

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
August 2016 Issue 42



In addition to gifting the wine for our reunion dinner, for which we are most grateful, Honorary Friend and wine producer, Peter Schreiber designed this beautiful wine bottle label to commemorate 49 Squadron's centenary.

IN MEMORIAM
WE WILL REMEMBER HIM
D. Coomber

EDITORIAL

I apologize for the late publication of this issue. Will you accept the Olympic Games as being the cause...I thought not!

You may have noticed that the June issue only ran to 16 pages which makes it the thinnest since I took up the reins. By contrast this month I have gratefully received so much material that I have held over any non time sensitive items. A happy situation indeed but I still appeal to you for future contributions. I am also most grateful to those who have made contributions of the financial kind. In my report on the Reunion I mention the plan to have a memorial to 49 Squadron installed at The National Memorial Arboretum. If you wish to donate towards this worthy aim then please send your contribution to me so that we can arrive at a budget for the project, Cheques as always should be made payable to 49SA PETWOOD and please state that your donation is to the Memorial Fund.

I am sorry to report the death of Don Coomber who, whilst serving in Kenya with the RAF during the Mau Mau Emergency, but not 49 Squadron, was aware of 49's activities. Such was his interest in the squadron that he wrote a letter to FlyPast magazine decrying the lack of a mention of 49' in their feature on the Lincoln in October 2006. Don subsequently became a 'Friend' in January 2007. I apologize for my incorrect description, in the May issue, of the career of the late Roy Walters. This should have described him as a pilot/air gunner as he flew 26 operations in the Lancaster AGLT rear turret.

Congratulations to former 49 Squadron ground crew member Counc. Bill Woodhead on the award of the M.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for 'Service to the community and local government'.

Congratulations also to the BBMF on getting their Lancaster back in to the air.

On page 26 of this issue you will find a piece by our Hon. President John Ward on his recording session for the BBC show 'Bargain Hunt'. I must express my admiration of John's courage in view of his suffering from 'Parkinsons'.

There is also a feature by Dom Howard on his struggle to repatriate the remains of Lancaster ED427. I must tell you that, although Dom doesn't mention it, his tenacious effort was made all the more difficult by the serious illness that he has suffered over most of that period including hospitalization in Germany. He is currently recuperating from a second major operation and I know that you will join me in wishing him well.

Chairman Stuart Keay suffered a minor heart attack and after a short spell back home has had to return to hospital. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and Pat.

We wish all 4T9ers who are suffering ill health a speedy recovery.

'Till the next time

THE WAR...

By

Tom W. Reed

Part 3

As I continually revolved my turret I spotted a Junkers 88 night fighter flying slightly higher crossing about 200 yards at 45 degrees to us and alerted the skipper who confirmed the sighting. The German aircraft was obviously (I surmised) being vectored on to the main stream and hadn't seen us.

Shortly afterwards the cloud dispersed as we neared the target and we were flying through what appeared to be a box barrage of heavy ack-ack with brown and black puffs of smoke and the acrid smell of cordite filled my turret..

As we started the run in to the target, I spotted a Lanc directly overhead and was horrified to see his bomb doors open.

I reported to the skipper who was unable to see him nor could the rear gunner, so Roy reacted by putting the aircraft into a dive which nearly shook my turret off, and we managed to 'pull out' at 8,000 feet, and having kept his heading carried on the bombing run with all hell breaking in the air and on the ground. I felt the aircraft leap as the bombs dropped and we got our picture.

I was relieved to feel the aircraft heel over with a steep turn and 'shoot out' over the Baltic to head for home. I suddenly realised that although I had been almost frozen stiff I was now sweating profusely.

As we returned over the North Sea we received a signal that we were diverted to Acklington as all the airfields in Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire were closed due to fog.

When P/O Watts, the navigator, asked where Acklington was I told him it was on the north-east coast and when he announced that he had no maps for that area I said not to worry as I knew where it is as I had been stationed there and was well acquainted with the area. I told Roy to aim for the east coast as far north as possible and I would tell them where we were. We got to the coast at Seaham Harbour and flew parallel to it. I called out the Wear, the Tyne, St. Mary's Lighthouse, Blyth and as we got to Newbiggin I warned Roy about a slag heap near the airfield and as we started to climb through the clouds I said to make a turn to port and as we were turning a finger of light shot straight up through the clouds dead ahead. We were 'stacked up' for landing and got down through pouring rain and landed about 2.30 a.m.

After debriefing and a flying breakfast of bacon and egg got our heads down and at about 9 a.m. took off with two aircraft forming on us and flew at 250 feet over the Travellers Rest at Framwellgate Moor and Durham Cathedral to arrive at Scampton with a low level formation flypast. So ended a night to remember.

I was quite flattered when approached by P/O Roy Perry and his crew and asked if I would stay with his crew until they finished their tour of thirty operational sorties. I told them I'd like to but was in a screened post as a group one tradesman. They did finish

their tour with the squadron but I never found out if they survived the war.

On the 16th October I was again asked to replace the rear gunner on the wing commander's aircraft by Ken Rogers, who was his mid-upper gunner, as Mick Mills was on sick leave. This time it was for a practice exercise involving 5 Group called 'The Dixon Exercise' which our commanding officer, Wing Commander Slee, was to lead the group of 94 Lancasters. I reported for duty as requested suitably attired for low level flying and took off with nine aircraft from 49 Squadron with similar numbers from the other squadrons in the group.

The exercise took place on a Sunday and all squadrons concerned had been briefed to rendezvous at a point well out over the North Sea. It was a beautiful sunny day and when we reached the rendezvous I was treated to the enviable sight of ninety four plus Lancasters in vee's of three spread out over the sky behind me. A sight I shall never forget.

We had been briefed to approach the English coast dropping to fifty feet as we passed over Wainfleet Bombing Range and to keep a sharp look out for the 'enemy aircraft' who were briefed to intercept us. I had the good fortune to spot them, calling the skipper saying, "Enemy aircraft on the Green Beam five miles." The wing commander confirmed my sighting by shouting, "Bandits on the Green Beam, independent evasive action", when we were soon spotted and attacked by three fighters from a Polish or Czech squadron, I think, who picked on the leading aircraft – us, in a follow-the-leader attack.

Our aircraft was gyrating furiously and the only way I could cope was to concentrate on the fighters. I got some pretty good shots with my camera gun but never actually got to see the film. When we eventually dispersed to land at individual squadron bases I was surprised to find that the station commander, Group Captain Whitworth, had been flying with us as an observer. He congratulated me for spotting the enemy.

