

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
May 2019 Issue 53**



Photo: Phil Waterfield

**On February 19th the RAF marked the final flight, in service, of the Tornado.
Here the three are seen flying over the National Memorial Arboretum,
and more to the point for 4T9ers, right over our memorial.**

IN MEMORIAM
R. Howard
WE WILL REMEMBER HER

NEW 'FRIEND'

Jane Sprague

EDITORIAL

Welcome to this 53rd edition of the 4T9er. I thank all those who have donated to our funds. As we do not operate a fixed subscription, without your financial contributions we could not continue. I also thank our faithful 'Crew'. Their efforts generally go unheralded but in Reader's Letters on page six there is a classic example of the sort of work that they do.

I regret to announce the passing of Rosemary Howard, the niece of P/O Cyril Anderson who was shot down on 23 September 1943 whilst piloting Lancaster ED702 on his 21st operation. Rosemary was also the mother of Associate Member Dom Howard, accompanying her son to many 49SA events.

Welcome to new 'Friend' Jane Sprague who "...has a long personal interest in RAF Heritage, especially Bomber Command Stations." She is ex RAF and is a Customer Liason Officer at RAF Wyton. Jane tells me that she makes regular visits to East Kirkby and Fiskerton.

Robert McEneaney sent in a report on ND474's amazing Relative's Group. I urge you to read the powerful speech that was made by General Wolfgang Schneiderhan, former Chief of Staff of the German Armed Forces and now President of the German War Graves Commission. It appears on page 16.

I am ashamed to admit that I wasn't aware of the deeds of Captain Fredric John Walker CB, DSO & three Bars until I read the book 'Submarine Destroyer Captain'. Indirectly Walker gave his life in WWII dying at the age of 48 from cerebral thrombosis attributed to overwork and exhaustion.

Remembering my own basic training when we had to do two consecutive nights on guard due to being less than satisfactorily turned out on the first, my words not the Guard Commander's, with three training days attached I was amused by a quote from a Japanese Training Officer prior to Okinawa. Working trainees extremely long and hard he was asked by the Commanding Officer why he worked them through the night without sleep in between two hard days of work he replied, "They already know how to sleep sir."

'Til the next time.

In the February issue of The 4T9er we published a photographic feature on the establishment of the Fiskerton Memorial. That same month our Archivist Ed Norman emailed to say that he had discovered a piece in the files of our late Chairman, Leslie 'Uncle Will' Hay', written by former Fiskerton Flight Engineer Tom Page DFM. Tom won first prize for this essay in The University of the Third Age 1995 competition for Non-Fiction Creative Writing. I emailed Tom requesting his permission to reproduce it here, without much hope of a reply as the last time that I heard from him he was quite poorly. If you read this Tom I hope that you will approve.

BOMBERS ON THE FARM

By

Tom Page DFM

This is a story of a farmer named Geoff Stuffins whose land at Fiskerton, in the shadow of Lincoln Cathedral, was used to make a World War II bomber airfield. During the time it was in use he watched, with other boys, all the activity that took place there. Fifty years later he gave a plot of land for a memorial to be set upon the old airfield to remind future generations of the history of the place.

This story is written by an aircrew member who flew from the station in 1943 to record Geoff's association with the airfield and to acknowledge, not only his generous gift of the land, but his labour, and the labour of his two sons, in erecting a memorial..

Geoff and the boys sat beside the pond, it was their favourite place when school was over for the day. The calm surface of the water reflected the fading light and dissolving clouds. Occasionally a ripple would extend from the opposite bank where a moorhen scuffled between the reeds. They wondered if it would happen again tonight?

Time passed, and then, from across



**Photo: 49 SA Website
Tom Page**

the fields came the sound like a cough, it came again, and then the steady beat of a smooth running engine. The sound increased as more engines on the airfield started up until the air was filled with a loud continuous drone. Yes! it was on again and men would fly tonight to bomb targets in Germany, some may not return.

The pond was beside the airfield not far from the end of the main runway. They had often sat there as the aircraft thundered past on take-off just clear of the ground, heavily laden and not yet at a safe flying speed. It did not occur to them that it was an unsafe place to be. They waved to the aircrew they saw in the cockpits and the gun turrets. Usually the rear gunners waved back but the others did not see them at this critical time as they concentrated on getting the aircraft safely airborne and were thinking of what lay ahead in the darkness.

Twenty aircraft they counted within fifteen minutes as they climbed away to join the large concentration of many others above from surrounding airfields. For a while the air reverberated as they all passed over flying towards the east coast of England; soon the sound faded away. It would be quiet now for five, eight, even ten hours. Where were they going? Would they all come back?

Throughout the day there had been great activity taking place on the airfield. School work was difficult to attend to as the boys thought of what was going on. Teacher would stop talking as the Lancasters flew low overhead on training and test flights; the noise drowning out her voice. They had often watched from the perimeter fence the aircraft being refueled and the bombs being fused at the bomb dump and then trailed around the perimeter track to be hauled into the Lancaster's large bomb bays.

The years had passed since those fateful days. Crops grew where the airfield had been. Portions of the runways that had not been cleared away showed through in places, they still had uses as hard standing for modern farm implements where the fields, divided by shrubs and trees had, re-established themselves. The area where the flight offices and the hanger had been was now a large copse of planted trees.

Geoff was now a man of three score years. He surveyed the land and the growing crops. It was his land as it had been his father's before him. Today he had two sons with their own families. He looked back to his boyhood days and all that had taken place there and felt so much a part of it all. In the years since he had seen men wandering around his fields, he knew who they were and had sympathy for them. They would be deep in thought of things they had known, things they had done in this place. They were the men he had waved to, they were the ones who came back, some had been shot down and had been prisoners of war. They were old now, fifty years had passed, age and infirmity had slowed their step, some would limp from old wounds as they walked

across the land they had come to know so well. in those days long ago.

