

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
August 2018 Issue 50



Photo: Janet Norman

Twenty-two RAF Typhoons, in immaculate formation, celebrate the Royal Air Force Centenary over The Mall and Buckingham Palace.

IN MEMORIAM

J. W. Turner Revd. A Buckler

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Lorraine Edwards

EDITORIAL

Well, we have the 49 Squadron Memorial installed and dedicated at the National Memorial Arboretum. Most appropriately perhaps this has taken place during the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Air Force. Of less significance is that I am announcing it in the 50th issue of The 4T9er. A full report on the Dedication Ceremony together with video links appears in this issue.

I regret to announce the passing of two of our number. Flight Sergeant John Walter Turner died on 27 June 2018, aged 97. John was an air gunner in the crew of F/Sgt L.E. Watson. They went down on their 11th op, which was to Mannheim, on 9/10 August 1943. All the crew became PoWs. Coincidentally, Bert Cole, the crew's bomb aimer, died in March. Rev'd Tony Buckler, for many years the 49 Squadron Association Honorary Chaplain, died on July 29th. Tony officiated at many reunion services at Fiskerton, his sermons always being most appropriate to the occasion. Tony loved writing poetry, he called them his scribblings although between him and me they were known as his 'odd odes'. Are you old enough to remember Cyril Fletcher? Tony's poem 'The Fiskerton Memorial' appeared in Issue 7 of The 4T9er, August 2007 and thanks to a prompting from Ed Norman I have pleasure in including 'The Lancasters' Battle' herewith.

My sincere apologies to 'new' Associate Member Lorraine Edwards for omitting to acknowledge her joining. Lorraine actually joined following the death of her father, Rowland Longhurst, in October 2016. Rowland, known as George, was a 49 Squadron armourer from 1941 to 1946.

Although the proposed closure of RAF Scampton has not altogether come as a surprise I've no doubt that we are all hoping for a reprieve.

I recommend 'V-Force Boys' by Tony Blackman which includes pieces by 49ers John Conning, John Muston and 'Spike' Milligan - an excellent read.

'Till the next time.

THE LANCASTERS' BATTLE

By

Revd Tony Buckler

We pause to remember when Europe was fighting
For freedoms that tyrants denied;
And we think of our own, who, in that sad struggle
Had duties that meant many died.

There may have been curses though very few questions
About the hard job to be done;
Confidence in training and not lofty theories
Led to valour, and now they have gone.

Justice demands that we also remember
The essential work done on the ground;
It was always and ever just one vast team effort
Where great skills and true loyalty were found.

The Lancasters' crews flew in moonlit night skies
Under fixed stars and planetary spheres;
Far from their homes and their families too,
And their children, of all too few years.

They fought all their fears, fatigue and frustrations
Cocooned in their black metal mounts;
They struggled for height and a bearing as briefed
With that quiet composure that counts.

That's how the squadrons courageously served,
Faithful to all allied powers;
Thousands met ends that were quite undeserved,
Self-sacrificed for us and for ours.

So we think of that light that a bombers' moon shed
On occupied Europe below;
And we think of the Lancasters with skilful crews
Plus the huge debt to them that we owe.

I am grateful to former BBMF Lancaster pilot Mike Chatterton for sending me a number of stories by his father, John Chatterton. The stories appeared as John was preparing his Biography (Ploughshare and Shining Sword) with the author Richard Underwood. This first story is fictional.

A LINCOLNSHIRE LANDFALL

By

SWEDEBASHER

*Light me a candle in your window sweet
And let it burn as brightly as our love
However thick your curtains, or complete
Your blackout, I shall see it from above*

Johnny Rustic was happy. With the sharp flak of the Dutch coast well behind them this final part of the trip always brought a feeling of relief. True, the North Sea was down there below, cold and cruel, and hostile if one had to ditch, but at least it didn't have flak guns, and most of the German nightfighters had turned back to their bases.

Lancaster Y-Yorker was flying superbly, responsive, buoyant, and light now that she had shed her deadly cargo on the target, and six out of the seven tons of petrol had been consumed. The Pilot had trimmed the ailerons, elevator and rudder, so that she held her course precisely, with only his fingertips on the controls. As they slowly descended through the ten thousand foot level, Ken, the Flight Engineer said "Oxygen off Skipper" and checked that all the other five crew members had heard.

Johnny Rustic thankfully unclipped the strap of his oxygen mask and eased the flying helmet off his itching right ear. The sudden, all pervading roar of four Merlins filled his world, drowning out everything, so he hastily slid the earpiece back into place. He looked at the spinning propeller a few feet from his head – what marvelous engines these were, not a falter as each had turned over 2650 times every minute of the last eight hours. The Pilot sent a heartfelt thank you to Yorker's Ground Crew. The revs were now down to 2000 on the long descent over the sea, husbanding the fuel because, although they wanted to keep up their reputation on the squadron for being 'first back', Ken was very jealous that his fuel consumption figures should not be less than one air mile per gallon.

