

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
May 2013 Issue 29**



A tribute to the W.A.A.F.

This is an extract from a photograph taken by Phil Waterfield. See page 10.

IN MEMORIAM

F. Ross J. Jones E. Winstanley A. Neal J. Joslin

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Shirley Broughton Andrew Perrin Heather Manning

NEW HONORARY FRIENDS

John Fletcher Ann Chesman

RESIGNED

Rev. Tony Buckler

EDITORIAL

A major disadvantage of only publishing quarterly was highlighted following the February edition when details of eligibility for claiming the Bomber Command Clasp were published within days of The 4T9er's issue. By now most of you who are eligible will no doubt have applied, however if you have any queries don't hesitate to contact me. One possible problem that I can foresee is if two estranged relatives apply for the same award. It could cause some trouble if it has already been issued. Perhaps unsurprisingly the award of a clasp rather than a medal for Bomber Command has caused some anger. I respect WWII veterans too much to disagree without apology, that being said I have to differ on this occasion. Whilst I agree that the exclusion of ground crew is unfortunate I must say that the campaign over the years has been for 'recognition' of the contribution of Bomber Command which has been sadly lacking since the end of the war. The award of the clasp is finally an acknowledgement of that contribution after more than sixty five years. Clasp, medal or even an engraved pewter tankard is recognition. The clasp also finally acknowledges the contribution of those who were denied the Aircrew Europe Star as highlighted in the February issue of The 4T9er. Our WWII veterans are disappearing at an accelerating rate but at least those who survive have the satisfaction of knowing that their courage and the sacrifice of their colleagues has finally been recognised. By the latter part of last year that was not even thought a possibility. Whilst regretting that so many have died since WWII with

bitterness in their hearts let us wear our clasps with pride and be thankful that we lived to see it happen. If you are a Bomber Command veteran or next of kin you can claim your clasp from; Bomber Command Clasp, MoD Medal Office, Imjin Barracks, Innsworth, Gloucester, GL3 1HW
or e-mail SPVA-ASBCCApplications@mod.uk

To move on, thank you as always to those who have made donations, some of them very generous indeed.

Sadly we have lost five more veterans of the Squadron. Hampden Flight Rigger Frank Ross died at the end of last year. The story of his Scampton experiences appeared in The 4T9er, February 2008, issue 9. Another Scampton flight mechanic, Jack Jones, died on February 20th. Eric Winstanley died suddenly on March 30th aged 92. He flew his tour as flight engineer in the crew of F/L T. D. Taylor between 29th March and 31st August 1943. Rear gunner Tony Neal, who died on February 19th aged 88, joined the squadron in February 1945, just in time to fly on Dodge trips. Jack Joslin was a regular at reunions until the start of his long illness. A compass adjuster with the squadron, he died on April 22nd.

Welcome to three new Associate Members. Shirley Broughton is a cousin of F/O Stanley le Vesconte Wood DFC who flew six ops as second pilot with 49 Squadron between May 1941 and January 1942 but then died in a flying accident on May 25th 1942. Andrew Perrin is the nephew of Sgt. W. T. Batty who was a 20 year old m.u. gunner in the crew of F/Sgt B. Kirton killed on 5/6th September 1943 during an attack on Mannheim. Heather Manning is the niece of pilot W/O Ron Brunt who was killed on November 26/27th during a visit to Berlin. Photographs of Ron and his crew appear in the squadron's history, 'Beware of the Dog at War' by John Ward.

The category of Honorary Friend is our way of saying 'Thank you', to those who have shown kindness and service to the Association. I am delighted to announce that two people have accepted my invitation. John Fletcher was the partner of Freda Styles whose passing was reported in the February issue of The 4T9er. Although not living in Fiskerton, John has been closely involved with the Parish Church for many years and has attended many reunion banquets with Freda and has been a good friend of the Association. Ann Chesman has for a number of years been my link with Fiskerton Village Hall and Scout Troop. Amongst the many good services that she has performed for the Association is the organizing of the buffet at our reunions.

It was with regret that I accepted Rev. Tony Buckler's resignation. Both Tony and Elaine have been suffering ill health for some time. As our Padre Tony officiated at our services for many years and his poems, otherwise known as his

'Odd Odes' were always eagerly awaited as they were, without exception, poignant and totally relevant. I have asked Tony if he will let me have some copies for publication but I fear that due to his illness this will not happen. Thank you Tony for your gentle devotion.

On Monday 22nd April Eric Clarke celebrated his 100th birthday. A Civic Reception was held at Doncaster Mansion House with around a hundred guests. I was able to tip off those who are on e-mail that the BBC camera crews for The One Show and South Yorkshire local news were present. The One Show covered the event beautifully on the Tuesday whilst BBC South Yorkshire covered it on the Monday evening. A photographic report appears on pages 16 and 17 of this issue with further photographs in the E-Supplement. Incidentally, a month and a day after Eric our celebrated Member Jim Flint reaches the same great milestone. We plan to cover his celebration in the next issue.

Arrangements are in place for our reunion which commences at Petwood Hotel on June 2nd. Sadly I have to advise you that this, our 76th, will be the last one at least in the form that we have known in the past. Around ten years ago my predecessor, Tom Gatfield, announced that they were ending and a few of us muttered, 'Not if I can help it'. Well, we've kept them going until now but with very few veterans now able to attend the events have somewhat lost their original meaning. Overall numbers are falling year by year and the financial viability is now in question. We are considering however, some form of gathering and details will be given in The 4T9er when we have investigated further. Wreaths will still be laid at Fiskerton on Remembrance Sunday each year and I hope that people will continue to make their individual tributes when in the area. I thank all those who have attended over the years, it was great whilst it lasted! Incidentally, there is no need to worry over the future of the Association which is in good health financially and numerically.

It is pertinent to mention once again here Heroes Return grants, which can be claimed against reunion costs. Some typical questions and answers are as follows;

Final Version – 19 February

HEROES RETURN 2 -Questions and Answers

1.1 What changes are you making to the Heroes Return 2 programme?

We are making a number of changes to the programme from Monday 25 February 2013.

The most important of these is that we are now offering veterans an opportunity to apply for funding for one more trip, if they have already been funded through Heroes Return 2. We have also increased the amounts of funding available that veterans can claim for their trips.

We are also offering the option of funding a carer for a spouse or partner in addition to the carer we will currently fund for the veteran. The Heroes Return 2 programme will also be closing in December 2015.

