

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
November 2010 Issue 20**



A BBMF Spitfire flies over Fiskerton Church on September 12th.



IN MEMORIAM

R. Robson I. Winter G. Kerridge D. Benfield

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

WELCOME TO:

NEW MEMBER

Fred Hill

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

**Ann Willis Cecily Hanlon Denis Clark
Jenny Winn Carolyn Salmon Peter Norman**

NEW FRIEND

Chip Beurger

NEW HONORARY FRIEND

Martin Bowman

COME BACK

Bob Drinnan

**LINCOLNSHIRE AT WAR THROUGH THE AGES-
THE FISKERTON LINK**

St Clements Parish Church

September 11th-12th

Facing page, Clockwise from bottom right;

The opening ceremony was performed by 49SA chairman, Ted Cachart (left) and the last commandant of 15 Group, ROC Fiskerton, Mr Peter Jex (right). The RAF ensign flies outside Fiskerton Parish Church. The display of Fiskerton Branch of The Royal Observer Corps. Display of RAF Fiskerton. In the foreground are items retrieved by the Stuffins family and kindly loaned by them. Local artefacts displayed in front of the church's lovely stained glass window. 'What did you do in the war mister?' A young visitor chats with Ted Cachart.

EDITORIAL

My thanks to all of you who have made contact and particularly to those who have donated to the Association in the form of postage stamps or cheques. Thank you also to those who have sent donations for forwarding on to The Bomber Command Memorial Fund. Thanks to your generosity and a donation by the Association I was able to send a cheque for £1,125. I am also most grateful to those who have sent stories etc. In this issue we come to the end of the late Jim Lowe's story. Like me many of you have enjoyed reading it.

As you will see from the 'In Memoriam' on page 3 sadly we have lost three Members and one Associate to the grim reaper. Former 49 Squadron pilot 'Robbie' Robson lived in South Africa until his death in July. He and his crew arrived at Syerston on April 13th 1945, good timing you might say. Associate 4T9er Irene Winter, who died on August 15th, was the widow of another 49 Squadron pilot, Jack Winter DFC. It was after Irene made a very generous donation to the Association that it was decided to erect a flagpole outside the scout hut at Fiskerton in Jack's memory. Former Hampden pilot Geoff Kerridge died on June 7th aged 90. David Benfield died on August 10th, he was 86. I am grateful to Mr Gary Godel for informing us of the sad news that former 49 Squadron C.O. Alan Newitt died aged 93 on October 1st on his native Island of Jersey. Alan commanded the Squadron from 1st April 1953 to 31st April 1956.

A warm welcome goes out to new Member Fred Hill who flew 20 ops as 2nd pilot and 13 ops as skipper with 49 Squadron on Hampdens from Scampton. Later he went on to fly a tour on Mosquitoes.

We welcome six new Associate Members this quarter. Ann Willis is the daughter of F/L (Pinky) Marshall who was a Lincoln navigator in the crew of Jack Higginbottom in Kenya. Cecily Hanlon and Denis Clarke are brother and sister. Their father was F/O H.D. Clarke, mid upper gunner in the crew of F/O B.E. Bell, which went down on 9/10th June 1944 during a raid on the railway junction at Etampes. Jenny Winn is the daughter of the late Irene and Jack Winter, remembered above. Carolyn Salmon is the daughter of the late Stanley Humble who was a gunner crewmate of 4T9er Bill Cooke. Peter Norman forms a welcome link with WWI as his uncle was Observer Private 1st Class L.C. Norman who was killed in 1918.

New 'Friend', Chip Beurger is the nephew of 4T9er Phillip Griffiths who was wireless operator in the crew of P/O R H Ewens.

We are pleased to welcome new Honorary Friend Martin Bowman. Proposed by Colin Cripps, Martin joins our other eminent WWII authors.

Recently I was shocked to learn that two of my former workmates have been diagnosed with prostate cancer. The following day I was talking to a member who, like myself, has undergone radical surgery for the same disease. Added to that we lost a Member last quarter to the same curse. It reminded me how prevalent prostate cancer is and how reluctant men are to take action. If your 'stream' is barely sufficient to bother the Laws of Gravity then get to your doctor. Whilst I admit that having him insert his digit in a chap's orifice is probably not something that one will want to take up as a hobby it may lead to a prolonged life. Don't delay. If you want to talk to me about my experiences then don't hesitate to call me. A number of men have found it useful as the medical profession is not always forthcoming.

In August Honorary Member, Freda Styles, advised me that the lead has again been stolen from Fiskerton Church roof. It is obvious that the low life that perpetrated this despicable deed do not fear Divine retribution. I hoped that more earthly punishment would be meted out meanwhile should they be apprehended but having just read that a woman who urinated and committed a lewd act on a war memorial in Blackpool received a 15 week, suspended for one year, jail sentence sadly I doubt it. Incidentally, full marks to The British Legion for providing a Guard of... 'Shame' on the courthouse steps.

On September 7th the Daily Express carried the headlines, "DON'T MENTION THE WAR - Now Germans want to stop Britain building a memorial to heroes of Bomber Command." Needless to say there were interesting responses in the Readers Letters in the following editions. On the Thursday the Express included a full page feature by a journalist, whose father had served with Bomber Command, in support of the Memorial. In true journalistic manner however it was accompanied by a large picture of an American crew standing by a B17. The caption read, "TRUE HEROES: The crew of 8th Bomber Command in 1942". Just as bad was an editorial insert in the text of the article "...Of all the branches of the military, it is the only one to have been denied a campaign medal for heroism (Its members do qualify for the Air Crew Europe Star)." Oh no they don't, at least not all of them. As most of us know the Air Crew Europe Star was only awarded before D-Day. After that date aircrew were only eligible for the France and Germany Star along with cooks, clerks etc who never heard a shot fired in anger. How my e-mailing fingers itched but tragedy, tragedy my computer was undergoing maintenance.

Whilst on the subject of errors I recently broke a golden rule. Once The 4T9er has been printed I refuse to read it for fear of finding a mistake. There was a copy on the coffee table which Barbara had been reading so I picked it up and flicked through it. To my horror I found two spelling mistakes within the first

minute. Oh bother! I really do know how to spell ante-room and compered.

I was delighted to see that the Daily Express has joined the campaign to promote funding for The Bomber Command Memorial. They carried a piece by Prince William which boosted donations considerably. On Armistice Day they announced that their owner had matched reader's donations with half a million pounds from his own pocket. Then, wonderful news on November 16th, yes ok, the royal engagement but I am referring to the really big news. That day it was announced that the Bomber Command Memorial is going to be unveiled by the Queen in the spring of 2012. Our thanks and congratulations to all those who have worked so hard to bring this about.

