

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
February 2018 Issue 48**



Photo: Malcolm Brooke

**The Guard of Honour for John Ward, our late Honorary President and Historian,
to whom so many are grateful for his help and kindness.**

JOHN WARD

1952 - 2017

Honorary President and Historian - 49 Squadron Association



Photo: Via Diane Ward

John with his wife Diane and two of their seven children, Rosie and Tammy.

On Tuesday 5th December I received the dreaded but expected news that John had died that morning. Exactly a week before I had phoned him and he finished the call by saying, “Call me again, same time next week.” “Ok”, I said, “About 3-15.” Sadly those words were destined to be the last that we ever exchanged.

John was born in Lincoln on 1st May 1952 and three years later his sister Lorraine was born and the Ward family unit was complete. John’s happy and stable childhood helped him to become the honest and stoic man we came to know and love, the man who always did his best, and kept his sense of humour no matter what life threw at him.

Apart from a brief period in his teens when the family moved to Canada, John lived all of his life in Lincolnshire.

His interest in Lincolnshire’s aviation history was life long, having begun when he played as a young boy on the disused airfield at Fiskerton, developing

into an encyclopaedic knowledge of Lincolnshire's WWII bomber squadrons and culminating in his becoming, firstly Historian, then Hon. President of 49 Squadron Association. John's connection with this association was very important to him and he valued the relationships he made with veterans and fellow association members. John's abilities to research, write and paint led to him producing several books and a wealth of artwork that will help to keep alive the memories of a generation of young men about whom John cared passionately.

Having researched and written *Beware of the Dog at War*, John's recall of all things 49 in particular, and Bomber Command in general, was amazing. It seemed that he was able to quote the fate of every crew in 49 Squadron during WWII. It was this knowledge that endeared him to many new Associate Members whilst they researched their relatives. I have received a number of letters describing John's enthusiastic assistance even to the extent of personally guiding them around Lincolnshire...his county of which he was so proud.

Whenever a query came in to the Crew we could always be confident that John would come up with the answer. Less than a month before he died our web-master Malcolm Brooke, circulated a photograph that he had received asking if we could identify the ten feet or so of the fuselage of a large crashed aircraft. After one or two of us had had a stab at it we received a one word e-mail, his last to us as it transpired, saying simply, "Halifax". Incidentally, it was John who gave us the title 'The Crew' following his name for his family of seven children. Including himself, there were seven of us who, in any other organization, would be known as the committee. Now we are six I suppose that we must consider ourselves to be as the crew of a Wellington rather than a Lancaster.

Riding his motorbike was another part of John's life that he loved. He had such good memories of riding with the Hellcats when he was a teenager, and more recently of his annual 'Ride to the Wall.' He left a message to be read at his funeral; "My fellow bikers, Airborne and Hellcats. We have shared the pleasure and freedom of motorcycling. Titch, you and the boys are the Arnhem Angels. I'll be a guardian angel riding with you next year and I'll always be at the Pegasus, 3pm at the Ride to the Wall."

John was a founding member of the Lincoln Branch Parachute Regimental Association, and was very proud of his service with 16th Independent Company, through both of which he made lifelong friends. He also left a message for them; "My airborne brothers it's been an honour to serve with you, waiting for those Russian tanks to roll over our trenches."

As previously stated John was an accomplished artist and proudly told us, during our final visit, that he has a picture hanging at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln. As his illness made painting more difficult he

became most skilled in tinting monochrome photographs, using the Photoshop software.

John had suffered with Parkinson's Disease for some ten years but throughout it all he bravely refused to let it get him down. When the BBC contacted us asking if there was a local man who would speak about 'FIDO', the wartime fog dispersal system, on the Bargain Hunt programme John volunteered without hesitation although he later admitted that he was concerned that his Parkinsons may be a distraction. It wasn't and he performed with panache later saying, "...it took Anita [Manning] five takes to get the opening sequence right which eased my nerves immensely." You can read John's account of the filming in the August 2016 issue of The 4T9er.

John's funeral service was conducted by the Revd. Michael Rose the Honorary Padre of Lincolnshire Parachute Regiment Association and during his address he described John as, "The most courageous man that I have ever met." For a padre of The Parachute Regiment to say that speaks volumes for John's steadfastness during those final weeks of his illness. John knew exactly what was happening to him and on the last visit by Barbara and me he met us with the words, "It's a matter of weeks now, I'm treating it as an adventure." That is courage!

The main source of joy in John's life was his family. His wife Diane and his children, Jodie, Lindsie, John, Tom, Kim, Rosie and Tammy and his 13 grandchildren. John met Diane when they were both still at school, and the love that they shared and the remarkable family they produced are legendary.

John was immensely proud of all of his children and unwaveringly encouraged and supported them all. It gave him great comfort at the end of his life to know that they had all grown into such well grounded, caring adults being loyal and loving partners and parents to their own families.

We 4T9ers have lost a dear friend but our loss is nothing compared with that of his family. Our thoughts are constantly with them.

As you "Interview the 55,573 and the 7,000 of Arnhem", may God Bless You Dear Friend. Those of us who knew you consider it an honour and a privilege to have had our lives touched by you.

Ride To The Wall is a unique motorcycling fundraising ride with a dedicated service of remembrance that provides an opportunity for all motorcyclists to ride as an organised group to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire to pay their respects and recognise the sacrifice made by the 16,000+ service men and women. The Armed Forces Memorial (The Wall) is a 43 metre diameter stone structure with two curved walls and two straight walls constructed of 200,000 bricks faced with Portland stone panels. The panels contain the names of those honoured by the Memorial providing recognition and thanks for those who have given their lives in the service of the country since the end of the Second World War.