The next day it was announced that 'Operation Robinson' was 'on'. Of course no one knew what that meant until briefing, and when I went along I found that Mick Mills had returned from leave and would be flying with the Winco as usual. I was very disappointed, especially when I found out later it was a daylight attack on Le Creusot, about 400 miles across occupied France, with Wing Commander Slee and 49 Squadron in the vanguard.

The operation was a great success with the loss of only one aircraft which apparently was blasted out of the sky by its own bombs and one 83 Squadron aircraft which returned early after a bird strike as it crossed the French coast which demolished the pilot's canopy causing a serious eye injury. On the way back they were attacked by three Arado seaplanes and the gunners shot two down, the third withdrew.

A few days later I was called to the Winco's office. He asked me if I'd be prepared to accept a commission as the group captain, Air Commodore Whitworth, was prepared to recommend me for a commission in the field.

I declined as I didn't think I had enough experience in the service. I guessed it would be as a gunner and I was only interested in becoming a pilot if I had to leave my current job. Later on when I was recommended for flying training as a pilot I attended a selection board in Doncaster. I 'boomed' when asked by one of the four senior officers of

the selection board, I told him that I only wanted to be a pilot because I wanted to be the author of my own destiny. He said, "So you don't trust our training methods." Interview over. With hindsight, I had survived the war, not like my old scouting pal Arthur Cowie, who had survived over three operational tours as a squadron leader gunnery leader had flown as a 'supernumerary observer' on his 100th sortie when his aircraft went missing.

The Halifax in which he was flying was thought to have collided with another aircraft. It was finally found in the late 90's in the middle of a dense forest in Normandy by a 'Crashed Aircraft Location Society'. The last time I had seen him was at Dishforth in July 1939 as an LAC who died a Squadron Leader.

One outstanding memory of my time at Scampton was when the 'Gang Show' with Squadron Leader Ralph Reader were resident in the mess for three weeks whilst they toured the airfields around Lincoln giving entertainment to the different units.

There were always one or two who stayed behind at home in the mess and we were treated to some impromptu entertainment every night.

The days went by with the usual 'ops tonight', 'ops scrubbed', 'stand down'. Drizzle, fog, snow, hiking into Lincoln for a night at the Armourers Pub managed by one of the armourers and his wife (LAC Tony Murrell), or halibut and chips at the local café.

In January 1943 the squadron moved en bloc to a newly constructed dispersed airfield at RAF Fiskerton.

The armourers were housed in Nissen huts, which were very cold and damp, about a couple of miles away from the squadron armoury on the far side of the airfield. I was housed about a mile from the sergeants' mess which had no individual accommodation, just catering and mess facilities.

I had been issued with an Aerial 500cc motorcycle for my normal duties supervising 'bombing up' operations etc. I was on my way down the narrow country lane to the mess for breakfast when I encountered Flight Sergeant 'Taffy' Aston cycling to the same destination. As he was in the middle of the road I gave a little toot on the horn to let him know I was coming and he turned his head and with it his bike, forcing me into the shallow grassy ditch, and as I turned out of the ditch I inadvertently turned the front wheel and was thrown over the handlebars with my chin hitting them and the bike landing on my left leg.

'Taffy' approached and promptly passed out – I kept shouting to him and all he could do was look at me and point. I kept shouting at him to lift the bike off my leg and he helped me up. I realised what he had been pointing at - my face and overcoat were covered in blood and the skin was hanging off my jaw.

With his help I managed to push the bike to sick quarters about 100 yards away. They got the MO out of bed as he'd been up all night as I'd seen him at 2a.m. debriefing when he learned that his brother, a pilot, had not returned.

I was a bit chary about him touching me as he was red eyed and unshaven, but he soon had me on the bed with my hands gripping the iron bed head whilst he inserted nineteen stitches to pull everything together without even an anaesthetic. He did a good job as I had little scarring but on some parts of my chin the hairs grow different ways.

To be continued.

LANCASTER ED427 - HER STORY

By

Dom Howard

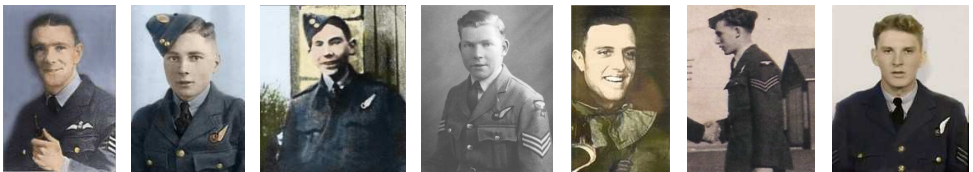
ED427 was one of 620 Lancasters ordered from A V Roe (Chadderton) in 1941 and built from November 1942 to June 1943 as 129 Mk.I's and 491 Mk.III's, mixed, up to ED782 and all Mk.III's from ED783 onwards.

The Mk.I's were initially fitted with Merlin 20 engines and the Mk.III's with Merlin 28 engines. ED427 was a Mk.III and was delivered to 49 Squadron in December 1942. She completed fifteen operations before being lost on her sixteenth.

16-Jan-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Berlin	1368871	Sgt	JM	Thom
27-Jan-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Dusseldorf	1368871	Sgt	JM	Thom
03-Feb-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Hamburg	111547	F/O	GE	Fawke
19-Feb-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Wilhelmshaven	44356	S/L	EG	Couch
21-Feb-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Bremen	NZ412223	Sgt	BF	Gilmore
25-Feb-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Nuremburg	NZ412223	Sgt	BF	Gilmore
26-Feb-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Cologne	NZ412223	Sgt	BF	Gilmore
08-Mar-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Nuremburg	NZ412223	F/S	BF	Gilmore
09-Mar-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Munich	NZ412223	F/S	BF	Gilmore
12-Mar-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Essen	1386073	Sgt	LH	Tolchard
22-Mar-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	St Nazaire	NZ412223	F/S	BF	Gilmore
29-Mar-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Berlin	NZ412223	F/S	BF	Gilmore
04-Apr-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Kiel	NZ412223	F/S	BF	Gilmore
08-Apr-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Duisburg	NZ412223	F/S	BF	Gilmore
09-Apr-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops	Duisburg	NZ412223	F/S	BF	Gilmore
16-Apr-43	N	Lancaster	ED427	EA-O	Ops/Lost	Pilzen	48898	F/O	AV	Bone

On the 16/17th April 1943 ED427 took off at 21-14hrs from RAF Fiskerton on her 16th operation, to bomb the Skoda factory at Pilzen.

On her homeward leg she was hit by a flak battery and became "Missing without trace, Believed lost at sea". Later all the crew were listed on the Memorial at Runnymede.