Who would remember this place when they were gone? It was time for it to be marked, a time for a memorial to all those who had laboured so hard and so long and to those whose remains lay scattered across Europe and in the deep of the North Sea. He knew the right spot for a memorial where it would be seen. He would reserve a small plot of land for it beside the road that crossed the old airfield.

The road between the villages had been closed when the war came. It went across the centre of the airfield where the three runways intersected: it was a fitting place for a memorial. He offered the suggestion to the Association of the wartime squadron who had served there and it was eagerly accepted.

The village of Fiskerton has changed over the years. The once typical hamlet of timeless, ancient Church, Inn and Farmstead, side by side with the rural cottages had grown into a dormitory area for the nearby City of Lincoln. There are many new houses. Gone are the cold and uncomfortable, oval, tin Nissen huts set on concrete floors that served as barracks for the airmen. They had been heated by a dirty, 'donkey' coke stove that stood in the middle of the floor of each hut, more trouble than it was worth. The coke fumes choked the room sealed tight by blackout material over the windows.

Some of the larger service messes and administrative buildings in the village area had been taken over by commercial concerns and were still in use. Some had been used as, a library, a school and some still stood empty. One building between the airfield and the domestic site had been the Intelligence/Operational War Room. This was the place where tired air-crews were debriefed in the early hours of the morning after their night operation. Here they would describe all that had happened, the infernos of the burning German cities below, the sighting of aircraft shot down, their experiences of enemy fighter attacks and the effects of the anti-aircraft fire. These things were fresh in their minds as they longed for food and rest and knew that they could be flying again that same night. This place of such emotion is now a humble stable for a donkey and other beasts. Is there a hidden significance here as we approach the second millennium of the birth of Christ?

A few years ago, a wall plaque, and a memorial book showing the names of the personnel who had paid the ultimate price, had been placed in the village Church and dedicated to the Glory of God. In this peaceful field of England now stands a monument of local stone and a tree of sweet chestnut, to mark the position of a Royal Air Force wartime bomber station. It was unveiled on Sunday the 21st May, 1995.

Sadly, Geoff Stuffs died on January 5th 2009. He is commemorated by a bronze plaque mounted on a stone pillar adjacent to the Fiskerton Memorial.

READER'S LETTERS

Steve Cooke, who is the son of 49er Bill 'Titch' Cooke LdeH, e-mailed:

"Dad was going through some of his memorabilia the other day and came across the picture attached.

"It's a photo of AC/W Margaret Ball. I think Dad went out with her for a few drinks when they were both stationed at Fiskerton and, he thinks, Fulbeck as well. That would be sometime between July and December 1944.

"All he remembers is that she worked in the Sergeants mess, that her home town was possibly Doncaster and that she married sometime in 1945 (I think Dad had a 'dear John' letter when he was away in India).

"He wondered if someone might want the photo for any archives or even for the magazine in case someone recognises a relative... highly unlikely I know. Anyway he wanted the squadron to have a copy."



Most grateful Steve and Bill. I will forward it to The Crew for inclusion in our website and archive. ED.

David Boughton, our Post War Archivist, came up with this, it may be one and the same:

"A quick scan of "The Dog" and the Free BMD's did not come up with anything that would help to find her. The nearest is a Margaret Ball born Q4, 1923, married a Walter Boyce Q4, 1944, both events in Hemsworth, which is between Doncaster and Wakefield."

To which Steve replied:

"... and I'm sure you've found the girl in the picture. She married in late 1944 and Dad remembers she was from Doncaster. He'll be really chuffed that you've found her. Thanks as ever Alan and thanks to David and Margaret."

Sadly there is no happy ending as David came back with:

"I have searched for possible children from her marriage and failed to

find anyone. Although this does not rule out adoptions, the trail has gone cold.

“Alas, I found that she died in 1992 and her husband in 1997, both in Pontefract. After 20 years I doubt that there are any records/memories that would be available.

“This is rather like my searches for National Service members of 49 Squadron....”

Associate Member Anthony Edwards e-mailed:

“...In August when driving from Dorset to Nottingham I took the opportunity to divert and seek out the old Fiskerton aerodrome and spent a few quiet moments at the roadside memorial there.

“Good to see Tom Gatfield and ‘Uncle Will’ Hay remembered there too.

“Whilst there a very strong wind suddenly blew up and took the 2017 poppy wreath from the memorial and sent it cartwheeling down the road. I rescued it and re secured it, and then a few moments later the wind just as suddenly stopped.

“A friend suggested afterwards that it was my welcome to Fiskerton and the wind was the wash of a Lancaster taking off.

“What a lovely thought.

“I went on to make my first visit to the IBCC in Lincoln, which was a wonderful and impressive experience and I’m so glad it got built finally.

“I also donated a recording to their digital archive of a very old cassette tape of my Father’s wartime experience in the RAF and 49 Squadron.

“Our family is also in the process of having his name added to the Ribbon of Remembrance there. (F/L Jim Edwards DFC. SN 121941).

“Either of the formats for the Newsletter by the way, is fine for me.

“Keep up the good work and like everyone, I am most grateful for all that you do.

“ ‘Lest We Forget’.”

Thank you Anthony, I share with The Crew the sentiment that it is an honour and privilege to perpetuate the memory of 49 Squadron. ED.

