

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
February 2019 Issue 52



The RAF Museum's Junkers JU88 R-1 Night Fighter showing the Lichtenstein radar aerials in the nose. Many 49 Squadron bombers were lost to this superlative type of German aircraft.

IN MEMORIAM
G. J. Golledge F. Cass
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Carol Bonfield

NEW 'FRIEND'

Steve Bonfield

EDITORIAL

I have pleasure in welcoming you to the first issue of 2019 and in doing so thank all who sent Christmas and New Year greetings to Barbara, myself, and the rest of 'The Crew'. Thank you also to those who have sent donations, the association's future depends on you.

I had hoped that, for only the second time in thirteen years, we wouldn't have any names in the 'In Memoriam' box but sadly, in the final week before closing for publication I received two notifications. Taking the second first, Fred Cass was not a 4T9er however his contribution to aviation merits his inclusion here. Associate Member Michael Brunton pays tribute to him in Reader's Letters on page 23. Gordon Golledge was a Corporal Radar Technician on Valiants, serving with 49 Squadron at Luqa, Jever, Wittering and Marham. He died on January 8th.

I have particular pleasure in welcoming New Associate Member Carol Bonfield and her husband Steve Bonfield as Carol is my eldest daughter. As such she is the great niece of Sgt. Robert Slaughter who died with the rest of his crew on their return from Peenemunde in the early hours of August 18th 1943. Bob was in the rear turret of Lancaster EA-L, JA691 in which the crew were on their seventh operation. Carol and Steve have already represented 49SA at the National Memorial Arboretum Service of Remembrance 2018 [See The 4T9er Issue 51] and hopefully will continue to do so in future years.

I have no doubt that all our readers were as shocked, disgusted and saddened by the despicable act of vandalism on the Bomber Command Memorial, and others, in London recently. If, as I hope and pray, the perpetrator is apprehended it is to be hoped that our normally lenient justice system will find a chord struck and deal harshly with him. John Nichol's 'Comment', which appeared in the Daily Express, appears on page 15.

It is probable that some of our more recent members will be unaware of the

origins of the Fiskerton Airfield Memorial. Browsing through my predecessor's photo album I came across photographs of the event and thought that it would be pertinent to show them to a wider audience in tribute to those who worked so hard to establish it, few of whom are still with us. See page 11.

Flicking through the November issue of The 4T9er my attention was drawn to the photograph on page 22 where John Chatterton remembers the wartime photograph of his crew which was depicted in mirror image. I was reminded that in television programmes relating to the air war one sees images of aircraft with lettering appearing in mirror image. I have seen this in shots of British, American and German aircraft and wonder how on earth this reverse printing can get past the production department. At the end of January that old classic The Way to the Stars was shown on Freeview television, yet again, and there was a glaring example of my point when a silver B17 was shown landing with its fuselage black lettering clearly in mirror image.

At the time of writing we have seen part three of the documentary featuring the Red Arrows. The Reds having been featured in such a considerable number of documentary programmes that it is a pleasant surprise to see a fresh approach to the production resulting in a most enjoyable hour of viewing. However, the third programme in the series had to feature the tragic crash at RAF Valley in which a member of the ground crew was killed. The pilot having ejected, injuring his legs, and presumably grounded anyway pending an inquiry, left one short for the forthcoming display season and who should step into the breach but our old friend and 4T9er Mike Ling. I remember the adjutant at the time of Mike first joining The Reds telling me that Mike is an exceptional pilot and he proved it by slotting in to the Red 3 position almost as smoothly as if he had never been away.

'Till the next time.

Noted historian William Chorley has announced:

The first of my two volumes concerning RAF squadrons losses in the Great War is now available from AMAZON at £15, its title:

Royal Air Force & Australian Flying Corps Squadron Losses 1st April - 30th June 1918

Over 1,500 summaries in the format of my Bomber Command losses series
[24 summaries featuring 49 Squadron Association frequently mentioned]

Three appendices - Roll of Honour - 21 black and white photographs.

Secondly, you can follow me on 'Twitter'

[Twitter.com/bomberhistories](https://twitter.com/bomberhistories)

DINGHY DRILL WITH A DIFFERENCE

By
John Chatterton

It was a bright, crisp, December morning at Dunholme Lodge. Outside, the black Lancasters perched like oversize crows on an airfield that shone white with glistening hoar frost.