Photo: Dom Howard

**With motorcycle escort John made his final journey up The Broadway,
Woodhall Spa.**



I previously mentioned John's skill at adding colour to monochrome photographs. About a year ago, to my surprise, I received an e-mail from him with a treasured photo having received the JW treatment, my uncle now in colour and wearing his sergeant's stripes and air gunner's brevet. I include the 'before and after' images so that you too can appreciate one of his many talents.

IN MEMORIAM

J. Ward I. Taylor V. Howard B. Lewis

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of 2018, overshadowed as it is by the loss of our Hon. President.

Seventeen members and spouses attended John's funeral. The previous night thirteen of us stayed at The Petwood Hotel which provided yet another pleasant get together. It is hoped that we can arrange another gathering for the memorial dedication and again before one of the Duxford air shows.

Thank you, as ever, to those of you who have donated to either the Association or to the 49 Squadron Memorial Fund. There are still a large number of Associate Members who have not contributed to the latter and I appeal to them to remedy this so that in the future they can truly feel that they have remembered their relative in a tangible way.

The order for the memorial has now been placed with a company in Lichfield, Staffordshire, which has had considerable experience in installing memorials of many kinds at the National Memorial Arboretum just four miles to the north. It is hoped that the installation will be completed by May this year enabling us to organize a formal unveiling and dedication. I will send out details of the ceremony to every member in due course.

That reminds me, it will help me tremendously, and save the Association money, if you would ensure that you make your e-mail address known to me. Obviously, if you receive your copy of The 4T9er by e-mail then you can ignore this request. Equally obviously, not all of you have an internet connection, in which case is there a close relative who can receive e-mailed news on your behalf? This would allow me to keep you up to date with events without the expense of postal costs.

Sadly I have to record the death of Iris Taylor. A former inhabitant of Fiskerton, Iris was one of the team at the Village Hall which provided our reunion buffets. Vin Howard was a pilot with 49' but who missed wartime ops by a whisker. He died on September 7th last year just four days after his 92nd birthday. Vin and his wife Kath regularly attended our reunions until about five years ago. By coincidence Vin's elder brother Leonard, a wop/ag, was killed on July 8th 1940 whilst flying with 83 Squadron from Scampton. 49 Squadron

were also there at this time and there was much friendly rivalry between the two. Vin's son Len, presumably named after his uncle, tells me that, in his father's papers he found a letter from Guy Gibson to Leonard's parents written immediately after their son's death, Gibson being on 83 Squadron at the time. Associate Member Beryl Lewis died last year aged 88. She was the sister of Sgt. Gordon Hands who was the rear gunner in the crew of F/L Bill Green DFC RNZAF which was shot down on a raid on Revigny on July 18/19 1944. All members of the crew were killed on what was their 27th operation. An e-mail from Beryl's daughter Sian appears in 'Reader's Letters'.

Thank you to those who have sent features for possible publication. They certainly help me to provide a varied and, I hope, an informative magazine.

In the November issue I told you about the generous bequest that has been made to the Association from the estate of Mme. Hugette Rouillard. This has enabled us to share our good fortune with a number of organisations including: Fiskerton Village Hall, Fiskerton Scout Troop, Fiskerton Parish Church, International Bomber Command Centre - Lincoln, Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre - East Kirkby, Michael Beetham Conservation Centre - Cosford and Fiskerton Parish Council. In the case of the latter it is planned to use the money to help install ornamental village signs, so popular in Lincolnshire, which will incorporate a Lancaster in the design. As the Fiskerton/Reepham border is very close to our airfield memorial it will be particularly poignant and appropriate. Other signs will be at the boundary with Cherry Willingham and at the Bardney end of Ferry Road.

Mention of the airfield memorial reminds me that those of you who have visited in the past year or so will probably be aware that one of the ornamental cherry trees has died. For a year now it has been propped but it was decided to remove it for safety and aesthetic reasons. Whilst I haven't personally seen it I am told that the more open vista is an improvement. During the non-growing season it is proposed to carry out some pruning of the lower branches of the remaining trees to improve access which was becoming difficult, and not only for us six footers!

East Kirkby will commence taxiing Lancaster 'Just Jane' in March. Details can be found on their website:

<http://www.lincsaviation.co.uk/store/lancaster-taxi-rides/>

During the winter months 'Just Jane' will be undergoing maintenance and further work with the aim of getting her into the air once more. Visits to the hangar can be arranged and there is also the added attraction of the Mosquito.

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

'Til the next time.

THE WAR [And after]

By

Tom W. Reed

Part 9 (Conclusion)

Very shortly afterwards I was seconded to the A & AEE aircraft armament experimental establishment at RAF Boscombe Down in Wiltshire and took over a four-bedroom married quarter almost immediately, so was able to go to pick up Deenie and the children from our own transit house in Thornton Heath.

I was allocated a job in Squadron Leader Fairhurst's department of the armament division, where I was to conduct trials of the sighting equipment on the Naval Sea Vixen aircraft. I was detached to the Ferranti Organisation for a three week course on the equipment at Edinburgh and housed at RAF Turnhouse.

On my return I found I was sharing an office with Flight Lieutenant Watson and a naval Lt Commander Sedgewick, and was soon given the order to get cracking. I was introduced to the naval pilots who would be working the trials with me, Lt Commander 'Ossie' Brown and Lieutenant Bill Newton.