From Associate Member Graham Bairnsfather I received the following e-mail:

“The front cover of the February edition of the 4T9er immediately brought back memories of my uncle, Ralph Bairnsfather, bomb aimer, who was shot down and killed with 3 other crew members of the Roussel Stark Lancaster EA-X on the 7th March 1945 by a JU-88.

“The Association's researcher, Colin Cripps in 2008 sent me information on the demise of Ralph’s aircraft. The crew were returning from an operation

on the oil refinery at Harburg when they were spotted by a Ju-88 G-8 night fighter of IV/NJG3 piloted by Oberfeldwebel Heinz Misch making EA-X his 11th and final kill of the war. This aircraft was fitted with the upward firing “Schlage Musik” so would have crept up unnoticed to the crew.

Rear gunner, Joe Dixon who survived & became a POW wrote to Roussel Stark’s mother advising the following; *‘We watched our bombs drop right in the middle of the fire when Russ spotted a FW190. There were a few planes in front of us going down in flames, we ran into a lane of flares which were lighting the sky up. Russ & Paddy (MuG) saw a Ju-88 pass underneath us...when I spotted it I opened fire and got it. We did some manoeuvres then flew level. Russ and Paddy watched the Ju-88 going down in flames. I was temporarily blinded by my own guns when something hit my turret and set it on fire. I told Russ and started getting ready in case we had to get out, a few seconds later Russ gave orders to jump immediately. I tried to get out and had a bit of a fight to do it as my turret was now well alight. Russ kept control of the plane to give us a chance to get out. I believe Paddy and Gus (Wo/P) were*



killed outright, when I did get out and was floating down, seconds later I saw our plane hit the ground in flames, Russ and Ralph must have died at once.’

“Interviews with the surviving crew upon their release from the POW camp state that Ralph left his bomb aimer’s position (right above the escape hatch) to assist Joe Dixon trapped in the rear turret. Moments later the

order to jump was given but as Ralph’s intercom was unplugged he did not hear the order. “The aircraft crashed at 22.15hrs at Sandbostel, 9km SSW from the centre of Bremervorde.

“The bodies of F/O Roussel Stark RAAF (pilot), W/O Ralph Bairnsfather RAAF (bomb aimer), Sgt Robert (Paddy) Gilbert RAF (mid upper gunner) and F/Sgt Angus Lovett RAAF (wireless operator) are all buried in the Commonwealth War Cemetery at Becklingen, Germany.

“Ralph is fondly remembered in our house in Bowral, Australia and on the wall in our study is a painting of Ralph in his position in the front of the Lancaster that I commissioned our late President, John Ward to paint for me back in 2008.”

JOURNEY OF REMEMBRANCE, RECONCILIATION AND FRIENDSHIP

ND474 Relatives Group visits to Germany 2019

By

Robert McEneaney

(All photographs via the author.)

Introduction

Last month the Relatives Group travelled to Germany to honour the crew of 49 Squadron's Lancaster ND474 and to mark the 75th Anniversary of their loss. Relatives from England, Ireland and Spain met in Munich to commence their journey of remembrance and to renew old friendships with the people of Bolstern.

As reported in previous issues of the The 4T9er, our story started 75 years ago when the crew of ND474 took part in a raid to Stuttgart on the night of the 15/16 March 1944, as part of a campaign known as The Battle for Berlin. Having completed the raid on Stuttgart and commenced their journey home the crew of ND474 were engaged by a Luftwaffe night fighter. Having sustained serious damage the records indicate they changed direction and headed south for neutral Switzerland. Sadly, the Lancaster crashed some 16km short of the Swiss border in the village of Bolstern, Southern Germany.

We will always remain grateful to the 49 Squadron Association for bringing together the Hoole/Dexter and McEneaney families as it has led us to forming the ND474 Relatives Group. Working through the Relatives Group and together with our friends in Bolstern we embarked on a journey that at first we would never have thought possible. Back in 2013 we arranged our first visit to Bolstern to discover that the crash of ND474 and the loss of the seven airmen, almost 69 years before, had remained a significant part of the village's history. That initial trip enabled us to establish a bond with the local people and in 2014 we placed a Memorial to our relatives at the crash site to mark the 70th anniversary of their loss. During those visits and through discussions with an eyewitness and other villagers we have established a better insight into the events that took place that night back in 1944. It is now known that the stricken Lancaster broke up on impact killing all the crew. A group of villagers removed the bodies from the broken Lancaster, took them to their local church and gave them a Christian burial. To learn that the people of Bolstern gave our parents' loved ones not just the dignity of a Christian burial but the honour of laying them to rest among their own deceased family members in a time of conflict is a source of both strength and sustenance to us all. The villagers continued to tend their graves until 1948 when they were reinterred at Durnbach Military Cemetery.

Since 1944 the villagers have continued to pray for the airmen on the anniversary of the crash and now hold a prayer service in their honour each year at the Memorial site. We in turn as a gesture of appreciation and friendship also remember them with an annual mass service here in London and so our bonds of friendship continue to grow.

VISIT TO GERMANY. March 2019 - 75th Anniversary of the loss of ND474.

Saturday morning - Visit to Durnbach Military Cemetery.

The first stage of our journey started with a short one hour drive south from Munich to Bad Tolz. There in a most peaceful and now snow covered setting is Durnbach Military Cemetery where some 2,200, mostly airmen from WW2, are laid to rest. Among those buried there are 51 aircrew from 49 Squadron including our relatives, the crew of ND474.

Following a short introduction the Service of Remembrance commenced with Fr John McKenna, grandnephew of Flt Sgt Terence McEneaney reciting a prayer for the seven aircrew. This was followed by Fr John blessing each gravestone in turn and recalling by name the seven airmen.

