

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
May 2017 Issue 45



Photo: Courtesy Andrew Panton

Warmest congratulations to all at East Kirkby on the completion to taxiing condition of their Lancaster NX611 'Just Jane'. Andrew Panton reports that NX611 rolled out of the hangar on Wednesday 27th and performed engine runs on all four Merlins. Following a thorough inspection they performed a trial taxi run on Friday 28th April, just a day before NX611's public appearance for the bank holiday."

IN MEMORIAM

**D. W. Messenger R. Walkinton J. R. McMahon
R. C. F. Amerena M. Hallam**

MEMBER COME BACK

John Muston

NEW HONORARY MEMBER

Gill Walkinton

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Chris Keightley

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the May issue of The 4T9er. I am grateful to those who have made donations to the running costs of the Association and to the fund for establishing a memorial to 49 Squadron at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Whilst a quotation, within budget, has been received from the monumental mason unfortunately progress has been very slow in the gaining of MoD approval for our memorial design. The Squadron Leader with whom I was dealing advised me that he was 'moving on', but unfortunately he didn't pass on the details that I had submitted. This only came to light after I finally received a phone call from the department following numerous attempts to make contact by phone and e-mail. I was told that our enquiry was still in his Inbox and that it appeared that it had not been submitted to the Air Historical Branch, whose approval is required. I was assured that this would now be done. Whilst this is very frustrating there is no cause for alarm, donations are still greatly appreciated.

I regret to announce the deaths of five of our colleagues. Association 'Friend' Don Messenger, himself exRAF, was a friend of former 49 Squadron armourer the late 'Reg' Jarrett. Don died on 16th June 2016, he was 91. Rob Walkinton died on March 1st aged 88 following a long illness. Rob was instrumental in the move to install the memorial in St Clements of Rome Church, Fiskerton to all those who served at RAF Fiskerton during World War II. John 'Paddy'

McMahon died on April 4th aged 96. He joined the RAF in 1940 and was flight engineer in the crew of F/L R. A. Jackson, Lancaster ED440 (EA-L), when they were shot down by a night fighter on 2nd February 1943 during a raid on Cologne. This was their first operation from Fiskerton and Paddy was the only survivor. He also survived the notorious 'Long March' as the war came to a close and wrote of his experiences in his book 'Almost a Lifetime'. Merv Hallam died on May 13th, he was seventy. Merv played a major role in establishing the museum at RAF Scampton and was the curator in its early days. He was made an Honorary Friend of the Association circa 2007. Gary Mennell, former officer i/c RAF Scampton Museum, writes, "...he made a great contribution to the Scampton Museum. In fact, he saved many of the artefacts from an over zealous officer, by diving onto a bonfire to save them. Unbelievably, a clear out of all the old "junk" had resulted in priceless photographs being thrown on the fire, and in some of the albums, you can see where they were singed around the edges." Roy Amerena, who died on April 21st, flew six operations as navigator in the crew of F/O H. R. Smith between 5th March to 8th April 1945. His son Roger tells me that Roy was a great friend of Sir Philip Jackson, the sculptor of the crew group in the Green Park Bomber Command Memorial, and he used Roy as the model for the figure of the navigator. In 2014 he gave an interview to William Mills a transcript of which appears in the 49 Squadron website:

<http://www.the-news.co/index.php/news/2014/08/seven-empty-beds/>

I am delighted to welcome back former F/O John Muston who was nav/plotter in the crew of S/Ldr 'Tif' O'Connor DFC for Operation Grapple Z.

We welcome Honorary Member Gil Walkinton, widow of Rob, whose passing is recorded above. Also new Associate Member Chris Keightley, the nephew of Sgt. Ernest 'Paddy' Paddick who flew a tour of operations with 49 Squadron between 3 November 1943 and 20 April 1944. He was the navigator in the crew of P/O Clive Roantree RAAF and their tour included ten trips to Berlin, the notorious 'Big City'. Having survived a tough tour Paddy was posted to 214 Squadron, by then with the rank of Flying Officer, and in one of those cruel events so common in Bomber Command, he was killed on 8 February 1945.

