

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
November 2018 Issue 51**



Sunset at Fiskerton Airfield Memorial 11th November 2018

‘At the going down of the sun and in the morning

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM’

IN MEMORIAM
D. Andrew DFC
WE WILL REMEMBER HIM

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Charles B Fox Brian Mackay

EDITORIAL

Welcome to this issue of The 4T9er with a particular thank you to those who have made donations towards the running costs of the association. Remember, our association does not demand a subscription but depends entirely on the generosity, or conscience, of its members.

I regret to announce the passing of Donald Andrew who died on August 15th, one day before his 96th birthday. He flew 26 ops in the navigator's seat in the crew of P/O G P George between August 30th 1943 and January 30th 1944. Their tour included seven visits to Berlin and he was later awarded the DFC.

On the other hand we welcome new Associate Member Charles Fox, son of W/C Thomas R Fox DFC. As a pilot officer Thomas flew 37 Hampden operations between February and October 1940, a remarkable record in view of the heavy losses suffered at that time. Welcome also to Brian Mackay who is the great nephew of P/O Alexander Mackay who flew a tour as bomb aimer to our late chairman Leslie 'Uncle Will' Hay DFC.

We send our warmest best wishes to Associate Member Mike Ling who retired from the RAF on October 12th after ten years, must be a record, with the Red Arrows. The photograph shows Mike talking with Ann and the late Terry Atkinson during our Reunion visit to Scampton in 2009. Those of you who have attended a display by 'The Reds' in recent years will have been thrilled by his dynamic commentary. We wish Mike and his family all the very best as he acclimatises to his return to civvy street.



In ‘READER’S LETTERS’ of the August issue there appeared a letter from Dom Howard and Colin Cripps proposing a ‘Get Together’ in July and asking for those interested in attending to contact Dom. Unfortunately the response has not been sufficiently large to make the event viable and consequently it will not proceed.

Not far from where Barbara and I live is Cannock Chase, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the edge of which is the site of RAF Hednesford. This training camp was opened in 1938/39 as No 6 School of Technical Training. Royal Air Force and Fleet Air Arm mechanics received technical training on a variety of airframes and engines. In 1950 it reopened as No 11 School of Recruit Training where many National Servicemen received their basic training. Some will remember, probably less than fondly, their first eight weeks in the RAF. I know of at least one Member of the association who spent time there. On Saturday 29th September RAF personnel paraded through the streets of Hednesford as part of a special ceremony to mark the centenary of the RAF and to grant them a special honour. Cannock Chase Council granted the local branch of RAFA with Freedom of Entry to the District. Freedom of Entry traditionally grants military organisations the freedom to march through the streets of the district, with colours flying, drums beating and bayonets fixed.

In the September issue of The Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, East Kirkby to you and me, there appeared the following report on Tony Agar’s Mosquito HJ711:

“On the road to restoration these last few weeks Mosquito HJ711 has thrown many a snag, dilemma and problem at our team but on Wednesday night she fired back into life and MY GOODNESS she sounds sweet.

“As dusk fell the wind dropped and allowed us to bring HJ out of the hangar with a plan to wake her up from a 70 year slumber.

“She was towed to the large concrete pan and tied down. With our trustworthy fire crew on standby and under Tony’s watchful eye the team primed, checked, took a breath and pressed THAT button.

“The port engine turned, coughed and burst into life for the first time before running out of prime. Another prime and off she went smoking and then clearing through to produce the most tremendous sound reverberating around the airfield. So sweet is the sound of such a hard earned achievement. We are proud to have lent our support to such a courageous and unique project. Well done Tony!”

49SA sends its most hearty congratulations and good wishes for the future of HJ711. The renovation can be seen on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Mo3fe2hbRI>

Deviating for a moment from matters aeronautical to a mode of transport more earthbound, it is fairly widely known that I have a passion for steam engines. I work every Thursday as a volunteer at Eardington Station on the Severn Valley Railway. As a surprise gift for my 80th birthday my family bought me a