*Though long the miles, and vast the distance stretch
Between myself and that far flickering light,
It's flame will be a lodestone, and will fetch
Me homewards, through a century of night*

Johnny Rustic, without relaxing his vigilance of eyes sweeping the darkness ahead from port to starboard wingtip, and back across the instrument panel, where any unusual position of a needle would trigger an instant alert, shuffled his parachute pack seat in order to get a bit more comfortable, after all he had been sitting there without a break for the entire flight. He wondered about this unusual feeling of content, because for most of their tour he had been under tension until they were safely landed. It must be due to experience he thought, - this was their twenty eighth trip, only two to go before the tour finished. Although, tonight he had felt the usual fear while they were being rocked by flak bursts as he was holding the Lanc straight and level with bomb-doors open over the target, and again, he had his heart in his mouth while desperately maneuvering to get out of the grip of six coning searchlights.

But these days he could shut off the fear when the danger had passed. He remembered, with grim satisfaction that they had fought off a ME 110, which had come in from the rear. Due to the dark night the fighter had to approach close to attack, and the alert gunners spotted him before he could fire. The Pilot's screaming dive in response to "Corkscrew Starboard - Go!" had caused the enemy cannon shells to pass over the Lanc's canopy, while their Brownings in the turrets responded with a hail of '303. The 18-year-old Canadian Mid-Upper Gunner who had seen him first, claimed a hit, but was quietly disabused by the phlegmatic Scot in the rear turret. At 30, Wee Jock was ten years older than most of the crew, and his calm attitude to life made him the perfect foil to the eager Canadian.

The skipper reflected that the sheer competence of this aircrew, whom he had taken for granted for the last eight months, was probably the main contribution to his feeling of content. He decided he ought to tell them how much he valued them someday before the tour finished.

*I'll set my course upon your lonely bed
And on your heartbeats my direction steer.
While like a star, will shine above my head
That glow of love that conquers all our fear*

He saw that Ken was staring at him enquiringly, and realized that the Flight Engineer had seen his jaw moving in speech, but with mike switched off no words came out. Ken's own oxygen mask was dangling on it's strap and the Pilot saw him smile, no doubt remembering the dramatic verses from "The Lays of Ancient Rome" that the crew were treated to when the Pilot decided to enliven the homeward leg.

In his mellow state Johnny found he was reciting his favorite poem, one written by "a bomber pilot to his love" that he had discovered whilst doing

ground school at the Paignton Initial Training Wing. In those early days flak and fighters had not made quite the same impression on the writer as the implacable weather situations, particularly icing. It was a major peril, and as Johnny murmured the fourth verse he remembered, some weeks back, when flying through an unexpected cumulo-nimbus cloud, the plane being suddenly coated with a film of glazed ice that had locked the controls, forcing them into a screaming dive. After losing thousands of feet into warmer air, the combined efforts of Pilot and Engineer had finally recovered the stricken plane.

*Keep warm your arms and when the invading ice
Licks at our leading edge, it will recall
Only their warmth and that rich benifice
To which I am inducted over all*

Was this then the answer to his happy state, every turn of the airscrews was taking him nearer to her whom he could love, if only his precarious trade would allow him to think of such a thing? He has seen too many desolate wives of friends who had not returned, and had made up his mind that he must not think of any serious commitment until his tour was over, and he would get six months of relative safety as an instructor.

*Sleep warm, sleep safe, and dream while I am gone
Of happiness's past, and yet to be
When this moon crazy interlude is done
And we can live and love at liberty*

The silence was broken by Jack the Navigator. Like many of the precise mathematicians of his trade, he favoured a slightly formal intercom drill – “Navigator to Pilot – We’re bang on track Johnny, and I’ve got a wizard picture of The Wash on the H2S set”, “Let me know when we cross the coast Scotty” The Bomb Aimer grunted – he prided himself on the promptness and accuracy of his pin-point fixes, and preferred to be the first to announce them.

Twenty miles ahead in Eastern England, a single searchlight suddenly sprang into life. It waved through the vertical a few times, then lay horizontally to the North. “Sandra!” said Ken referring to the rescue service for lost aircraft – “Somebody’s in trouble!” The Wireless Operator answered the question, “I picked up an SOS sometime back. There’s a Halifax on two engines, reckons he can’t make it to the emergency ‘drome at Carnaby.” The crew wholeheartedly wished him well. Sandra was probably showing him into Strubby, the first Lincs base.

There were a couple of flashes on the sea below and Johnny Rustic instantaneously turned the Lanc sixty degrees to the left, as an instinctive reaction to a lone flak position. Over his shoulder in the turn he could see the sky over the

receding continent of Europe, and realized how much lighter it was behind them, where dawn was breaking over a hostile land, compared with the persisting dark of the friendly shore ahead. But what were the flashes? Was the Royal Navy feeling trigger-happy again? Wee Jock in the rear turret came up with the answer. "Somebody's just got rid of some hung up bombs – that's the second lot I've seen." 'They're leaving it plenty late enough' thought the Pilot as the Bomb Aimer came up with "English coast ahead. Or should I say, for the benefit of the skipper, Lincolnshire coast ahead. We should pass right over Skegness pier".

"Gee" said Champ, the Mid Upper Gunner, "Skegness! My honey Ruby lives near the pier. I expect she's dreaming of me." "Ruby!" exploded the Wireless Operator, "the girl you brought to the dance last week was Joan, and she lived near the railway station." The Mid Upper Gunner responded "Well I can't help it, if I am an attractive, handsome Canadian....." The remainder of the sentence was lost in the concerted howls of derision from the rest of the crew.