1.2 Why have you changed the one visit only rule?

We have had requests from Veterans for us to pay for additional trips in the past and funding is now available for us to be able to fund these trips. We also recognise that many veterans will want to look to attend commemorative events, including those in 2014 that will mark the 70th anniversary of D-Day, and events in 2015 that will mark the 70th Anniversary of the end of WW2.

1.3 I have already paid for an additional trip myself – can I claim the money back?

We will only fund additional trips that have been booked to take place in 2013 onwards.

If you have already paid for your trip in 2013 onwards we will reimburse you at the revised rate of funding.

Unfortunately we are unable to fund additional trips retrospectively if they took place before 2013. However, you will be able to apply for funding to undertake another trip if you meet the programme criteria and wish to do so.

1.4 I think I might be eligible for a grant from the Heroes Return Programme but I have not applied before. Can I still apply?

Yes, we would still welcome applications from veterans who have not applied before.

1.5 Why is the programme closing in December 2015?

Our investment in veterans' funding stands at over £50m. Since 2009 we have been able to help over 15,000 veterans and their spouses and carers to take trips. Given the importance of the anniversaries in 2014 and 2015 we feel that December 2015 is an appropriate moment in time to bring the programme to a close. By then veterans will have had 7 years to have applied for a grant through the programme.

1.6 Have the amounts we can apply for gone up?

The rates have been revised to reflect increases in travelling and insurance costs.

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For further information contact Ted Cachart, details on the back cover.

There was exciting news in May's issue of FlyPast. Tail dragging Shackleton MR.2 WR963, based at Coventry, has been entered on the civil register which presumably means that it will fly again. The aircraft could be taxiing within a few months, with taxi rides being available to the public. Engine runs have

already taken place and WR963 is open at present to the public but only on Saturdays. If you wish to donate to the Shackleton's Return to Flight contact Dawn; dawnwoods2002@yahoo.com dare we imagine two Lancasters and a Shackleton in the air together?

A friend of mine, Jeff Cogan, e-mailed some fantastic photographs of a re-enactment which was staged at East Kirkby on Saturday 16th March this year. I add 'this year' as the weather for the occasion was absolutely perfect in a Spring that has been simply atrocious. The photographs were taken by Phil Waterfield at a special event organized by Neil Cave who is responsible for various photographic events and I have agreed to publicize these in the future whenever possible. Besides our cover other photographs are shown on page 10 and a further selection are included in the E-Supplement. The combination of blue sky and puddles on the tarmac are truly stunning and I am grateful to Phil and Neil for allowing me to publish them. Incidentally Neil's next project is a photo shoot at the Great Western Society, Didcot, on the weekends of June 15/16 and 29/30 and July 13/14. Each weekend will comprise an early morning as well as an evening session. Continuing the historical theme locomotives and surroundings will be made over to represent a British Railways Western Region shed of 50 years ago. The first two weekends are already booked up and details can be found on: neil.cave@me.com.

I have been reading FlyPast magazine for many years but the time has come to dispose of my large collection of back issues. I am making my way through them looking for items of interest to 4T9ers. I e-mailed the Editor of FlyPast seeking permission to reproduce such articles and he, Nigel Price, very kindly gave me unequivocal permission to do so, even offering Pdf versions where available. So far I have found a number of full length articles which will be published in the future but a short extract that I came across in Issue No. 9, April 1982, written by Fred Shildrick who flew DH9s on 49 Squadron in 1919 read:

"...Whilst at Waddington we made an inter-station visit to Scampton, north of Lincoln. The place was small compared to Waddington, only having a Dolphin and Camel Squadron. During dinner I remarked to one of their chaps sitting next to me how quiet it was and said what a lively crowd we had at our aerodrome. He replied that he didn't think that I would be so cheerful if I resided at Scampton, as they averaged 10 fatal crashes a week. We averaged 2 to 3 per week and it made me realise how fortunate I was that, when I asked to fly Scouts after graduating, they put me onto bombers." Can this really be true?

In the February issue of The 4T9er I enthusiastically told of the announcement of a memorial dedicated to the airmen who died whilst flying from Lincolnshire. Well I'm afraid that my enthusiasm has been dashed by the publication of the

three short listed designs. I can't think of anything less appropriate for a Bomber Command memorial than searchlights, I don't know though, an 88mm anti-aircraft gun would be in a similar distasteful vein. As for the tall pointy thing next to it, Fred Dibnah knocked Victorian chimneys down by the hundred and good riddance too. The third one is called 'The Lens'. What this has to do with Bomber Command I don't know. It looks like a V1 launching ramp. I have written to the organisers telling them that we have a sum of money

set aside as a donation but will not be sending it if any of these dreadful structures are chosen. What is wrong with a statue of a lone airman looking out to the east for his comrades who did not return?



Our heartiest congratulations to our Hon. President's eldest daughter on her promotion to Wing Commander.



Talking of John Ward, I am grateful to him for e-mailing this item to me. As a modeller myself I am in absolute awe of the work of Charles MacDonald whilst a prisoner of war. I understand that Charles was on 7 Squadron in the crew of the first Stirling to be shot down during WWII.

The inscription on the back reads;
"Me and my model.

Stalag Luft III.

This was made from metal tins, with solder melted from the tins, using a margarine fuelled blow torch. The model was fully working with twin cylinder single acting steam engine with margarine fuelled boiler. Only tools available were; pocket knife, nail file and nail scissors."

It's truly amazing what humans can achieve with determination and sufficient time on their hands.

A post war member has said that it would be nice to see some articles featuring the Valiant years. I couldn't agree more so how about you Valiant bods writing a few, the last one was written by the late Brian Taylor and published in November 2009?

I had to visit my doctor recently because of an on going digestive problem. Imagine my surprise and delight when he said, "I'm going to try you on Dom Perignon". No wonder the NHS is in financial trouble if they are prescribing vintage champagne. My joy was short lived however as I was given my prescription by the chemist and it turned out to be Domperidone.

'Till the next time...



Continuing the WWI selection from the February issue we see a Sopwith Pup, probably a visitor, and in the distance is an Avro 504.



The backward stagger of the wings of the DH5 was unusual in a WWI aircraft as was the pilot sitting forward of the wings. Evacuating the aircraft in an emergency must have been rather dicey as one had to climb over the upper wing and then miss the tail but as parachutes were not issued in those days it was probably academic.

DH5s were mainly used for ground strafing but this example was, as the Pup, probably a visitor as 49 Squadron were not issued with them as far as we know.



It's hard to believe that these superb photographs were not taken in 1944, apart from the quality of course. See 'Editorial', page 6, for more details.