It came as a pleasant surprise when Bomber Command's contribution to preventing 'Operation Sealion' in 1940 was covered in two BBC programmes on The Battle of Britain. Amongst all the justifiable praise for Fighter Command it was fitting that all participants in the war at that time were recognised.

The BBC series Coast is oft repeated but recently I caught up with an episode that I had previously missed which featured Southport. I was amazed and delighted to see that flights have recommenced from the beach using a DH. Fox Moth, G-ACEJ. It was in this very aircraft in the mid fifties that Barbara and I took our first ever flight and started my passion for de Havilland aircraft.

On pages 28/29 our Webmaster, Malcolm Brooke, details his, and May's final expedition to photograph 49er's headstones. As I have said before this has been a magnificent effort and the resulting website Roll of Honour probably does more than anything else to perpetuate the memory of those 49ers who have died whilst serving throughout the squadron's history. At the time of writing the site has received over 10,600 visitors which has resulted in a steady influx of new Members and Associates. Whilst highlighting Malcolm's wonderful contribution to the Association I must also acknowledge the ongoing work of 'The crew' whose names appear on the back cover of every issue of The 4T9er. Their ongoing dedication and hard work has kept us in the forefront of squadron associations. Let us not forget also the support given by our ladies, our Ground Crew, without whom we could not achieve what we have.

It is some time since we held a stock of 49 Squadron badge windscreen stickers. We are considering buying a new batch as these things are usually lost when cars are changed or windscreens are broken. If you are interested in buying one then please let me know so that I can assess the viability.

To those of you who are suffering through ill health or for any other reason our thoughts and prayers are with you wherever you are.

'Till the next time.

JIM LOWE'S STORY

Part 4 (Conclusion)

Summer passed on into autumn, autumn into winter. Time did not mean a thing. After all time was the only thing we had plenty of. Still two parades a day, stiff as ramrods, impeccably behaved so that we could get back inside away from the rain and snow. Winter was the worst time for as soon as daylight started to fade we were locked in for the night. No communication with friends from the other blocks to help relieve the boredom and monotony. Not that it would not have been easy to get out of the block during the hours of darkness, but one was very aware of the vicious Alsatian dogs that were turned loose in the compound after we were locked in, also the guards in the watch towers developed very itchy fingers once darkness had closed in.

Escape activities still went on, however, with the production of equipment ready, ever ready, for the slightest possible chance to get somebody away .

Compasses to be made, blocks of concentrated food, maps produced, clothes to be modified to look civilian and the hundred and one other items to take care of. This was also the worst time for being caught, producing such things, for being locked in one could not get so much notice of approaching danger in the form of a surprise search party, for it was not uncommon for the door to crash open and everyone shunted outside under armed guard, whatever the state of dress or undress one would be in at the time, and made to stand in the snow whilst the sadistic guards ransacked the hut. So if one was engaged on forbidden occupations, it had to be able to be hidden in a few seconds, for not only did you stand to lose what could be the results of possibly months of patient work, but also finish up in the "cooler", a most uncomfortable place, for a couple of weeks for being caught with it. It must have been very few of us who did not experience this at some time or another during our time of captivity.

Of course, not all activities were to do with escaping but were still forbidden, for in the compound was a radio loudspeaker extended from the German block over which we used to get newscasts, but as this was the German version as to how the war was progressing we knew it was distorted. So it was decided to build a secret radio so that we may get news direct from the B.B.C. which involved me in what I considered one of the best things I ever produced in Stalag Luft III. One day I was approached by another kriegie who was a genius on the theory of radio who said to me "Look, Brum, we want to make a radio to be able to get the B.B.C. news and we need a condenser". "Fair enough, what exactly do you want?" I said. He replied that he had it all worked out in theory

and it could be done with razor blades. He had worked out the area of the razor blades, subtracted the area of the holes and came to the conclusion that "all I want is thirty two razor blades soldered on a nail two millimetres apart" - "Oh, by the way, I want two of them so they would turn to make it possible for tuning".

I started by collecting as many razor blades as possible, and once having acquired a good stock, then the problems began. The solder was painstakingly collected from thousands of little blobs which in those days was the method used to seal bully beef tins. The flux that was needed was the resin which seeped from the wood that the huts were built with. I soon found out that razor blades could not be soldered until they had been tempered, but as soon as any heat was applied to do this, there was a little click and the razor blade distorted like a withered leaf. Many blades were scrapped trying to get sixty four to do the job. This was eventually overcome by suspending the blade in a bowl of water with just the corner protruding above the surface and blowing a flame across the water until the protruding corner was blue. So far so good. Now I was in business on a mass production basis. The next step to overcome was to ensure they were two millimetres apart and parallel with each other. This was achieved quite by accident when I found a broken piece of gramophone record and as near as I could measure, with the equipment available, was two millimetres thick. So now it was only a matter of binding together a razor blade and piece of record until the thirty two blades necessary were as one block. To solder them all altogether the nail was discarded and a groove cut in the table. The razor blades were then positioned in the groove. The resin and molten solder was then run in this groove. It broke my heart to have to use the hard earned solder so lavishly, but there was no other answer. All that had to be done now was when it had gone cold was to shake out the pieces of gramophone record and fashion a bearing on each end of the solder, go through the whole procedure again and there were the two parts of the condenser. I am proud to say that this was part of the radio which gave us the news of the invasion. This news, I may say, we were in possession of before our German guards. All that was said was that, "Today allied forces landed on the French coast and the first exchanges were in our favour". But what a historic announcement. Moral was boosted sky high.

When this condenser project was finished, to keep myself occupied, with the aid of books from the "reference library" supplied by the Red Cross (God bless them) I passed the time working out the stresses and strains of the rivets on the Forth Bridge, interesting but useless, but it helped to stop stagnating.

Summertime came, the need to keep yourself occupied was greater as the days lengthened. Of course, one of the important things was to keep fit, though there was not much energy to allow one to do this. Walking was one of the ways

when with a companion, one would "bash the circuit". This entailed many miles on a well trodden path within the confines of the camp, as close to the wire as possible. A complete circuit would be perhaps three quarters of a mile and one would just keep walking round and round. Of course, this was also the safest place for discussion, for the circuit was one place where talk could go on in private, be the subject escape, family, or whatever. At least the guards could not sneak up and hear what was going on.

Periodically word would go round that a new bunch of kriegies were expected and a crowd would gather around the gate in the hope that one might recognise a familiar face, another link with home. No matter how remote this would be, it was something to talk about. Latest news from one's own Squadron was a real boost. Home at that time was a very long way away.