It is appropriate, I think, to give some details on membership numbers. Full Members, i.e. those who served on the squadron, eighty. All other categories, two hundred and thirty six, making three hundred and sixteen in total... a healthy number I'm sure you agree.

I was recently reading Guy Gibson's autobiography 'Enemy Coast Ahead', for maybe the fifth time and was reminded of the comment, "But despite the fact that Lancasters from our Group [5 Group ED.] were the only ones capable of 'doing' Italy, we flew in the month of November no fewer than 1,336 sorties to

that fair country for the loss of only two aircraft. If we should cast our minds back and say, for a matter of example, that an airline flew three flights a day to Italy for three years running and lost only two aircraft, they would consider themselves one of the safest airlines in the world.” Obviously, as the book was written during WWII, Gibson was killed on September 19th 1944, he was referring to airline flying in the 1930’s. How times change, we certainly take airline safety for granted today. Whilst on the subject of books I recommend ‘Dead Before Dawn’ by Frank Broome. This follows Broome’s recruitment, his training as a pilot in Canada, from which he was scrubbed due to a surfeit of pilots at the time, his subsequent training as an air gunner and his operational career with Bomber Command. If you want to get the true feel of a young man going through the RAF and Bomber Command system during WWII then this is a must. Both these books are available on Kindle.

I sent a PDF of February’s The 4T9er to Chris Gilson, Editor of FlyPast magazine. In acknowledging Chris asked, “It’s given me an idea too – do you know anyone in the association, who would be willing to write a Valiant-themed article for us? We often get Victor and Vulcan articles, but Valiants are rarer. Let me know what you think of idea and we can take it from there.” I said that I would ask around and asked Chris for more details of his requirements. He replied, “I’d be looking for 2-3,000 words ideally and I’d also need images as well – high res or original that I can scan if possible. That would be wonderful if you could find someone who’d be willing to produce something – or be interviewed.” I have put this to a number of people but is there anyone who I haven’t contacted who would be willing to oblige? It can be a joint effort and air and ground crew would be welcome to contribute. Chris would put it into a coherent article.

Our cover photograph shows the return to taxiable condition of the East Kirkby Lancaster ‘Just Jane’. Our heartiest congratulations to Andrew Panton and all those involved in this gargantuan project. What a beautiful picture NX611 makes. Who knows what will be next with the drive and enthusiasm that exists at Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre.

On page 19 of February’s issue I mentioned that I have block booked a number of rooms for the weekend of the Scampton Air Show, September 9 & 10. There are a couple of rooms still available but I will soon have to cancel these in order that we do not incur any ‘no show’ costs. If you wish to take advantage of this let me know urgently.

Finally, I am most grateful to those who have contributed articles and ‘Reader’s Letters’. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find sufficient interesting material to sustain the magazine so come on, put fingers to keys.

‘Til the next time.

THE WAR [And after]

By

Tom W. Reed

Part 6

When I reported to the armament officer I was greeted with, “Where the hell have you been you should have been here two days ago.”

I tried to explain what had happened but was told to get out and get on with the job, without being told what the job was. So I met Flight Sergeant Collinson in the adjoining office and he told me that I would be I/C station armoury.

The station armoury was a purpose-built building with the photographic section on the upper floor. Flight Sergeant Collinson showed me around the armoury and I noticed a general air of neglect, so when he had gone I assembled the armourers in the office and told them what, with their help, I hoped to achieve.

I said the first thing we would do would be to restore the mahogany block flooring throughout. I would borrow a sander but the floor had to be cleaned first with solvents.

All equipment lying around was to be listed and stored correctly and anything surplus returned to stores.

