

# The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine  
August 2011 Issue 22**



Photo; Ed Norman

**After three barren years due to inclement weather it all came together on Sunday 19th June when the BBMF Lancaster made three low passes over Petwood Hotel during the Association's reunion.**



**2011 Reunion outside Fiskerton Village Hall**  
**Above, The Veterans. L to R; Lou Crabbe (WWII), Ted Cachart (WWII),**  
**Eric Clarke (WWII), Stuart Keay (Lincolns), John Dodkins (WWII),**  
**Anthony Hollinshead (Lincolns), David Boughton (Lincolns)**



**Photos; Dominic Howard**

**IN MEMORIAM**

**J.G. Beck G. Brunton F. Hope M. Mills  
W. Jarrett M.D. Webb R.K. Drinnan**

**WE WILL REMEMBER THEM**

**WELCOME TO:**

**NEW MEMBERS**

**Eric Dumbell Mike Thompson John Turner**

**NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

**Arthur Burns Myrtle Lawson Ian Bramley  
Barbara Hope Paul Henley Joan Jarrett Paul Bennett**

**NEW FRIEND**

**Pieter de Vries**

**NEW HONORARY FRIENDS**

**Martin Nicholls David Briggs**

**GONE AWAY**

**Robert Carter**

**ARE YOU A VALIANT PERSON?**

**Newark Air Museum, Notts, will host a third V-Force reunion on April 28th 2012 following successful events in 2004 and 2010. Next year's gathering of Avro Vulcan, Handley Page Victor and Vickers Valiant air and ground crew will commemorate 60 years since the formation of the so called V-Force. It will also be the 30th anniversary of the Falklands campaign.**

**The aim is to bring together as many former personnel as possible, and trustees are hoping to spread the word far and wide well in advance. Full details of the activities planned and how to join the reunion can be found at [www.vforcereunion.co.uk](http://www.vforcereunion.co.uk)**

## EDITORIAL

What a difference a day makes! One day in early May I was working to complete the May issue of The 4T9er and the next day I was mentally with the fairies in Stafford Hospital Critical Care. After two weeks of saline drips, just about every antibiotic that they had in the cupboard and six blood transfusions I was transferred to an observation ward. After a week I was discharged having suffered a leak from the gall bladder which caused septicaemia and e-coli. I was told that it would take four to six months to make a full recovery and as I write, two and a half months later, I can say that this time estimate seems reasonable.

Barbara and I are most grateful for the numerous messages and the flowers that we have received. It was far harder on her and the family than me as during the worst period I was totally unaware of how dicey it was. Knowing how many of you care has been a great help to us. Stafford Hospital has been the subject of much negative criticism in the news media but I can't praise them highly enough for the dedicated care that I received and they certainly helped me avoid a short appointment with the undertaker.

So that's why there was no May issue. Due to the short notice that I received of the above events there will inevitably be some correspondence that I have not attended to for which I apologise. If you have any outstanding business then please let me know. But that's quite enough of me as I know that many of you have challenges of your own and I hope that you receive the same degree of loving care as I have.

As always I am most grateful to those who have donated to the Association funds. As you all know we do not operate a subscription system but depend almost entirely on donations to fund our activities. Without donations there will be no Association and in common with all else costs are on the rise. One way to help us to reduce costs is for as many as possible to take their copy of The 4T9er by e-mail. Instead of a cost of £1.20 plus postage per copy the e-mail costs us nothing. I appeal to you, if you are on broadband take The 4T9er by e-mail.

I also wish to express my appreciation to those who have sent in articles for publication. There are still many of you veterans of the Squadron who have not recorded your experiences. As I was recently reminded time is running out so do it now.

I regret that I must record the passing of seven of our former colleagues. John Beck died in February preceded one month earlier by his wife Eileen. John was a flight engineer in the crew of F/O JR Barrie with whom he completed his tour between 7th July and 4th December 1944. A member of The Magic Circle John will be fondly remembered for entertaining us reunion goers with his card tricks.

Geoff Brunton, also a flight engineer, died late February after a short illness. Only a month before he had attended the funeral of Ken Read. Geoff had a close shave in 1943 when a motorcycle accident put him in hospital for a spell during which time his crew captained by F/O WR Green RNZAF were all killed on the Revigny raid. It was their 27th op. Earlier in their tour the crew took part in the costly raid on Mailly-le-Camp. After the war Geoff took part in the annual commemoration ceremonies at the Mailly' Memorial. He often combined these trips with a visit to his crewmate's graves in Herbissee Cemetery, a practice that Geoff's son Michael is continuing. Frank Hope, who died 2nd October 2010 aged 80, was a navigator on Lincolns with 49 Squadron from 28.6.50 to 16.6.53. After leaving the RAF Frank joined Eagle Airways as commercial manager before co-founding Caledonian Airways (Prestwick) Ltd. whose aircraft carried a distinctive rampant lion on the fin. 'Mick' Mills died early in the year. He flew most of his ops as rear gunner to 49 Squadron O.C. W/C later G/C Leonard Slee DSO DFC. His last op, on Berlin 20th June 42, had F/O GE Fawke in the captain's seat whilst G/C Slee acted as Master Bomber. Gerry Fawke later went to 617 Squadron together with his navigator and current 4T9er Tom Bennett where they became one of the most successful Mosquito target marker crews. Mick became Adjutant of the University of Wales Air Squadron in the 80's for which he is fondly remembered by all who knew him. William 'Reg' Jarrett was an armourer with 49 Squadron between 1941 and 1944 before being posted overseas. Sadly he died in February. Former Associate Dawn Webb was the widow of popular pilot Ernest Webb DFC. With a ready smile and wicked sense of humour Dawn, who died on May 19th, like Ernest is greatly missed by all who were lucky enough to know her. Canadian, Bob Drinnan died on July 22nd. He was bomb aimer in the crew of P/O PA Taverner which was lost on 22nd October 1943, Kassel. Bob together with four of his crewmates, including our Archivist's father, became PoWs. They were on their sixth operation.

I am always delighted to welcome new Members who served with the squadron. Eric Dumbell flew 19 ops between 18th August '44 and 16th April '45 as mid upper gunner. The raid on Pilsen on 16th April was 49 Squadron's last of the war. Eric's pilots were F/O DA Dickson and F/L R Williams. Mike Thompson was an SAC Engine Mechanic on Valiants, including XD818, between 1958 and 1960. John Turner's details will be published in the next issue of The 4T9er.

We are also delighted to welcome new Associates Arthur Burns, Myrtle Lawson, Ian Bramley, Barbara Hope, Paul Henley, Joan Jarrett and Paul Bennett, all of whom will be introduced in the next issue. An e-mail from new 'Friend' Pieter de Vries can be found on page 30. New Honorary Friends, David Briggs and Martin Nicholls co-edit the interesting website on RAF Fiskerton.

