, or my mates would fill me in". He would then walk away from the gate long before "Shultz" got there, knowing full well that as soon as he moved, the German N.C.O. guard commander would be informed.

All that remained now was for the ones who had set the trap to watch from various places in the camp and see the unsuspecting guard leave the camp. As soon as "Shultz" went through the gate, the N.C.O. would call him into the guard room where he would be searched and of course, the cigarettes and

chocolate would be found and he would be accused of accepting bribes, and no matter how much he protested his innocence, the evidence found in his possession proved beyond any doubt. He was immediately charged and more often than not sent to the Russian front.

And so the days passed - slowly, oh so slowly.

It was a great day when it was learned that a consignment of mail had arrived, for as one can imagine, this was very erratic and one could get a months' mail in one day. It was a direct link with home and as soon as the letters were received, you would retire to your bunk and sort them out by the date of the postmark, then settle down and read them, oh so very slowly, savouring every word. Then read them again and again until one could have recited them if necessary. Then they were carefully put away to be read and re-read again at some future date. The important thing was it was a link with home. One could feel the atmosphere of longing, even see tears in some cases, and for a time the room was very quiet as each was pre-occupied with his own thoughts. Who knows what went through the minds of wives, sweethearts or girlfriends who wrote those letters, for surely they must have been a sterling breed to boost moral as they did.

To be continued.

ENEMY IN THE DARK

We are grateful to former Luftwaffe night fighter ace, Peter Spoden, for permitting us to continue quoting from time to time from his fascinating autobiography. (Cerberus Publishing Ltd. ISBN 1 84145 032 4)

...And there were also the others, the callous ones steeped in ambition who went ruthlessly for every 'kill'. Above all they wanted the Knight's Cross to the Iron Cross, and they were known as the men with a sore throat because they wanted to wear that decoration around their neck. Unfortunately this 'medal hunt' was greatly encouraged by the men at the top at that time, just as was the 'medal hunt' among the Allies. With us one got the Iron Cross Second Class for the first victory; for four victories one got the Iron Cross First Class; at ten victories the Goblet of Honour; at fifteen victories the German Cross in gold. We, as young fighter pilots, were admittedly keen to have these decorations. Among the lower orders the German Cross was called - without malice - the 'Fried Egg' or the 'Knight's Cross Stopper'. Towards the end of the war the number of victories necessary for the award of the Knight's Cross was set progressively higher. After the war I admired Professor Marcuse for his courageous remark to the effect that it was not the naked breast of a woman that was obscene, but the breast of a *General* covered in medals. And what was it that my father used to say? 'My boy, better no Iron Cross on your breast than iron in your back!' "

49 SQUADRON REUNION, JUNE 6TH -10TH 2010

By Alan Parr



All photos in this feature by Dominic Howard

Sunday, June 6th.

It had been the hottest, driest early summer for years, farmers and gardeners were praying for rain, then on Sunday June 6th their prayers were answered. Leaving a bright day in the Midlands the clouds got lower and more threatening as we headed east until, at Grantham it started to rain. By the time we reached Petwood Hotel the rain was steady and the cloud ceiling down to about 1,500 feet. The BBMF Lancaster was due at 1500hrs but it was obvious that it would not appear as conditions for low flying were impossible. For the third year the weather had beaten us although it later transpired that problems with the undercarriage at Southend had necessitated the Lancaster flying home with the gear down.

It takes more than a bit of rain to dampen the spirits of 4T9ers however and as we entered the anti-room we were greeted with smiles by the early arrivals.

By 1600hrs everyone had checked in satisfactorily, always a relief for the organiser, and at 2000hrs we gathered in The Petwood Suite for the first organised event of the reunion. Malcolm Brooke had compiled a most entertaining quiz. As well as questions for the general gathering there were a series of specialist questions for 'The crew' which I must admit to being most surprised at the depth of their knowledge. As a finale Barbara was blindfolded and a number of veterans were seated in a



row at the front, with your editor slipped in for fun. She made her way along the row, identifying Stuart Keay, John Fray and John Dodkins and on arriving at her husband said, “I know who this is, it’s Ted”, and gave him a hug only to find her mistake when the blindfold was removed much to everybody’s amusement.

