

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
November 2017 Issue 47



Photo: Darren Friday

**The superb Handley Page Hampden restoration progresses at the
Michael Beetham Conservation Centre, Royal Air Force Museum Cosford.**

IN MEMORIAM

E. Weatherley D. Radcliffe MBE J. R. Jenkins

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

GONE AWAY

Robert Grant John Scott

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

David Manning Ian Weatherley

EDITORIAL

Well here we are on ‘finals’ for Christmas once again and another year has flown by. Wherever you spend it may you have a happy and peaceful one.

I am pleased to tell you that the application for our memorial has now been accepted by the National Memorial Arboretum. I would appeal to those of you who have not yet made a donation to seriously consider doing so in order to feel a part of it when the dedication ceremony takes place. All of our Associate Members joined in order to remember a loved one who served with 49 Squadron and although they may not have died during wars they are still part of the memorial whose inscription will read, “IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO SERVED ON 49 SQUADRON 1916 - 1965”. Having said that, I sincerely thank all those who have donated and by doing so have made the memorial possible.

My thanks go also to those who have donated to association funds thus enabling us to continue our work. It is appropriate here to mention the names of ‘the Crew’ who give so much of their time to forwarding the aims of 49SA. They are: John Ward - Honorary President and Historian, Stuart Keay - Chairman, David Boughton - Post-war Archivist, Ed Norman - Archivist, Colin Cripps - Researcher, Malcolm Brooke - Webmaster, and not forgetting their lady ‘Ground crews’ and my Crew Chief Barbara. They are the best in the business.

Sadly the Grim Reaper continues to take his toll. Associate Member Edna Weatherley, widow of Flight Lieutenant Albert Weatherley, died on 5th July 2017, aged 95. Edna and Bert attended many reunions over the years and after Bert’s death, until a few years ago, she was accompanied by her son Ian. We are most grateful to Ian for donating his father’s memorabilia to the Association for

safe keeping and distribution. I am pleased to welcome him as a new Associate Member. Warrant Officer Doug Radcliffe MBE flew a full operational tour as a wop/ag on Wellingtons with 425 Squadron. Doug, although not a member of 49 SA, was Secretary of the RAF Bomber Command Association since 1985 and latterly its President. He saw his tireless work rewarded when the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park was unveiled by HM Queen in 2012. He was 93 when he died on September 7th. John Jenkins died on April 4th aged 93.

On the other hand I am delighted to welcome New Associate Member David Manning, the son of the late Ken Manning who died last year aged 93. Ken flew 29 ops as wireless operator to Norman Alty DFC.

An example of how the passage of time has a deep affect on an organisation such as ours was this year's discontinuation of our annual reunion. All was not doom and gloom, however, as a very enjoyable two day gathering took place at the Bentley Hotel, Lincoln, coinciding with the RAF Scampton Air Show. This was attended by thirteen members and spouses and it is our hope that a similar get together can take place annually to coincide with some suitable outside event perhaps with an enlarged attendance. It would be a pity to let the spirit of reunion die completely. An illustrated report on the gathering and air show appears on page 23 of this issue.

I join many, many others in wishing Sqdn Ldr Mike Ling MBE all the best now that he has finally left The Red Arrows. Mike is an Associate Member of 49SA as his grandfather Sgt. James Parkinson flew on 49 Squadron as a flight engineer from 1945 until 1947. Mike attended our reunion in 2008.

On Saturday 11th November Barbara and I visited our Hon. President John Ward who, as many of you know, has bravely suffered with Parkinson's Disease for many years. At the end of October he went into hospital to explore the possibility of having an operation but tragically was found to have an aggressive brain tumour. In early November John posted the following on Facebook:
"Dear Friends

I am pleased to say that I am back home in the company of my family for the final phase of my journey. In a few weeks time I will be starting the adventure of a lifetime, laying in a slow flowing boat, floating to hopefully find the answers to all the big questions, and what lies beyond. I am in good spirits and good frame of mind, so in the future if you enter a room and feel someone there or catch sight of something down the corridor, or the curtain rustles or a pile of paper blows onto the floor, well its not me! I'm too busy, I've got 55,000 aircrew and 7,000 men of Arnhem to interview.

Feel free to visit me at home, I am always in!

Airborne all the way,

John."

Now bed bound his opening words to Barbara and me were, “It’s a matter of weeks now, I’m treating it as an adventure.”

What a man! God bless you John and your loving family. Thank you for your huge contribution to 49 Squadron and its Association.

Please permit me to indulge myself! On Remembrance Sunday my granddaughter, 10 year old Evie Crowson holds her great grandfather’s miniature medals in her right hand and her great great Uncle Bob’s medals in her left. The former was killed in Tunisia on August 17th 1943 and the latter was killed a few hours later over Denmark on ops with 49 Squadron. That evening she proudly wore the miniatures to her Girlguiding Remembrance Service at Fradley Church, Staffordshire.



To those of you who are not enjoying the best of health our thoughts, prayers and good wishes are with you all.

’Til the next time, wherever it may be.

OPEN WEEK AT THE MICHAEL BEETHAM CONSERVATION CENTRE. RAF MUSEUM COSFORD.

By

Alan Parr

This eagerly awaited event at Cosford gives the opportunity for the general public to view progress on the items under restoration. I dropped in on the Tuesday and was delighted to have the chance of a chat with Darren Priday, the Centre’s Manager and Honorary Friend of the Association.

I was delighted to see the Lysander in the Centre, the first time that I have seen one since the war. I have just finished reading a book about their service over occupied France and in one instance four passengers returned...how, I can’t imagine!





