

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
May 2012 Issue 25



Photo; Albert y Mara

This rather sombre memorial was placed and dedicated on April 18th at Harderwijk, Holland. It commemorates the 117 airmen who perished in the IJsselmeer, formerly the Zuider Zee, some of whom were never recovered.

IN MEMORIAM

**C. Kind L. J. Jones K. Tarrant C. E. Wright
B. G. Browning R. W. Petty R. S. Hogg C.G.M.**

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

NEW MEMBER

John Jack

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

**Eric Tarrant Jenny Wylde Mandy Browning
Louise Dexter Robert McEneaney**

NEW FRIEND

Robert Westerberg

NEW HONORARY FRIENDS

John Nichol Bill Day

GONE AWAY

Roy Lavis

EDITORIAL

Once again I start by thanking all of you who have written, phoned or e-mailed. Looking down my master membership list I see that there are a few phone numbers missing. As it is much easier for me to lift the phone to reply, I get all U.K. and many overseas calls free in my broadband package, I would appreciate all correspondents noting their telephone numbers on their letters etc. I am particularly grateful to those who have made donations of money or postage stamps.

We are holding our own financially, just, but the more observant of you may have noticed that the two most recent 'The 4T9er' magazines have been reduced to twenty-eight pages and in the case of printed copies there has been less colour in an attempt to minimise printing costs. E-mailed copies still carry the normal amount of colour. There are still quite a few recipients, sixty-four to be precise, who are on broadband but have still not offered to accept e-mailed copies.

This is a considerable drain on our resources, e-mailed copies cost us nothing but those sixty-four additional printed copies cost the association about £390 a year. You may be getting tired of me keep banging on about this, I am, but I will continue to do so for as long as the situation exists. U.K. second class postage costs increased from 36 pence to 50 pence on the 1st May. I managed to counter the immediate effect of this by bulk purchasing stamps before the increase came into effect but that has only delayed the inevitable. It is your Association's money that I am trying to safeguard. If you are reading a printed copy it will have cost around £1-10p to print and a minimum of 36 pence plus envelope to send by post, overseas considerably more... we have sent out two hundred printed copies of this issue! As in most things there are exceptions, those who are not on broadband or who have made donations, some very generous indeed, in order to cover the costs of their printed copies. To them I say "Thank you", and apologise otherwise, once again, I leave it to individual consciences.

As our reunion coincides with RAF Waddington Air Display, all things being equal, we should have our own mini air display over Petwood. At the time of writing we will be treated to passes by the BBMF Lancaster, Dakota and a Spitfire. An additional treat will be a flyover by the Red Arrows. We are, of course, most grateful to all concerned. Incidentally, bookings for the reunion were very slow coming in initially and I had reluctantly decided that this year's event would be the last. However, I am delighted to say that a late spurt means that, at the time of going to print, we expect 75 to attend the banquet. I have therefore booked Petwood Hotel for June 2nd onwards next year.

Sadly I must report the passing of six ex 49ers. Firstly Charles Kind on January 22nd who served with 49 Squadron from April 1941 until December 1943. A LAC Fit2E he worked on Hampdens, Manchesters and Lancasters. Lemuel Jones served with 49 Squadron from 1940-46 and Charles Wright who died on January 25th flew 32 ops in the mid-upper turret of F/O A. Sullings' crew from 27th May 1944 to 29th August. Bernard Browning died on August 18th last year. His tour as navigator in the crew of F/L K. A. Bromfield lasted from 6th October 1944 until the end of the war. Robert Petty DFC died on February 26th, one month before his 95th birthday. Bob was on his way to Berlin on December 2nd 1943 when the aircraft he was piloting was shot down by a Bf110. It was his twentieth operation. Coincidentally, our Chairman's skipper F/O Johnny Young flew his second dickie trip, to Hanover, with Bob on October 18th. Robert Hogg CGM died on April 19th. Robert joined the RAF as a boy entrant in September 1938. He then went to 12 Squadron at Bicester, after training as a wop/ag at Cranwell, when 17 years old. The squadron moved to France with the A.A.S.F. but Bob was too young for ops. On April 18th 1940 he reached 18 and began his operational career on Fairey Battles. As is well known this aircraft

suffered terrible losses and Bob and his crew returned to England during the Dunkirk evacuation. He was then posted to 144 Squadron flying Hampdens out of Hemswell. After completing his tour of 32 ops he served as an instructor at Cottessmore before being posted to 49 Squadron at Scampton. He flew 35 ops with 49' between May 2nd '42 and March 26th '43, the first five being on Manchesters, mainly with F/O M. A. Eyre. Following this tour he was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal and went on to fly 64 wartime trips on Dakotas with 62 Squadron based at Kinloss. Following this the crew were awarded a Green Endorsement. By the end of their service in March 1948 they had flown 285 trips. Robert was a very humble man. When he first joined the Association I knew that we had a Hogg in 49 who had been awarded the C.G.M. so I asked him if it was him. He replied, "Yes. End of story." Fortunately John Ward found him in a more open mood and Bob's letter is published on page 218 of the second edition of 'Beware of the Dog at War.' He was also very generous, regularly sending substantial donations to the Association. Robert Hogg was an exceptional man from a generation of exceptional men. We also remember Associate Member Keith Tarrant who was the cousin of Sgt. George Bicknell, rear gunner in the crew of F/Sgt. D. Stanton, lost on 23rd September 1943. A self styled Lancaster fanatic, in later life Keith was totally blind. I had a number of telephone conversations with him and found him to be an inspiration, rising totally above his terrible handicap.

I am always delighted to welcome old 49ers to the Association. This time it is former F/O John Jack who joins us. John flew all his 28 ops, including seven to 'The Big City', as bomb aimer in the crew of P/O J.A. Jones between 29th December 1943 and 22nd May 1944. Remarkably, all but four of his ops were in Lancaster ND473 EA-O. John tells me that he spent many hours playing snooker with the Sports Officer at Fiskerton, F/O Bill MacMenemy a former Glasgow Celtic 'A' Team footballer. John also has the dubious distinction of having once been put on a 'fizzer' by our very own W/C Jim Flint DFC. CGM.