"Navigation lights on Ken" said the Pilot. "There don't seem to be any 'Intruders' around tonight, with Sandra waving her arms about like that."

"Navigator to Pilot, Course from Skegness to base, 294 degrees Magnetic. E.T.A. 12 minutes, and in case you need help, Course for the farm 292° M., E.T.A. six minutes. Perhaps we should 'Try a Banking Search'!!!"

'Try a Banking Search' was the title of their very own cartoon on the wall of the brand new Officers' Mess on Honeyholes Lane, where they had hastily moved after the old Mess in Welton was wiped out by a crashing bomber. The acres of pale cream wall were completely bare until schoolmaster turned Intelligence Officer, Henry Treece, set about them with a stick of charcoal. Having, very wisely caricatured the Station Commander in a complimentary manner over the large fireplace, his artistic talent was let loose depicting a favourite "line shoot" of the senior crews. Jack had once said that his crew did not need to carry out regular banking searches to detect fighters in the blind spot underneath, as his Pilot did that as normal when flying "straight and level."

Jack of course knew very well where the farm was, as the Pilot had taken him there in the Austin Seven a fortnight earlier. By sheer chance it was the day they killed the pig, and the Navigator, from urban Cardiff, had been bewildered and delighted by the host of mouthwatering delicacies from a single animal. "I can still remember that pig's fry Johnny."

Yorker swept inland, and evidence of Bomber Command's presence became very apparent as each airfield was shown up by its ring of lights, known as the Drem Circle, with the runway in use lit up in the centre, and a funnel of lights leading into it.

First of all there was Steeping, a mile off to port. Why the RAF called it Spilsby, the Pilot could not understand – it was three miles from Spilsby town

itself now under the port wing. Johnny knew Spilsby – he had been to school there, and he fleetingly wondered if Headmaster Nesbitt was still helping wartime food production with the hens he kept next to the tennis courts, occasionally on them! The pilot remembered ruefully that the only prize he had ever won at the Grammar School had been for Woodwork, and being fond of puns, he decided that the skills he had picked up in handling a ‘plane’, were now being put to good use!

It was getting lighter now, and the ground detail could just be made out. Johnny could see what he thought was Mavis Enderby, but Old Bolingbroke where his mother and father were at breakfast prior to starting the chores with cow, pigs and hens, was just too far away. Beyond Old Bolingbroke was the Drem circle of East Kirkby, whose perimeter track nudged the farmhouse where he was born, and still further away, lay Coningsby and Woodhall Spa, whose aircraft had marked their target a few hours ago.

Scraftfield Fork coming up, with Winceby’s old battlefield below. Johnny was glad he was not fighting in that earlier war – the Lanc was a far better tool than a Roundhead pike.

He let down to 700 feet. Good, there was the thatched white farmhouse dead ahead, and what’s more, from the east facing window under the eaves, a tiny flickering light trying to compete with the strengthening dawn. “Good girl” She was listening out for them. The Pilot had to admit that here was the centre of his dreams. This beautiful green-eyed Wren who was on a week’s leave from her secret work at Bletchley Park, and who, if they weren’t on ops again tonight, he might get to see in a few hours time.

Electricity had not yet arrived at the farm and as they roared over the yard he saw a couple of hurricane lamps moving around where the waggoner and gathman were on their never ending rounds. He climbed back up to 2000 feet, glad that he had not flashed the ‘Downward Ident’ light, because last time, it had been spotted by the sharp eyed Observer Corps at Baumber, who had alerted the whole of No 5 Group about an ‘aircraft in distress’

Underneath now was the dark wooded area of Bardney Forest, and three miles to port, Bardney’s Drem Circle was welcoming home the Lancs of 9 Squadron. Dead ahead there was a cloud of steam and sparks as a train pulled away from Langworth Station, and away on the left they could see Fiskerton airfield, where a month earlier, on a foggy night, they had made a terrifying approach between two walls of flame when landing on FIDO. Thousands of gallons of petrol were burnt in channels on each side of the runway, the rising heat dispersing the fog for a few hundred feet, enabling otherwise blind aircraft to get safely down. On the right was another Drem Circle with a small searchlight standing vertically in the centre. It was said that the Station Commander at Wickenby had got so fed

up with other squadrons landing there by mistake, that he'd come up with this unique identity card. Yorker's crew had collected one of 44 Squadron's Lances from Wickenby last week, and the No 1 Group station had made some sarcastic remarks on the subject.

Dunholme Lodge on the nose. No sign of other aircraft, must get our call in first, before my Aussie mate, Roy Manning in Q. Queenie beats us to it.

"Hello Bluestripe, this is Airing Y. Yorker. Landing instructions please, over."

"Y. Yorker from Bluestripe. You are number one to land. Runway two two. Q.F.E, one zero two zero, slight crosswind from port, over."

"Bluestripe from Yorker. Understand number one to land. Runway two two. Q.F.E, one zero two zero, on to channel B, over."

"Right Ken, landing drills"

"OK Skip, wheels down, 2650 revs, thirty degrees flap, both undercart green lights on."

The Pilot called Control "Number one downwind."

Letting down, they turned into the Drem Funnel, the lights were still on, though hardly needed now the daylight was so strong.

"Full flap, 2850 revs, Ken." - "OK Skip".