THE RED LINE

By John Nichol

"A truly epic tale of courage and sacrifice - and an intensely moving epitaph to the men of Bomber Command" - ANDY McNAB

More men from Royal Air Force Bomber Command died on one single night of World War II than the total RAF losses during the whole of the four-month-long Battle of Britain.

This is the story of that night and the air raid intended to be the climax of Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris's relentless campaign to defeat Nazi Germany. In *The Red Line*, we meet the young airmen who flew on the night of 30th March 1944. From fledgling bomber crews to the Luftwaffe pilots who tried to shoot them down and the innocent civilians on the ground, their testimonies are all here.

John Nichol has interviewed the few surviving veterans of that night, British and German, in the air and on the ground, to record the voices of a diminishing generation.

Nuremberg was the target. A centre for German industry, the city was also the iconic site of Hitler's notorious pre-war rallies and the eponymous birthplace of his anti-Semitic laws. 795 aircraft set out that night, nearly 700 men did not return.

While these airmen were amongst the greatest heroes of the conflict, their contribution and sacrifice has, until recently, been side-lined in the face of post-war criticism of Bomber Command's tactics. Yet they were among the best of their generation. Of the 125,000 airmen who served in Bomber Command, 55,573 lost their lives – one of the highest casualty rates of any military formation during the war. John Nichol's dramatic tribute to the men who flew on the RAF's bloodiest raid has provided the surviving veterans with the chance to tell the story of that terrible night – the night they flew to Nuremberg.

ISBN = 978-0-00-748683-0

RRP £20

A VISIT TO BOLSTERN AND DURNBACH CEMETERY, IN MARCH 2013

Robert McEneaney first got involved with 49 Squadron Association in 2004 when he arranged a family visit to Durnbach War Cemetery in Germany on the 60th Anniversary of the loss of RAF Bomber Command Lancaster ND474. Their raid on Stuttgart took place on the night of 15/16 March 1944 and led to the loss of all seven of the crew. The navigator was his uncle Terence McEneaney and the flight engineer, Ronnie Hoole, the uncle of Louise Dexter.

In mid 2012, when undertaking further research for his brother's upcoming visit to Fiskerton and the airfield, he came across a message on the 49 Squadron Association website from Louise Dexter who was attempting to contact other family members of the crew of ND 474. That started their joint search for the remainder of the crew's families which to date has resulted in them establishing contact with the families of four of the seven crew members. In 2012 they attended the Association Reunion where they discovered the existence of a team of researchers based in Germany under the leadership of Uwe Benkel. Mr Benkel provided invaluable help in arranging contacts for them in Germany which enabled them to plan their visit early in March to Bolstern on the 69th Anniversary of the loss of ND 474.

Robert and Annette McEneaney, representing Flight Sergeant Terence McEneaney with John and Louise Dexter and Emma O'Halloran representing Sergeant Ronnie Hoole, travelled to Munich on the 15th March and stayed in Bad Saulgau, not far from Bolstern, the site of the crash.



Emma O'Halloran, Louise Dexter, Annette McEneaney, Robert McEneaney, John Dexter

Robert and Louise now take up the story;

On Saturday morning 16th March we were met at our hotel by the Burgermeister, Mrs Gunter Strigler and taken to Bolstern Village Hall to meet some of the local people. One member of the group was Alfons Hauser (2nd right below), now in his eighties, who was an eye witness to the aftermath of the crash in 1944. Extreme right, in pink, is the lady who arranged for flowers to be placed on the graves. Following a very warm welcome, with the opportunity to sample some fine German pastries and wine, the Burgermeister formally welcomed us to Bolstern and with the benefit of an interpreter we also received an account from Mr Anton Stoerk of the events that unfolded on the night of the 15/16th March 1944. We were honoured to receive a gift of a book on Bad Saulgau, a village that will now remain part of our families' history and we returned the compliment with a gift of Waterford Crystal to both Mrs Strigler, the Burgermeister, and Alfons Hauser.



It is now our understanding that ND474 had actually completed its raid on Stuttgart as part of a force of 863 bombers but was subsequently engaged by a Luftwaffe night fighter. Realising a safe return to Lincolnshire was no longer possible a decision was made to change direction and head for neutral Switzerland.

The damage sustained was such that the Lancaster came down some 16km

short of the Swiss border on the outskirts of Bolstern village. Mr Hauser, 12 years old at the time, was awoken by the loud crash and resulting fire and, together with his parents and other members of his family as well as other villagers went to investigate the horrible events that had unfolded that night.

We were informed that the aircraft had broken up on impact with the fuselage in two pieces. The villagers removed six bodies from the aircraft with the seventh member of the crew found a short distance away still, we understand, strapped in his seat. All the crew had perished in the events that preceded the crash or in the crash itself.

We will remain forever indebted to the villagers who removed the crew from the Lancaster and buried them in their local Catholic Church graveyard. Not knowing the names or nationalities of the crew, they erected a timber headstone with the inscription; 'Here lies 7 English airmen, crashed: 15 March 1944.

Our visit included the opportunity to visit the church and church grounds to see the place where the seven crew members were first laid to rest, a small Catholic church with adjoining burial ground to the side, which Alfons Hauser pointed out to us is the final resting place of both his parents who had helped all those years ago to lay to rest the crew of ND474.

A visit was then made to the crash site itself, which was a short walk from the village. Mr Stoerk and Mr Hauser explained the events that occurred on the 15th March 1944 and indicated where the Lancaster crashed on the edge of a field adjoining the village. Thankfully, some broken glass windows was the only damage caused to the villagers homes. The field and crash site now in the ownership of Mr Stoerk, is bordered by a public footpath with religious symbols placed around its perimeter. Beside one of the religious symbols now sits a bench for the benefit of the weary traveller and it was at that spot that Mr Hauser informed us that the crew as they were removed from the bomber were first laid prior to their burial.

Another of the villagers, Bernard Sherer who with his young son was part of the welcoming group, also retains a smallholding close to the crash site. Mr Sherer and Mr Stoerk informed us that there is a section of land adjacent to the crash site which remains in the village ownership where a memorial of the crash could be placed. If the families of the crew wish this to take place, it was proposed that the 70th Anniversary of the crash next March would be an appropriate date for this to happen.

Both the representatives of the McEneaney and Hoole (Dexter) families present were overwhelmed by the kindness and thoughtfulness of the people of Bolstern on what was a quite emotional journey for all concerned. It is our wish that we complete the research into the final journey of ND474 and the crew and erect a memorial in Bolstern to mark the 70th Anniversary on the 15th March

2014. It is also our wish that we will be accompanied by other family members of the crew as we are already in contact with David Mitchell, who is related to Thomas Waugh the pilot, and Colin and Sue Brown relatives of John Wise the rear gunner. On that occasion it is hoped that we will be accompanied by the families of the other crew members that we have yet to find, but our search continues.