Photo: John Oates

‘Footplate Experience’ which comprises, as the name implies, a ride on a locomotive footplate acting as driver in one direction and as fireman on the return. As I have ridden the footplate on a number of occasions I am familiar with most procedures although this was the first time that I had my hands on the controls or the fireman’s shovel. I must stress that a regular driver and

fireman were present to ensure correct procedures and safety. Even though I was trusted with a small passenger engine the feeling of the power available, in the engine not me, was awe inspiring. One could only speculate at the 39,000lbs (nearly 17.5 tons) available on the drawbar of a top express locomotive. As I said, being on the footplate was not a new experience but when driving I was staggered at the work load. Watching the regular drivers they seem so relaxed but watching the road, railwayman speak for the track, looking out for adverse signals, checking crossings for people or animals, obeying speed limits, keeping to time, listening to the engine for any odd sounds, sounding warnings on the whistle when necessary not to mention remembering to stop at the scheduled stations et al it was a wonder that the drivers had time to drink their tea. On crossing to the other side of the footplate and taking up the shovel the workload was equally daunting, but, it was absolutely exhilarating. I can’t recommend the experience highly enough to anyone who enjoys the sensation of wonder at man’s engineering genius. As Donald Beale, senior driver on the Somerset and Dorset Railway in the days of mainline steam, said, “My job is to get the passengers to their destination safely and on time.” That’s the summary of it but there is far, far more in the detail.

In the past few months I have read four fascinating books on Kindle which I strongly recommend to you: The first is ‘Dowding of Fighter Command’. I doubt that there are many who are unaware of the massive contribution that Hugh Dowding made to the victory in the Battle of Britain but I daresay that, like me, the majority are not aware of the battles that Dowding fought with his

own side, particularly the Air Ministry. Many a lesser man would have given up when faced by the negativity and bias against him by those in the Ministry. Thank God he didn't. The second book is 'Nineteen Weeks' by Norman Moss which tells of another struggle, much of which against his own side, by Winston Churchill and his relationship with President Roosevelt during the period May to September 1940. Once again we learn of the challenges that these two men faced in their efforts to do what they believed was the best for their countries and The Free World. The third is a book that is essential reading for anyone with an interest in Bomber Command and its reputation. 'Bomber War: Arthur Harris and the Allied Bomber Offensive 1939 - 1945' by Robin Neillands covers the RAF campaign and the USAAF involvement as well as Harris's good relations with most of the U.S. commanders. Finally, 'On the Deck and in the Drink' is an autobiography by Brian R. Allen. Whilst I am interested in all aspects of aviation I recommend this particularly to those who served on Christmas Island. The author was a Fairey Gannet pilot who was transferred to fly Grumman Avengers from HMS Warrior during the Christmas Island tests. The Avengers were used as general cooperation aircraft and he mentions the amusement of the Canberra aircrews on seeing such a venerable machine although they apparently scrounged a ride on many occasions. Although he does not state specifically which test he was involved in one can speculate, from dates mentioned, that it was the first drop. Mention of the land crabs will no doubt bring back memories to all Grapple veterans no matter which test they were involved in.

I learned something about shoe maintenance the other day. On taking a pair of shoes, that I call my funeral shoes, to be repaired, the soles had started to detach from the uppers, I happened to mention that I do not wear them all that often. The cobbler said that one should wear shoes every other day to keep the shoes and adhesive supple. Every two days! If Barbara did that for all her shoes she would be changing them every two minutes!

In this issue you will read of the progress in the restoration of RAF Museum's Handley Page Hampden and I must express my gratitude to RAF Cosford's Conservation Centre Manager, Darren Priday for his, and his staff's hospitality during my visits. Incidentally, when the tv programme Escape to the Country visited the Shropshire area, the Conservation Centre was featured and Darren had quite a considerable speaking part. Look out for repeat showings.

The current association membership count shows:
76 Full Members, 167 Associate Members, 6 Honorary Members, 61 Friends,
& Honorary Friends, Total 310.

'Til the next time...

49 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION REMEMBERS

FISKERTON

The annual Service of Remembrance, conducted by the Revd. Penny Green, took place at St. Clements of Rome Church, Fiskerton to a packed congregation.

During the opening hymn the Standards of 5th Lincoln Scout Troop were placed on the altar together with the 49 Squadron Roll of Honour to remain there throughout the service.

The names of the Fiskerton men who gave their lives during the two World Wars were read out and wreaths were placed on the respective memorials. Our Chairman, Stuart Keay, laid our wreath on the 49 Squadron Memorial whilst those of 576 Squadron and the Royal Observer Corps were also laid. Revd. Penny delivered her usual robust sermon, giving all present much food for thought.



Photos with this feature: Dom Howard unless stated otherwise.

Two former aircrew members of 49 Squadron exchange greetings. On the left is former WWII air gunner Bill 'Titch' Cooke L d'H with our Chairman former Lincoln pilot Stuart Keay.

Following the church service we made our way to the Fiskerton Airfield Memorial where the scouts formed the Guard of Honour for the wreath laying party. In a biting westerly wind Revd. Penny again conducted a short service.