Monday June 7th

Speaking personally, the day that I most wish to be dry is the Monday of the Reunion for it is this day that we hold our Church Memorial Service and wreath laying at The Fiskerton Airfield Memorial. Memories of the event some seven years ago still haunt me when my predecessor, Tom Gatfield, had to hold the airfield service in the coach. This year we didn’t even have a coach as the cost has become prohibitive.

Whilst numbers overall were down for this year’s reunion it may have been the fact that people had to make their own way from Woodhall Spa to Fiskerton that resulted in a much reduced congregation relative to recent years.

In spite of this Revd. Peter Collins conducted an excellent service once again during which the Squadron Roll of Honour lay on the altar and ten names were read from a page at random.

IN REMEMBERING TEN WE REMEMBER NINE HUNDRED AND SEVEN.

The wreath laying at the church memorial was performed by Ted Cachart, our Chairman, escorted by former pilot David Brady and mid-upper gunner Bill Cooke.



Following the service we made our way, in summer sunshine, to the airfield where the same trio laid the wreath at The Fiskerton Airfield Memorial. Our Padre, the Revd. Tony Buckler, made his usual eloquent address. A minute’s silence was broken by Colin Cripps reciting, “They shall not grow old.” and The Kohima Epitaph.

We next repaired to Fiskerton Village Hall where the now customary sumptuous buffet lunch awaited us, prepared by the wonderful volunteers pictured on the facing page. After this had been demolished I had the honour, and pleasure, of presenting a superb collage, which had been compiled by our Hon. President and Historian, John Ward, to Ann Chesman and Alan Gibson who received it on behalf of the



Hall. Ann has since told me that this has been studied with great interest by the villagers as it illustrates, photographically, the airfield and major events that



Later, behind the bike sheds!!

took place therein, relative to the village area.

After the usual photographs it was now time to return to Petwood where the afternoon was free for recuperation.

As has already been said, numbers were down on the previous two years so the banquet was held in part of The Woodland Suite. Seventy-four members and their guests sat down to dine. I once again carried out the duties of M.C. which commenced rather unceremoniously when the head flew off the gavel at the first blow. Padre Tony said Grace and The Loyal Toast and Absent Friends were in the hands of Ted Cachart. During an excellent meal three 'Get Well' cards were circulated for signature. These were later sent to Brian Taylor, Ken Read and Lou Crabbe, all of whom had to cancel at the last minute due to illness.





David Boughton then made the first of some entertaining speeches when he proposed ‘Guests and Ladies.’ This was replied to by Colin Beasley. Bob Weeks then proposed ‘49 Squadron Association’ to which I had the usual honour of replying.

“...We are rapidly approaching a pivotal point in the history of the association. For the first time the number of WWII veterans attending the reunion has fallen to seven and the total number of ex squadron members present is twelve. Sadly this number will inevitably

continue to fall. When there are no longer any members attending this ceases to become a reunion and we must take a long hard look at the format for the future. Significantly, this is the first reunion for fifty years that there has not been a Gatfield present. Most of you will know that Tom was Secretary for over forty years and his widow Marion has continued to attend until this year.

“On a brighter note I am delighted to announce that total membership has reached 307 which includes 150 full members and is an increase of 32 since this time last year representing a growth of 11.38%.



“Thanks to the generosity of members our finances are stable and our total bank balances have hardly varied, on average, over the last five years.

“I went on to thank all those who had contributed to the success of the reunion. Sadly I had to announce the ‘posting out’ of the popular Fiskerton Rector, Peter Collins. In recognition of his contribution to the Association and keen interest in 49 Squadron I offered him Honorary Friendship of the

Association which I am pleased to say he accepted.

“In conclusion I stated that the Association has become more than that. By numerous acts of generosity, thoughtfulness and kindness members have proved that we are more than an Association. We are a family; ‘The Family of 49.’ ”

The speeches were followed by the raffle which included the successful format



of last year, being bottle prizes only, and this raised the excellent sum of £335.
Thus ended the formalities of the banquet.

Tuesday 8th June

The Lincolnshire Rain Dancers once again had their way for the ceremony at Scampton. Fortunately, thanks to most generous donations by two 4T9ers we were able to provide a coach, free of charge, from Petwood Hotel to RAF Scampton.