In the nine months or so since my last visit there has been a leap forward in the restoration of the Handley Page Hampden, so much so that I could hardly believe my eyes. The above photographs show, on the left the aircraft in November 2016 and on the right the progress one year later.

The most impressive progress however is apparent when one looks inside the aircraft. Just compare the cockpit photograph, above taken in 2016, with the internal view on page 6. The quality of workmanship is absolutely amazing.

My thanks to Darren and his staff once again for their hospitality.

The most recent additions to the Combat Hangar.

**Messersmitt
Me262**



**Boulton Paul
Defiant**



HANDLEY PAGE HAMPDEN P1344, 75 YEARS LATER.

By

**Darren Priday Honorary Friend of 49 Squadron Association
And Manager
Michael Beetham Conservation Centre
RAF Museum**

On the 4th September 1942, the RAF Museum's Hampden P1344 left Sumburgh in the Shetland Islands on what was to be its last flight. The aircraft was one of 32 aircraft being sent to the Kola Peninsula, Northern Russian to protect the Arctic Convoys (it was known as Operation Orator). Now the 5th September, and after suffering with icing problems, the aircraft was slightly off course and flew directly above a Luftwaffe base at Petsamo. It received ground fire and the crew witnessed two Bf109's take-off; the two hostile aircraft engaged and eventually brought down the Hampden. In total nine aircraft were lost that night just trying to get the aircraft to their operating base in Russia.

There were five crew on-board P1344, three were sadly killed (Navigator, Wireless Operator/Air Gunner and Air Gunner) whilst the two survivors (Pilot and Engine Fitter) ended up as POW's for the remainder of the war.

Seventy five years to the day, RAF Museum Cosford ran a special event to commemorate the aircraft's last flight. Of the five crew members on-board, four of the families attended and met up in the Conservation Centre prior to the talk. This allowed the families to have their private time together before the evening's event kicked-off. Also, invited to the pre-talk meet-up was Flt Lt Fred Hill DFC, 49 Squadron Hampden pilot (87 ops, 22 on Hampden's) ably assisted by John and Zena Lowe.



The Hampden's 'Office'

Once inside the Centre, Fred saw the aircraft (we nearly have a complete fuselage) and made a beeline for the cockpit as he had full intention to get ‘back into the seat’. Eventually, and after a lot of gentle persuasion from John, Fred was allowed to sit on the cockpit sill (getting him out was considered to be difficult). He was introduced to P1344 families and spent time giving them a thorough run through of the Hampden and its controls.

The talk, held in the Museum’s lecture theatre, was attended by 130 people. A few slides were dedicated to Fred, for which he received a tremendous hero’s ovation from the attendees.

After the talk the audience were invited to the Conservation Centre to view the current development of the Hampden. Once again Fred was in his element, passing on his knowledge and stories to all within earshot. Eventually Fred did retreat to a seat (he is 96 years young) where a queue quickly formed for visitors to meet, chat and get a quick ‘selfie’ with him.

On behalf of the RAF Museum, the MBCC and all who attended the evening, I would like to pass on my grateful thanks to Fred; a true gentleman, someone who has time for everyone, who has a better memory than most half his age and a real hero of our nation.

**Opposite: Fred and Robert Howard
nephew of P1344’s navigator**



Fred is reunited with a Hampden



All photos with this article by Darren Priday

49 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION REMEMBERS

By

Alan Parr

On Sunday 12th November 49 Squadron was remembered at a number of locations across the U.K. and no doubt in many more countries.

As has become the tradition, the largest single gathering of 4T9ers was at Fiskerton. Once again the church was full for Revd. Penny's excellent service during which the 5th Lincoln Scout Troop's Standard and our Roll of Honour were placed on the altar. Chairman Stuart Keay laid a wreath on the Fiskerton Memorial. Following the church service there was a brief wreath laying ceremony at the Airfield Memorial. The only WWII 49 Squadron veteran present this year, Bill 'Titch' Cooke LdeH, laid our wreath, the Guard of Honour being mounted by the scouts. As in recent years, the ladies of the village hall prepared a delicious lunch. We are most grateful. Associate Member Ian Weatherley, son of former 49 Squadron wireless operator, Bert Weatherley, had previously donated his father's artefacts to the association and one of them, a framed print by Frank Wooton, signed by three VC's, was presented to the committee of the village hall for hanging in The 49 Squadron Lounge.



**Bill 'Titch' Cooke LdeH
lays our wreath at the
Airfield Memorial.**

Photo: Dom Howard



The lunch time gathering at Fiskerton Village Hall

Photo: Revd. Penny Green

Jo Cockburn laid a wreath at Runnymede to her great uncle F/Sgt. George Silvester who, like all remembered there, has no known grave.



Photos: Via Jo Cockburn



John Lowe attached the photo, left, and wrote:

“Remembrance Sunday on Hameldown was brilliant. Cold and very, very windy. Over fifty people, more than ever before, braved the elements and made the climb. The National Park decided that conditions were not suitable or safe enough for Fred [Hill. Ed.] to be taken to

the Memorial Stone so he stayed in Sidmouth. I placed the 49 Sqn wreath and Bill and Serina, National Park Rangers, jointly laid the Not Forgotten one. What makes this so special is that our small ceremony is unannounced so those that come do so because they want to. It has now become a meeting place for old and valued friends. I was told by many that they had come because of hearing of the story of *‘The Boys’* either in their local communities or because of attending one of the presentations that I had given within their locality.”

Following the service at the Bransby Memorial Stan Smith wrote:

“...had a good turn out about 25/30 people also the RAF cadets.”

