

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
February 2016 Issue 40**



**The landmark that all returning crews longed to see, Lincoln Cathedral.
Fiskerton is in the right background.**

IN MEMORIAM
T. Reed P. Varvel
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the fortieth issue of The 4T9er. It doesn't take a mathematical genius to work out that, at four issues a year, it is ten years since I, with the invaluable help of the late Ted Cachart, put together Issue No.1. In those ten years the membership structure has inevitably changed significantly. When I took over from Tom Gatfield the number of Members, i.e. those who had actually served in 49 Squadron, far outweighed that of Associate Members. At that time there were no Friends or Honorary Friends categories. Whilst, over the years the number of Members has steeply declined the Associates and Friends has correspondingly increased. Whilst this is very satisfactory as far as sheer numbers is concerned it is so sad to see the direct link with the squadron steadily diminishing. When Tom approached me in 2005 to take up the reins as secretary he said, "If you organize the 2006 Reunion I will continue to run the Association for a while and lower you in slowly." We had hardly started the process when, on March 28th 2006, I received the devastating news that Tom had died. Worse was to come as two months later our long standing chairman, Leslie 'Uncle Will' Hay also died. "Well Alan, you're on your own now." I said to myself. I couldn't have been more wrong because in no time my friends had rallied round and my wonderful Crew was formed. Ted Cachart became our chairman, a position he held most ably until his sudden death on 9 September 2013, to be succeeded by our present chairman Stuart Keay. He and the rest of the Crew, whose names appear on the back cover of every issue, have supported me and the Association with loyalty, enthusiasm, diligence and every other conceivable complimentary adjective. Without them it is possible that 49SA would have folded. Certainly the service that we give would have been a mere shadow of what it is. I remember Stuart saying, after a few months in office, that he couldn't believe the level of activity. I must acknowledge, as I know the Crew do, the wonderful support of our ladies, The Ground Crew. Without their approval we wouldn't 'get off the ground'. I am in absolute awe of what Tom and Marion Gatfield and 'Uncle Will' achieved for over forty years, and without the help of computers! I hope that they approve of what we are doing!

This year is a most significant anniversary being the centenary of 49 Squadron's formation. On 15 April 1916 49 Squadron was formed at Dover, Kent, under the

command of Major A.S. Barratt. After an illustrious history it was finally disbanded on 1 May 1965, significantly perhaps, 49 years later.

It is rather ironic, but again symbolic, that this year will see the Association's final reunion in June. Tom Gatfield announced in 2004 that that year's reunion would possibly be the last. Well we kept going for a further twelve years although I did issue some rather pessimistic comments a couple of years ago. It was, however, pointed out to me that 2016 is the centenary year so it seemed appropriate to continue until this year. So, for a number of reasons June this year will see the finale. Predominant of these is the fact that, due to steadily decreasing attendance numbers, it is no longer financially viable to promote the gathering at a reasonable cost. We have been showing a deficit over a number of years now which we can no longer justify. **DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA. 49 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION IS STILL HEALTHY AND I SEE NO REASON WHY IT CAN'T CONTINUE FOR SOMETIME YET.** However, it must be recognized that I am moving into the age group, if I haven't already done so, that my own mortality is running out and the question of finding a successor cannot be too far away. Think about it!

I regret to report that two former members of the squadron have died. Thomas William Reed passed away suddenly on November 14th at the age of 96. Tom served in 49's Armoury. It is a sad coincidence that this issue sees the commencement of Tom's story. Phil Varvel, who served as an airframe mechanic with 49 Squadron before being transferred to the Fleet Air Arm, died on October 29th. .

In the November issue I appealed to those of you who are able to receive The 4T9er by e-mail, but are currently receiving it by post, to consider taking the electronic copy. I thank the one member who volunteered to do so. However, I am most grateful to those who have sent donations, not only to help finance their copy of the magazine, but also to contribute to the general cost of running the association. On behalf of the Crew and myself I thank all of you who sent Christmas greetings.

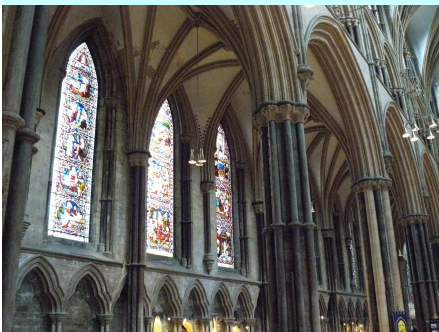
'Till the next time.