The weapon system to be tested were the four pods of two inch rockets and the accuracy of the sighting system. There were seven cine cameras installed to check every aspect of the system. I had the rockets individually marked and identifiable smoke heads fitted.

The pilots were briefed to fly a preliminary sortie to test everything out and I managed to get the cine films into the photographic section in order to collect them at 5 p.m. I took a cine projector home to assess the results.

I co-opted Deenie as my assistant projectionist, and using the dining room table and cream coloured wall started to view the films. I saw immediately that the rockets were all over the sky as the smoke bursts were covering a 30 degrees cone instead of the assumed $\frac{1}{4}$ degree. I rewound the film and asked Deenie to stop the projector at intervals and was horrified to see that many of the rockets had 'flamed out' and the aircraft was flying through them.

I realised at once what was happening – the rockets were colliding with each other and the impact was extinguishing the solid propellant as I had had the same problem with four-inch rockets at AFDS. The next day I went straight to my boss and told him what I had found and showed him one of the films. He too was shocked and immediately rang our commanding officer, Group Captain Jameson, and asked him to come down to view the film, and as soon as he saw it sent a signal to Admiralty in London banning the firing of two-inch rockets on Sea Vixen aircraft. About an hour later a 'posse' of admirals arrived demanding to know why. They said an important NATO exercise was currently

taking place in the Mediterranean.

When they asked who was responsible, 'Titch' Fairhurst pointed at me, a lowly flying officer. My boss told me to take them into the projection room and I showed them the film, frame by frame, and they witnessed two-inch rockets cart wheeling past as the aircraft flew through them. Later computer analysis showed one nineteen inches from the pilot's cockpit.

As my predecessor, naval Lieutenant Taylor, had carried out trials on the rocket's system and approved it for service, they demanded to see his reports and films. The reports were available and on occasion mentioned unexplained dents in the wings and pods, but the films were not available.

Apparently he had taken them with him to his new unit in Scotland for instructional purposes. I don't know what happened to him but I can guess.

Happily our 'boffins' solved the problem with a little black box in the circuit to give each rocket five milliseconds delay. It amazed me how no one had been killed. I presumed this episode prompted my promotion to flight lieutenant (acting) with the necessary pay adjustment.

As the annual ball approached, on the officers mess I was delegated the job of decorating the armament division's ball project in a large building adjacent to the mess, the aircrew and flying support services were given the main lounge and the Navy were given the bar to decorate.

The Navy chose a replica of Nelson's quarters and aircrew chose a knights' jousting set-up with armoured shields and heraldic decorations. The armament division's effort was to be on a countryside theme.

The hall that we were in had a stage so we organised a band a la 'Acker Bilk' and various internal decorations of harness, farm tools and implements around the periphery, and I had the opposite end to do something with, an area of about 60 sq. yards.

I decided to build a village pub. I constructed the walls with bomb tail cases which were about four feet long and about 2'-3" x 2'-3" wide and deep, leaving a couple of apertures 2'-6" wide and 3' high, with diamond mesh inserts as windows and a normal sized doorway. I covered the walls with grey stone patterned paper and topped it off with a sloping roof of thatch. I'd seen a thatcher working locally and he gave me some tips and materials to do a DIY job.

I went to The George in Amesbury and for a couple of invites borrowed some genuine antique pub furniture and built a 'bar' inside. During travels previously around the area I'd noticed in one pub a penny in the slot' piano and a couple of invites did the trick, we borrowed it. I christened the pub 'Ye Olde Reduntande Arms. Outside I had obtained enough artificial grass to cover quite a good area and kitted it out with tables and chairs with a village green atmosphere.

The local band of five musicians did an excellent job playing popular music and on the night a large proportion of the guests forsook the main dance floor and 'homed' in on ours. The ball lasted until about 5a.m. when breakfast was served in a large marquee and a good time was had by all - especially myself as I received a letter of commendation for my efforts.

As usual I was asked to 'volunteer' as an officer I/C the corporals club. We had the usual bar, darts, pool table, table tennis etc. but I had heard that a retired squadron leader had started building go-carts and had constructed a track for them in Thruxton, an ex-RAF station nearby.

So I went on a recce, met him and asked him if it would be possible to hire a cart for use by the corporals club. He let me have a go myself and afterwards told me that I could borrow two 'gratis' for a month to test the water.

The corporals were delighted with their new toys and I had found a suitable area in the explosives compound. The noise attracted some of the officers, including the CO, who all had a go. Eventually I took them back to Thruxton (now a fully fledged racing track). The squadron leader was delighted as he had gained many enthusiasts from Boscombe Down.

Back to work: after a series of sorties to assess the safe 'break off' point during an attack flown by Lieutenant Commander 'Ossie' Brown and Lieutenant Bill Newton, it was apparent that to me that enough information had been gathered to rule out the necessity for a second planned phase which involved acoustic targets towed by Valiant aircraft supplied by the French.

When 'Rajah' White, the section chief, a civilian, returned the matter was discussed between him and the OC. As a result I was sent for and given an almighty 'dressing down'. It seems that I had put a spanner in the works of Rajah's plans for an increase in personnel, ergo an increase in comparative rank with the OC's job in his sights.

I had made the decision to leave the service when I was called to Rajah's office and was offered my job as a civilian, staying at the same desk in the same office with Mike Watson and Lieutenant Commander Sedgewood. I would have the same salary and pension rights and as I was retiring on medical grounds I could have my service pension straight away. I was forty-two and Deenie forty-one and I realised that it would be difficult to start in business at a later age. I turned the offer down and eventually left the RAF in October 1961.