Robert McEneaney wrote:

“Regarding Remembrance Sunday,...The McEneaney / Hoole group of 49ers gathered at the Memorial for the short service which also gives many the chance to meet old friends again. I travelled to Littleover in Derby with Annette and our son Anthony to remember Annette’s Great uncle who was lost 100 years ago this year in WW1.

“We attended a beautiful remembrance service in the Village Church at Littleover where Annette’s relative is remembered on the War Memorial in the church

grounds. The local vicar reminded me very much of Penny Green at Fiskerton, very upbeat, and she dedicated the service to Annette’s relative.

“I was thinking yesterday of you all at Fiskerton and as we are aware of John’s failing health from your earlier note we placed a candle and said a prayer to remember him also.”

In Denmark Marilyn Nissen planted crosses on the graves of the eight 49ers who are buried in Aabenraa Cemetery and a further cross on the crash site memorial to the crew of 49 Squadron Lancaster JA691.



Photo: Via Robert McEneaney



Photos: Via Marilyn Nissen

Peter Hare laid our wreath at the Fulbeck Memorial and no doubt there were many other acts of Remembrance by 4T9ers around the world.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.

UPDATE ON LANCASTER JB301 EA-U

By

Dom Howard

49' lost two aircraft on the night of 23rd September 1943, ED702 of the Anderson crew and JB301 of F/S David Stanton and crew, on the return from the raid on Mannheim. Both have been covered by me in previous editions of The 4T9er, and details on the 49SA web site.

The crew of JB301, who were on their 3rd op with 49', were: F/S D. Stanton Pilot, Sgt. J. Tunley F/E, Sgt. C. F. Walton Nav, Sgt. E. W. Howell Wop/Ag, Sgt. F. Fleming A/G., Sgt. J. Spiers B/A, Sgt. G. A. Bicknell A/G. They were hit by a flak battery and crashed just outside Altdorf in the Rhineland Pfalz. I started looking into this loss as it was close to ED702 and my great uncle's crash site. On locating all the families we made a trip out to see the crash site to see if anything was remaining and meet with witnesses.

We were not able to do a search at that time due to the field having a maize crop and as you can see in the photo it's just not possible. Sadly, since that first preliminary search the rules on aircraft recovery's have changed in the Pfalz region so a full search and recovery is at the moment on hold.



In September 2015 I visited the crash site to lay some poppies for the family and also to leave with Herr Litty, the Bürgermeister of Altdorf, a brass plaque in memory of the crew. Herr Litty told me that this would be placed in the churchyard.



I returned to Germany again this year and visited both the crash sites of ED702 near Offenbach and JB301 in Altdorf and the memorial to F/S G. J. Green. I was pleased to see the memorial plaque placed in the churchyard in front of the central cross between the graves of four airmen from 620 Squadron who lost their lives 6 September 1943, P/O P. G. Quayle, F/S M. J. Finn, Sgt B.M. Giles, Sgt. F.A. Jones.

Sadly, I did not have time to meet Herr Litty as he was busy preparing for the wine harvest but on my return home I wrote thanking him and the community of Altdorf for doing this on behalf of the families and 49SA.



Photos by Dom Howard

THE WAR [And after]

By

Tom W. Reed

Part 8

A query arose about a missing dustbin, Flt Lt Parsloe had checked everything and a dustbin was missing, I eventually found it inside the 'adjutant's tent'. In fact, it had been a 'red herring' to test my reactions I learned later.

I sat frozen in my tent writing out vouchers to clear the deck for my successor until the small hours and as I had to start my new appointment as catering officer at 5 a.m. I didn't get much sleep.

I handed over at 5 a.m. and went to the field kitchen where I found half a dozen staff. I had to devise the menus for the day and breakfast was the easy one. Full English breakfast with cereal, fruit and toast from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. Lunch: lamb chops grilled with tomatoes and onions and vegetables, with apple pie and custard; Dinner: sirloin steak and mushrooms with sprouts, peas, cauliflower and mashed or roast potatoes, with prunes and rice.

The exception was Flt Lt Parsloe who requested a lighter meal as he was 'housing an ulcer', so I did him steamed haddock with cauliflower cheese for which he was very grateful.

For the tasks we were to carry out we were divided into pairs or trios or as a split course, enemy and survivors.

There were several forced marches from twelve to twenty-five miles with full pack and rifle, usually after dark in the rain or fog. On the long march we were harassed by ambushers throwing thunder flashes at us and inevitably there were several dropouts who couldn't keep up, they were picked up by transport following us and eventually got back.

Flt Lt Parsloe ordered everyone to remove their boots and socks for a foot inspection and everyone, except myself, had blisters and sores, even the officer I/C himself. When he inspected my foot he was surprised and asked how I'd managed. I said I'd cured my feet with meths to harden the skin, what I didn't tell him was the fact I had silk socks under my service issue.

On one occasion we were driven up the mountains in an enclosed lorry and dropped off in groups of three, usually a regular and two direct entry cadets with one of them as leader. We were given a distance and a reading and told to find the rendezvous. Our trio were dropped off into the mist and the leader was given a sealed envelope to be used only in an emergency. I had estimated the speed of our transport and the directions we had travelled as near as possible and jogged whenever possible. On the last section we had to negotiate a dried stream bed descending at about one in four and as we ran down the leader lagged behind.

When we reached the road we heard a voice calling out, asking if we were from Jurby. We were shocked to find it was Sqn Ldr Lewis, he asked where our third man was and advised that we wait for him as we would be disqualified if we booked in without him, so we waited until he caught up with us and were allocated second place.