On Sunday 17th March we completed our journey with a visit to Durnbach War Cemetery where we laid Poppy wreaths on the graves of the seven members of the crew of ND474 and also laid a wreath on behalf of 49 Squadron Association. The Association asked that we take photographs of 20 graves, not yet recorded on their website but known to be 49ers, which we successfully completed on their behalf.

Finally we would like to express our sincere thanks to 49 Squadron Association, and all committee members who have kept the Association in existence over the past years for the benefit of us all. Without the Association it is highly unlikely that our families would have had the opportunity to meet and access such truly invaluable information and researchers. We are truly grateful to you all for keeping alive the memory of all those who made the supreme sacrifice whilst serving with 49 Squadron, Bomber Command.

Robert McEneaney & Louise Dexter.



All photos via Robert McEneaney and Louise Dexter

A CENTURY FOR ERIC.

On Monday 22nd April 2013 the ever popular Eric Clarke reached the age of one hundred. At 2-00pm, at Doncaster Mansion House, a Civic Reception was held to mark the occasion. Surrounded by relatives, friends, fellow veterans and



colleagues, including a dozen or so 4T9ers, Eric was presented with his Bomber Command Clasp by Air Marshal Sir Kenneth 'Dusty' Miller KCB, President of the Royal Air Force Association.

Film crews from BBC South Yorkshire and 'The One Show' recorded material for Monday's News programme and Tuesday's 'The One Show' respectively.

Following the cutting of the cake and coffee etc, at 4-40pm Eric made his way



to the Mansion House balcony accompanied by his two sons and A/M Miller to witness the Lancaster make two passes directly overhead whilst a large crowd watched from the street below.

Also on the balcony was the BBC cameraman and after the Lancaster had made its first pass the shot panned to Eric who, in the subsequent broadcast could clearly be seen saying, “Wonderful, wonderful”!



On the following day Waddington Flying Club member and ‘Honorary Friend’ F/Lt Gary Mennell, took Eric for a flight around Lincoln and Scampton in a Cessna 172. Whilst Eric is without doubt the oldest person to fly with the club, by one day, there is speculation that he is the oldest Bomber Command veteran still flying.

Eric and his family have asked that we express their deep appreciation to

all those who sent greetings, comprising, as we go to press, 48 e-mails and 87 cards including one from HM The Queen. (I wonder if she reads The 4T9er?)



Eric and Gary share their experiences.

MEMORIES OF MY LIFE IN THE RAF

By Roy Gould

Part 6

There is one trip we did at about this time that is very strongly in my memory. So much so that, when I was asked to give a talk to the Clacton Rotary Club, of which I was a member for many years, I gave it upon my experiences on that fateful night. It was a fairly comprehensive talk telling of my crew and the life we had, so I have decided to include this just as I gave it in May 1984.

I called it: *To Breakfast by the Pole Star*

Those of you of, say, a more mature age who have gracefully surrendered the things of youth, will no doubt have experienced suddenly having memories of the past, of long ago; clearer than those of last year or last month.

I had such an experience just before Christmas when I was looking after my daughter's border collie, Meg. I was giving her a last run one evening at the back of my house on some waste ground, waiting for what dogs have to do before they are bedded down for the night. I realised that we were well away from the streetlights, my eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, there was no moon but the night was crystal clear and all the stars were shining with a brilliance I had not seen for a long time.

I looked up and tried to find the stars and constellations I used to know. I found 'Orion'. You cannot miss him with the three stars on his belt. Then there was 'Cassiopeia' and 'The Plough' with its 'pointers' leading up to the 'Pole Star' at the end of the 'Little Bear'. And as I looked at the 'Pole Star' my memory flashed back to September 1942 and almost a vision came to me of the events upon a clear starlight night just as it was then.

Seven of us were in a Lancaster bomber having just been over a factory area in Düsseldorf, but it may have been Frankfurt, Bremen or Essen, for the weather had been very good in September 1942 and we had, accordingly, been very busy trying to deter the Nazi war effort. The natives had not been very friendly but I suppose they had cause to be for we had delivered a 4,000lb blockbuster and twelve canisters of 30lb incendiary bombs and we were only one of many.

We were flying at about 20,000 feet at 190 knots and it was a wonderful starlit night. There was no moon, no cloud and no haze and it seemed as though we could see, and be seen, for miles and miles. We were not very happy about it.

Now travel by air at that time was very different from the trips we all take for granted to Crete, Majorca or Tenerife, for the Lancaster in which we were

flying had only a thin aluminium outer skin to the wings and fuselage which was painted jet black on the under surfaces with green and brown camouflage on the rest of it. It had no sound deadening or insulating panelling inside like a modern jet, the aluminium was just painted green. There was no pressurisation and oxygen had to be used above 10,000 feet. The cockpit had some heating but the gunners in their turrets just suffered the cold and draughts and froze.

The seven members of our crew were a mixed bag. The front gunner was an Australian, Sgt. Acker by name. He was in the Australian Air Force operating with the Royal Air Force. He was a quiet chap and there he was forward and below me in his gun turret which had two Browning .303 guns. This was mechanically operated from side to side turning the whole turret, but they were draughty things with the slots for the guns to move up and down. To try to keep warm he would have been wearing the issue long sleeved vest and underpants (we knew them as passion killers), his battle dress, a thick long sleeved pullover and then fur lined jacket and trousers – and he still felt cold.

The Flight Engineer was a little Cockney by the name of Sgt. Brown. I took my hat off to him for he was a bundle of nerves when we were briefed for our target for the night and he continued like that right up to when we were on board and he had to deal with all his switches, valves and dials for the four Rolls Royce engines. Then he felt all right. We all had butterflies during this period but he seemed to suffer more than most of us. The Engineer sat in the co-pilot's seat in the cockpit where we had some heating and, other than the heavy underwear, battledress and pullover, we normally only used the fur- lined jackets.

Just behind the cockpit sat the Navigator. He had a curtain all round his compartment so that he could use his Terry lamp on his charts and things without disturbing us in the driving seats. He had fairly recently had his 'Gee' Navigational aid set with which he was able to pinpoint our position. It was a strange position with him for on the ground, technically, I had to salute him, for he was a Canadian Pilot Officer Ridley and I was only a Flight Sergeant, but as soon as we entered the plane he did as I said, for I was the Captain. Later I climbed the ladder to Flight Lieutenant, but that is another story.