On arrival at RAF Scampton we went to a briefing room where the recently released film 'Memories in Mud' was shown. (For details of this film see The 4T9er issue 18.)

The ceremony was initially intended to see the official hand-over of the wreckage of 49's Hampden P1206 from the Royal Netherlands Air Force to the RAF Scampton Museum but unfortunately Major Paul Petersen was unable to attend so a Service of Commemoration was held instead.

Due to the torrential rain that fell throughout the day the service was held in the former 49 Squadron hangar rather than out on the airfield as had originally been planned. Once again the weather caused the cancellation of a fly-over, this time by a BBMF Spitfire.

A tyre from P1206 formed the focus of the 'Drumhead Service' which was conducted by RAF Scampton's Chaplain W/C (Rev) Alastair Bissell.

Three 4T9ers, Dorothy Smith nee Dot Everett (In wheelchair left), Bill Pyrah



(Blue jacket, left centre), and Eric Clarke (to right of Bill), all veterans from Scampton's Hampden days, were present and provided a tangible link with the past. Also present were relatives of the crew of P1206.

Following refreshments at the RAF Scampton Museum we boarded the coach for the short journey to Scampton Church where, still in steady rain,



wreaths were laid at the Cross of Sacrifice by RAF Scampton Station Commander W/C A. Stylianides MBE MSc RAF on behalf of the Station and Eric Clarke for 49 Squadron Association.

On behalf of the Association I thank W/C Stylianides for his time and hospitality,

F/L Gary Mennell and F/L Harriet MacCauliffe for their work in organising the event, and to Mervyn Hallam and Roger Crisp and the staff of the Museum for their hospitality.

Whilst some of the reunion guests made their way home from Scampton the remainder returned by coach to Petwood Hotel. Thus ended the organised part of the reunion. According to feedback, in spite of the largely inclement weather, a most enjoyable time was had by all.

NEXT YEAR'S REUNION WILL COMMENCE ON SUNDAY 19TH JUNE.



**‘A corner of an English village hall that is for ever 49 Squadron’,
with apologies to our Webmaster’s great-great uncle Rupert!**



In issues 14 and 15 of The 4T9er we published Bert Cole’s story of the shooting down of his Lancaster during a raid on Mannheim on August 9/10th 1943. Bert was the bomb aimer in the crew of F/S L.E. Watson flying EA-K ED719. Sixty years later he received a letter from Gerd Morgenthaller, the local headmaster, who had researched the crash. They became friends and Bert proposed Gerd as a ‘Friend’ of the Association which I was pleased to approve.

BERT’S STORY - THE OTHER SIDE. WHEN WAR CAME TO ERFENBACH

By Gerd Morgenthaller

It was the very early morning of August 10th 1943 about 5 o’clock. The air-raid sirens gave the all-clear and a lot of sleepy inhabitants left the bomb shelters of the village and the nearby textile factory. Everybody was glad to breathe the fresh air of the dawning summer day. Since the war with Soviet-Russia had started in 1941, the public opinion had changed a little bit: Also some young people of Erfenbach (today a part of the town of Kaiserslautern) were killed in action as soldiers on the various battlefields all over Europe (by the way also one aboard the “Bismarck”) and so people more and more were

worried instead of being absolutely confident of victory as they were at the beginning of the war.

Suddenly – so my grandparents told me – the deep roaring of an airplane engine could be heard. From eastern direction the dark shadow of a large bomber came closer. “Now we are all lost!” a woman was crying. The airplane seemed to touch the large chimney of the factory, was quickly descending and went out of sight. In this moment the noise of a crash mixed with splintering trees could be heard.

Like a dead monster the airplane was regarded by the gathering crowd around the crash-site. Bert’s Lanc had found it’s end on a wooded hill after ploughing through some fields and orchards. Very nearby the crash-site lived a teacher with his family. As his house was outside the village on this hill, there was no water pipe so the teacher was in great fear that his house would catch fire or would be destroyed by an explosion. But only the port outer engine of the Lanc was burning, the flames smothered before the local fire-brigade (mostly consisting of young women) was there. In those days the crash-site was not easy to reach, there was only one steep, narrow and twisting road. Shortly after this for the now chattering inhabitants some very exciting moments – they were searching for the bomber-crew – a Flak-soldier, on leave, entered the rear gunner’s turret by a small door which was to be seen because the gun-turret was turned aside. He started examining the gun.

