

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
February 2020 Issue 56



The commemoration in Worthing of the 75th anniversary of the crash on the beach of 49 Squadron Lancaster PB355. See page 4 for report.

IN MEMORIAM

All those 4T9ers who have taken the ‘early flight’.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Andy Lupton Charles Brunton

In welcoming you to this edition of The 4T9er I am thrilled by the fact that for only the second time in 56 issues I am able to do so without a name being in the ‘In Memoriam’ box. Long may it continue!

I am most grateful to all those who have made donations-without you there would be no association. At this point I must thank ‘The Crew’ who give so freely of their time in sustaining the memory of 49 Squadron in general but particularly those who served and died.

I am pleased to welcome two new Associate Members. The cousin of Andy Lupton’s mother was F/Sgt 1865370 Robert Boyce, the 20 year old flight engineer in the crew of P/O Robert Montgomery. They were on their 19th operation, to Schweinfurt, when their aircraft, EA-D JB729, was lost on April 26 1944. Whilst the two gunners survived, Robert and his remaining four colleagues were killed. Welcome also to Charles Brunton. Charles is the son of Michael Brunton who, in turn, is the son of flight engineer Geoff Brunton. Geoff was a keen member of the association, attending many reunions before his death in 2011. Geoff, followed by Michael and now Charles, attended the annual commemoration services at Mailly le Camp. It is a well known fact that Geoff’s life was saved when he broke his leg and missed the raid on which his first crew were all killed.

There are two significant dates in the lives of our chairman Stuart Keay and our representative at the Worthing Commemoration Reg Woolgar. Stuart is a mere laddie of 90 on March 5th compared with Reg whose hundredth birthday is on March 21st. Warmest congratulations and best wishes to both of them.

Of Worthing Reg writes: “The event went very well from my perspective, although as the only war time flyer present I found myself in more prominence than I anticipated. I was provided with an electric wheelchair, which was easy to use, and I duly laid the wreath without falling over.... In particular, the Lady Mayor of Worthing, Hazel Thorpe, was present and spoke, and was most attentive to me! It was a sad occasion but a good day because all went well, and I was pleased I was able to make it, and very grateful for all the help I had.”

Two issues ago I reported the passing of former 49 flight engineer Alan Morgan. I was sent the following piece, written by Sol Buckner, that appeared recently in the West Sussex County Times:

“The son of a second world war airman who was a member of the Guinea Pig Club made a poignant return to Queen Victoria Hospital.

“Peter Morgan visited the hospital in East Grinstead 75 years after his late father Alan was first treated there.

“The Guinea Pig Club was established in 1941. It was the name given to the group of British and allied aircrew injured during the second world war who received experimental reconstructive plastic surgery, including facial reconstruction, at the hospital by pioneering plastic surgeon Sir Archibald McIndoe.

“Peter’s father, Alan Morgan, was involved in a flying incident in 1944 while returning from a mission with the 49 Squadron on his 21st birthday. The flight engineer was left with severely frostbitten fingers after the main door of his Lancaster bomber flew open. He took his gloves off to close the door but passed out and his hands were stuck to the frozen fuselage.

“Alan was admitted to the QVH three days later where he had five operations, including having his fingers amputated, carried out by Sir Archibald McIndoe. Alan, affectionately known to fellow members of the Guinea Pig Club as “Fingers Morgan”, sadly passed away last year.

“Peter, along with his father’s lifelong friend Joe Barrett, and Joe’s son Michael, visited the hospital to donate an IV drip stand with built in electrical input sockets to make a lasting impact in its operating theatres, an area Alan knew well.

“Despite his injuries, Alan continued as an engineer after the war and met Joe who trained as his apprentice. It was a legacy he later passed on to Peter who became Joe’s apprentice. The IV drip stand, carrying a plaque with Alan’s name, was specially made for the hospital by Joe’s medical equipment company SafetyMed Ltd.

“Peter, who lives in Stockport, Greater Manchester, said: “Joe and Dad were lifelong friends and he supported him tremendously. When Joe suggested donating some equipment to Queen Victoria Hospital we wanted something that would be a fitting and lasting tribute to Dad and we think this is it.”