I would obtain paint and brushes and have the rooms decorated which hadn't been touched since the place was built. I detailed the sergeant to obtain the sander and the two airmen to do the floor and the rest of the staff to clean benches and sort equipment.

It transpired that the boss was an alcoholic who ‘lived out’ about ten miles away and commuted to work in a rusty old Morris Minor. He rarely arrived before 10 a.m. and left at 4 p.m., no wonder the set-up was a shambles.

All the work had been done without the knowledge of the armament officer who almost threw a fit when he did a pre-Cos inspection. He sent for me, gave me a ‘rollicking’ for doing it without orders and banished me to the bomb dump, bringing Flight Sergeant Collinson back to the armoury.

As soon as a married quarter became available I was able to request removal leave and went up to Durham by train where we packed our belongings and I drove down with the family.

The MQ was the same pre-war type as at Acklington, a three bedroom semi in a similar condition.

I had managed to exchange the furniture but had not had time to redecorate to the usual cream and pastel green décor which I did in my off-duty time and I had just finished when we were allocated a brand new four-bedroom semi on a

new development called Packsfield Road.

The furnishings and equipment were also all brand new and Deenie was delighted. The walls were all buttermilk and the doors and woodwork a beech colour with matching tables and chairs. The windows were all larger so it was quite light and airy.

In the armoury the floors had been sanded and polished to barrack room standard, the benches cleaned, vices painted and the walls were painted a flat cream. Furniture and lockers replaced and overalls exchanged for new. The equipment all sorted and racked and maintenance organised.

I felt really bad about my banishment after all the work had been done until I realised that the semi-underground storage sheds were equipped with overhead gantries and chain block lifting gear.

As I had got a married quarter fairly quickly and I had to leave to pick up Deenie and the children, I had driven down to West Raynham in my car, a Standard 12, which I wasn't happy with. I had taken the engine out to change the piston rings and was obliged to do my maintenance in the kitchen (much to Deenie's disgust) and when I'd finished the overhaul, having seen a shooting brake I fancied, I decided to sell the Standard.

The Wolseley shooting brake had been a police car which had been modified with a body in mahogany and oak trim like a larger mini estate, light oak frames with mahogany panels.

I soon realised that the engine wasn't in the best of health so I scouted round for a replacement. It was a six cylinder engine which weighed three cwt.

I eventually found one near Burford, it had been a write off taxi and had only done 25,000 miles, so I hired a van and got it back to West Raynham where I'd already lifted the old engine out.

My stay in the bomb dump was short lived, I had barely finished the engine installation when an internal posting to the Air Fighting Development Squadron materialised.

I duly reported to Wing Commander Lapsley, a pre-war pilot of the old school who had survived the Battle of Britain as had both of his predecessors.

I took over from a sergeant who had either been posted overseas or demobbed, I never met him.

The squadron armoury was at the back of the hanger consisting of my office, airman's crew room and a large workshop which never saw the sun. It was decorated in the usual dark green and brown and was very dismal.

I set to give it the treatment, cream walls and door panels and pastel green elsewhere, which brightened things up. The mahogany parquet floors were in fairly good shape and were buffed up to an acceptable standard,. The benches were cleaned and broken furniture, lockers etc, changed as required. My office

was transformed and a couple of filing cabinets and Windsor armchairs put the finishing touches to it.

I had been suffering from severe headaches for about six months and was only given painkillers which were pretty useless. I then developed a strong abdominal pain. I was sent to the RAF hospital at Ely and diagnosed with a grumbling appendix and told to return the following week for an operation.

I went to hospital on the Friday and prepared for an op on the Monday. I was given the pre-op tranquilliser and remembered nothing until the following day. When seen by the surgeon he asked if I had had any previous problems and I told him about my headaches. I hadn't had the op but he referred me to the ENT consultant who examined my nose and said, "My God you're rotten! You have fifteen badly infected polyps, no wonder you're having headaches. I'll have to order some special tools and as soon as I get them I'll call you in!"