Another man, a 59 year old neighbour of my grandparents, on the search for something of worth in this foreign ‘bird’ also tried to enter the plane. He seized one barrel of the rear gun to get closer. In this moment some shots were fired and he was badly wounded. It took a long time in those days to reach the hospital and so he died that very evening. Probably the soldier had pulled the trigger of the gun – the incident was never solved, it was suppressed by the Nazi-authorities. Hours later the pilot W/O L.E. Watson tried to reach his Lanc to get his iron rations which he believed to be still inside. He was seen and seized by the local policeman, he had no chance to escape as he had hurt his leg because he had had a very hard landing after bailing out at a very low height. He was brought to the school of Erfenbach and - I was told - treated very kindly.

People brought him some bread and the speciality of the region, ‘Hausmacher Leberwurst’ (homemade liver sausage) in a large tin. He refused it, I think he believed to be poisoned by the grey pasty mass and by the smell. (In other parts of Germany this special ‘liver-sausage’ is unknown and people outside the Palatinate region therefore make a lot of mockery about us!). Some hours later W/O Watson was taken to the military authorities in Kaiserslautern.

The wreck was taken over by the armed forces. My uncle, in those days fourteen years old, told me that there was a vivid discussion between some Flak-officers and some officers of a night-fighter unit: Both sides claimed the

shooting down for their weapons. Finally the shooting down was contributed to Oberleutnant Hans-Jörg Birkenstock, 1. NJG 6 (Mainz-Finthen).

First a lot of barrels were filled with the fuel left in the plane, then Bert's Lanc was cut into pieces which were taken on horse-wagons to next railway-station.

When I was a little boy, we used to play football near the crash-site. I was the owner of a leather ball, which was nearly a "sacred object" for us boys. I always grew furious if somebody kicked the ball between some hedges in the direct neighbourhood of our playground because there was a very greasy patch of black earth and I didn't want my ball to be soiled with it. My grandfather told me, that this very place would have been the crash-site of an American(?) "Viermot-Bomber" (Bomber with four engines). Years later, as a headmaster of school and teacher of maths and history, with a group of students I started a project "Give history a face" by which we tried to find out something about this mysterious story of a probably American bomber and its crew. After the description of my grandfather, the bomber had four engines and double fin and rudder I took the bomber to be an American B24 Liberator. But as the Americans during this part of the war mostly did "day-bombing" I became unsure. A request at the Air Historical Branch of the British Ministry of Defence and by the help of "Bob Baxter's bomber command" via the internet I got on the track of the Lancaster ED 719. How I met Bert and his return to Kaiserslautern-Erfenbach he gave a very vivid description in the The 4T9er magazine. [Issues 14 and 15] Nevertheless I am still very astonished, as I couldn't get any original photographs or any newspaper articles from 1943: To take pictures of military objects was strictly forbidden and as the press was not free, all articles were censored.

This year, May 4th, I got a call from Lt Cdr Graeme Stringer, who asked me to show him and W/C Dave Lainchbury the crash-site of Bert's Lanc. Both belong to the RAF Department of the large NATO Base - Ramstein, which is about 6 km away from us. For me it was completely natural to do this. So we met the following Sunday (May 9th). I also had invited my dear friend Patrick Henry, a former American Staff Sergeant, who is also very interested in history. (He is searching with a metal-detector for any traces on a battleground of 1792 near Kaiserslautern – where French and Prussian troops fought against each other). We went up the hill to the crash-site of Bert's Lanc. During pouring rain I showed them round. The last storm had broken some trees up there, nevertheless we found our way through the woods. David started his research with a metal-detector, Graeme should do the excavating. It didn't really last long and they found lumps of melted aluminium (part of the port outer engine), smaller parts which David recognized as parts of an engine-block and also some parts (15 cm x 2 cm) with holes of rivets. Patrick was eager to collect all parts which Graeme had brought to light.

Although not a member of 49 Squadron at the time, he was posted in later, Archie Ross was on Christmas Island for Operation Grapple Y. He stresses that no criticism whatsoever is directed at 49'.