Finally we made our way to the warmth of the Village Hall where an excellent lunch was served. Our most sincere appreciation goes to the Revd. Green and all at Fiskerton Church, the members of 5th Lincoln Scout Troop, Alan Gibson, Ann Chesman and the committee of the Village Hall, the ladies who assisted in preparing and serving the wonderful lunch and drinks and by no means least the Stuffins family for their part in preparing the Airfield Memorial so beautifully. Our thanks go also to Fiskerton Parish Council.

49SA Researcher Colin Cripps shows a drawing of the airfield layout to farmer Carl Stuffins and his wife Pam.



THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM



Photos this page: Carol Bonfield

**10,000 people were expected to attend the Service of Remembrance.
49 Squadron Association was represented by Carol & Steve Bonfield.**





Alan Parr lays the Association's wreath at the 49 Squadron Memorial.

Autumn hues embrace our memorial. It was from near this spot, in the reverse direction, that the two photographs on the previous page were taken.



HAMELDOWN TOR, DARTMOOR



The memorial stone on Dartmoor commemorates the four young men from 49 Squadron who were killed when Handley Page Hampden X3054 hit the crest of the Tor in 1941.

John Lowe writes: "Remembrance was very well attend (57 had made the journey to pay their respects which was lovely. Many come year on year, all looking forward to seeing each other once

again which makes the brief ceremony very personal and rather intimate.) I laid the 49 Squadron wreath for the Association. Happy the weather was kind."

BRANSBY MEMORIAL

Stan Smith reports, “The turn out was really good, about 60 people turned up, some I have never seen before so that was good. The RAF cadets were there, and John Galloway [Former 49er ED.] was also on parade, he's looking good. All the staff turned out. Two of the girls had two small Shetland ponies which was nice. The rain held off and it wasn't too cold....”

BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL, GREEN PARK, LONDON

The Association was well represented at this year's Remembrance Sunday service at the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park.

The Hoole and McEneaney Families, relatives of Sgt Ronald Hoole, Flight Engineer and F/Sgt Terence McEneaney, Navigator on Lancaster ND474, were present to represent the Association at the Service of Remembrance.

The RAF representatives laid their wreaths at 9 o'clock before moving onto the Official proceedings at the Cenotaph. Anthony McEneaney, great nephew of F/Sgt McEneaney, laid the wreath on behalf of the Association

together with other association representatives. The short service included a lone bugler playing the Last Post with Malcolm White OBE, of the Air Pilots Association, delivering the Ode to Remembrance.

The main service of remembrance for the relative groups started at 10.30 when those present were given the opportunity to pay tribute to their relatives. Tom Hoole, great nephew of Sgt Hoole ND474, recounted the story of the crew's final mission to Stuttgart and the memorial that now stands at the crash site. He went on to recall how the crew were initially buried in the local village church yard before removal to their final resting place at Durnbach near Munich.



Photos: Robert McEneaney

Another 49er F/Sgt Dennis Blumfield and crew were remembered when a Cross of Remembrance was placed at the Memorial on behalf of his niece



The Hoole family

Chris Beare.

Tributes were also paid to a great Bomber Command favourite Harry Irons who sadly passed away on the 10th November. Those who had the opportunity to meet Harry will have fond memories of him as he always recalled stories of his time in the RAF and how he was one of the lucky ones that made it home. Harry was a major campaigner to get Bomber Command honoured with the Memorial built at Green Park. RIP.

At 11 o'clock those in attendance observed a two minute silence as the Royal Gun salute could be heard across London paying tribute to the fallen.

As usual there were other acts of remembrance by 4T9ers, for example, Honorary Friend Marilyn Nissen laid crosses on the graves of P/O Tom Tomlin and the crew of F/O Harry Randall in Aabenraa Cemetery Denmark, all of whom were killed on the return from Peenemunde. In addition she laid crosses at the crash site memorial to JA691 at Lojt Kirkeby near Aabenraa and read the lesson in the local cathedral remembrance service.

Honorary Friend Peter Hare laid the Association wreath at the Fulbeck Memorial. Fulbeck was 49 Squadron's home following their departure from Fiskerton on October 16th 1944.