F/O.A. Bone, Sgt R.N.P. Foster F/E, Sgt. C.W. Yelland Nav, Sgt. R.C. White Wop, Sgt. R. Cope A/g, Sgt. R.J. Rooney B/a, P/O. B.E. Watt RCAF A/g.

16/17 April, 1943; PILZEN:

In the light of a full moon, 327 heavy bombers went after the Skoda armaments

works. Aircraft from the squadron pressed home their attacks with great determination. Unfortunately the bombing photos brought back, showed the raid to have been a failure, with a large asylum building several miles away being mistaken for the factory. To make matters worse, the cost had been very high; 18 Halifax and 18 Lancaster crews failed to return. F/O Alex Bone and crew on just their 2nd trip had tragically perished in the night and were presumed to have come down in the sea. (49SA Website)

ED427 actually crashed just outside Laumersheim where the remains of two crewmen were recovered and taken to a cemetery in Mannheim. After the war MREU recovered them and tried to formally identify them, sadly they were unable to do so. They were taken to Durnbach CWGC and laid to rest as "Unknown Airmen". It appears that, due to a clerical error, no one went to Laumersheim to check, they went instead to Laubenheim.

An extract from the MREU report reads: "On March 19th, 1947, a British detachment under Captain Martin exhumed the two coffins in Manheim. One contained a decomposed corpse, clothing and parachute remains. In the second were the badly burned remains of corpses and clothing. Identification was not possible as skulls, teeth and identification marks were missing. Further investigation revealed that the corpse parts were not more than two bodies. On October 16th 1947, these were buried as "Unknown" in the military cemetery in Dürnbach, to the north of Tegernsee. These are the graves 19 and 20 in Row F. Area 20."

An acknowledgment for all seven airmen was turned down by the Air Ministry. The file was closed in June 1949.

The crew of the Lancaster ED427 are still officially counted today as "missing". Only the relatives were informed of the crash site "near Dirmstein" since no-one was quite certain. Both German as well as English detachments had confused Laumersheim with Laubenheim in the documents.

The crash was witnessed by a 13 year old Peter Menges, who for the next 69 years researched carefully what he knew and what he could find out knowing that crewmen were still on board. He later contacted amateur archaeologist Herr Benkel the leader of the amateur weekend archaeology group Arbeitsgruppe Vermisstenforschung. The recovery was started in September 2012, with the remains of one of the engines being recovered, sadly in the rush to get it out of the ground it broke into several parts. Many other parts were also recovered along with human remains. The human remains were handed over to the authorities, and in October 2015 the funeral took place in Durnbach British War Cemetery, with all the families present.

At the end of the day all the aircraft parts recovered were dropped into the farmer's field and covered with a tarpaulin. Several months later the farmer contacted Peter Schreiber to say that they were still in his field and now in the way, and if not moved soon as promised, he would have to call the scrap yard! Peter chased up Herr Benkel over a few weeks, before he agreed that Peter could collect them from the field and keep in safe storage at his winery.

In the spring of 2013 I was over in Germany, with several items on my agenda, one being to place a Memorial cross to a 61 Squadron Lancaster crew in Gerolsheim, JA852, on behalf of a family member. It was here that Herr Benkel approached me, "ED427 should be in a museum in England, would it be possible for you to find a museum in England to display it?"

I replied that wreckology is very difficult to find a home for as there is so much of it but to leave it with me and I would see what I could do. I did not think that it would take 2 years! Many museums were happy to accept if, all were already cleaned and preserved, the engine was in one piece, but most asked, "Did she fly from here?" We were therefore very grateful to Andrew Panton and LAHC when contacted by Alan Parr asking if it was possible for them to take ED427 in, with Andrew agreeing, and the team from LARG agreeing to clean, preserve and display her as a permanent memorial to F/O Bone and his crew.

Once the families had been informed that a home had been found, everyone else was told and so began what should have been a simple negotiation to set up the formal handover from Herr Benkel to the 49SA. All, I thought, was proceeding as per requests from Herr Benkel, full press and TV notifications sent out, all in the UK informed of what was happening and with Herr Benkel informing all in Germany, a date Sunday 16th August 2015 was set. Relative of Sgt. R.C. White, Gary White, flew over, not just for the handover but also to see the crash site. Between us, Gary, Peter and myself the trailer was packed for display so that it would look good for the newspapers and TV. *(The trailer by the way, was purchased and loaned to bring ED427 home, the Gentleman who did this has requested to remain anonymous, I have thanked him and given him some rather good German wine.)*



On Sunday morning we arrived at Laumersheim, myself, Gary and a friend of mine Bob Wilton, whom Herr Benkel had arranged to meet and take to his home. We set all up and waited...and waited. We were the only ones there, no one else turned up. I later found out that no one knew of us being over or that we were even at the crash site for the handover.

We therefore decided to hold a simple act of Remembrance, and laid new Poppy Wreaths and Gary placed seven Poppy Crosses.

All was taken back to Peter's, and with no word from Herr Benkel, the only choice was to unload and try to find out what happened. Sadly communications with Herr Benkel became impossible. Not wanting to let this go as my fear was that ED427 would just "disappear". I contacted Sue and Louise at JCCC to see if they could help in any way. Knowing this was outside their usual remit I was very grateful therefore when they said they would contact Martin Hajduk MBE Land Liaison Officer in Germany.

With several months of email exchanges between Martin, Herr Benkel and myself, eventually a new date was set - Wednesday 8th June at 10am.

I spent all Monday the 6th at Peter's repacking all the parts recovered into baskets, and weighing them all. Peter had arranged for me to weigh the trailer and main parts at a weigh station in the next village. Both Peter and I were a little surprised to find out that what we had in the trailer weighed 475 Kg! The gentleman who operated the weigh station waved the €5 fee when he saw my shocked expression! The weight limit on the trailer is 505 Kg load (600Kg total, the trailer itself weighs 95Kg). I still managed with a little sorting to fit all into the car keeping under my maximum car/trailer load weight of 3900Kg (the car is 2200Kg) with the reunion wine also loaded. It's just as well that the week before

coming out I had new springs and rear shock absorbers fitted! I will say that with all on board the car was still sitting rather low!

On behalf of the Association I presented Peter, his father Peter-Jakob and his mother Maria a framed letter of thanks from our Secretary for looking after the remains of ED427 for the last four years. I also gave them a bottle of Scotch which both Peter and his father do enjoy and a large box of Thornton's chocolates for Maria. All was grateful accepted with many thank back to all at 49.