Of course, it was not all sombre and dramatic. Humour also played a great part, for without a sense of humour life would not have been worth living. Like the time a lorry drove into the camp to deliver goods. It was the only time I can recall this happening and as can well be imagined, this, as far as the Germans were concerned, was courting disaster, for no sooner had the two guards climbed out when a diversion was laid on in the form of a "fight", much to the amusement of the guards who, while being so engrossed as to what was going on, did not see the tool kit belonging to the lorry being stolen. Not only was this stolen, but later on as the lorry left the camp a few yards down the road it crashed into a wall. Upon investigation it was found the brake rods had also been stolen. This could well be the reason no other lorries were allowed inside the camp. All goods in future were delivered by hand truck.

I think one of the cheekiest episodes, although it could have been most dangerous, that was pulled off was the day we were paid a visit by a high ranking German officer. Once again a diversion was laid on and the net result was the theft from his car of his gloves, torch and, of all things, his cypher book. Shortly after he left there was the greatest uproar I was ever to witness. Not that the cypher book was any good to us, but the gloves and torch were valuable additions to the escape equipment. The outcome was that the camp was invaded by more guards than I thought the German army possessed, more or less one guard to each one of us, whilst another party made such a thorough search of the camp they almost wrecked it, only to draw a blank, and for a time the situation was very tense until in desperation the officer concerned said that he didn't care about the gloves or torch but could he please have his cipher book back. After a time it was arranged that this would be found during a further search.

I have often wondered what his feelings were, after a couple of days of anguish, when he opened the book and found rubber stamped on the inside cover "Passed by British Board of Censors, Stalag Luft III".

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

The summer passed again into autumn - autumn into winter - once again the long, long nights. Anything to pass the time, chess, draughts, various classes. We even built our own theatre, mainly from Red Cross boxes - as I said, anything to pass the time.

This was the pattern of life until nine-thirty one mid-February night, Nineteen Forty Five, when the door was flung open and a party of German guards rushed in shouting "Rause! Rause! Be ready to move in thirty minutes". This was to move us out of the way of advancing Russian troops.

Just imagine the upheaval this caused. About four feet of snow outside and all we could take with us was what we could carry! Great priority was given to the amount of cigarettes we could carr^y for it had been proved conclusively in the past that these were the most valuable commodity we had got as they were good currency for bartering purposes.

We were ready to move out in the thirty minutes then we heard there would be a delay until three o'clock in the morning. This gave us some valuable time which was spent hurriedly knocking together the most outrageous forms of transport one could contrive, mostly in the form of some type of sledge to cope with the conditions we had to face outside. We finally moved out about six o'clock in the morning, again with about one guard per kriegie. That was the start of what was to be a nightmare of a journey.

The first day we covered about twenty miles, using only side roads and country lanes. This was to leave the main roads free for military traffic. So we struggled on through the freezing conditions. That night we were all herded into a farmyard. The farmyards were built in the form of a hollow square with only the one entrance, so once in there, it was almost as secure as the camp we had left that morning. Once inside, we were left to our own devices as to how we ate or slept. My own particular quarters - shared with about 12 others - was a pig sty which thankfully had the pigs removed and had just been hosed out. I had slept on a concrete floor before, but a concrete floor wet and in the middle of winter was a hundred times worse. The next night the same procedure was followed, only this time I was more fortunate as I was in a stable and was able to sleep alongside a horse which was much warmer. This was the way it was for a whole week. Of course, we went as slowly as possible, hoping that the Russian Army would catch up with us. This made our guards frantic for the last thing that they wanted to see were the Russians, and on several occasions the atmosphere was rather tense and explosive. One good thing about this episode, however, was that we had a change in diet, for as we left the farms it was common to see kriegies looking rather bulky and if one opened his coat, you would see a couple of chickens or rabbits, or even, in some cases,

a little pig hanging around his belt. I have often wondered if the farmers were compensated for the stock they lost, for I must add, we were not given these goodies. We just helped ourselves as we went along. One amusing episode was, one day we came across a Panzer Unit complete with tanks who were retreating from the Russians, but could go no further as they had not got any petrol. Their Commanding Officer was with them and someone had given him a goose as it was his birthday. Needless to say, he did not have the goose very long as some of the lads had stolen it and it was eaten before he found out. When he did all Hell broke loose. Never had I seen a man in such an uncontrollable rage. The situation was rather dicey for a time. He was finally consoled with 100 cigarettes and two bars of chocolate. What we would have done without our stock of cigarettes and how we used them I do not know. I think it must have been his first experience of prisoners-of-war. If there had been some petrol he would have had fears for his tanks also.

After about a week of this life-style during which we had covered about 120 miles of agony, at the end of the week we were turned from the side road we were on down a woodland track, when after about two miles we came across what looked like a deserted prison camp, but a more depressing hell-hole I have never been in.

From the outside it was the familiar pattern of a barbed wire compound within which were built half a dozen or so huts, different construction, though, as they were brick-built up to about four feet, then timber, with window frames but no doors and just plain earth floors, with no furniture whatsoever, so where you stood was where you sat and slept.

By the end of the month we were once more settled and organised into prison camp life, though by no means as comfortable as we were back at Stalag Luft III, though one must realise the word 'comfortable' is only relative. We still had our illegal radio which we, by devious means, had been able to get through a couple of searches.

Food by this time was our main concern, for the tide of war had cut us off from our supply of Red Cross food parcels and our rations were very meagre, being once more half a litre of watery soup and one slice of black bread per day.

As the days went by, in the usual pattern of two parades a day for counting, we could sense a growing tenseness amongst the guards, for they, like us, knew the Russians were getting closer and that it was only a matter of time before they caught up with us.

After about two months of this existence we could hear the gunfire of the Russian advance. This, of course, became a very dangerous time, which we tended to overlook in our excitement. The guards attitude to us by this time had changed considerably and they tried to become most friendly - even as far as

asking us to sign notes that they had treated us well - to which they were given an unprintable answer.

Then one morning in mid-April we awoke to find we were alone and that during the night the guards had all taken off and left us. This left us then in a most uncomfortable position as we were then stuck between two fronts, the retreating German Army and the advancing Russians.

We were in this position for about another week, hearing the shells whining over us and hoping that none dropped short. April 20th dawned bright and sunny. I shall always remember that date, it being Hitler's birthday, when suddenly out of the woods appeared a Russian tank. As soon as he saw us he stopped and waited for his Commander who came forward to ascertain who we were. Fortunately for us we had in the camp a Russian speaking kriegie who explained who we were and the predicament we were in. Without any more ado the Russian tank driver started up and proceeded to drive around the compound demolishing all the barbed wire. The trouble was, whilst doing this he also demolished the poles carrying the electricity supply, which meant we had neither light nor water, which had to be pumped by electric pump. This then meant we were at last free but behind the Russian lines. The problem of the light and water situation was soon solved by a Russian Captain who told the local Mayor to get it fixed - or else. Needless to say we soon had light and water, even though the Mayor was insistent that he hadn't got anyone to do the job. It was amazing what the threat of a spell in Siberia could do.