THE CENTENARY REUNION

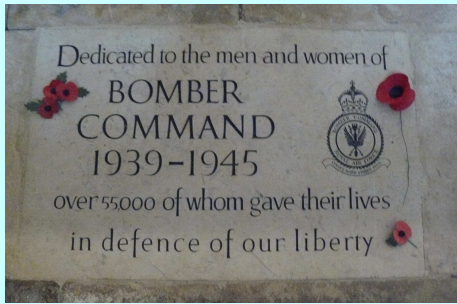
**CELEBRATING THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF
THE FORMATION OF 49 SQUADRON**

**THE EVENT WILL BE HELD AT THE BENTLEY HOTEL, LINCOLN
BETWEEN JUNE 12th AND 14th 2016.**

PRELIMINARY BOOKING FORMS ARE ENCLOSED WITH THIS ISSUE.



*The Magnificence
that is
Lincoln Cathedral*



This page;
 Top, The Bomber Command Memorial Stone unveiled on August 27th 2006, see The 4T9er issue 3. It is set in the floor at the entrance to the Royal Air Force Chapel.
 Above; The frontispiece of the 5 Group Roll of Honour.
 Right; The Bomber Command Memorial Window.

Photos; Dom Howard

I am grateful to the late Tom Reed for granting me permission to publish extracts from his auto-biography, The War, and Before and Civvy Street. We have read many accounts of life in the RAF in general and 49 Squadron in particular but few cover the experiences of ground crew members, Tom's memoirs help to redress the balance.

THE WAR...

By

Tom W. Reed

...In May 1939 I volunteered for service in the RAF. I visited the recruiting office in Newcastle and when the sergeant asked me what trade I was interested in, I asked him which had the quickest promotion. He said there was a shortage of armourers, so I said, "Put me down as one of them," not having the faintest idea what they did.

I was called up to report to his office on 5 June and was issued with a rail ticket to Uxbridge with several other recruits. We arrived at Uxbridge and I was attested and took the oath on 6 June. I was posted to RAF Dishforth for recruits' training (i.e. square bashing etc.)

On my first day who should I meet but my old pal Arthur Cowie, who was by now a fully fledged WOP/AG LAC on 102 Squadron on Whitley bombers. Unfortunately I never saw him again. He went on to complete three tours of operations and had risen to squadron leader rank, he was squadron signals leader and although he had finished operations he flew as an extra man on what was to be his last trip and he and his crew were lost.

I heard later that the Halifax they were flying had collided with another aircraft and they were reported missing and were not found until in the early nineties. An organisation of enthusiasts looking for wartime crashed aircraft found their remains in the middle of a dense forest in France.

I survived the training course under the auspices of a corporal called 'Spike', an old timer with three GC stripes and a broken nose, who must have been a boxer in his youth. His bark was worse than his bite and he thanked us all in the billet as he received a commendation from the warrant officer for our performance.

My weekends were spent at Sharow about five miles march away, where Deenie was staying with her Aunt Marion and I was able to enjoy her company, she would walk halfway back to camp with me and our courtship was given a big boost.

After three months' training I was posted to RAF Acklington, an Air Observers School, which was equipped with aircraft which the airmen used to say, "existed

when Pontius was a pilot.” Boulton Paul Overstrands and Sidestrands, Handley Page Harrows, Hawker Hinds and Harts, Westland Wallaces and Wapitis, etc.

When I reported to the warrant officer disciplinary he said, “Just from recruits training? Did you do any funeral drill? Report for drill at 2pm you’re on funeral drill tomorrow.”

I duly reported for funeral drill which we did until the warrant officer was satisfied and as we were dismissed I asked who the deceased was. I was told he was a local lad from Newbiggin who was an armourer who had tripped whilst carrying some practice bombs and fell on them as they exploded underneath him.

“What have I done?” I thought, “Volunteering as an armourer.”

I soon got the hang of things and even had a few trips in the bomber aircraft which had open cockpits. Sometimes in the front cockpits and sometimes in the rear, it was ‘stately flying’ over the range at Druridge Bay at ninety miles an hour or so.