The next down the line was the Wireless Operator, Sgt. Seaman, who was also surrounded with curtains so that he could twist his dials with his light on. He was also in charge of the two carrier pigeons that we always took lest we had to ditch in the sea.

The mid-upper gun turret, as its name suggests, was half way down the fuselage and that also had two Browning machine guns. Sgt. Grey, another Australian, manned this; a big lively chap whose father had a fruit farm and he frequently handed out prunes from home which proved very beneficial to the whole of the crew.

The loneliest man of the team was Sgt. Bromley, the Tail Gunner, who came from Perth [Australia. ED.] or somewhere up there. He had four Brownings in his turret. He was only little, which was just as well, for the rear turret was very cramped, most difficult to get into and even worse to get out of, for he had to fall out backwards into the fuselage after opening two small doors behind him. He had an idea that beer bottles sounded just like falling bombs to those below when thrown out from a great height. He saved all the bottles he could lay his hands on, and bundled them into his cramped turret and cast them out one at a time when the 'ack-ack' or 'flack' was getting too close for comfort. His idea must have worked for we always got home in one piece.

So that is the picture of us on that dark clear starlight night. Usually there was at least some haze or cloud below us to hamper the searchlight crews, but that night there was none and we were naked. The searchlights were all over the place swinging from side to side, probing for the bombers they could hear and were trying to find. Their lights were coming up like laser beams to way above us without any sign of diminished intensity.

Now those of you who can remember the Jerry planes coming over here will always have been able to tell them from 'ours' because of their distinctive 'urgh' - 'urgh' - 'urgh' up and down sort of drone, but did you know that we always did the same over there? As soon as we crossed the coast our engineer adjusted the revolutions of the two inner engines to make them very slightly out of synchronism with the two outer engines to make that all too familiar droning sound. This was supposed to make it more difficult for the audio direction finders for the searchlights to pick us up positively.

Now at that time we had been in the air for about 3 hours. The cockpit was in complete darkness and there was only the jade green phosphorescent glow of all the instruments for company. We had full night vision and because it was so clear we hardly needed any instruments anyway. Suddenly the voice of the Mid-upper gunner came over the intercom in his Australian twang, (which I cannot copy), "Look at that poor bastard caught in the cone on our port beam". I had in fact been keeping an eye on that aircraft which was perhaps only a mile away being picked up by one searchlight, then another, and then other swung round until there were perhaps 7 or 8 all pinpointed on him in a cone.

As he went along those lights left behind shut off only to be taken over by others he was approaching. So the 'poor bastard' was being passed on and on and, although painted jet black, he was shining like a plane of polished aluminium. He turned and twisted but all to no avail. There he was almost clamped at the apex of that cone of light and as we watched we saw a faint ghost of another aeroplane creeping up behind him, but he was blinded and could not see it. We watched spell bound while streams of tracer bullets went

from that 'ghost' to the 'shining star' and then suddenly it rose into the air and plummeted down to earth. We did not see, or want to see where it fell. We in the Squadron were only too familiar with seeing empty beds and empty chairs in the mess the day after an 'op' when some of our aircraft were missing. We just hoped that our friends had managed to get out safely but we seldom saw it happening to our fellow aircrew, as on that night.

The cone of lights then dispersed and started searching again and we watched one come slowly, ever so slowly towards us. I turned away from it but on it came until suddenly we ourselves were in a blinding intensity of light. Again I turned sharply the opposite way but to no avail and sensed rather than saw that other searchlights were now on us and we were another shining star at the head of a searchlight cone. Being caught in a cone like that is not a common experience these days so perhaps I will try to give you some idea as to what it is like.

Imagine that you have stopped in your car on a country road to have a rest or what you will. You have switched off all your lights and have been there at least a ¼ hour and your eyes have become fully accustomed to the darkness, when round the corner comes a car and stops fifty yards in front of you with its headlights full on. You are blinded and you cannot see a thing when another car comes up behind and also stops fifty yards away and keeps his headlights on you. To make matters worse, three cars in the fields on both sides of you do the same and there you are with blinding light coming in from all directions. Now stretch your imagination one stage further and assume you are lifted 50 feet in the air and all these headlamps follow you up there. You will then realise that you are having a completely new experience, not only is that blinding light coming in the windscreen and every other window but also it is coming upwards to you. You have been used to the sun, street lamps or the lights above you at home, but never before has the light come from below. The roof of the car has an intensity of light you have never seen and all shadows are the wrong way round. The dashboard has disappeared and you can only see bright lights in front of your eyes.

That is the best way I can give you the impression of what it was like that night at the apex of that searchlight cone and all the time there was that nagging thought, "Was that fighter coming up behind us ready for his kill".

At that period of the war the night fighters were very active. You see, on the outward journey for a raid we were routed over the coast where there was thought to be the least ground defences and then on as though we were going to one particular city but, before getting there, and where the night fighters had been alerted to wait for us, we would turn off to the proper target for the night. But on the return journey they knew we would have to make our way back towards our East Coast bases and they put their fighters up ready for our

return. I don't think they had airborne radar at that time and were rather dependent upon co-operation from their searchlight organisation.

So there we were, a sitting target. I had tried steep turns to port and then starboard but with no result and we were still in the grip of those lights. I realised that unless I did something desperate pretty quickly we would end up like the plane we had seen earlier.

So I called out to the crew to hold on tight and tipped the Lancaster on its port wing and plummeted into the steepest dive a four-engine bomber had ever done. What speed we attained I don't know, for I could not see the instruments and was flying blind and as they say 'by the seat of my pants'. When we had passed what must have been way beyond the maximum design speed for a Lancaster, the lights suddenly seemed to go out and I realised we had beaten the 'cone' and all we had to do was to get out of that fateful dive.

I shouted to the engineer to heave back on the stick (which was actually more like a wheel), but I could feel that our joint efforts were not having any effect at all. I then reached down at the side of my seat for the elevator-trimming wheel and wound it back madly.

Now, the elevator trim is supposed to be for adjusting the controls so that you can fly 'hands off' straight and level. But our trim was really put to the test and gradually I could feel the 'G' or the centrifugal force of pulling out of the dive was pushing me into my seat. Then, I could feel we had gone into a steep crazy climb for I could hear the speed falling off rapidly. I hastily wound the trim forward and pushed the stick as hard as I could before we went into a loop. Then I remembered I had cut the throttle in that crazy dive and rapidly pushed them fully open. We must have shot up thousands of feet in that climb and just crawled 'over the top' for, slowly the sloppy feeling of the controls of an aircraft just about to stall receded and we were flying fairly normally again on a constant climb but which way we were going I did not know. My sight had come back a little bit and the compasses were going round and round!