On Wednesday 8th I went to Peter's to pick up the trailer and proceed to the crash site, the weather in Germany the previous week had been the worst ever with many

flash floods and many injured by lightning. Knowing this I decided to go to the crash-site early, last thing I wanted was to get stuck in a muddy wet field. Sadly



I was not able to get next to the crash site (the ground though firm was just too wet to get a grip with the weight I had in the trailer and in the car) but placed the trailer as near to as I could get and still be able to get safely back out. Time set for the hand over was 10am but a phone call from Martin, who was caught up in a very heavy downpour, requested we delay for an hour. At just after 11am Martin arrived with Herr Benkel.



The paperwork was signed by Herr Benkel and Martin Hajduk MBE and a short service was held at the site of the simple memorial to the crew. With the birds singing, the Last Post was played, we held a two minutes silence and the Act of Remembrance was read out.



**Members of the Bundersreservists,
Reiner Diehl & Leo Schmitt,
Herr Benkel, Martin Hajduk MBE,
Dom Howard,**



**Reiner Diehl, Dom Howard &
Leo Schmitt**

Flowers were laid by Martin on behalf of the families and I placed the Poppy Wreath on behalf of 49 SA.

The morning events were wound up and we all departed, I returned to Peter's to thank him for all his help.

ED427's journey home started just after 7 pm on Friday 10th June, departing Herxheim for Luxembourg for fuel, then through Belgium, France and on to Dunkirk for the 4am ferry. The night drive was excellent, hardly any traffic on the road, I arrived at Dunkirk DFDS ferry terminal at 03.08 am.

A quick check by the French customs and we were allowed through. As dawn arrived we were just outside Dover.

While over in Germany, a thought came to mind, if F/O Bone and crew had made it home when would they have landed? I made a phone call to our Chairman, to ask, "Can you get the down time of those who made it back?" Stuart informed me that most were landing just after 6 am back at Fiskerton.

We arrived at Dover docks just after 5 am which would have been the approximate time, 73 years 1 month and 25 days earlier, that ED427 should have crossed the English coast....

Landing at Dover English customs just waved me straight through, and so began the final leg of her journey home to Fiskerton.

The drive up to meet with our Chairman was uneventful, even the M25 was quiet! Unloading the reunion wine and some of my luggage into Stuart's car and quickly rearranging the baskets, we proceeded on to RAF Fiskerton, arriving at 11.17 am, to be informed by our Secretary, "I suppose 17 minutes late is allowable..." I had just driven just over 16 hours doing nearly 750 miles !! *[I was referring to ED427 being 17 minutes late on ETA after 73 years. ED.]*



I formally handed over the escape axe and some tools, which represented ED427, to our Chairman. *(These Peter had found within some earth that he cleaned off after he had collected all from*

the field in Laumersheim in 2013.)

The Revd Penny Green conducted a short service and act of Remembrance.

Relatives of crew members, Tony and Hazel Snedker and Gary White, were able to make it to see ED427 arrive home.

After a short break we all



departed for East Kirkby to proceed with the formal handover to Andrew Panton and the team from LARG, arriving just after 1pm, but lunch in the NAAFI came first!

Our Chairman, formally handed over the remains of ED427 to Mr Andrew Panton and the team from LARG and unloading began!



Top left: Alan Parr, Andrew Panton, Dom Howard.

Top right: Andrew unloading part of the engine.

Bottom left: The team from LARG looking at the engine parts.

The clean up of some of the parts started almost immediately but the team from LARG have said it will probably be around 18 months before all is completed and ED427 goes on display.

It has been an honour to be involved in a small way in bringing the remains of ED427 home, though I will now add that after 3 1/2 years of finding a museum and trying to arrange a handover, if this handover had not taken place I'm afraid I would have walked away.

I would also like to take this time to thank the Ladies and Gentleman at JCCC Imjin Barracks, and Martin Hajduk MBE in Germany, for all the care and attention they provide to all our military losses. They are the real unsung Hero's who work quietly and diligently without any of us knowing, providing the honour and dignity in the final Act of Remembrance in laying our fallen to rest. To you all at JCCC - Thank you.

Photos Dom Howard, Katja Bauer & Ian Collis - Additional ED427 information Colin Cripps & John Ward. Crew photographs John Ward.

PILGRIMAGE IN FRANCE - MAY 2016

By
Roger Bedford

There is an annual commemoration of the bombing raid on Mailly-le-Camp, which took place on 3rd/4th May 1944, in which 49 Squadron participated – A. G. Edgar and crew and Bill Green and crew (including our late friend Geoff Brunton) among them. Geoff's son Michael wrote about his and Geoff's attendance at this commemoration in the August 2014 The 4T9er. I have attended as often as I can and several years ago I met Geoff there. Prior to that I was aware from things told to me by my late dad, by Alf Ridpath and by the late Bob Brooks that Bill Green had given up his landing slot at Turweston on 31st May 1944 to A. G. Edgar whose aircraft was in difficulty with no hydraulics and had been denied a priority approach by Air Traffic Control. As a result, the Edgar crew considered that by doing this Bill Green had saved their lives. This was when the squadron was sent a recall to Silverstone before carrying out its briefed raid. After a few landings Silverstone was closed by a mishap on the runway and its satellite, Turweston, became the objective. A. G. Edgar, his crew and their repaired aircraft (LL976) returned to Fiskerton on 2nd June.

Bill Green – William Raeburn Green DFC RNZAF – and crew were lost on July 19, 1944 – 72 years ago.

Since Geoff Brunton told me that Bill Green was buried at Herbissee – which is a short distance from Mailly-le-Camp – I always visit the churchyard to pay my respects in thanks for that generous act at Turweston. Michael Brunton covered his and Geoff's visits to Herbissee in his aforementioned article.

The map on the following page shows the relative position of Mailly-le-Camp and Herbissee. They are a matter of 10 minutes apart by car. Michael Brunton's article mentions that Bill Green's aircraft was badly damaged on the night of 3rd/4th May 1944 during the raid on Mailly-le-Camp. How ironic then that he and his crew were downed within a stone's throw of that experience.

Also highlighted is Voué. This is where we – the Brunton party and the Bedford party (and others) – usually stay when attending the commemoration at Mailly-le-Camp. It's about 25 minutes from Voué to Mailly-le-Camp by road and is also where Geoff Brunton presented a bomb-flash photo taken on 3rd/4th May 1944 to Monsieur le Maire in La Mairie.

To give some geographic context : Troyes is to the South; Châlons-en-Champagne (used to be called Châlons-sur-Marne) and then Reims (Champagne land) is to the North, Paris is to the West and Saint Dizier (night fighter land) is to the East.



Michael Brunton covered the principle of the Mailly-le-Camp commemoration in his article. This year there were no veterans of the raid present. Michael and I were the only two present whose fathers had participated.