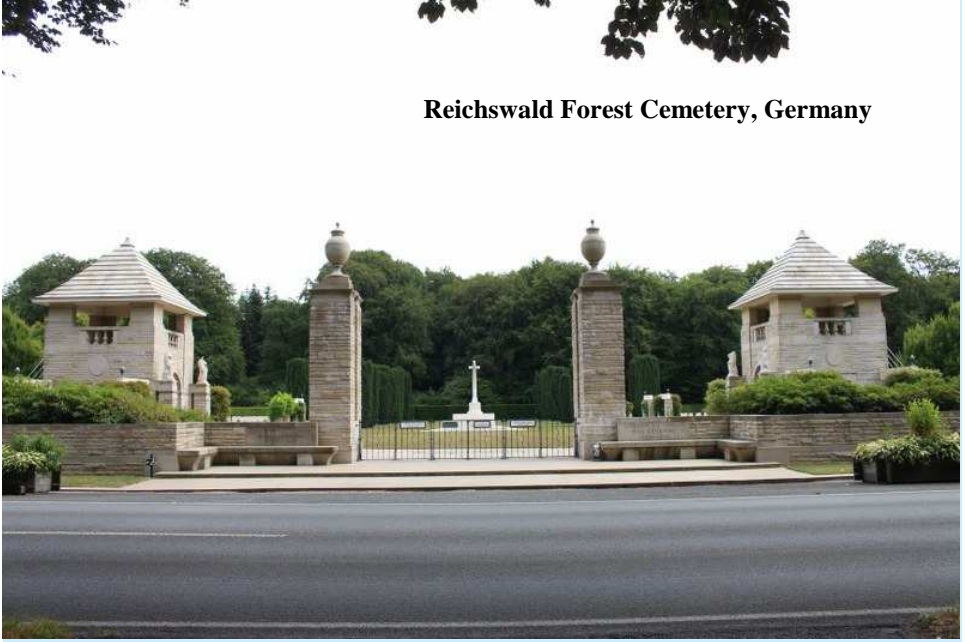
These are the acts of which I am aware but if you wish to let me know of your own then please let me know and I will be delighted to list them in the February 2019 issue.

Associate Member Jo Cockburn, great niece of F/Sgt George Silvester DFM who was killed whilst returning from Peenemunde, invariably attends a Remembrance gathering but this year was unable due to work commitments. However, she e-mailed: "Ben [11 years. ED] and I volunteered to assist the British Legion Poppy Appeal, and we raised over £760. Ben undertook this as part of his community work for his civic award, which is the equivalent of D of E."



DOM HOWARD'S 2018 PILGRIMAGE TO BELGIUM AND GERMANY

Reichswald Forest Cemetery, Germany



Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany





Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium.

Rheinberg War Cemetery, Germany



**AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN, AND IN THE MORNING
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.**

HAMPDEN PROGRESS BY ALAN PARR



OPEN DAY AT THE MICHAEL BEETHAM CONSERVATION CENTRE ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM, COSFORD

Although I have enjoyed a number of private visits to the MBCC when accompanying veterans the Open Week in November is always eagerly anticipated.

Being a 4T9er it is the progress of that rare bird the Handley Page Hampden that excites me. 49 Squadron flew Hampdens from September 1938 to April 1942 when they were re-equipped with the dreaded Avro Manchester. These were mercifully replaced by the Avro Lancaster in June 1942 with which 49' saw out the war.



I have had the pleasure of accompanying the late Eric Clarke, wop/ag, who was one of a rare breed having flown his tour on all three types, the late Jim Flint DFC GM DFM, pilot, the late Bill Pyrah, rigger, Fred Hill DFC, pilot and Reg Woolgar DFC, wop/ag. What memories the Hampden evoked for them.

As those of you who have been following the aircraft's progress through these columns will observe there has been a giant leap forward since my report on the visit of Reg Woolgar in June. On that occasion the four main fuselage sections were separated. Incidentally, the forward joint is mid way between the cockpit and the upper turret, the centre joint is through the roundel and the rear joint is just forward of the tailplane. Seeing the fuselage as one makes one realise that the Hampden is quite a long aircraft. Aft of the wing it is certainly slim, even skinny!



Photo: Darren Priday

The wooden model in the foreground is a rare example of a wind tunnel mock-up.



Remaining photos : Alan Parr

The huge single elevator is shown to good effect.



Above: The bullet holes on the starboard side, received when P1344 was shot down, will not be repaired as a reminder that two men died in the action.

Below: The navigator/bomb aimer's position.





‘The Tin’ as the lower rear turret was known, seen from within and without.



“WELCOME TO 44”

By

John Chatterton

There was a feeling of anticipation in the whole crew. We had completed our training (or so we thought), could handle the Lancaster fairly competently, and were now destined for the Front Line on a squadron. These boys were in my hands and as a humble Sergeant Pilot; I was about to start earning my pay of 13/6 per day (67 ½ pence). We might lose a bit of this keenness when we had looked into the “Jaws of Death” night after night, but that was all in the future.

