

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
August 2013 Issue 30



Photo; Dominic Howard

**During the June reunion Fred Hill, Eric Clarke, and Ted Cachart
share wartime memories in the bar at Petwood Hotel.**

See page 2 for more details.



In May the seventieth anniversary of the dams raid was remembered including flights over the Derwent Dam by the Lancaster, Spitfire and two Tornados. I am grateful to that talented photographer, Phil Waterfield, for e-mailing copies of his amazing photographs of the event. You don't take photographs of aircraft from above without being in an aircraft yourself or, as in Phil's case, doing some serious fell walking. Above is one of his shots of the Lancaster over the dam whilst further views appear in this issue's companion E-Supplement.

OUR COVER PICTURE

Fred Hill (90), left, flew Hampdens on 33 ops from Scampton between August 6th 1941 and April 10th 1942 before instructing at various O.T.U.s. He went on to pilot Mosquitos including more than 20 trips to 'The Big City', Berlin. Wop/ag Eric Clarke (100), centre, most unusually, flew his tour from Scampton in Hampdens, Manchesters and Lancasters.

Ted Cachart (88) also Wop/ag, right, flew 7 ops as wireless operator before bailing out of his Lancaster on November 2nd 1944, after a collision, to spend the rest of the war behind German wire. He was 18 years old at the time.

Fred and Eric were at Scampton at the same time and both remember the formidable O.C. W/C Stubbs saying, "Remember, you aircrew are only sergeants so that if you get shot down you will not be sent to the salt mines".

IN MEMORIAM

J. D. Wylde D. Austin A. B. Crabbe

D. Brady F. Panton J. Gunn A. Drinkell

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

NEW MEMBER

Tony Yule

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

David Haines David Watson Peter Brady

NEW FRIEND

Iris Taylor

NEW HONORARY FRIEND

Paul Foster

EDITORIAL

Thank you once again to all of you who have sent donations to the Association. Your generosity is the food that keeps life in the old dog yet.

Would you believe it, this is the 30th issue of The 4T9er? The first issue of the magazine was in May 2006 and has been published quarterly, apart from May 2011, ever since. That's 900 pages of 49 Squadron chat. I am most grateful to all contributors, living or dead, for their help in keeping the flag flying. It is a sad fact that only once in those thirty issues has there been no names in the 'In Memoriam' section. I regret that once again I must record the passing of some much missed fiends.

Associate Member Jenny Wylde died at the end of April. The story of how she had the name of her late relative F/L John Rowland Hill added to their school Roll of Honour appeared in the February issue of The 4T9er. Derek Austin, a former NCO Lancaster pilot at Upwood in 1948/9, died suddenly on May 5th, shortly before his 88th birthday. Our dear friend 'Lou' Crabbe died on May 14th. Aged 91. Lou, as he was always known due to his admiration of boxer Joe

Louis, flew his tour as flight engineer in the crew of F/O Ken Lee from September 6th 1944 until April 4th 1945. Also in the crew were our former secretary the late Tom Gatfield and bomb aimer, the late John Aldridge. These two, with their families, shared many happy post war holidays together with Lou and Nora. Former pilot David Brady DFC died on May 19th aged 90. He flew his tour between May 1st 1944 and August 15th. Our late chairman, Leslie 'Uncle Will' Hay, flew his second dickie trip to Sequeville with David on August 7th '44. The aviation world was saddened by the sudden death of Honorary Friend Fred Panton MBE who died on June 9th. Together with his brother Harold, Fred rescued Lancaster 'Just Jane' and set up the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirkby in memory of their brother Christopher who was killed on the infamous Nuremberg raid in March 1944. Mid upper gunner, John Gunn, died earlier in the year. He was posted in to 49 Squadron on January 1st 1945 and flew fifteen ops between January 15th and April 25th in the crew of F/Lt G.G. Abbott. Alan Drinkell died suddenly on August 7th aged 95. He was posted in to 49 Squadron in November 1941 and flew 27 Hampden operations as Wop/ag before going on to Pathfinders.

On a brighter note we welcome new Member Tony Yule who joined the Squadron in 1961 at RAF Wittering then made the move to Marham after a few months where he stayed until 1965 when the Squadron was disbanded and he was then posted to Central Flying School. Tony went on to fly with BOAC, later British Airways, as 1st Officer on VC10's and Concorde.

Welcome to New Associates David Haines, son of E.R.G. Haines, navigator, David Watson the son of Colin Cunliffe Watson and Peter Brady who is the son of David Brady whose passing has already been noted. Peter and the family attended the 2012 Reunion with David, an event that he always enjoyed.

Iris Taylor has helped out on a number occasions at Fiskerton Village Hall providing our reunion buffet. She has developed a keen interest in 49 Squadron and has joined as a 'Friend'.

From time to time we invite people who have given time to the 49 cause, whether directly or indirectly, to become Honorary Friends as a small token of our appreciation. As we highlighted at the time, during the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial on 28th June last year London taxi drivers transported veterans and relatives of Bomber Command personnel free of charge. Our chairman, Ted Cachart, was driven by Paul Foster, not only on that day but on Ted's frequent visits to London ever since, and he constantly refused to accept payment. I witnessed this when Barbara and I accompanied Ted to a recording session at the Blind Veterans UK. (See page 7 for further details.) His respect for Bomber Command veterans in general and Ted in particular

impressed me greatly and I had pleasure in inviting Paul to join us as an Honorary Friend. His joy and appreciation were most touching.

In the May issue I made some scathing remarks about the design of the proposed memorial to the 25,000 aircrew who died whilst flying from Lincolnshire airfields. Whilst I do not regret a word of what I wrote it is obvious that I am in the minority. As the memorial is going to be built it would be churlish of me to withhold the donation that was originally planned as I have to assume that the majority of our members are in favour of the design in the absence of any comments to the contrary and in view of the purpose of the memorial, which in principle I am totally in favour, the association will make a donation of £300.