Inside the B Flight Crew Room it was a sharp contrast. There was a fug of cigarette smoke that you could cut with a knife, and the fumes from a recalcitrant coke stove did nothing to help. The inner door to the Flight Commander's office burst open and he stood for a moment surveying his group of recumbent pilots with a look of distaste. "Ops are most likely to be ON", he said, "We shall know definitely in an hour, there will be nine of you on tonight – A Flt can only manage eight!" There was a muted cheer, and he proceeded to list the aircraft letters of the "lucky" nine who went off to gather their crews and get kitted up for N.F.T.s (Night Flying Tests). He turned to the three of us remaining, and detailed the other two for Link Trainer and similar tasks saying, "And don't skive off until you've seen the Battle Order in case you are Standby Crew, although I think it's A Flt's turn tonight." I was wondering what was in store for me when he said, "Your crew is for Dinghy Drill. Our bosses at 5 Group have decided that the practice we put in at Dispersal isn't comprehensive enough, as it stops when you get to the exit, and you never actually launch and board the dinghy. So they have rigged up an old Manchester fuselage in a gravel pit just south of Skellingthorpe airfield, and will send a couple of staff from Morton Hall to act as assessors. Take your parachute harness and flying kit; we have to supply our own dinghy radio, and emergency packs, although they can be dummies. It doesn't say so in my brief, but I suggest you all take a towel and spare pair of socks." I jotted down a few notes and was about to leave when he added, "By the way there's also a special bit of kit I want you to test – I don't know why our squadron's got it, unless it's because Sgt Watts ditched in the mouth of the Humber last month." He handed me a heavy cylindrical canister about the size of a jam-jar with a conical protrusion on the top and a taped-over knob on the side, together with a spool of light insulated wire. "Dinghy radios haven't much range so this device is to launch a kite and the "string" will give a much improved aerial. Make sure you keep that tape over the trigger until you use it, and point it well away from the dinghy and the crew."

I gathered my crew and collected the gear and got the truck driver to go round via the billets to get the socks and towels. The crew were quite interested in the idea of a "proper" dinghy drill, their only query being, "Will we be back in time for lunch?"

I had in my pocket the four sides of foolscap notes that were issued for the drills and which were getting a bit tatty from frequent use. On the journey we went through our various tasks and were pleased with our cohesion. I handed the “device” to the W. Op, after all he was the signals expert, and the notes said that the captain’s task was to “supervise” the whole exercise both before and after boarding the dinghy.

We arrived at the site, which looked quite promising with hardly a ripple on the sunlit water. The Manchester fuselage, plus a bit of wing on each side, was fixed with a couple of poles like rugby goalposts to hold the nose just above the six foot of water, with the bomb doors level with the surface, and the tail secured on the bank. A short plank led from dry land to the rear entrance door. We were pleased to see a wooden hut nearby, with smoke coming from the chimney, a good sign as we would probably need some warmth later on.

Not so pleasing however, was the Flt Lt of the assessment team who obviously took very seriously his prospective task of examining every crew in No 5 Group. In a very brusque and officious manner he told us what he expected of us. He checked the kit we had brought and was unwilling to accept the kite launcher, which he viewed with grave suspicion. His book A.P.2095, said we should have a crate of two pigeons. We told him they had been discontinued three months previously and persuaded him to accept the “device” in lieu. His No 2 was a very different character, a cheerful, smiling Sergeant who was obviously the hands-on man. He was carrying a couple of batteries to energise the intercom, and then with a very long boat-hook positioned the dinghy where it would have emerged from the wing, as obviously this could not happen in every practice.

We boarded the “aircraft” and took up our flying positions with Flt Lt Keen amongst us in the fuselage. He had a clipboard with a sheaf of papers, a very sharp pencil, and a stopwatch. The intercom worked, so I initiated the drill in the appropriate manner:- “Dinghy- Dinghy, Prepare for Ditching”. I said it twice, and all the crew responded promptly, and then set about their pre arranged movements first unplugging oxygen and intercom and undoing neckties and collars. The Navigator passed me the surface windspeed and direction, whilst the W.Op transmitted S.O.S. at his W.T. set. Since I couldn’t actually do it, I said in a loud voice “Bombdoors open – bombs jettisoned, Bombdoors closed”, then, “Fuel jettisoned and cocks closed.” The forward crew went back removing hatches, while the Gunners moved forward, all to get to their ditching stations near the two spars and flap jack where they could brace themselves. On the way, designated pieces of kit were collected e.g. :- Nav collected signal pistol and cartridges, the M.U.G. the dinghy radios and “pigeons” etc.

I “put down 25 degrees of flap”, told the W.Op to leave his keyboard, and checked that all were at ditching stations with Mae Wests inflated, via the Nav

on intercom at the front spar and the B.A. who was cosily nestling between the Gunners at the rear spar.