We had completed our clearance chits from Swinderby the previous afternoon and were waiting at the Guardroom at 8.30 am with our kitbags and bicycles. I had been to the Orderly Room and collected some involved transport instructions and two railway warrants, the second one was for our Navigator who, as the only officer in the crew, was entitled to travel First Class. While we waited for the crew bus that was to begin our journey by taking us to Swinderby station, I studied the itinerary. It was complicated, and it seemed that the journey from Swinderby to Dunholme Lodge, just north of Lincoln, was going to occupy the whole day. Shades of RAF efficiency!

As a Lincolnshire lad I knew that by road it was only fourteen miles from Swinderby to Dunholme, and even in the most battered of RAF lorries would only take about half an hour – perhaps a bit longer as we had to go through Lincoln city. So I nipped back to the Orderly Room to see if this could be arranged. I should have known better! – posting arrangements were written in stone!

The battered lorry arrived and we loaded up for the two mile trip to the station. Alas, the postings clerk had consulted the weekend timetable and we had missed the train to Lincoln; the next was due in about an hour. Whilst we sat on our kitbags, still quite happy, in the mid October sunshine, I read out the itinerary. We would arrive at Lincoln (St Marks) at about 11.30 am and then we had to cross over to the other station (Central) and catch a train at about 4.30 pm to go to Langworth. This was still five miles from Dunholme, and we had to ring up for a crew bus from there. The Rear Gunner said, “I was wondering why they gave us each a pack of sandwiches – now I know!”

Fortunately the two Lincoln stations were not too far apart and we borrowed a porter’s barrow (after paying a small deposit) to manhandle the kit across. I think the Left Luggage Office had previous experience of transient aircrews as they accepted it without much fuss. The seven bicycles were a different matter however, and they solved this by chaining them together round a lamppost on the platform, first insisting that we remove any lamps and bicycle pumps, to

avoid them being pinched.

All this helped to pass the time, but there were still many hours to fill, so the crew fell in with my wishes to renew my acquaintance with the cathedral. We ate our sandwiches at the Brayford Pool where a local waterman let us sit on his boat as there were no obvious seats at hand. Our young legs made short work of the steep hill, and I was secretly pleased to see the impression that the cathedral made as it towered above them in all its majesty. Inside, I again felt surrounded by feelings of permanence and peace, and the overwhelming sense of faith that would somehow be our armour in the months to come.

We wandered downhill through some back streets, and in one, came across a photographer's shop. "Let's have a crew photo" someone said. "Looks a fairly tacky outfit!" said another. But film was in short supply and he was willing to do it, so in we trooped. We were in for a shock - ! The Bomb Aimer baldly stated that he would have none of it, it was unlucky, and tempting fate to be photographed before we had even started Operations! So the remaining six of us made a group and said we would collect six copies in a week or so, whenever we could get in. Since we were bomber aircrew he, not surprisingly, asked for the full payment on the spot, and we made our way back to Central Station.

I reflected that I had learnt two new things about the crew. First the rather unwelcome fact that the B/A was so deeply superstitious, but this was more than cancelled out by the heart warming memory of the Navigator refusing to use his First Class ticket, and instead, traveling with us in the same compartment.

The photographer's shop was indeed a "tacky outfit". A friend collected the prints about ten days later without checking them, and we were appalled to find

that the negatives had been printed back to front and all our flying brevets were over the right hand pocket and not the left where they should have been. At the first opportunity one of us stormed into town to demand compensation but the shop was closed and the owner had decamped....The B/A was mercifully silent!



The backwards, and poor quality, photograph.

The journey to Langworth was uneventful but we had a long wait for transport as Ops at Dunholme had been laid on and then scrubbed, necessitating double journeys. After a meal in the Mess, we found our allotted Nissen Hut in a little

wood by the roadside. The other crew sharing it had got the stove red hot, and it was very cosy. “We’ve been here a couple of days” said the Aussie pilot – “Welcome to 44!” He became my best friend and we finished our tours at the same time six months later. We still correspond today.

Superstition is a strange thing, --- our only crew member to be lost on Operations was the B/A who was borrowed one night when we were reserve crew. They never came back.

Adapted from “Ploughshare and Shining Sword” by Richard Underwood with thanks to Mike Chatterton.

Right: The crew photograph, the right way round!



OTU Crew at Tilstock on Whitley, taken by BA Pete Lees.

Rear – Nav Jack Reyland , and author

Front – WOp John Michie, RG Jock Davidson, MUP Bill Champion

Further excerpts from Paul Gaunt's book Shadows of the Past reproduced here with his kind permission.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

By

Paul Gaunt

Part 2

No. 14 OTU Cottesmore, in Rutland, was to give Tubby familiarisation with both the Hampden bomber and working as an aircrew member. The Hampden was the aircraft that he was to fly in during his first tour of operations with 49 Squadron. This is also where he was to meet many of his flying comrades, in particular Sergeant Pilot Terry Freeman, with whom he would fly many of his operations over enemy occupied Europe with 49 Squadron from Scampton.