Whilst on the subject of donations, I am informed that our friends at Fiskerton are raising funds for toilet and kitchen facilities to be installed in the church. As we will benefit from these amenities we are making a donation of £300, in addition to the £100 already given in appreciation of the reunion services, to assist with this project. If you should wish to make a personal donation, thou never knowest when thou shalt be the one sorely in need, see page 6 for details.

As in 2011 my health, or lack of it, prevented Barbara and me from attending this year's reunion. We did however manage to get to Fiskerton Village Hall for the buffet. Once again 'The Crew' and their Ladies, 'The Ground Crew', rallied to the cause and demonstrated that, 'No-one is indispensable.' If I am not careful they will be staging a coupe, some hopes! I am grateful to Ed Norman for writing a report on the three day event and to Dom Howard once again for providing the majority of the photographs. Incidentally, for the third time that much maligned Stafford Hospital, most unfairly in my opinion, has brought me back to good health. Considering how ill I felt, a blocked bile duct being the villain, a twenty minute procedure in the X-Ray department has completely resolved the matter. Whilst I lost twenty four pounds in weight in eight weeks I have since regained fourteen. Hopefully this heralds a period of better health. At the same time I am only too aware that with the passing years many of you are suffering. Whilst I was ill I could offer empathy but now I have recovered I can only offer sympathy which I do most sincerely.

Following hard on the heels of Eric Clarke's 100th birthday came the celebration of Jim Flint's centenary. A report appears on pages 8 & 9. We wait a hundred years and then two come along at once. Incidentally in my family's case three came along as Barbara's mother's 100th birthday was on July 19th.

It is a good time to buy an aircraft it would seem. According to the national press 21% of private jets in the U.K. are up for sale but if it's a classic that you desire there is a Spitfire Mk.IX in the States going for US\$ 3,400,000. If your

pockets aren't quite deep enough for that there is a Wildcat at US\$1,100,000 or a Hurricane IIB at £1,295,000. There are more but I don't want you to be spoiled for choice.

After spending the whole of my working life trying to keep up with the cutting edge of engineering technology I find, to my horror, that I qualify for the description - Luddite! Many of you will have experienced the sudden feeling that the person to whom you are talking is not responding. You then realise that they are studying a piece of plastic, about the size of a packet of twenty fags but half the thickness, their fingers flashing up, down, left and right as they search through their Apps. Then they put it to their ear and start talking to it after which they point it at you and apparently take a photograph of that silly old duffer who is frowning at them. Last Christmas I was out walking in the dark with my grand-daughter and her dad when I said, "I wonder what that planet is." What is it Dad," says five year old Evie? Out comes the black fag packet which is then pointed at the planet and hey presto, "It's Neptune". I don't know about you but it's leaving me behind but the strange thing is, I don't really care anymore! I can live without sending or receiving a text every five minutes. If I want to contact someone I speak to them on the phone, to take photographs I have a camera, o.k. it's digital, and if I want to know what that planet is, well I just wait a few minutes and I'll have forgotten what it was that I was wondering about anyway.

Reading a railway heritage magazine recently I realised that the LMS Pacific locomotive, 'Duchess of Sutherland', is the same age as I am. We were both introduced to the world in June 1938. It's the best excuse I have had yet to include a photograph of a steam locomotive in The 4T9er, illustrating how much more gracefully she has aged than I have, see page 19.

To those of you who are having problems with health or life in general our thoughts and prayers are with you.

'Til the next time...

FISKERTON CHURCH APPEAL

As reported in the Editorial the Association has donated £300 to the appeal to finance the installation of toilet and kitchen facilities within the church.

**If you would like to make a personal donation send your cheque, made payable to; 'Fiskerton St. Clements Church' to:
Mr P. E. Forman, Applegarth, Ferry Road, Fiskerton,
Lincoln LN3 4HU**

BLIND VETERANS UK

(Formerly St. Dunstons)

NO ONE ALONE CAMPAIGN

Nearly 70,000 former military personnel with sight problems could be eligible for support from a dedicated veteran's charity.

Blind Veterans UK is a national charity dedicated to supporting vision impaired ex-Servicemen and women. The charity has recently launched its No One Alone campaign to help veterans, including those who did National Service, who are currently having to deal with sight loss on their own.

Blind Veterans UK estimates that up to 68,000 blind ex-Service personnel could be eligible for its free and comprehensive support. The charity believes that no one who served in Britain's Armed Forces should face blindness alone and is appealing for blind or partially-sighted veterans to get in touch.

If you suffer from sight loss and served in the Armed Forces – or if you know a veteran with sight problems - please contact Blind Veterans on: 0800 389 7979

or see our website, noonealone.org.uk, for more details.

JIM FLINT IS 100 NOT OUT

Based on information provided by Bill Flint

Photos courtesy of Andrew Hallsworth.

Marlow Photographic

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Jim Flint was born on May 24th 1913 in a suburb of Nottingham, one of four children.

In his early days he was a talented cricketer and took ten wickets on a number of occasions. He once told me that he played with Harold Larwood. I'm sure that our Aussie readers will remember that name. Jim also played football for a local team, Woodthorpe.

Prior to war breaking out Jim had already joined the RAFVR and volunteered for aircrew. From Tollerton he went to Brize Norton and then Scampton where he joined 49 Squadron. Although he had qualified as a pilot Jim's early ops were as navigator. He went on to pilot Hampdens with 49 Squadron and, with the rank of Wing Commander, commanded 50 Squadron at Skellingthorpe, flying Lancasters.