A photograph of each member of the crew was placed at their headstones, followed by the wreath laying ceremony. Many of the wreaths carried a personal message of remembrance from the families of the crew. The younger members of the group recited the poem "The Visitor " a very emotional piece of poetry recording the long wait by a deceased airman for a family member to visit. The poem finishes with the line " and on this day my family came". It is a piece of poetry treasured by the group as it was passed on to us by the late John Ward the former President of 49 Squadron Association. The group then recited the Lord's Prayer and sang 'Abide with me' and 'Danny Boy'. Anthony McEneaney recited High Flight by John Magee and John Dexter, brother in law of Sgt Ronald Hoole delivered the Ode to Remembrance.

The service was brought to a close by Robert McEneaney when he recited that famous epitaph:

'When you go home tell them of us and say: for your tomorrow we gave our today'

A wreath was laid at the Cross of Sacrifice on behalf of 49 Squadron Association remembering all those who are buried there.

A final wreath was laid at the grave of Cyril Pratt whose family are neighbours of Deborah Murgatroyd, niece of Flt Sgt Terence McEneaney. Deborah, who was making her first trip to Durnbach with her daughter Kerri, had mentioned at a lunch club meeting that she was to make the journey to Durnbach to honour her uncle.



The younger members of the relatives group at the graves of the crew of ND474



**Fr. John McKenna together with Deborah Murgatroyd at the grave of Sgt Cyril H. Pratt.
Died 28.08.1943**

A neighbour alerted by the story mentioned that he also had a relative buried there. We were pleased on behalf of the Pratt family to place a wreath at their loved one's grave carrying a message of remembrance from home. Photographs were taken and passed on to the family on our return.

Leaving Durnbach we continued our journey across southern Germany to our next destination, Bad Saulgau, which is a town close to the village of Bolstern and the venue for our Friendship Dinner with our guests from Bolstern.

Saturday evening - The Friendship Dinner, Kleber Post Hotel, Bad Saulgau.

The main aim of the Friendship Dinner is to enable the Relatives Group to meet with friends and representatives of the village of Bolstern in a relaxed and less formal setting where fine wine and good food can be appreciated in the company of old friends.



We were delighted that our friend, the Mayor of Bolstern, Anton Stork and his wife Ingrid, together with village representatives, were able to join us. In addition we were honoured to have present a special guest Mr Wolfgang Schneiderhan, former Chief of Staff of the German Armed Forces and now President of the German War Graves Commission.



The dinner party now totaling forty people made up of guests and the relatives group sat down together to enjoy each other's company where memories of our previous trips to Germany were recalled. As hoped a

most memorable evening was enjoyed by all. As late evening approached it was time to turn our attention towards the next day and the more formal Service of Remembrance at St Gallus Church in Bolstern.

Sunday morning - St Gallus Church, Bolstern.

St Gallus Church, as mentioned previously, was the first burial place of the crew of ND474 in 1944. They were laid to rest in the cemetery by the villagers with a simple timber cross bearing the inscription "Here lies 7 English fliers 15 March 1944".

As the Relatives Group assembled for the 10.00am Service of Remembrance we were greeted with the local choir in full voice and the Church filled to capacity as it was on our previous visit five years earlier. The Church committee had arranged for not only their local choir to be present but also the region's brass band to be in attendance to give the Mass the most beautiful musical accompaniment. The Mass was celebrated by the local priest Fr Shinto together with Fr John McKenna representing the Relatives Group.

A table was placed in front of the altar displaying photographs of the seven aircrew and beneath it a wreath from the German War Graves Commission. Following the mass the wreath would be placed at the Memorial by Mr Sneiderhan.



TOP: The relatives read the Bidding Prayers. Mr. Schneiderhan RIGHT: and Robert McEneaney. LEFT: address the congregation.

Due to the inclement weather that morning it was decided that the speeches would be delivered as part of the Mass and not at the site of the memorial as previously suggested. Mayor Anton Stork opened the service welcoming us all to Bolstern and reflecting on our visit five years earlier and the unveiling of the memorial to the Crew of ND474. Our special guest Mr Schneiderhan went on to deliver a powerful speech reflecting on the importance of learning from the past through services of Remembrance and Reconciliation.

Robert McEneaney was then invited to speak on behalf of the Relatives Group where he thanked Fr Shinto for the most heartfelt service in honour of the seven airmen. He recalled the journey the group had taken and the friendships that had blossomed over the years. He went on to thank Mr Schneiderhan for attending the service, expressing the gratitude of the relatives group and acknowledging the significance of his presence and its part in our and their shared journey.

A most beautiful and dignified mass was brought to a close with the Church bells ringing seven times in honour of the seven airmen.

It was a privilege for all our group to hear first-hand the thoughts of such a high ranking German Official reflecting on the causes and consequences of war and the need to acknowledge our past so that we can move forward in remembrance and reconciliation. We are pleased to share with you all Mr Schneiderhan very in depth and thought provoking speech. See page 16.



Memorial Service

Although the weather had deteriorated during the Church service a sizable group of relatives and villagers braved the elements and led by Fr Shinto and Fr John walked through the village and down to the Memorial stone.



A wreath placed by Mr Schneiderhan on behalf of the German War Graves Commission, a floral tribute from The Relatives group and a lantern containing a flame of remembrance placed there by the people of Bolstern.



A short service was delivered by Fr Shinto and a final blessing by Fr John.