Sadly contact has been lost with Robert Carter. During a visit to Bob's home

some years ago he told me that he was posted in to RAF Scampton whilst it was still being built and actually flew as ballast with Rod Learoyd VC in a Hind.

To our great disappointment Barbara and I were unable to attend the reunion. Our absence did however create the opportunity for the crew to show what a fantastic group they are. Having been removed from the scene so abruptly there were one or two loose ends but once these were highlighted the crew swung into action and did a wonderful job. In fact they did such a good job that I have since decided to delegate some of the work next year. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all who were involved in making this year's event so memorable. I must mention Ted in particular who made two visits to my home and pulled the whole event together. I am also grateful to Ed, Ted and May Brooke for submitting the reunion reports for this issue and to Dom Howard for covering the event with the camera.

New Associate Myrtle Lawson, the partner of late Member Ken Read, wishes to thank those who attended Ken's funeral, sent sympathy cards or made telephone calls. A lovely man who regularly attended reunions Ken is sadly missed.

Honorary Friend F/Lt. Mike Chatterton made what was thought at the time to be the last ever Nimrod flight whilst delivering one of the last three examples to East Midlands Aeropark on Tuesday 12th July. At the time of writing, 19th July. Mike is the sole Nimrod pilot in the world with the possibility of making the last, last flight to Kemble with an aircraft due to be shipped on by road to Cosford Aerospace Museum. I heard on BBC News that RAF Cosford's future is once again in the balance as the School of Aeronautical Engineering is now due to move to Lynham although this will not affect the museum.

A number of 4T9ers witnessed the two accidents at the Flying Legends air show at Duxford on 10th July. The first involved a replica Fokker Triplane that tipped on to its nose on landing. The pilot was thankfully unhurt and only slight damage resulted to the aircraft. The second incident was potentially far more serious when the lovely P51D Mustang 'Big Beautiful Doll' was in collision with a Skyraider. The pilot of the P51 baled out and was unhurt. The Skyraider landed safely although minus the outer wing section but the P51 was a total loss.

F/Lt. Gary Mennell advised that by the end of August the museum at RAF Scampton will have moved to new premises. We will bring you more details when they are available.

Have you got a burning ambition to own a Spitfire? Well there is one for sale. It has a guide price of £8 million. Well it is a rare two seat Mk VIII and the prototype conversion to two seat T8 configuration! I bet you wish now that you had bought one for ten quid just after the war!

## HEROES RETURN

THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND INITIATIVE AS DETAILED ON PAGE 30 OF FEBRUARY'S ISSUE OF THE 4T9ER HAS BEEN EXTENDED ONCE AGAIN. GRANTS ARE NOW AVAILABLE UP TO THE END OF 2012 BUT APPLICATIONS MUST BE PLACED BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY 2012

A national memorial to Canadian air forces was dedicated on July 8th by HRH The Duke of Gloucester at a ceremony at The National Memorial Arboretum. A photographic feature will appear in a future issue of The 4T9er.

In issues 13 and 16 we asked, in Can You Help, if anyone could assist Honorary Friend, Douwe Drijver and his Dutch colleagues in the search for relatives of the crew of a 103 Squadron Wellington, R1397 which crashed in Holland on July 24th, 1941. In the Sunday Express of 31st July this year there was a two page spread describing the unveiling of a memorial to the crew in the presence of relatives of the airmen. We congratulate Douwe and his team from the Stichting Missing Airmen Memorial Foundation on a successful conclusion to fifteen years of research.

## **NEXT YEAR'S REUNION WILL COMMENCE ON SUNDAY JULY 1st AT PETWOOD HOTEL, WOODHALL SPA.**

As there was no May issue I have made this a bumper colour edition. I hope that you enjoy it.

'Till the next time.

### **AVIATION PRINTS FOR SALE**

Former air gunner, with two tours behind him, Geoff Easterling, is offering the following prints for sale;

'Lancaster' by Robert Taylor, signed by  
G/Capt. Leonard Cheshire VC, DSO, DFC

'The Dambusters' by Robert Taylor, signed by  
Air Marshal Harold (Mick) Martin KBE, DSO, DFC, AFC.

'Fair Fighters Revenge' by Howard Bourne

'The City of Lincoln Lancaster' by S. Gallimore

'New Arrivals at Scampton' a pencil drawing by Nicolas Trudgian signed by  
ten 49 Squadron veterans.

Anyone interested can contact Geoff on 01473 827893 or via the Editor.

*On February 12th 1942 the two German battle cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau together with the light cruiser Prinz Eugen left the French port of Brest to return to Germany in what has become known as The Channel Dash. Churchill's orders were to stop them at all costs. 49 Squadron lost four Hampdens on this operation which unfortunately failed to stop the German ships reaching their destination. One of the missing aircraft was piloted by Sgt. TK Downes whose wireless operator was Sgt. Brian Hunter.*

*4T9er Eric Clarke was a close friend of Brian and when Eric was 'stood down' whilst in the locker room Brian asked if he could borrow his flying boots as he had left his in the billet. Thus Brian made his last flight wearing Eric's boots which finished up at the bottom of the Channel. Brian's body however was washed up in Holland together with those of his pilot and navigator. Eric vowed then that he would one day visit Brian's grave never dreaming that it would be 69 years after Brian died.*

## **MY HOMAGE**

**By Eric Clarke**

With the help of funding from the 'Heroes Return' initiative I left Doncaster on April 14th 2011 to fulfil a lifelong ambition to visit the grave of my friend Sgt. Brian Hunter.

I did not know until later that our 49 Squadron Association Chairman, Ted Cachart, had phoned KLM Flight Services and primed them that a 97 year old Bomber Command Veteran was travelling to Amsterdam, and although he was not an invalid, could he have some attention ?

Wow!! I, and my splendid escort/carer Assoc. 4T9er Mrs Sheila Hamilton received VIP treatment from the moment we reported to the first desk at Leeds/Bradford Airport. A KLM attendant with a wheelchair took us through the procedures, no queuing, to the plane to be greeted by the KLM Captain and cabin crew. The Captain took us to our seats, we were first on, and conversed with me while the passengers arrived. He then made his usual welcome to the 80 passengers and announced my presence!! He then invited me to the Flight Deck where I enjoyed the whole flight to Amsterdam.

Throughout the visit it was VIP every step of the way and I was amazed, again, at the wonderful generous welcome with such respect. Truly heart warming. Ed Ijsbrandij [*Hon. Friend. ED.*] had prepared an excellent itinerary. We arrived at breakfast time and in the afternoon Eric Molinaar [*Hon. Friend. ED.*], a journalist with photographer, took us to Bergen War Cemetery where I placed flowers and paid homage to the four members of the crew of Hampden P1206 shot down 8/11/41. [*See The 4T9er Issues 5 & 11. ED.*] Whilst there I became

involved with about 30 students.