At this stage Flt Lt Keen interrupted the procedure to give his criticisms which were not well received by my battle-hardened crew who stared pointedly at his very smart but brevet-less tunic; and there were mutterings that he needed a bit of flak up his backside. His main complaint was that they did not move fast enough. I pointed out that he got in everybody's way and would be better tucked in behind the pilot's seat or on the rest bed. There was some argument because we had only loosened collars and ties instead of discarding them, and we firmly refused to do the latter. He instructed us to start at the beginning again, which we did with some resentment, and this time after getting them all in position I was able to shout, "Brace for Impact!" and said, " CRUMP – SPLASH," after which we all started to exit via the roof hatches having operated the two dinghy releases. I sat on the roof supervising things, receiving the radio and "pigeons" etc. from the M.U.G. and passing them to the R.G. in the dinghy. The W.Op had been the first to board the dinghy followed by Nav, - Rear Gunner, - Bomb Aimer, - Flt.Engineer, - Mid UpperGunner, and myself. I called the roll, told the Nav to cut the rope and we paddled away followed by a stream of adverse comments from Flt Lt Keen who was standing with his head and shoulders out of the top hatch.

"If we paddle far enough we can get out of earshot," said the Nav, but unfortunately this was restricted by the geography of the quarry. So I suggested that we each had a turn at winding the handle of the dinghy radio and topping up with the bellows, and then we could launch the kite as a finale. The main drawback was the hundred feet of aerial, which by rights ought to have been inside the container ready to follow the projectile on it's way out. Instead it was on a separate spool so the W.Op spread it out on people's knees, as no other flat surface was available. He secured one end to the dinghy radio and the other to the nose of the launcher, shouted, "All Clear!" and pressed the trigger. It operated perfectly. In a shower of sparks (not too hot) the thing soared up into the blue sky trailing the aerial with it. Unfortunately it never deployed the kite, as halfway to its zenith it was abruptly snatched back, the M.U.G. was sitting on the "string"!! The rocket, for that is what it was, performed a loop and curved downhill, levelling out alarmingly to head straight for the dinghy, whose occupants, with one accord, bent down smartly. The smiling Sergeant, who was monitoring us from the bank later said that it looked like a very devout prayer meeting. But the rocket was not finished yet – after its pass over the dinghy it carried on low flying, struck and pierced the Manchester fuselage with a WHUMP, and unfolded the kite inside.

In the dinghy we warily lifted our heads and saw that the smiling Sergeant on

the bank had become a laughing Sergeant, in fact he was doubled up with mirth. The reason became apparent when we heard a strangled shout from a red faced Flt Lt Keen who was struggling in four feet of water having baled out hastily when the missile hit the fuselage. The Sergeant, trying to keep a straight face, hauled him ashore with the long boathook but the clipboard and papers were floating away and had to be rescued by dinghy, well, some of them were, as we paddled back. As we repositioned the dinghy for the next crew the Rear Gunner said "We'll have to take back what we said about him never having been shot at!"

The Sergeant helped us back on to dry land and we re-entered the fuselage to inspect the damage and collect the fragments of the kite. This, together with the fired launcher and "string" we put in the W.Op's satchel, and loaded it all onto the truck with the rest of the kit. We didn't need our dry socks, (and the offer of my pair to Flt Lt Keen was rejected).

YES, we did get back in time for lunch, - but NO, the Flight Commander was not very pleased with our report.

Post Script.

Another squadron crew went on "Dinghy Drill" a few weeks later and reported that Flt Lt Keen had gone back to his desk and the Sergeant had been promoted to F/Sgt and put in charge of things, which all went well. The riggers had put a neat patch on the Manchester side and painted over what the F/Sgt referred to as "Damage by Light Flak!"

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

FROM TOM'S FILES

At the end of March it will be thirteen years since I succeeded Tom Gatfield as the 49 SA secretary at which time I inherited some of his files including some draft copies of a few of his news letters. After so many years I concluded that many of his interesting articles would stand revisiting as many of our newer readers will not have seen them before and those who have will probably have forgotten them anyway! The following appeared in March 1999 but unfortunately the author is not credited. All we know is that he was a PoW in Stalag IVB. As some of the spellings and expressions are of American origin, although others are British, the nationality of the author is not certain. The fact that 33 nationalities passed through camp doesn't help either.

As time went on the Red Cross sent a variety of books, and a library was set up. We were able to enjoy a number of theatre productions put on by some of our companions who were very talented fellows. In our own barracks time was occupied with reading, playing cards, writing letters, or just in conversation. During the day time was spent shaving and keeping ourselves clean as this was

important in this environment. Periodically, we were taken out for delousing and a shower. We also had a doctor's inspection occasionally. The Germans were very efficient.

There were times when volunteers were called upon to go out of the camp to gather firewood or to help bring coal into camp. I usually volunteered as it was a chance to get away for a while. On the wood detail we would walk to a pine forest and gather dry sticks from the ground to help keep our cooking fires going. Likewise, when we went to get coal there would be a dozen men pulling a big old fashioned wagon to the nearest town where it was loaded and dragged back to camp. This job was a bit harder but still worth volunteering for in order to get out and see the countryside.