During my six months' notice period I carried on working but during the weekends Deenie and I scoured the country looking for a suitable business we could run ourselves.

After leaving the RAF Tom ran a number of garage businesses in Wales. Deenie died in 1994 and Tom was finally 'posted out' on November 14th 2015 aged 96.



A FURTHER LOOK AT EXHIBITS AT LAST YEAR'S AIR SHOW AT RAF SCAMPTON

Above are some 'Cold War' aircraft whilst those below are present day.



CAN YOU HELP?

BOND TESTER

A friend of the Editor, Phil Harris, has repaired two Bond Testers. One is dated from 1944 and the other 1957 although June/1957 could be the date on which it was repaired by Evershed & Vignoles. They carry an RAF reference 5G/2126, and the original battery had a reference 5A/1623. There is also another reference, "A.P. 19744" which is the Air Publications reference number. The probes are not the originals of which, one was 6 feet long with twin probes and the other 60 feet, yes six zero, with a single probe. The leather strap shown is also not original, that being long enough for carrying over the shoulder.

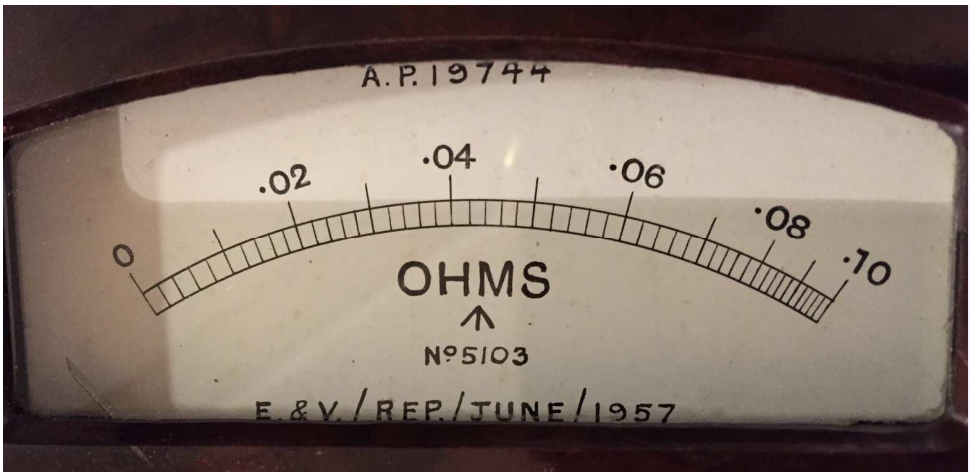
The two instruments illustrated were made by 'Record', the cases being of Bakelite. Those made by Evershed & Vignoles had wooden cases.

They were used to test electrical bonding and screening connections of aircraft. Presumably these would be used by riggers or airframe fitters.

You may have heard of these instruments being referred to as 'Ducter' or 'Ductor', the latter being a registered trade mark of Megger Ltd. thus becoming the generic term for any very-low-reading ohmmeter.

Do you remember using one?





READER'S LETTERS

In the November 2017 issue of The 4T9er, Reader's Letters', we published extracts from a series of e-mails from Adrian Amber regarding his, and Aletta Stevens' search for information on Sgt. McGrenery. Aletta e-mailed:

"I have been meaning to write to you, as Adrian has been doing all the communicating for me so far and I apologise for not being in touch sooner. I am most grateful for your help in contacting Fred Hill and Reg Woolgar, and it was very exciting to hear from them and to meet Fred.

"I have read the association newsletter with interest, noting that you acknowledged our search. I thought I'd give you some background information as to why I got involved with this story.

"It is more than two years ago now that my Dutch friend, Jan Geert Vogelzang, asked for my help in finding a living relative of Sergeant Thomas Hill McGrenery and I found his sister-in-law, Hilary McGrenery. Hilary is 86, housebound and not in possession of a computer, which is why I offered to help her with the research. I wrote a book about Holland in WW2 and this is how I met Jan Geert. I was brought up in Holland and had a Dutch uncle who was killed during the German Occupation in the region where Jan Geert lives. I have been fascinated by personal WW2 stories ever since and of course the Dutch have always regarded the RAF airmen as their heroes in the fight against the Nazis.

"In the early days our research was predominantly concerned with finding a blood relative who could give DNA to prove Jan Geert's theory that the remains buried in a grave dedicated to an unknown airman at Nijemirdum cemetery are those of Thomas Hill McGrenery. However, when we discovered that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is no longer prepared to exhumate for DNA purposes, we had to abandon this line of enquiry.

"Having read about the new International Bomber Command Centre in Lincolnshire, I then suggested to Hilary that we submit Thomas Hill McGrenery's story to the IBCC digital archive, together with personal items, which the archive was keen for her to do.

"This is when the research took another turn. Hilary found a boxing cup that Tommy (as she always calls him) had won in a boxing match at RAF Yatesbury, which happens to be very near where I live in Wiltshire. I went to the National Archives in Kew to look at the Operation Record Books on RAF Yatesbury, which were most interesting but unfortunately contained no information on boxing matches. Hilary also found Tommy's RAF service record, but I had difficulty reading it and it was at this point that I thought of Adrian Amber, who I knew had been in the Army.