On Friday, Ed, along with Inca, a lady photographer and a KLM colleague of Ed's, took us to the Hook of Holland Cemetery where I placed flowers and paid my homage to Brian, my former colleague who went down in the Channel on February 12th 1942, wearing my flying boots. I stood there and the emotional chords fell apart. Alfred Lord Tennyson said in one of his poems, "I would that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me." Memories!!

On Saturday we spent the day with Dick and Annett Schilder [*Hon. Friends. ED.*] at the farm where our Hampden P1206 went down at Berkhout and again we paid homage at the crash site.

The welcome throughout the visit was outstanding with such heart warming hospitality. From start to finish Shelia and I received fantastic service and attention from Ed. Ijsbrandij the chief organiser, Dick and Annett Schilder, Eric Molinaar, Major Paul Petersen [*Hon. Friend. ED.*], KLM airlines and the staff at Hotel Magneet, Hoorne.

The respect of everyone we met was wonderful and so obviously sincere and I do believe reflected the Dutch Nation.

This incredible visit was made possible every step of the way by my splendid friend, as my escort/carer Mrs Sheila Hamilton has had special affinity with the P1206 project since 2004.

Thanks are also due to the National Lottery, 'Heroes 'Return' scheme who have been especially helpful since the unfortunate difficulties in 2010. Absolutely splendid service and greatly appreciated.

A most amazing, unique, unforgettable occasion for me and my gratitude is boundless.

We returned on the Sunday with similar VIP treatment. Mission accomplished.

**We do not glorify War but we honour those who served.**



Photo; Ed Ijsbrandij

## “YOU HAVE CONTROL.”

By Eric North

“You have control,” I’m sure that many RAF pilots will recognise this instruction from their very early days of flying training.

I recently experienced this situation when my daughter and son-in-law arranged for me to have an hour’s flight in a Tiger Moth for my eighty-fifth birthday. On being told of this trip I estimated that it was fifty-seven years since I last flew in a Tiger Moth.

Luckily on the day of the flight conditions were perfect, a completely blue sky, sunshine and virtually no wind.

The flight was to take place at a small aerodrome south of Cheltenham and all my family came along to watch.



Photo; Courtesy Eric North

On arriving in the flight hut I was approached by a lady holding a leather Irving jacket which she kindly held for me to put on. To my surprise she then wound a long white silk scarf around my neck, as worn by pilots in the First World War. She then told me that she would be my instructor for the flight.

Arriving at the aircraft I climbed up on the wing and into the cockpit.

After ensuring that I was strapped in she checked that the intercom was

working and I could hear her clearly. She then went through the pre-flight checks before giving the thumbs-up for the prop to be swung to start the engine.

Contacting Air Traffic Control we were given the o.k. to taxi out for take off. Although the airfield had runways we were allocated the use of a prepared grass strip which was for the exclusive use of the Tiger Moth.

Once airborne and reaching a reasonable height over the intercom came the familiar words, "You have control," (My previous flying experience had been noted before take-off) to which I gave the standard reply, "I have control."

I was then given instructions to make a number of right and left hand turns during which local landmarks and other features were observed.

During these turns I was pleased that I didn't side slip at all and maintained height, speed and direction using the horizon as a guide to the attitude of the aircraft.

The instructor then asked if I would like to do a loop and roll. My answer to this was that I had little experience of these manoeuvres flying Ansons and Lancasters so I felt it sensible that she took over control.

One thing I remember during my initial flying training was that when you were at the top of a loop the engine tended to cut out due to there being gravity petrol feed. This never caused a problem in my experience as the engine always restarted on the way down. I don't recall that happening during our loop so perhaps things have improved over the years.

After completing the obligatory roll I was asked to resume control and head back to the airfield with guidance from the instructor. The landing (she now had control) was understandably perfect and brought back memories of many a trainee's first attempt at landing, probably like me touching down too hard and kangarooing along until thankfully the aircraft stayed on the ground with caustic remarks from the instructor.

On arriving back at the flight hut I received a very nice certificate with comments on my flying skill which were probably more complimentary than I deserved. While standing around talking I was asked if I had noticed the camera on the wing of the aircraft. Saying that I hadn't, a television was switched on and pictures of us flying the aircraft appeared which included all the chat that took place between the instructor and myself. After seeing a few minutes of the film I was asked if I would like to purchase a DVD of the whole flight which would last about forty-five minutes. This was the icing on the cake as my son-in-law ordered a copy for me as a memento of the day.

I would heartily recommend this experience to any association members who did their early training on Tiger Moths. I have always maintained that the only way to get the true feeling of flying is in the open cockpit and hear the words "You have control."

## 49 SQUADRON REUNION, JUNE 19th-22nd

By Ed Norman



**All Photographs in the Reunion report are by Dominic Howard unless credited otherwise.**

The sun shone brightly over Petwood Hotel this year as we gathered for the 74<sup>th</sup> Reunion on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June. While relaxing with refreshments after the long journeys undertaken by some of us, others found time to visit the plant sale held in the hotel grounds. But the thunder of two Griffon engines deafened everyone as two Spitfire PRXIX's roared overhead in a low pass over the hotel, herding everyone together. A lovely, lively noise repeated in a couple of equally low passes before heading off back to Coningsby. The BBMF Dakota seemed quite sedate in comparison as it trundled by a short while later, but a very welcome sight nonetheless. But the Griffons' roar had whetted our appetites. We remained outside in the sun and were rewarded by the Lancaster appearing very low over the hotel rooftop, banking round and passing again in salute to the Association. Alan and Barbara (Parr) could not be with us this year but mobile 'phones came out to deliver the sound of the Lanc to them at home in the West Midlands. Our thanks to the BBMF for honouring us once again and putting on a grand show.

Malcolm Brooke, our webmaster, conducted a successful Meet'n Greet in the evening for the benefit of the newcomers, introducing them to the regulars with a passing explanation of everyone's ties and connections to the Association. It seemed to break the ice somewhat and reinforced the idea that we were all very approachable.

Tony and Jean Hollinshead were attending for the first time, flying in from Cyprus where they now live. Tony was a rear gunner on Lincolns back in the '50s and had made the effort in order to meet with his pilot Stuart Keay.

An interesting lecture followed presented by local historian David Radford on the development and evolution of Woodhall Spa with an emphasis on the origins of Petwood Hotel.