Welcome also to new Associate Members Eric Tarrant, Jenny Wylde, Mandy Browning, Louise Dexter and Robert McEneaney. Eric is the brother of the late Keith Tarrant whose passing is recorded in the 'In Memoriam' section. Jenny is related to F/L Johnny Hill who was piloting Lancaster ME675, EA-B on the catastrophic raid on Wesseling, June 21/22nd 1944, when 49' lost six aircraft. Thirty-eight men were killed or missing including the new O.C. W/C Malcolm Crocker DFC and Bar and BBC correspondent Kent Stevenson. Mandy Browning, who was a 'Friend', is the daughter of the late Bernard Browning. She automatically becomes an Associate on the death of her father. Louise Dexter is the niece of Sgt. R. Hoole who was flight engineer in the crew of P/O T. W. Waugh. All members of the crew of ND474 were killed on 15/16th March

1944 when their Lancaster was lost on a raid on Stuttgart, their first operation. Coincidentally, within a few weeks of Louise joining we were approached by Robert McEneaney whose uncle was F/Sgt T. C. McEneaney, navigator in the same crew.

New 'Friend' Robert Westerberg, was a family friend of the late John Beck (See The 4T9er issue 22.) Robert's reason for applying stated, "I would like to continue membership of the Association he was so proud of." Robert is a RAFVR(T) Flt. Lt. and is most welcome.

Two Honorary Friends join us. I extend a warm welcome to former Tornado navigator, author and broadcaster, John Nichol. John first hit the headlines when he was shot down during the First Gulf War. He subsequently wrote of his experiences in his first book 'Tornado Down'. This was followed by Bomber Command related books 'Tailend Charlies', 'The Last Escape' and 'Home Run'. He is currently working on a book about the infamous Nuremburg raid of March 30/31st 1944. John's appeal for anyone with memories of that night appeared in the February issue of The 4T9er. Welcome also to Bill Day who joined the RAF in 1943 and trained as a wop/ag. Due to a hold up in postings following OTU Bill volunteered for Coastal Command but this also stalled and he finally served in the Middle and Far East in communications flights from the U.K.. Bill was proposed by 49er Jack Shearing in recognition of the part he played in the rededication of the 49 Squadron memorial on Worthing pier. See page 16.

It never ceases to amaze me how often, when advising of the passing of a wartime veteran, that relatives say, "He always said that his RAF days were the best time of his life." Either this is true or just maybe a case of an elderly man looking at the past through rose tinted spectacles. Either way, 49 Squadron always comes out with high praise.

Congratulations to fund-raising director Jim Dooley, Bomber Command Association secretary Doug Radcliffe and BCA registrar Vivienne Hammer on being presented with a Lifetime Achievement prize at the Soldiering On Awards in March. As we go to press there is just over a month to go to the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial. A story in the Daily Express tells that wreckage from a crashed Halifax, LW682, OW-M, has been melted down and recast into aluminium roof tiles for the memorial. Nice touch!

Britain's fastest locomotive, electric Class 91 number 91110, is to be named 'Battle of Britain Memorial Flight' at a ceremony at The National Railway Museum, York, on June 2nd. Following the naming ceremony, which is to be conducted by TV presenter Carol Vorderman, there will be an 'aerial display' by the BBMF Lancaster plus a Spitfire and Hurricane. The BBMF DC3 Dakota will also be in attendance. Fittingly, No. 91110 set up the still current record

of 162mph on Lincolnshire's Stoke Bank in 1989. Following the ceremony it will be placed nose-to-nose with A4 No. 4468 'Mallard', the world's fastest steam locomotive which achieved 126mph (203 km/h), also on Stoke Bank, on July 3rd 1938. Remarkably the world pedal bicycle speed record stands at 167 m.p.h. (268 km/h) and that is not a typing error!

Our Webmaster, Malcolm Brooke, gave a talk on 49 Squadron to Pocklington Probus Club in January. They kindly made a donation of £25 to the Association for which we are most grateful.

As this issue is being completed for press I read that the final stone has been laid in the Bomber Command Memorial by Mr John Caudwell whose donation to the fund amounted to two million pounds. It is reported that Robin Gibb, who has done so much to publicise the appeal fund, has come out of a coma and still hopes to be present at the unveiling. We wish him well in his fight against liver and colon cancer. The BBMF Lancaster is due to overfly the ceremony and drop a million poppies, biodegradable of course. There have been appeals to sponsor these at £5 a handful. The Association has sponsored two lots as have some of our members so when the poppies fall, some of them are ours. Amongst the 4T9ers attending the unveiling it is hoped that our two oldest members Eric Clarke MID (99 on April 22nd) and Jim Flint DFC. CGM (99 on May 24th) will be in attendance. By the way, Eric has received so many birthday greetings that he is unable to reply to them all personally. He has asked me to express his appreciation here to all who wished him well...Thank You!

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

'Til the next time.

MY EARLY DAYS IN THE RAF

By Eric Read

Part 2 (Conclusion)

The year started with all the usual; Drill, Morse Code, Aircraft Recognition, Guard Duty and games. We are kept at it all the time by Sgt. Midgely and other instructors. The disassembly and assembly of a Browning .303 was quite interesting especially when it had to be done blindfold. I remember one part, 'the rear seer spring retainer keeper and post' but what it was Heaven only knows.

Of course there was Navigation and Triangle of Velocities plus the Dalton

Computer. Sometimes we went on the Castle Mound to do clay pigeon shooting. Came the day when we had our Examinations and as far as I can remember everybody passed. I did very well on Aircraft Recognition and Morse together with Navigation. We were all now Leading Aircraftsmen but were told that we could not wear the props. Some hopes. They were sewn on to our best blue straight away.

Other recollections of Scarborough are Church Parades on a Sunday. Before marching off from outside the Grand one would hear, "Fall out the Roman Catholics and Jews." How we all wished on a cold, dank morning we came into that category.

I recall hitching to Guisborough to visit a relation of the Hitchcocks. When hitching back I was picked up by a taxi driver. I told him that I could not pay but he said that it was O.K. as he was returning from a long distance fare.

We could play golf on the links and I did have a go, but it was not for me. I met up with a few young ladies and got invited out to dinner on a few occasions. One worked in a shoe shop in the High Street. Her father was a Coastguard. He was drowned a few years later whilst trying to save somebody from the sea. I met her again in Great Yarmouth in 1946 when I was driving around on Recruiting. There was also another young lady who was a bus conductress.

In the entrance to the Grand was a very nice stairway with a red carpet which was strictly out of bounds to us. Fire watching was done from the rotundas on the roof. One couldn't see much because of the roof but we could see the Hull defences in action.

Before this time we lost a chap named Pepper. He reputedly suffered concussion when his head connected with a concrete post whilst running backwards on P.E. The general consensus was that he had had enough of I.T.W.