Now Lancasters had three compasses. The standard small magnetic type, which was very reliable, but any change of direction or speed made it swing badly and it then took a long time to settle down again. There was also a device amongst the instruments that I believe we just called the 'Gyro'. This was not really a compass but a gyroscope that controlled a dial showing 0-360°, which we set to conform with the magnetic compass when the aircraft was stationary and it then maintained its direction and showed the heading of the aircraft very accurately. But like all gyroscopes it could stand only a certain amount of violent tipping and turning about and then it toppled and went haywire.

Then there was the combination of the first two, the Gyro-Compass, which was quite a big thing suspended about $\frac{2}{3}$ down the fuselage well away from any

steel, and it had repeater dials for the pilot and navigator, but even this had 'toppled' during our violent manoeuvres.

So there we were, flying normally but with no idea as to which way to go. Then a memory of the times when I had to 'shoot the stars' to get astro fixes for navigating on Hampdens came to mind. We had been steering about 275 before all our troubles started and so I searched through the glazed roof of the cockpit, found the pole star, turned the Lanc round until I had it just in front of my right shoulder and so we went on until the compasses eventually settled down and we could go on our proper course.

That is how seven young men, long ago, for a while, came home to a welcome breakfast of bacon and eggs, solely by the pole star!

When I had finished the talk, I was asked whether I would answer questions. The first one to come from that august assembly was one that I had been queried upon several times before in private. It was how did you relieve yourself whilst on an operation? After a quick glance round to see whether the girls had gone from the bar, for you did not talk about those things in mixed public in those days, I told them. If anyone in my crew wanted a 'pee' they could do so provided that they let me know first and there was no immediate threat of a fighter attack. They were not strapped in and had clip on parachutes on a handy rack near their position and could easily visit the Elsan closet situated half way down the fuselage. I, on the other hand, had a seat parachute 'permanently' strapped on as well as being strapped to my seat and the oxygen tube and intercom wire plugged in. I made it a practice never to leave my left hand seat in the cockpit. On a long flight that could prove difficult. I tried bottles and various things but those were messy. I then remembered the 'P' tube I had been given a long time previously and found it at the bottom of my kit bag. On the next long trip I used it, putting it on when I needed. It was a long pink tube with a sort of funnel at one end shaped for its purpose. The other end I put out of the little sliding metal framed window by my left shoulder, heaving myself up as far as my straps would let me go and, 'standing' on tip toe on the rudder pedals, I hoped that the slipstream outside would suck it all through nicely. This worked very well at first but I did not realise that the little sliding window was slowly being jogged shut! When it pinched the tube and stopped the flow it became most uncomfortable and I was very cold for the rest of the flight. So that was not the answer to my problem. The next day I consulted the Sergeant Rigger who looked after my Lancaster, which was known as 'Q' Queen. He made a nice little hole through the side of the aircraft at about 6 inches off the floor with a swing flap over it to stop the draught. Everything worked very well thereafter.

To be continued.

READER'S LETTERS

Former 49 Squadron WAAF driver Vi Winters sent this poignant little poem which I'm sure rings bells with many of you;

LOSING MY MIND

Just a line to say I'm living
That I'm not amongst the dead
Though I'm getting more forgetful
And mixed up in my head.
I've got used to my arthritis
To my dentures I've resigned
I can cope with my bifocals
But ye Gods— I miss my mind.
Sometimes I can't remember
When I'm standing by the stair
If I should be going up for something
Or have I just come down from there?
And before the fridge so often
My mind is full of doubts

Now did I put some food away
Or come to take some out?
If it's not my turn to write dear
I hope you won't get sore
I may think that I have written
And don't want to be a bore.
So remember I do love you
And wish that you lived near
And now it's time to mail this
And say goodbye my dear.
At last I stand beside the mailbox
And my face it sure is red
Instead of posting this to you
I've opened it instead.

Noel Callon e-mailed;

“Good to hear about the Bomber Command award, it is really an excellent thing to happen for all the guys who served our country in the war years, very brave people they were. I was just a National Serviceman but being on a squadron of Lancasters made you feel for the people who took them all over enemy lines at night and in the daytime as well. I am very proud to have had the experience of serving with 49 Squadron even in 1949 to 51. A bit late for the war but I still feel good about that...well Alan I also thank you for The 4T9er mag, I wait for it to come when its due. Many thanks again.”

Accompanying a donation and his membership continuation form from Canada Phil ‘Griff’ Griffiths wrote;

“...I hope I'm not too late with the form [*It's never too late. ED.*] I was taking a break from the Canadian winter in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, which is quite a Mecca for Canadian ‘Snowbirds’ as they call us down there!

“As a matter of interest, I went to three live shows at different theatres and in each case before the show started they asked veterans in the audience to stand and we were given a noisy round of appreciation - I felt quite proud and pleased. Also the attendees in the nearby seats shook my hand!

“Part of Route 81 and Route 95 is designated as ‘Highway of the Veterans’.

“The Americans really think a lot of their veterans, and show it. I also had lunch at a U.S. Legion Post, using my Canadian Legion card and I was overwhelmed by their hospitality – I had a glass or two with a B17 ball turret gunner and we exchanged a few war experiences, as you can imagine.

“How did I end up in Canada? Following my thirty missions (including seven to the ‘Big City’) I was posted to 45 Group Ferry Command based in Montreal where we ferried aircraft, Daks, B25s and Libs mostly to Dum Dum on the Burma frontier, usually via Bermuda, Rabat, Cairo, Bahrein Island, Karachi, Allahabad and Calcutta. (We always had a ‘mag drop’ in Bermuda!) and got the hell out of Bahrein Island and the like as soon as possible! To the U.K. it was; Goose Bay, Labrador, (where coke containers glowing redly were put under the engines as the temperatures were often 30/40 below zero!), then it was Greenland, Iceland and Prestwick. We were returned by our ferry service which used RG3’s (a Liberator with one tail fin, which shed rivets on every trip.)

“I was later based on Miami, Florida, and was on the Caribbean shuttle service, (What a life!) but that’s another story.-what a posting!...”

[I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall during the chat with the B17 ball gunner! ED.]



Twenty-six RY-3’s were delivered to the RAF and some served with the RCAF. I presume that it was one of these that Griff is referring to. In U.S. service, as seen above, they were known as PB4Y or Privateer.