Fine, sunny weather stayed with us throughout the following two days. Monday began with the Service of Remembrance at St. Clements Church, Fiskerton. It would be the last for the Rev. Peter Collins as he leaves with his wife Sally, to take up a new post in Leicestershire. We extend to them our heartfelt thanks and good wishes for their future. The service was



jointly conducted with Peter's successor Rev. Penny Green. Peter left us with a poignant and memorable sermon in which he played a BBC recording of a nightingale in a Surrey garden refusing to be silenced by an armada of Bomber Command aircraft approaching overhead; then receding into the distant skies.

*[Our Hon. President & Historian John Ward has since established that there were no ops on at the time of the recording but it was likely to be the Searchlight Co-ordination exercise over London in which 49 Squadron took part. ED.]*



The Association wreath was laid at the church memorial by Ted Cachart escorted by our Padre, Rev. Tony Buckler. Following the church service we rejoined the coach for the short ride up to the Fiskerton Airfield Memorial where Eric Clarke escorted by Ted Cachart laid the wreath on our behalf. Rev. Tony Buckler led the prayers, but also treated us to one of his evocative, poetic 'scribblings' as he likes to call them. They really do deserve to be published. 'Friend', Steve Pepper had purchased a rose aptly called 'Remembrance' at the plant sale and generously donated it to the memorial site. He assisted Carl Stuffins in planting the rose between and just behind the two stones.



The ladies of the Fiskerton Village Hall excelled even themselves this year with a marvellous spread of fare and hospitality. Our grateful thanks go to each who prepared the food or served our hungry members. A tradition has been built with annual group photos taken in the garden and this year saw that tradition maintained.

The banquet in the evening went fairly smoothly, with only one *faux pas* recorded by the crew who had taken over in Alan's absence, Colin Cripps performing the duties of M.C. Sadly, the number of attending veterans was

down to single figures for the first time with some members unable to attend at the very last moment.



We wish them well and hope to see them next year. The Petwood provided a roast beef that melted in the mouth, good wine and superb service as usual.

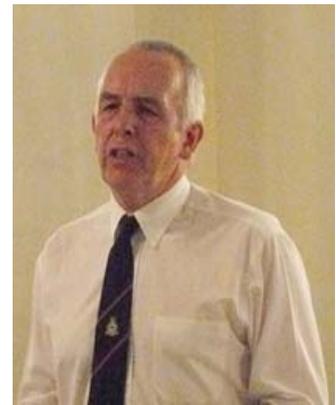


Veteran and reunion stalwart Lou Crabbe proposed the toast to Guests and Ladies with Pam Cripps replying on their behalf. John Ward proposed 49 Squadron Association to which Colin Cripps replied. During his reply Colin read a short 'State of the Union' report from our

Secretary Alan which contained the following;

*"...The Association is still in sound financial health thanks to the generosity of those who make donations. Although printing costs for the 4T9er magazine like everything else are rising I see no need in the immediate future to change the format. Our total membership numbers have continued to grow from 307 at this time last year to 322 today. Sadly but inevitably the number of full members has fallen from 150 to 138..."*

Our raffle, so often the bane of the organisers, garnered some funds for the association, while the



introduction of two auctions during the evening produced both funds and some entertainment for the guests. Associate Dominic Howard had generously donated a computer-generated picture (of super quality) that he had personally commissioned. It depicted his great uncle's (C.T. Anderson) Lancaster, ED702 'D-Dog.' Margaret Boughton made the highest bid of £50 for this together with a bottle of Avro Lancaster wine [see Issue 21, page 18 of *The 4T9er.ED*], both of which were presented to her by



Dominic's mother, Rosemary Howard. She also presented a copy of the picture on behalf of the Association to Ann Chesman and Mary Pycock for hanging in the 49 Squadron Lounge in Fiskerton Village Hall.



On behalf of the association Ted Cachart had commissioned a set of limited-issue, china mugs sporting the squadron badge and a picture of the new Bomber Command Memorial, presently being built in Green Park. Each mug was numbered and offered for sale, but number 49 was the object of the second auction of the evening. The bids rolled in, gradually increasing in size and far out-

stripping any reasonable expectations. Finally, it reached the staggering sum of £100 which was made by an exceedingly generous Richard Bartlett-May.

Not many members are aware that Padre Tony Buckler, clergyman, poet and 'scribbler' is also a talented amateur artist. His painting of a Hawker Hind



now hangs in the 49 Squadron Lounge at Fiskerton and this year he again generously donated a painting of a Handley Page Hampden sporting 49 Squadron markings.



Rev. Tony presented it to our own 'Action Man' veteran Eric Clarke who flew Hampdens with 49 Squadron way back in 1941.

To complete the reunion, guests were given a choice on the Tuesday, of visiting the BBMF at Coningsby, the museum at RAF Scampton or viewing the Lancaster at the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirkby. But those relaxing at the Petwood that day were treated to the find (by an eagle-eyed member of *'the crew'*) of a quite rare wild orchid in the grounds by the lake, and seemingly unknown to the hotel staff.

## VISIT TO RAF SCAMPTON, TUESDAY, JUNE 21st

By May Brooke

After the Reunion events of Sunday and Monday I thought my visit to RAF Scampton would be a brief, low key affair. How wrong I was...

We mustered at the entrance and were greeted by the guide, Tom Evans. A few steps inside the gate we were intercepted by F/Lt. Gary Mennell, the Officer i/c the Museum and close friend of 49 Squadron Association. It seems he was at the banquet the evening before but I didn't recognise him in his uniform!

As we set off on a brisk and breezy walk towards a hangar in the distance, I reflected that the Station had a lonely, ghostly atmosphere and it was Tom who pointed out that the road we were on featured in the film 'The Dambusters' with Michael Redgrave as Barnes Wallace and Richard Todd as Guy Gibson.

Much to my surprise the hangar in question was none other than the one in which the Red Arrows keep those, sleek, shiny red Hawk jets, but one forgets they have to park them somewhere while they go shopping at Waitrose!

Once inside, the bets were off and we were encouraged to wander round and enjoy the spectacle as ten beautiful Hawks were re-bored and de-coked. Strange to see them disembowelled, the



Photo; Malcolm Brooke



pilots' seats standing to attention nearby, yet knowing that they would delight and charm in a forthcoming display.

Just outside is a memorial plaque and tree to Red pilot, F/L Matt 'Jarvo' Jarvis, who died of cancer in 2005, aged just 31.

Before entry to the hangar, I had spotted a car in Red 8's parking place - but if he was there he certainly kept a low profile. However, I left my

mobile number just in case!

Besides 49 Squadron RAF Scampton is inextricably connected to 617 Squadron - The Dambusters - and it was sobering to muse that many brave young men spent their last days here.

The grave of Guy Gibson's dog Nigger was a poignant part of our tour and it was one more strand in the tapestry of life at RAF Scampton.

For some, the walk had been a little strenuous though without demur, and we were rewarded with some R&R in the Museum. We were served refreshments by Tom's wife who made us very welcome.