Then farewell to Scarborough and on to 6 Elementary Flying Training School at Sywell, Northamptonshire on 21st April 1943. More theory of flying and everybody wanting to get flying. Eventually the days came when all the budding Biggles were doing Circuits and Bumps. We could not get lost on the circuit because of the reservoir south of Sywell which had a long finger of water pointing to Sywell. The emergency landing field tended to be a little off putting as we had to do dead stick landings over a churchyard! One day I left my parachute on the edge of the takeoff area. It was found by a Cpl. S.P. from Costessey who didn't put me on a charge as we were both from Norwich.

It was at Sywell where we did static parachute jumps in a hangar. The parachute harness had a counterweight. It was strange just jumping into space, releasing the harness and rolling over.

It was here that Scarborough C.I.D. came to interview us all about a murder which had occurred whilst we were at the Grand but I never knew the result.

One interesting item was when I was on Sentry Duty. I was in the sentry box

on the far side of the aerodrome complete with .303 rifle and bayonet but no ammunition, not even a blank round and no means of communication with anybody. If a hulking great German paratrooper had come down near me, well, I knew the word 'Kamerad'. I was on the 2am to 4am stint when after a short time I fell asleep standing up. I did not wake up until 5.30am, my relief had not turned up at 4am. Naturally I complained most bitterly when the 6am relief arrived. All had overslept including the Guard Commander.

Came May 30th and my tonsillitis caught up with me. I was admitted to the R.A.F. Hospital, Henlow, to have my tonsils removed. I was discharged from there on June 14th and went to the Aircrew Convalescent Home at Old Warden Hall, home of the Shuttleworths. I suppose that I was there for about a fortnight with white shirt, red tie, and light blue jacket to wear. I do recall at Henlow and Old Warden, a diet of jelly and ice cream at first. Also 20 cigarettes a day were issued free to everybody but as I was not smoking I had quite a supply when I left. I felt a bit of a charlatan being there when all the rest were real aircrew.

From there it was off to Heaton Park, Manchester, where people were made ready to go to Canada or South Africa. It was here that I came across my old school friend Geoffrey Cockrell. We had dinghy training in a public baths nearby at Middleton. Seven of us, in gash flying clothing, having to get into the water and right an upturned dinghy, quite a job.

It was here at Heaton Park that I had my first disappointment. A surfeit of pilots meant that I was regraded to navigator/bomber/wireless. So much for getting high marks in exams. I expect that I would have ended up on Mosquitoes. Other bods were graded as navigators or bomb aimers. I accepted this grading without much protest. Then came the bombshell. I had to have a medical because of my operation.

It was found that I had acquired an eye defect. I assume that the indirect cause was my tonsils operation. Pleas for corrective goggles had no effect and I was regraded permanently unfit Aircrew 1, 2 and 3 Categories and was posted to R.A.F. Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey on July 17th.

My wings and with them my hopes had been well and truly clipped. However, in retrospect I would probably have been dead within the next two years had I gone on training.

At Eastchurch, (where my dad was in 1918), I was told, as with all others, that as a Volunteer I could leave the R.A.F. and no doubt get called into the Army). I chose to be an R.A.F. photographer.

However, Eric served with 49 Squadron as a Fitter General Gp. 1 at Fiskerton and Fulbeck eventually reaching the rank of Flight Lieutenant in the R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve before retiring in 1960. He died in 2009. Eric's house was named 'Cave Canem' which puzzled his postman no end.

LIFE ON LINCOLNS WITH 49 SQUADRON

Former Sgt. Steve Stevens wrote the following letter to the son of his pilot the late F/Lt 'Rick' Rickard.

I am delighted to provide you with the information you requested together with a few details about who did what and other snippets that you might find interesting.

Your Dad was the sole pilot on board in Lincoln aircraft. The pilot was always the crew captain regardless of his rank. He was responsible for the conduct of the flight and the safety of aeroplane and crew. All major decisions were down to him but a good captain always sought the advice of the specialist crew-member and they, being mostly well disciplined, would not mess him about; but there were exceptions! Rick was also a Squadron Flight Commander running the day to day flying programme with additional welfare and administration duties. His rank was flight lieutenant at the time which made him a pretty big wheel from the Squadron point of view.

Next is Flying Officer 'Freddy' Fausch (navigator radar operator) his main job was to operate the blind-bombing equipment and carry out all non visual bombing. Central to the system was the H2S plan position radar with its accuracy heavily dependant on the interpretation skills of the operator (the radar returns varied considerably depending on the over flown terrain and the direction of the aeroplane's approach) It was temperamental and prone to break-down and would keep the operator fully occupied; a much improved version was later the standard fit for the V Bombers. Fred was able to use the other bits of radar that we carried and was fully qualified in all navigation duties.

Sergeant Alan 'Bronco' North (flight engineer) assisted Rick with in-flight engine handling, fuel monitoring, flap selection etc etc; also responsible for turn-round servicing and refuelling when at unsupported airfields. Bronco was an ex- RAF apprentice and able to carry out quite complicated rectifications. He was serving on a four year flying appointment after which he would revert to his ground engineer's trade. The flying appointment expired whilst on his second or third detachment to Kenya; his application for permanent flying duties being rejected he was directed to complete the detachment with the Squadron. Unfortunately this didn't happen; he was killed with another crew in a badly executed low-level operation. (*See The 4T9er issues 17 and 18. ED.*)

Sergeant 'Jock' Todd (rear gunner) was in charge of the twin 0.5 machine

guns in the tail, a permanent fit in the aeroplane's standard configuration. The two front guns were installed for the Mau Mau campaign and operated only in elevation by the navigator plotter. Apart from keeping a look-out astern the gunner had little else to do.

Next in line is Flight Sergeant Fred Pitman (navigator plotter) he kept a manual chart plot using whatever navigation aids he could get including astro shots, to establish where the aeroplane was and to determine a heading to get us to where we wanted to be. It was very much a pencil and parallel rule job with much mental calculation involved, and became more complicated the further away from the UK we were. Fred could also operate the radars.

Finally myself, Sergeant (air signaller) handled all long range communications for the flight, obtaining radio position lines and fixes for the plotter, position reporting to air traffic controls etc etc. All this carried out using HF WT (Morse) transmissions; the radio receiver was quite good, favoured today by some radio hams; the transmitter however was underpowered rubbish. You could work like a beaver if radio conditions were bad or as in my case Morse was not your posh subject. The 'Siggy' was also supposed to know something about the aircraft electrical system.