Following the announcement that this year’s reunion is to be the last, Pat Keay’s e-mail is typical of the many received;

“Really sorry to read the news that this will be the last re-union. Stuart and I have enjoyed them so much as, I am sure, has everyone else. I guess that due to age some find it hard to get to Petwood, then, there is the cost. I would gladly give up some treat or another to be able to go to the re-union. It is all so sad.”

David Boughton, our Post War Archivist, sent in a cutting from ‘Aeroplane’

magazine dated November 2005 which queried the history of Tiger Moth NL911. The reply to the query read;

“It was one of a batch of 350 built at Cowley between July 1943 and March 1944, initially NL911 went to No 3 EFTS, Hamble, then to No 22 EFTS run by Marshalls at Caxton Gibbet. Later serving at Upwood, Waddington and Wittering, it eventually became surplus, like many Tigers, and was sold in March 1955. Seen at Fairoaks in ferry marks G-AOAB on 10.4.55, it was at Croydon, badly damaged, on 31.7.56, but was rebuilt by 16.9.56. Sold from Croydon as SE-CGD in April 1957 (along with SE-CGA, B and C), it crashed in June 1964 and was sold to Denmark for rebuilding, but there the trail goes cold!”

David’s accompanying letter says;

“Like you, I do keep copies of old magazines but now have to cull them in order to make room for the newer ones.

“Tiger Moth, NL911, was flown in from Upwood along with Lincolns in July 1952 as part of 49 Squadron’s baggage and was kept in ‘our’ hangar at Waddington until the move to Wittering. The details in Aeroplane confirm this is the right aircraft as does my logbook. Sid flew it a few times and took me up in it for 15 minutes. It looks as if it came to a sad end after being very carefully looked after on ‘49. I seem to remember that it even had a WAAF airframe fitter who was responsible for it - whether she was on the strength of ‘49 or not I do not know....”

This sent me diving into my records to find this photograph of NL911 which was sent in by Noel Callon some years ago. It is hand captioned, “Refuelling our Tiger Moth”. Noel’s story of his time on 49 Squadron at Upwood appeared in The 4T9er, March 2010, issue 18.



After many years of service our Padre, Rev. Tony Buckler, relinquished his position a few years ago. He hasn't been too well in recent years and submitted his letter of resignation from the Association which I regretfully accepted;

"Thank you for the last two issues of The 4T9er. In my thinking corner (where I mostly fall asleep!) it was tidying up time and there was your Important Notice. So sorry to have lost sight of it.

"While Elaine and I have not 'gone away' we have a cluster of health problems between us - Elaine much more than myself.

"After much thought and many regrets I must ask you to let me 'stand down'! What a wonderful honour it has been to meet you all, so thank you for the great meals and company. Best wishes to the Association."

In my acceptance letter I told Tony that there is an open invitation to Elaine and himself to attend our reunion banquet should they feel fit enough. I sincerely hope that will happen.

V FORCE REUNION

We have now finalised the dates for the next V Force reunion which will take place over the weekend of 17th/18th May 2014 (not 2013!) at the Newark Air Museum.

The format will follow that of previous reunions. Events will be organised in the hangar at Newark, with a signing in area and displays by various organisations related to the V Force. The only charge will be for admission to the museum and a small charge for nametags to cover admin costs. On the Saturday evening there will be a buffet reception at nearby Newark Golf Club, which has proved an ideal venue at recent reunions.

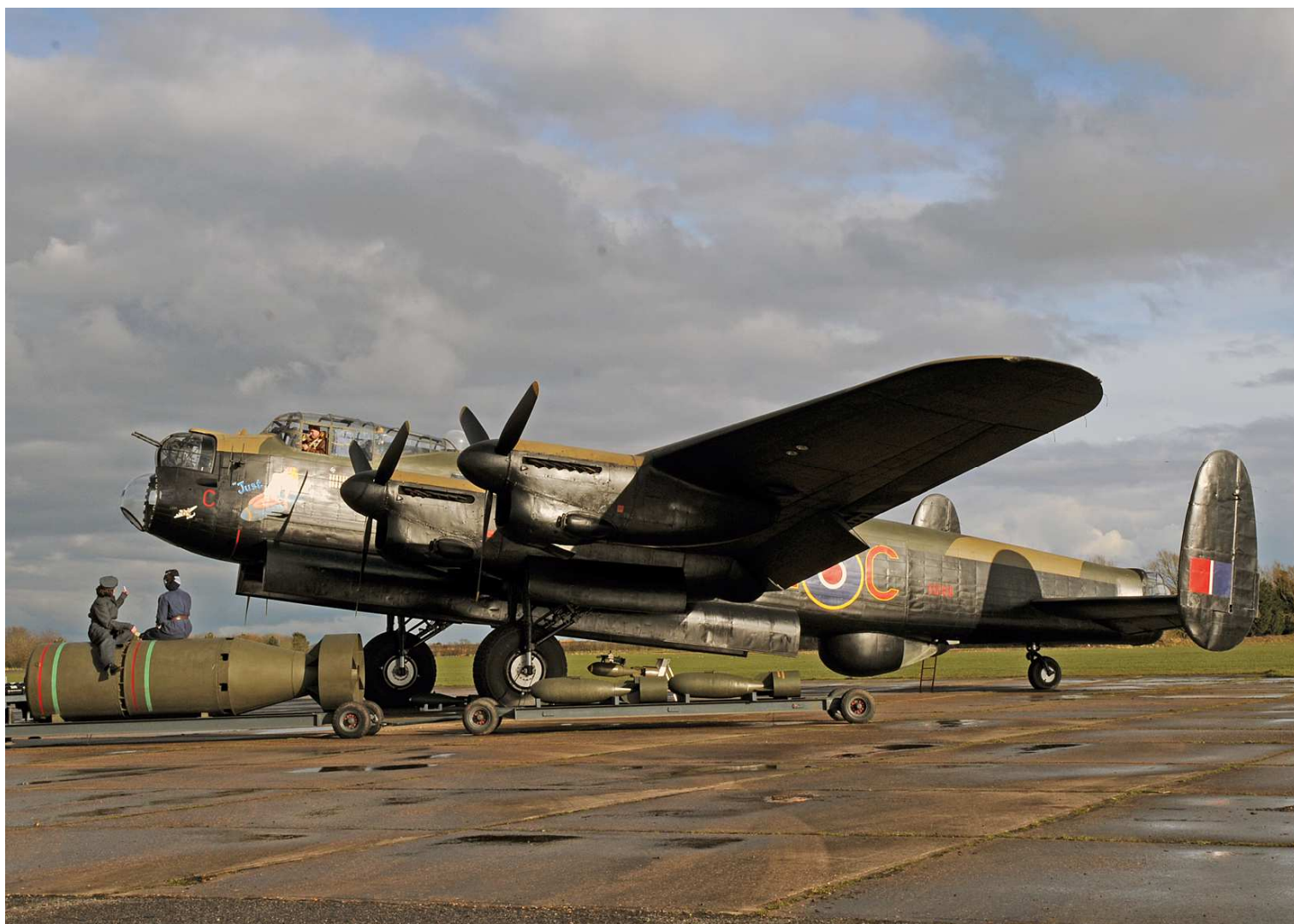
If you think you would like to attend please complete and send the enquiry form, see website address; V-Force Reunion. This does not commit you to attend - obviously things happen which may cause you to change your plans, but if you think there's a likelihood you will be coming send the form as this gives us an idea of likely attendance figures to help in planning. We are still looking for more interesting articles to go with those already on the website, and we will be reviving the gallery, so hunt out those pictures! We are looking forward to the reunion, but with the relentless march of anno domini this may well be the last that we organise, so let's make it a good one! You can all help by spreading the word - we do our best but after each previous reunion we have heard from people who didn't hear about it until too late, so tell all your friends!