Eventually on 2 September 1939 we were paraded and told to pack our kit and were marched to Acklington Station and entrained to RAF Station Warmwell in Dorset which was our ‘war station’ and the aircraft flown ahead of us.

We left Acklington at about 10.30a.m. and made our hesitant way towards Dorchester, stopping many times for reasons unknown, and eventually reached our destination in pitch dark and pouring rain to be loaded into lorries for Warmwell. We arrived to find that we would be accommodated in bell tents in a flooded field with duckboards around the tents and inside to sleep on.

It was after midnight and we were starving and had to make do with hot cocoa and bully beef sandwiches. We were all whacked and soon got in between the blankets to be woken at 6a.m. for duty.

We repeated the routine we had at Acklington, bombing and gunnery training for the observers and I was fortunate enough to get a few trips over the range at Chesil Beach. After a few days we were all paraded and the ground trades, aircraft mechanics, engine fitters and armourers were called forward and half of us were transferred to the Royal Navy as crew for HMS Illustrious which we heard had been sunk at Scapa Flow about a week later. Lucky me!

Eventually I was posted to RAF Manby for armament training and passed out as Armourer 1st Class (AC1) and was posted to Silloth from where I could hitch- hike to Durham on a forty-eight hour pass to see Deenie.

I was billeted in the town with Mr and Mrs Metcalf.

During my last forty-eight hour pass before Christmas I had requested permission from Uncle Frank (Deenie’s legal guardian) to get married to Deenie and asked her to marry me. She answered in the affirmative and as I had a

few days leave to come at Christmas, I went to Durham Registry Office and applied for a special licence.

I was given an assent form which had to be signed by one of my parents as I was still under twenty-one. On my Christmas leave I went to Newcastle and asked my mother to sign it, she refused and was very displeased, even though Deenie and I had been courting for three years. Happily my dad was pleased to sign, saying, "I suppose you know what you are doing."

When I asked him if he would come to the wedding, my mother retorted, "No he won't."

So I left for Durham and Deenie and I were married next day, 23 December 1939. Clare Senior and Bob, who was also on Christmas leave, were witnesses and we all went to a café on Silver Street for an intimate wedding breakfast.

Deenie returned to work in the shop making up orders for delivery, and I delivered them in the boss's Morris Minor car. We had a few days at home and as Clare had given us the family car, the Standard 12/14, my landlady at Silloth said, "Bring Deenie over to stay with us as you are occupying a double room in any case."

So we took off for Silloth on New Year's Eve morning, arriving to celebrate our first New Year's Eve together. Deenie and Mrs Metcalfe were soon firm friends and got on very well together. I, of course, had to report for duty and was soon promoted to LAC and was asked to assist the station armament officer, Squadron Leader Hards, who was a pilot and had his own personal aircraft, an ex-Navy 'string bag'. (His father was a commodore.)

He had set out a floating target in the Solway Firth and was trying different methods to destroy or damage the invasion barges assembled in the Channel ports in France and the Low countries. We had a collection of incendiary bombs with noses sharpened to a point and I was to occupy the rear cockpit and as there were no bomb racks on the aircraft I was to throw them out towards the target as he directed. I don't know whether this was adopted but I was detailed for a more mundane armament task.

The Americans were shipping Lockheed Hudson aircraft to Manchester in sections packed in large crates and assembling them at RAF Ringway (now Manchester Airport), and they were flown to Silloth by the ATA girls.

I had by now been promoted to corporal and was detailed to install the Boulton Paul electric gun turrets and the forward firing Brownings in the nose, and shortly after finishing each install action did a test flight whilst instructing the gunners to use the turret.

On one occasion, with one pilot an instructor converting the Coastal Command and the other a pilot from the old Anson aircraft, we were flying over the Lake District chasing through the alleyways in the fluffy cumulus and I was standing

up behind the pilots, the aircraft dropped 500 feet and I hit the roof and was more surprised than hurt as I hit the floor. I learned then that a safety harness was essential equipment.

We had just finished the first batch of Hudsons when twenty Hurricane fighters arrived at the MU on the airfield and Squadron Leader Hards announced that we had to install all the armament and harmonize all eight guns on each aircraft and would be required to work non stop until the job was done.