THE DETONATION OF THE 3 MEGATON BOMB (GRAPPLE Y) APRIL 28TH 1958.

The day began at 05.30hrs. We rose and got dressed in full khaki dress wearing long trousers and proceeded to the Airman's Mess where we drew individual food packs. On doing this we moved onto the main road and assembled into our various units where a roll call was carried out. This was customary as the whole operation was totally dependent on all troops being accounted for. This being done we were then loaded into several three ton Bedford trucks which transported us to the Port Area where we again had a roll call. We then sat around in groups talking, joking and generally relaxing but we did however wonder what was then going on.

The whole assembly was now addressed by a senior officer informing us we would be embarking on the Landing Craft moored by the jetties where we would remain when the Valiant aircraft took off. This was a precaution in the event of a mishap on take off, as it would be necessary to evacuate the island. We were totally unaware that in the event of an accident we would have to go to sea in these craft and not, as we believe, ferried out to bigger ships off shore. The Pacific Ocean can be very rough indeed.

From the time we arose it is essential to point out there was not a cloud to be seen in the sky, it was typical of a central Pacific morning and although it was dark the sky was a black awning with millions of sparkling holes in it.

The exact operation of the test was explained to everyone, referring to the aircraft flying in a "Racetrack" pattern with a "Dummy Run" first followed by another. If the weather conditions were acceptable on the first run the second "Dummy Run" would become a "Live Run" and the test would proceed.

We then proceeded to embark in an orderly fashion onto the landing craft supervised by a very young Royal Marine Officer. It became quickly obvious that this landing craft was capable of holding an unbelievable number of people as they literally crammed us on board to the point of disbelief.

At this point a colleague of mine (Cpl. Chris Christmas) from Pompey shouted out:- "O.K.! Now you have proved the theory of Noah and the f—— Arc, let's get to f—— out of here!" There was a terrific howl of laughter all round which is characteristic of all servicemen. I recall the Aircrew guys sitting on the top of the ramp killing themselves with laughter. The spontaneity was superb.

However, I have to add that there was one serviceman who could not see the funny side at all. This being the very young Marine Officer who proceeded to

run up and down the sides of the vessel like a scalded cat, demanding to know who had said that? His demand was met by approximately 300 grinning faces, two hundred and ninety of whom could not tell him, and those of us who could were enjoying his frustration. To make matters worse, he prolonged his humiliation by carrying on his futile demands whilst the lads enjoyed the situation. If he had laughed too it would have quickly died away.

After what seemed an age on board, the Tannoy announced that the aircraft was ready for take-off and when it was airborne we all disembarked at about 07.00hrs and sat on the sand by the jetty. There was another Roll Call and from then on we simply waited. Approximately 07.30hrs there was another roll call, and by this time we could see the vapour trail left by the aircraft high above us and we had a detailed explanation of how things were proceeding. The timing was relayed to us as detonation time was nearing, and was announced frequently.

We sat with our backs to ground zero, observed the aircraft start the dummy run and proceeded with the second Dummy / Live and it was announced this run would be 'LIVE'. The aircraft was now high above flying towards us, but the target was behind us. It was announced that the Device had left the aircraft in front of us but had obviously some distance to travel and I remember thinking we were between the detonation and the device which was falling through the air. I was a bit apprehensive!

Each minute from Zero Minus Ten was announced then, "One minute! Face away from the detonation, close your eyes and keep them covered," came the instruction, then:-

"30 seconds keep your eyes closed!"

"10 seconds keep your eyes closed nine/eight/seven/six keep your eyes closed five/four/three/two/one! The time was 08.00hrs. A brilliantly white flash accompanied instantly by a rapid build up of heat and the Tannoy increasing to 20 seconds. The heat built up to a very worrying temperature almost painful and then to our great relieve it started to subside.

"20 seconds! You may now open your eyes and look at the device."

It was an absolutely amazing sight! A huge explosion column was topped by a giant mushroom, an inferno of red, gold and yellow flame and a great column rising from the sea, sea water and sand being sucked up into the mushroom where it was obviously being vaporized, you could see the column flowing skyward like a vast river of sand and mud and water. The mushroom was getting bigger and bigger, and the inferno was too bright for the naked eye to gaze on.