Rick controlled the crew with a light touch and unlike several other officer captains never threw his weight about; consequently our flights were conducted in a relaxed manner. He had an impish sense of humour which was always just below the surface and there were some good laughs to be had; we had a good Nav team so in the final countdown we were always there or thereabouts. I was hospitalised soon after our return to the UK so saw virtually nothing of the crew from then on; Dad and Fred Fausch visited me in hospital, Bronco came to my wedding and that was that.

The trip to Kenya started out as a regular deployment to Shallufa, an airfield on the banks of the Suez Canal, to carry out live bombing practice for a few weeks; or so we thought. The departure from Wittering was delayed by about a day and we got away at 0650 on 1st November 1953; ten hours later we landed at Idris (an airfield about 10 miles inland from Tripoli). Off again at 0700 the following day we touched down at Shallufa five and a half hours later. Interesting to note that because of a fresh food embargo imposed by the Egyptians on all British Forces, we had slung in the bomb bay a cargo net full of cabbage which hadn't improved with the delay and heat. It was dripping when unloaded and the airframe smelled very rural for several days.

What the cooks did with the greens is not known but I don't suppose it was thrown away. Having been briefed about the Kenya situation, we attempted to depart for Khartoum in the early hours of 10th November with a full load of 1000 lb bombs but having reached a fair speed the starboard main wheel brake seized on and shot us off the runway into the surrounding dark desert. To make matters worse we were in a radio dead spot so were uncertain if the control tower knew of the problem and if the next aeroplane taking off would clear us. Fortunately they did, the desert was rock hard and the bombs were being carried 'safe' (but you never know with bombs!). We got away later at 0600 that morning reaching Khartoum in four and a half hours and arrived at RAF Eastleigh, Kenya the following day after a six and a half hours flight.

I cannot be certain of the date that the photo was taken; my best guess is 30 November. The civilian photographer accompanied us and was badly airsick for his pains; but he did get a series of good pictures and hoped to sell these to the UK press. Unfortunately there had been a heated debate at Westminster with the expressions 'carpet bombing' and 'indiscriminate bombing of defenceless natives' being bandied about, so a D notice was slapped on his efforts until the heat died down and as old news is no news after release the best he could get was a spread in the local Nairobi native Swahili press! We did not fly many bombing raids; Eastleigh did not have a stock of heavy bombs so until a supply could be delivered by ship via Mombassa we fetched them from Khormaksa, a large base on the Red Sea. It had its compensations because nearby Steamer Point was a duty free port well stocked with French perfume and other goodies which made us very popular with the white Kenyans as Christmas approached!

49 Squadron was relieved by 61 Squadron in January 1954 and on 9 January the crew returned Eastleigh-Khartoum-Shallufa-Idris-Wittering in 3 days, double staging through Khartoum to Shallufa; in total a flight time twenty six and three quarter hours. Of course we did much more; your Father loved low level flying and made the most of it when he got the chance, low level strafing was right up his street. We made our last Lincoln flight together on 25th February '54 and I didn't fly again until December that year.

Sorry if I have bored you with my drivel. I got my log book out and got carried away! By the way there is a Lincoln Bomber on display at RAF Cosford, well worth a visit if you like that sort of thing and happen to be anywhere near Shrewsbury; the kite is said to be haunted...

PILGIMAGE TO GRANGES-SUR-AUBE

By Chris Beare

On July 19th 2004 I travelled to France with my brother and my son and daughter to visit the war grave of my uncle in the village of Granges-sur- Aube in the Champagne-Ardenne region of North Eastern France.

Dennis William Blumfield was my mother's only brother and he was serving with 49 Squadron as a navigator with Australian skipper Flying Officer William Appleyard on a mission to attack the rail junction at Revigny, when their Lancaster crashed in a field on the night of 18/19 July 1944. They died along with the rest of the crew George Jameson (air bomber), Everett Matheson (air gunner, Royal Canadian Air Force), Geoffrey Perry (wireless operator/air gunner), Howard Turner (flight engineer) and Robert Viollet (air gunner) and they were all buried in the village churchyard.

My parents had visited the grave on a previous occasion but my mother's age now prevented her from accompanying us. We had chosen this date as it was exactly 60 years since the event and was also my brother's birthday (he is named Dennis after his uncle).



At the time of their deaths some of the crews members families corresponded with each other but this ceased with the passing of their parents generation. My own grandmother, Margaret Blumfield, had kept letters received at the time from the mayor of Granges sur Aube, expressing the support of the village and sharing information about the night of the crash.

These are copies of letters sent to my Grandmother & to the Viollet family;

*Translation of letter from the Mayor of Granges-sur-Aube, Marne, France.
To Margaret Blumfield – mother of Dennis Blumfield.*

Granges 20 November 1945

Dear Madame,

In replying to your letter of the 3rd November I have the honour to inform you that the plane in which your son was flying was in flames before its fall.

The disabled machine had lost many parts – tail, wing, engine and was out of control. Sergeant Viollet was found inside his turret some 250yds from where the machine fell; thus we were able to identify him. Another body was found

about 20 yards away badly charred and carried the inscription "Canada" on the shoulder of his flying jacket.

As for the other members of the crew, it was unfortunately impossible to identify them; they were too badly disfigured by the exploding bombs still in the plane. Their remains have been placed in a communal grave.

Such belongings as we were able to collect were handed to the military authorities (civil establishment).

I have just had a visit by the British Air Force Officers who came to do honour to and salute the grave and take a photograph of it, one of which will be sent to you. In addition they also collected all information concerning the fall of the machine.

The population here make it always their duty to care for the grave and to place flowers on it as well as possible; although they are far from you, they are not forgotten/abandoned.

I beg you to believe, Madame, in my assurance of our respectful sympathy.

Le Maire

(The Mayor)

Translation of letter sent to family of Sgt Viollet

*Department De La Marne
Arrondissement D'Epernay
Canton D'Anglure
Grange-Sur-Aube*

Grange 27 May 1945

Sir,

In answer to your letter of 19th May, I have the honour to give you the following information.

After the fall of the machine in which Sergeant Viollet had taken place, I went immediately to the place of the accident. I did belong to the Resistance and I wanted despite the danger of the unexploded bomb, to frustrate the Germans of all the documents and personal objects which the airman possessed.

Sergeant Viollet was the only man recognisable. He was still at his post at the guns. His hand was bandaged, having probably lost a finger. He also had a few wounds in his face and we found out at his burial that both of his legs were fractured. I was able to take his identity disc and also some money and a French map which he carried on him. The Germans then gave us the order to take away the corpses and bury them. Despite the occupation we gave him and his companions a moving service in which all the population took part. Your comrade was placed alone in a coffin of planks; his belongings were put in it with him.

Two other coffins placed near his contain the rest of the non-identified airmen.