We set to work with a will, dismantling all the guns after removing them from their storage boxes and boiling all the heavy grease off them in forty gallon barrels of water heated by field kitchen blow lamps then oiling for service and assembling them before installing and arming them ready for immediate action.

The job started on Wednesday a.m. and finished on Friday p.m.. We had been sustained in our task with refreshments - sandwiches, coffee and meals from the cookhouse, delivered in person by Squadron Leader Hards who kept up verbal encouragement throughout and congratulated us on a job well done.

A few days later he sent for me and said that he was recommending me for training as an armament fitter, saying that I had been detached to RAF Prestwick with a sergeant airframe fitter and about twenty tradesmen to form the nucleus of No2 COTU converting Coastal Command aircrew from Ansons to Blenheim fighter bombers.

The detachment to Prestwick was housed in Monkton Town Hall and travelled to the airfield which was just a grass field. We had two marquee tents and a caravan which doubled as the aircrew crew room and the flight office.

There was a flying training school with DH Moths which worked from the other side of the airfield and when it was very windy the instructors used to take-off and 'climb the stairs' to get up speed and fly backwards across the airfield.

Our task was the conversion of the Coastal Command pilots from the old Ansons to Blenheim fighter bombers and I managed to do a couple of air to sea gunnery sorties in the nose position - very frightening.

I scouted around for accommodation and found a room at a little grocery-cum-post-office bungalow. I returned to Silloth and brought Deenie up to our new accommodation and the old couple were delighted to find that Deenie was an experienced assistant.

Unfortunately we were only there for a few months before my posting to the armament fitters' course came through to RAF Weeton near Blackpool. Whilst at Prestwick, Deenie and I became regulars at a lovely little café called The Copper Kettle, sometimes for lunch and for an evening meal.

I drove Deenie back to The Travellers Rest and parked the car behind the pub.

I arrived at Weeton and started my fitters' course, but was horrified to learn that although we got a monthly forty-eight hour pass it was practically impossible to get home and back by public transport in forty-eight hours.

When out during the first weekend we had transport into Blackpool and on enquiring at Standerwick's Coach Garage I found that I could hire a coach to go to Newcastle via Durham so provisionally booked one provided I could muster enough passengers.

I put up a notice which was filled up immediately so I confirmed the booking and it was all systems go and off we went on the first forty-eight, leaving on Friday p.m. and returning before midnight on Sunday.

The trip went through Kirby Stephen and Bishop Auckland and went very well.

Not so on the return, we stopped at a pub in Lancaster and found it was the permanent residence of several retired service officers who were delighted to see us and provided drinks and sandwiches all round.

The only problem that I had was that the passengers were so pleased to get home for the weekend, that they started plying me with drinks and I became rather inebriated. When time to go arrived we said farewell and promised to call on our next forty-eight.

I managed to get everyone on board and off we went. About fifteen minutes later we heard the bell of a police car who pulled us over and climbed aboard. The sergeant asked who was in charge, I replied that I was, and then he said that five tankards had disappeared from the pub and if they were returned immediately the publican would call it an escapade and no action would be taken.

Within minutes all five were found under the rear seat, so all was well.

When we got back to Weeton I felt awful and started to vomit into a handy fire bucket, I had an awful night retching and had the 'mother and father' of all headaches. I managed to crawl along to sick quarters and was immediately taken across the road to the hospital.

When the MO came round the ward he checked me over and asked what I had eaten on the previous evening and what's more important what I had drunk. He told me I was very lucky to survive a bad case of alcohol poisoning. It took me three days to recover.

At the second and subsequent weekends I had two coaches, one to Newcastle and one to Framwellgate Moor where the driver parked on the Main Road Service Station forecourt and stayed in the Salutation Inn across the road.

Eventually I finished my course and having acquired 82%, the necessary percentage result, was now a corporal armament fitter and was posted to 49 Bomber Squadron based at Scampton near Lincoln on 13 January 1941.

To be continued.

