

The 4T9er



**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
May 2016 Issue 41**



IN MEMORIAM

R. Barnes L. W. Homard H. Wilkinson

R. Walters

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Brendan Wood Kerrie Barnes

EDITORIAL

As I write it is the last day of April, the daffodils are virtually gone and it is bluebell time. Caravans and motor homes are on the road...and we have thunder and lightening! Welcome to Britain!

As always I express my gratitude to those kind folk who have sent donations in various forms. We never have, and hopefully never will, employed a subscription system so your spontaneous generosity should be welcomed by all the membership.

Sadly, as you can see from the 'In Memoriam' box we have to announce the passing of four more members. Associate Member Robert Barnes, who died on February 15th aged 73, was the nephew of P/O Keith Ormond Barnes DFC RAAF, who was the pilot of Lancaster JB360, killed on January 23 1944 when it was shot down during a raid on Berlin. Aged 20, it was his 23rd operation. Bob Barnes was himself a civil pilot as are his two sons. I enjoyed many telephone conversations with Bob over the years, despite his long illness which he bravely bore, not only as he acted as the unofficial 'Australian Secretary' but as a friend. He has saved the association hundreds of pounds as he repackaged and forwarded the copies of The 4T9er, which I sent him in one package, on to our Aussie Members. When I spoke with Kerrie, Bob's widow, about Bob's passing she said that she wishes to continue his work and succeed him as an Associate Member. I'm sure that all 4T9ers join me in thanking her for this brave and generous act. Leslie (Les) Homard passed away on Monday 22nd February 2016 at the age of 97 years. As Sgt. Homard he was wireless operator

Front cover: A Bae Hawk from RAF Valley salutes Les Homard's cortege at Blacon Crematorium, Chester on March 23rd.

Photo courtesy: Sqn Ldr Dave Williams OC Media Communications Flight. RAF Valley.

in the crew of Sgt. W. J. Baird when they were shot down over Holland. All the crew escaped from the aircraft but were captured to start four years as PoW's. Les Homard eventually found himself at Sagan, Stalag Luft III at the time of the Great Escape. Due to claustrophobia he was employed on lookout and sand dispersal. Having undertaken the "Long March" he was liberated by the Royal Dragoons at Kogel. He was discharged in August 1945. At his funeral on March 23rd his coffin was borne by a contingent from RAF Valley and as the cortege approached the crematorium a lone Bae Hawk, also from RAF Valley, flew over in salute. Harry Wilkinson flew 17 operations as air bomber with S/Ldr Gilpin and New Zealander F/Lt R.C. Munro between 14 April and 18 October 1943. He died on March 17 aged 94. Roy (Pat) Walters died on March 12th aged 92. As mid upper gunner he, and the crew of F/O R. M. Pereira, flew a remarkable eleven operations between July 26th and August 15th, 1944.

Both our new Associate Members are Australians. Brendan Wood is the son of A408548 Sgt John Wood, late RAAF and 49 Squadron, who flew 31 ops as air gunner to Sgt. B.A. Gumbley and, coincidentally, F/Lt R.C. Munro. He died in 1978 aged 64. Kerrie Barnes has already been introduced in late husband Bob's obituary.

Our final reunion is only a month or so away and I have sent invoices to all who have booked. Therefore, if you wish to attend but have not received an invoice get in touch with Ed Norman or myself without delay. As this is the Centenary of the formation of 49 Squadron, on April 5th 1916, this final reunion is of considerable significance and we hope to make it quite special. Honorary Friend, Jack Hawkins, has advised me that we are 'in the book' for BBMF Lancaster flypasts at the hotel on the Sunday and over the Fiskerton Airfield Memorial on the Monday and Associate Member, Red 10 of The Red Arrows, Sqn Ldr Mike Ling has informed me that the Reds are returning to Scampton on the Monday and MAY be able to fly over our memorial. Tissues at the ready!