The early training and familiarisation on becoming a w/operator & air gunner at 14 OTU was carried out in Avro Ansons, then Hampdens and Vickers Wellingtons. Most of his pilots were Polish instructors: Squadron Leader Bukdowski, Flying Officer Srymonski and Sergeant Gruszlznski, to name but a few. Tubby completed his course at Cottesmore on May 23rd, 1941. An interval posting to 'B' Flight as Staff Operator was to keep him busy until his transfer to 49 Squadron, with which he completed his first tour of active operations against the enemy.

Chapter Three No 5 Group, 49 & 83 Squadrons, RAF Scampton

Just three miles north of Lincoln's magnificent cathedral lies Scampton airfield. This was a new airfield in 1938 and home to No 3 Group but was soon taken over by 5 Group which stayed until 1944. It is perhaps the most potent symbol of the county's deep affiliation with the RAF, being as it is today not only an operational RAF air base but also home of the RAF's famous 'Red Arrows'. [Sadly RAF Scampton is now listed for closure. ED.] Back in 1938, with war on the horizon, the new Hampden bomber came into service with Scampton's two squadrons.

Within six hours of the declaration of war, at 11am on September 3rd, 1939, by Chamberlain's solemn words, nine aircraft, three from 49 and six from 83 Squadrons, took part in their first operation of the war. Accompanied by a further nine aircraft from 44 Squadron at Waddington, the operation was an offensive sweep over the entrance to the Kiel Canal, close to Wilhelmshaven, to attack the German pocket battleships there.

The secondary target was the ammunition depot at Marienof, and on no account was anyone to attack civilian establishments. This token raid pushed through, found all aircraft taking off about 6 pm, reaching the target area late

evening. The cloud dropped down to 300 feet and consequently, unable to make contact with the enemy ships, the operation was aborted. Most of the crews had not flown at night so navigation lights were switched on to keep all the aircraft together. Everyone experienced all the emotions and tension of their first operation and not being able to see, let alone attack the enemy, was very frustrating for all the crews.

The three aircraft from 49 Squadron were piloted by (L4040) Flight Lieutenant G.F. Lerwill, (L3046) Flying Officer RAB Learoyd and (L4093) Sergeant T P Pratt. (Later, on August 12th/13th, 1940, Learoyd was awarded the Victoria Cross for his 'signal act of valour' in pressing home his attack on the Dortmund - Emms Canal).

Of the 11 Hampdens, which included five from 83 Squadron and five from 49 Squadron in the attacking force, two failed to find the target, four carried out diversional attacks, only the five remaining aircraft attacking the primary target. Under intense enemy fire, Flight Lieutenant Pitcairn-Hill and crew of 83 Squadron went in first and, although very badly shot up, dropped their bombs on target. The second and third attacks were made by 83 Squadron crews, but both were shot out of the sky, crashing close to the target. The fourth to attack was Pilot Officer Mathews and crew of 49 Squadron, pushing forward and being repeatedly hit by flak: with one engine stopped, they bombed the target successfully. Mathews brought his aircraft back to Scampton on one engine.

Learoyd and crew of 49 Squadron, witnessing the previous attacks, met the full force of the German defences head on, blinded by searchlights, the pilot brought his aircraft down to 150 feet above the canal, totally ignoring the onslaught of deadly cannon shells. The aircraft was repeatedly hit and large pieces of main planes were torn away. Completely blinded by the searchlights he asked the navigator to guide him over the target, this was carried out with precision and the delayed action bomb, which was fitted with a parachute, allowed the crew to locate the point of impact. The bomb hit the aqueduct and along with other hits the target was destroyed.

Roderick Learoyd was one of six RAF VCs to survive the Second World War. Tubby was to meet him at No.14 OTU while doing a stint as Staff Wireless Operator; Learoyd was the Commanding Officer (CO), indeed, Tubby's logbook bears the VC's signature.

By early 1941, Scampton had become one of the largest bomber airfields in the country; its two squadrons operating a total of 52 Hampdens and approximately 2,500 servicemen, who lived either in or around the airfield, many in tents before more suitable accommodation was built. The situation was to become worse in the autumn, with 5 Group's Target Marking Flight joining them, and which remained at Scampton throughout the winter months.

In the first two years of war the Scampton squadrons lost over 150 Hampdens. By early spring the first Manchesters arrived, signalling the end of operations for the obsolete Hampdens.