It was during a minelaying operation with 49 Squadron, on 5/6th July 1941, that his aircraft was attacked by two ME110s which put the port engine out of action. Jim was awarded the DFM for his valour in keeping his stricken aircraft airborne long enough to reach the coast near Cromer. He was awarded the George Medal for rescuing his navigator from his ditched Hampden. Having escaped from the rapidly sinking aircraft Jim re-entered to pull Sgt. 'Benny' Benningfield clear but sadly he died from his wounds the following day. This was a very rare case of two gallantry awards being granted for the same action. Later in the war, as a commissioned officer, he was also awarded the DFC.

Jim married Joyce in June 1944 but sadly she died in January 2003, a few months before their diamond wedding. They did not have children.

Post war, his cricket and footballing days being over, Jim took up golf, playing off a seven handicap. He has always supported RAF causes and attended the unveiling of The Bomber Command Memorial last year to the 55,573 who fell, many of whom were his close friends.

The celebration of his 100th birthday took place at The Carriage Hall, Plumtree, Nottingham and was attended by a hundred of his relatives, former colleagues and friends.

In Nottinghamshire Today magazine Jim summed up the wartime attitude with the words, "You thought of chefs with meals, of debriefings and having a go at the blonde collating the information."

When asked how one coped he said, "You just had to get on with it".



Clockwise from top left:
 Jim proudly displays his birthday card from the Queen: 50 Squadron veterans, from left; Air Vice Marshal Nigel Baldwin, James Flowers, Richard Jones, Fred Jones: Jim with fellow 49 Squadron centenarian Eric Clarke: Jim and his well wishers: Jim's 100th birthday cake.

THE FINAL REUNION

By Ed Norman

Photos by Dom Howard apart from Bransby, taken at a later date by Alan Parr.

Clear blue skies greeted our arrival at the Petwood Hotel on Sunday June 2nd 2013 for the Association's 76th and final annual reunion. Long, thirsty journeys ensured our assembly in the bar to meet with old friends and those destined to become new friends. We particularly gave a warm welcome back to Vi Veness and our 'new boys' 90-year old veteran Hampden pilot Fred Hill and Air Commodore 'Spike' Milligan from the Valiant years and former Officer Commanding Gibraltar.

Operation Reunion began, though we were missing our skipper Alan and his navigator Barbara, at 4.15pm prompt. The sound of an approaching Dakota took everyone into the garden to witness a fine display of low-level flying. The Lancaster was not flying as, like our skipper, it was feeling slightly unwell.



A surprise visit by two of the Lincolnshire

Memorial team, led by the Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, gave us a new insight into the proposed memorial which should be visible over many miles around Lincoln. The names of all those killed while flying from the many airfields scattered throughout the county during WWII, will be etched onto the monument, and their position

will be obtainable from the visitor centre and readily seen through binoculars.

In the evening, we gathered for the 'Meet-and-Greet' hosted by Malcolm Brooke where members connections to the squadron were explained; a particularly useful exercise for those attending for the first time. A short but very interesting presentation was given on the BBMF's Lancaster by ex-BBMF F/Lt. Jack Hawkins, an Honorary Friend of 49 SA.



Blue skies remained with us for the whole of the three days - a welcome change from the cloud and chilly wind of some previous years. So, Monday morning saw the coach arrive to transport us to Fiskerton Church for our Memorial Service led by the Reverend Penny Green. After receiving the Book of Remembrance from our Chairman Ted Cachart, she gave a particularly apt sermon on the theme of friendship which summed up the feelings of all those



present. A wreath was laid at the Memorial Plaque by Ted Cachart, Eric Clarke and Fred Hill who combine an experience of 280 years between them!

Then onto the airfield where a second wreath was laid at the Airfield Memorial by our ladies, Vi Veness and Churchwarden Gill Walkinton and the Reverend Penny concluded our memorial service after Malcolm Brooke had read aloud a short, emotive poem written by John Ward, our Hon. President and Historian.



John also gave an interesting insight into the layout of the airfield, which helped one enormously to visualise what it must have been like seventy years ago, and recounted a few tales of shenanigans and highly-unofficial behaviour too! An added bonus for us was The Red Arrows practising in the distance, ploughing hearts and bomb-bursts into the open sky.

We coached back to the village hall where the Fiskerton ladies provided a fine feast for lunch of the usual high quality that we have come to expect from them, and greatly appreciated by us. We were all very pleased to see Alan Parr and Barbara who had managed to travel over from the West Midlands, albeit for



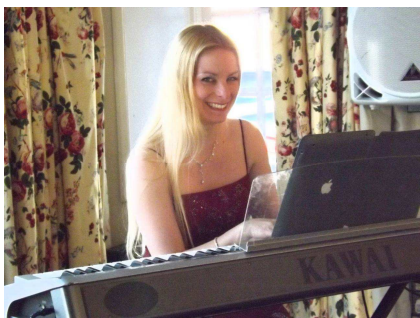
Our friends at Fiskerton Village Hall:
Above left: Ann Chesman, Mary Pycock, Alison Cooke, Iris Taylor.
Above right: Alan Gibson and Jenny Hayes.



49 Squadron veterans: Back row: Dave Harrison, Bob Weeks, ‘Spike’ Milligan, John Fray.
Front row: Stuart Keay, Betty Grundy (Lived adjacent to RAF Fiskerton.) Ted Cachart, Fred Hill, Vi Veness (nee Winters, MT Driver), Eric Clarke.



such a brief visit. A short compilation of Eric Clarke's and Jim Flint's centenary celebrations, as seen on national television, was shown, though the bright sun made viewing a bit difficult. We can never get the weather right!