As the speeches originally planned to be delivered at the Memorial had thankfully taken place in the Church the group soon retreated to the warmth and comfort of the village hall where we enjoyed the generous hospitality of the villagers with the additional treat of local pastries and pies.

It was a very nice and relaxing setting where we got the chance to mingle with the villagers and meet again Mr Alfons Hauser the eyewitness to the events that had taken place 75 years ago.

Before we prepared to say our goodbyes John Dexter, brother in law of Sgt Ronald Hoole, delivered in German a message of thanks to our hosts that was generously applauded and gratefully appreciated.



John Dexter addressing the villagers in the Bolstern Village Hall.

As we departed Bolstern the expressions of farewell were most definitely heartfelt where the recognition of our shared journey had blossomed into a beautiful friendship. We left with the deep sense of gratitude, comforted by the knowledge that the memory of our relatives the crew of ND474 has not only a special place in our hearts but also in the hearts of the people of Bolstern.

Until we meet again in 2024 –
Auf wiedersehen.

SPEECH BY GEN. WOLFGANG SCHNEIDERHAN, PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Thank you very much for inviting me to this commemoration ceremony and for allowing me to speak to you. We are commemorating an incident which has deeply affected me.

Not far from here, a British fighter bomber crashed in the night from March 15 to March 16, killing the entire crew of seven young men. This was only one of many tragedies that happened during World War II, and like all the other tragic events, it was one too many.

The people living at Bolstern were lucky and unlucky at the same time, because the plane crashed in an open field and not in the village proper. Whether it was coincidence or whether the pilot tried to avoid the village in a last-ditch effort, we do not know. Both scenarios are possible.

The bombardment of German cities from the plane and its crash were 'normal' war events as it were. I do, however, appeal to all of you, not to consider such a thing as normal, because war must never become a norm. What happened after that, however, was truly extraordinary.

Men and women from Bolstern retrieved the dead bodies of the young men and buried them. They did not just inter them, but they put them to rest at the most dignified place they had, the village cemetery, next to the graves of their own beloved ones.

In 1944, this was truly an act of courage. At that time, a year before the war ended, it was obvious to anyone that Germany would lose the war, which it had started in 1939. The more desperate the military situation in Germany became, the more fanatically and obsessively the national socialists waged this war, also within Germany itself.

In this situation, the gesture of burying the enemy next to the grave of one's own mother, for example, was by no means irrelevant. This could have been interpreted as compassion with the enemy, an act of undermining the German fighting spirit or secret sympathy with the war opponent and could easily have led to a prison sentence or deportation to a concentration camp.

The people from Bolstern could not be bothered by this. Their act was an act of decency in the truest sense of the word.

In 1948, the corpses were transferred to the war cemetery at Dürnbach. In the process the names of the men could be verified and at their burial they were given back their true identities.

So, it was not seven anonymous soldiers whose coffins were lowered into the earth, but Thomas Waugh, Ronald Hoole, Terence McEaney, William Hardy, Douglas Birbeck, John Knowles and John Wise.

All of them were very young, the two oldest ones were a mere 23, the youngest was 19. They had dreams, plans, hopes, ideas of what their lives would be like after that hated war, which they did not want and which they hadn't started. I wonder who they were thinking of in their last moments: their parents, their siblings, their sweethearts? We will never know. The future of these young men was buried together with their bodies.

The victims, while they lost their lives, deserved to be given their life stories and their identities as an act of respect for the dead. This is also of great importance to the relatives and the generation born later: For the relatives who now have a place for mourning and for young people who find it difficult to relate to people born before their time.

But once one sees and understands that the men buried here were, at the time of their deaths, of the same age as the present-day visitors to the graves, one begins to realize the full insanity of war.

For this reason, too, research into the individual biographies is of utmost importance to the German War Graves Commission. We investigate the names and biographies of the men who were killed in the war and edit them so that young people can develop an understanding for them.

Seventy-five years after the tragic event we are now gathered together not far away from the site of the crash: People from Germany, Britain and Ireland, residents of Bolstern and relatives of the soldiers who were killed in the crash. Five years ago, the memorial stone was erected on the initiative of relatives and with the support of the local authority.

The Austrian author Robert Musil once said: "There is nothing in the world, which is as invisible as memorials." Indeed, there are many memorials which we pass by without paying much attention. It is therefore vital that we not only erect those memorials but also use them as gathering places which allow people to come together.

We are united in grief to commemorate the victims. We also know that apart from these seven young men who we remember today, a further 60 to 70 million lost their lives in World War II.

However, it is little consolation that besides the individuals we remember today, there are many more who lost their lives. It merely goes to show how monstrous and how destructive war is, in general.

But wars are by no means natural disasters. They do not just break out, they are man-made. And they need a lot of preparing. A dictator cannot wage a war on his own. He needs the support of at least part of society, the industry and, of course, the military. That is why wars always have a prehistory, which consists of degrading and demonizing the nation which one wants to attack. Negative stereotypes, prejudices, hate propaganda pave the way for the first

shot to be fired.

Whoever wants to stop this, must block this path and open another one, which leads to reconciliation and understanding, to mutual acceptance and respect for each other.

At the memorial site not far away from here, five years ago the Mayor of Bad Saulgau, Mrs Schröter, quoted Richard von Weizsäcker with an old Jewish proverb which I am happy to repeat here: 'The secret of reconciliation is remembrance.'