"Number one funnels." Johnny wound on elevator trim to counteract the nose lifting flaps and lined up with the runway.

"Airspeed Navigator!"

"One twenty, - one twenty, - one fifteen, - one hundred, - one hundred, - ninety five, - ninety, - and we're down"

The tyres squealed on the tarmac. "One of your better landings Johnny", Jack couldn't resist it.

The Lancaster lost speed until the Pilot was able to turn her off the runway and on to the perimeter track towards their dispersal point.

"Number one clear of runway".

"Roger number one"

The Bomb Aimer came on with the satisfied voice of one who has remembered an earlier wager. "First back again. Well done skipper!"

"Well done all the crew!" said Johnny Rustic.

The last verse of the poem came into his mind. Up to now he had refused to recite it.

*But if on waking in the morn, you see
The flame has died, like dreams that fall apart
Light me a candle in your memory
And let it burn forever in your heart.*

No, damn it! They would beat it yet! Only two more to go!

THE DEDICATION OF THE 49 SQUADRON MEMORIAL AT THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM ALREWAS, STAFFORDSHIRE.

By

Alan Parr

The Service of Dedication was scheduled for 2-30pm on Monday June 18th.

As Lichfield is a tourist city I block booked fifteen rooms at the George Hotel, which is in the city centre, three months prior to the event. To those of you who don't know Lichfield, if it wasn't for the fact that it boasts a beautiful medieval cathedral it would be classed as a medium sized market town.

Twenty-two members and spouses checked-in on the Sunday and an enjoyable gathering took place in the bar that evening.

The following day we travelled the five or so miles north up the A38 to the National Memorial Arboretum where the morning was individually spent looking round the beautiful site.

At 1-00pm we were joined by several others, who had travelled over that day, to take an excellent buffet lunch in the Founders Room.

At 2-00pm we started out for the memorial and were gathered there for 2-30pm when the familiar sound of



four Merlin engines was heard approaching from the east. The wonderful sight and sound of the BBMF Lancaster thrilled, not only the 4T9ers, but also every other visitor to the Arboretum that day. I've no doubt that it caused quite a stir



as it crossed the A38 as well. The appearance of the Lancaster was due to the arrangements made by Honorary Friend Jack Hawkins who, having served with the BBMF before his retirement from the RAF, is still involved as a civilian. On a personal note, my granddaughter's school, where she was spending her final few weeks before going

on to secondary school, is half a mile from the Arboretum and within the flight area of the Lancaster. Jack was able to arrange for the Lancaster to over fly the school following its second pass. The head teacher later e-mailed me, *“What can I say? It was such an incredible experience for us all. Many of us found it extremely moving. The whole school were out and sat quietly until the plane arrived. When it did, they all jumped up and were leaping around, waving in excitement. None of us were prepared for such an impressive event.”* I understand that the year five pupils sent letters to the pilot, Flt Lt Dunlop, and crew.

After the Lancaster had departed everyone returned to the memorial where Revd. Penny Green conducted the dedication service.

It has been my dream for many years that 49 Squadron should have a memorial



in this place and having achieved this the emotion showed in my voice as I made the introduction;

“Although there are many memorials to individual events involving the squadron there has, until now, been no memorial to the squadron as a whole....”

Stuart Keay followed with a synopsis of the squadron’s distinguished history finishing with an extract from the Pericles’ Oration ending;

“...Take these men, then, for your examples. Like them, remember that prosperity can only be for the free, and that freedom is the sure possession of those alone that have courage to defend it.”

In recognition of the huge contribution made by the members of the WAAF my

wife Barbara read the lesson, John 15: verses 9-17, on their behalf.

The service continued to the Act of Remembrance;



“Let us remember before God, and commend to his sure keeping those who have died for their country in war; those whom we knew, and those whose memory we treasure; and all who have lived and died in the service of mankind.”

After a short pause for private reflection Penny continued;

“Almighty God, Creator of all things, you knew this patch of earth before ever human walked upon it.

You knew the hearts of those who wished to create a memorial and you gifted the eye and the hand of the craftsman and artist before anything was placed here, just as you knew each one of us before we were conceived.

By your great mercy we ask that this Memorial may be to us and to all who see it, a signpost of memory for the members of 49 Squadron Royal Air Force.

May it be a place of reflection, and a bridge between past and future.

So now O Lord we dedicate this Memorial to the memory of those who served this Squadron.

May God bless them, and may the sacrifices they made, to serve in war and peace never be in vain;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.”

There then followed The Last Post by trumpeter Stephen Fagg. I first heard

Stephen play The Last Post at the recent funeral of 49 veteran and friend Bert Cole. His tone was so beautiful that I asked him to play at our service. Judge for yourself when you view the video.

After 2 minutes silence three veterans of the squadron approached the memorial where Bill 'Titch' Cooke L de H, escorted by Reg Woolgar DFC and Terry Deane, laid the 49 Squadron Association's wreath. Those who wished then laid their poppy crosses.

Stuart then quoted from Kipling's Recessional;

*"The tumult and the shouting dies;
The Captains and the Kings
depart:*

*Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!*

There then followed prayers and, in particular, reference to those who have, and continue to suffer as a result of war.

The service closed with the Blessing.