We were warned we would be shot if we went outside our barracks after dark. The camp was surrounded by two high barbed wire fences twenty feet apart with guards posted in towers at all four corners. Search lights were trained along the fence at night. In most camps there was always a number of prisoners actively planning an escape. In some cases tunnelling under ground was carried on. We did not hear until after the war that some airmen in a Luft camp were successful in escaping by tunnelling under the wire fence but were later captured. Some of them were shot. Living in a prison camp was a time of uncertainty; not knowing what the next day would bring. We often worried that when our own planes were bombing cities nearby that they might accidentally drop bombs on us. We had our fears in this area. I remember one day when we were out walking, a German pilot flew so low one wing of his plane struck and killed a prisoner walking near the fence of our camp. We heard later the pilot was severely reprimanded. On another occasion, near the end of the war, a U.S. pilot flew low mistakenly firing at one of the barracks. A bullet ricocheted around the building. A fellow was standing shaving at the time when the bullet creased the back of his neck and finally landed in a corner. That's what you call a close shave! In the centre of camp there was a compound which held the Russian prisoners. They did not appear to be regular Russian soldiers as they wore quilted jackets and hats, and may have come from the Siberian region. One of them had lost his legs below the knees and had two pieces of rubber tire [sic.] strapped to the stumps to enable him to shuffle along. They received basic rations only and were hungry all the time. When supplies of bread and vegetables were brought in by wagon they were often pulled by a horse and a cow. You often saw a few Russian prisoners trailing behind hoping to steal a potato or turnip or some bread. Many times we would see a guard beating them over the head to drive them away. We would also see them going through our garbage bins in hopes of finding a jam tin they could finish cleaning out just in case some jam might have been left in it. A number of Russian prisoners were

sent out each day on work parties. This gave them the opportunity to obtain a few items they could sell in camp. Others were skilled craftsmen who made a number of items for bartering. With cigarettes, I bartered for a small metal box made from an Italian mess tin. It was decorated on top with the engraving of the flags of the United States, Britain and Russia and another design was engraved around the top and sides. The inside was lined with green felt. I also bartered with another Russian prisoner so I could obtain a picture made on hardboard. It was inlaid with wheat straw to form a picture of a Lancaster bomber over a target. The border was inlaid with wheat straw. On the one side there was an opening where a photo could be inserted.

From time to time we would see some S.S. Troops show up in the camp for a couple of days. We were never sure why they came but we did not feel comfortable having them around and were happy to see them go.

Usually we had one or two German guards assigned to our compound whose job it was to inspect our barracks and count us each morning. Generally, they were older soldiers not fit for active duty. We did have one younger man guarding us. A young man who no doubt served in the war, but was possibly injured preventing him from partaking in active service. He was tall, blonde and handsome, so we called him Blondie. He was well liked by all the airmen. He left for a while and was replaced by another guard we knew as Schmidt.

Conditions at the camp started to deteriorate. There was no one on hand to pump out the toilets and do other jobs that were done before. Food continued to be scarce with no supply source available. A few days later we were informed to get ready to move out. We were to go to a city called Riesa where the Russians would formally turn us over to the Allies. Up to this time I had had regular contact with our crew, even though I wasn't billeted with them, which was a disappointment. However, after we left the camp I seemed to follow a different path and did not see them again until I returned to England.

For the next twelve days or so I kept a daily diary.

Sunday, May 6. 1945: We left Stalag 4B at 2.30pm walking to Riesa, a distance of about 20 miles, arriving at 7pm tired and foot sore. Each man carried his own kit bag. We were located in an empty three storey building which appeared fairly modern but there was no electricity available. It was a case of each man finding his own space, scrambling around to find a mattress and room to lay down. We slept on the floor. To make tea or cook porridge we would light a small fire at the edge of the side walk.

Monday May 7 1945: Up at 8am making breakfast or coffee and porridge. 'Red Aircraft' (Russian) over city all morning. Walked around, picked a few supplies.

With thanks to the author, whoever you are!

THE INSTALLATION AND DEDICATION OF THE FISKERTON AIRFIELD MEMORIAL



**This photograph was taken in 1997 when the two 'Poem Stones' were dedicated.
The central memorial was dedicated on Sunday 21st 1995.**



Left; The site.

Centre: The first sod is cut by farmer Geoff Stuffins who generously donated the land.

Bottom: Digging commences with Geoff again wielding the spade.





Left: Ancaster stone direct from the quarry.

Right: The stone is unveiled.

Below: The stone is installed- surrounds made- the plaque fitted.





The day in 1997 when the 'Poem Stones' were unveiled.

**Former Fiskerton WAAFs Dot Smith, nee Everett, and Vi Veness,
nee Winters, perform the ceremony.**





The following piece was published in the Daily Express, January 22nd. I am grateful to John for giving his permission for us to reproduce it here.