True, reconciliation does not mean forgetting about it, 'putting an end to it, a clean break' but realizing and becoming aware of what was. Only if we Germans own up to our own guilt and accept our responsibility, if we express openly and clearly, what this war essentially was, namely a cold-blooded, also racially motivated war of aggression and conquest, only then can we expect our neighbours and former war enemies to be ready for reconciliation. That today we are gathered here together with the relatives of the fallen British soldiers, that they took the initiative to have the memorial stone erected and that the Bolstern municipal administration gave its full support is living proof of the power of such a concept. For this I am immensely grateful to all of you.

You probably know, that on internet platforms the question has been discussed, if it is appropriate to commemorate the crew of a fighter bomber who had already dropped a destructive cargo over Germany before their plane exploded. Your very presence here is the answer. The young men who encountered death in the nearby field did not come to Germany out of recklessness or a desire to kill. They fought in a war, which had been imposed on them.

I am positive they would have preferred meeting at a British pub to sitting in a fighter bomber.

In an internet forum, where the setting up of the memorial stone was also discussed, the question was asked if one could imagine that German soldiers were commemorated abroad, too. The answer is a definite "yes".

We, the German War Graves Commission, maintain more than 830 war cemeteries in 48 countries outside Germany. 48 countries! This also shows the far-reaching influence of the war.

It was often a tremendous act of goodwill for the local people to support the setting up of a war cemetery, because the German soldiers came as conquerors and occupying forces and were not only involved in military operations but they also committed terrible crimes in many regions. And now the German War Graves Commission maintains a cemetery there which often may have a regular soldier being buried next to an SS man. This calls for more generosity than can be expected and we are deeply grateful for that.

By the way, we are still setting up new cemeteries in Central and Eastern

Europe. We know of a further 800.000 German soldiers killed in action who are buried somewhere out there. We hope that we can retrieve, identify and rebury at least 250.000 of them.

In Western Europe this job isn't completed yet, either. In 2018 alone, 73 years after the end of World War II, we gave some 24.000 individuals a final, dignified resting place.

These war grave sites are important because they provide the relatives with a place for mourning. The interest in these places even among the younger generation is unabated. We have installed an online search, which allows people to look for graves from the two world wars from their homes and without additional red tape. This online search receives 3.5 million clicks a year, which is an average of nearly 9600 requests a day.

But the war cemeteries and memorials are also relevant, because they provide a link to history and remind us to make use of the experiences of the past in order to shape the future.

Therefore, the Commission is deeply committed to political education at schools, and in cooperation with the schools it organises events and runs four training centres, three of which are located abroad. It also runs work camps where young people from different nations maintain graveyards, but also spend their free time together. Prejudices are best overcome through personal encounters which includes meetings like the one we are having today.

It is young people, in particular, that must know and understand history. Only from this understanding can they develop a feeling for moral values and personal responsibility. Their involvement for peace and democracy guarantees that they will not have to repeat the experiences of their grandparents and great-grandparents.

All this is only possible on a voluntary basis and with the support of civil society. And in this respect Bolstern can serve as a role model, too. In 1944, the citizens of Bolstern did not wait for the government to take action - they would have had to wait for ages anyway in those days. They took things into their own hands and showed initiative as a community.

So did the relatives of the fallen soldiers who became active themselves, were highly motivated and became strongly committed. Together they laid the founding stone for a reconciliation that bears fruit today.

For this I am immensely grateful.

The largest German War Cemetery in the United Kingdom is located on beautiful Cannock Chase, Staffordshire. The site was chosen because of its similarity to the forests of Southern Germany. Photographs taken by the Editor appear on the following two pages.



Cannock Chase German Cemetery.

At the current time there are 2,143 burials from WWI and 2,786 from WWII. Among them lie 5 Unknown from WWI and 90 from WWII.

The four large flat stones on the facing page mark the graves of four WWI Zeppelin crews.





THE RELUCTANT CRUSADERS

By

John Chatterton

“Come to my office after briefing, I’ve got a job for you,” said the new Flight Commander. I didn’t actually hasten. I’d nothing against the man, but I was still missing his predecessor, the tour-expired S/Ldr Jack Shorthouse. Ebullient and charismatic, he had been my hero since taking me on my very first raid, in October 43, on a very dirty night to Leipzig. We suffered icing more or less continuously for most of the trip, and I was impressed by the nonchalant way he landed without the use of the airspeed indicator. We would have followed him to the Jaws of Hell; come to think of it we often did.

The new man, S/Ldr Cockbain (pronounced Co-bain like the port!) indicated towards a heap of kit in the corner of his office. There were steel helmets with holes in the sides to accommodate an underlying helmet’s earpieces, and waistcoats with strips of steel sewn into them. “Bomber Command wants us to test out this flak gear that the Yanks use in the B17,” he said, “and I’m told your crew will volunteer for anything interesting“. “But, Sir,” I protested, “we only volunteer for things like delivering or picking up kites, checking bomb sights, and the odd weather test – nothing that might be dangerous!” He replied, “I’ve seen that leather helmet of yours that you are so proud of – it’s got a two inch cut in the top, don’t tell me that was due to mice!” “But, Sir, that was the Royal Navy!” “Just my point! Now that they’ve got your range, they’ll be waiting for you!”

As we kitted up in the locker rooms, my crew were less than enthusiastic. “Why us? Do they think we go looking for flak?” Our mates were delighted to find some new banter in what was usually a fairly fraught period, and it was suggested that we apply for new parachutes! The Navigator, with a touch of erudition, said, “I feel like Richard the Lionheart all trussed up to set off on the Crusades!” That was a mistake. All the way out to dispersal we heard nothing but Turks and Saracens, with a parting shot as we got off – “Watch out for that Saladin!”

We dutifully wore all the clobber for take-off, which was just as well because as we left dispersal the S/Ldr’s Hillman swung in and he opened our rear door to say, “Good luck chaps! I’ll have a full report when you get back!”