Photo: Alan Parr



**The 49 Squadron veterans present:
Left to right:
Reg Woolgar DFC
Bill Cooke LdeH
Stuart Keay
Terry Deane**

**Photos with this article
by Dom Howard unless
credited otherwise.**



I produced two videos on my Parsound YouTube channel. The first on general release features solely the Lancaster flypast: https://youtu.be/TxJpTbWb_68

The second, which is unlisted and therefore only accessible to those who have the following link features the complete service including the flypast:

<https://youtu.be/qZYK04gySKM> Feel free to share the links if you wish.

‘RAF 100’
Celebrating the centenary of the Royal Air Force.
Text & Photographs by
Janet Norman
Our roving reporter on The Mall

As July comes around each year, Ed and I look forward to our annual visit to the exhibition of paintings by the Guild of Aviation Artists in The Mall Gallery.

When we realised that this year it would coincide with the ‘RAF 100’ celebrations it was too good an opportunity to miss, so on the 10th July we made our way to London for what we hoped would be a spectacular day. The previous days had been extremely hot but now the sky was overcast, making for a cooler and more comfortable day.



We arrived in good time to find a favourable vantage point among the huge crowd lining The Mall and found a small gap towards Admiralty Arch. We then watched enthralled as the bands and the immaculate squadrons of airmen, with their colours flying, marched smartly past towards Buckingham Palace and their Queen. It must have been a very proud moment for them all, a sea of cameras and smartphones recording the splendour of the occasion.



As soon as the parade had passed we took the opportunity of lunch and a comfort break in the gallery and of course to see the many fine paintings on display. We resisted the urge to purchase one or two

favourites but I think, in theory, we spent close to £3000 – if only! We had decided not to follow the crowds processing down the Mall towards Buckingham Palace, although unfortunately it meant missing the next stage of proceedings, the presentation of the new RAF Colour by the Queen, and seeing the royal family gathering on the balcony for the flypast.

The anticipation was tangible as we rejoined the waiting crowd and at precisely 1pm it was ‘eyes to the skies’ as the flypast began. Aircraft, classic and modern, suddenly appeared over Admiralty Arch, flying over our heads and down the length of The Mall to finally disappear over the Palace. They were an amazing sight and there were cheers as first the Chinooks and smaller helicopters came over looking like great spiders in the sky. They were swiftly followed by the Dakota and then to even greater cheering and applause, our own favourite the Lancaster with its escort of Spitfires and Hurricanes. Smaller training aircraft



followed and then the huge Hercules, Atlas and Globemaster transports together with the surveillance aircraft from the Sentinel to the Rivet Joint, the Sentry being the most recognisable with its large rotating disc. The excitement

grew again as the fast jets appeared. First the smaller Hawks in their familiar ‘arrow’ and ‘diamond 9’ formations, followed by the roar of nine Tornados and then the first appearance of the three brand new F35 Lightnings, code named Gibson in tribute to their newly reformed 617 Squadron. The fantastic sight



of the 22 Typhoons in their '100' formation then stole the show *[See front cover]* to be swiftly followed by the familiar Red Arrows, as always bringing up the rear 'smoke on', their famous red, white and blue trails sweeping down The Mall for a show stopping finale.



We had wanted to see the display of static aircraft on Horseguards Parade so as the crowds drifted away we made our way there. Unfortunately we were unable to get a close view as it was now a private reception area for the many



international officials and guests who were attending, but it was fascinating to see the amount of dazzling gold braid on display and enough to be able to photograph the event from a distance.

Many thousands of photographs must have been taken and memories made of this wonderful occasion, a spectacular once in a lifetime day!

“...NEVER THOUGHT I’D MEET UP WITH A HAMPDEN AGAIN...”

(Reg Woolgar’s visit to see the Cosford Hampden)

By

Alan Parr

Whilst ex Hampden Wop/Ag Reg Woolgar was in the Midlands for the dedication of the 49 Squadron Memorial it seemed a good opportunity to get him to see the Hampden under restoration at RAF Museum, Cosford. With the kind cooperation of Conservation Manager, Darren Priday, this was arranged for Tuesday June 19th.

Unfortunately Darren was at Hendon in connection with the RAF 100 commemoration but he had arranged for his number two, Mick Shepherd, to act as host, and an excellent one he was too.

Those of you who have read my reports on the Handley Page Hampden’s progress will know that it is located in the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre at Cosford.

As Reg entered the Centre and first set eyes on the aircraft his face was a picture. He stood wide eyed as he looked on the type of aircraft that he had last seen 75 years before.



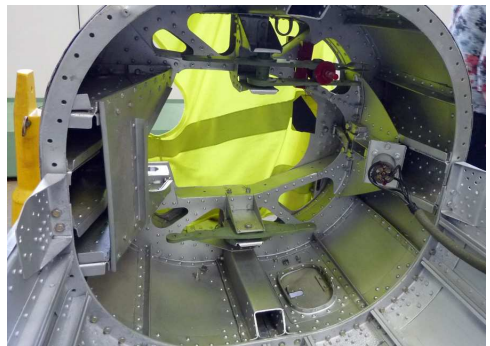
Reg shares a joke with Dave Carr, left and Mick Shepherd.



Mick and his colleagues were eager to hear of Reg's experiences and to look at his logbooks and the memorabilia that he had brought with him. The centre like to interview and record veteran's recollections for their educational archive and Reg was only too pleased to oblige.