COMMENT

By

John Nichol

Former RAF navigator and now an author and broadcaster.

When the Daily Express told me of the desecration of the Bomber Command memorial it was a real shock.

When I saw the pictures of the paint damage I felt physically upset that some mindless thugs would have thought this was acceptable.

Regardless of your views of the Command campaign, that memorial honours the sacrifice of young men, average age just 22, who died in their tens of thousands serving this country.

Of the 125,000 men in Bomber Command, 55,573 were killed. That's nearly a 50:50 chance of being killed, one of the greatest percentage losses of any military unit.

Critics forget that they took the war to the heart the of the enemy day after day, night after night.

Yet in the aftermath of war Bomber Command was poorly treated because of the lack of understanding of what they had done, controversy surrounding some of the raids and ignorance of why they needed to take the fight to the enemy.

Their story has been close to my heart since I was shot down over Iraq 28 years ago in the First Gulf War. Once I got home I became a member of the RAF Prisoners of War Association and the Bomber Command Association and helped launch the campaign for the memorial with Bee Gee Robin Gibb in 2008 at the RAF Museum.

I was with the veterans in their battle against officialdom and those who said they did not deserve a memorial that recognised the sacrifices of their friends.

I was there on that beautiful sunny day when the memorial was unveiled by the Queen.

The pride of the veterans – mixed with sadness – was palpable.

These men saw their friends die and would return to a Nissen hut to find one half empty because a crew had disappeared in a matter of seconds.

I often stay at the RAF club across the road and always give the memorial a silent acknowledgement because this is an important part of our military heritage.

These veterans are now in their 90's. Seeing the memorial defaced will hurt them to the core.

But it will be cleaned up. It will be polished back to brilliance. And if the thugs come back, it will be cleaned up again.

The dignity of the men of Bomber Command will always triumph over mindless hooliganism.

John Nichol's latest book is Spitfire: A Very British Love Story.

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

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

By

Paul Gaunt

Part 3

Chapter Four 49 Squadron, 'A' Flight — Scampton — No 5 Group

Tubby arrived at 49 Squadron on August 9th, 1941, being fully trained as a wireless op/air gunner. The next seven months would see Tubby participating in the early theatres of the bombing campaign over occupied Europe as part of aircrew, flying Hampden bombers.



'Tubby' Gaunt, left, with two unidentified airmen both of whom wear the wireless operator's insignia.

Sorties included 'Gardening' operations (the laying of sea mines), the bombing of chemical installations along the Rhur Valley (known as 'Happy Valley') in Germany, attacking the German capital battleships in Brest Harbour (France), the Scharnhorst and Prinz Eugen and the intruder raids into designated areas, but selecting the targets at random, usually search light concentrations. Tubby spent three days settling in and experienced two flights to familiarize himself with the aircraft, the pilot being Pilot Officer McGuffie, who was sadly to be killed in action a year later.

First operation: Bombing Brunswick, August 14th, 1941

HAMPDEN AE132

P/O WALKER: pilot

P/O WOOD: navigator

Sgt CHEETHAM: wireless operator

Sgt GAUNT: air gunner

Up 2040 hr, down 2350 hrs (3 hrs 10 mins)

Details of Sortie: - Tubby's log book says, 'Returned early due to an unserviceable (U/S) engine.'

It was not unusual to send new aircrew with the more experienced ones on their first operation. The operation proved disappointing for the crew. The aircraft suffered starboard engine failure, preventing it reaching the target.

The summary of events for the raid on Brunswick gives an idea of how difficult it was to find and bomb a target using dead reckoning and visual means to reach and successfully bomb a given target during this early part of raids over occupied Europe.

Summary of Events: -Weather - mainly cloudy, scattered showers and bright intervals. Visibility 8-12 miles.

24 aircraft to standby to bomb Brunswick GY4775, alternative S and M Germany, usual photo reconnaissance. All aircraft took off at short intervals and though only 11 aircraft were able to locate and bomb the primary objective owing to adverse cloud and haze, all remaining aircraft attacked alternative targets, Saldstedt, Hanover, Brunswick Town, Minden Lehart railway junction. Bremen, Arnham aerodrome and searchlight concentrations, in nine cases bursts were observed. Three aircraft overshot on landing and crashed without injury to crew.

One aircraft AE 132 piloted by P/O Walker suffered a starboard engine failure, preventing it reaching the target.

The Bomber Command War Diaries (BCWD): -Brunswick - 81 Hampdens to railway targets, one aircraft lost.