Roast Lincolnshire beef was the main fare of the banquet throughout which the lovely Helen provided the background music. As this is the last formal reunion it is apt to give her a special mention as she has been playing for us for ten years or so. Our thanks go to Colin Cripps and Malcolm Brooke who 'stood in' for Alan as Masters of Ceremony, particularly so to Malcolm who gave an impromptu 'State of the

Nation' address. (Alan had spent the entire previous evening composing this for Malcolm and forgot to bring it with him!) Also, thanks to May Brooke for her highly entertaining reply to 'Guests and Ladies' and to Bob Hayward for an endearing and emotive reply to '49 Squadron Association' with 'What makes a 4T9er?' Special thanks also to Janet Norman who baked a special reunion cake for the guests, featuring the squadron badge as its decoration. Janet and Eric cut the cake before an *incandescence* of flashbulbs.

Some visited the BBMF at RAF Coningsby on the Tuesday, while others visited The Heritage Centre at RAF Waddington. Honorary Friend, F/Lt Gary Mennell, ably guided us around The Heritage Centre, though it contained little to remember its 49er years.



We did spot a poster depicting Lincoln RF354 which a certain young sergeant pilot, Stuart Keay, had the misfortune to crash in Kenya. He assured us that he was still paying for it in his taxes, but as the crash was proved to be due to engine failure we held this to be another RAF tall tale. Stuart is seen in the



photograph with a photo of RF354 which he just happened to have in his wallet.

During the tour Gary pointed out a T1154 radio transmitter. Ted Cachart, an ex Lancaster wireless operator, was on to it like a flash and commenced to demonstrate the operation of said piece of equipment, a remarkable feat considering that he last used one seventy years ago. Gary commented later that he learns something new every time he shows a veteran round the centre.

Over at Coningsby, their Officer Commanding, Squadron Leader Duncan Mason, kindly led the tour, and it was suspected that he wanted Eric's autograph! Eric particularly wished to thank him for the Lancaster flyover of Doncaster Mansion House during his 100th birthday celebration.



In the afternoon we visited the Bransby Home for Horses. If you love horses or donkeys then this is the place for you, there are hundreds of them.



Much to our amusement, Eric distained the use of a wheelchair. Our own 'Action Man' promptly marched off leading us on to the Plaque that commemorates the crash of the Stewart crew in Hampden AT129, EA-O on 25th January 1942, then gave us a short monologue concerning the crash and later funding of the plaque by caring local villagers. Quite an amazing man.

Those who were staying at Petwood for the third night spent a splendid evening at the 'Village Limits' restaurant just a short distance from the hotel.

Thus ended the final reunion, a fitting finale to the seventy five that had gone before.

There were many ghosts among us of 'Absent Friends' from years gone by.

49 GATHERING 2014

In order that the many friendships and the Association family spirit can be continued the annual reunions will be replaced by a '49 Gathering'. What's the difference? The Gathering will be an informal affair but otherwise to a similar format to the reunions.

The 2014 event will be held at Bentley Hotel, Lincoln, commencing Sunday June 2nd for up to three nights.

On Monday 4th June we shall make our way to Fiskerton for the usual church and airfield services followed by buffet lunch at the village hall. In the evening we shall enjoy an a la carte dinner in a private dining room. There will be no formalities.

Tuesday will be free time to enjoy Lincoln city or the many RAF related centres. If one wishes they can take advantage of the hotel facilities: such as the gym, swimming pool, leisure club or spa.

Full details will be given in the November issue of The 4T9er.

DORNIER RECOVERY AND TRIBUTE TO A FALLEN FOE.

As many of our readers will know, on June 10th and 11th the remains of a German Dornier 17 bomber, shot down on August 26th 1940 by a Boulton Paul Defiant of 264 Squadron, were raised from the Goodwin Sands prior to being taken to The Royal Air Force Museum at Cosford.



What is less widely known is that on the day that the aircraft was being recovered a wreath was laid on the grave of the 21 year old bombardier, Gefr Heinz Huhn. Of the four man crew, Fw Willi Effmert and Fw Hermann Ritzel survived to serve out the war as PoWs in Canada whilst Huhn and Gefr Helmut Reinhardt perished in the crash. The former is buried in the German Cemetery on Cannock Chase whilst Reinhardt is buried in Holland. The wreath was laid by the Director General of the Royal Air Force Museum, Peter Dye. A few days later Barbara and I visited the cemetery to pay our respects

and to take some photographs for this feature, more of which can be seen in the E-Supplement.

I visited Cosford on July 21st to view the remains of the inverted aircraft



which are now housed in two polythene tunnels and are continuously sprayed with citric acid and sodium hydroxide to prevent further corrosion. Although carrying a liberal coating of barnacles etc. the wreckage seems to be in surprisingly good



condition considering that it has been under the sea for more than 70 years, the tyres even appear to be inflated. The tunnels are positioned outside and can be viewed by the public although photography is not straight forward as you might guess being through wet polythene.



The German Cemetery on Cannock Chase has 2143 burials from WWI and 2786 from WWII all of whom died on British territory. Whilst the grey headstones create a very sombre atmosphere the best time to visit is in late August when the

heather is in bloom. Unlike Commonwealth War Graves headstones those at Cannock carry at least two names on each side and in some cases three or four. Purely viewing the rows of headstones therefore is somewhat misleading when considering the actual number of graves. In a totally separate section are the communal graves of the crews of four Zeppelins which crashed in England.



**Cachart still manages to get an arm round the M.T. Driver even after 70 years.
Our WWII Veterans: Ted Cachart, Vi Veness (nee Winters), Eric Clarke, Fred Hill**



The crew look unusually smart as they ‘fly’ a Missing Man Formation at the reunion.

Back row l to r:

Ed Norman...Archivist

Malcolm Brooke...Webmaster

John Ward...Hon. President & Historian

Colin Cripps...Researcher

Seated l to r:

David Boughton...Post War Archivist

The Missing Man...Secretary

Ted Cachart...Chairman

Photos on this page: Dominic Howard



Photo: Malcolm Brooke

May and Malcolm Brooke migrate to Cyprus over the winter months which happens to coincide with the Red Arrows early Spring training visit. Associate 4T9er and Red Arrows pilot Sqd. Ldr. Mike Ling gives May her annual cuddle.