“Beryl Hobson, chairperson of Queen Victoria Hospital, said: “Alan was the first member of the Guinea Pit Club that I met and I was delighted to meet Peter and reminisce with him about his father. We would like to thank Peter, Joe and Michael for this kind donation which will make a real difference to our operating theatres. It will enable our theatre staff to plug in pumps and multiple pieces of medical equipment safely without the worry of trailing cables.”

‘Til the next time.

WORTHING REMEMBERS THE ESSENHIGH CREW

The November issue of The 4T9er covered the setting up of the commemoration boards on Worthing Promenade. Thankfully, due to the efforts of the organisers, the vandalism which followed was rectified in time for the Service of Commemoration on December 15th.

49 Squadron Association, and indeed 49 Squadron, were represented by former serving members Reg Woolgar DFC and Terry Deane.

Organizing committee member Eric Mardell wrote to the Editor:

"It was a fantastic success! Terry and Elaine arrived quite early, with Reg comfortably seated in the back, and I was there 5 minutes later to reassure them that all was well. Then ensued the transfer of Reg into the electric scooter which I had asked to be delivered. I am so pleased I had asked one of our scooter suppliers to deliver one, (Mario of Russells Mobility did so for nothing), because Reg did need it. Reg struggled with the controls to start with but soon gained confidence. Hardly surprising considering his background!...

"There was an absolute downpour at the time the service was supposed to start, so we, well most of us, stayed in the warm shelter of the Lido. 10 minutes later, with the shower over, the cadets were lined up and we marched - well some did - down to the new display. The padre then took the reins and said a few appropriate words, followed by Reg laying a wreath, and then the Mayor laid hers followed by the Last Post, which was beautifully played, and then the Kohima Prayer. The padre then named each of the crew members and we completed the ceremony with God Save The Queen.

"We all then repaired to the Lido again where a table had been arranged for Reg and the Lady Mayor. There was free tea/coffee and mince pies on hand for one and all to round off the proceedings and it gave us a chance to chat and swap stories. Although Reg had been struggling with his hearing earlier he seemed to get on famously with everyone.

A great success I am pleased to relay, thank you for your part in making the morning go so smoothly.

We are all really pleased down here that 49 Squadron members took part. I still can't quite grasp the living link we have in Reg, to our wartime past.

"He was the epitome of a war veteran today, it was such a privilege and a pleasure to meet a warrior and charmer. I felt something - I'm not sure what - but there was something special about today and meeting your Reg.

"Incidentally, I recognised four other ex Worthing Mayors there today, plus of course the current one."

Photos by Bob Kershaw except where stated.



45 Worthing Squadron, Air Training Corps are brought to attention

**Former Mayor of Worthing, Eric Mardell, accompanies
49ers Terry Deane and Reg Woolgar DFC**

Photo via Terry Deane





Current Mayor of Worthing, Councillor Hazel Thorpe, right and George Butterworth, Armed Forces Chaplain left flank the restored commemoration boards.

Members of Worthing Veterans Association



THE ROADS IN WORTHING WHICH ARE NAMED AFTER THE CREW OF LANCASTER PB355

Photographed by Bob and Mary Kershaw



49 SQUADRON IN WORLD WAR ONE

As usual, when reading, the figure 49 leaps out – I doubt if I am alone in this. Reading on Kindle *Aces' Twilight – The War in the Air. 1918* by Robert Jackson was no exception. I spotted a mention of six 49ers.

“During this second week the RAF claimed sixty-three enemy aircraft destroyed and thirty-one driven down, and not all of them fell to the guns of SEs and Camels. On 10th June, for example, Captain George Fox-Rule and Lieutenant E. H. Tredcroft of 49 Squadron, Fourneuil, were carrying out a low-level bombing attack in their DH4 when they were jumped by five Albatros Scouts which cut off their line of escape. Fox-Rule promptly dived through the middle of the enemy formation and fired a long burst into the leader, which burst into flames and was seen to hit the ground. The DH4 was then attacked by three more enemy fighters, which came in from astern. Tredcroft opened fire, sending one down out of control and forcing the others to break off. Fox-Rule brought his aircraft safely back, although its tailplane bracing wires had been shot through.”