On my return journey from Mailly-le-Camp I do my best to include a stop at the French Military cemetery at Beauvais-Marissel. This is situated on the northern side of Beauvais in the Rue d'Amiens. Beauvais is to the North of Paris so a few hours travel by road from Mailly-le-Camp.

I made my first visit to this cemetery in September 1998 whilst en route to Versailles for the start of a car rally in which I was participating. The primary purpose of such visits has been to pay my respects at the graves of Cyril Baker

and crew who were lost in LL976 (EA-A) on 8th July 1944.

The background to the particular wish to do this arises from the loss of EA-A (ND792) and its replacement by LL976 as EA-A. This is apart from a general paying of respects at the graves of any 49 Squadron personnel present at any churchyard or cemetery that I am otherwise visiting. I'm sure that many people do this.

A. G. Edgar was awarded his immediate DFC for succeeding in bringing his damaged aircraft – and I'd imagine, more importantly, the crew (from the point of view of saving experienced and trained aircrew) home to the UK. They landed at Woodbridge, an aerodrome designated as a "crash drome" where damaged aircraft could land having made the UK.

Below is the A G Edgar's DFC citation from the London Gazette Issue 36555, Page 2755 published on 6th June 1944 (the supplement was dated 9th June 1944).

Pilot Officer Alfred George EDGAR (172180), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 49 Squadron.

One night in May, 1944, this officer piloted an aircraft to attack a target in Belgium. On the homeward flight the aircraft was intercepted by a fighter and sustained much damage in the ensuing fight. The aileron controls and the trimming tabs were severed, whilst a fire broke out in the fuselage. The flames were extinguished but the aircraft was difficult to control. To keep the aircraft level it was necessary for Pilot Officer Edgar and another member of the crew to apply their full weight against the control column. In this manner the aircraft was flown for 2 hours until an airfield was reached where Pilot Officer Edgar executed a masterly landing. This officer displayed great skill and resolution in the face of heavy odds.

Cyril Baker collected the Edgar crew from Woodbridge and returned them to Fiskerton. The damaged aircraft was ND792 (EA-A). This aircraft had become A G Edgar and crew's regular aircraft after Clive Roantree RAAF and crew finished their tour. The replacement EA-A was LL976. The first operation for LL976 was to Amiens with A G Edgar as captain. For some reason unknown to me my dad, who was A G Edgar's regular Flight Engineer, did not go on this operation. In his place for this first operation was John Morris Moss. This was the only time that Dad was replaced in that crew. John Moss was Cyril Baker's Flight Engineer when LL976 was lost on 7th July 1944 so John Moss had the unenviable and unique distinction of being on LL976's first and last operations. Geoff Brunton told me that John Moss was a friend of his and probably also would have known my dad.

While reviewing the cemetery register some time ago I became aware that Sydney Holmes was a member of 49 Squadron and a Flight Engineer. I now also pay my respects at his grave. He too may have been acquainted with my dad.

Again, the August 2014 The 4T9er was of value. It added more information about Cyril Baker and crew and about Sydney Holmes. The two articles remembering ND533 (one by Olek Brzeski and the other from details sent to

John Ward by his friends Heather and Nigel Allsworth) describe that Sydney Holmes is buried at Marissel and the other fatal casualties of that crew are buried in Bayeux. There is a brief mention of the memorial to Cyril Baker and the crew of LL976 outside La Mairie in Beauvoir-en-Lyons. This year after my visit to Marissel I was able to visit that memorial.

As many will know, in cemeteries containing Commonwealth War Graves there is a place – usually by the entrance – holding the register for the cemetery and a visitors' book. Often, though not always, I write a few words about my visit. This year, for some reason, I decided to look in the visitors' book. Following my visit in 2008, a comment had been written by a visitor in 2009 asking me to be in contact. This comment was written by the sister of Ronald Nineham. He was an Air Gunner in Cyril Baker's crew when that crew and LL976 were lost. I have been able to make contact with her and her son. It transpires from the exchanges we've had that the family lived in Barley, Hertfordshire (it's near Royston). This is perhaps a 10 minute car journey from my home. Ronald Nineham is remembered on the village war memorial – the only person from that village who died in WW2 – and in the local church (St Margaret of Antioch). I've visited his grave in France but did not know until a few weeks ago that he is remembered in a village so close to my home. The

49 Squadron Association web-site has a picture of Ronald Nineham and of the plaque in the church that remembers him. I have photos of the war memorial and his name on it. These are shown here and have been made available to the 49 Squadron Association web-master (Malcolm Brooke) who has added them to the web-site.

I've heard that, generally speaking, a crew would get on with life among themselves and in isolation from other crews. With the life expectancy of bomber crews that's understandable. However, sometimes there are coincidences and circumstances that link crews





or more particularly individual crew members.

One last coincidence relating to Marissel. The late Bob Brooks, the Australian Navigator in A G Edgar's crew, was born and grew up in Mackay, Queensland, Australia. While reviewing the Marissel cemetery register I noticed that a Gilbert Graham Podosky, 467 RAAF Squadron, was also from Mackay. I asked Bob whether he knew Gilbert Podosky. He told me that they were friends from boyhood and that he had unexpectedly seen him in Birmingham when they were both on leave. This was a few weeks before Podosky was killed. He was lost on the same date as Cyril Baker and crew.

I mentioned my visits to Gilbert Podosky's grave and my discussion with Bob Brooks to his daughter Andrea Deveridge. She told me the following :

"Dad took a photo of this grave in 1980 to take home to show the family that he would try to chase up. He found Gilbert's sister was a nun at Lochinvar about 40 minutes from our home in Newcastle. His sister was overwhelmed with the fact that Dad had traced the only living relative and that they were close by. Mum and Dad had tea with the sister and the nuns in the nunnery - they were members of a teaching order. Mum and Dad visited her a number of times. On her death bed she asked to see them again. Dad was very touched by her. She had joined the nuns and in those days heard very little of her brother. She was told he had died but did not know anything else. Dad said what strange things life could bring. That a Presbyterian would sit holding the hand of a St. Joseph nun shortly before her death in the nun's hospice and was welcomed by the order for the kindness and knowledge he had brought to her and had given her peace. So this is very special."

THE 76th & FINAL REUNION.

By

Alan Parr

Photos: Dom Howard unless stated otherwise.

Sadly the writing has been on the wall for several years now but it was decided that 2016 would see the final reunion as it is the centenary of the formation of 49 Squadron - 15th April 1916.

With the steady falling off in the numbers of members attending our financial deficit has increased until it is no longer viable, there is obviously a limit as to what we can charge. This year the number of 4T9ers attending hit an all time low so it was obvious that our reluctant decision to end our annual gathering was the correct one.