We later repeated this exercise from a different starting point using the same technique and Flt Lt Parsloe couldn't understand why we arrived dry (again 2nd) when everyone else was dripping wet. I told him we had decided that as there was a road on the other side of the river there must be a bridge somewhere and we found one about ¼ mile away.

The next exercise we did was to gallop along the beach about five miles and climb a sand cliff with an overhang. It was difficult scrambling up the cliff and the overhang was worse. It was pitch dark but by managing to get one cadet steadied by two cadets, which allowed one of the lankier ones to scramble on to the first cadet's shoulders, we got a foothold and one by one were pulled over the top where we were attacked with thunder flashes.

The final exercise was an escape and evasion exercise, I had been detailed with a partner, one of the 'uni' cadets. Our brief was to get to the lighthouse at Maxey and collect as much information as we could and presuming we had avoided capture submit a report to Flt Lt Parsloe.

Before moving inland we were moving along the beach towards the Point of Ayr when I spotted a lighthouse and it dawned on me that we could get all the information needed from the keepers there. We compiled a detailed report, including the names of the keepers on the Maxey lighthouse, the candle power of the light, its flashing code and even the number of steps in the tower.

We then relaxed on the beach out of sight until dusk when we camouflaged our faces and dodged a little way inland back to base.

Flt Lt Parsloe was amazed that we had not been captured and accepted our report with an astonished look on his face.

Back at Jurby we were smartening up for the passing out parade. All good things come to an end, and after the farewell ball we were all given our appointments and I was appointed stations armaments officer at RAF Laarbruch, the largest NATO base in Europe, situated on the Germany/Dutch border at Vell near Kevelar. I confessed my sins to Flt Lt Parsloe about the E & E exercise.

He just grinned and said, "Touche!"

We were all granted end of course leave, during which Deenie and I had to make decisions about the education of our two eldest daughters Heather and Wendy. Heather was a pupil at Fakenham Grammar and Wendy had been awarded a place in Wymondham Residential College, which was a pioneer co-educational establishment, the first of its kind in UK. Fakenham didn't want

to lose Heather, but after much discussion and a big meeting with the head of Wymondham College, it was decided that in the best interests of the girls they would both be accepted by Wymondham as boarders. The girls were delighted as they would both be together.

Wymondham College was an experimental establishment, the brainchild of the headmaster, a very competent and progressive educationalist. It was housed in what had been a wartime USAF hospital, a series of large and small Nissen buildings which would be developed by building permanent brick accommodation blocks and lecture rooms. The girls managed to move into permanent accommodation before they left.

As anticipated they were able to spend most of their holidays with us at Laarbruch and the odd weekend at Granny's and as they were together they weren't homesick. Our first Christmas holiday together was at Granny's in Thornton Heath.

Apart from the three months at Jurby and the odd visits to the RAF hospital at Ely, Deenie and I were always together and I revelled in her company, as well as an excellent mother, cook, lover, companion and best friend, she excelled as a hostess, entertaining many of my fellow officers and their wives, even the group captain and his wife were visitors. We often entertained some of the senior German Scouts from Kevelar and as Brown Owl she did her bit for the Brownies. We were both loathe to leave Laarbruch eventually in May 1958.

On arrival at Laarbruch I found the incumbent armament officer, Flt Lt Mannford, was due for repatriation as he was retiring from the RAF, and after a week he left me in charge, a junior pilot officer with responsibility for two squadrons of Meteor XI all-weather fighters, two squadrons of Canberra PR aircraft and a Dutch fighter wing, the major maintenance for two RAF regiment squadrons and the largest explosives area on the continent to contend with.

I studied the actual establishment figures and learned that it was for one squadron leader and two flight lieutenants. I had a basic establishment of one flight sergeant, two sergeants, four corporals and approximately thirty-five airmen for the station and the flying units had their own armament personnel. My duties included supervision of the fighter squadrons when at practice camp at RAF Sylt and all major inspections of weapons.

I found the armament working accommodation was dire, a large weapons storage room plus workshop and airmen's crew room upstairs in the maintenance hangar and a Bofors gun servicing bay with a dingy office on the ground floor.

On a visit to the 'Works and Bricks' office I studied a plan of the camp area and noticed that a large single storey building situated not far from the maintenance hangar was designated 'Aden Gun Armoury', so I went to it and

By

discovered it was a brand new building (Larbruch was only two years old) and peering through the windows it was chock-a-block with what appeared to be equipment stores, and after discreet enquiries found out that's just what they were.

I made representation to the wing commander tech who asked me to stand by whilst he made enquiries. He was a blunt Yorkshireman as I immediately learned. He phoned the equipment officer and asked, "What's all that equipment doing in the Aden Gun Armoury?" It was about 100 feet long and 96 feet wide with hardwood parquet flooring, three separate aisles and a row of office toilets and crew room accommodation. The small arms were moved in to one aisle fitted with racks and the other two with shiny metal topped benches were used as workshops, the offices and crew room were immediately furnished and spotlessly clean as a German cleaner, Hans, was employed for the purpose. It was his day job, he had a small farm and apart from working he also made a very good cup of tea.

I had a very comfortable office with the flight sergeant next door with one of the sergeants, spotless toilet facilities, then the airmen's crew room. The armourers were delighted with the new set-up. I had been allocated a four-bedroom house with a centralised heating system which served all married quarters from the main boiler house, so was given removal leave to bring Deenie, Christine and Michael out to their new home. We crossed from Harwich to the Hague where we caught the army train to Kevelar and were transported from there to Laarbruch.