It must be pointed out that while Tom was our official guide, Eric Clarke, who flew his tour from here, was also in attendance to enhance history and embroider anecdotes. I was personally given a detailed account of fast track exits from his niche position in a Lancaster, using the large model on display in the Museum.



We were able to browse the rooms at leisure, each packed with history and I left happy and content with a big bag of predictable purchases from the gift shop and a Red Arrows key ring in my hand.

## **VISITS TO EAST KIRKBY AND THE BBMF, CONINGSBY**

**By Ted Cachart**



My driver, Rolf Wegmann, his wife Sue and I set off for East Kirkby, after a comfortable breakfast, followed by Associate Member John Green and his wife Hilary. We arrived just as the 11.30 taxi run ended with Just Jane pulling to a halt as we walked to the entrance gate. I left them all to their own devices as I wandered around the hangar, bookshop and then enjoyed a quiet coffee.

John had booked himself a visit inside the Lancaster which was to take place after the next taxi run scheduled for 2.30pm. Rolf, Sue and I, after chatting to Fred and Louise, departed for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at Coningsby, and on arrival, we telephoned through to the adjutant, F/Lt Jack Hawkins, having confirmed these arrangements the previous night when he and his wife Marion were Honored Guests at our banquet.



With another veteran (not a 49er but who held the record for the highest number of Berlin Ops by an individual) and four or five men from an Air Refueling Unit (well I think that was where they were from!) we were led through to the main hangar by Jack, bypassing the standard ‘Tour’ with volunteer guides.

Jack gave us chapter and verse of each of the

Spitfires, a Hurricane and another that I forget what it was, and then the Lancaster, all of us were allowed inside, the other veteran went up into the cockpit area and I took ‘my seat’ by the main spar. This was a true time warp visit as my area appeared to be exactly as it was in 1943, even with ‘Fishpond’, the radar scanner that showed any aircraft below you. I ignored the pair of binoculars that were sitting on top of the screen !!!

Had you seen my exit over the main spar you would have thought I was acting the fool, I went over backwards ending up sitting on the floor with both feet stuck on top of the spar. I managed to ease myself out without damage (needing a haircut in the early days saved many a gash on the scalp).

A most enjoyable visit with lots of happy memories .



*In issues 17 and 18 of The 4T9er we read of Richard Bartlett-May's quest to discover the circumstances of his father's death in Kenya. Richard now closes the final chapter.*

## **A SON'S PILGRIMAGE**

**By Richard Bartlett-May**

### **Part 3**

It had been 18 months since I first made contact with the 49 Squadron Association. Alan Parr along with Stuart and Pat Keay kept saying I should attend the annual reunion at Petwood. Living 6000 miles away in California and having other family commitments for my precious vacation time meant I needed to carefully coordinate a trip back to Blighty that could incorporate visiting family around the same time as the reunion.

Since my return from Kenya in August of 2009 Arthur Williamson had provided me with the black and white photos of the damaged rondavels and the crash site from Richard Matthews in Australia. But from there the trail had gone cold. I was seriously beginning to think that I had found all the information there was left to find some 55 years later. I always hoped that somewhere there was someone still alive who had been at Githunguri that day and could give me an eyewitness account. After speaking via phone with Alan and Stuart, it appeared that all the crew members from 49 Squadron visiting Githunguri that day had, unfortunately, passed on several years ago. The article that appeared about my story in "Old Africa" magazine in October of 2009 had spawned a few e-mails from around the world but no additional information.

I had, however, flown to Dallas, Texas just before heading to Petwood and met with Ruth and Hanna Kuria. Both sisters I discovered had emigrated to the USA from Kenya. It was their father Paul who had helped carry my father from the burning wreckage. Neither sister was born at the time of the crash but they relayed the story as they had heard it told numerous times. One new piece of information that I heard from them was that there was a very large dog onboard SX984 and that dog survived the crash. They went on to say that the dog was running around after the accident chased by several Europeans from the Police Station trying to catch it. I was naturally very dubious to the credibility of this story and politely dismissed it. I did enquire with Stuart if perchance the squadron had a dog and was informed that it did not.

The other more disturbing piece of information was that my father had given a wedding ring to Paul Kuria who in turn had apparently turned it over to the officers at the Githunguri Police Station. The daughters wanted to know if my mother received the ring. I searched the list of my father's personal effects sent to my mother by the RAF but there is no ring listed. I only hope that if the story

is correct, that this ring was buried with my father.

I had booked my trip back to the UK in late May 2010 and was looking forward to meeting everyone at Petwood. I had always hoped that one day I would meet some squadron members who had served along side my father in Kenya. I was hoping that I might glean a little more information about my father. I particularly looked forward to meeting 49er John Galloway who lived close by my parents and me at the caravan site in Ramsey. I left San Diego on the 27th of May 2010 and flew to Detroit, Michigan where I was to catch my connecting flight to London Heathrow. While waiting in the departure lounge at Detroit airport I received an e-mail with no subject line from an Ian Fox. I had no idea who Ian Fox was and opened the e-mail, even though my first instinct was to delete it as unsolicited junk mail. I sat in stunned silence and read and re-read the brief missive.

“Dear Richard,

I have just read the article "RAF Bomber Crashes at Githunguri" by Bryan Harris in Old Africa magazine Oct/Nov 2009.

I was an Inspector in the Kenya Police 1953-1956 and I was visiting Githunguri Police Station the weekend when this horrific crash happened. I witnessed the accident from where I was standing a few feet from the Officers Mess (a mud and wattle thatched rondavel with a stone chimney). On its third run the tail fin of the aircraft struck the stone chimney.

I was involved, with others, in searching for survivors at the crash site and assisted in loading your father on a stretcher onto the back of a police Land Rover. I recall that he had ginger hair and was still conscious, but suffering from severe burns.

If you wish I will be happy to write a more detailed account of the events that day.

I live in the village of Leigh, Kent, UK.

Regards,

Ian S. Fox.”

I could hardly contain myself and immediately called my wife in San Diego. I then replied to Ian and informed him that I was minutes away from boarding a flight to London Heathrow and would contact him when I got to the UK.

I was both shocked and also elated, just as I thought the trail had gone completely cold, here was an e-mail from the man who I hoped was out there somewhere. I was shocked as the RAF informed my mother that my father died without regaining consciousness. The image of him being conscious and cognizant of the event, while suffering such dreadful injuries was rather distressing. This information, however, also backed up what the old lady in Kenya had said also gave credence to my father handing his wedding ring over. After arriving in the UK, I called Ian and arranged to drive down to Kent the

following week. It was a little hard to grasp that I was about to meet a man who was one of the last to see my father alive. Ian of course never met my father until the crash and had no idea that the dying man he helped had a wife and young baby back in the UK. Like when I visited my father's grave, I had no idea what my reactions would be upon meeting Ian and was somewhat anxious.