"Adrian has shown me your emails and I in turn have relayed their content

to Hilary by phone and letter, and she is most grateful. I have now made photocopies of all relevant materials for Hilary and she intends to write Tommy's story for the IBCC archive this year.

"I also took the liberty to record our conversation with Fred Hill, who has given his permission for us to use it. I understand you may be interested in this recording for your archive. If so, I could send you a copy but would point out a few things: 1. I missed off the beginning of our conversation; 2. there are two points at which Adrian and Fred, and John Lowe and I are having two separate conversations at the same time, so it's difficult to follow either; 3. the end includes our photo session and has little of value to add. This could be deleted if you wish.

"With very best wishes for the New Year for you and the 49 Squadron Association"

Former 49 Squadron wireless operator Phil Griffiths writes:

"As is my family custom (which I originated) I am tolerated (barely) to tell one short war story at my birthday party between drinks and dinner, my choice this year was 'Coned over Munich'. It went something like this:

"Just after 'bombs away' and flying straight and level for the brief time required for the camera to register 'the drop', a wandering searchlight found us and seconds later numerous beams latched on to us. Suddenly the night was a glaring white blindness which actually hurt the eyes and effectively blinded the whole crew. Russ Ewens, our pilot, with his eyes as close to the artificial horizon as possible immediately commenced a gut wrenching series of corkscrews in 500ft increments while our mid-upper and rear gunners blindly fired astern into the most likely path of an attacking night fighter. I am sure the fighter pilots must have licked their chops at the sight of a helpless bomber caught in the light like a fly in a web. (I also wondered if the fighter pilots took numbers out for their turn to attack!)

"We were attacked by two individual fighters each registering hits - one 20mm cannon shell crumpled the tailplane about a foot from our rear gunner and holed one of the starboard wing tanks. However, we continued with the unending corkscrews 'till more tracers passed above us and to the side. We wouldn't have lasted long with this action so Russ yelled, "Dash this"! (Actually a stronger word was used) and he put the Lanc into a swooping power dive from about 20,000 to 8,000ft! I wondered after if we were the first piston engined aircraft to break the sound barrier! The whole aircraft shuddered and shook from stem to stern but somehow the wings stayed on and we lost those clinging searchlights somewhere on the way down. Likely they picked up another, easier target as they followed us. We did obviously get back OK, banged up and on fumes but alive!

“I’ve really considered that I’ve been on borrowed time ever since and I consider every day to be a bonus.

“My rapt (I think) and captive audience did the usual eye rolling and expressed almost believable appreciation of my tale. I needed a good drink afterwards a one malt Scotch given for my birthday!

“”Looking back at my squadron days when those supposedly bright young men laughed uproariously when the Group Captain at the briefing ‘pep talk’ would say - “When you get back - *pause* - if you get back” - night after night these crews went from the briefing to the crew vans where they joked and teased with one another and chatted up the WAAF driver - then climbed into those noisy, throbbing, vibrating, freezing (except for the Wop who controlled the heating!) cylinders of metal and took off knowing that they only had perhaps a 50/50 chance of completing a tour - what sort of men were we? Perhaps we thought biblically, ‘10,000 shall die at your right and 10,000 shall die at your left but no harm shall become thee.’

“I kept in touch with my old crew until they all flew off into the great unknown as, ‘The only things eternal are the sun, moon and the stars.’

“Like all 49ers, ‘I shall not go gently into the good night, but shall rage, rage at the dying of the light.’ - Dylan Thomas— a good Welshman.

“A slightly sombre note— you are on my ‘notification list’. [*I hope that it is a long time before it arrives! ED.*]

“Brighter - I look forward always to receiving my copy of the 4T9er - I always think you are all doing a wonderful job - It’s amazing that we have such a lively and active association, after all these years - surely we must have the record for longevity for a military association.

“I feel very much a part of the squadron.

“My very best and good luck and happy landings to all 4T9ers.”

I am grateful to Griff for his story and kind words. When I took over as secretary twelve years ago next month I said that it is the one tangible way that I can repay the huge debt that I owe to those who served with 49 Squadron in particular and Bomber Command in general. I know that my colleagues in ‘The Crew’ feel exactly the same.

Note - Sgt. Phil Griffiths, flew 26 operations including 8 trips to ‘The Big City’ - Berlin, between 22 October 1943 and 28 April 1944. His pilot on every trip was F/O Russ Ewens DFC. Phil now lives in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

I am grateful to ‘Friend’ Bill Day who wrote:

“I would like to extend my sympathy to the association and to the family of John Ward R.I.P. May he rest for ever in peace.

“John was the first member of the 49ers association that I contacted some years ago when I was involved in the renewal of the plaque on Worthing Pier

to the memory of the crew of a Lancaster which crashed onto Worthing beach whilst setting out on a raid into Germany. The renewal of the plaque and the laying of the wreath was performed at the centenary celebration of the establishment of Worthing pier by the then lady Mayor and a group of local school children, most of whom did not know that the names of the streets that they are living in are named after members of the crew who perished in the accident. [*See The 4T9er, November 2012, Issue 27. ED.*]

“I was assured by the maintenance staff of the pier at the time that they would look after the plaque for us, but since I have grown old myself, I have not managed to inspect it.

“Although I was not actually a member of 49 Sqn. I have enjoyed your newsletters immensely, and must compliment you on their production. Having been the newsletter editor of many of the associations of which I have been a member, I can appreciate the effort which you must put into yours. Unfortunately I am now almost 93 years of age and have not been able to support your efforts financially, but I want you to know that they are greatly appreciated. Long live the life in the old dog.