There was a great social atmosphere in the married quarters and the officers' mess, which kept everyone happy. We were issued with large aluminium boxes and allocated some basic food items each week from the NAAFI, where we could also purchase goods.

Deenie and I planned from the first that we would accumulate tinned items as we planned to make the most of our stay in Europe.

I decided to do duties on most of the holiday breaks to add on to my annual entitlement of leave so that we could take the family on camping holidays when Heather and Wendy had their summer holidays.

During the first few months Deenie and I studied the map of Europe and eventually started planning our summer holiday. We decided to try to get to the Spanish border with Southern France. The beginning of our route took us down to the German border and eventually down through France, stopping in 300 km stages overnight. I managed to acquire an ex-army 14' ridge tent and an Opel caravan (estate), fitted it with a full length roof-rack. The Opel was just a year old and had a detailed inspection before purchase so I was quite confident of its reliability...

To be continued.

The following article by Graham Ptchfork was part of a feature on the V Bombers that appeared in FlyPast Magazine in February 2016. It was extracted by Ed Norman. The editor is grateful to FlyPast editor Chris Gilson for his permission for us to reproduce any relevant article in The 4T9er.

Photographs have been added, courtesy of 49 Squadron Association website.

AIR COMMODORE ARTHUR STEELE

Arthur Steele was still a teenager when he completed his pilot training in Canada. He went on to fly Mosquitos during the closing months of the war in Burma and then during the post-war troubles in Indonesia. Later he instructed at the Central Flying School. After converting to Canberras he flew with 617 Squadron before becoming one of the early pilots to join the new V-force. He became one of the most experienced Valiant pilots so was selected in September 1956 to join 49 Squadron for Operation Grapple, the testing of Britain's first H-bomb.

The aim of Grapple was to test the performance of nuclear weapons dropped from V-bombers. The site chosen for this unique event was Malden Island, 400 miles south of Christmas Island in the South Pacific.

Specially equipped Valiants of 49 Squadron based at Wittering and commanded by Wg Cdr Kenneth Hubbard, were allocated to the task and Steele was responsible for a concentrated training programme for the four crews selected for the first phase of Grapple.



Arthur Steele, centre, and his crew.

One of the most important aspects during the preparation phase was to develop and perfect an escape manoeuvre and profile for the bombers once they had released their weapons. The report of the trial conducted at Farnborough concluded: "This manoeuvre must be practised assiduously from now on by the pilots taking part. It must become second nature to the pilot or else he will jeopardise the safety of the aircraft and the crew". The first of the specially



prepared all-white Valiants (XD818 preserved at the RAF Museum Cosford) arrived at Wittering in November 1956 and was soon followed by a further four, Steel and his crew taking responsibility for XD823.

Photo left.

Under Steele's supervision, the crews flew an intensive training programme. This included bombing runs at Orfordness, off the Suffolk coast, perfecting the Farnborough escape manoeuvres, exercises with HMS *Warrior* to test control procedures and practising other drills in the simulator.

Further training was carried out on the weapons ranges at El Adem in Libya when Hubbard selected the four crews to fly the Grapple sorties with the others providing valuable back-up.

DRESS REHEARSAL

Flying via Canada and the U.S. the Valiants started to arrive at Christmas Island in March 1957. Steele and his crew touched down on March 18 and he immediately set about devising and supervising a further intensive period of trials and training to familiarise the crews with the target and the operational procedures.

Over the next few weeks all the crews flew practice-bombing sorties using 1001b bombs on the Christmas Island range. This phase of the training was completed by April 5, and the following day the crews started to perfect the procedural aspects.

This began with a drop at Malden with an inert weapon fitted with telemetering equipment. These operational training flights followed precisely the route for the real drops and the four crews practised under the control of HMS *Narvik* with *Warrior* in position to provide radar coverage.

Over the next three weeks a number of full profiles were flown with weapon drops. These gave an opportunity to check the in-built electronics, in particular the mechanism to ensure that the weapon exploded at a height of 8000 feet.

A full dress rehearsal was flown on May 11 when all the many naval vessels and air supporting forces took part and carried out their specific tasks. It was entirely satisfactory. Arthur Steele's supervision of the long and complex training programme was complete, all was ready for the first operational drop.

BIG BANG

For each live test it was planned to have three Valiants fully serviceable with bomb circuits complete and each prepared for a drop. One was to take-off just after the primary aircraft to act as an airborne reserve codenamed *Grandstand*. This had the added advantage of giving more crews experience of the flash and blast effect of a thermo-nuclear weapon.

The reserve joined the primary at the initial point and was positioned 2000ft below and approximately half a mile behind. It would start its own escape manoeuvres 11 seconds before the 'bomb gone' call.

On March 15, Wg Cdr Hubbard's crew dropped the first weapon successfully, for the second release on the 31, Steele flew the reserve and for the third and final test he and his crew were tasked for the sortie.

On June 19 he took off and climbed to 45000ft. and carried out a practice run over the target before he was given clearance to drop his bomb. Fifty seconds after release, the weapon exploded at the pre-determined height of 8000ft. Steele had raised the anti-flash screens in the cockpit of his aircraft moments in advance of making a precisely executed turn away from the explosion and before the shock wave was felt. The drop was completely successful. A few days after Steele's flight, the squadron returned to Wittering. The complex venture ~ the largest joint service operation to be mounted since the end of World War Two had been a resounding success and Hubbard was loud in his praise for Steele's work. He wrote: "He was a perfectionist both in the air and on the ground.