Disturbing facts emerged following the receipt of an e-mail from our archivist Ed Norman. It read, "A small part of JA851 (Tomlin crew) is presently on sale on Ebay with Hans Meissners' combat report." Knowing that this 49 Squadron Lancaster was lost, with all its crew, whilst returning from the Peenemunde raid and that the rear gunner was F/S G.B. Silvester DFM, the great uncle of Associate Member Jo Cockburn, I forwarded it to her. Knowing that the bulk of the aircraft lies beneath the Baltic, just off the Danish coast, Jo replied, "this is somewhat worrying to say the least, I am going to contact the seller and find out how he has acquired this, and it's story." She later called me to say that the seller openly admitted that he made a business of obtaining relics, researching them and selling them for the best price he can get. He also admitted taking the

Meissner combat report from our website. Whilst there is a great temptation to buy something of this nature which might have great sentimental value I strongly advise against it. Firstly, unless one is extremely lucky, there is very little chance of there being the means to positively identify the aircraft concerned. Secondly, I consider this to be callous profiteering considering that there are many people who are still living that may find it offensive. It should not be encouraged.

Sometime ago I published details of the award of the Legion d'Honneur to anyone, still living, who took part in the liberation of France, after D Day, whether on land, sea or air. I was delighted to hear from Bill 'Titch' Cooke that he has received his. As far as I am aware he is the first former member of 49 Squadron to receive the award.



Photos: Steve Cooke

Bill proudly wears his Legion d'Honneur below his British medals which include The Burma Star and France and Germany Star.



'Til the next time.

THE WAR...

By

Tom W. Reed

Part 2

At the time there was about three feet of snow covering the west side of the country and I managed to get routed via Carlisle and Newcastle. I managed to interrupt my journey at Durham and spend a few hours with Deenie before reporting for duty at Scampton.

I blamed the weather for my delayed arrival and my excuse was accepted.

I was billeted in a barrack room with a dozen members of 49 Squadron armoury and my reception was hostile to say the least. I was asked my service number and told to 'get some in' by the 'old sweats' in the room who were corporals and A/Cs sporting three good conduct stripes and had been airmen since 'Pontius was a pilot'.

Two of the corporal fitters were really incensed at such a 'sprog' corporal being thrust among them and 'put the poison in' with the warrant officer in charge, so for the first few months things were pretty miserable for me.

Eventually I was accepted and even put in a few 'gash flights'. The squadron was equipped with Handley Page Hampdens, not very brilliant aircraft, and there were many incidents around the airfield, crashes on take-off, aircraft running out of fuel on return, collisions on the ground, etc.

There was a period when intruder bombers were operating. The airfield was attacked several nights in succession damaging two of the hangars and blowing out all the windows which on the first occasion were replaced by glass and afterwards by plywood.

The intruder aircraft was shot down on the seventh night and crashed about 200 yards from the bomb dump, the ground defence gunners were credited with its destruction. All the crew were killed.

When the arrival of the 'heavies' - Manchesters and Lancasters - became imminent the armament officer, Warrant Officer Spradbury, had been sounding out the sergeants and senior corporals for a likely person to take over the responsibility of NCO I/C gunnery section, and, possibly as a last resort, sent for me as none of the other NCOs was interested.

The gunnery section was to be a break-away section as the work included the servicing of hydraulic gun turrets and systems with a sergeant in charge.

I agreed to take over if I could be sent to the Fraser Nash factory, where the turrets were made, for a comprehensive course on the turrets and hydraulic systems. I was sent to Parnall's Factory at Yate in Bristol for a three week

course and on arrival was introduced to my instructor, Tony Carpenter, who was a very friendly person and we gelled immediately. He was an expert at his job and gave me the confidence to emulate him, by following every stage of the manufacturing process and in the classroom the whys and wherefors of the whole system.

We spent quite a few nights in his local pub playing darts etc. I completed the course and returned to find a Manchester aircraft already on the tarmac at Scampton.

The Hampdens were fitted with the manual scarf rings with pan loaded Vickers guns, except for a few fitted with electrical traversing by A. V. Roe.

The Manchesters and Lancasters had three hydraulic gun turrets, except a few with underbelly turret which were soon replaced with navigational equipment. I carried on with a programme of instructions for my staff and air gunners, sometimes with eight gunners per sortie over the Wainfleet range.