Photo; Jeff Cogan

Duchess of Sutherland, 75 years old and still going strong as referred to on page 6.

MEMORIES OF MY LIFE IN THE RAF

By Roy Gould

Part 7

This is probably an opportune time to recount to you a ritual prevalent, I believe, over the whole of Bomber Command, and it certainly was with 49 Squadron. After we had been briefed and probably had a meal according to the time for take off, we would go to the crew room. There we would go to our lockers, collect our parachute, helmet, oxygen mask and the like and gather to wait for transport. This was usually a light canvas covered van driven by a young but very 'worldly' W.A.A.F. She took two crews at a time and when we arrived at the hard standing for our plane she would call out "Q Queen" and our crew would scramble out. We would dump all our things near the steps up into our aircraft.

We would then ceremoniously gather round the tail wheel of Q Queen. A moment of quiet would descend over us whilst we all, I expect, said our own silent prayer for a safe return. Then at a nod from me we would all pee over that tail wheel and woe betide anyone who missed. (On reflection we did some silly things to keep up our morale.) Having completed the ritual, the crew scrambled up into the aircraft whilst I looked all round it to check that the ground crew had done everything they should. Then in I went and we all had plenty to do to check everything inside was OK for take off. All the 'blues' were gone and we had left the remaining butterflies in our stomach on that tail wheel.

There was one more incident in my memory that occurred during that period. This was also on a beautiful starlit, but dark night as I mentioned earlier. As we crossed our coast over Lowestoft or somewhere there, I put on our underbelly strong light, switched on the I.F.F. to let those below us know we were 'theirs' and we relaxed. Oh, how we used to relax when we had returned to that stage. That was one more 'op' off the tally of 30 obligatory sorties, which we had to do for a 'tour of Ops'. Yes, we counted them off and were very happy to do so.

The engineer handed me my coffee and I expect six other Thermos flasks were opened quickly and then many of us had a fag. That cigarette tasted good after 4, 6 or 8 hours without one to calm our nerves. The navigator gave me the course we should take for our base near Lincoln and I set the automatic pilot so that we would continue over Suffolk and Norfolk on our way up to Lincolnshire. So, with a coffee in one hand and a fag in the other, I made myself as comfortable as possible in my harness and looked around wondering how many others had managed to be doing exactly the same thing around me. East Anglia was, of course, dotted with Bomber Command aerodromes to which we all had to return.

I looked out at the sky and all those brilliant stars when I noticed that one was particularly bright. As I looked, it became brighter and brighter and, all of a sudden, I realised what it was. There was another Lanc flying at exactly the same height only 100 yards or less away on my portside. It was flying on a converging course and unless I did something quickly our safe return would come to a very speedy end. I dropped everything and pushed the stick forward as hard as I could to overcome 'George' the automatic pilot. The aircraft made a sudden dive and with splutters from half drunk coffees there were shouts from the crew, "What the hell are you doing, Skip?" or something more verbose. I heard that Lanc just pass over us. I heard its Merlin engines. One – two – three – four and we were clear and I never want to hear another aircraft when flying. It was not only the enemy that we had to overcome.

I wonder how many people have witnessed St Elmo's Fire. I saw it twice and this is a good place to tell you about it. The first time was in a Hampden and then later in a Lancaster. Both times were on dark stormy nights and they were both much the same. We flew through a wispy cloud when suddenly along the leading edge of the wings and tail, on the aerial mast and the other such protrusions there were tongues of white flame like lights. The whole of the sweep of the propellers were great flaming disks. It was quite a sight; one like which, I believe, old mariners used to see sometimes on the rigging of their tall ships.

By now I was approaching the end of my tour of operations and I expect I was getting a bit nervous and wondering if I would 'make it' after all. I had in fact been on 33 trips already, but if you had been recalled before reaching the target or returned in a like manner with only two or three engines or radio failure, they did not count!

At the beginning of October we were all summoned to the Briefing Room quite early in the morning so we knew that 'something was on' of particular note. But we were wrong. We were told we would practice low level formation flying over the sea for a future raid but on no account were we to mention this inside or outside of the Camp for our own safety and that of our fellow crews. This was a new experience for us, one we were previously forbidden to do. It was quite enjoyable, but one day I was on the starboard wing of a Vic formation of three and the lead pilot decided to do sharp turns to right and left. He obviously did not realise the problem it gave to his wing pilots when flying at less than 50 feet over the sea. When you are on the wing of a formation on the inside of a turn you have to bank, throttle back slightly and drop lower to keep your wings in the same line as the leader's. One day we were doing this and I watched my starboard wing tip only just skim over the crest of the waves of a very cold sea. In the end I could not contain myself and said over the R.T., "If you go any lower you will have to pick me out of the drink".

We were told to attend a very early briefing at last on the morning of 17th March and then we found we would be on something new and very big. The whole of 5 Group would be involved in attacking armament and engineering works at Le Creusot right in the middle of occupied France. The navigators were briefed on the route we would take although all the Squadron would go as one massive formation! We were also given the position that all the pilots would have to take up behind the leader who would be 49 Squadron's Wing Commander Slee who was usually referred to as 'Slasher'. Unfortunately he considered his Squadron to be an elite one and he appeared to have no time for non-commissioned pilots. There were three of us, Sgt. Mart, F/Sgt. Webster and myself, also a Flight Sergeant by that time, and actually we were probably more experienced than many of the newly acquired Pilot Officer pilots. His apathy towards N.C.O.'s, however, became a talking point in the Squadron when it was noted that F/Sgt. Webster was to be on his right flank and I was on his left, the two most vulnerable positions in an attack by fighters!