He remarked that whoever had done my tonsils had done a good job. I told him I'd never had a tonsil operation and he said that a large collection of polyps had been doing the job of tonsils...

...During my second year at CFE a circular came round requesting all flight sergeants and WOs to volunteer as aircraft controllers, stating that it was a requirement to be accepted for officer training and pass the necessary aptitude and medical tests.

My next-door neighbour and I decided to apply and were called to take the necessary aptitude selection interviews and later the officer selection board after an interview with the CFE station commander, Group Captain Boxer.

We went to Group Headquarters and were interviewed separately by a board of four group captains who asked a variety of questions, and were then passed on for interview by the air officer commanding, Air Commodore 'Batchy' Atcherley, one of the legendary Atcherley twins.

He recognised me immediately as he had previously been station commander at CFE and a regular visitor to AFDS, which was then commanded by Wing Commander Lapsley, as they had been two of the 'few' during the Battle of Britain. He congratulated me for having passed the selection board and wished me luck.

Some weeks later Flight Sergeant North was called for officer training and I presumed as I hadn't that they had their quota.

As the later models of Meteors and Vampires were due off the production lines I was detailed to attend the Martin Baker factory for a three week course on ejection seats and practice rig.

After completing the course successfully I returned to the AFDS to instruct everyone on the procedures to be adopted for their use. The main responsibility was for inserting the safety pin whilst the aircraft were on the ground, and it was

the pilot's responsibility to ensure it was removed before taxiing out for take off.

I supervised the erection of the practice rig for the pilots who were sat on a replica seat, and when instructed to do so pulled the face mask which operated the mechanism and shot them twenty-five feet up the gantry.

With the arrival of the first six of each type of aircraft from the factory it had been realised that jet aircraft were not able to do adequate firing against drogue targets towed by much slower propeller driven Martinets.

AFDS were directed to produce and test tow glider targets for high-speed towing, so I was detailed to set up a programme for testing them.

The glider was to be a thirty-five foot wingspan cut down with wings reduced to half size and the glider trimmed to fly about fifty feet above the tug aircraft, which was a Meteor fighter with a bomb release installed underneath the belly of the fuselage. There were two horns fitted to the extremities of the wings to which a triple wired harness was fitted, coupled to a nylon rope spring attached to 1,000 feet of steel wire cable, which in turn was attached to the bomb release fitting.

The spotter aircraft was to take-off and circle ready to fly alongside the glider and supervise its flying mode.

The first two attempts failed as the severe pull on the cable stretched the nylon spring to its limit and the glider shot forward and overran the cable, and the tug pilot was forced to release it on the ground.

After disentangling the cable ready for the next attempt, I decided to act as a human brake and hung onto the tail fin and ran for several yards to restrain the spring stretch as the glider started to move, several successful flights resulted.

On one occasion however, on the first flight of the day, I waved to the pilot of the 'spotter' aircraft as he took off, my crew laid the cable and I prepared the glider for towing.

The Meteor tug came out and positioned itself ready for take-off and my crew member who had fitted the cable stood at the tug's wing tip waiting for my signal, two whirling hands, and gave the go signal to the pilot, I had noticed the spotter flying downwind and as I let go of the glider and turned round I was horrified to see it turn sharply and start falling in a fighter weave straight for us.

We were close to the end of the runway and he bellied on the ground and bounced fifty feet, landing about 200 yards away with a small lane, hedged each side, between us. I and my crew ran towards the crash and I managed to break through both hedges and get to the aircraft and get the pilot out. His harness had been severed but he was too heavy for me. It was obvious he was dead as he had landed on the side of the cockpit and was almost cut in half and was unrecognisable.

As I turned to shout for help I noticed the station ambulance had arrived and a very white face had appeared, it was the medical officer on his first day on the station. I yelled at him to come and give me a hand as the aircraft had started to burn and between us we got him clear. He felt just like a lump of jelly, I thought every bone in his body was broken, his face was swollen and his eyes had big bulges. To me it appeared that he had turned too quickly with insufficient airspeed. I suppose it was pilot error.