“I am an ex RAF Wireless Operator / Air gunner who is still flying whenever I get the chance, but have recently had to spend 8 weeks in hospital to correct a faulty heart valve, and this has somewhat curtailed my activities.

“May I also take this opportunity to wish you and all the 'old dogs' a very Happy Christmas, and I look forward to receiving your newsletters by email in the future.”

Thank you Bill. I hope that your operation was a success enabling you to continue as a reader of The 4T9er for years to come.

Coincidentally, Ed Norman sent me an email that he had received from south coast researcher Graham Lelliott who has uncovered some further information on the Worthing crash. We are grateful to Graham for sending the following contemporary reports in the Worthing Herald:

“Worthing Herald - Friday 22 December 1944

CRIPPLED PLANE CRASHES ON BEACH

With live ammunition exploding every few seconds, a Worthing N.F.S. crew, under Company Officer A. Duffield, attacked a fiercely burning plane on Worthing beach recently.

Eye witnesses, a few minutes earlier, had seen a plane in obvious difficulties. Through the dusk of the early evening they had watched the pilot's struggles as he fought to avoid crashing the crippled plane on the town. Directly in its path was the Plaza Cinema; its huge auditorium was packed.

It was on the water's edge - literally within a few hundred yards of this cinema

- that the aircraft struck. An explosion followed - then a tongue of red flame as the wreckage caught fire. Numerous smaller explosions followed as the plane's ammunition exploded.

The N.F.S. were quickly on the spot. Police and wardens were also there to lend a hand. A line of hose was run out and the men ignored the flying missiles until they had recovered the body of a sergeant-pilot. It has been stated that the remainder of the crew had baled out, but no confirmation can yet be obtained.

There was extensive damage to windows in the town's coastal area and, in certain freak instances, far inland, Montague-street suffered heavily. Traders worked by the lights of their shops - for a while the dim-out was not so dim - to clear up the broken glass with which the beach was strewn."

Worthing Herald - Friday 28 May 1948

ENGINE IN SAND DEFIES EXPLOSIVES

"Explosive charges were used by R.A.F. maintenance men on Wednesday evening in an unsuccessful attempt to destroy a plane engine embedded in the sand off Heene-road. The engine has been there since December, 1944, when a R.A.F. bomber crashed on the beach, after the pilot had skilfully guided his damaged machine over the town. The pilot lost his life in the crash.

Several attempts have been made to dislodge the engine, which has caused an obstruction to local fishermen and boatmen. Cranes have been used, and efforts to drag it clear by means of tow ropes attached to service lorries also proved ineffective.

On Wednesday police kept people from the foreshore while a R.A.F. demolition squad, under W.O. J. V. Evans and Sgt. G. Lipscomb, from Thorney Island, placed gun cotton charges near the engine. These were detonated, and pieces of wreckage were blown over the sands.

Windows of hotels and houses on the front were shaken by the explosion, but the main part of the obstruction still remained un-disturbed."

Worthing Herald - Friday 12 August 1949

THE MAN WHO SACRIFICED HIS LIFE NINE DAYS BEFORE HE WAS DUE TO BE MARRIED

"A woman walked into the office of Mr Ernest G. Townsend, O.B.E., Worthing's Town Clerk, on Wednesday, and gave him information which for nearly five years the townspeople have wanted to know - the name of the pilot of a crippled bomber who sacrificed his life by deliberately crashing his plane on the beach to avoid buildings in the town.

The pilot was Flying Officer Edward Gordon Essenhigh, of 54, Bishopthorpe-road, York. His aunt, Miss Ethel Maud Essenhigh, visited the Town Clerk to see

if she could obtain any further details of her nephew's death, which occurred on December 17, 1944. She also revealed that five other members of the crew were killed in the crash.

Flying Officer Essenhigh was on his "Black Gremlin" mission - the thirteenth. The bomber was bound for Munich, where a special target was to be attacked. The next day he would have been celebrating his 24th birthday, while nine days later he was due for a spell of leave and intended to marry his fiancée, Miss Eileen Colley, also of York.

Essenhigh, who was 6ft. 2½ins. tall, was trained and commissioned in Canada. Before joining the R.A.F. he was a chemistry apprentice.

Worthing residents will remember that the plane, after being in difficulties at dusk, came from a northerly direction. Eye-witnesses stated that it looked as though the pilot was trying to avoid the built-up area near Montague-street. The plane limped over the Plaza Cinema and then crashed near the water's edge opposite Heene-terrace. The bomber immediately exploded and burst into flames.

"Members of the N.F.S. and Civil Defence who extricated the body of the pilot came under a hail of fire from exploding ammunition. The faces of houses along the Front suffered extensive damage and shops in Montague-street had windows blown out.

Afterwards, letters poured into the Herald office suggesting that a form of memorial should be erected in recognition of the pilot's action. The Mayor at that time, Alderman (then Councillor) H. W. Shalders, said that until he was in possession of fuller information of all the facts he could take no action:

Flying Officer Edward Gordon Essenhigh.

Burial or Cremation Place: Englefield Green, Runnymede Borough, Surrey."

Former 49 Squadron navigator Alasdair Campbell e-mailed:

"Many thanks Alan for this excellent edition. [The 4T9er November 2017 ED.] I remember Arthur Steele from my days at 232 OCU RAF Gaydon on No 105 Valiant course. A dedicated and thoroughly professional officer."