From then on the camp was transformed. We just went out and from local houses and shops, amidst many protestations from the local populace which we totally ignored, helped ourselves to whatever we wanted and for the first time since captivity had a proper bed to sleep in with real sheets and blankets, bedside tables and cabinets, even to a cuckoo clock ticking away on the wall. We just took what we wanted - radios, food, anything. In fact life became almost enjoyable though it was still dangerous to wander too far from camp, or one was quite liable to be shot at and this I may say happened too often for comfort.

This "idyllic" life went on for about six weeks while arrangements were being made for us to be taken home. But that, again, is another story.

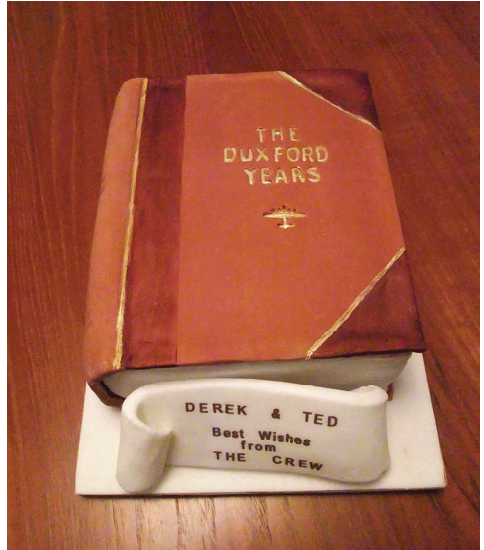


**Jim Lowe's grave
thought to be in Dudley.**
Photo courtesy; Graham Boyd

DUXFORD FAREWELL

Duxford's closing airshow of the season on October 10th saw the last appearances of Derek Vanstone's Aviation Books and Ted Cachart, alias Ted the Lad. Derek's stand has been a feature of Duxford air shows for many years and Ted has been present for the last seven. As a gesture of appreciation for his help to the Association Derek was welcomed as a 'Honorary Friend' in November 2007.

A cloudless early Autumn sky was a perfect backdrop for the flying display during which Derek and Ted were presented with a magnificent cake crafted in the shape of a book by Janet Norman. (Mrs. Archivist)



Photos Courtesy; Ed & Janet Norman

Left to right; Ed Norman (Archivist), Colin Cripps (Researcher). Derek Vanstone, Barbara Parr, Ted Cachart (Chairman), Pam Cripps, Alan Parr (Secretary). Janet Norman.

AN ILLUMINATING EXPERIENCE!

By Frank Lowe

Ops again tonight. Where would the target be this time? I take my Hampden up with my WOP/AG in the morning for an air-test and then go back to the Sergeant's Mess. We have a couple of hours sleep after lunch and then go along to the Ops Room for briefing. The target is Hamburg once again and I get that familiar feeling of butterflies in the tummy. This time the briefing is extended to include a talk by an Army A.A. Captain. He tells us that if we are flying above 12,000 ft. and if a searchlight beam catches us, we need not worry, because the searchlight crew won't be able to see us. We usually operated at 8 or 9,000 ft. I tell my crew that on this trip we will go in at 13,000 ft. They are enthusiastic!

The navigation is finally sorted out, "flimsies" (codes, radio frequencies, colours of the day etc. typed on edible rice-paper) and rations collected, flying kit donned and the trucks take us out to the aircraft. I have a chat with the ground-crew, then do the external checks. We climb aboard. I strap in and go through the internal checks. Start engines. Check intercom. We are number four to take off. I watch the first two taxi out and wave the chocks away as the third rolls past me. By the time number three starts his take-off run the first two have disappeared into the darkening Eastern sky. We get a green light from the ACP (Aerodrome Control Pilot) and I taxi to the start of the flare-path, turn into wind and open the throttles. We pick up speed slowly, heavily laden with bombs and fuel. The speed builds up and we can feel the jolts as the wheels follow the bumpy surface of the grass field. Ease her into the air, up with the wheels, then the flaps. Set throttles boost and revs, and we are slowly climbing, heading East.

The sun has already set but the red afterglow lingers in the Western sky behind us as we cross the coast at Mablethorpe. We are still climbing as I tell each of my crew to test-fire the guns-the WOP/AG's twin Vickers K's, another pair for the under-gunner, a single one for the Navigator/Bomb-Aimer and finally I fire a few rounds from my own fixed Browning.

We have now been flying for more than two hours. The Northern sky is still light - it never gets really dark at this time of the year but remains a pale background against which our aircraft will be visible to enemy aircraft to the South. We shall be unable to see them against the sombre sky in that direction in spite of the rising moon. We spot a large convoy of ships in the Bight of Heligoland, apparently heading for the Elbe. One of our aircraft is getting a pasting from the flak batteries on the island of Heligoland - a place to avoid! We are now at 13,000 ft. The heating system has failed and we are very cold. Enemy coast in sight! We cross just north of the Kiel canal and start weaving. Suddenly a searchlight comes on. It is right on us, but we don't worry! Remember what the

Army Captain said? More lights cone us and our confidence evaporates. (One of my Squadron buddies ,in a Hampden a few miles behind us told me later that he counted twenty plus lights on us). There is no flak, so I tell my crew to look out for fighters. I weave back towards the sea to try to escape the lights. "Bandit green high!" yells my WOP/AG and I hear him open fire as I break right. I see tracer coming past on the port side, close and I tighten my turn and shove the nose down. Both of my gunners are firing. I can smell the burnt cordite. The fighter, an Me109, is firing again and this time, in spite of my efforts to out turn him he hits us. Tracer streaks through my cockpit, missing my left leg by inches and smashing some of the instruments. The Airspeed Indicator is still working. It reads over 300 m.p.h! The Hampden's "never exceed speed" is 290 and we still have a full bomb load!

At last we are over the sea and out of the lights. We level out at 1,200 ft. The gunners claim the fighter is still going down but they don't see it hit the sea.

What to do now? Climb up and have another go! I head back towards the target and ask for damage reports. There are lots of bullet holes in the WOP/AG's canopy, the cockpit, the fuselage and the navigator's position. The wireless aerial has been shot away but nobody has been hurt. It could be worse! Then the under gunner calls me to report that petrol is running past his position. I hope that the "self-sealing" tanks will live up to their name but decide that we will have to leave Hamburg for another occasion. Instead we will have a go at the convoy we had seen on the outward journey. We head South-West and continue to climb. The navigator is the first to spot the convoy. We are carrying one 1,000 lb. and two 500lb. bombs. I tell the navigator to aim for the biggest ship in the convoy and drop a stick with half-second spacing, the biggest bomb last. We do our bombing run at 5,000 ft. The navigator calls "Bombs gone!" and I do a gentle orbit so that we can all see the bursts. Unfortunately the bombs have dropped in a salvo, not in a stick and we see an impressive explosion half a ship's length astern of the biggest vessel.