Out of the blue fighter command requested that I be detached to 608 Squadron at RAF Thornaby to prepare them for their Annual Practice Camp in Malta as they were having dismal results when air firing and didn't seem to be able to rectify the problems

I agreed to go provided I was given a month to prepare them and 'live out'.

I reported to Squadron Leader Martin at 608 Squadron and soon recognised the problem. Most of the squadron personnel were employed at ICI Chemicals and the pilots were mostly from the same source.

A skeleton staff of regular airmen, which included two armourers and a sergeant, were all employed on different jobs.

The sergeant drove the squadron transport and the airmen were employed as a storekeeper and a general dogsbody.

After WWII, If the guns were properly stored in the aircraft that was it, no servicing was carried out during the week and very little at weekends.

The guns were in a pretty sorry state, so one aircraft at a time was removed from the flying programme and the guns were properly serviced and tested on the twenty-five yard range, firing 100 rounds through each gun before the installation in the aircraft after cleaning.

When all the aircraft had been done they were test fired air to ground at Druridge Bay, and the whole lot cleaned ready for Malta.

I flew out with the squadron in a Hastings transport and we were bussed to Takali, a naval aerodrome.

We got cracking straight away and things went well during the fourteen days. The armourers excelled themselves and we got a record stoppage rate of 2,600 rounds per stoppage.

The commanding officer was so pleased he took us all out for dinner, a fabulous 'Night Out' in Valletta, which was enjoyed by us all.

We flew back to Thornaby to learn that one aircraft had blown up after take-off after refuelling at Morocco.

After landing I was approached by Squadron Leader Martin who said if it could be arranged he'd like me to stay with 608. I declined saying I had a much better job in AFDS.

To be continued.



THE LATEST ARRIVALS AT RAF MUSEUM COSFORD.

GLOSTER GLADIATOR Mk 1.

Note the Wellington wing to the right
of the top photograph.

Opposite page, JUNKERS JU88-R1
Three views taken during reassembly.

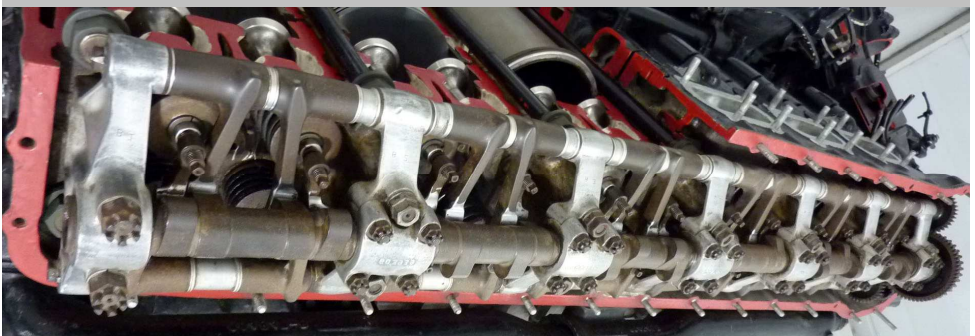






THE INCOMPARABLE ROLLS-ROYCE MERLIN ENGINE

Imagine setting 48 tappets per engine when perched high above the ground on a freezing Lincolnshire January morning!





Friend of 49 Squadron Association, Steve Pepper, holds an extremely successful annual WWII ‘Victory Show’ on his farm at Cosby, Leicestershire. All the details of this three day event can be found on the link: www.thevictoryshow.co.uk

This year’s event is on the same weekend as the Scampton Air Show, enabling both shows to take advantage of shared aircraft in the skies that weekend.

This year, Steve has very generously offered 49 Squadron Association a free display marquee with a view to the Association raising funds towards the 49 Squadron Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Our Hon. President and Historian John Ward will be on the stand, offering for sale photos, prints, and books and he will be delighted to meet any members attending the show.