As in the previous two years the event was held at The Bentley Hotel, Lincoln.

SATURDAY JUNE 11th.

As has been covered by Dom Howard, see page 6, a small number of us arrived a day early to enable us, and a number of the villagers, to welcome home to Fiskerton the remains of Lancaster ED427. We then went on to East Kirkby for the 'hand-over' to Andrew Panton.

SUNDAY JUNE 12th.

The majority of our attendees started to arrive at The Bentley Hotel just after lunchtime in the hope of seeing a BBMF flyover. We had already been informed that the Lancaster and its substitute the Dakota were grounded, the Lanc did not fly again until late July, and that a Hurricane would flyover at 1535. Unfortunately this could not take place due to the low cloud. Nevertheless a pleasant evening was spent catching up on the news of old friends, many of whom we had not seen for a year or more.

MONDAY JUNE 13th.

The Service of Remembrance commenced at 1100. During the first hymn the writer delivered the 49 Squadron Roll of Honour to Revd Penny Green who placed it on the altar for the duration of the service.

The service was conducted jointly by Penny and the Curate, Revd Chris



Hewitt. Chris preached the sermon and his choice of readings were so appropriate to our final reunion that I have included both, in full. The readings were most ably delivered by Air Commodore Michael 'Spike' Milligan and former Flight Lieutenant John Lowe.

Spike read:

"WHO ARE THESE MEN ?"

Who are these men who march so proud,
Who quietly weep, eyes closed, head bowed?
These are the men who once were boys,
Who missed out on youth and all its joys.

Who are these men with aged faces,
Who silently count the empty spaces?
These are the men who gave their all,
Who fought for their country for freedom for all.

Who are these men with sorrowful look
Who can still remember the lives that were took?
These are the men who saw young men die,
The price of peace is always high.

Who are these men who in the midst of pain,
Whispered comfort to those they would not see again?
These are the men whose hands held tomorrow,
Who brought back our future with blood tears and sorrow.

Who are these men who promise to keep
Alive in their hearts the ones God holds asleep?
These are the men to whom I promise again:
'Veterans', my friends - I will remember them !

(Written by: an 'unknown' - 12 year old girl - 1966.)

John later read:

Ecclesiastes 3 vv1-11

‘A TIME FOR EVERYTHING’

For everything there is a season, and a time for
every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is
planted;



a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.
What gain has the worker from his toil?

I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time.



Our wreath was laid at the church memorial by Stuart Keay with Revd Chris Hewitt and Revd Penny Green.



Standing: David Boughton (Lincoln), Revd Chris Hewitt, Terry Dean (Lincoln Ground Crew) Stuart Keay (Lincoln), Revd Penny Green, 'Spike' Milligan and Bob Weeks (Valiant)
Seated: Bill 'Titch' Cooke (Lancaster), Reg Woolgar & Fred Hill (Hampden),

We next made our way to the Fiskerton Airfield Memorial for a short wreath laying service. Once again this year the weather was dry although the skies were overcast. The flyover, by a Spitfire, was due to take place at Fiskerton at 1220 but once again events, and the weather, conspired against us. We are nevertheless most grateful to the BBMF for including us in their programme.

Next stop was the village hall for a superb buffet lunch, once again prepared by volunteers from the village and presented with the compliments of Fiskerton Village Hall. I have to say again how much we value our warm relationship with the good folks of Fiskerton. We are truly grateful.



At 1930 sixty-three members and guests sat down to dinner at Bentley Hotel. As a memento of the squadron centenary and the final reunion each were



presented with a 49 Squadron whisky glass, a Parker pen printed with '49 Squadron Centenary' and a key ring with a leather fob embossed '100 Years, 49 Squadron'. The latter were kindly donated by Stuart and Pat Keay's daughter and her husband, Susan and Nigel Bellamy, whose staff in Botswana had made them. Once again the meal was superbly prepared and

presented under the watchful eye of the irrepressible Giovanni. Revd Penny said Grace and following the first course our Chairman proposed the Loyal Toast and Absent Friends. Sadly, but inevitably, the numbers of the latter have grown once again. Each table carried a bottle of red and a bottle of white wine so kindly donated by Peter Schreiber. Each bore the beautiful and very special label which is shown on the front cover of this issue. A centenary cake, which was made for



us by Janet Norman, was truly a work of art and tasted every bit as good as it looked. 'Spike' Milligan recounted an amusing service tale relating to eating irons falling in the toilet...enough said! Stuart Keay then gave a short history of 49 Squadron and the Association. It was now my turn to say a few words in which I stated that the end of reunions was inevitable as falling numbers over the past five years had resulted in a deficit each year but I emphasised that this did not mean the demise of the association. I was pleased to

announce that total membership still exceeds 300, although the majority of the membership are now Associates. I also advised that we are in a healthy financial position and that it is my intention to devote my time in establishing a worthy memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum to 49 Squadron. Whilst acknowledging the crucial contribution of the 'Crew' I was also pleased to recognize the essential support of our wives, 'The Ground Crew'. As an acknowledgement of this I was delighted to present each with a bouquet on behalf of the association. Thanks to the kind donation of 'bottles' once again a successful raffle was held which raised £290 for association funds. I mentioned earlier the generous donation of wine for the tables by Peter Schreiber, well he also gave us a boxed pair of bottles to auction.

The box was duly signed by the veterans present and the association 'Crew'. Colin Cripps acted as auctioneer and we are grateful to 'Friend' Steve Cooke for his winning bid of £140 and to Associate Member Richard Bartlett-May who earlier had pledged to match the winning bid as a donation.

TUESDAY JUNE 14th

I had tried to arrange a visit to RAF Waddington's Heritage Centre but by the time I managed to contact someone it was already booked up. However, quite a number of us went over to East Kirkby to see 'Just Jane' taxiing and, for those who had not been present on the Saturday, to take a look at the remains of Lancaster ED427. In addition, vehicle owners were posing their 'treasures' in front of Just Jane.



Photo: Alan Parr

So concluded our final reunion. We will all miss the annual formal get together with old friends but I had mentioned at the dinner that it is hoped that we can use the RAF Scampton Air Show as a focal point for gathering in the future.

THE GRAND TOUR - 2016 STYLE

By

Malcolm & May Brooke

In order to complete the project of photographing all ex-49Sqn aircrew who were killed flying with other units, we planned a circuitous tour from Groningen in northern Holland to Le Mans south of Paris, in order to visit twenty six different cemeteries.

Not to miss UK locations, the journey from York to the ferry port at Dover took us to several cemeteries including Flitwick where Cpl John Dillingham is buried. He was hit by the propeller of a Martinsyde training aircraft on the 1st August 1916 at Dover and has the dubious honour of being the first person to be killed with 49Sqn.