Now for the home run! It is cold, draughty and noisy, but we feel that the worst is over. The punctured tank seems to have sealed. Time drags as we fly on across the sea. The moon has set and it is so dark that we are very close to the friendly coast before we recognise the familiar shape of The Wash. We follow the River Witham, fly over Boston and Lincoln and approach our home base, Scampton. We are not expected back so soon, so there is no flarepath. We cannot make radio contact as we have no aerial. I do a circuit of the field and can see the red obstruction lights on the top of the two "Chance Lights", one at each end of the unlit flarepath. I make a careful approach and manage a creditable landing on the dark field. I'll never trust an R.A. Captain again - he'd never heard of radar-controlled master-searchlights!

Much to his regret, and ours, Ken Read missed the reunion due to illness. By early August he was making a fine recovery and was able to enjoy a day out.

KEN'S DAY

By Ed Norman

The East Anglian Aviation Heritage Centre at Flixton, Suffolk hosted an RAFA day on 22nd August, inviting local WW11 veterans to attend. Ten veterans of varying ranks and trades – including 4T9er Ken Read, responded to meet, answer questions and sign autographs for an enthusiastic public on a gloriously hot day. Ken completed 19 ‘ops’ as the bomb aimer in David Hytch’s crew during 1944-45.

They gave their time for free and unusually for any museum, so was the entrance to the open day. This small but expanding museum has huts containing assorted treasures and a small collection of static aircraft.

The veterans later took the salute as a squad of air cadets, assembled from all over East Anglia, honoured them with a march past. The event was recorded by the BBC and Ken was modestly pleased to see himself ‘front and centre’ on the local news programme “Look East” on the 6pm and 10 pm news slots.



Photo; Ed Norman

The March Past. Ken Read is fifth from the left.



Photo; Janet Norman

Ken Read, 'Captain George Mainwaring', and Ed Norman at the memorial to the popular television series 'Dad's Army' which was filmed in and around Thetford.



Photo; Via Ted Cachart

Ted Cachart, was Guest Speaker at the Dining In and Ladies Night at the Officer's Mess, RAF Kirton-in-Lindsay on September 17th.. The Mess at Kirton in Lindsay is also shared by officers from RAF Scampton.

Associate 4T9er Dominic Howard has been keeping us informed on progress in the search for one of 49 Squadron's missing Lancasters ED427 and her crew. German researcher, Uwe Benkel, who has kept in touch with Dominic, sent two articles from the German newspaper Die Rheinfalz. We are grateful to May Brooke for translating these for us from which the following are extracts.

DIE RHEINFALZ 22nd January 2010

Laumersheim

...The search for the English, seven man Avro Lancaster bomber which crashed over Laumersheim farmland in April 1943, is making progress. After thorough investigation of the area on Saturday with deep ultrasound equipment, Uwe Benkel, the researcher on missing persons, is certain that the bodies are not in the near field but diagonally across. The 79 year old Ehrenfred Stahler from Laumersheim is certain that, there in the corner, is the tripod with which the scrap metal dealer dug out the metal pieces from the ground in 1947. Moreover, on the night in April 1943 when the English bomber was shot down on the return from a raid, probably by flak in Mannheim or gun battery at Frankental, the pensioner can remember exactly: "The aeroplane exploded while still in the air. The next day we ran to the field to look at the wreckage. Here in the field there were three huge craters."

The description corresponds exactly with aerial photographs from 1944 which Benkel got from the Bomb Disposal Unit. On the photos an elongated patch is recognisable, which clearly suggests a distortion of the ground. Working with ultrasound in the harvested field with a nearby fenced orchard, Uwe Benkel and Markus Kowollik quickly confirm the suspicion: the equipment, which can detect metal to a depth of 8 metres, has come upon something solid several paces long: "We are most probably standing over the aircraft cockpit about 5 metres long." Two more places are found very close by, presumably two of the four engines which formerly powered the Lancaster. A third could be under the field path a short distance away. The only thing now which the aerial archaeologists have in their sights is a bigger field diagonally opposite. Numerous small fragments are still being found today, such as aluminium metal pieces from the plating, but no related remains...

...First sporadic excavations with a spade confirm the suspicion that the team is on the trail to the heart of the bomber: Phil Adams brings to light a plug with the remains of a cable, which must have come from the cockpit. A little later a pressure switch turned up, possibly from the oil pressure gauge.

A few minutes before the end of Saturday's search, the helpers make a spectacular discovery: bone fragments. Now Uwe Benkel is quite certain that

they are only a short distance from their goal. Above all, it's the aim of the researcher for missing persons to find the bodies of the missing soldiers and clarify their fate for their relatives.

Benkel has had email contact for months with Alf Bone, the brother of the pilot Alexander Bone. Benkel reported that the Englishman, who himself had been an airman during the Second World War, was following the search with great interest: "As soon as we started on the excavation work, he wanted to be here on the spot at all costs." Now he also wants to stand again, side by side in word and deed with Peter Menges, the amateur historian from Ludwigshafen. He himself experienced the crash and was first to bring the Lancaster in Laumersheim to the attention of the experts.

First Uwe Benkel has to get in touch with the owner of the field, with the proprietors of the Zelt Winery of which it is part: "We want to get on with things before the field is sown again. A JCB digger will be necessary for the excavation work. It would be fantastic if someone would put a digger at our disposal for a few hours and only charge minimal costs."

DIE RHEINFALZ 8th September 2010

...The Edigheim amateur historian Peter Menges is certain that the wreckage of the British bomber ED427 is to be found in Laumersheim. Menges experienced the air war as a teenager and was also there as a 14 year old when the crash site was cleared. Now in retirement, he is engaged with aerial war history. In retirement, the post office chief clerk meticulously and in detail documented the fate of 60 bombers which were shot down. Each crash with a complete document file in the second cellar: framed photos, documents, mementos, thank you letters from relatives and colleagues.

Menges helped to clear up the fate of the dead airmen. He brought in Uwe Benkel, the researcher into missing persons. Together they wanted to track down the bodies of the missing men in Laumersheim. But what happened that night during the war?...

...The crew was young and it was only their second mission. The first was over Berlin on March 29th, 1943, a mission in which they were the only one of three new crews in their squadron to return.

Alex Bone, the pilot, is a Flying Officer and 31 years old. The other six are sergeants: Norman Foster, Flight Engineer, approx mid 20s: Cyril Yelland, Navigator, 23 years old: Raymond White, Radio Operator and Gunner, just 20: Raymond Rooney, Bomb Aimer, 19 years old and two Gunners, Ronald Cope 23 years old and Bruce Watt, 22 years old. Watt was a Canadian Pilot Officer and was additionally qualified as a pilot.