READER'S LETTERS

Whilst making a further donation towards the proposed NMA Memorial Denis Colquitt, who lives in Douglas, Isle of Man, included the following:

“Re your article regarding a visit to Cosford [*The 4T9er Issue 44. Ed.*], a few years ago I visited the museum to show my late wife the Lincoln Bomber on which I had spent two years of my three years service in the RAF. When 49 Squadron was disbanded in August 1955 I was posted to RAF Gaydon which was a sort of staging post for Valiants just entering service. After a crash two weeks course I was deemed ok to be let loose on the aircraft. Your photo of the rear of the Valiant brought back memories of crawling up the jet pipes to check the turbine blades - not a job for anyone who was claustrophobic. Another less challenging job was to crawl into the bomb aimer's blister to grease the throttle linkages.

“As regards the aircrew both pilots had ejector seats but the other three had to use the hatch to escape in an emergency. I understood that the hatch could be jettisoned if necessary and something like an eyelid deployed in front of the hatch to deflect the airflow. However, we all thought it would be dangerous. I don't know if it was tested up in the air. Anyway the Valiant was the first bomber in service and the first to be scrapped.

“P.s. We also visited the National Arboretum whilst in the area to see the names of the crew who were killed in a crash during our tour in Kenya 55/56. It was a moving experience to see the names of all those killed since 1945.”

The number now exceeds sixteen thousand!

Alasdair Campbell e-mailed following my piece in February's issue on my visit inside Valiant XD818:

“My log book records that I flew in XD818 on 17th, 19th, 20th & 21st Aug 1964 on a detachment to RAF Luqa (Malta) for bombing practice at El Adem range (Libya) with the 100lb training bomb. I flew again in XD 818 on 20 Sept 1964 on a training sortie from RAF Marham. I was the Nav Radar.

“Looking backwards from the pilots' seats, the rear crew was (from left to right): Nav Radar; Nav Plotter; AEO. As you will have noticed, we were in a well below and behind the pilots. In the Victor 2, that I flew in later, the rear crew layout was the same but better in that we sat at the same level as the pilots and so could see forward.

“The subject of rear crew ejector seats that were trialled successfully has always been controversial.”

This was tragically illustrated in the Heathrow crash of the Vulcan, which has a similar arrangement, when the pilots ejected but the three 'back seaters' perished.

Associate Member Roger Bedford e-mailed:

“A couple of weeks ago I went to a Royal Aeronautical Society lecture at Hamilton Place.

“As I had not previously visited the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park I left time in my schedule to do that. It is an impressive memorial, as you will know.

“The experience was made more relevant when I saw two wreaths laid in memory of 49 Sqn aircrew.

“For one of them Chris Beare remembered her uncle F/S D W Blumfield, Louise Dexter remembered her uncle F/S R Hoole and Robert McEneaney remembered his uncle F/S T C McEneaney.

“F/S Blumfield was lost on 18-19/7/1944 (Revigny) and is buried in the churchyard at Granges-sur-Aube. (I am sure that I have visited the graves here. I think this was on a particularly memorable Sunday when I was en route home from Mailly-le-Camp and took the opportunity to visit a number of cemeteries where 49 Sqn casualties rest. It was particularly memorable because I was stopped for speeding and fined 90 Euros on the spot. I don't think I was speeding and I was driving a car with a British registration plate. It was a holiday in France and I felt I was an easy target, I wish that my French had been sufficient to argue my case effectively and explain what I was doing. Moral: keep 90 Euros handy while driving home from France.)

“F/S Hoole and F/S McEneaney were lost on 15-16/3/1944 (Stuttgart) and are buried at Durnbach War Cemetery. They were members of P.O. T W Waugh's crew.

“The second wreath remembered each member of P.O. T W Waugh's crew - naming each of the seven members.

I don't know who placed it - probably you will know as it may have been arranged through you.