All this time there was not a sound, absolutely nothing, no voice, no birdcall everyone was speechless.

However there was a distinct rapidly expanding ring in the sky which appeared to be thin vapour disappearing which could not have been clouds as there were

none. Suddenly there was the loudest BANG you could ever imagine or ever hear, and a severe blast in the face which hurt.

The detonation was over, the sky still appeared to be burning and the mushroom still expanding. It went exactly to time.

We all re-embarked on the trucks and returned to main camp, went to the tents, changed into working gear, and waited for transport to work. As I waited the sky was rapidly becoming completely overcast, originating from the detonation and I noticed the clouds were a very peculiar shade of deep green and turquoise. I mentioned this to a colleague who endorsed my observations and pointed out the green was a reflection of the lagoon bottom. This was obviously what it was, but I have to add that it indicated just how low the clouds were to have this effect. Still the clouds were building up in a sky which had been absolutely clear prior to the detonation, and then it started to rain, and it rained as it only rains in the Tropics. Very suddenly, very heavily, and also very wet. Now fifty odd years on, I understand from M.O.D. sources that no-one serving in the tests was in any danger. The completely overcast sky did **not** develop from North, South, East or West, but it centred and built up on the detonation at sea.

A huge source of Nuclear Radiation sucks sand, sea and mud into a very big Nuclear explosion, vaporizes it, then turns a totally cloudless sky into an overcast sky and produces heavy rain on everyone. How can anyone be in danger? Thousands of my fellow servicemen are dead from various carcinomas, many are suffering, can it be that someone is not telling the truth? Ask the widows and offspring, they will tell you the answer.

I write this recollection of the events subject to the possibility I may have slight inaccuracies in my timing, which is not deliberate.

I would like to dedicate this article to the memory of the many servicemen who died as a result of the Service to Queen and Country in the Nuclear Test Program in the Pacific area. Many Commonwealth servicemen and the indigenous native population of the area were absolutely ignorant that the experiment would blight their lives and that of their offspring for years to come.

A quote from one of our illustrious leaders (Sir Anthony Eden) on being informed of the possible outcome; "It is a pity but it cannot be helped"!

At 76 years of age, in my wisdom I ask:-

WAS THIS A CASE OF (OFFICIAL) FRIENDLY FIRE ?

DONATION TO THE BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL FUND

It is our intention for the Association to make a donation to the Fund. If, in addition, you wish to make a personal donation you can either send your cheque to the Editor made payable to; Bomber Command Memorial Fund or direct to;

Bomber Command Memorial Fund, RAF Museum, Grahame Park Way, London
NW9 5LL



LINCOLNSHIRE AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE

THE AIRFIELD, EAST KIRKBY, SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE, PE23 4DE

Lancaster Taxi Runs with NX611 'Just Jane'

Thurs 19th August 11.00am & 1.30pm
Wed 25th August 11.00am & 1.30pm
Sat 28th August 1.00pm & 3.00pm
Mon 30th August 1.30pm & 4.00pm

Flying Display to be confirmed.

Wed 1st September 11.00am & 1.30pm
Wed 8th September 11.00am & 1.30pm
Sat 11th September Spitfire & Me109 dogfight
Wed 15th September 11.00am & 1.30pm
Sat 18th September 1.00pm & 3.00pm

Buell Motorcycle Meet

Wed 22nd September 11.00am & 1.30pm
Wed 29th September 11.00am & 1.30pm

Sat October 2nd Black Dyke Brass Band Concert

Wed 6th October 11.00am & 1.30pm
Wed 13th October 11.00am & 1.30pm
Wed 20th October 11.00am & 1.30pm
Wed 27th October 11.00am & 1.30pm
Sat 30th October 1.00pm & 3.00pm

Lincolnshire Poppy Appeal Launch with Service

Wed 3rd November 11.00am & 1.30pm
Tues 9th November 11.00am & 1.30pm
Thurs 11th November 11.00am & 1.30pm

Lancaster Taxi Ride places available,
Please ring Louise on 01790 763207

Refreshments all day.