You can feel reassured in what concerns the tomb; it is kept with care by the borough and all the population makes it a duty to flower it with respect.

I am unable for the moment to let you have a photograph of the tomb, films being unobtainable but I will do my best as soon as possible.

I add, to end, that the personal objects have been collected together by a Lieutenant Kenneth, Commandant of the Military Cemetery at Champigneul (Marne), this officer having come and taken all information relating to that crew.

I pray you to believe, Sir, the expression of my distinguished sentiments.
The Mayor.

The villagers had shown great care and compassion for the victims and their families and to this day, as we found on our visit, are diligent in their care for the graves in their churchyard.

My uncle's cousin, Flt Lt K. W. Cameron, had been able to visit the graves and the crash site a few years after the event and had sent photos and a detailed hand drawn map of the location of the crash site to my Grandmother.

In July 2004 we took with us to Grange sur Aube the copies of the mayor's letter and the hand drawn map as we travelled by train to Romilly-sur-Seine and then by taxi to the village. We were delighted to be greeted by the present mayor and, as word got around of our arrival, we were joined by several others. We were overwhelmed by the connection these villagers still felt with us and with the responsibility they took for the burials at the time and the care of the graves since. We were so glad that we had taken a friend with us who was French and able to interpret all the conversations. The mayor was most interested to read the letter from his predecessor in 1944.



We met a lovely gentleman who had been a boy in 1944 and remembered the plane coming down. We heard how he and the young boys of the village used to collect pieces of window and craft them into rings to give the little girls. He also spoke with tears in his eyes of the memories and the loss of life.

A message was sent to the lady who has tended the graves over the years and always makes sure that they have fresh flowers, and she arrived to meet us. We were so pleased to be able to meet her face to face and thank her personally. We had taken some small souvenir gifts from England and some photos, which were received with great delight.



Also present to meet us was a gentleman who was a great enthusiast on the history of WWII and had with him a copy of the book 'Massacre over the Marne' by Oliver Clutton-Brock [*'Honorary Friend'*. ED.]. He was full of information, as he had researched the event well. He showed us some small pieces of wreckage from the plane, which he had collected from the field where the plane had come down. We were full of questions about this and amazed that

he claimed to have only collected these pieces recently. We couldn't believe that they could still be present after all this time.

After taking photos in the churchyard we were invited to walk the short distance to the Mairie where we were served with local champagne and toasted the crew members and our new friends. After showing them our hand drawn map, we asked for directions to walk the mile or so to see the field for ourselves. Once again we were overwhelmed by their enthusiasm to drive us to the site themselves rather than explain the directions to it. We were driven just out of the village centre and down a long track to some fields. We stopped at the top of a field, which had a large stretch of sunflowers growing in it. This was where the plane had landed, and as is customary, the area had not been cultivated as it was also partly a burial site possibly still containing some of the remains of the crew who died there. Sunflowers grew there instead of crops and it was a most stunning and moving sight to see. We were invited to wander up and down the rows of sunflowers and words can not express the emotion we felt as we did this. On close inspection there were occasional small pieces of plane wreckage on the ground and as we all wandered along we each collected a few pieces.

I remember how surreal it was and I kept saying "It's 60 years today that my uncle died here and I can't believe that although I never met him, I am standing here and collecting pieces of wreckage from his plane."

More photos were taken and our new friends insisted on driving us all back to Reims for our return train.

A truly memorable visit in so many ways.

Having since researched the squadron a little, my mother has now become an Associate Member of 49 Squadron Association and is hoping that it will not be too late to meet someone who still remembers her brother.



THE WORTHING MEMORIAL

By Alan Parr with assistance from Jack Shearing and Bill Day

On Worthing pier there is a stainless steel plaque on which the 49 Squadron badge is in the upper left hand corner with the names of the crew immediately to the right. It reads;

Pilot-F/O E G Essenhigh, Flight Engineer-Sgt H Varey, Navigator-Sgt L B Bourne, Wireless Operator-Sgt F B Rees, Mid Upper Gunner-Sgt J W Moore, Bomb Aimer-F/O J A Thompson, Rear Gunner-F/S G F Callon.

On the 17 December 1944 at 1930hrs., 49 Squadron Lancaster, fully loaded with bombs and incendiaries, was losing height because of mechanical problems, unable to ditch the bombs for it would have blown the tail off, the crew looking for somewhere soft and level to land saw the beach-the tide was out.

It was pitch dark when the crew realised suddenly that they were over Worthing Town. Turning sharply seaward, and with insufficient height to make more than one attempt, landed on the beach, wheels up, hit a wartime beach defence and immediately exploded killing all the crew. Only one body was ever recovered, that of Sgt Callon.

The only casualties in Worthing were some smashed windows.

Remember these brave men - they gave their tomorrows for your todays.

Unveiled by the Mayor, Cllr. E. Mardell 2002

Mrs. Liz Edwards, a local resident, was walking on the pier one day with her grandchildren when one of them remarked that it was a pity that the plaque could not be read, it had deteriorated so badly from being exposed to the sea air. She determined to do something about it and spoke to local RAFA member Bill Day. Bill, a former wop/ag with Coastal Command, agreed and put in motion the manufacture and installation of a new plaque.

Thursday 12th April saw the pier's 150th anniversary celebrations during which a poignant ceremony took place at the memorial. Bill Day gave a short address outlining the happenings on that fateful day in December 1944. Former 49 Squadron wireless operator Jack Shearing, who flew 23 ops up to the end of the war and was serving with the squadron at the time of the incident, laid a wreath on behalf of the Association. Mayor Ann Barlow offered a prayer of remembrance and stressed that it is important never to forget the sacrifices made by the previous generations.

Coincidentally, former 49 Squadron flight engineer, the late John Beck, a

resident of Roedean, just a short distance down the coast, was a member of the crew that carried out the pre raid NFT, air test, on PB355 and he told the author that there was nothing wrong with the aircraft at that time, it climbed normally. Whilst nothing is known for certain, as all on board were killed, it seems that the aircraft would not climb to 5,000 feet, the lowest height at which a 4000lb bomb (cookie) could be dropped safely. One can only speculate on the terrible dilemma facing the crew. Too low to bale out or drop the bomb and the only alternative to crash land with a cookie, a notoriously unstable bomb, on board.