“I wonder what the connection is between F/S Blumfield - a member of F.O. W D Appleyard's crew - and the two members of P.O. Waugh's crew.

“I have read Chris Beare's write-up on the 49 Sqn Association web-site reporting on her family visit to Granges-sur-Aube. Very interesting and adds to the worth of the web-site.

“BTW, the ranks I quoted are as shown on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission web-site.

“I can't locate my copy of Beware of the Dog at War - I am sure it will shed more light. It usually does !! Thank you J Ward.”

I replied to Roger giving the involvement of Robert, Louise and Chris, copying it to those three. Chris's response to Roger read:

“Alan Parr has forwarded your recent email on to me along with his reply.

“I understand that you have recently been to the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park and seen the tributes laid there. I can offer a little clarification that might be of interest to you.

“My mother’s brother was Flt Sgt D W Blumfield and after my visit to France (as you have read) my mother, brother and I attended the 49 Squadron reunion. We met and formed a friendship with Robert & Annette McEneaney and Louise Dexter.

“As an active member of a group set up to fundraise for the building of the memorial in Green Park and subsequently its upkeep, I regularly attend events there and meet with Robert and Annette on these occasions. Although quite a trek from Devon it is much easier for me than trips to Lincolnshire and an opportunity to pay tribute to those who lost their lives.

“The most significant of these visits is on Remembrance Sunday when we assist in leading a time of reflection for the people who gather at the memorial rather than attending the cenotaph. On these occasions we always lay a wreath between us in remembrance of our family members and all who were lost serving with 49 Squadron.

“I hope that this explains that, although there is no connection between our crews, we always like to support each other in making sure that our relatives are remembered.”

I must say that one of the most satisfying aspects of carrying out the duties of secretary, which is shared by the rest of the ‘crew’, is the bringing together of like minded people.

Louise Dexter e-mailed me to advise that she has changed her name to Louise Jennings-Hoole in honour of her uncle Ronnie, F/Sgt R Hoole. She has explained the details and origin of the name and I congratulate her on making such a positive step of remembrance.

Coincidentally, in view of earlier messages, Robert McEneaney e-mailed to tell me:

“I attended a short lecture with Annette at Bentley Priory Museum on Friday morning [28th April ED.] given by the author & historian Steve Darlow on the subject of Bomber Command.

“Steve Darlow gave a very interesting lecture supported by recordings he had made of interviews with three veterans who gave us a very detailed insight into their time with Bomber Command. Following the lecture we enjoyed a questions and answer session and finished with those in attendance explaining their connection to Bomber Command.

“At the end of the lecture Martin & Sally Baker made themselves known to us

as I had mentioned the work undertaken by the 49 Squadron Association. Martin explained his family connection with Bomber Command and that his Mum's cousin, John Dickinson JB399, had served with the 49ers and was based at Fiskerton. He also explained that he is known to you and John Ward and that you have exchanged research material in the past.

"However that is a first for the relatives group of ND 474, we have now met relatives of a 49er who was based at Fiskerton at the same time as our boys back in March 1944. We can only hope that both crews may have had the opportunity to enjoy a night in the local pubs together as sadly both were to soon join the ranks of those who failed to return.

"We intend to meet up in the near future and exchange information relating to our relative's crews and as always our thanks to the Association for giving all relatives a reference point."

My earlier comment regarding the satisfaction that I, and the 'crew', feel from the work that we do is amplified by Robert's message.

Totally unconnected with his previous e-mails, Roger Bedford sent the following:

"You probably watched the Operation Grapple documentary on BBC TV on Wednesday evening. Britain's Nuclear Bomb: The Inside Story

"I have just watched it on the iPlayer. It will be available for a further 29 days [Expires end of May. ED] for those who either missed it or want to see it again. This link will go straight there: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b08nz0xh/britains-nuclear-bomb-the-inside-story>

"In 1957, Britain exploded its first megaton hydrogen bomb - codenamed Operation Grapple X. It was the culmination of an extraordinary scientific project, which against almost insuperable odds turned Britain into a nuclear superpower. This is the inside story of how Britain got 'the bomb'.