Fortunately, we avoided the huge delays at Dover (having sailed the day before the main trouble began) and made our way through France and Belgium to base ourselves for a few days in Bielefeld, Germany. A former colleague still working there had lent us his Married Quarter and this was a useful location from which to visit the site of one of my other projects...the German surrender on the Lüneburg Heide.

Leaving Bielefeld behind, we experienced our only failure at Lichtenvenoorde. Most unusually, the CWGC website gave an incorrect cemetery location and this was one of our busiest days with little time to spare. After an hour of searching we had to admit defeat and move on. Arriving in Amsterdam during the late afternoon rush hour is not to be recommended but we were rewarded by being given a lift to the CWGC part of the cemetery in an electric cart...it was a very big cemetery!

Every few days we gave ourselves an extra overnight stay in order to do other sightseeing. Our stay in Arras allowed us to visit the Thiepval Memorial, the Wellington Quarry Museum as well as several smaller Somme cemeteries...a sort of busman's holiday.

We worked our way south enjoying wonderfully sunny days which somewhat disguised the rather sad nature of our travels. However, we were rewarded by experiencing many tranquil settings and confirmation of the wonderful work undertaken by the CWGC.

Flight Lieutenant Bill Porteous is buried in the General Cemetery at Le Mans. I had questioned my decision to visit as our records showed that although posted to 49Sqn between June - July 1942, he flew no operations. However, I discovered that he had been at Scampton in order to undertake further training and that he went on to become the bomb aimer for the Master Bomber. He was killed on his 60th operation attacking railway targets at Le Mans in May 1944.

Sgt T Mellors (W/Op) was killed instantly when his Lancaster was attacked by a nightfighter. One of the four survivors, when released from captivity at the end of the war, was able to tell the heroic story of their pilot who helped clear a blocked escape hatch and then returned to the controls to give several of his crew time to escape. The pilot, Sgt Mellors and one other did not survive. They are buried side by side in Wevelgem, Belgium.

Some cemeteries are huge and others are small village graveyards. Beaumont-le-Roger is one of the latter. Pilot Officer John Beckett is buried here and is a good example of why I began the project. P/O Beckett flew a tour of 31 Hampden operations and was awarded the DFM. He might have been expected to “live happily ever after” but, shortly after being posted out, he was flying operations again with 44Sqn and ten months later he was dead.

The final graves were at Le Havre and Dieppe. F/L R E Richman is buried in the latter cemetery with the Canadians who were killed during the Dieppe Raid of 1942. A visit to the beach and the new museum completed our trip which covered 5635kms over a period of almost three weeks.

Several newly researched WW1 graves were included making a grand total of thirty two graves visited. Each grave, each location and each story was different but these men were all, at one time, 49ers.

(The *Update Log* on the Association website gives links to each visit)



Photos:
Malcolm Brooke

The beautiful forest cemetery at Emmen in north Holland. Three ex-49Squadron aircrew rest here.

BARGAIN HUNT

By

John Ward

The BBC recently contacted 49 Sqn Assn regarding the use of FIDO during WW2. They are planning to broadcast a small item on the subject during one of their 'Bargain Hunt' programmes. Lucy Sewell from the BBC Production Team asked if the Association could help with possible artefacts and possibly provide someone with a bit of FIDO knowledge to interview. With time running short, I stepped up to the challenge.

I met the team at the RAF base at Hemswell...this is an old stomping ground of our Chairman, Stuart.



Photo: Via John Ward

I was to be interviewed by Anita Manning, and Lucy thought an old piece of runway, out on the Airfield, would be the ideal location.

I had previously collected a 5 foot length of original Fiskerton FIDO pipe which was kindly lent by Mary and Carl Stuffins. This pipe was the centre of the 'talk' with Anita, who genuinely was most keen to learn about FIDO. We filmed for about an hour, having been briefed on what info was required...

15 airfields equipped in the UK...four in Lincolnshire. When on full burn it consumed 100,000 gallons per hour. A Lanc would use about 2,000 gallons on an average raid. In the post war period it has been estimated that FIDO saved the lives of 11,000 airmen.

For me, it was a rewarding experience, although I must admit, I was constantly conscious that my Parkinsons may have become more evident under stress, but we soldiered on and hopefully it won't be too much of a distraction.

The BBC team of six were extremely kind and helpful and Anita was charming...just to let you into a secret...it took Anita five takes to get the opening sequence right, which eased my nerves immensely.

It should be screened in about 2 - 3 months...they will inform us when.

READER'S LETTERS

In response to the death of non member F.S.J. Aldridge our Post War Archivist David Boughton e-mailed:

"My Christmas Card to him this year was picked up by his daughter and she wrote to say that he had died on the 16th October. Although he was not a member of the Association Sid did serve on the squadron from before Jan 1952 until he left Wittering August/Sept 1953. He then was commissioned, converted onto jets and flew with various squadrons on Canberras, Valiants, Vulcans and finally with Transport Command on VC 10's as a Squadron Leader, retiring in September 1975. Although he saw war service with 103 Squadron at Elsham Wold and flew on at least 18 ops as a Flight Engineer, his post-war experiences must have been just as adventurous. Perhaps if you could ask if anyone has details of his service career - Tony Cunnane has been in touch with me about his time at Finningley and I did contact David Fell of the 103 Squadron Association but they were not able to fill in the gaps. Sid did mention to me that he was an Evader and was asked to be the Secretary of their Association."

Did any of our readers know Sid? If so you can contact David whose details are on the back cover.

Associate Member David Harwood e-mailed:

"My wife and I had a week's holiday in Lincolnshire last month. Although we had to look after the grandchildren while our son and daughter-in-law attended a wedding on the Saturday, we all managed a visit to the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirkby on Tuesday 17th May to show my three-year-old grandson the type of aircraft that his great-granddad flew in and how big it was.

"It was a lovely day and we witnessed two taxi runs of 'Just Jane'. The whole family enjoyed the visit, including all the other exhibits plus an *al fresco* fish & chips lunch outside the NAAFI (which we finished just in time for the second taxi run).

"It was the first time that any of us had heard four Merlin engines so close and we were awe-struck at the size of the Lancaster as well.

"An amazing experience."

An e-mail from Associate member Roger Bedford read:

"On August 20, 1940 Winston Churchill made a speech to the House of Commons from which is oft-quoted the line 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.'"