Associate Member Graham Boyd e-mailed this piece, written by his father Bill Boyd. As most of our readers will be aware the Peenemunde Raid was undertaken to destroy the centre for German rocket research. This account of the raid is of particular interest to me as my uncle's crew 'Failed to Return.':

Graham writes: "My Dad only wrote about the outbound trip to Peenemunde but it does provide a little atmosphere of what the journey was like."

OUTBOUND FOR PEENEMUNDE

By

William Boyd

I could say 17 August 1943 dawned bright and clear, but truthfully I don't remember. By lunchtime there were rumours that there was a big effort tonight. We did a 20 minute NFT in the afternoon.

As we walked to the crew-bus after landing, a petrol bowser moved in to refuel. We knew if anything, we were most certainly going. Back in the crew-room we headed for the notice-board. Sure enough, there it was; "The following crews to report for briefing at 6 pm."

Plenty of nervous excited chatter as we entered the briefing room. Where the hell are we going tonight? The familiar blackboard had the usual map of Europe covered by a cloth so, until the CO pulled the covering off, we could not know the route or target. Section Leaders took their seats in the front row: Engineering, Navigation, Wireless Ops, Gunnery; etc - plus the Weatherman. Finally the CO shows up and respectfully we stand up en masse as he takes his place facing the assembled aircrews. His opening gambit was dramatic in the extreme: "Tonight's target is so important that if you do not destroy it tonight you will go back tomorrow night and the night after". Everyone sat up with a jolt as he whipped off the covering on the blackboard. "Bloody hell it's Berlin", were the loudly whispered comments - but wait: The return route started long before Berlin - on the Baltic coast. Wing Cmdr Johnson, our CO, had a sharp staccato voice he delivered in spades: "Your target tonight is Peenemünde on the Baltic coast". Peenemünde? Never heard of it! Stettin and Lubeck on the Baltic - yes we had been there - but Peenemünde? Johnson ploughed on ignoring the murmuring: "This is a very important high priority target and must, I emphasise 'must', be destroyed". The route takes you over Denmark, north to the top of the island of Rügen by which time you have descended to 8000 feet. You then execute a time and distance run to the target and bomb from 8000 feet. The Meteorologist told us the weather was no problem - no cloud. Yes - and a bloody full-moon! The CO said Section Leaders would brief crews in the

Conference Room. From my point of view, as Flight Engineer, I needed to know the full load, and the most economical engine revs and boost at the different heights we would be flying. Johnson said, "Take off 9:30 pm." and wished us good luck. It was soon over. Off to the Section Leader's briefing which lasted some 15 minutes. Teatime and all those on Ops were entitled to fried-egg. Eggs were scarce and rationed. Powdered egg yes, but fried-eggs... a delicacy!

Back in the hut for a short rest. Some guys wrote letters to their wives and girlfriends in case they got the chop. Some of these men were old guys in their 30's, with wives and kids with much more to lose than we 19 and 20 year olds with a totally different outlook.

Walk back to the crew room to clobber up. Silk long-johns; flying boots; Mae West; check the parachute; escape kit, complete with Deutschmarks; flying helmet and oxygen mask; torch - wedged in your flying boot. So many things to remember. Help Jack the Canadian rear-gunner on with his electrically heated suit: Can be hellish cold in the rear turret. [I reminded him of our trip to Mannheim 10 days earlier: It was my job to call every member of the crew every 20 minutes to confirm all was well. Soon after leaving the target, Jack did not respond. Robbie our pilot asked me to put on the portable oxygen bottle and go aft to see if he was okay. Gunners have been sick in their masks which froze and cut off the oxygen supply. Many gunners lost their lives in this way. However I did as ordered and clambered over the main spar back to the tail of the aircraft, giving the mid-upper gunner a pat on the leg as he swung around in his turret. He had heard the interchange between the pilot and myself so he was aware of the situation. Reaching the rear turret I plugged into the spare intercom socket and called Jack: No reply. His turret was centralised so I banged on the doors which to my relief he opened. I pointed to his intercom plug which he pushed home and, hey presto, contact restored. A gloved handshake and I set off back to my position at the front of the aircraft. When I got there I had the surprise and shock of my life: to starboard an aircraft had drifted over a town, had been coned, and was taking a fearful battering. We thought he went down but could not be sure. More to the point it could have been us and - being at the rear of the aircraft without a parachute at 21,000 feet - is not to be recommended. It could have spoiled my evening.]