"The BBC has been granted unprecedented access to the top-secret nuclear research facility at Aldermaston. The programme features interviews with veterans and scientists who took part in the atomic bomb programme, some speaking for the first time, and newly released footage of the British atomic bomb tests.

"First shown: 9pm 3 May 2017, Available for 29 days, 60 mins

"The 49 Sqn crest on the Valiant is 52 minutes and 50 seconds into the programme when Co-Pilot Alan Pringle and Navigator Derek Tuthill are walking up to the Valiant.

"Has that aircraft been moved to Cosford? I remember seeing it at Hendon.

"BTW, I chanced upon a YouTube item recently. It was uploaded in 2011 but might be worth noting if not already. I haven't yet found part 2.)

"Recovery of Avro Lancaster PD309 W-William 2 576 Sqn. Part 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vF0U9NTyA2Y#t=12.827773>

“Uploaded on Aug 27, 2011

“This Lancaster, flown by F/O Clarence Roy Pegg of B Flight 576 Sqn, took off from RAF Fiskerton, 5 miles East of Lincoln at 17- 45 pm on the evening of the 16th January 1945 to bomb the German petro-chemical plant at Zietz Troglitz in central Germany.

“After successfully dropping its bombs on the target, the Lancaster, now damaged and on 3 engines, made its way back over Germany.

“The Lancaster had further engine trouble, leaving only 2 engines working. At this point the crew decided to head south to the allied lines near Brussels, against attempting a North Sea crossing.

“Near Brussels the Lancaster, now down to 3,000ft, lost a 3rd engine and the crew baled out. The Lancaster crashed in a farmers field.

Recovery was by a group of Belgian enthusiasts led by Nicolas Clinaz.

In reply to Roger’s query regarding the whereabouts of the Valiant XD818, see page 8 of February’s issue of The 4T9er for my article following my visit inside the aircraft at RAF Museum, Cosford.

Associate Member Stephen Hill e-mailed to tell of a fortuitous find:

...”You might find this interesting, last year I found a rather tatty print by Robert Taylor in a local junk shop, no frame, bent and dirty, but I bought it anyway, it had to be rescued, I left it with a framer friend of mine with instructions to do his best, but frame it anyway, I am now the proud owner of a signed print by R.T. "Memorial Flight" plus the additional signatures of Johnnie Johnson, Leonard Cheshire VC, and Group Captain Peter Townsend.”



I replied:

“Thank you for your e-mail and congratulations on your find. It seems to have recovered very well. As a matter of interest how much did you pay for the print, Robert Taylor is always collectable?”

From Stephen:

“As I said I found it in a junk shop, bought it for £7, it was the Lancaster that caught my attention, when I got home and researched the name, that's when I realised how lucky I was, also my new friend owned the local framers, he took it on as a project, and it only cost me the price of the materials £30.”

Moral...Always keep your eyes open! You never know!

The work of the dedicated Association ‘Crew’ is continuous. The e-mail sent to me by our Researcher Colin Cripps is typical of their efforts:

“I have this evening exchanged contact details and put Frank Nicholson in touch with Michelle Connolly .

“Michelle is the Great Niece of Sgt Sullivan Rear Gunner and Frank is the Nephew of F/Lt Lawson-Tancred Pilot.”

Erik and Anne van der Meiden tend the graves of six members of the Sgt. G. S. Cole crew who were shot down on June 15 1943. They lie in Oosterbeek Cemetery near many of those who perished at Arnhem. Erik & Anne took over the care of the graves from Truus Oosterhaar MBE who started too look after them as a girl during the war.

“Just some photo's from Oosterbeek. On Sunday we put some summer plants on the grave. Now they have to grow.”

We are so grateful to all our overseas friends for their loving care.