My spare time was used writing vouchers for tools, maintenance manuals and spare parts which were very slow in forthcoming.

The Manchesters were a disaster due to the two underdeveloped Vulture engines which caught fire at the drop of a hat.

It was redesigned with four Merlin engines and the mighty Lancaster was born. Shortly after returning from Parnall's I learned that there was a unit at Bracebridge Heath where Lancasters were cannibalised and the recovered parts built into new aircraft.

I decided to pay a visit and was delighted to find my old instructor Tony Carpenter was in charge of all armament spares. He kitted me out with tools and a few spares and offered me a spare rear turret. As I was on my motorbike, Camel 500, I promised to come back with a truck for it and returned an hour later. He gave me some maintenance manuals and I invited him to meet me at the armourers pub, The Angel.

49 Squadron now had the best equipped gunnery section in Bomber Command.

On taking over the gunnery section I had been promoted to sergeant and now had a room in the sergeants' mess.

When the airman aircrew, who had been housed in a nearby mansion, were promoted to sergeant they descended 'en masse' on the sergeants' mess and we were obliged to share accommodation.

My room mate was Basil Chandler, who soon became one of the flight gunnery leaders, and with the squadron gunnery leader who didn't have a recognised office, shared mine, which was adjacent to the workshop and airmen's crew room so we became one happy family.

Basil had been renamed 'Chan' as F/Lt. Ken Rogers said he wasn't going to have a Basil in his outfit. Chan, as he was now known, had survived at least two crashes and a couple of incidents where he escaped with minor injuries.

I was horrified to learn that Chan's aircraft was 'missing' on the night of 30 June 1941. Their aircraft had been seen to 'ditch' just off the coast of Holland so they had a chance. Next morning I had to assist the equipment sergeant who came to collect his belongings.

It was with great relief that I learned nine days later that they had survived for all that time in their four-man dinghy. They had been spotted by a Hampden from Hemswell who were searching for the crew of a Wimpey that had 'ditched' the night before.

They had dropped a rescue dinghy with rations and they were rescued by an RAF launch in the middle of a minefield about five miles off Yarmouth. They were given hot soup and a tot and were put ashore in Lowestoft where they stayed for a week before going on sick leave.

They had survived on a tin of Horlicks tablets, a bar of chocolate and the contents of a hot-water bottle, as all their rations were lost when the dinghy was overturned and inflated when released from the aircraft when they 'ditched'.

In August 1941 I received a telegram saying that Deenie had had an accident. I applied for, and was granted, five days. I hitched home as quickly as possible and arrived to find Deenie in bed with burns on her arms and legs and hair badly singed. She was delighted to see me and was, to my surprise, her usual placid self taking it all in her stride.

She told me what had happened. The living-room fire, burning anthracite coal, had died down so she decided to revive it. She got a bottle of liquid from the storeroom thinking it was paraffin and poured some on the fire. It was petrol and the flames 'whooshed' up into her face and all over one of the greyhounds lying in front of the fire. It ran round the room with Deenie in pursuit trying to extinguish the flames on his back. Her younger sister and brother were sitting at the table having a meal which was upset, one of the basket chairs caught fire and as Deenie's mother, Claire, burst in to see what happened she dashed over to the window where the curtains were on fire, slammed down the sash window and threw the curtains out which landed on the car parked in the yard. When the excitement had subsided Deenie found severe burns on both arms and legs and her hair was badly scorched. Fortunately her face wasn't too bad. As she was pregnant with our first baby the doctor was called and after treating her said the trauma might cause a premature birth and advised me to stick around for a few days. In the meantime I got the car out of the yard and into the coach house and 'mothballed', greasing and oiling most of the components. In the event I stayed at home for a week, and received a telegram, "RETURN TO THIS UNIT IMMEDIATELY OR ELSE".

I returned as requested and was charged, 'AWOL' and confined to camp for a month on 24 August. On the 25th I received a telegram to say Deenie was in

hospital and both she and the baby were well. I asked for a forty-eight hour pass and F/Lt. Morley-Brown, the adjutant, persuaded the CO to let me have leave provided I did my CC when I returned. I got to Sedgefield in time to take Deenie and the baby home. We had the baby christened Heather Anne.