Below Left: Reg's 'office'.

Below: An example of the superb standard of the restoration.



Reg is the fifth Hampden veteran that it has been my privilege to accompany to Cosford, only he and Fred Hill are still with us, and I have to say that seeing their reactions is one of the many highlights of my time as secretary of this wonderful association.

A week or so later Reg e-mailed me to express his appreciation saying, "That was a very nostalgic occasion, never thought I'd meet up with a Hampden again after all these years!"

*In 2008 Paul Gaunt published a book, **Shadows of the Past**, which tells of his father, 'Tubby' Gaunt's, wartime experiences. I am grateful to Paul for giving me permission to include excerpts in **The 4T9er**.*

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

By

Paul Gaunt

Part 1

Chapter One The Civil Air Guard

The formation of the Civil Air Guard in 1938/39 brought flying within reach of almost all pockets, so the CAG consequently played a significant part in Britain's preparation for war

On March 11th, 1938, Germany marched into Austria, her policy of rearmament and open aggression against her neighbours now evident to the entire world. She had already set foot on the patch, which was to lead to the Munich Crisis, the occupation of Czechoslovakia and World War Two.

Meanwhile, in this country, the situation had certain similarities with that of later years. In the country as a whole and in the Labour Party particularly, although facts stared them in the face, many refused to believe in the possibility of World War Two and looked to peace through disarmament - peace, in fact, at any price. The result was that whilst endless debates on rearmament took place in the House of Commons, little was being done either way.

So far as the RAF was concerned, although production lines had been laid down for the Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire, front line fighters were still, in the main, biplanes with fixed-pitch propellers and fixed undercarriages, whilst for bombers, there were only Fairey Battles, Handley-Page Hampdens and Armstrong-Whitworth Whitleys. The performance of these machines all fell far short of those aircraft used by the *Luftwaffe*, which incorporated new techniques, developed in recent years in the United States. Civil aviation at the time was in much the same laggard state. This too came under the umbrella of the Air Ministry, through the Under Secretary of State for Air, who, by tradition, was responsible to and answered in Parliament for civil aviation.

In May 1938, as a result of criticism in the Cadman Report of the Air Ministry's handling of civil aviation and of the air estimates, the Secretary of State for Air, Lord Swinton, resigned and was replaced by Sir Kingsley Wood. At the same time, the Under Secretary of State, Colonel A J Muirhead, also moved on, his task passing to Captain Harold Balfour, an active pilot and Royal

Flying Corps (RFC) survivor from the First World War (1914-18).

With the new appointments, a wind of change blew through the corridors of the Strand's Aerial House; Sir Kingsley Wood brought from the Post Office a reputation for getting things through the Treasury, but had no experience of aviation. It therefore fell to Balfour, with his wide experience as a pilot and director of Saunders Roe in the aircraft industry, to supply the drive and initiative necessary to waken the Air Ministry from its slumber. In the coming year, some of his drive was directed towards the setting up of an organisation called the Civil Air Guard and in this task, Balfour was particularly well supported by W P Hildred, Deputy Director-General of Civil Aviation (DDGCA), who Lord Swinton had recruited shortly before his departure to combat the alleged "lack of energy and leadership" with which Cadman had charged the civil side of the Air Ministry.

The major difference between the British scheme and those of Italy, Germany and Russia was that it was voluntary. In other countries, the young were being conscripted. Here, all that was asked of those who joined was that in a national emergency, they would serve in the RAF or another branch of aviation, in whatever capacity was required. There was no obligation on the part of the authorities to employ them as pilots, for this, they must join the RAFVR.

The Civil Air Guard scheme came into effect on September 1st, 1938. Flying was not to start however, until October 1st. This gave the clubs a breathing space in which to build up their fleets, hire additional instructors and generally be organised to meet the new requirements. Only one sour note sounded and that was the next step forward, so far as the CAG scheme was concerned, in January 1939: it was announced that 'A' Licence holders were each to be put into one of four grades according to their age and the part they could be called upon to play in war. 'Class A1' was to consist of males between the ages of 18 and 30 who might be expected to join the RAF as operational pilots. 'Class A2' consisted of men over 30 with exceptional instructional or general flying experience who might be suitable to the RAF as either pilots or instructors. Those in the age group 30-40 who, for age or medical reasons, were not eligible for Class A were to be put in 'Class B' and would be liable for call-up in the RAF as observers, air gunners, wireless operators, etc. The last class, 'C', was reserved for men who did not fall into any of the above categories and all women CAG members. These, according to experience, it was envisaged could be used as civilian ambulance or ferry pilots or for general communications duties. Those who did not qualify for any of these classes would be recommended to take up some form of national service. Within each group, members were to be classified further by means of a 'starring' system, those 'starred' being allocated some additional flying. Starred members of Class A1 would be required to attend

travelling RAF Medical Boards and if passed fit would be allotted a further 10 hours CAG flying and some advanced training, after which they would be tested by the RAF. Starred members of Class A2 would also get extra CAG flying, but would not, for the time being, have to take a medical or be tested. Starred members of Class B would get extra CAG flying, would be tested and would be given extra training in the form of lectures and special instruction in the duties for which they had been selected, whilst in Class C, although some in this group would also be selected, they would get no further flying or instruction. Those starred in the various groups would, it was said, be able to wear special gold stars. The women, needless to say, were not at all happy about being thrown en bloc into Class C and thus being ineligible for further training.