"No man could have devoted more time, energy and expertise to the training task, which was the vital factor to our success. Neither could I have wished for a more loyal officer." Steele was awarded a Bar to an AFC he had received a few years earlier. After three years in the Air Ministry, Steele returned to the V-force as the chief instructor at the Valiant and Victor conversion unit at Gaydon before serving at headquarters of 3 (Bomber) Group and Bomber Command. These services were recognised when he was appointed a CBE. He retired from the RAF as an air commodore in 1978.

Air Commodore Arthur Steele, born October 2 1923, died April 26 2012

HUGUETTE ROUILLARD'S BEQUEST

By

Michael Brunton & Alan Parr

Madame Huguette Rouillard was born in February 1926 in Rhèges, a small village in the Champagne region of France, just to the west of Arcis-sur-Aube. As a young teenage girl, living with her parents in Rhèges, she became acquainted with the Royal Air Force when aircrew of 103 Squadron, part of the British Expeditionary Force, were billeted in her parent's house. She fondly recalled how she would bring hot water for the personnel to wash in, and 103 Squadron became her first true love.

Throughout World War II, Huguette continued her studies, spending time in Paris, although like many in the region, she and her family trekked to avoid German occupation. Having travelled south early on in the War, they were sent back by the Germans, only to find the family home occupied by the invading army, and it would take many months until they were able to reoccupy it.

Huguette's immediate and extended family were involved with the Resistance, and there are many stories which identify the role they played in disrupting German lines of communication, and in repatriating airmen who found themselves unexpectedly in France! One such story recounted by Huguette, required her to swear to an aunt to keep a life-or-death secret – this led to her being introduced to a British airman who had been hidden away in the aunt's house. This story was subsequently recounted by the same airman in a book, when he recalled being introduced to a young girl who, because of her command of the English language, seemed to be interrogating him!

During this period, Huguette witnessed an event which later defined her life and her passion for the Royal Air Force – a tragic raid on Mailly-le-Camp, a German Wehrmacht training centre and Panzer maintenance base to the south of Arcis. On the night of the 3rd/4th May RAF Bomber Command attacked the large barrack complex which was built originally for the French army in 1902. It was a relatively small target and the intention was to obliterate it with high explosives. The initial marking by the 14 Pathfinder Mosquitos was accurate, a force led by Wg. Cdr. L. Cheshire. The 'Main Force Controller' then attempted to call in the 346 Lancaster bombers to begin the attack. His radio transmissions were drowned out by an American forces broadcast of band music, somehow set on the same frequency. There were significant delays before the Deputy 'Main Force Controller' took over and ordered the bombers in to attack. The delay was sufficient for the Luftwaffe night fighters to get amongst the raid and, in total,

42 Lancasters were shot down – 258 airmen were killed.

After the war, Huguette moved to the UK, to teach French at a girl's school in Bournemouth – she already had a formidable command of the English language, such was her passion for all things British. Up until her death in October 2015, she still actively engaged with her 'past pupils', because of the strong bond she had made with them, and the respect that they had for her. It was during this time that she met the man who would become her husband, Maurice. A French Canadian architect, Maurice spoke little English, so Huguette was asked to translate for him and the family he was staying with in the UK. Their love grew, and they moved eventually to Quebec in Canada. Sadly, Maurice died tragically early. Left alone, Huguette elected to move back to France, and to Arcis, close to her family home.

It is unclear how Huguette became involved with Maily-le-Camp Association, but she did become the translator for a regular newsletter (The Link). She then became a key, if not indispensable, facilitator of Anglo-French relations, as a memorial was unveiled on the site of the raid, and commemorations attracted more and more visitors. She quickly established links with veterans of the raid, from across the globe, as well as relatives of those who lost their lives. She was key to 101 Squadron re-establishing its association with raid in the late 1980's and subsequently supporting each and every visit they made.

It is fair to say that there are few who shared the deep devotion and passion for the Royal Air Force that Huguette had, and particularly for her beloved Squadrons. She was never happier than when she was in the company of her RAF friends, all of whom loved her deeply. It is, therefore, unremarkable, that she should wish to leave such a large legacy to support the RAF Benevolent Fund, her Squadron's and their veterans. Much loved, and sorely missed, Huguette's memory will remain with us for many, many years to come.

The late Geoff Brunton flew on the Maily-le-Camp raid with 49 Squadron and he and his son Michael, together with Michael's partner Nikki, had regularly attended the anniversary commemoration services of the raid and a warm friendship with Huguette had resulted. Incidentally, a report, by Michael, of this year's event appeared in the August 2017 issue of The 4T9er.

**Huguette with one of her dear RAF friends, former
49 Squadron Flight Engineer Geoff Brunton.**
Photo: Via Michael Brunton



In early November Michael e-mailed to say that, as a trustee of Huguette's estate, he was in possession of a cheque for £5,000.00 on behalf of 49 Squadron Association. I was so taken aback that I asked Michael if I had miscounted the noughts. He confirmed that the sum is indeed five thousand pounds and suggested that we meet for a handover.

Together with Barbara, I met Michael on Wednesday November 15th, at a restaurant near Birmingham Airport in which he presented the cheque to me.

Whilst it is still too early to say how the money will be spent I propose that we allocate an amount to the 49 Squadron Memorial at the NMA and with the remainder make some donations in Huguette's memory to various organizations which are based around Lincoln.

I'm sure that you join me in thanking the trustees but most of all in offering a silent 'thank you' to Huguette.



Michael Brunton, right, presents the cheque to Alan Parr.

Photo: Barbara Parr

CAN YOU HELP?

Can anyone identify the RAF stick shown below? It may have been issued to a Warrant Officer but is too short and slender to be a 'pace' stick.