We took off at about mid-day and formed up behind Slasher with the nine Lancs in our squadron. Flying on a set course to various rendezvous, we first of all had the nine aircraft from each of 61 and 9 Squadrons fall in behind us and then in turn those from 50, 91, 57, 44, 106 and 207 all assembled in Vic formations behind us. That was nine squadrons comprising 95 Lancasters; what a sight it must have been and what a noise.

We had been flying at about 1,000 feet all the time we were assembling, but then we crossed the South coast and headed out to sea going down to about 50 feet. Right out to sea we went skirting the French coast by at least 100 miles to keep under their radar detectors and then turned in towards the French coast striking land somewhere near Bordeaux.

To be honest, my recollections of the trip are very scant. I was too busy keeping my station with the leader of this whole assembly and making sure that a mere N.C.O. could do the job as well as anyone else!

So we went right over occupied France at low level and lifted up to about 5,000 feet to do our bombing at Le Creusot. Just before reaching this target, however, I understand that five Lancs peeled off to attack a nearby very important electric central dispersal centre. Dusk was just coming so we all then climbed right up and went home to our various bases. Once we were home we filled in our log books showing that we had just completed a trip lasting 10 hours and 10 minutes and this was done this time in green ink because it was in daylight.

Strangely enough, what was to prove to be my last operation was also a 'green ink' and a low level trip as before but very different from the previous one. In retrospect it seems as though it must have been an exercise to wave the Union Jack under the noses of Hitler and Mussolini for we were to go all the way to the railway junction at Milan in Italy.

There must have been about eighty Lancasters, which set off whilst there was a cold weather front over the French coastal defences on the 24th October 1942. It was thick cloud up to a great height and so we flew in or above it as far as we could and when it fizzled out we dropped down to tree top height. It had then turned into a lovely morning. The navigator had previously worked out all the courses we should take to avoid large towns and so he stood behind me in the cockpit map reading. The front gunner sat in his turret and warned me, “Wires ahead” or, “Steeple on our starboard bow” so that we would not knock anything over. Thus we went along mile after mile. A gendarme shook his fist at us, and some nuns, after getting over their surprise, waved up at us furiously. Another gendarme un-slung his rifle and pointed it at us but a quick burst from the rear gunner made him change his mind!

Thus we all made our way right over France and when we came to the Alps we rose up to 15,000 feet with the intention of meeting over Lake Annecy. I was a little early so I diverted a little and did a trip round Mont Blanc after going a bit higher. It was a wonderful sight in the brilliant afternoon sunlight. So back to Lake Annecy, over the Alps and on to Milan with the other Lancs. When we got there everything was covered with a thick layer of cloud. We had come all this way and there was no clear target, but I was not going to take all those bombs back. The bomb aimer thought he could see some railway junction through a hole in the cloud so we let them have our load. With our job done, we set course for the long journey home which was accomplished without any serious trouble. I was back again for my last green ink entry of a 10 hour trip to Milan. I had now done 35 operations to my calculations but unfortunately, as I said before, the Air Force did not count ones where we had had to return to base because the trip had been aborted for one reason or another.

So I had finished my tour of operations and was due for 14 days of well-earned leave and then to be put to some other tasks. With a fond farewell to my crew and a curt visit to the Wing Commander for his instructions, I then sought the orderly for a travel pass to Milford in Surrey for my leave and another one to take me to R.A.F. Fulbeck for a very different sort of life.

Chapter 9

Instructing with Bomber Defence

1485 Bomber Defence Training Flight, R.A.F. Syerston

It was on the 5th November 1942 that I arrived at R.A.F. Fulbeck to find that it was a new aerodrome still being constructed. The runways had been completed but they were still erecting much of the hutted camp.

I had been assigned to 5 Group's Bomber Defence Training Flight and was to find that my life was to be very different from what had come just before. We

could rest in our beds knowing that there would be a tomorrow.

This flight had 6 or 7 old hand pilots like me, mostly N.C.O.'s to fly the sundry aircraft they had and about the same number of gunnery instructors also mostly N.C.O.'s. Every few weeks or so we were invaded by 18 to 20 gunners straight from initial training and it was our job to try to knock them into shape and improve their skills with first hand tricks of the trade, ready for Lancasters.

I remember my first job was most enjoyable. We had a '4 gun' hydraulically operated turret fixed on the airfield but it was mounted with a camera gun instead of 4 Browning machine guns. It was my job to 'beat up' this gunner in his turret in a Tiger Moth. I had not flown a Tiger for a long time and I certainly had never been allowed to 'beat up' anything on the ground before from all directions.

We had old Manchesters to take up 6 or 7 gunners at a time under the supervision of a gunnery F/Sgt. to give them actual firing experience. Sometimes we flew these out over the sea and on other days we had to tow the firing drogue – not a nice job at all. A drogue is like a windsock that shows wind direction but is towed on a long wire behind the aircraft at 140mph and is held out horizontally by the slipstream. The gunner shoots at the drogue and the holes he made are counted on return to base.

To do this task we had an old Lysander at first. I expect you will have watched films where our agents were taken to France to help the Resistance and were landed in a small field. They always used Lysanders for this job because of its low take off speed and short landing run.

I remember, on one fateful day, one of the pilots and a good friend of mine who had brought his nice little wife up to Lincoln, was doing this towing exercise when one stupid gunner mistook the Lysander for the drogue and shot him down. So I lost a good friend (and also his drogue operator) and had the unenviable job of having to go and tell his wife of her loss.

Life had to go on but shortly after this we were re-equipped with Martinets. They were brand new drogue towing aircraft. A nippy little, quite fast, very manoeuvrable aircraft that were a delight to fly. Not only did we use these for towing, but also as a 'fighter' to 'attack' the Manchesters with all their air gunners who 'shot' at us with their camera guns, the results of which were examined and assessed by the gunnery instructors.