Into the crew bus with four other crews. The WAAF driver knew the position of all the B- Flight kites parked around the perimeter. The crew-bus was always very quiet - it was getting serious and we all knew it. Time for a little retrospection: I recall Squadron Leader Todd-White being in the bus: he and his crew had been on the station about a week and this was the second trip of their second tour. *[By the following morning all were dead. ED.]* Crews dropped off as they reached their aircraft to shouts of good luck and, "You will never get out

of this”, from some cynic.

Finally, our turn, and out we jump with our gear. There she is: JA 892, ready to go, and the ground crew waiting to greet us. The pilot has a word with the Sergeant in charge. I have a word with the leading Fitter, “All instruments working okay?” Occasionally, in the final engine run-up, an instrument might go u/s and with time short and no replacement immediately available a strip of sticky paper with “U/S” scrawled on it would be stuck on the face of the instrument. If it was an RPM indicator or boost gauge it was no real problem. By keeping the throttle position of the engine with the duff instrument at the same setting as the other three, all went well. The gunners and the bomb-aimer had a word with the Armourers; and the wireless operator with the Signals. On occasion there had been minor changes to the bomb load - more incendiaries and less high explosive - or vice versa. In that event the armourers worked feverishly executing the change, trying not to delay take-off time. At such times I used to look in the bomb-bay and wonder how the hell we got off the ground okay - packed with high explosives and other nasties...and we were sitting on top of it! Some crews were very superstitious. In some instances the pilot boarded first, in others he boarded last. Some rear gunners always peed on the tail-wheel. Other guys took a pair of their wife’s or girlfriend’s panties out of their pocket and ceremoniously wore them as a cravat.

Finally all aboard and in position ready to go. Thumbs up to the engineers on the ground. Switch on the two magnetos per engine and press the starter button on starboard inner. The prop starts to rotate, a puff or two of smoke, as the engine is away and running. Port inner next, followed by starboard outer then port outer. Run up each engine in turn to 2850 RPM. Check the RPM drop is no more than 40 revs when one magneto is switched off. Everything looks okay. Thumbs up all round. It was customary to start the inner engines first as they supplied hydraulic power to the gun turrets, bomb doors and other services generally. This gave the gunners the chance to operate their turrets to ensure they are all working before we leave the dispersal.

Our CO Wing Commander Johnson moves past our disposal point heading for the runway. He is first off, we are seventh. I called to each crew member; a final thumbs up to the ground crew; chocks are pulled away; brakes-off and we move from the dispersal to the perimeter where we join the queue of aircraft waiting to take-off. During the hot evenings, engines tended to overheat which was rather a worry.

We are on the runway facing into the wind. The few final checks between the pilot and myself: make sure we are using fuel from the inner tanks; flaps set at 15°; push the throttle levers until the RPM is at maximum around 3000. Brakes off and we start to roll. Even though the aircraft is pulsating with power we

move quite slowly. Reaching takeoff speed, the pilot eases the aircraft off the ground and wheels up. At about 20 feet, there was Lincoln Cathedral - and we were heading straight for it. The same thing on every take-off for the heading on this runway. No worries really, gain a few hundred feet and turn away. Took off about 9:50 PM. Spent some time in the Wash area circling to gain height. Finally head out over the North Sea climbing en-route and heading for Denmark.

A full moon and as bright as day - not the ideal situation for the night bomber. Very easy for the night fighter to spot you or to follow your vapour trail if you are leaving one. For the moment no worries on that score. We are a long way from German occupied Europe. The first wave is 20 minutes ahead of us in the fifth wave. Even if the German radar has picked them up, they are unsure where we are headed. We could do a sharp right and head for the Ruhr. We could go for Hamburg or onward over Denmark to Berlin. Several Mosquitoes were sent to Berlin about half an hour before the first wave took off and this did fool the German night fighters for a long time. The night fighters only arrived over Peenemünde as the fifth wave arrived - most of Bomber Command's losses that night were suffered by the fifth wave.