"That's succinct and makes a wonderful sound-bite. How that paragraph continues expresses a view that probably resonates with many in 49 Squadron Association - and many others:

‘All hearts go out to the fighter pilots, whose brilliant actions we see with our own eyes day after day; but we must never forget that all the time, night after night, month after month, our bomber squadrons travel far into Germany, find their targets in the darkness by the highest navigational skill, aim their attacks, often under the heaviest fire, often with serious loss, with deliberate careful discrimination, and inflict shattering blows upon the whole of the technical and war-making structure of the Nazi power. On no part of the Royal Air Force does the weight of the war fall more heavily than on the daylight bombers, who will play an invaluable part in the case of invasion and whose unflinching zeal it has been necessary in the meanwhile on numerous occasions to restrain.’

“That is by no stretch a sound-bite! Which probably explains why we hear little of it.

“That use of bold text is mine.”

Roger later posted a generous donation to Association funds in particular memory of:

“ - Cyril Baker and crew of LL976 lost in July 1944 and buried in the French Military Cemetery at Beauvais Marissel, France— particularly John Morris Moss, the Flight Engineer, and Ronald Nineham, one of the Air Gunners.

- Sydney Holmes who is buried in the cemetery at Marissel while his comrades are buried in Bayeux.

- William Green RNZAF, and his crew who are buried in the churchyard at Herbisse, France. I would include the late Geoff Brunton, who was Bill Green’s usual Flight Engineer and would have been in the crew on that occasion if he had not been recovering from a motor cycle accident.

- Alfred George Edgar and crew.— in which my late father was his Flight Engineer. The crew survived the war but, with the exception of the Wireless Operator, Alfred ‘Rid’ Ridpath, have yielded to the passage of time.”

Public spirited Mr. Trevor Elliott sent the following e-mail:

“While walking on Dartmoor yesterday I came across the memorial to the crew of Hampden X3054 which crashed nearby on March 21st 1941. It is with utter abhorrence that I have to report that some moronic imbecile has scratched SS runes into the top left and right corners of the marble plaque on the reverse of the stone.”

Mr. Elliott expressed a desire to arrange the repairs to the memorial or even to replace it at his expense. I passed the message to John Lowe who, as most of our readers will know, has made it his duty to ensure the memorial’s well being and to perpetuate the memory of the 49 Squadron crew commemorated thereon. Having examined the memorial John e-mailed:

“The disfigurement takes the form of surface scratching in the upper left and right areas of the black Marble plaque. I have seen it previously and thought at the time that it was associated with general wear and tear due to age and not as ‘lighting flashes’ similar to those used by political groups. In certain lights it is almost impossible to see. The Dartmoor National Park Authority is now aware and between us we are looking at the best way forward. (It should be possible to ‘polish out’ the disfigurement by hand. I hope to take the Monumental Masons advice and guidance before embarking on any remedial work myself.)

“I feel honoured that I have been given the role of ‘maintainer of the monument’ for 49 Squadron and assure you of my diligence and support in carrying out those associated duties, however, both the Duchy, DNPA and I would appreciate guidance as to what you see my role as, please. I derived enormous personal pleasure when allowed to assist in the recutting of the stone a couple of years ago and would be happy to continue with a watching brief, removing Remembrance debris etc. Hameldown, The Boys Stone; Widecombe and the surrounding area has become home territory and as such its connection with 49 Squadron brings a huge sense of pride and privilege. Although the Stone stands within Dartmoor National Park, land ownership has transferred away from that of a private individual to that of the Duchy of Cornwall. Like most things in life, nothing is as simple as it first appears, there are many stake holders; all of which I have had to negotiate with throughout my investigative research and thereafter. Each has its own perception as to the level and depth of protection required to maintain the moor for posterity. (Walking through a mine field!!) Therefore a directive from the Squadron would be of a distinct advantage when working with these organisations.”

Taking the easy path, I suppose, I asked John, being the man on the scene, to let me have his ideas as to what his involvement should be. He replied as follows: “...I would gladly undertake the responsibility of monitoring the Stone, removing accumulation of debris, wreaths and crosses etc. and generally becoming the Guardian of the ‘Airmens’ Stone’. As an integral part of that responsibility would be being present on Remembrance Sunday as a Representative of 49 Squadron. So on balance, if the Squadron and Team wish it, then I am very happy to undertake that role.”

I was pleased to accept this suggestion and John is now proceeding accordingly for which we are most grateful. Mr. Elliott and John Lowe have demonstrated the good that there is in people as opposed to the criminal, for a crime it now is to damage a war memorial, who carried out this vile deed.

John later told us: “...Happy to report that refurbishment will be undertaken in house by the National Park craftsmen and funded by them, which is wonderful and very generous. I hope to be on hand when the work is planned.”

John Ward sent me the following e-mail:

“SX974 was used by RAE for high altitude photography, and was specially lightened and streamlined, hence the cutaway bomb bay. Merlin 113's were fitted and the crew wore pressure waistcoats. 41,000 ft was achieved.

In the last year of her life she was assigned to 49 Sqn but still continued to be a 'high flyer'...In June 1954, F/Lt Jack Higginbottom and crew took a group of Scientists from Cambridge, to observe and photograph an eclipse of the sun from high altitude.

“I think this photo was taken in Australia where she went to photograph Missile tests. She became known as the 'Eclipse Lincoln'.”



Associate Member Robert McEneaney e-mailed:

“Together with Chris Beare we represented the Association at the 4th Anniversary of the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial, Green Park, London on the 26th June.

“The Act of Remembrance was led by The Venerable Canon Brian Lucas CB Honorary Chaplain of the Bomber Command Association.

“A minutes silence was followed by the "Ode of Remembrance" delivered by Douglas Radcliffe MBE. At the wreath laying ceremony Chris Beare niece of Dennis Blumfield (Revigny Railyards 18/19 July 1944) and Robert McEneaney nephew of Terence McEneaney (Stuttgart 15/16 March 1944) laid a wreath with the customary blue ribbon on behalf of the 49 Squadron Association.



“The memorial is a fitting tribute to the memory of the airmen who gave their lives to secure the peace which we enjoy today and how fitting it is to see the Veterans joined by so many relatives and friends, both young and old, of those young men who lost their lives serving with Bomber Command.

We will remember them.

“During a visit to Cambridge to see my family I called in at the Godmanchester Veterans Day held in their Village Hall. Bomber Command was represented by non-other than Johnny Johnson DFM who kindly agreed to have his photograph taken with me. Once he had removed his glasses we shook hands and then he commented, "Although I am pleased to have this photograph taken with you I would much prefer to have it taken with your daughters". Still plenty of life left in the old Bomber Boys yet !

“Also present was Mary Stopes -Roe daughter of Barnes Wallis and Rusty Waughman DFC raising funds for the Bomber Command Association.”



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