Right and below; Eileen Shearing, Jack Shearing, Mayor Ann Barlow and Bill Day

Photos; Via The Mayor's Office, Worthing

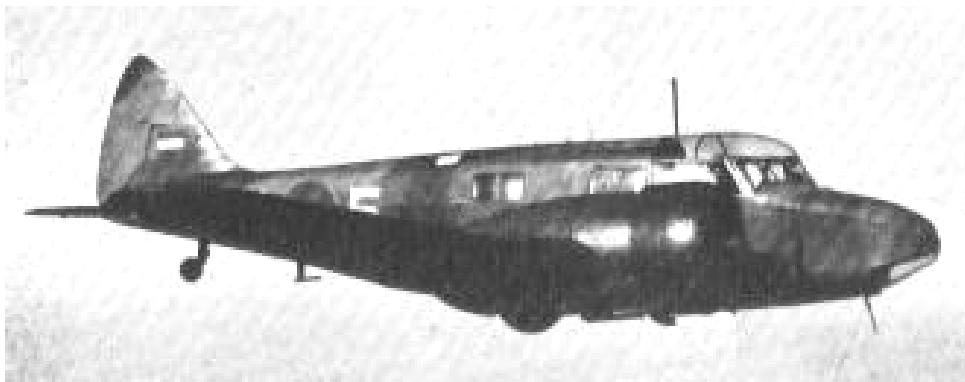


MEMORIES OF MY LIFE IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

By Roy Gould

Part 2

We found Brize Norton was quite a large aerodrome but nothing like the vast place I understand it is now. It was a grass field, for concrete runways had not been heard of then. It had large hangars and good brick buildings.



The aircraft were all 'Airspeed Oxfords'. These were a new product with a single wing, two engines, a closed cockpit with sophisticated instruments, space for the pupil pilot, instructor and two passengers, I think. They were all painted the same bright yellow as the Tiger Moths but otherwise there was no comparison. This was an aircraft, advanced for its time, designed to be able to teach pilots how to fly the heavier bombers then in use. It was made with and covered entirely in wood and I understand that Airspeed co-opted all the local furniture makers, of which there were many, to assist them by making parts for them to assemble. Such was the demand. It had many of the adjuncts of the heavier aircraft so that pilots could get used to them such as 'flaps and trims'. I must tell you about these, for I will refer to them later.

Flaps were (and still are on present aircraft) long pieces of the underside of each wing near the trailing edge extending for about half the length of the wing and some 2 feet wide. These flat pieces could be swung down with a switch in the cockpit and a dial indicated the angle to which they were lowered. They moved together, one under the back of each wing. They had two objects. Firstly, they were set at about 20° from the horizontal so as to give greater lift at slow speeds when taking off and landing, and then at the last moment before touching down their angle was increased to about 80° to help slow the aircraft down, save some braking and shorten the landing run.

Trimming tabs usually referred to as ‘trims’ were small parts on the elevators on the tail plane, which in themselves were moved up or down with the joy stick in the cockpit to make the aircraft climb or dive. The trims could also be moved to pivot up or down by a small knob in the cockpit to enable you to set the aircraft into precise level flight with hands off the joystick.

At Brize Norton we had to work hard for there was a great deal to assimilate. We learnt how essential it was to do a full pre-flight check on all the controls before attempting to take off, and another short one before landing. We did many take offs and landings, and I was flying solo quite quickly. There were cross-country flights, instrument flying in cloud, forced landing procedure and many other such exercises. And then there was the dreaded ‘Link Trainer’. This was a relatively small contraption containing a full instrument panel and controls in a cockpit with a solid hood which when shut made it pitch black inside. The whole thing was supported on an upstanding bracket on the floor that allowed the trainer to twist round and round and tip up or down. In this thing we practiced night flying by instruments only in the pitch black and, if you ‘stalled’ it by losing your airspeed, you went round and round just like in an uncontrolled spin! We did repeated practice on this contraption until it no longer presented its original fears.

We had already started night flying and I quickly went solo. Then followed cross-country flying by day and by night going from A to B, B to C, and back to A again. Nothing further untoward happened on this course. We were tested on all these newly learned skills and at the end I was passed as ‘Average’. However, perhaps because of this or the fact that I had initially “let women interfere with my work” I was not considered to be officer material and was granted my Sergeant’s stripes. We were told to go to the stores and collect them together with the coveted wings. No one lost any time in sewing on these adornments.

We were then told to pick up our railway warrants and proceed immediately to the School of Navigation at Cranage near Chester. This was because we were destined to fly Hampden bombers in 5 Group where the second pilot is also the navigator.



No. 2 School of Navigation at R.A.F. Cranage

I soon learnt that this really was back to school, in the classroom and in the air, being flown around in one of their Avro Ansons. These were old aircraft, the forerunner to the Oxford but slightly bigger to take 7 or 8 people plus the pilots.



It was a very stable aircraft that could almost fly itself and in these we were to practice the navigation techniques of the time. Remember there were no radio or radar navigation facilities. It had to be done entirely by 'Dead Reckoning'.

We soon learnt that if you had to go long distances you could not just point your aircraft in the right direction and go there using an ordinary map. Many other factors had to be taken into consideration.

We were introduced to a type of map we had not seen or heard of before – Mercators Projection maps. These are maps on white paper showing only the outline of England (or Europe according to size). There were a few large places and rivers marked on it and also, most importantly, lines of Latitude and Longitude forming 'squares' all over the map. It is difficult to explain but this was due to putting the spherical shape of the earth onto a flat map to enable the correct course to be found known as the Rhumb line.

So we learnt how, if we wanted to go from A to B, we first marked them on the maps and drew a pencil line between them – the Rhumb line. This was the basic start and then we had to apply all the other factors that would affect the compass course we would have to take to make the flight.

First of all there was the 'inclination' difference. Due to the fact the magnetic pole is not quite at the same place as the North Pole, one had to lay off a few degrees according to the latitude. Then there was the 'deviation' to take into consideration. The compass on an aircraft never shows the exact heading that it would fly straight and level. This has to be compensated with tiny magnets

under the compass to overcome all the metal around it so far as possible. So another odd degree to port or starboard has to be applied for the rest.

Then there is the wind that would drift you to one side. The Met Office would give you the wind speed and direction that could be expected and you hoped it would hold. Another few degrees amendment and you had your course to fly. Then taking into consideration the air speed you intended to fly, you calculated your ground speed and, with the distance, calculate the time for the journey. This was all very complicated, so having learnt what we should be doing we were given a neat little calculator that did most of it for you. You only had to remember to adjust it for all the factors and it revealed the magnetic course to fly and the ground speed.