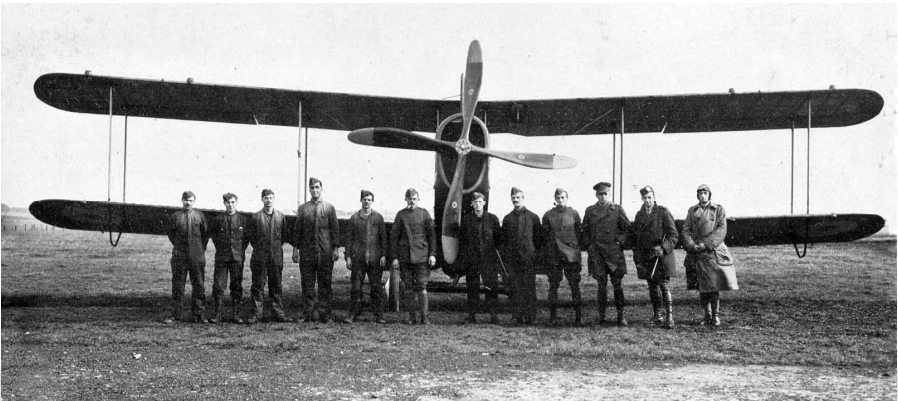
“The new Fokker D.VIIs were very much in evidence; on 8 August nine of them attacked an RE8 of No 3 Squadron AFC and shot it down, killing its crew, and on the following day the DH9s of 49 Squadron were subjected to persistent attacks by two large formations of Fokkers as they returned from a bombing raid. One crew – Lieutenant J. A. Keating (an American officer) and 2nd Lieutenant E. A. Simpson had a particularly hard time, and it was only the observer's skill that saved them. Simpson shot down a Fokker in flames at close range, followed by another shortly afterwards, and during the running fight that followed he sent two more down to crash. By this time the DH9 had been practically shot to ribbons, and he was lucky to make a forced landing on the right side of the lines.”

“...but it had been a black day for the squadron, [104], which had lost seven out of twelve DH9s and most of its best aircrew.

Yet the DH9 could give an excellent account of itself. The next day, an aircraft of 49 Squadron, returning from a bombing raid and crewed by Lieutenant A.R. Spurling and Sergeant F.W. Bell, became separated from the rest of the formation in cloud. After flying west for sometime, Spurling saw what he took to be a friendly airfield and prepared to land, but as he lost height he was suddenly attacked by a Fokker D.VII. Spurling then saw a formation of thirty more D.VIIs directly below him and, with little other option, continued his dive through the middle of them, firing as he went. One of the Fokkers was hit and burst into flames; two more, taking violent evasive action, went into a spin and one of them was seen to crash. The DH9 was then

harried from astern by four Fokkers, one of which was shot down in flames by Sergeant Bell; a few moments later Bell also accounted for another which attempted a beam attack. The DH9 was pursued by three more D.VIIIs as it climbed hard towards the line, but they did not attack. An enemy two-seater tried to intercept it as it headed for home, but a few well-aimed bursts from Bell drove it away.”

The book that I read previous to this was *Don't let them bag the Nines* by *Capt F Williams MC DFC*. He flew DH4s and makes derogatory comments about the DH9s as being sluggish and underpowered. The title of his book reflects that the job of the DH4s was to protect the DH9s. It should be explained that the DH9, designed to replace the DH4, was initially inferior due to its unreliable inline Siddeley Puma engine. When this was replaced with the American V-12 Liberty engine, it now known as the DH9A, it became an excellent aircraft.



Above: DH4 Below: DH9



TWO OF BOMBER COMMAND'S BLACKEST DAYS

By

Philip 'Griff' Griffiths

Part 1

A poet, Ernest Raymond wrote: "Youth is ever proud to visit the margins of death". How true, all of aircrew were young and volunteers!