Leigh is a most picturesque little village in Kent. I quickly located the house and with some trepidation knocked on the front door. Ian opened the door and said, "You must be Richard!" We greeted each other rather awkwardly, not really knowing what to say. Both Ian and I became somewhat emotional, Ian's voice broke as he spoke and my emotions overwhelmed me and I started to cry.



It was a very poignant meeting. Ian still found it difficult to speak about the event even 55 years later.

His wife later informed me that Ian, although happy to help me learn as much as I could, said that reliving that day was very painful for him. This was evident as Ian had written down his recollections and requested that I read it rather than him verbally relaying it to me.

#### “RAF Bomber Crash at Githunguri.

In 1955 I was an Inspector of Police in Kenya, aged 21, in charge of a remote Police Post within the Githunguri Division.

On Saturday February 19th 1955, I was invited to lunch at the Officers Mess at Githunguri Police Station together with F/Sgt. Tommy Thomas and his crew from Eastleigh RAF Base. Another guest I recall was a Harvard Pilot, F/Sgt Jim Moody (who I understood to be in the RRAF - Royal Rhodesian Air Force).

Lunch was fresh Lobster salad - a rare and unheard of meal in Kikuyuland! We had Sgt. Jim Moody to thank for this as on the previous day he had flown his Harvard to Mombasa and purchased several live Lobsters which he brought back to Eastleigh in a bucket of sea water between his legs. The Police Mess cook had never seen a Lobster before and had to be guided on its preparation!

After lunch some of us started playing Canasta. This was later disrupted by the sound of 4 or 5 Lincoln Bombers flying overhead en-route to a mission in the Aberdare Forest. They revved their engines as they flew over. Some time later, about 3.30 pm, the aircraft returned one by one at low altitude, again revving their engines in salute.

The last aircraft was SX984 which made a low level pass over the station. We

all went outside and some of us, including myself, climbed up onto an elevated defence point adjacent to the Mess. This was a timber platform with sandbags alongside the perimeter barbed wire fence. The Lincoln had now turned and made a second "beat-up" run. This time the Pilot, who the RAF personnel said was F/O. Hunt, must have seen where we were gathered and he banked sharply to port, levelled off and flew directly towards us.

At the start of this (third) last fatal run the aircraft had to increase altitude slightly to clear some wattle trees and it then reduced altitude slightly - but too much. We all had to throw ourselves flat on the platform. I felt sure that if any of us had remained standing we could have been hit by one of the props. Just seconds before reaching the fence the Pilot applied full throttle in an attempt to clear the rondavels behind us. The noise was deafening.

The aircraft was banking to the right and I saw the starboard tail fin clip the stone chimney of the Mess. The Lincoln was gaining altitude but shedding bits of body as it rose. It levelled off for a few seconds and then went into a nose dive into the ground with a huge explosion.

We immediately went to the site of the crash and we split up to search around the inferno for any possible survivors. At the time I could not believe that anyone could have survived. There were occasional explosions and all the time tracer shells were firing off in all directions. After encircling the site we all ended up badly shaken, out of breath and squatted behind a bank on the roadside. Suddenly there was a shout and the Sgt. Major from the Police Station and others arrived carrying the Rear Gunner who had been found some distance from the crash. His flying suit had been on fire and he had severe burns to his entire body. The rescuers had presumably doused his burning clothing by rolling him over and I was told that the Sgt. Major had cut off his flying suit.

The other RAF personnel referred to the casualty as "Ginger", who I now know to be Sergeant Stanley Bartlett. A stretcher was brought from the Station and he was placed on this and then across the back of a short wheelbase Police Land Rover. He was still conscious. A radio message was sent to Kiambu Divisional Headquarters requesting the urgent dispatch of an Ambulance and the Land Rover set off to meet the Ambulance.

These are my recollections of that awful day 55 years ago. I remember feeling very angry at the recklessness and stupidity of the Pilot and sadness for all those who had died as a result.

Ian Fox. 30th May 2010."

Ian went on to explain that the returning aircraft were passing about half a mile away from the police station as they headed back to Eastleigh. SX984 being the last aircraft broke away from this loose formation and headed directly towards the Githunguri Police Station.

Ian, his wife Chris, and I spent the day together and, I am pleased to say, have

corresponded many times since. Another strange coincidence came to light later which was that Bryan Harris' (who published my story in "Old Africa") whose wife's parents had lived next door to Ian's family in Kenya during the 1950's and 60's.

After leaving Tunbridge, I headed north towards Cambridge as I had arranged to have dinner with Arthur Williamson. Arthur was an absolute delight and although he couldn't give me any eye witness information, (he was up country chasing the Mau Mau that day), was very helpful in detailing the Mau Mau offensive on the ground and the daily life at Githunguri Police Station.

During the course of the evening I told Arthur that I had been able to get very little information directly from the RAF or its Historical Branch regarding the accident. I told him how I had tried for many years, but had never been able to get a copy of the official accident report. The RAF claimed it had probably been lost after the squadron disbanded. I had always been told that the cause was unauthorized low flying and wilful disobedience of orders by Alan Hunt but didn't have anything official that recorded that or detailed the event. "You don't have a copy of the accident report"



said Arthur...."Well I do! It might take me a couple of weeks to find it, but I definitely have it." "You do." I said incredulously! I was once again speechless. In less than a week after hearing from Ian yet another piece of information I thought I would never get my hands on was about to be in my possession. Because of the damage caused by SX984 to police property and the surrounding dwellings, an official copy of the initial report on Air Ministry form AM1180 was requested and given by the RAF to the Officer in Charge at Githunguri, who was of course Arthur Williamson. [See following page. ED.]

He then went on to inform me that while stationed at Githunguri he had a large Alsatian dog. When the aircraft crashed and everyone ran from the police station to the crash site, Arthur's dog got out via the open gate and was running around the town for hours before they could catch him! Once again another little piece of the puzzle which I thought had no relevance made sense. The large dog the Kenyans thought came from the aircraft was Arthur's!

I journeyed from Cambridge to Woodhall Spa, taking the back roads through the fens versus the motorways. I grew up in the fens around RAF Upwood and now, driving through fenland towns whose names I had only seen while researching my family history, I was very introspective. Many of the old buildings and churches standing today were there when my Great Great



all the history surrounding the building was very nostalgic for me. I felt that I should be driving an old open top two-seater sports car with a black Labrador by my side. The hotel lobby and bar was packed full of people enjoying the ambiance of Petwood. Several 4T9ers soon became evident by their squadron badges etc. I was hesitant to introduce myself as everyone was so engaged with each other. I decided to walk outside and snap some photos. As I did Stuart and Pat drove up to the hotel lobby and it was smiles and hugs all around. It was wonderful to see them both and in short order Pat had introduced me to all the 4T9ers present. I was quickly welcomed by everyone and made to feel quite at home.