These calculations would all be upset if the compass in the cockpit did not show it was pointing in, as near as possible, the direction the aircraft was pointing and would fly. So you had to 'swing' the aircraft to make sure. This was a laborious task which the navigator had to do every so often with reluctance. You moved the 'plane into a very open space and, with the help of several unwilling airmen you twisted the aircraft round and pointed it precisely to the four cardinal points of the compass; due north first, then at 90° and so on. At each stage the precise alignment was ensured by using a remote compass at a distance from the tail plane sighting along the centre line of the aircraft. This is when you used the little magnets under the cockpit compass to adjust it as near as possible to the correct headings and found the 'deviation' referred to before.

We had learnt how to do Dead Reckoning navigation with which we were enabled to fly from one place to another with accuracy but this was only possible if the forecasted wind speed and direction would be correct during the whole of the journey. Remember that the forecasters did not have sophisticated computer predictions and print outs in those days and neither did they have the meteoric data that they have now from all over the world. They did their best and were pretty good. During the day, provided you could see the ground, you could map read and see where you were. If you found you were drifting to port you could give the pilot instruction to alter course, say 2° to starboard. If you were above ten-tenths cloud you were stuck and had to hope for the best. However, we were told of one more thing we could do to assist with Dead Reckoning Navigation when we were over the sea, although they did not have the facilities for us to practice it. This was to get the wireless operator cum rear gunner to throw a flare overboard when we were on the Hampdens to which we were destined. These flares ignited on hitting the water due to the sodium in them and gave off a bright flame. The rear gunner could then read off the angle of the aircraft's drift on his special gauge.

To be continued.

THE UNVEILING OF THE HARDERWIJK MEMORIAL

By Erik van der Meiden

10/11 April, 1942; ESSEN/NICKELS:

Despite forecasts of clear weather conditions over the target, a main force consisting of over 250 bombers, found Essen covered in cloud. 49 Squadron had 13 Hampdens airborne of which 8 attacked the primary target but were unable to see the results. Bomber Command suffered the loss of 14 aircraft on the Essen raid, mainly due to the heavy flak defences in the Ruhr. Of the five Hampdens reported missing, 2 were from 49 Squadron:

F/Lt Marshall (AT190) and Sgt Webster managed to escape from their downed bomber, but two fellow crew members perished when the aircraft came down in Germany.

F/O Reg Worthy (AE421) and crew were shot down by a German night fighter. The combat took place over Holland, with the doomed Hampden falling into the IJsselmeer. The body of F/O Reg Worthy was recovered from the water's edge on 22nd May and buried in Oud-Leusden. Sgt Anthony Considine was found at Laaxum four days later; his watch had stopped at 02.16hrs. He is buried in Scharl. Sgt John Wilkinson is buried in Stavanger, Norway whilst the body of the fourth crew member, Sgt Tom McGrenery was never found, still missing in 2012; he is remembered at Runnymede Memorial, Panel 88. *[This account is taken from, 'Beware of the Dog at War' by John Ward. ED.]*

The Harderwijk Memorial is to remember 117 crew members who lost their lives in the IJsselmeer lake. Their names are remembered in a list on the website of the local City Museum of Harderwijk. The list of names starts with the text; 'date unknown, unknown Sgt from the United Kingdom.'

49 Squadron lost one crew and plane in this lake. Three of the four crewmen of AE421 were found and buried, their names are standing on their gravestones. We now know that the unknown Sgt mentioned on the list of the City Museum of Harderwijk is not our missing Sgt Tom McGrenery but standing next to this new monument gives us the feeling to remember him and all those who are still missing and found their grave in this IJsselmeer lake.

'WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.'

Before the unveiling of the Monument on April 18th there was a meeting at the Town Hall of Harderwijk. Mr. Dim van Rhee of the Allied Monument Harderwijk Foundation and the mayor of Harderwijk gave their speeches to a well filled hall. A professional education programme for the school children of Harderwijk was presented by the alderman of education.



After the meeting in the Town Hall we went to the IJsselmeer lake which is just a few hundred meters distant. A Chinook helicopter of the Dutch Royal Air Force took the monument, which represents a plane, up into the air to put it down into the lake. It was so nice to see. It was spectacular without being a showpiece. While doing this the Dutch Royal Air Force brought homage to the air-crews of the past.

After the Monument was put into the lake the remembrance stone was unveiled by the mayor and the Queen's Commissioner.

The Last Post was followed by one minute of silence. After that 117 names of the perished crew members were mentioned.

Wreaths were laid by Military Attaches of different countries. I had the honour to lay a wreath on behalf of 49 Squadron Association which is on the left with a blue ribbon next to the wreath of the British Embassy.

At the end of the ceremony Mr Dim van Rhee of the Allied Monument Harderwijk Foundation thanked the people for being there and for their attention and asked the schools in Harderwijk to adopt the 45 graves of the perished men and take care of them.

It gives us a good feeling that even after 67 years people like Mr. Dim van Rhee and his helpers take the initiative to erect such a beautiful monument like this one.

During the war the planes high in the air above occupied Holland were, for the people on the ground, a sign that they were not forgotten, it gave hope and would bring them freedom.



Photos; Upper Erik van der Meiden, lower Albert y Mara

READER'S LETTERS

Ian Bramley e-mailed;

“Since contacting the Association and becoming an Associate Member in February 2011, I always look forward to receiving the 4T9er. My late father flew with 49 Squadron in WW2 out of Fiskerton as a member of Roy Gould’s crew as Flt Engineer. I was given Roy’s contact details in March 2011 but unfortunately due to a number of reasons had not been able to make contact with him and so it was with sadness that I read of his passing in August 2011 in the November issue of the 4T9er. So you can imagine my delight in reading Part 1 of Roy Gould’s “Memories of my life in the Royal Air Force”. It was a great article and I do look forward to the next instalment. I am only sorry I could not make contact with him before his death and it is also disappointing I didn’t take a greater interest in my father’s RAF service before he died in 1981, whereby maybe I could have got in contact sooner and he and Roy Gould may have been able re-connect in some small way.

Roy’s series is due to run in The 4T9er for several issues and I can assure our readers that it is a fascinating tale.

An e-mail from Associate Member Chris Stevens reads;

“I was in Whitehall for meetings yesterday and had the chance to see the Bomber Command Memorial exhibition at RUSI.

“I took a few photos but my smartphone camera isn’t very good. The artist’s impressions and model were great. It will be fantastic and a fitting tribute when



completed, to the bravery and sacrifice of so many. All we need now is recognition with a medal whilst some veterans are still with us.”

In enclosing a generous donation Associate Member Joan Jarrett wrote on a similar theme;

“I have just read The 4T9er magazine– good stuff, I really enjoy them. It brings home the sacrifices these lads made. I think the way that they have been treated is disgraceful. At least the memorial is a step in the right direction...”