Second Operation: bombing Bremen, August 17th/18th, 1941

HAMPDEN AE132

P/O WALKER: pilot

Sgt WOOD: navigator

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt CHEETHAM: air gunner

Up 2245 hrs, down 0535 hrs (6 hrs 50 mins)

(The operation saw P/O Wood again as navigator, second pilot, to gain operational experience.)

Details of Sortie: - Weather out was good, with considerable searchlight activity down to Bremen which was bombed at 0135. Had to use drastic avoiding action along the river Weser, until over the sea (although no reference is made why avoiding action taken, it would have almost certainly been enemy fighters). Tubby's logbook states that their aircraft was badly shot up.

Summary of Events: -Weather - early mist, clearing - fine, with occasional low cloud.

13 aircraft to stand by to bomb Bremen GH484, alternatively the town. S and M last resort. 2 aircraft on special gardening operations, Pumpkin and Kraut. 2 gardeners took off and both were successful in laying the mines as indicated, without incident. One aircraft landed at Coningsby on its return.

The 10 bombers took off at short intervals and only 4 claimed definite successes, owing to unfavourable weather and CU Cloud. Searchlight concentrations N.W of Bremen, Focke-Wulf works, S.W of town, Kiel, S.W Cuxhaven and Northolz aerodrome were the alternatives attacked by the remaining aircraft, 1 returning with its load. Few results were seen and all aircraft experienced accurate and intense flak on the target areas. Of the 59 aircraft despatched by Bomber Command, 2 Hampdens failed to return. All 49 Squadron came home safely.

Results: - 39 Hampdens and 20 Whitleys, with the Focke-Wulf factory and the railway goods station as aiming points. Hits were claimed on the Focke-Wulf factory, with two Hampdens lost.

Target Dusseldorf: Collision Tragedy

Hampdens began returning to Scampton shortly after 0200 hrs on Monday, August 25th.

Because of recent intruder activity by German night-fighters around Hampden bases, our aircraft had elected not to use navigation lights whilst in the airfield circuit. It is not certain if this was the case on this particular morning, but whilst 49 and 83 Squadrons' aircraft (83 being the sister squadron to 49 at Scampton), were awaiting permission to land, H-Harry from 49 Squadron and F-Freddy of 83, hit each other over the village of Hackthorn to the north-east of Scampton airfield. The wreckage from both aircraft fell to the ground around Whale Jaw Farm. Tragically there were no survivors. The accident was timed at 0250 hrs. Sergeant Owen McMahon, pilot of the 49 Squadron aircraft, is buried in Scampton churchyard, whilst his three fellow crew members were each returned to their respective hometowns for burial.

Scampton's night of anguish was sadly not yet over, for at 0400 hrs, as AE223

of 83 Squadron returned to dispersal from operations, the aircraft suddenly exploded killing all the crew and four ground crew members. It is thought that a wing bomb, which failed to release over the target, became dislodged when the aircraft landed and taxied back to its dispersal point. All 49's remaining aircraft returned safely.

Crashed AD967 (EA-H)

Sgt O B McMAHON: pilot (killed)

Sgt E WELBOURNE: wireless operator & air gunner (killed)

Sgt I D MaCKINNON: air gunner (killed)

Sgt G F UPTON: 2nd pilot (killed)

Third Operation: Intruding, Cologne, August 26th/27th, 1941

(Destroying Searchlights and Dropping Incendiaries)

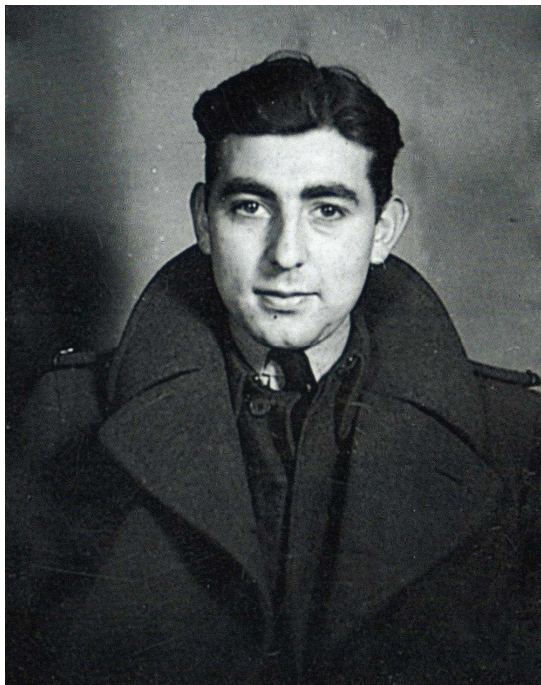
HAMPDEN AD960

P/O. WALKER: pilot

Sgt WOOD: navigator

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt CHEETHAM: air gunner



P/O Walker

Up 2215 hrs, down 0610 hrs (7 hrs 55 min)

Details of Sortie: - No searchlights or flak en route south of Liege. Pinpointed position on Rhine through gaps in cloud, made several dive bombing attacks on searchlights and planted incendiaries in middle. Nice fire started with one stick. Tubby's log records 'badly shot up'.