We rumbled on across the North Sea. I called each of the crew in turn every 20 minutes or so: All okay nothing to report. Subconsciously we were aware that we were moving from a fairly safe area to a zone where it could suddenly become very hairy indeed. We were young, not really interested in politics, surrounded by the drone of synchronised engines and one's thoughts raced through all sorts of diverse paths. Even to thinking that surely at this period in the 20th century there must be another way to settle disputes between nations. Ah yes but he started it! He being Hitler aided and abetted by his cronies Goering, Himmler, Goebbels, etc. No you can't negotiate with this bunch and we are doing it the right way. One's musing is interrupted by the bomb-aimer lying in the nose intoning Denmark ahead. Ever positive Jim was sure we had hit Denmark. A few minutes later in an interchange with Phil the navigator he confirmed that with the bright moonlight he had identified a landfall and we were indeed on track.

Phil spoke to the pilot - "Rügen in about an hour." At that time Rügen meant nothing to me. When the bomb-aimer called out "Northern Rügen now", the navigator gave the pilot a new course nearly 90° to our present one, taking us down to the Baltic coast of Germany. Jim the bomb aimer continued to call out names and times. I wondered why. Then I remembered a similar performance when we had done a couple of time and distance runs on the bombing range at Wainsfleet on the East Coast. Perhaps we were doing a time and distance run. It was not until after the war that our bomb-aimer told me we had indeed done a

time and distance run, that I knew for certain. Apparently Air Marshal Cochrane had insisted that 5 group aircraft do a T & D.

We rumbled on South with Jim intoning times and names - presumably Danish islands. We were now almost at bombing altitude, 8000 feet. The navigator gave the pilot a marginal alteration to our course and airspeed. I got out of my seat and switched the fuel valves to the inner tanks. This was normal procedure. There were three tanks in each wing of an operational Lancaster. You took off using the inner tanks. At operational height, or soon after, the 120 gallons was pumped from the outer tanks into the inner, replacing the fuel used in takeoff and clawing the way to 20,000 feet. The immersed fuel pumps were very efficient as it seemed a very short period of time to pump the 120 gallons from the outer to the inner tanks. The flight engineer then switched to the centre tanks - fuel being routed directly from the centre tanks to the engines. The fuel cocks were on the Flight Engineer's panel and were operated by hand. No button-pressing in 1943! On a bright moonlit night switching tanks was easy. On a dark moonless we had a hooded torch which we used economically. A shaft of light from a carelessly used torch could alert a prowling night fighter. Some engines had more exhaust flame than others and indeed some German pilots are on record as saying their first sighting of the Lancaster below them was the exhaust flames. The exhaust ports were shielded to cut down the glare and were very effective with most engines. Not a lot could be done. Any tinkering with the throttle controls i.e. closing them a little would result in a consequential loss of airspeed and spending longer time in the bomber stream.

The raid took place only two weeks or so after the Battle of Hamburg.

Bill's son Graham adds: "The hand-written account then has half a page of notes intended to be added in a continuation, including an assessment that more than 4,000 men had flown to Peenemünde – but which was never written. The final entry says, 'Do not confuse history with nostalgia!' "

Editor's Note: 49 Squadron despatched twelve aircraft to Peenemunde on 17 August 1943 of which four failed to return, Bill Boyd's was one of them. The two gunners; Sgt D Parkin and F/S J Wallner RCAF were killed, the remainder; Sgt. C. Robinson-pilot, F/O P.F. Duckham-navigator, Sgt. A.E. Anderson-wireless operator, F/O W.J. Lowe-bomb aimer and of course Bill, became Prisoners of War. Graham had previously sent me Jim Lowe's account of that night's events, see The 4T9er, February 2010, Issue 17, and it provides an interesting continuation of the story including life as a prisoner of war. In the four aircraft lost that night by 49 Squadron twenty three crew members were killed, the only survivors were in Bill Boyd's aircraft.



REUNION OF GIANTS

There are only two Avro Lancasters left flying in the world today and when they joined and flew together, it was...

HISTORY IN THE MAKING





The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum is pleased to present REUNION OF GIANTS, The official Lancaster UK Tour Documentary. It has been 50 years since two Avro Lancasters flew side by side. The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum's Avro Lancaster, VeRA, flew from Hamilton, Ontario to meet her British counterpart, Thumper, the only other surviving flight worthy Lancaster bomber in the world, the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's (BBMF) Lancaster in England.