In the summer of 1942 Deenie announced that she was pregnant and looking forward to having the baby in the following spring. I managed as usual to have my 48 hour passes once a month and everything went well with Deenie.

I saved my leave for the time that we estimated that the birth would be and I got my leave when Deenie was admitted to hospital in Gilsland and the baby, another girl, arrived before I did. After a couple of days I brought both back to The Travellers Rest and the new arrival was christened Patricia Wendy, later 'Windy Wendy'.

Deenie proved to be a very good mother to the girls and as usual took everything in her stride. 'Uncle Frank', who was by now bedridden, loved to have them around and as they grew older taught Heather, in particular, to read before she was three years old.

Baby number three, Christine Pamela was born on 23 December 1945 on our wedding anniversary.

Baby number four, Michael John, was born in our married quarter at Acklington on 10 June 1948 and as a result has a twenty-one gun salute as it is the Queen's official birthday.

In the early days if a crew was short of a gunner a call was made for a volunteer replacement, usually an armourer, and there were two LACs in the armoury who had been awarded the DFM (LACs Rich and Alwood.



**Photo: 49 Squadron Association Archive
49 Squadron Gunnery Section. 1942**

But when an LAC aircraft mechanic went missing shot down over Germany and became a POW, his parents wanted to know the details, and it was decided to ban all ground staff from flying on 'ops'. It was shortly after-

wards that all aircrew were promoted to sergeant, essentially to give them privileges as POW.

However, on 1 October 1942 'ops' called for a 'maximum, effort' and one crew, P.O. Perry's, had lost their mid-upper gunner when their aircraft was 'shot up' and badly damaged and was a write off. It was not known what had happened to the gunner, whether he had baled out or been blown out.

There was a discussion in the gunnery office and Ken Rodgers, the gunnery leader, asked me if I would stand in. My room mate, Chan, loaned me the necessary equipment and I reported to Roy Perry as a replacement gunner. We had been given a brand new Lancaster in the livery of the old 'O' Orange (now Oboe) with the squadron markings EA. We took off on air test (NFT) and flew round the area for twenty minutes to prove all the systems. Everything was OK.

We attended briefing and learned that the target was the Dornier factory which was the supply base for Peenemunde, the testing station for flying bombs and rockets, which had recently been attacked successfully with considerable losses (49 Squadron lost six aircraft; forty-two German).* As we lined up for take-off I began to wonder what I'd let myself in for, but as soon as we were airborne I settled into the routine of keeping my turret circling and my eyes peeled.

In the afterglow I could see a few Lancs all gaining height together and was shocked to see what could only be an aircraft exploding in a ball of fire about five or six miles ahead with no sign of flak or fighter aircraft. I thought it probably was a delayed-action bomb which had actually gone off after the acetone capsule had been inadvertently damaged.

As we reached our planned altitude of 20,000 feet I could feel an icy blast coming up the flare chute which was just below and behind my seat, which was just a padded hammock type seat suspended by two loops of steel cable, and in spite of the fact that I was wearing two sets of thick underwear with a complete Irvine suit I began to feel the cold.

As we turned in over the enemy coast we could see flak rising in several areas but we were in the clear. Before long the skipper announced that one of the port engines was overheating and he would have to throttle back and we gradually lost height, levelling out at 18,000 feet just on top of the cloud ceiling. As we flew through the fringes of the cloud tops I began to notice sheets of ice flying past my turret from the wings. So at least the de-icers were working, then I was treated to a display of electricity on the wing tips and tail fins which I learned later was called 'St Elmo's Fire'.

To be continued.

** Tom's recall has gone a bit awry here as Peenemunde was not attacked until 17/18 August 1943 when 49 Squadron lost four Lancasters and the total RAF loss was 42 aircraft. ED.*

TOUCH AND GO!