Summary of Events: - Continuous rain and risk of low cloud and thunder. 11 aircraft to stand by, seven to bomb point B in area Cologne, alternatively the town. Four aircraft to act as intruders to attack searchlights belt on 10 mile sector, west of main target.

Four further aircraft to lay mines in Nectarine. 14 aircraft took off

at intervals, one returning shortly owing to engine trouble and 11 were successful (including the two gardeners). One aircraft suffered excessive oil temperature and low pressure and so before returning, bombed searchlights on enemy coast. Two bombers observed bursts and one took successful photographs. One attacked the estimated target on the intruder side - all were successful (from low altitudes) in causing searchlights to be extinguished. One Wellington and one Whitley failed to return from the operation; all 49 squadron came home safely.

Results:- 99 aircraft consisting of 47 Wellington, 29 Hampdens, 22 Whitleys, one Manchester - to the city centre and to railway yards. Six further Hampdens made searchlight-suppression flights 10 miles west of Cologne, without loss. Good bombing was claimed in clear visibility. Cologne records indicate that most of the bombing was probably east of the city, with only about 15% of the bombs dropped being inside the city limits. 8 people were killed in Cologne. Two aircraft lost.

August 28th/29th, 1941

Eight aircraft sent from 49 Squadron on a searchlight suppression raid. Of these, two aircraft failed to return – Pilot Officer Bernard Fournier (AD971) and crew became victims of a nightfighter. At 330 hrs their aircraft fell in flames into the Waddenzee just south of the Isle of Ameland; there were no survivors. The 21 year old pilot and his crew are buried in Nes Cemetery, Ameland, Holland. It is believed that Pilot Officer Thomas Pratt (AE126) and crew also fell to the cannons of a night-fighter, they also came down in the Waddenzee and again, sadly, there were no survivors. The body of Sergeant Charles Hodgkinson came ashore near Richel on September 8th. The following day the body of 25 year old Pilot Officer Pratt was found, Sergeant Arthur Willis also being washed ashore on September 10th, and two days later the body of Pilot Officer Harry Tongue was found near Vliehors.

FTR [Failed to return] AD971

P/O B M FOURNIER: pilot (killed)

Sgt D H BARRETT: navigator (killed)

F/S E R PALMER: wireless operator & air gunner (killed)

Sgt D WATSON: as above (killed)

FTR AE126

P/O T P PRATT: pilot (killed)

P/O H C TONGE: navigator (killed)

Sgt A C WILLIS: wireless operator & air gunner (killed)

Sgt HODGKINSON: as above (killed)

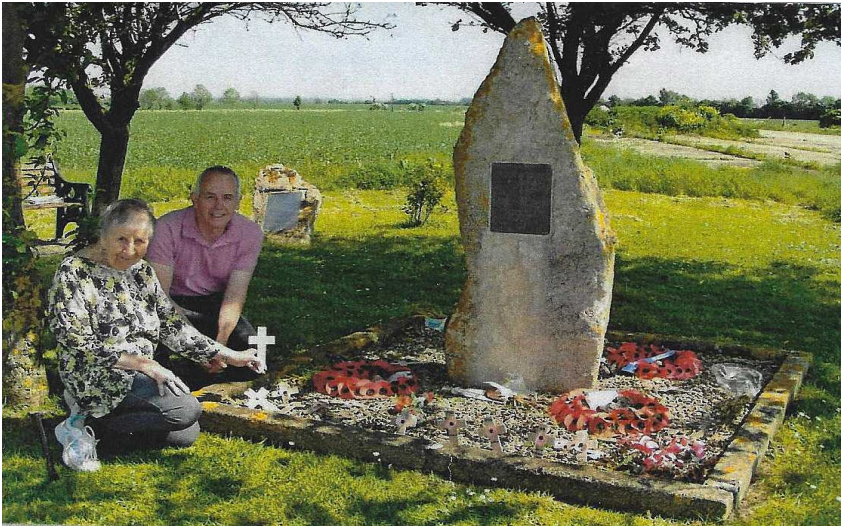
To be continued.

READER'S LETTERS

In kindly sending a donation, Associate Member Shirley Moxon wrote the following:

“Thank you very much for your, as usual, very interesting November 2018 The 4T9er magazine and lovely photos inside it.

“It was an ambition of mine to visit Fiskerton Airfield Memorial, where my husband’s Uncle George Witty, [Flight Engineer KIA 21/22 June 1944. ED.] flew from. With the help of you all, and particularly wonderful John Ward who came on his motor bike to meet us at the memorial, I achieved it with the Daughter and Son-in-Law and took photos and put a cross there. John also did me a compiled photo of George.