This much anticipated documentary includes first-hand accounts from the men and women who experienced the war and were connected to the Lancaster. It transports the viewer back in time as they share what it was like during the Lancaster's glory days. REUNION OF GIANTS documents this historic mission as it unfolds through the eyes of the flight crews, veterans, friends and family. It includes all parts in this new chapter of the bomber's history, as VeRA crosses the Atlantic.

83 minutes. Colour. Aspect ratio 16:9. PCM stereo and 5.1 sound.

DVD-PAL Region 0 (All Regions) £19.99 (Inc. VAT)

Postage is £2.50 UK only.

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enquiries@lincsaviation.co.uk

READER'S LETTERS

Member Bill 'Titch' Cooke is an amateur poet and sent this odd ode about his RAF days. One can easily imagine Cyril Fletcher reading it:

I'll tell you a tale of me, William,
In the war, like others my age,
Called into the RAF, as aircrew,
'Cause them days it was all the rage.

I'd heard that the girls were all willing
To go with a lad in the RAF
So I thought 'Was I lucky?'
What! At five foot four, 'That's a laugh.'

But I joined and was issued my tackle,
Flying boots, long johns, the lot.
Dressed up like a turkey for Christmas
And looking a proper clot.

Then off to do the training
Gunnery school, O.T.U., L.F.S.
Met the rest of m'crew and the skipper,
Did it all without too much mess.

Then Fiskerton with 49 Squadron,
Getting through the tour quite OK,
Thought, it's time to find me a girl,
A nice little WAAF who will play.

I took her down to the local,
It was all going to plan,
I thought, 'That's it, you've cracked it,
Tonight you will be a man.'

It was that bloke Freud who said it,
'Sex drives us on in life's dance.'
A pint of weak beer on a cold winter's night,
Dr. Freud, sex didn't stand a chance.

But that stuff's now all finished.
It's getting to the end of my life,
And it has been a good one,
Two great sons and a wife.

When it comes, I hope to go happy
And be ready to hang up my hat,
C'ause with my mates I've had tea at the
PALACE
And it doesn't come better than that.

HAVE YOU AN INTEREST IN RHEINBERG, REICHSWALD FOREST OR DURNBACH CEMETERIES?

As most of you know I try to nip over to Germany at least once a year, not only to see friends and sample some excellent wines, some produced by one of 49SA's members, but also to visit many of the Commonwealth War Grave Cemeteries.

I am hoping to return this year at some point, I've not set any dates yet due to the fact that I am awaiting on a date for the second part of my surgery.

I would like to offer to all the members and their families to place a Poppy Cross, Posy or wreath, or just spend a few minutes with them, on any family member resting in one of the CWGC that I visit while over.

I hope to visit Rheinberg, Reichswald Forest Cemetery & Durnbach this year.

You can contact me via email or letter with your family or friend's details, the information that I require being;

CWGC they rest in - Name and the grave reference eg;

Rheinberg - C T Anderson - 18. A. 18

Dom Howard, Solway House, Port Carlisle, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 5BU

E-mail: lancaster.ed702@gmail.com

Associate Member Robert McEneaney continued his active involvement with all things Bomber Command as described in his e-mail to me:

“A belated Happy New Year to you and all the crew at the 49ers.

“Just a note to let you know I attended the Bomber Command Association Christmas Lunch at the Union Jack Club, Waterloo, London with my brother Paul and my son Anthony. It was a very enjoyable afternoon and as always an honour to sit and chat with a few of the veterans following a wonderful lunch.

“Having explained our connection with the 49 Squadron Association Air Commodore Charles Clarke OBE told me he remembered Fiskerton and the introduction of FIDO and was happy to chat about his time with BC and as a POW Stalag Luft III.

“Sadly ,as with most of the associations, they are also losing their veterans but they continue to proudly honour the memory of those who served with Bomber Command.

“I asked Charles Clarke about the mighty battle to deliver the BC Memorial at Green Park nearly 70 years after the war to which he replied, ‘If we'd got the memorial in 1945, people would have forgotten us by now. In a way the delay helped to perpetuate the memory of what we did.’

“A fitting response from a wonderful gentleman.”



Photo: Robert McEneaney

Anthony McEneaney, A/C Charles Clarke OBE, Paul McEneaney