In the pre-flight discussion at 17.00hrs they found out their destination for the

first time. It was the Skoda armaments factory in the Bohemian beer town of Pilsen. Nine hours flying time lay before them. Over the Channel the bomber force was forming with 554 heavy aircraft; Halifax, Lancaster, Stirling and Wellington bombers...[327 aircraft, including those of 49 Squadron, were briefed to bomb Pilsen. The remaining 227 were to bomb Mannheim. Ed.]

...The crew of the Lancaster ED427 is still officially counted today as “missing”. Only the relatives were informed of the crash site “near Dirmstein” since no-one was quite certain. Both German as well as English detachments had confused Laumersheim with Laubenheim in the documents. However, in book and internet publications it is still referred to as, “disappeared without trace” or “tragically missing, presumed dead, crashed over the North Sea”.

To be continued



On November 4th a ceremony was held at Welton School to unveil a memorial to W/C John Nettleton VC who flew from RAF Dunholme Lodge on part of which the school is built. The unveiling was carried out by Australian Mr Keith Payne VC, The photo left shows 4T9ers Stuart Keay and Bob McWatt with Keith. Just look at that medal cluster!

Photo; Pat Keay

Prior to the Remembrance Day Service at Fiskerton Ted Cachart presented Dragon Award badges to scouts of the 5th Lincoln Scout Troop. Part of the qualification is to have slept under canvas during each month of the year. Quite an achievement! Left to right; Sean Tyler, Josh Trevor, Alan Parr, Ted Cachart, Henry Callingham, Ewan Murray.

Photo; Barbara Parr



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

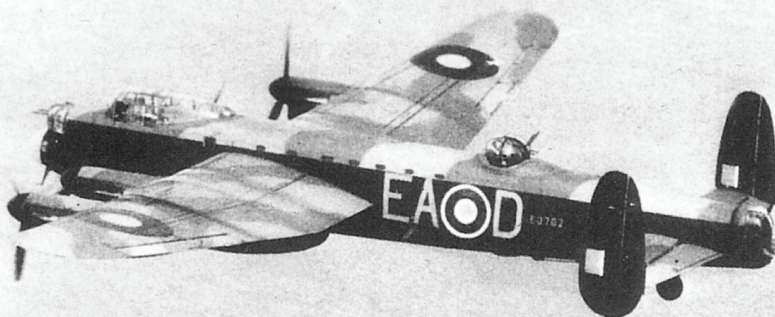
Below is shown a selection of photographs from Fiskerton, Berkhout and Bergen Cemetery (Holland) and Scampton. Wreathes and/or crosses were also laid at Bransby, Fulbeck, Runnymede, Aabenraa (Denmark) and no doubt numerous other places. Our thanks go to all concerned.

Photos courtesy of; Barbara Parr, Ed Ijsbrandij and Dick Schilder, Sheila Hamilton



49 SQUADRON LANCASTER ED702, EA-D

By Dominic Howard



She was known as the Squadron Commander's personal aircraft, this photo, taken in April 1943, I believe with W/Cdr Slee (later G/Capt) at the controls.

D-Donald was flown on 14 operations by W/C Peter Johnson and 3 by W/C Leonard Slee but my interest with her is with my Great Uncle P/O Cyril T Anderson who flew her 7 times out of her 33 operations.



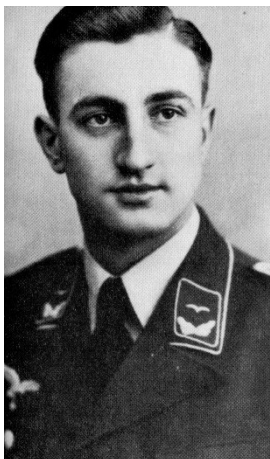
Photo; 49 Squadron Association

Six members of the crew Jock Paterson, Jimmy Green, Doug Bickle, Arthur Buck, Cyril Anderson, John Nugent

The last flight was to Mannheim on the night of 23/24th September 1943, on the homeward leg of the sortie they were 'Lost without trace'.

Route believed – Clacton – 50 58N 0254E – 49 55N 0705E – Mannheim.

The raid report from the Brunt crew states: 'Amazing number of fighters flares over target' while the Bull crew observed: 'Quite a number of fighters seen in target area by light of enemy flares.'



Working with 49 Squadron Association Researcher, Colin Cripps, the AHB (Air Historical Branch) and Dr. Theo Boiten, we were able to conclude that ED702 was attacked by a night fighter possibly flown by Oblt Lenz Finster in a BF110 G-4 of 2./NJG1. And crashed near Landau. The crew were buried at the local church by the local residents and The Catholic Priest Revd Jakob Storck. Oblt Finster himself was later killed on the 23/24th December of 1943 at Unteresbach 15 Km SE of Cologne, the Radar Op Fw Siegfried Beugel bailed out.

Left; Oblt Lenz Finster

Image taken from the book "Against multiple supremacy" (Gegen vielfache Ubermacht) by Gerhard Bracke. With Thanks to Dr. Theo Boiten for the loan of his copy.

I joined several forums in the hope of finding some more information on Oblt Lenz Finster, I was informed by a member of one of these that if I look in the book "Against multiple supremacy" (Gegen vielfache Ubermacht) by Gerhard Bracke, there are several pages with some photographs of Lenz Finster. All this and then just to throw a spanner into the works I am given the email of Gerhard Bracke the author of "Against multiple supremacy" Who very kindly went through all my research and told me that his relative Lenz Finster could not be the man I was looking for as the radar op Siegfried Beugel had told him that in 1976 he had met up with the survivors of the Lancaster he had shot down that night a Lancaster from 103 Sqd.

Gerhard contacted Hans Ring for me and he was able to work out from his information that a Lt Heinz Grimm, photo right, was our likely man, I passed this information onto Theo Boiten and from the research papers he has he was then able to confirm with very little doubt that Lt Heinz Grimm, member of the staff of the IV./ NJG (Nachtjagdgeschwader) I, who was awarded the Knight's Cross after his death was the man I was looking for.



On 9-10-1943 (only two weeks later) after shooting down a bomber Heinz Grimm's aircraft was hit by German AA fire and he was seriously injured while baling out, on 13-10-1943 he died in a hospital. A picture that Gerhard found in the book of fighter pilots, all wearers of the Knight's Cross, is on page 23.

I've not been able to find any more pictures of Heinz or his aircraft but the search goes on.

I was then contacted in November 2009 by Uwe Benkel, who had seen one of the postings I had made on one of the forums asking for information on the loss of ED702. He offered to assist in the research in locating the exact scene of the crash, Uwe contacted the Mayor of Offenbach, with an article then being placed in the local newspapers. From all this he was able to confirm where ED702 had come down was at Insheim, also that there were some eye-witnesses who remembered the aircraft crashing.