Luckily it was only a short trip but as we left the target three hours later I had had enough! The waistcoat was snug enough but the extra weight slowed me down on the controls. The helmet was a complete pain making my neck ache, and clattering on everything when I turned my head or leaned forwards. “OK,” I told the crew, “I’ve had enough let’s take the damned stuff off.” There were

exaggerated sighs of relief, and I found later that my instructions had been anticipated by quite some time. After all the Flight Engineer was the only one in my line of vision.

At Interrogation, the Wing Co as well as the Squadron Leader were waiting to hear how we had got on. The Bomb Aimer felt hard done by, “I thought Butch Harris himself would have been here!” The company generally was disappointed to hear that no shrapnel or bullets had come through the fuselage to be deflected by the armour. We comprehensively damned the gear on the grounds of restriction of movement, and impaired reactions, and were about to depart with a sigh of relief when the Wing Co said :- “Since you didn’t get a chance to test it properly, I want you to wear it just one more time – tomorrow night!” Exit crew muttering!

To the delight of the “Crusader Comics” we dutifully carted all the stuff out to the aircraft the following night on what was to be an eight hour trip. The Squadron Leader had put himself on the Battle Order so there was no danger of his Hillman turning up in dispersal, and the flak kit was piled up in a neat heap inside the rear door for it’s second trip to the Third Reich. Fortunately the Navigator noticed that the large heap of high quality steel was directly underneath his precious Distant Reading Compass, and with the Wireless Op’s help moved it to a less sensitive part of the fuselage. What a ‘Deviation’ that might have been!

The flak was accurate and prolonged but again nothing pierced our skin. However, the insecure storage of the flak gear was made apparent when one of my violent “corkscrews”, in response to an attacking Me110, sent the seven helmets rolling the length of the fuselage from the main spar to the rear turret, and the W.Op had to go back to tie it all down.

Again at Interrogation, things were a repeat of the previous night. The Wing Co said, “Whatever am I going to put in my report? I’ve noted your vigorous adverse comments, but I have to mention the ‘protection’ side. Maybe something on these lines:- This flak gear was taken by an experienced crew on two consecutive, deep penetration raids to heavily defended targets. They received no wounds or damage of any kind whilst wearing it!”

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

Following the publication announcement, in the February issue of The 4T9er, of Volume One of ‘Royal Air Force & Australian Flying Corps Squadron Losses 1st April—30th June 1918’ author William Chorley has now published Volume Two which covers losses from 1st July - 11th November 1918 - cover price as volume one £15.

Further extracts from Paul Gaunt's tribute to his father, reproduced here with his kind permission.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

By

Paul Gaunt

Part 4

Fourth Operation: Bombing Frankfurt, August 29/30, 1941

HAMPDEN AD960

P/O WALKER: pilot

P/O WOOD: navigator

Sgt CHEETHAM: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt GAUNT: air gunner

Up 2105 hrs, down 0520 hrs (8 hrs 15 mins)

Details of Sortie:- 8/10-10/10 Cloud over whole trip, breaking up over Frankfurt. Impossible to identify actual target, but bombed light flak along river near centre of town seen through gap in cloud.

Summary of Events: - Weather mainly fair, with local showers and ground haze.

10 aircraft to stand by to bomb inland port at Frankfurt, alternative to the town. Last resort as detailed in BCSO or built-up areas in Germany.

10 aircraft took off at short periods, but owing to almost 10/10 cloud, four aircraft were unsuccessful in locating the target and three were doubtful of success. Flak/Frankfurt town and an aerodrome (unidentified) were alternatives bombed. But only in one case were bursts seen. Generally, heavy icing was encountered, increasing the difficulties. Broomfield's crew (X3057) limped back across the sea with their aircraft's starboard engine repeatedly cutting out. After sending an SOS, the pilot eventually made a safe landing at Manston shortly after 0245 hrs.

Results:- 143 aircraft, of which 73 Hampdens, 62 Whitleys, 5 Halifax and three Manchesters took part. This was the first 100 plus aircraft raid on this city, with railways and harbours as aiming points. The first sortie by an Australian squadron was flown in this raid, when Squadron Leader French and his crew took a 455 Squadron Hampden to Frankfurt and returned safely. Two Hampdens and one Whitley were lost. Bad weather prevented accurate bombing and crews reported that the attack became general in this Frankfurt area. Frankfurt reported that only light and scattered bombing took place, with damage to a gas works, a cask merchant's depot, and to several houses. Eight

people were killed, seven of them in one house, which was struck by a bomb.

Squadron Strength, September 1, 1941

‘The posted strength of this Squadron 1 Sept. 1941 was as follows - 30 officers, 555 airmen. Aircraft held by this unit were 24 Hampdens representing initial equipment, 3 Hampden aircraft representing reserve equipment, 1 Tiger Moth representing training equipment’.

Fifth Operation: Bombing Berlin, September 2 /3, 1941

HAMPDEN AD759

P/O GREEN: pilot

Sgt READ: navigator

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt WARREN: air gunner

Up 1943hrs, down 0400 hrs - Fog – landed Driffild) (8 hrs 17 mins)

Details of Sortie:- Weather 9/10 cloud, which helped against searchlights, as also did IFF (Identification: Friend or Foe). Ran in from S. East and bombed with 250 lbs to draw fire, but this was unsuccessful. After further search, found gap in clouds and bombed with 1000 lbs a built up area and factory.

Summary of Events: -16 aircraft to standby for operations, 12 to attack Berlin, one to attack Manheim, three to lay mines near Schiermonnikoog.