SCAMPTON AIR SHOW

By

Alan Parr

As already mentioned in my editorial the inaugural show was used as a focus for a 49 SA get together as this is the first year following the discontinuation of our reunions.

The majority of us stayed at the Bentley Hotel on the Friday before attending the air show on Saturday 9th September. On the Friday evening we gathered in the bar for an informal meal and chat and were delighted when Australian Associate Graham Bairnsfather and his wife Carol joined us for the evening.

The morning of the air show dawned bright but with rain forecast for later. I can't praise too highly the transport arrangements for the show. The A15 was closed off for the exclusive use of air show traffic up to the showground where we were shepherded in to park. From here around a hundred double deck buses ran a shuttle to RAF Scampton airfield a couple of miles up the road. A similar arrangement in reverse ensured a seamless departure.

There were stalls galore, in fact too many for us old'uns to get round in the time available due to the widespread locations. One display that was an absolute must for us 4T9ers was John Ward's superb photographic display in the



Heritage Hangar. John has, in the last few years, applied his considerable artistic talents to bring dull monochrome photographs to full colour using Photoshop software. Coincidentally it was located adjacent to the tastefully displayed remains of 49 Squadron's Hampden P1206 that was recovered from a field in Holland in 2007. See The 4T9er Issue 11.



You call that a bomb bay?



That's a bomb bay!

The flying display started with blue sky overhead but with dramatic cloudscapes out to the west, the direction from which the weather was coming. As can be seen from the photographs the first half was perfect with the heavy weather providing a dramatic backdrop but just as the Red Arrows were about to taxi out the rain came. To their great credit and skill four aircraft put on a superb low level display as if not wishing to let the crowd down at an air show on their 'home turf'.



On the ground a fine array of Swedish SAAB aircraft caught my eye.



There is no truth in the rumour that a certain budget airline was demonstrating its new Super Economy Class!





Photos in this feature by: Jan Norman, Dom Howard and Alan Parr

READER'S LETTERS

Associate Member Steven Hill, who lives in Llandudno, e-mailed:

"I thought I would share my recent experience with you,...in the garden enjoying a bright quiet Sunday morning in Llandudno, when out of the blue, literally, I heard the sound first, then I saw it, I have to say I just stood there stunned, and I am still on a high..."

"Also a friend sent me these from the Ogden Valley, Snowdonia taken the same morning."



On learning of the death of Bomber Command Association Secretary Doug Radcliffe I informed 'the crew'. Our Researcher Colin Cripps responded:

"Thanks for the info, I have fond memories of Doug.

"When I began tracing my Uncle, I contacted Doug at Hendon and after three questions to him, he replied, 'You do know old boy that the Squadron has an Association, contact Ted Cachart on ..., speak to him...'

"I became a 4T9er."

Good fortune not only for Colin but also for the association as he has been a brilliant researcher for us for more than ten years.

Associate Member Jo Cockburn sent me this pencil drawing of Spitfire pilot Tom Hardy that she has just completed. She describes herself as 'Self taught with lots of encouragement.'



Following the Scampton weekend get together Associate Member Robert McEneany, on behalf of Annette and himself, e-mailed:

“Thank you for your kind email following the weekend at Scampton. On our arrival on Friday evening Pat and Stuart asked us to join them in the bar and we were delighted to remain part of the group for the remainder of the weekend. We also enjoyed the gathering for dinner on Saturday evening where you all made us very welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed the whole evening.

“We were particularly pleased to be able to meet John Ward at Scampton, he is always available to help us with our research and it was nice to get the opportunity to meet him again and give him our thanks. Our thoughts and prayers are with him as he continues his personal battle and hopefully he will be rewarded for all his kindness to others.

“It was nice to have the opportunity to chat about Farncombe and Godalming, quite a remarkable coincidence that we should all enjoy fond memories of times we spent there in our youth. As we mentioned during our conversation on Saturday Annette visits her Mum every Wednesday so they took the opportunity yesterday to visit Guildford Castle. They also visited the memorial to the fallen and remembered your Uncle Robert [Slaughter. ED.]. We visited the memorial many years ago but were unaware of the connection so it was nice during this trip to see your uncle remembered in his home city.

“As I mentioned Nicky Barr had kindly arranged for us to join a small group of visitors at the IBCC [International Bomber Command Centre. ED] on Sunday afternoon as I believe the area will not be officially open until the end of the year. As promised we found the name of Ralph Bairnsfather and placed a poppy next to the inscription and offered a prayer in his memory. [Associate Member Graham Bairnsfather and his wife Carol were on a visit from Australia during the Scampton weekend and I told them of his uncle's name being on the IBCC Memorial. Robert and Annette's visit to the IBCC was a happy coincidence. ED.]

“They continue to make tremen-



dous progress with the Chadwick Centre and no doubt Ralph and all those that served with Bomber Command will have their story recorded for future generations to come and learn of their vital role in protecting the freedom we enjoy today.

“Finally and as I mentioned previously our thanks to the ladies and all the crew for making us so welcome over the weekend. We really enjoyed the visit to Scampton, my Uncle carried out part of his training there, and obviously the day was topped off by the sight of the Lancaster and the display by the Red Arrows.

“Best wishes also to you and Barbara and please pass on our thanks to the Ladies and Crew.

“P.S. As mentioned from my early days on the drawing board I have kept a keen interest in the work of architectural and Aviation Artists. We met Robin Smith and his wife Carol on Saturday – a very friendly couple – You mentioned another Aviation Artist to me on Saturday evening – his name now escapes me – I would appreciate a reminder so that I can look up his work. Thank you.”