To be continued

OBITUARY

WING COMMANDER ALAN E. NEWITT DFC

1st August 1917—1st October 2010



We are grateful to the Jersey Evening Post for allowing us to include the following which appeared in the 22nd October edition;

Alan Newitt, an R.A.F. Wing Commander whose courage was rewarded with a Distinguished Flying Cross, has died at the age of 93.

The former pilot was born in Kenya on 1st August 1917 – a date that earned him a rather unusual nickname. “I was called Bill, because in those days the

bills arrived on the 1st of the month,” he said during an interview with the Jersey Evening Post in 1999.

Mr Newitt grew up near Mombasa, where his father Alan, was port captain. The young Alan was sent to a boarding school in England at the age of 7. Six years later his father retired and moved to Jersey, which was a popular destination for retired British military officers because of the favourable climate and low tax, and he could no longer afford the fees at the boarding school.

So the young Alan moved to Jersey and became a day student at Victoria College, where fees were the equivalent of £7.50p per term – compared to £32.50p at the boarding school.

He spent his childhood swimming and surfing at Greve de Lecq and watching films, which in those days were screened at the Opera House. He also excelled at sport and won medals in football, hockey, gymnastics and cricket.

He joined the R.A.F. in 1937, training on Hawker Harts and Audax bi-planes, and was awarded his wings and commissioned as a pilot officer the following year.

He taught navigation throughout the war until he was called up to the front line when an entire squadron was written off over Poland. Finding himself in charge of its replacement – 148 Squadron – he flew various missions from a base in Brindisi in Italy, including missions over the Balkans, Poland and Germany, dropping supplies behind enemy lines to partisan fighters and undercover agents.

Mr Newitt was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his courage in dropping supplies over the heavily guarded enemy territory. During his career with the R.A.F. he was awarded the 1939-45 Medal, the Italy Star, the France and Germany Star, the Victory Medal, the Palestine Medal and the Kenya Star.

In 1971 he received the Warsaw Uprising Cross from the Polish Government for attempting to drop urgently needed supplies to Poles at the height of the Warsaw uprising as smoke rose from the burning city.

He was demobbed in 1946 and went on the fly commercial airliners for B.E.A. before flying the de Havilland Rapide to and from Jersey. He later returned to the R.A.F. and commanded 49 Squadron, flying on a number of missions over Kenya during the Mau Mau military conflict.

Mr Newitt finally retired from the service in 1957. He went on to work for Midland Bank in London before moving back to Jersey with his family in 1975 and working for Midland Bank Trust Corporation until 1981.

Mr Newitt, who was honorary life vice-president of the Jersey branch of the Royal Air Force Association, was married to the late Nancy Ella and leaves behind a son Richard.

The Jersey Evening Post extends its sympathies to Mr Newitt's family.

S/L, later W/C A.E. NEWITT DFC

See Log Book entry 26th December, 1954 Mau Mau operations

In 1953 a wave of terrorism in Kenya had reached serious proportions. At that time I was Commanding Officer of No. 49 Squadron, equipped with Avro Lincoln heavy bombers. In November, 1953 the Squadron was on a months detachment at Shallufa in the canal zone, Egypt, completing its annual armament practice exercises. Shortly after arriving I received a personal visit from S.A.S.O., Middle East, who informed me that General Erskine, C-in-C East Africa, was complaining about the inadequacy of the R.A.F. in Kenya where the Mau Mau terrorists activities were in full swing, and the action was moving uncomfortably close to the cities, particularly Nairobi the capital. The small 25 lb. bombs being dropped by the Harvards were no deterrent, and the General was pressing for bigger aircraft capable of dropping larger bombs. S.A.S.O. suggested that three Lincolns should be loaded up with 1,000 pounders and flown to Kenya on a purely temporary basis and reporting to General Erskine direct. As so frequently happened in those days, the temporary duty stretched to a year with the whole Squadron being based at Eastleigh.

This tale however, is not about the Squadron's activities, but relates to an exciting trip in a Piper Pacer aircraft (*below*) flown by a pilot of the Kenya Police Air Wing. During my tour I took the opportunity of flying at the 'sharp



end' with both the Harvard Squadrons and the intrepid aviators of the Police Air Wing. I had had an invitation from the Kings African Rifles to visit M'Weiga, a forward post on the edge of the forest. There, on a small and very bumpy landing strip, I was introduced to a Major Beacroft, who very kindly offered to take me on a routine smoke-marking operation to guide the attacking Lincolns onto a known Mau Mau hide in the Aberdare mountains.

Major Beacroft was an unusual pilot, to say the least, for he only had one hand.

Where the right hand had been was a hook with interchangeable attachments. He flew the aircraft with a clip on the stick, leaving his good hand free to operate the throttle and other ancillaries. He not only dropped the smoke markers but also added his own contribution to the war by dropping hand grenades.

His method was to fish a grenade out of his brief case which not only contained the grenades but also his sandwiches and other private belongings. He would pull out the grenade with his left hand, put it to his mouth, and extract the safety pin with his teeth and spitting the ring onto the cockpit floor. Holding the grenade catch down with his good hand, he would then fumble with the cockpit window release in quite a hairy operation and manage to slide back the window, still with the grenade in his hand, do a steep turn over the target and lob the grenade out. I found this somewhat disconcerting for he had given me no warning except to say that he 'fought his own war'. When I realised what he was doing I kept a sharp eye on the proceedings which, to my utter consternation, was to be repeated twice more. I had visions that if he accidentally dropped the grenade we would both be scrabbling about the cockpit floor, with limited time at our disposal.

When we landed, I thanked him for an interesting flight and said how much I enjoyed his technique of dropping the markers at tree-top height. We parted with a left-handed handshake and my first pint never touched the sides.

When General Erskine found out that I was a native of Jersey, he revealed to me, in the strictest confidence, that he was about to become the next Governor of the Island and could I fly his heavy gear to Jersey. I jumped at the chance for it meant that I would be the first pilot to land a Lincoln at Jersey Airport.



Photo; 49 Squadron Association Collection

THE FINAL TRIP

By

Malcolm Brooke (Webmaster)

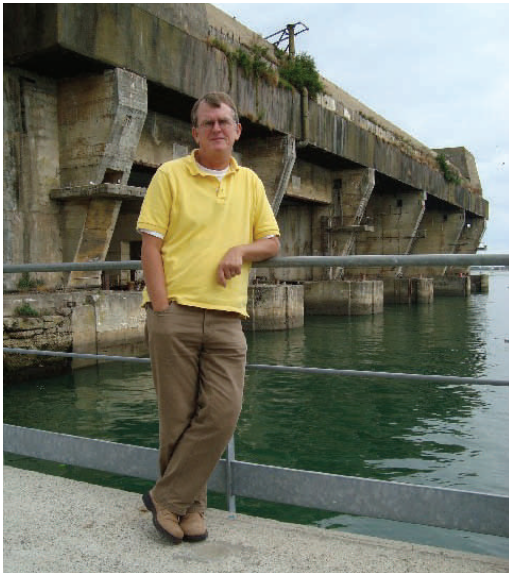
Following our summer expedition of 2009, when we photographed the graves of 49ers buried in the isolated island cemeteries off the Dutch coast, the remaining locations were in the south west of England and parts of France.