Former 49 Squadron rear gunner, Tony Neal, arrived on the squadron just too late to fly on ops although his skipper did do a second dickie’ trip. Tony wrote the following interesting letter;

“I often wonder if any 49ers remember a rather odd event that happened shortly after the end of WWII.

“Our crew joined 49 Squadron, then based at Syerston, shortly before the end of the European War.

“The squadron was then selected as one to form a unit known as ‘Tiger Force’, to join forces with the Americans against the Japanese, flying from an island called Okinawa, a prospect not relished by young men who thought they had seen the last of a hazardous activity. Luckily for us the war in the Far East came to a swift and sudden end.

“The squadron then moved from Syerston to its first operational peacetime base at Mepal, shortly thereafter exchanging our old Lancs for new machines finished in peacetime livery, white upper surfaces and Bomber Black underneath.

“Then began several instances of brakes locking up on one side on landings. On 17th June ‘46 we were detailed for a cross country and fighter affiliation exercise. After take off the port wheel refused to fully retract, skipper and engineer went through the correct procedure and as a last resort used the high pressure air system to no avail, the gear was well and truly jammed at the halfway position. After much discussion we were directed to the emergency runway at Woodbridge. The inevitable happened, the wheel collapsed and we finished in the middle of the runway facing in the opposite direction. No one was injured thanks largely to our skipper and engineer.

“There is a sequel. A week or so later we had to visit an RAF base near Manchester, we duly taxied to the visitors hard-standing near the watch tower. We were about to leave our Lanc when a cheery resident Flight Lieutenant ground engineer rode up on his issue bicycle. Evidently he and our skipper were old friends. After the usual greetings he looked curiously at our aircraft and said, ‘Jack, your port wheel is on the wrong way round.’ He was right, when we got back to base a report must have been forwarded. It was found, as far as I remember, that most if not all aircraft had the same fault.

“The explanation was simple. The Lanc wheel is very wide and on one side there are louvres arranged so that the louvres at the top of the wheel are facing forward to scoop in cooling air which is directed over the brake drum and out through slots cut into the other side of the wheel. If the louvres faced the wrong direction practically no cooling air passed over the very hot drum.

“I understand that on the Lancaster, PA430, we pranged at Woodbridge it was found that the hydraulic retracting rams were kinked due to bending forces no doubt due to severe brake locking on a previous landing.”

I wonder if checking that the port wheel was on the right way round was added to the pilot's pre-flight check list before signing the Form 700! See also 'CAN YOU HELP?

Associate Member, Graham Boyd, e-mailed to say;

“You almost certainly know about this, but there is currently a Corgi model Lancaster Bomber coincidentally based upon a 49 Squadron aircraft.

The overview says,

‘...Haynes brings you the concise story of this superlative RAF Second World War bomber, and salutes its place in Corgi's modelling history. This set contains an authentic 1:144 scale die-cast model of the Avro Lancaster in the colours No. 49 Squadron of the Royal Air Force Bomber Command and a 36 page miniature history; from its first flight in 1941, to becoming the undisputed queen of the heavy bombers taking the fight to Nazi Germany's heartlands, and the air show-stopping sight that it is today. Purposely written, the book contains superb pictures and essential facts that pay homage to this ‘Dam Busting’ masterpiece.’

“The model is also available on the Amazon website where the following comment was posted:-

‘Astonished and honoured to find this model from Corgi carries the EA-D registration, the ident of my uncle's Lancaster lost over Berlin in 1943, piloted by Ron Brunt who heroically stayed with his aircraft damaged by a night fighter when members of his crew refused to parachute out, the crash landing killing all who stayed on board. This deed was never recognised by the families of the dead crew as the only survivor of the three that jumped, John Burrows, was not able to fully explain the sacrifice Ron Brunt made in the attempt to save his crew and close friends.’

“ Apparently the aircraft, JB362, was shot down on 26/27 Nov 1943 and the bomb-aimer John Burrows was the only survivor.”

Our Archivist, Ed Norman e-mailed on April 28th with the following;

“This morning's Daily Mail has the vehicle registration **49 EA** up for sale. All you need is a spare £4,800 in your bank account. I must admit to being tempted, but as a poor pensioner it's too rich for me.”

Me too but if you are interested contact Ed for more details not this Editor!

CAN YOU HELP?

In ending his letter on page 25, Tony Neal asks;

"...I would like to know if any 49er came across this particular experience.

"Also our Lancs were fitted with 'Village Inn' AGLT turrets. Another feature few old hands seem to know about in discussion at my local branch of the now defunct A.C.A. over recent years. Where are all the 'Village Inn' bods?"

In 1944, 49 Squadron was one of the those chosen to test a new turret. AGLT stood for Automatic Gun Laying Turret, code named 'Village Inn'. An excellent description of the turret's operation appears in John Ward's book, 'Beware of the Dog at War', the 49 Squadron operational history. Briefly, the turret was fitted with a radar screen which could detect the approach of an enemy aircraft, all friendly aircraft were fitted with a transmitter which sent out an infra-red morse like signal which was picked up by an infra-red telescope attached to the rear guns.

In July last year the Editor saw a film called 'One of our aircraft is missing'. Made in 1942 it featured a bomber crew which was shot down over Holland. After making an unlikely escape by rowing boat the crew rowed out to sea and found themselves on a German 'rescue buoy'. This was fitted with a radio and contained cooking facilities and provisions. It would appear that these were anchored around the Channel. Were any of our WWII veterans briefed on the existence or whereabouts of these life savers?

Another question from the Editor; In most if not all photographs of wartime airfields the grassed areas appear to be well groomed. I can't believe that it was someone's duty to cut the grass, maybe I'm wrong! How were the rolling acres kept so neat and tidy?

Yet another from the Editor; My uncle flew seven ops with 49 Squadron and we have always thought of him as a rear gunner. However, John Ward sent me two combat reports covering his first and second ops. On his first he is mid upper gunner and in the second he is rear gunner. On checking the Operations Record Book we find that he is indeed down as mid upper in the first one and rear gunner in his subsequent six ops. It appears that the interchange in this case was official so my questions are; 1) Was it common for gunners to be officially switched from one turret to the other? And 2) Was it common for gunners to interchange unofficially by mutual consent?

**WHEN SENDING CHEQUES TO THE ASSOCIATION FOR ANY
REASON WHATSOEVER PLEASE MAKE THEM PAYABLE TO;**

49 SA PETWOOD