The artist is Nicolas Trudgian.:

<https://www.nicolastrudgian.com>

Honorary Friend John Lowe has a close friendship with former 49 Squadron pilot Fred Hill. Fred, in his mid nineties flew Hampdens with 49 Squadron.

“This is what Fred and I get up to on Saturday afternoons when no one’s watching!! Flying a 737-800 series commercial jet simulator, courtesy of the Virtual Jet Centre at Chudleigh, and under the watchful eye of Capt. Phil Clarke. The last time Fred was in a ‘Link Trainer’ was in the 1940’s!! (Take Off was a shock to the system/ the upper air manoeuvres were not bad but the landing; well, requires more practice) Seriously; he did brilliantly – just like riding a bicycle, he says.

“Fred took off from Exeter and after heading out around Lyme Bay set course for Bristol Airport.

“Our thanks indeed to the staff of the Virtual Jet Centre for a wonderful afternoons’ experience.”



Whilst not a Reader's Letter I thought it appropriate to bring the following to your attention. It was addressed to Ed Norman and John Ward and further illustrates the work that the 'Crew' quietly carry out.

“Just to share with you the recently published biography of Captain Gordon Fox Rule, DFC, CdG* - Brazilian's and 49 Sqdn's greatest WW1 ace.

“This is a Commemorative Edition of only 1,200 books (just a small parcel for the author), not a Commercial work. The books do have 352 pages A-4 format, covering his early life, RFC training and his 68 combat sorties with the RFC/RAF, plus his Post-War time flying as a Flight Instructor and in Ireland (1919-20).



“I do owe Ed Norman and your Association one book, since you authorized me to use the 49 Squadron's image of La Bellevue from your own Archives. I have not received my samples yet from the Editor and Publisher, but you will receive in due time the book. Please allow me some time, since I do have some books to send to France, Germany, etc...and it weights some 1.2 Kg and the shipping fees will be very expensive. So, slowly will be reciprocating all those that helped me with pictures, data, etc...with one book. I do have a small kid of 1.5 years to take care, this is why I am unable to send abroad the 40+ books simultaneously, ok? One book per month, etc....

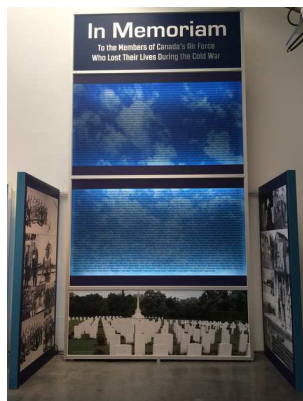
“I do re-affirm that your Association will receive one book freely, since you helped me and I shall Honor that.

‘WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM’

“Adriano Silva Baumgartner, ASV 00.344 (author of: Brazilians in RAF Service, 1939-45 and biographer of Captain Gordon Fox Rule, DFC, CdG)”

Malcolm Brooke, our Webmaster, received a request from Canada for permission to incorporate a picture from our website into a memorial to the Canadians who died during the Cold War. This is Irene Kerr's acknowledgement:

“Please find attached a couple of photos of the Memorial wall in the Cold War exhibit. The wall is actually 16' high! Your photo looks great, and I hope you can see the credit line that you requested - you



will have to zoom in. I really appreciate the loan of the photo and the “speedy service”. I am cc’ing this email to Don, Gerry and Alison who are with the Air Force Museum of Alberta and the ‘brains’ behind the exhibit.

“Thanks again and all the very best.”

I received the following e-mails which chart the progress of a sister-in-law’s search for information on Sgt. McGrenery:

“Good afternoon. My name is Adrian. [Amber. ED.] I am a retired Army officer with an interest in military history, and in particular WW2.

“I am assisting a colleague in researching the above-named member of Bomber Command, who was KIA over the Netherlands in the early hours of 11 Apr 42. His body was never found, although he could well be the unidentified RAF Sgt whose body was recovered on 28 May 42. This person is buried as an unknown airman at the municipal cemetery in Nijemirdum.

“I understand that 49 Sqn Association was in communication with the Stichting Missing Airmen Memorial Foundation (SMAMF) in June 15 about Sgt McGrenery. You may recall that at that time you (and Colin Cripps) advised that the unknown airman could be Sgt McGrenery and that a DNA test could give a definitive answer. But, even if a family member could be traced and offer a DNA sample, I understand that the CWGC has advised that, after so many years, the grave is not to be disturbed. Offered for your information as a reminder only.

“My colleague is presently assisting Sgt McGrenery's elderly sister-in-law (she never met him), who plans to gift his story and some documents to the IBCC archives. But we know little of the story. I now come to my enquiry: what information do you have, please, on Sgt McGrenery's time in 49 Squadron?

“I look forward to your response, and do hope that the Association may be of some assistance. You mentioned records of Tom McGrenery's ops, which I look forward to seeing when you have the time please...”

Our database shows that Sgt. McGrenery flew eleven ops with pilot Fred Hill who still has a very high regard for him and readily agreed to a conversation.

“Just to keep you in touch. Last week I enjoyed a 40-minute telephone conversation with Fred Hill. On Sunday Aletta and I are visiting him in Sidmouth for lunch and a chat. I will let you know how that goes.”

“Aletta and I spent some 4 hours with Fred... last Sunday. We had lunch then retired to his bungalow for a chat. John Lowe joined us after a while. Fred could not have been more welcoming and helpful. There is a thank you letter in the post... We are really pleased with the way that this matter has progressed through the 49 Sqn Association - thank you so much.”