In June 1939, when a review was being taken of CAG members available for RAF call-up, it was noted that there were some 800 to 900 women members, 200 of which had qualified as pilots. These, especially the more experienced ones, together with the women instructors, were becoming more and more restless about the lack of information as to how they might be used in war and the Air Ministry discussion continued about how, if any were to be used as ferry pilots, they would be organised. Flying Training was to be carried out at local flying clubs.

The new Secretary of State for Air, Sir Kingsley Wood, announced the formation of the Civil Air Guard on July 23rd 1938. Members of the public aspiring to become pilots were invited to apply to 76 clubs for training. All of these clubs had agreed to participate in the scheme - probably due to the attractive scale of payments offered by the government for the use of the club's aircraft, instructors, engineers and premises. Tubby Gaunt was to train at Leicestershire Aero Club, Braunstone, and was one of the aspiring flyers.

The CAG did not actually own any aeroplanes or premises. The clubs were paid £30 for each pupil who qualified for a licence, £50 if on heavier aircraft, with payments for up to 10 hours annual practice flying after qualification. As the scheme developed, so the clubs sought additional machines to provide for the extra needs of CAG flying.

A club had to have a CAG section of a minimum of 12 pupils before commencing training. Men and women applicants aged between 18 and 50, medically fit and free of any military reserve commitment, would be taught to fly at a cost to them of 2/6d (12½p) per hour during the week and 5/-d (25p) at weekends and public holidays on aircraft under 1,200 lbs (544 kgs) all-up-weight. Above this weight (on types such as the DH Moth) the charges were doubled. The normal club charge at the time was £1.10.0d (£1.50) per hour. By joining the scheme, the applicants undertook to offer themselves for service, which would not necessarily involve flying, in a national emergency. A basic



Tubby, in CAG uniform, well on the way towards becoming a pilot, in his father's garden, Countesthorpe.

uniform was provided, this being a pale blue boiler suit with buttoned breast pockets and a matching belt. A miniature civil aviation ensign with the letters 'CAG' superimposed was worn on the shoulders. Members were required to join their club operating the scheme for a much reduced membership fee. On qualifying as a pilot, a pair of 'wings' with 'CAG' in the centre was worn above the breast pocket.

A committee was appointed to administer the scheme as follows: -

Chief Commissioner - The Most Hon the Marques of Londonderry, KG, PC, MVO. Hon Secretary - Air Cdre John A Chamier, CB, CMG, DSO, OBE, RAF (Ret'd). Hon Area Commissioners - W Lindsay Everard, MP (Knighted in 1939). Maj. Alan Goodfellow, RAF (Ret'd). Mrs F G Miles. Robert Murray, Esq.

Of the original 76, only 58 clubs actually operated the scheme, and training started in September 1938. By the following January, 5,500 of the original 30,000 applicants had been accepted and already 1,380 of these had gained their 'A' licences and thereby qualified to wear the CAG flying brevet.

These figures illustrate the pace of instruction at the clubs during the autumn. These statistics do not include normal club instruction, which continued simultaneously with CAG flying. For this hard work, the clubs were paid £40,823. By the time the scheme ended, there were over 10,000 members, of whom more than 7,000 had qualified.

On January 24th 1939, the scheme was categorised for the various age groups. Those up to 30 or 40, if having special qualifications, formed a special pilot reserve; those between 30 and 40 were to be available for secondary flying duties; and the third category contained the remainder and all women.

Many members served in the air during the war, either in the armed forces or in the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). Had it not been for the additional strength of the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF), it is possible that the Battle of Britain would have been lost. Without the CAG, the ferry organisation would have been hard pressed to cope with the delivery of aircraft from the factories and thus make good the losses.

Statistics show that the CAG was training one pilot to 'A' Licence standard

every hour of daylight. During the long days of midsummer, it is estimated that the output of pilots was increased to the point of training one pilot an hour for every hour in the 24, a rate of 9,000 a year.

The CAG movement was achieving three important objects: it was creating a large body of men and women with a practical knowledge of flying, which would be useful in any emergency; by broadening the basis of entry into aviation, it helped to make the average citizen air minded and fully conscious of the vast potentialities of the air; further, it helped to increase the numbers of those who found employment in aviation, whether as pilots, ground engineers, or on the constructional side of the aircraft industry.

A civilian 'A' Licence, however, was no substitute for a service flying training course, so many CAG members volunteered for other aircrew categories. One such, W Cutting of the West Suffolk Aero Club CAG, was an air gunner in a Whitley on operations, when the aircraft's pilot was killed. Although he had only flown Taylorcraft aeroplanes before, he now took control of the twin-engined, 21,660 lbs (9,825 kgs) bomber and flew it back to base, thus saving both the valuable crew and the aircraft. For this, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The cost to him of his CAG training had been under £5, but the value to the country of his bravery far exceeded the small subsidy paid for his pilot training. This is but one example of the way in which the country gained from the CAG scheme.