The 4T9er

E-Supplement

May
2013



Photo; Phil Waterfield

A superb study of 'Just Jane' at East Kirkby during the Neil Cave re-enactment.

More shots can be seen on pages 2 & 3.

**IF YOU WISH TO MAKE A COMMENT ON THE LINCOLNSHIRE
BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL YOU CAN DO SO ON;
www.lincsbombercommandmemorial.com**

The 4T9er E-Supplement is compiled and edited by Alan Parr and published with The 4T9er magazine by 49 Squadron Association.
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More great shots from the Phil Waterhouse album.



Part of this photograph can be seen on the cover of The 4T9er

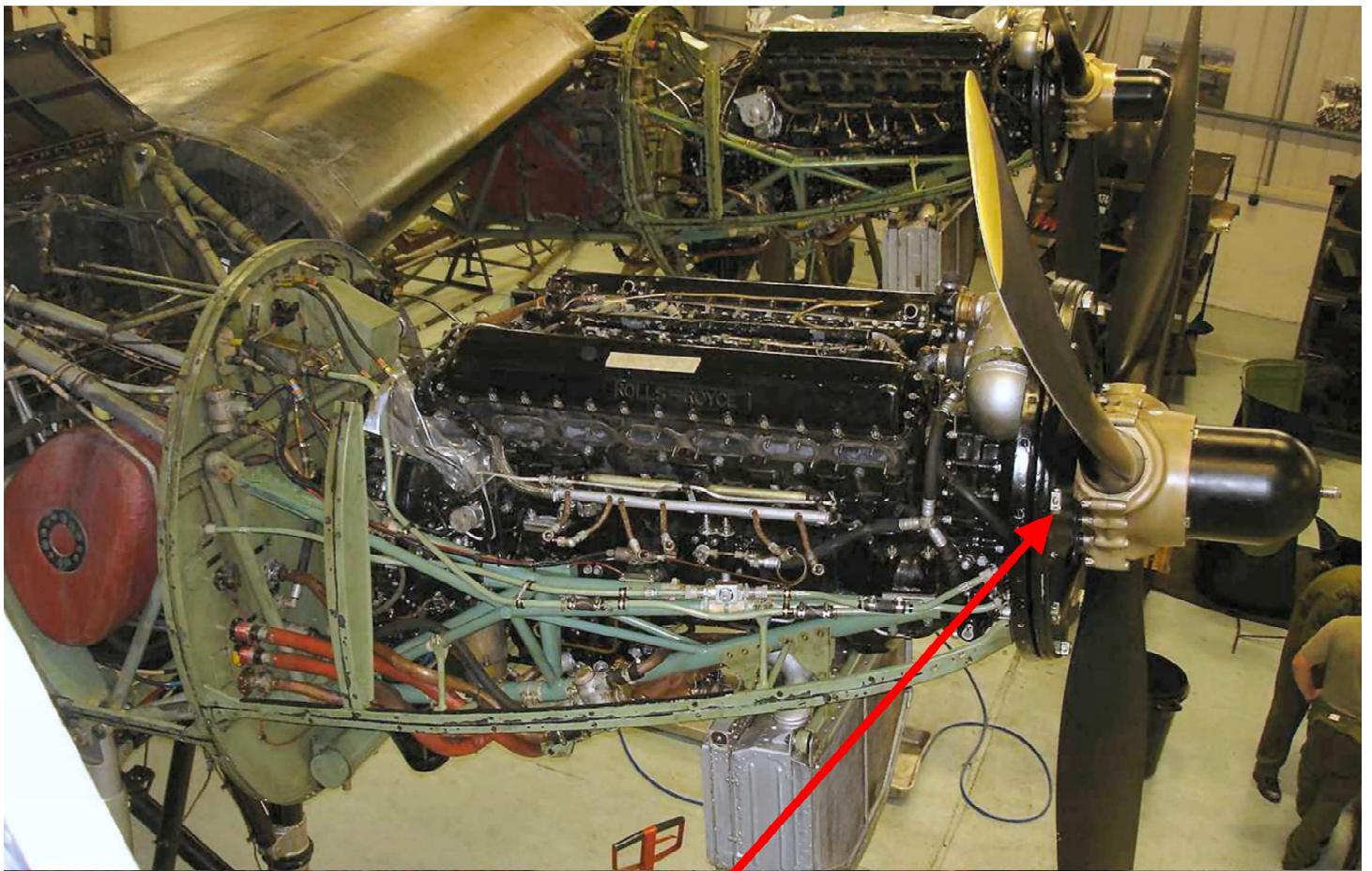


Photo: Phil Waterhouse

Photo Annette McEneaney



Robert McEneaney and Louise Dexter at the graves of their relatives in Durnbach Cemetery.



Peter Schreiber sent these photos, plus those on the following page of a recovered engine from 49 Squadron's Lancaster ED427 EA-O which was excavated, together with the remains of the crew, last year.





ERIC FLIES AGAIN

24th April 2013

Following the wonderful reception at Doncaster Mansion House on Eric Clarke's 100th birthday as described in the current issue of The 4T9er, two days later Action Man was off again. Courtesy of F/Lt. Chris Hives and Waddington Fliers, 49 Squadron Association Honorary Friend, F/Lt. Gary Mennell, kept a long standing promise and flew Eric on a nostalgic circuit from Waddington via Lincoln Cathedral and Scampton back to Waddington. His youngest son, David, accompanied them on the flight. Eric flew his tour from Scampton in 1941/2.

All photos; Via David Clarke