I first met Catherine Goodier of Blind Veterans UK when Barbara and I accompanied our late Chairman Ted Cachart to London on what transpired to be our last outing together. Following are some extracts from e-mails that she kindly sent to me, I have purposely left them anonymous:

"I had thought that I had formally given up trying to persuade our Government to award a campaign medal to Bomber Command but some of my supporters had responded to my former pleas to write to their MPs and one had sought to ask his MP to use the Freedom of Information Act to question the original Honours and Awards Committee back in 1946 about their reasons for denying BC a campaign medal and that MP had replied, 'It would appear that it was

King George Sixth who ruled, after 1946, "that no further awards should be instituted for service in World War Two". ' (quoting Simon Hoare, MP for North Dorset). One must assume, of course, that this was on the advice of his Ministers at the time, and the members of the 1946 Honours and Awards Committee in particular...."

Response: "That is very interesting but not necessarily for the negative reason stated. My reading of the quoted sentence is "*At the time*" the King also ruled that no further awards should be instituted for service in World War Two. [emphasis added]

"There are two ways to interpret this. Firstly as indicated by my emphasis of '*at the time*' it has been interpreted to mean this could change, as has been the case with the award of the Arctic Star and the Bomber Command clasp. Whilst we disagree with the latter, it is still *an additional award*, as of course is the Arctic Star. This new precedent therefore supersedes the contemporary wishes of the King. Secondly, if the conditional phrase '*at the time*' has been ignored by the Honours and Awards Committee, and it is interpreted to mean in perpetuity, then why have they considered the issue at all? They could simply have said 'the King ruled that no further awards should be instituted for service in World War Two'. Only the current monarch would have the right to overturn her father's decision.

"As a result of the above, the sentence quoted is null and void regarding current awards as precedent has already been set to override it. Therefore it cannot be used as a reason to refuse reviewing the award of a BC campaign medal." *Personally I, the Editor, do not expect a medal to be awarded as I fear that the award of the Bomber Command Clasp will be seen as just acknowledgement.*

The following letter was received by post from Tony Redding:

"I am a military history author and PhD student at Kings College, London. My research project concerns 'The capability and credibility of Britain's airborne nuclear deterrent'.

"I would be interested in contacting any Squadron association members who served with the V-Force. So far I have 65 aircrew and groundcrew on my list for interview and it would be great to expand participation."

Tony goes on to give all his contact details which I will pass on to any former V-Force personnel who wish to participate. Note: Both air and ground crew personnel are included. If you qualify please get in touch with the Editor who will give you Tony's details.

I received the following e-mail:

"My name is Sian English & I am the daughter of Mrs Beryl Lewis, a member of your 49 Squadron Association. I am contacting you for a couple of reasons - firstly to let you know that sadly my Mum passed away last year, peacefully in

her sleep at the age of nearly 89 years.

“Secondly I would like to ask your help in contacting one of your members, please bear with me as I would like to recount to you what my family & I consider an extraordinary event.

“In late 2009, whilst both my Dad & my husband were terminally ill in hospital I had gone to collect my Mum in order to visit them & had managed to get her in the car, (she was struggling with arthritis & we had several inches of snow) when I heard the house phone ring. Thinking it could be the hospital I answered it & a voice asked to speak to Mrs Beryl Lewis. At this moment I thought it was a "cold call" & quite impatiently replied that she wasn't able to come to the phone, to which the voice replied, ‘I would like to speak to her as I flew with her brother during the war.’

“I said I would let her know & perhaps the caller could ring back that evening. All of this probably seems quite reasonable & not particularly noteworthy, & you must remember my mind was quite occupied with our impending hospital visit, however, by the time I got into the car the information must have seeped into my conscious mind as my Mum took one look at me & said, ‘Whatever is the matter you look like you've seen a ghost.’

“As the sister of Sgt. Gordon E. D. Hands Air Gunner, my Mum had told us the story of his fatal raid over Revigny in July 1944 & that ALL the crew had perished & were buried in the churchyard of the village of Herbissee in France where the villagers had done what they could to rescue the bodies. We have pictures of his headstone.

“So naturally I was completely shocked to hear that this caller had flown with Uncle Gordon but my Mum said that she remembered that one of the crew, the navigator, had broken his leg in a motorbike accident during a weekend off & had been unable to fly on that mission. That navigator was Mr Geoff Brunton who had made the phone call & who subsequently we had the enormous privilege & pleasure of being able to meet with on a few occasions.

“It was so totally awesome to talk with someone who not only had served during the war, but on a Lancaster & knew my Uncle, had talked with him, laughed with him, shared their days & nights, worked together & gone through the most awful of times together as pals & colleagues. I really can't convey to you how much this meant to my Mum who was only 15 when her brother died or to us as a family. To hear about his life as an airman, his friendships, his daily routines were all so fascinating (& a great source of personal joy & comfort for my Mum) I can feel the hairs on my neck rising as I write this to you - it truly has been one of the greatest episodes in my life.

“Sadly Geoff has passed away now too but he gave so much information to my brothers & I including some memorabilia of his visits to Herbissee to remember his comrades & he told us that the village hold a ceremony on the anniversary of

the crash. I understand that his son may be carrying on this tradition.

“I have two sons, aged 19 & 15 & we want to visit Herbissee to see where Uncle Gordon is buried & honour him & the rest of the crew & would love our visit to coincide with this ceremony, if it is still being done or at least to meet some of the villagers.

“So I wondered if you could either contact Geoff's son on my behalf & pass on this email or perhaps send me his details so that I may contact him.