Chapter Two The Training Starts

After signing the respective papers on volunteering to join the RAFVR in Leicester, on September 2nd, 1939, Tubby's first posting was RAF No.2 Receiving Centre at Cardington, Bedfordshire, on November 10th, 1939. Within a few days, on November 15th, Tubby was posted to No.8 receiving centre at Manston, where he was to undergo his basic training, which was to take six weeks. Issued with his kit, Tubby quickly settled down to forces living and discipline, mixing easily. He quickly found new friends, having a photograph taken with six of such outside their billet; each airman signed the back of all seven copies for future reference.

It would not be long before the grim realities of war became evident. Almost 12 months to the day after the photograph was taken, the first of four of his comrades was killed in action, these including G. A. Hadden. Some four months later, Sergeant Clifford Ginnette, w/op & air gunner serving with 22 Squadron on Bristol Beauforts, was killed in action whilst attacking shipping in the Channel on April 24th, 1941. On July



Manston, December 3rd, 1939. Tubby is far left, Cliff Ginnette rear left, G. Haddon far right. These seven friends all signed the photo; by September 1941, four are either missing or dead.

5th, Sergeant Gerald Hutson, another w/op & air gunner, was killed in action with 106 Squadron flying in a Hampden from Coningsby in Lincolnshire. One month later, on August 26th, 1941, Sergeant Thomas Parkinson of 21 Squadron, Watton, Norfolk, was killed in action; this was to set the trend for Tubby's personal chances of survival.

From Manston, Tubby was posted to SHQ Debden, to the Signal & Wireless School. On January 26th, 1940, he was to begin his aircrew training as a w/op & air gunner, firstly successfully completing his classroom wireless training. On the move again to 51 Group, Tubby was classed as 'satisfactory to good'. Moving in quick succession, he arrived at Cranwell (No 1 Signals School). Training here was to be carried out using Westland Wallace, Percival Proctor and Vickers Valencia aircraft. Flying training times varied from 10 minutes to over an hour. Successfully completing his wireless training, his Morse Code was acceptable at 18 words a minute receiving and 20 words a minute sending.

Moving on again, Tubby was posted to No 4 Bombing & Gunnery School (B&GS) at West Frough. There he quickly learnt to handle and fire machine-guns and was passed as 'above average', this course being the last of his initial training, lasting some six weeks.

To be continued.

READER'S LETTERS

Associate Member Roger Bedford e-mailed following the Dedication Service at the NRM:

"It was a lovely day on Monday. Thanks for the invitation to join you for lunch. Weather was kind; Lancaster was a fitting touch - and a bonus to those visitors to the NMA who wouldn't have known about its appearance. I spent some time talking with Robert McEneaney and his family.

"You must be pleased with what you and your team have achieved. It is a splendid memorial.

"Congratulations on achieving this goal.

"BTW, I thought I recognised Jack Hawkins. A few years ago he arranged for Ted Cachart, Geoff Brunton and a few others including myself and a friend who was a Flight Engineer on 57 Sqn to have a tour inside the BBMF Lancaster.

"I remember Ted telling me about the night he was shot down. We were standing on the flight deck looking out of the cockpit and he was telling me how the wing was on fire and buckled. He was lucky.

"I hope your grand-daughter's school turned out in force and enjoyed the display."

As there are no longer any formal association reunions, Dom Howard and Colin Cripps wish to organise a get together so that members can keep in touch. Please note however that it is not an official Association event.

"Members at the recent trip to the National Arboretum and the unveiling of the Memorial to 49 Squadron, several of them were mentioning that they miss the reunions. Colin and I chatted and with the OK from Alan we would like to put it to you that a "Hangar Doors" could be organised if we have enough members interested. We are therefore looking at early July 2019 at The Bentley Hotel, Newark Road, South Hykeham, Lincoln. The Bentley have always looked after us extremely well. We can look at other areas of the country for 2020 and would be grateful to members for their suggestions.

"Colin and I would need to know if you, the members are interested, by the end of December so we can see what kind of discount rate we may be able to get, then we will be able to advise on costs per member. We (Colin & Dom) will book your hotel rooms but you will then be responsible for all expenditure and payments to the hotel.

"The thought is 2 to 3 nights. Arrive Friday get together in the bar, Saturday have a trip somewhere, members to decide as you all well know there is plenty to see. Colin and I will look into what's happening in the area in the new year and provide to all interested members.

"Sunday if there is a service Fiskerton Church - Church Service - then onto

the Airfield for a simple Memorial Service, and back to the hotel.

“Sunday evening a meal together in the restaurant, the meal depending on numbers could be arranged into an informal or formal dinner, with enough members a menu will be looked into for the members to chose from and again cost to each member advised, Monday depart for home.

“Your thoughts and ideas are also welcome.

“Please only contact Dom Howard on lancaster.ed702@gmail.com

Dom Howard

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Wigton

Cumbria

CA7 5BU

“ Please include a telephone number.”

Ed Norman copied to me a further e-mail from Graham Lelliot:

“Graham Lelliot continues his research and detecting remains of the Essenhigh crash at Worthing...”

“I went with my friend to PB355’s crash site this evening, it being low tide and found several items from the Lancaster including armoured plating from one of the seats, parts from the incendiary bombs and plenty of 303 bullets both live (don’t worry, he gets them made safe) and exploded. I wonder if you may be able to help though, some of the ammunition have a Canadian mark on them. Is this a bit unusual do you think?”