The next morning we left the hotel for the church at Fiskerton. Terry Atkinson kindly gave me a squadron badge to wear on my blazer. I was truly honoured and said to him at the time, "You have no idea how much this means to me." That statement is as true today as it was then. I wear that badge with a great deal of pride and it has been commented on while visiting the House and Senate in Washington DC on several occasions.

I don't consider myself a religious person but felt enveloped by a warm spiritual feeling as I walked for the first time inside St Clements Church at Fiskerton. It has been referred to as the squadron's spiritual home and I can see why. After the church service, we took a short drive to lay a wreath at the memorial on what now remains of the old Fiskerton airfield. As I got out of the car I stood pensively looking down at what remained of the old runway. I could inwardly, even 60 years later, feel the dull ache of intense nervousness imagining the anticipation of what was to come, as with engines roaring, those brave young men disappeared into the night skies of WW2. That small section of remaining wind-swept runway truly felt like being on hallowed ground.

I had brought along with me the soil I had taken from the grave site in Nairobi and placed it at the bottom of the monument on the edge of the airfield. Reverend Peter Collins kindly said a prayer and performed a blessing for my father and the crew of SX984. I felt at peace that I had in some small way connected that distant 49 Squadron grave site in Kenya with the 49 Squadron memorial at RAF Fiskerton.

I feel indebted to all those who selflessly continue to volunteer for the 49 Squadron Association. Without these people and their dedication, I would never have been able to accomplish what I have in regards to my father's memory and those of SX984. My three short days spent with the 49' Association at the reunion are days I will never forget. The friendship and camaraderie, along with the reverence shown to those who served and are with us no more, are exemplary. The kindness, generosity and respect shown by the village people at Fiskerton decades after the squadron left the area was quite humbling. I was truly blessed to be among such people.

## READER'S LETTERS

*Non member, Mark Bailey, e-mailed to tell us that he intended to commemorate the crew of 49 Squadron Hampden X3054 at their memorial on Dartmoor. A local resident, he agreed to lay a wreath on behalf of the Association and we are most grateful to him for his act of remembrance.*



Photo; Courtesy Mark Bailey

“...It was a privilege to have laid the wreath, unfortunately Hugh Everitt was unable to do so as he had contracted a chill on the golf course the previous week.

**“AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN, 70 YEARS ON, THEY WERE REMEMBERED**

“At sunset on a perfectly still Dartmoor evening on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March, local residents Mark and Jane Bailey laid an Association wreath at the foot of the crash site memorial stone that stands 2¾ miles north of Widecombe-in-the-Moor, on Hamel Down. 70 years beforehand to the hour, six of the Squadron’s Hampden bombers had lifted from RAF Scampton and set course for the German naval base at

Lorient, in occupied France. On return, Hampden X3054, experiencing problems with a radio that was unable to receive, struck Hamel Down at about 1400 feet and caught fire. Sgts Brames, Ellis and Lyon appear to have died on impact but P.O. Wilson, the pilot, survived until the following day, presumably because he would have been strapped in. He and Sgt Ellis, the second pilot, lie next to one another in Exeter’s Higher Cemetery; the two air gunners are buried in their home towns. 21<sup>st</sup> March 1941 had been a night of 10/10 cloud at 2000 feet and it was concluded that P.O. Wilson had probably intended to break cloud over the sea before crossing the coast, but was further north than he thought and hit high ground instead. A nephew of Sgt Lyons and a great nephew of P.O. Wilson were located in the months prior to the anniversary but unfortunately neither were able to attend the wreath laying.”



Photo: Courtesy John Ward

***Our Hon. President, John Ward, e-mailed the following;***

“Just wanted to let you know Di and I rode in the Ride of Respect through Wootton Bassett yesterday with 10,000 other bikers. We hope to raise £150,000 for 'Afghan Heroes', a charity set up by seven mothers who all lost their sons on the same tour.

“Photo is taken outside the motel just before going down to Hullavington Airfield to form up. A fantastic day with a fantastic crowd lining the route and thousands in Wootton itself...Union Jacks everywhere....brought a lump to your throat...’PROUD TO BE BRITISH’ was heard hundreds of times.....and 'THANK YOU WOOTTON BASSETT’ thousands of times.”

***Secretary of The Megaton Club and 4T9er, Fred Vening, e-mailed;***

“It is with regret that I have to report the death of Peter Woolcock, a bomb aimer of 49 Squadron, who served on the Valiant fleet during the Operation "Grapple" series, 1956 to 1959. [Peter was not a Member of 49 SA. ED.]

“Together with Operation ‘Buffalo’ (Maralinga, Australia 1956), eight atomic and hydrogen weapons were dropped by 49 Squadron Valiants. Peter Woolcock was the bomb aimer on the seventh of these trials, when he flew in the late Bill Bailey's crew to drop a nuclear weapon, listed as ‘Flag Pole 1’ on the 2nd of September 1957.

“The unfortunate distinction of this trial from Peter's point of view, was that it employed the ‘blind method’, being radar controlled.

Ken Hubbard, the squadron commander at the time, wrote a book - "Dropping Britain's First H-Bomb", which sets out the two drop methods, and I quote:

***"The Visual Method This method used the T.4 bombsight where the graticule must be brought into coincidence with the target indicator on a line of 164degreesT, the weapon release being subsequently delayed by an appropriate number of seconds to effect the desired burst condition over ground zero. The***

*bomb line on 164 degreesT was marked by a northern marker and a southern marker as shown in the diagram, the Valiant being positioned on this line navigationally by the aid of the Decca system. Once the northern marker became discernible to the bomb aimer, the aircraft commenced its visual run, the bomb aimer then being required to maintain the graticule on the bomb line at the same time as the aircraft's heading was calculated to make good a track of 164degreesT.*

*"This technique required the aircraft to be moved laterally in space so that the graticule line of sight was maintained on the line markers, with the correct final heading being maintained on the G.IV.B compass. To achieve this, the pilot flew to a constant compass heading to an accuracy of 0.5degrees."*

In other words, the bomb aimer was in charge!!

***"The Blind Method** The Blind Method with the Mk. 7 gunlaying radar table required the Valiant to position itself on a 164degreesT bomb line at the intercept point, some 50nm from ground zero. At approximately 4.5 minutes from instant of release, the aircraft was picked up by the Mk. 7 radar and its position relative to the bomblines fed into the Instrument Landing System (ILS) which was set on a map scale. Times from instant of release were called by the Mk. 7 ground control, and at 2.5 minutes the localiser switched to expanded scale. For the remainder of the run down the bomb line to instant of release, the captain was required to maintain the ILS needles central whilst ensuring that with the elimination of drift, the aircraft's heading was maintained to achieve a track of 164degreesT. Timing was called from the Mk. 7 controller in accordance with the bombing procedure check list being activated by the Valiant crew, followed by a countdown from minus 10 seconds to enable the bomb aimer to release the weapon at zero "*

"In other words, the ground controller was in charge of release, the bomb aimer reduced to a "button pusher". No wonder Peter was not too pleased.