By

Frank Lowe

In the spring of 1942 I was a staff pilot in the Air Firing Flight at 16 O.T.U., Upper Heyford. The Flight was equipped with several Hampdens, a Lysander and, later, some Wellington 1C's. All the aircraft were fitted with target-drogue-towing winches.

When using Hampdens or Wellingtons, we would operate in pairs, flying out to the firing range in formation and then taking it in turn to stream our drogues so that the trainee gunners in the other aircraft could each fire his allotted number of rounds at it. On one occasion Bob B----- and I were detailed to fly a pair of Hampdens on an air firing sortie to the Wash. When we arrived at the range I streamed my drogue first and Bob's trainees did their firing. I then wound in my drogue while he streamed his. When my gunners had finished firing and Bob had started to retrieve his drogue I decided, in a sudden fit of exuberance, to "beat him up". From above and behind him I put the nose down, intending to make a close pass just above him. Unfortunately I misjudged my clearance by about half an inch! There was a surprisingly loud bang as the lowest point on my aircraft - the under identification-light cover clipped the top of his aerial mast. Another few inches and our airscrews would have clashed!

My exuberance was instantly transformed into extreme alarm. I took station again above and behind him on his starboard quarter to see whether I could spot any damage. He was flying straight and level. His aerial was no longer attached to the mast but was trailing from his tailplane and there was a hole in his top gunner's Perspex canopy. I called him on the RT and asked him if he was OK. Fortunately we were out of radio range of Upper Heyford and he said his elevator was very stiff. Almost immediately the aerial dropped off the tail and he called me to say all was well.

We flew back to Base very sedately. I landed first, went into the crew room and waited for Bob. When he came in I offered him my jaw and invited him to take a swing at it. "That's OK, old boy," he said. "How are you going to explain the damage," said I? "Leave that to me," he said, and he duly reported that he had suffered a collision with a large black bird at 4,000 ft. over The Wash!

We got away with it, in spite of the fact that there were four trainees in each aircraft, any one of whom could have spilled the beans. Had anyone "grassed" I would probably have been court-martialled, grounded and reduced to the ranks.

CAN YOU HELP?

Darren Priday, Manager of the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre, Royal Air Force Museum Cosford and Honorary Friend, e-mailed with a query that had been received by the museum regarding the two circular openings in the nose of the Lincoln.



Al McLean, Curator of the Cosford museum has already commented:

“The inside of ours is completely devoid of equipment or any clues (apart from that the wiring has been mucked around by persons unknown over the years and someone has made two ply-wood discs and pushed them loosely into place): They are possibly illustrated/referenced on the electrical air diagrams e.g. X001-8044, 8045, 9474, 9475 but the CMS images are too low a resolution to read the details.”

As requested by Darren I referred the question to our Chairman and ex Lincoln pilot Stuart Keay but he came back with:

“I remember the fitting under the nose of the aircraft, and although we never used it, I seem to think that the two lenses were coloured Red and Blue. They were also fitted to the Lincolns of 199 Squadron, (RCM/ECM), but never used when we were on exercise. I think that it must have been before my time!!! I would like to know the answer too.”

I also asked former Lincoln Flight Engineer, John Galloway, if he had any idea but again the reply was, ‘Sadly, no.’

So there we are...flummoxed! Can any of our former Lincoln ground crew Members come to the rescue?...49 SA’s honour is at stake!

SUMMER EVENTS AT EAST KIRKBY

May

[1940's Dance 28th May 2016](#) Sat 28th May 2016

Our annual 40's dance held under the wings of Avro Lancaster NX611 to the fabulous music of the 40's.

[Lanc. Tank and Military Machines](#) Sat 28th May 2016 - Mon 30th May 2016

Saturday 28th and Monday 30th May 2016 Experience a military weekend including an M36 Jackson tank destroyer, Lancaster taxi runs, military vehicles, trade stands and flying display (Monday only).

June

[Lincolnshire bike night](#) Wed 15th June 2016

Gathering of hundreds of bikes of all makes to watch an evening engine run of the Lancaster.

[Woodhall Spa Rotary Club Big Night Out](#) Sat 18th June 2016

Annual Concert.