On the 16/17 December 1943 we were briefed for a mission to Berlin. There was the usual groan when Berlin was posted, we could always be assured of a very warm reception during a raid on their capital city with its batteries of A.A. fire, some 80 searchlights and its locally based fighters. The reception on this night was as expected but a successful 'drop' was made and casualties, from and over the target, were considered 'acceptable'. 'Only' twenty-five Lancasters lost! I wonder how acceptable this was to the families and sweet-hearts of the 175 lost flyers! However, the worst was yet to come. Black Thursday's weather back in England was the worst ever experienced by Bomber Command. It was low dense cloud combined with thick fog. Thirty-one Lancasters crashed on their return. The cruel truth was that the system of landing at the end of 1943 could not cope with the influx of 450 Lancasters with exhausted crews all needing to land immediately as they were all very low on fuel. Faced with a landing at fog shrouded airfields many crews were desperate and were forced into drastic and often fatal crash landings. For some reason the airfields with FIDO [Fog dispersal system. ED.] were not given the 'light up' signal early enough to help most of the force. Some thirty-one Lancasters crashed attempting to land, with heavy casualties. So twenty-five Lancs lost over the target, thirty-one crashed on their return, and in addition another fourteen Sterlings, Halifaxes and Lysanders crashed on return from 'Gardening' (Mine laying), special duties or training. Seventy of our aircraft lost in one terrible night - a very 'Black Thursday' indeed. Our Pathfinder Squadrons were hard hit that night losing many experienced crews, sixteen Lancasters were lost, four over Berlin and twelve due to crashes whilst attempting to land.

Fiskerton was equipped with FIDO but had no crash landings. We did not land there as we were shot up by two fighters and hit badly with machine gun and cannon fire. We made it back, just, but had to land at an emergency field as two of our engines were starting to cough through lack of fuel as one of our starboard fuel tanks had been hit, along with the hydraulics, bomb bay and other things.

49 Squadron lost one crew that night, that of P/O G.L. Ratcliffe. They were on their first mission and were all killed.

The loss of seventy aircraft in one night was hard to swallow and for a while our morale was on the low side. Perhaps we bounced back a little with the thought that such a nightmare couldn't happen again – we were very wrong. Along came Nuremberg!

On the night of 30 March 1944 we assembled for a very late briefing. The crews were surprisingly in their usual high spirits laughing, joking and jostling each other, then the target was revealed, deep into Germany about three times the distance to the Ruhr...the target, Nuremberg. The briefing map showed our predetermined route and to our dismay it showed a long straight navigational leg of approximately 160 miles which inevitably passed close to the Ruhr and Koblenz defences, actually, only a twenty mile gap. The defences on such a long leg would have ample time to organise their opposition. We were assured however that there would be lots of cloud cover all the way along and many diversions to confuse defences. Nevertheless, the attitude in the briefing room had changed, we were very quiet, the thought being, what if there was no cloud cover? We climbed into the crew vans in almost complete silence, a rarity, and on reaching the dispersal even the groundcrew were quiet, none of the usual rather rude greetings. They were aware that we were going on a long trip by the petrol and bomb load. I wondered afterwards if there was a general premonition of things to come.

But what could go wrong, cloud cover all the way, lots of diversions, the target clear for a good 'drop'.

At our take-off point the Group Captain, other officials and a number of off duty personnel were there as usual to see us off. We were saluted and waved to, wishing us God Speed and good luck. It was perhaps as well we didn't know how much we would need both! We then lurched away at full power loaded with seven and a half tons of fuel and four and a half tons of bombs - we were glad when the earth receded behind us!

A total of 780 bombers were scheduled to take part in the mission however fifty-five aborted for various reasons.

We more or less assembled over the North Sea then crossed the coast of Belgium, made a short jig then turned onto the 160 mile 'long leg'.

Our fears were soon justified, we were in bright moonlight, not a cloud in sight. In fact it was so bright I could have read 'Jane' in the Daily Mirror. (Does anyone remember that feature?) Also that night, most unusually, we were trailing very visible con-trails - what more could the enemy fighters want?