Open 9.00am

[Www.lincsaviation.co.uk](http://www.lincsaviation.co.uk)

READER'S LETTERS

Ted Cachart received the following e-mail from Stephen Buckley whose status becomes obvious;-

"I've just returned from a most enjoyable week cycling in Lincolnshire, Fiskerton to be exact, where I stayed at The Old Tannery at Diamond House. Whilst there my brother-in-law and myself became very fascinated by a small collection of reading material provided for guests by the owner. This included a copy of "Beware of the Dog", "Ted the Lad", and the February and May copies of the 4T9ers association publication. We were enthralled. We are both in our 60's and although with no personal RAF experience, were captivated by these publications. We felt very humbled by the stories they tell, and especially so when able to visit the locations at the old airfields etc.

"I am particularly interested in obtaining copies of both books, and would be grateful if you could tell me if they are available. I would also be interested in knowing more about the work of the association.

"Incidentally, my father, whom I never knew due to my parents separating when I was only months old, was in the RAF and I understand was based at Linton-on-Ouse where (according to my mother) may have made several sorties as a stand-in AG during air crew shortages. I don't know how true this might have been. I only met him on two occasions in my 61 years, and he passed away last year so have never had chance to find out about his service. Where might be a good place to find out about his record?

"Thank you and your colleagues, past and present for your wonderful and unselfish endeavours, and it is the responsibility of us all to make sure your sacrifices are never forgotten."



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Bed and Breakfast, Caravan Site and Camping

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Highly recommended by the Editor

Regular correspondent, former rear gunner, Ron Eeles wrote;

“...It only came to my notice yesterday [8th June] that a new magazine was published towards the end of 2009.

“The first issue of ‘Aviation Classics’ was the Lancaster containing 130 pages and I have found I could not put it down. It is a must. It is full of excellent photographs and information but gives a detailed history of RAF Fiskerton which could be of interest to some of us old codgers. [And slightly younger codgers. Ed.]...”

“Publishers:- Mortons Media Group Ltd. Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6BR
Magazine published every two months, available WH Smith.”

Following the death of her husband Brian, Brenda Taylor wrote;

“...Also of course for the many cards that I have received since Brian passed away, the many enquiries of how I was have been appreciated very much, so do you think when you next get in touch with members as a whole you could say thank you on my behalf for their concern. I do hope to get to Petwood next year as you know how much I love it there and meet with you all again.”

CAN YOU HELP?

In July the Editor received a telephone message on his telephone answering machine. Apart from saying that the call was from Warrington the caller left no name or number. The message was asking how the magazine can be obtained and method of payment. One assumes that the caller is not a member but has access to the magazine. If you have access to this copy and read this note sir, would you please contact me again. Ed.

Associate Member Ashley Hales asks if anyone remembers Sgt Linton Nightingale or any of the crews of F/S R. Greig or F/O D.G. Turner. Of the two crews only Sgt P. Velasco survived to become a PoW when they were both lost on March 22/23 1944.

SLIGHTLY BENEATH THE GLIDE PATH

By Gary Mennell

This new book by a serving officer and Honorary Friend, F/L Gary Mennell tells the story of each of the airmen buried in Scampton Churchyard.

The book costs £7.99 plus £1 P&P (Overseas at cost) and can be obtained from Gary at
garrymennell@btinternet.com

If you are unable to order by e-mail then contact the Editor.



**THE ROYAL WINDSOR
MILITARY TATTOO
15th May 2010**



During the afternoon HM Queen had attended the Royal Windsor Horse Show but in the evening she changed in to her best coat to take her place with HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at the military tattoo in Windsor Great Park. Several 4T9ers attended primarily to witness Bomber Command veterans taking part in the grand finale. Representing 49 Squadron were Ted Cachart, who was also Standard Bearer, and Lou Crabbe.

There were displays by many facets of the British Armed Forces but the highlight for many was the impeccable drill by the Norwegian Army. From a personal viewpoint the stars of the show, after Ted and Lou of course, were the horses, both from the Royal Horse Artillery and the Household Cavalry. Another horse, the life size puppet from the West End Show 'War Horse', astounded the audience with its lifelike movements and actions.

The show was compared by Alan Titchmarsh who, in July, presented a TV programme which gave a most interesting glimpse behind the scenes.