July

[57 and 630 Squadron Reunion](#) Sun 3rd July 2016

Reunion of 57 and 630 Squadrons who were based at RAF East Kirkby during the Second World War.

[Rover Car Rally 2016](#) Sat 9th July 2016

Annual Rover Car Rally at the Centre. There will be Lancaster taxi runs at 11.00am, 1.00pm and 3.00pm.

August

[East Kirkby Air Show 6th August 2016](#) Sat 6th August 2016

The largest ever air show to take place at the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre with three hours of flying.

[Monday 29th August- Props and Pistons](#) Mon 29th August 2016

Bank Holiday Monday Lancaster taxi runs at 11.00am, 1.30pm and 4pm Flypasts and flying displays, 200+top class cars.

READER'S LETTERS

John Ward, our Hon. President and Historian sent this whimsical tale of wartime deprivation:

“On the Aquata Scrivia trip 617 borrowed ED999 and DV178...both were flown by ex 49er crews...Ralf Allsebrook took 999 and Dambuster Bill Townsend and crew took 178, landing in Blida. The Lancs were crammed full of N. African goodies...fruit and alcohol etc. on the return. Before going into the army, my father worked on Scampton for the maintenance firm. During this period he had to fit a clasp lock on Guy Gibson's garage door...well wishers kept messing with his car...swapping the HT leads and peeing in his petrol tank. Dad had just finished the job when Gibbo turned up in his motor. So pleased with the work, he went to his car and returned with an orange which he gave to my father. Not having seen an orange for nearly four years, by the time he'd shown it round it was hardly edible!”

John also picked up this piece:

“G. F. Sleight & Son ran a fleet of Trawlers out of Grimsby and Lowestoft including LT113 Fiskerton. It transpires that family member, S/Ldr Sleight, flew some ops out of Fiskerton with 576 Sqn.

Evidently several of their Trawlers carried Bomber Command airfield names... another is Kirmington (now Humberside Airport).

Details of LT113;

Built: 1962

Weight: 199 tons

Named 'Balmoral' Bought by G F Sleight and renamed 'Fiskerton' in 1964.

Scrapped at Gravesend 1982.”



This e-mail slipped through my net although I have published details of this project previously. Peter Jones made the following request:

“I am a researcher at The University of Lincoln working for The International Bomber Command Centre project;

www.lincsbombercommandmemorial.com

“At the heart of our project, as well as a memorial spire and walls carrying the names of the fallen, is the creation of a digital archive formed from merging several existing archives and digitising new material including the personal letters, diaries, log books etc. of those connected to Bomber Command. Our archive will enable, for the first time, family history and aviation researchers to source comprehensive information in one place. This archive will also include oral histories and films.

“I am contacting Squadron Associations to request help and support for our project. If you have any veterans who would be willing to be interviewed by our team for the oral history project, or have documents that could be copied for our archive, could you please contact me at The University of Lincoln on 01522 837707 or 07702 111182, e-mail pejones@lincoln.ac.uk.

“We would also be very interested in Squadron Association archive material.

“The University of Lincoln, located in the heart of the city of Lincoln, has established an international reputation based on high student satisfaction, excellent graduate employment and world-class research.”

Whilst not a letter or e-mail in the normal sense in this section of the magazine, John Ward sent me a cutting from the Lincolnshire Echo of February 25th drawing my attention to some exciting news the gist of which is:

**“THE AIR SHOW IS BACK
SCAMPTON WILL BE NEW AND UNIQUE.”**

That was the headline of an article announcing that an RAF Scampton air show for September 2017 is in the early planning stage. This has created much excitement in view of the demise of the highly popular Waddington Show. The RAF Charitable Trust Enterprises, which hosts the immensely popular Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) at Fairford, Gloucestershire, has reached an agreement in principle with the Royal Air Force to organise a show at the airbase lasting at least one day. As Waddington attracted 100,000 visitors and brought £12 million into the local economy, a similar event at Scampton would prove immensely popular with local businesses.

I have no further information at present but I’m sure that John will keep me informed. Incidentally, as this year sees the final 49 Squadron Association Reunion the show may well provide a focal point for 4T9ers to get together.