Shirley with the late John Ward

“Since then on a coach trip to Skegness, there was a visit to Coningsby Museum, which I really enjoyed but was unable then to get to the Spire Memorial but managed it recently. How impressive it was, but so sad to see so many lost from Lincolnshire on so many walls.

“We were met by helpful Stephen Baldwin, who explained everything to us and my Son-in Law has sent me details and photos there by Email since our visit.

“I was able to find George Witty’s name and put a poppy there. It is well worth a visit, with a nice restaurant, gift area and toilets. A marvellous credit to all who raised the funds to build it....”

Over the past few years regular readers will have learned of the huge efforts of Robert and Annette McEaney and Louise Jennings-Hoole to trace relatives of the crew of ND474. Louise e-mailed me with the latest news and at the same time generously made a donation to Association funds:

“Robert and I are presently making the preparations for another family group visit to Bolstern and to the Durnbach Cemetery in Germany. This March will see the 75th anniversary of the loss of Lancaster ND474 and her crew. On this trip our family group will be approximately 13-15 relatives.

“The Mayor of Bolstern – Mr Anton Stork has always been extremely supportive and welcoming to our group, we could not have achieved the memorial in Bolstern or developed the special friendships we have now, without him. We are grateful to Anton and of course, we will always be grateful for the help we have been given by the 49 Squadron Association.

“We wanted to share some additional information with you and the 4T9ers as it maybe be of interest to others within the association. For our next visit Anton Stork has succeeded in obtaining a special VIP guest speaker, Mr. Wolfgang Schneiderhan. Mr. Schneiderhan is a long standing Inspector General of the armed forces and current president of the Peoples League of the German War Graves Carers, he has successfully united former war enemies and has built friendships and understanding between those people. The Peoples League is a non-profit making organisation, whose volunteers work in military cemeteries throughout Europe. We have been advised by Anton that Mr. Schneiderhan would also like to lay a wreath to the crew of ND474, this is something that will be welcomed by the family group.

“My good friend and researcher Mandy Stieber has continued to support our search for a photograph of John Joseph Knowles. Recently my father, Mandy and I visited the Trenchard museum at RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire. John Knowles was an apprentice (34th Entry) at No.1 School of Technical Training - RAF Halton and passed out from there in July 1939. We found a group photograph which John had signed at the bottom and we believe we located which one of the apprentices in the photograph was actually John J Knowles.

“Mandy kindly sent this photo to a gentleman called Patrick Herne, who had trained with John in Canada and had travelled with him on a weekend trip to Montana. Mr Herne certainly believed the photo to be John, but couldn't be 100% sure as the photo was of a young John. We presented Mr. Herne with two photographs of apprentices from the same group photo, and Mr. Herne selected the one he believed to be John. It was also the same photo that we thought was John too. We are not sure if we should accept the photo as being that of John Knowles, or to seek a second confirmation.

“In the meantime Mandy has written to Air Chief Marshal - Stephan Hillier, in

the hope that someone can check



Is this John Knowles?

the apprentices records for a confirmation on this photograph (copy attached) We understand that the apprentices personal records are still held but due to personal data restrictions, they are not allow to release them. If someone can check John Knowles record, it may show that the photo we now hold is definitely J.J. Knowles.

“During this next visit to Germany we would be delighted to add any poppy crosses or wreaths to the graves of any 49 Squadron personnel and we will also be laying a wreath on behalf of the association

“Finally I wonder if we might be able to add a note of Remembrance to the 4T9ers website for March 15th/16th . I’m sending a donation (Bank transfer) and would be grateful if the crew of ND474 could be remembered.”

Michael Brunton is an Associate Member through his late father flight engineer Geoff Brunton. Michael e-mailed to advise the death of one of WWII’s unsung heroes:

“I wondered if this may be of interest for the next 4T9er publication.

“On Friday I attended the funeral of a dear friend Frederick (Fred) Cass whose name will mean nothing to you and I suggest almost all of the 4T9er readers. However Fred was a legend in his lifetime in that he designed the wiring loom for the Lancaster that revolutionised the manufacturing process and hence dramatically enhanced the production/delivery capability of the Lancaster for the war effort.

“He went on to design the wiring looms for the Vulcan and the other “V” Bombers too. It didn’t stop there he designed heat exchange systems for piston and turbo prop engines and was involved in designing several actuators for landing gear systems.

“His work by nature brought him into the company of aircraft designers, manufacturers (A.V. Roe of course) test pilots and a wide range of serving officers including naval aviators. His involvement in aircraft engineering was widely respected, he retired to Exmoor in Somerset in the late eighties where his exploits were generally not known or understood. He spent the last 30 years pursuing his passions of fly fishing and painting.”