16 aircraft (including two gardeners) took off at short intervals and nine were successful in attacking main objectives (including one gardener). Being unable to locate the area owing to 10/10 cloud, the other gardener returned to base with the mines. Five other aircraft were unsuccessful, but bombed alternative targets - Neubahndenburg, Stettin and Lubeck, also built-up areas. Four aircraft only observed results of bombing and on return, owing to intense fog in Lincolnshire, four aircraft crash landed at other ‘dromes, without injury to crews. In eight other cases, landings were made at other ‘dromes. Difficulties were encountered with A/A fire and in one case an Me 109 attacked and is believed shot down. Petrol shortage was experienced and also oxygen failure. Two Halifaxes, two Hampdens and one Manchester failed to return from Berlin and two Hampdens were reported missing from the mine-laying sorties.

Results: - 49 aircraft, which consisted of 32 Hampdens, seven Halifaxes, six Stirlings, four Manchesters. Five aircraft consisting of two Halifaxes, two Hampdens and one Manchester were lost. The Manchester loss contained the commanding officer of 615 Squadron, Wing Commander GE Valentine, and Group Captain JF Barrett, the Station Commander of North Luffenham. Both officers were killed and are buried in the Berlin War Cemetery.

Aircraft and Crew Losses

Bombing Berlin & Keil, - September 7/8, 1941:- Three aircraft from the unit were detailed to attack Kiel. Two completed their sorties and returned safely. Out of the 51 in total despatched against Kiel, three failed to return and one of these came from 49 Squadron. Tragically, 22 year old P/O John Bromham (AE236) and crew all perished and are buried in Kiel War Cemetery.

FTR AE236

P/O JWT BROMHAM: pilot (killed)

Sgt PJ DUFFY: wireless operator & air gunner (killed)

Sgt EV DURHAM: 2nd pilot (killed)

Sgt A KETTLEWORTH: wireless operator air gunner (killed)

Sixth Operation: Bombing Frankfurt, September 28 /29, 1941

HAMPDEN AD759

P/O WALKER: pilot

SGT BLOCK: navigator

SGT MULLENGER: wireless operator

SGT GAUNT: air gunner

Up 2320 hrs, down 0615 hrs (6 hrs 55 mins.)

This raid was a catastrophe from start to finish, with both appalling results and losses.

Details of Sortie:- Failure of intercom on return. Glide attack from 14,000 feet to 10,000 feet. Bombed by light flare and burst observed in town. Flak moderate/ heavy and accurate. Landed Detling on return. Weather abysmal. Returned to Scampton the next day at 1535 hrs, September 30th.

Summary of Events:- Weather – east wind, local mist and fog. Dispersing at noon. Continuous rain late afternoon and local thunder.

2250 hrs - 14 aircraft to standby to bomb Frankfurt. Nine aircraft only took off, four being cancelled and one suffering a tail wheel collapse at the taxiing point. One aircraft cancelled at take off. One crashed eleven minutes after being airborne and all the crew were killed. One aircraft did not return from operations and nothing was heard of it (it later became known all the crew were taken prisoners and the cause of the crash has not been established). Five of the unit's aircraft landed at other aerodromes due to bad weather.

Crashed AE 376

Sgt WALKER: pilot (killed)

Sgt A RAINE: wireless operator & air gunner (killed)

Sgt R E GREENHALGH: air gunner (killed)

Sgt T H SMITH: O/Bs (killed)

FTR AD 733

F/L J D MUNDY DFC: pilot (P.o.W)

Sgt P C DARWIN: pilot (P.o.W)

Sgt A WINTON: wireless operator & airgunner (P.o.W.)

F/S F HIBBERT DFM: wireless operator & airgunner (P.o.W)

October was to be a busy month for Tubby and crews, four operations were carried out in a ten-day period. From a total of 99 aircraft sent to Bremen, two Wellingtons and one Hampden failed to return, all 49 Sqd aircraft returned. Of the 30 Hampdens and 14 Wellingtons despatched on the raid, one Wellington and one Hampden failed to return. Flight Lieutenant Mundy DFC (AD733) piloted the missing Hampden from 49 Squadron. The cause of this loss has never been established, but happily the crew survived to become POWs.

Seventh Operation: Bombing Bremen, October 12, 1941

HAMPDEN AE132

P/O WOOD: pilot

Sgt MACKEY: navigator

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt POINTER: air gunner

Up 1850 hrs, down 0150 hrs (7 hrs)

Details of Sortie: - No cloud till German coast, 9/10 from there to target area, river observed by flare, presumed Weser, where heavy and light flak fired, so bombed concentration presumed Bremen.

(Again, this operation was not very successful.)

Summary of Events:- Weather generally bright with cloudy periods and occasional rain.

16 aircraft to stand by, 12 to bomb objective at Huls and four to attack objective at Bremen. Four bombers took off to Bremen and none was successful in bombing main objective owing to thick 10/10 clouds which obscured target, concentration of flak and searchlights attacked in vicinity.

The flak was found to be intense. The remaining bombers took off and 11 were unsuccessful in bombing main objective. Two aircraft returned with bombs after two hours, owing to R/T (radio transmission) and engine trouble. One suffered excessive oil temperature. Seven aircraft bombed alternative targets - flak in the area - and three returned bombs to base. Heavy flak and thick cloud experienced by all, also several enemy aircraft were encountered.

Results BCWD: - 65 aircraft bombed in cloudy conditions and fires were seen. Of the 99 aircraft dispatched to Bremen, two Wellingtons and one Hampden failed to return.

To be continued.