We also were a bit of a 'dogsbody' with 5 Group. If someone wanted to get quickly to another aerodrome they would ask 1485 Flight, as we were known, to provide an aircraft and pilot to take them there. The Army also called upon us to do the same thing. I did a lot of this taxi work; it was a change from the usual daily round and most enjoyable. I went all over the place, landing on aerodromes of which I had not previously heard. I remember I landed at one aerodrome, I

forget where it was, and I was told I was the first aircraft to land there. I took a Lieutenant Colonel over to Old Sarum near Salisbury, a lovely long map reading trip.

We had to take stranded aircraft back to their bases and I remember being told, “You have flown Lincs so you can take this blooming Stirling back to where it belongs. It’s got four engines just the same”. So back it went as instructed.

That was our life then, flying the Tiger, Lysander, Manchester and Martinet doing the various functions. It sounds a bit monotonous and I suppose it would have been, if it had not been for the ferry trips near and far and other distractions. Some times if the weather was bad, and it had to be really bad for us not to fly, the gunnery instructors would take their gunners out onto the field and there give them clay pigeon shooting with 12 bore guns to keep their eye in. When we could, we pilots also took a 12 bore out to them and picked off the clay when the gunner missed. I got quite good at that.

To be continued.

READER’S LETTERS

Bill Woodhead, former Lincoln airframe mechanic e-mailed:

Thanks once again for the May edition of The 4T9er again very interesting and informative, it was especially interesting for me to see the item about Tiger Moth NL911. I remember going for a flight in her when I was at Upwood, a few of us off 49 were invited to go up in her one sports afternoon, it was marvellous, real flying. The pilot I was flying with did the Loop and the Falling Leaf it was great. When I got out of the cockpit they couldn’t find the safety pin for the harness so they couldn’t take anyone up anymore that day, I wouldn’t have missed it for the world. It was also interesting to see in the photograph the two Lincs in the hangar, it brought back happy memories.

Associate 4T9er, Dave Harwood e-mailed:

Thanks for including details of John Nichol’s new book, “The Red Line” in the May issue of the 4T9er. After dropping a few hints to my son I received a copy for my 65th birthday last week! Although my father wasn’t involved in that raid (*according to his log book he was on night exercises on 30th March 1944 in a Lancaster of No.5 L.F.S. Syerston, flown by P/O Edgar, just prior to joining 49 Sqn. on 3rd April 1944*), I look forward to reading about those brave men that flew to Nuremberg that night.

After hearing about the desecration of the Bomber Command Memorial with graffiti, I was filled with trepidation about what I would find on my planned visit yesterday. Although there was evidence of the clean-up operation, the

graffiti was no longer visible and I was still able to pay respects to my father's memory, it being three years to the day of his death. The sun broke through the clouds shortly afterwards which lifted my spirits.

Non member, Ron Piper, sent the following e-mail. I invited him to join the association but sadly have had no reply to date:

Arthur Ward was my AEO on 49 Sqn. 1957 to 1962. Our crew initially was Tom Chambers, Dave Brooke, Alan Thomson, Ron Piper, Arthur Ward. I fashioned the 49 Sqn. honours board in 1958 because my secondary duty was sqn. historian. No one seems to know that 49 Sqn. was on the dam-busters raid. The attack was on the Sorpe dam, and Arthur won a DFM. (He is in the London Gazette). So he was flying on the Sqn. in 1958 and was the only aircrew named in gold leaf on the honours board and still flying.

PS. Sadly Tom was killed test flying at Boscombe Down when he was posted from our crew, and Dave Brooke also bought it. We had a total of 15 children between us in our crew, and the Sqn joke was we always came over the hedge with 15 knots to spare.

The Anderson crew also flew on the dams raid.

Iain Bramley raised the following point by e-mail:

I have been meaning to email you regarding the latest instalment of the late Roy Gould's chapter in the 4T9er. While I had read this previously as you so kindly sent me the whole of Roy Gould's memoir I had forgotten about it until I re-read the article. When he was describing his crew on that trip in September 1942, I think Roy got a few of the names and roles mixed up, not surprisingly, but I thought I might email you with what I understand to be the facts of that flight. Roy's description of his crew goes this way: "*The front gunner was an Australian, Sgt. Acker by name.....The Flight Engineer was a little Cockney by the name of Sgt. Brown.....the Navigator was a Canadian Pilot Officer Ridley.....the Wireless Operator, Sgt. Seaman.....The mid-upper gun turret.....Sgt. Grey, another Australian, manned this.....loneliest man of the team was Sgt. Bromley, the Tail Gunner, who came from Perth....*".

Having been very interested in my father's career with 49 Squadron, I have done a fair bit of research and have looked at this period, and offer the following information:

Sgt Roy Gould piloted the aircraft;

Sgt Bill Bramley, my father, was born in Norwich and was the Flight Engineer; Pilot Officer Frank Ridley, was the Navigator;

Sgt Cyril Seaman, was the wireless operator;

Sgt Llewellyn (known as Larry) Grey, born in Kincumber NSW, from the RAAF was the mid upper gunner;

Sgt James Browne, born in Brisbane, QLD, from the RAAF, was the bomb aimer and so would have also been in the front turret; Sgt James Acker, was the Canadian born in Toronto, from the RCAF, occupied the rear gunner's position.

To confuse the issue further our database shows: Gould...Pilot, Bramley...F/E, Ridley...Nav, Grey...B/A, Browne...WoP, Acker...MuG, Seaman...R/G. Whilst WoPs and gunners might change position it is inconceivable that the other positions would interchange except in an in-flight emergency.

John Ward e-mailed the copy of the certificate below which had come to him from Australian Associate Member Graham Bairnsfather. It was issued by his late uncle's home town. Ralph Bairnsfather was killed 7th March 1945.