Tubby's first flight in a Manchester was on April 2nd, 1942. He was wireless operator, the pilot being Wing Commander Stubbs who was 49 Squadron's new CO. For Tubby, this month was to see him crewing for all the 'top brass' on 49 Squadron whilst awaiting orders for pilot training which subsequently took him to Marshal's at Cambridge.

To be a bomber crew member required persistent fortitude in circumstances when the stoutest mind and heart would have every excuse to show a natural normal weakness. The average operation was in darkness and in the early hours of the morning. Berlin was the furthest target; Tubby's log shows 9 hrs 15mins, Cologne 6 hrs, with most of this time being over enemy occupied Europe. Everyone who took part in it knew that casualties were so high that the odds were against the survival of any particular airman. It never was and never could be a mode of warfare to be conducted in hot blood; the Bomber crews were engaged throughout the flight in a series of intricate tasks resembling those of a skilled craftsman. Calculations and minute adjustments of machinery had to be made all the time, with a clear head and steady hand. A long flight by night is in itself no task for the feint-hearted, when a small navigational error may result in a forced landing at best. All this had to be carried out in the face of the most formidable air defences. Searchlights and anti aircraft guns set up a visible and terrifying barrier between the bomber and the target. The far more deadly night fighters might at any moment during the flight of hundreds of miles over enemy territory, strike without warning, engaging for only two or three seconds, striking terror into the aircrews. In all encounters bomber aircraft were at a gross disadvantage with inferior speed manoeuvrability and firepower. How the young men flying the bombers coped with the inhuman strain and stress beggar's belief.

With headquarters first at Grantham and later at Morton Hall, just off the Fosse Way by Swinderby, No 5 Group of RAF Bomber Command not only contributed to the general bomber offensive but was responsible for many of the most dramatic and specialised attacks of the war. These included the successive breaching of the Dortmund-Emms canal; the destruction of the Mohne and Eder dams and of the great Kembs dam on the upper Rhine; and the sinking of the capital battleships, *Tirpitz* and the *Lützow*. The famous daylight raid on the MAN diesel engine factory at Augsburg was also made by this Group as were the big attacks on German cities and oil installations.

Many new weapons were launched on the enemy from aircraft based in southern Lincolnshire - the 12,000 lb earthquake bomb and the newer 22,000 lb

monster, for instance. It is a far cry from the huge 10 tonners to the 250 and 500 lbs bombs, which were standard at the outbreak of war. No 5 (Bomber) Group was formed during the RAF's 'Expansion Period' at Mildenhall on July 1st, 1937. On October 2nd the same year, they replaced HQ 23 Group at St Vincent's, Grantham, remaining there until November 14th, 1943, when they moved to their final home, Morton Hall, at Swinderby.

September 1939 found No 5 Group with HQ at Grantham (as mentioned above) and 10 squadrons spread over five stations: Scampton, Waddington, Hemswell, Finningley and Cottesmore. All squadrons were equipped with Hampden aircraft and six were still within the Group on VE-Day, May 8th, 1945: they were Nos. 49, 83, 44, 50, 61 and 106 Squadrons at Syerston, Coningsby, Spilsby, Skellingthorpe (50 and 61) and Metheringham respectively.

Only one of the original five stations, Waddington, was contained in the Group at the end of European hostilities. At that time there were 12 stations and 18 Squadrons. Each squadron was capable of despatching some 20 to 25 aircraft for a really big raid. Thus from this one Group in south Lincolnshire alone, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris could launch some 350 aircraft carrying close on 2,000 tons of high explosives against the enemy. Contrast those figures with the minute compiled by a group staff officer in February 1942, recording his pleasure that, 'this group alone dropped no less than 19 tons of bombs on Mannheim last Wednesday'!

On September 14th, 1939, Air Vice-Marshal A T Harris, OBE AFC assumed command of No 5 Group. The future Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief RAF Bomber Command stayed with the Group for 14 months.

For the first six months of the war, the Group was engaged on North Sea sweeps, security patrols and leaflet raids. On January 11th, 1940, two aircraft from Waddington each dropped 324,000 leaflets on Hamburg and Bremen. Later that month, three aircraft from Scampton dropped leaflets over the Reich, but the first bombs to be released by the Group in anger were directed against the island of Sylt on the night of March 19th, 1940.

Then came the Norwegian campaign. The Group was kept busy but a grimmer note now began to appear. Where 'None of our aircraft is missing' had been a happy regularity, many familiar faces began disappearing from the Lincolnshire stations. For example, on April 12th, one of the Waddington squadrons sent five aircraft to attack enemy shipping in Kristiansund harbour: only one returned and that aircraft owed its escape to the wireless operator, Acting Corporal J Wallace, who removed the gun (fixed to fire only to the rear of the aircraft) from its mounting and shot down two enemy fighters which were attacking from the beam. Later, as a Flight Lieutenant, he shared with Acting Corporal Caldecott, from the same station, the honour of being the first NCO in the Group to receive

the Distinguished Flying Medal.