"The next drop in the Grapple series, destined for later in September 1957 and which turned out to be the last, was also designated to be by the Blind Method but the radar failed and, even though the drop aircraft was already airborne, it was all changed back to "visual", to the delight of Tiff O'Connor and his crew, particularly the bomb aimer, John Muston.[4T9er. ED.]

"Bill Bailey and his crew received one advantage from their trial. The accuracy of the drop was down to 95 yards (from 45,000 feet) whereas the overall accuracy of the Megaton trials averaged at 245 yards. This may seem a lot but when testing weapons in excess of 1 Megaton, a few yards here or there is of little consequence.

"I apologise for the technical content of this report but I am sure those familiar with the equipment and of "pushing the button" will follow it. Peter Woolcock will be remembered by name at future Megaton Club reunions."

***Chris Bearde, daughter and guest of her mother, Associate Member Elsie Holwill, e-mailed after attending their first reunion;***

“...We very much enjoyed taking part in the reunion and although Mum’s expectations of meeting people who remembered her brother were not practical, I think they were replaced by a satisfaction of belonging to something connected with him and visiting places he had been.

“For me, personally, it was very special to meet other members and share their stories too. We met Pam Sullivan and Donna Jardine, also on their first visit, and have exchanged contact details as they live very close to us. We spoke to Dod [*John Dodkins ED.*] who was probably the only person who was at Fiskerton in 1944, he filled in a few details for us. He did recognise a couple of the crew photographs but it seems they were in different groups on opposite sides of the airfield and therefore hardly met.

“Eric [*Clarke ED.*] was a joy to meet and talk to and he loved the Scampton visit and we also enjoyed having breakfast with him a couple of days.

“We seemed to end up with Dom [*Howard ED.*] on several occasions on trips or at table and he has kindly e-mailed me the link to the photobucket as well as general information. I started to read Ted’s book [*Ted the Lad ED.*] and found he grew up in the same area as I did and we attended the same secondary school (not at the same time of course).

“Overall ‘the crew’ did a great job in your absence and Malcolm was very welcoming to us and produced a very helpful presentation on screen on the first night of ‘who’s who’ which helped us feel a bit more involved.

“Will we come again? Well I certainly hope so, a lot depends on Mum’s health but I think that Dennis and I will certainly return...”

***Vicar of Fiskerton, Rev. Penny Green wrote;***

“...I am writing to thank you and the Squadron Association for the wonderful occasion held at Fiskerton in June. As my first taste of the occasion I found it wonderfully uplifting to meet so many wonderful people who are committed to the Association and to the memory of the many who served, and in some cases gave their lives in combat. Our connection with the Association and the Squadron is one which we are duly proud and look forward to fostering the relationship in the years to come.”

*[We also cherish our close relationship with the good people of Fiskerton. ED.]*

***And from Mary Gibson, Secretary of Fiskerton PCC we received;***

“I have been asked by the Treasurer of Fiskerton PCC to write and express our thanks to you and 49 Squadron Association for the very generous cheque of £100. We are always very pleased to see you and your members. The Service in church in June is looked forward to by all who have a link with the RAF and Fiskerton.”

*On February 13th I received a phone call from Nora Crabbe suggesting that I listen to a discussion on Dresden on BBC I-player. This was broadcast on The Jeremy Vine Show. Malcolm Brooke also listened and later wrote;*

“I recently read A.C. Grayling’s book.....a very academic text from a respected philosopher.

“He emphasised that he was writing with the wisdom of hindsight and he also acknowledged the commitment and bravery of Bomber Command aircrew and most sincerely wished that nothing he wrote would take anything away from the sacrifices that were made.

“With that in mind it is a very readable book that takes the points for and against one by one and then puts forwards his conclusions.

“I think it’s important to read ‘across the authors’ and Frederick Taylor’s book on Dresden is a worthy read.

“This subject is like many discussions.....I hear one argument and tend towards that point of view. I then listen to a counter argument and lean that way.....at the end I’m no further forward but at least I ‘understand’ the opposing arguments.

“Maybe it was Frederick Taylor who said that Dresden was a ‘terrible event carried out by brave people’ that just went ‘horribly right’.

“I thought John Nichol did a pretty fair job for the ‘defence’.

“A difficult subject...”

## **CAN YOU HELP?**

*New ‘Friend’ Pieter de Vries asks;*

“I hope you can help me.

“I have become more and more intrigued by Stanley Hawes who perished on the return of the Wesseling raid, June 22nd 1944 and whose body washed up on July 12th 1944 at ‘Beachpost 96’ on the beach near Wassenaar, slightly north of Scheveningen in Holland.

“Stanley was taken and buried at Westduin Cemetery, The Hague. (Kijkduin) He was a radio telegraphist and air gunner, his last flight was with Lancaster ND683.

“I cannot clearly explain why this interest, what I can tell you however is that I was born in December 1952 in Delft, near The Hague, Holland, and spend many happy days during my childhood on the beaches near Scheveningen, Wassenaar and Kijkduin.

“However, there is a specific area on those beaches, when getting close, I always feel extremely ill at ease, to the point of nauseous, this started from a very young age and it is still there today.

“Early last year I found out that this location was near Strandpaal 96 and

wondered why, how, etc.

“With the wonder of today’s IT and search engines I started ‘digging’ and that is how I eventually found out the sad story of Stanley and all further details of 49 Squadron and your fantastic website.

“Strangely enough I have spent a long time of my youth close to the Westduin Cemetery as well.

“I have been living in the UK now for almost 32 years, the last 20 in Staffordshire.

“My late wife was British, as a child I always wanted to go to England, and when the chance was there I did and I stayed, I love this country.

“Last October I took my kids and partner to Fiskerton, drove around the perimeter, what's left of it, and felt extremely sad in a way.

“My question is the following:

“Are there any photographs of the crew of ND683 or of Stanley himself? Would anybody have some information about him, what was his job before he joined up, are there any known relatives etc etc? It is not that I have some ‘freakish’ interest in Stanley, it is just that, if possible, I would like to close this thing in my mind because it keeps bugging me, if that is the correct explanation.”



Photo; Dominic Howard

**On display at the Reunion was the fuselage of Dominic Howard’s superb 11 foot wingspan Lancaster model which it is hoped will be flying at a future reunion.**