After poring over maps, a route which would take in all these locations became clear.....it would also allow us to visit our 'best man' in Helford whom we had not seen for some years. Ferries and hotels were booked and I felt quietly confident that I had everything organised.

As I hoped to complete the cemetery project during this trip I checked the website very carefully to ensure that no-one was forgotten. To my dismay I found that I had missed a headstone in a UK cemetery, five airmen from one in France and forgotten to include two WW1 cemeteries.

When I plotted these additional tasks onto my carefully crafted plan, I was greatly relieved to find that the missing locations all fitted perfectly into the existing route.....what luck!

During our long journey from York to Cornwall we visited Bath to photograph a difficult to locate headstone, Exeter to add the missing airman and Torquay for the final UK cemetery photographs.



After a few days in Cornwall we caught the Plymouth to Roscoff ferry to begin the French part of the journey.

At Escoublac la Baule we visited the crew of ED467 (W/O Duncan) shot down while attacking the U-Boat bunkers at St Nazaire.

Today, many of these bunkers in Lorient and St Nazaire are open to the public and I satiated my interest in large concrete structures and famous WW2 actions. There was an interesting connection with our UK visit in that HMS Campbletown, which rammed the lock gates in St Nazaire, had sailed from Falmouth in Cornwall. Many of the graves in Escoublac are from that action and

Photo; May Brooke

A nonchalant Malcolm at St. Nazaire

from the sinking of the SS Lancastria.

We then worked our way via several beautiful cathedral towns to Bourges where P/O Arthur Anderson and his crew from JB421 are buried. There was then a long drive north to an area west of Paris where the final WW2 cemeteries were located. We photographed the missing crew members in Le Chesne (LM541) and then arrived in the beautiful village of Chéronvilliers where five members of LM337 (P/O Gospel) are buried. We were immediately impressed and moved to find that beautiful baskets of fresh flowers were placed by each of the headstones. On checking the date of the crash we found that it was two days prior to our visit. I have subsequently received a newspaper article which details a ceremony that took place there on the anniversary of the crash. It was frustrating to realise that, had we visited two days earlier, we could have represented the Association. Only during the evening did we remember that, after almost four years, we had photographed our final WW2 cemetery.

In the next few days we visited the outstanding WW1 cemeteries which included an American airman who flew with 49 Squadron and is buried at Suresnes. This is a beautiful hillside location to the west of Paris with a magnificent view over the capital city and the Eiffel Tower.

Finally, we visited the recently opened CWGC cemetery at Fromelles where many newly identified Australian soldiers lay buried. The constant flow of curious visitors contrasted poignantly with the many cemeteries that are silent where only the sky looks down on the fallen.

Between the time of writing and the publication of the 4T9er my wife and I will have photographed the individual names of two hundred and eighteen 49 Squadron airmen who have no known grave and whose names are inscribed on the walls of Runnymede.

So, this part of the website is now 100% complete.....how can I sum up our experiences and emotions?

Like an earlier trip, I'll leave this to an inscription from a headstone in the final cemetery at Chéronvilliers.

DEEP IN OUR HEARTS A MEMORY IS KEPT WE LOVED YOU TOO DEARLY TO EVER FORGET.

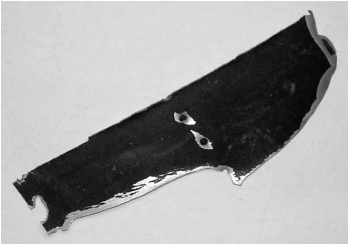
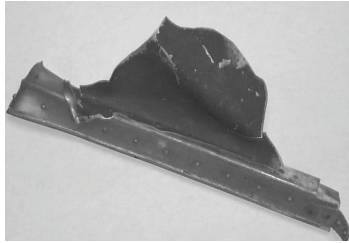
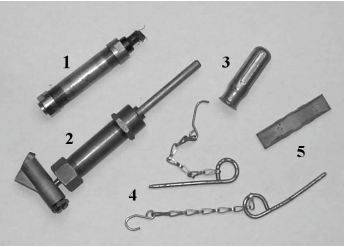
567 airmen in 66 European cemeteries, 121 airmen in 90 UK cemeteries and 218 airmen remembered at Runnymede.

906 names.....906 photographs.....no-one forgotten.

(The website also has 36 WW1 and 7 post-war entries. Ed.)

READER'S LETTERS

In issues 14 and 15 we featured Bert Cole's story which culminated in the crash of his Lancaster in Germany, the whole crew surviving to become Pows. This was followed in issue 17 by Gerd Morgenthaler's account of the crash as witnessed by the Germans and now we have received the following photographs from German researcher, Uwe Benkel, via Associate 4T9er Dominic Howard. These illustrate the pieces of Bert's aircraft which were retrieved by a German boy and presented to Bert on the occasion of his visit in the autumn of 2004. Bert kindly donated the pieces to RAF Scampton Museum where they are on display.



Bert Cole is third from the right,

Honorary Friend and former Red Arrows Adjutant, John May e-mailed to say that Corgi are to introduce a model of 49 Squadron Valiant XD818. This will be in 1:144 scale and will be available in February 2011. The advert below appeared in FlyPast magazine.

The advertisement features two model aircraft: a white Valiant bomber on the left and an orange and white Red Arrows jet on the right. Text on the left includes 'NEW TOOLING' and 'AVAILABLE FEBRUARY'. Text on the right includes 'AVAILABLE NOW'. The central text reads 'Post War Military Air Power'. At the bottom, a blue banner states: 'The complete Aviation Archive Collection is available from all good model shops or from Corgi Direct. To find out more call 01843 233 519 or visit www.corgi.co.uk and sign up for your free e-newsletter.' The Corgi logo is in the bottom right corner. Small text at the bottom left reads: 'All models photographed herein are made under license for production models produced specifically for Corgi Publications and advertisements. We reserve the right to improve or amend colours, markings or actual production, and to substitute models. The copyright is owned by Corgi. All rights reserved. Corgi Ltd.' A small inset shows a 'Corgi Collectors Club' card.

ITMA



Photo; Via Ted Cachart

Yes it's that man again! In October our ubiquitous Chairman was taken to Fiskerton to be interviewed by the BBC who were filming a feature on FIDO for The One Show. Following the interview on the runway Ted was taken to Wickenby where they took off and returned for a flight over the airfield at Fiskerton. By road next to East Kirkby for more filming. The feature is due to go out in the New Year.