Bombs fell on Germany proper in mid-May of the same year, when a crossroads near Munchen-Gladbach was among the targets attacked in the Ruhr and at Hamburg. One squadron reported that flak was 'accurate at 2,000 feet over Hamburg'. The Group was later to attack from more than 10 times that height.

The Battle for France in 1940, found the Group occupied with much the same duties they fulfilled between 'D' and 'VE' Days - support of troops in the field bombing German factories and synthetic oil plants and the laying of mines in the enemy's sea-lanes.

Whilst the Battle of Britain was being bitterly fought out, British bombers were striking at the heart of Germany. Berlin was attacked twice in August 1940. Invasion barges in enemy-held ports were a first priority target while the enemy also was attacking local airfields. In the same month, Flight Lieutenant Learoyd, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his daring lone attack on an aqueduct of the Dortmund-Ems canal. Scampton earned another VC. the next month, awarded to Sergeant Hannah, regarding whose actions 'Bomber' Harris, who was still in command of No 5 Group, said "I consider that this is one of the clearest examples of most conspicuous bravery and extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy under the most harassing conditions that I have come across".

At this time, people in the Boultham, Skellingthorpe district of Lincoln were taking an interest in a large wood clearance scheme in the area, which was to be absorbed by Skellingthorpe aerodrome. The preservation of the maximum amount of the wooded area made this one of the most charming airfields in the country (it was closed on November 15th, 1947). In order to make Waddington fit for heavy bombers to use, a large stretch of the Lincoln, Sleaford road was closed to the public. Airfields were also under construction, or were planned, at Syerston, Coningsby, Woodhall Spa and Bardney. Soon too, the powers hoped to bring the drone of heavy bombers to the people of East Kirkby, Spilsby and Strubby.

All these stations, with those at Metherringham, Balderton and Fulbeck, were under the command of the AOC. No 5 Group at the close of the heavy bomber offensive from bases on 'aircraft carrier England'

The Group began to convert from Hampdens to Manchesters in the summer of 1942 and where 250 lb and 500 lb bombs had been carried, one and two thousand pounders were being loaded into the bomb bays. Soon these were to be joined by 4,000 lb 'Cookies' and 8,000 lb 'Blockbusters'.

To be continued.

READER'S LETTERS

Our Archivist, Ed Norman, e-mailed to me a message that he had received with photographs of a stunning floral display.

"Dear Ed

"I wanted to share with you the attached montage of images. This flowerbed sits at the main roadway entrance to the ancient Royal Burgh of Cupar, some nine miles to the west of St Andrews; both towns in close proximity to the former RAF Leuchars (closed 31st March 2015, when it became "Leuchars Station" under the control of the British Army).

"You will in all likelihood know more about this than me, but according to Wikipedia, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards were transferred there from Germany in the spring and summer of 2015 along with 2 Close Support Battalion of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and 110 Provost Company. Wikipedia also notes that the airfield is maintained; "as a relief landing ground for aircraft based at RAF Lossiemouth and other aircraft... [and] the station continues to be home to several RAF units, including No. 612 (County of Aberdeen) Squadron RAuxAF, the East of Scotland Universities Air Squadron (incorporating No. 12 Air Experience Flight), and the headquarters of Scotland and Northern Ireland Region and South East Scotland Wing of the Air Training Corps.

"Unfortunately, some of the flowers in the, otherwise magnificent, Cupar display have started to 'bolt' but the shots I took still give an impression of just how wonderful was this display and how attached the Kingdom of Fife remains to RAF Leuchars.

"Turas math dhuibh,

"David E Booker"







In July 2008 we featured the funeral of two of the crew members of 49 Squadron Hampden P1206 which crashed in Holland on November 8th 1941 having taken off from Scampton. The bodies of the pilot and navigator were recovered at the time and buried at Bergen. Conveniently there was a wide space behind their headstones which allowed the single coffin bearing the remains of the two gunners to be buried adjacent to their colleagues although two headstones were raised. Whilst stationed at Scampton Gary Mennell took a keen interest in P1206 and its crew. He organised a number of special events, including the 'borrowing' of the 49 Squadron Standard from RAF Marham Chapel. Unfortunately he was unable to attend the funeral in 2008 but sent this photograph of himself by the graves at Bergen earlier this year.



Photo: Phil Waterfield

Two east coast icons. In the foreground is 60103 Flying Scotsman with Lincoln Cathedral in the background.