“I thank you for your time & hope that you are able to assist me - should you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact me.”

As we are not permitted to divulge members details to non-members I have forwarded the e-mail to Michael Brunton. Happily Sian and Michael are in touch, Michael responding:

“I am Michael Brunton, son of the late Geoff Brunton who was indeed the Flight Engineer in the crew that your Uncle Gordon flew in until the fateful Revigny evening. My father spoke little of his war time experiences until the 1980s and then not in the detail that he did when we started to visit “the boys” at Herbissee and to attend the memorial service at Mailly le Camp each May.

“I took my father to see “the boys” for the first time in 2001 to coincide with the Mailly event and continued annually with him until he passed away in 2011, we continue to go every year and my son attended in 2017 for the first time and laid the 49 Sqd wreath at Mailly and hopefully is now on for the duration.

“My other half Nikki now prepares a water proof copy of a summary I wrote about the fateful night and how my father survived so that visitors can read it at the graves. You are correct in saying that the graves are splendidly maintained by the villagers of Herbissee and we now have many friends there. We are just planning this year's trip so I will let you know the dates and suitable places to overnight etc in case you are interested in attending.

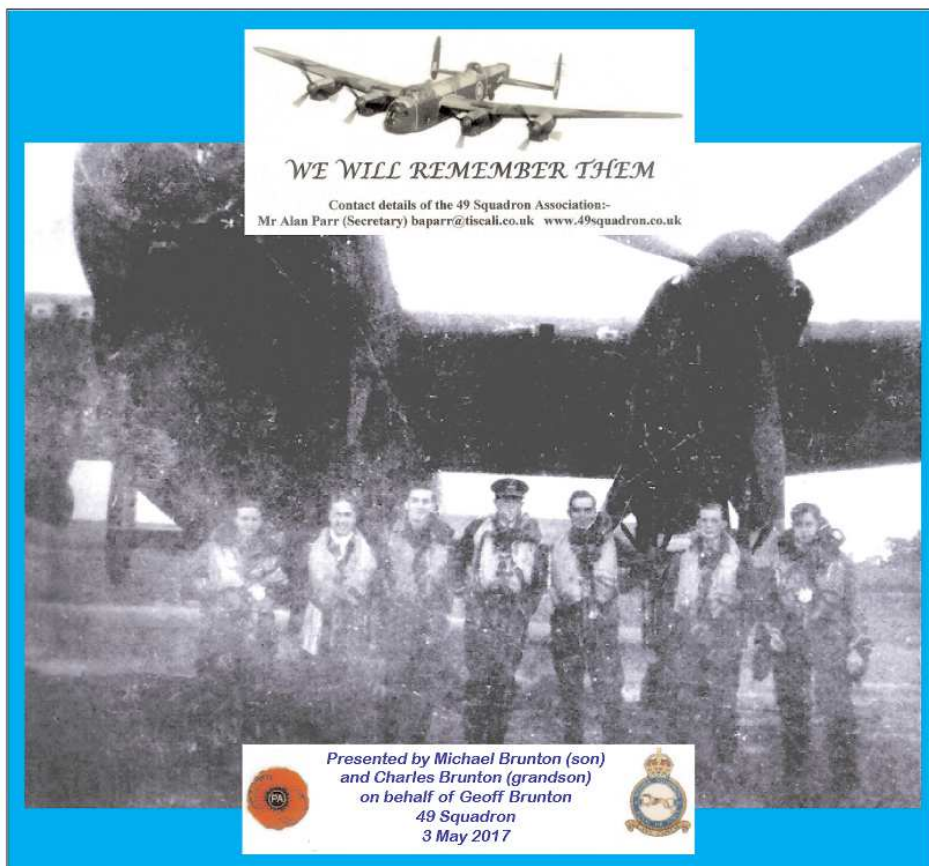
“If you would like to have a chat please do not hesitate to call, I am on 07..... most of the time, whilst we live on Exmoor we also have a house and office near to Newark where my father lived and where my children are all living.”

Dom Howard e-mailed:

I am planning my trip to Germany in late July/early August once again which will also include the Submarine Pens in Saint Nazaire. I will also be visiting Reichswald Forest Cemetery, Rheinberg War Cemetery and Durnbach War Cemetery. If any member would like me to visit an airman family member and leave a dedication I will happily do so. Dedications can be obtained from the RBL and posted to me. I will need Cemetery, Name, and details of where buried e.g.

Anderson C T Rheinberg 18. A. 18.

Dom's contact details can be obtained from the Editor.



Lancaster - EA- V/U Serial No. JB178, 49 Squadron, 5 Group RAF Bomber Command.

Pictured left to right:

Sgt. A. Ansell, RAF - F/S M. Hollar RNZAF - Sgt. G. E. Brunton RAF - F/L W.R.Green RNZAF
F/S R. Neal RAF - Sgt. C. Davison RAF - Sgt. G. Hands RAF

This aircraft was shot down returning from a mission to Revigny the night of 18/19 July.
There were no survivors and the crew of 7 are buried here in Herbisie churchyard.

Sgt. G.E. Brunton - Flight Engineer did not fly with his usual crew on this mission because of a broken leg, sustained during a motorcycle accident. Sgt. F.S. Seymour was his replacement.

Sgt. G.E. Brunton remembered his old crew with many visits to their graves at Herbisie.
Geoffrey's son Michael continues to visit the graves and pay tribute to the brave men of 49 Squadron.

Details and photograph supplied by Geoffrey Brunton.