The 4T9er

E-Supplement

*August
2013*



The E-Supplement was introduced a year ago to compliment the e-mailed version of The 4T9er to enable us to bring to you photographs and other items that otherwise would be unpublished due to space restrictions. The superb photographs by Phil Waterfield are prime examples of what would otherwise be missed. I am grateful to Phil for allowing us to share the RAF's marking of the 70th Anniversary of the dams raid through his photographs which appear on pages 1, 2 & 3.

The location is of course the Derwent Dam and the aircraft shown in these pages are: Lancaster, Spitfire PR XIX and two Tornados of 617 Squadron.

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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Above: Note the Spitfire passing the left hand tower.



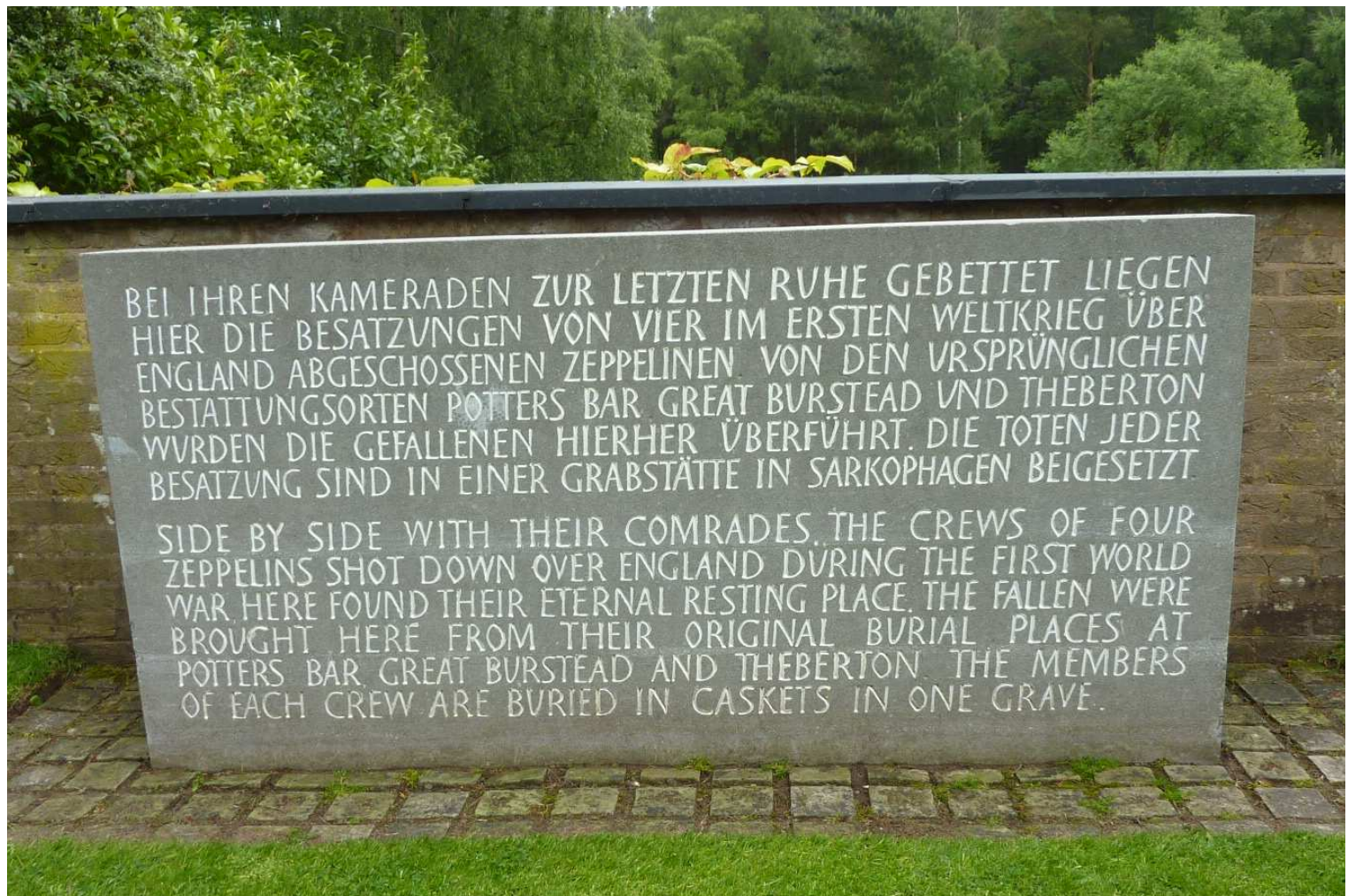






THE GERMAN MILITARY CEMETERY
CANNOCK CHASE
STAFFORDSHIRE





At the beginning of August an international delegation of young people made a special journey to Cannock to remember the fallen. Sixteen teenagers from Germany were joined by six from Staffordshire, together with dignitaries from across the county, to commemorate those who died in the two World Wars. Cannock is twinned with the Ruhr town of Datteln and every year, for the last fifty years, young people have been visiting from Germany to help tend the graves.



**WHEN THE LARGE MODEL ASSOCIATION SAY LARGE THEY MEAN
VERY BIG & VERY NOISY**

The LMA Meeting at Cosford will be featured in the next issue of The 4T9er



PHOTOSHOOT AT EAST KIRKBY

A photo shoot at East Kirkby on August 10th was organised by Neil Cave. You may remember the superb shots, taken on a previous occasion by Phil Waterfield, which were published in the May issue. Hopefully, to whet your appetite for the November edition when more professional photographs will be available, I am enclosing a couple of my own moody shots.

For those interested in railways Neil is promoting the following photographic charters;

Keighley & Worth Valley Railway—Autumn 2013, Middleton Railway—October 2013

Stockton & Darlington Railway—December 2013 & February 2014, Vale of Rheidol—Autumn 2013

For details contact Neil Cave on: neilcave@me.com Aviation related events will be advised when known.