The 'long leg' has been variously described as flying down a six to eight lane highway with bright flares either side or down a big city main street lit up for Christmas. The reports from the Mosquito windfinder crews were transmitted

back to H.Q. but were at variance and no firm decision was reached so we didn't have a clue in that we would have this 'lovers moon' and contrary winds of some 50mph. It was actually so bright that the Luftwaffe brought out their potent day fighters, ME109's and FW190's to augment their directed night fighters.

Very shortly, as we turned on to the 'long leg', we saw, almost simultaneously, just ahead two huge explosions and one ball of fire falling earthwards. We thought, rather naively, that they may have been 'scarecrows' which we thought were devices which simulated doomed aircraft. Actually it was just a rumour, they didn't exist, they were in fact falling aircraft. This myth was quickly erased when a flaming wing with a Merlin engine still attached narrowly missed us!

At the time we didn't understand why there had been no return fire from our gunners in the stricken planes. Now we know of course, many of the night fighters were equipped with a deadly new weapon, 2x20mm or 30mm cannon mounted on top of the fuselage facing upwards and forward with the gun sight in the cockpit. It was designed for the fighter to come under the bomber's blind spot and fire into the wing between the two engines thus piercing the fuel tanks. The tracer shells then started a fire that quickly spread, eventually reaching the bomb bay and blowing up the bomber. The lapse in time for the flames to take hold gave the fighter time to get away unscathed. It was a deadly accurate weapon, the Luftwaffe called it 'Schrage Musik' which we called 'slanting music' - Black humour! As an example of its accuracy, an ME110 pilot landed at base to refuel and rearm and the armourer advised him that he had only needed fifty-seven shells to shoot down three Lancasters!

After the disturbing sight of three of our bombers going down just ahead of us we decided very quickly that there was very little future in continuing down the 'suicide alley' or 'death row' so we banked sharply to port, diving to 17,500 feet. The action seemed to be taking place at our normal cruising height of 19,000 to 20,000 feet. At our new height we thankfully lost our contrail but we were, of course, still in bright moonlight. We were now parallel with the main stream but a mile or so removed. As we flew along and looked to starboard we saw almost continuous losses as our bombers exploded or went down in flames - we had never seen the like before. Our fears of the heavy losses which we witnessed were later confirmed, no less than seventy-three of our bombers were shot down on the one and a half hour, 165 mile leg.

We paid for our slight deviation as we passed close to the outer Ruhr AA fire. We were hit by a few distant bursts of the white hot shrapnel from AA shells but suffered no serious problems.

We noticed as we flew along, in effect paralleling the main stream, a number

of bombers that were at the same height and heading as we were. They had also deviated somewhat from the main stream and there were almost enough to form a formation and fly as a squadron.

We turned south at what we estimated was the turning point and we soon noticed a city under attack way off to starboard. We later found that it was Schweinfurt! Some pathfinders had turned south too early and had initially marked the city. This completely unscheduled attack by some two hundred of our bombers was quite successful hitting no less than three ball bearing factories - better results than the previous planned attack on that target!

We carried on south towards Nuremberg and in the distance we saw widely dispersed pathfinder flares. Aircraft which were close enough to observe the flares took their pick of the markers and bombed - there was no Master Bomber to direct us. The flares disappeared rapidly through the 10/10ths cloud over Nuremberg. (At the briefing it was predicted that heavy cloud on the way to the target, and the target itself, would be clear for our early marking and bombing - it turned out to be exactly the reverse!) As there was no back-up markers and no Master Bomber to advise us we let loose on where we had seen the last of the two sets of markers disappear.

One of our bombers was shot down to the north of the city and could be seen aflame on the ground. A number of our bombers dropped their load on this, what they thought was a marker or portion of the burning city. Unfortunately their bombs fell on the farming village of Schoberg, completely obliterating the unfortunate place.

Many of our bombs fell on open fields to the east of Nuremberg - The unscheduled winds again! No doubt our 'tilling' of the fields contributed to a fine harvest!

We turned west for home with still another 'long leg' to negotiate. This time there was cloud cover and the force was well scattered. Our return trip was uneventful although we had to negotiate concentrations of searchlights which we saw ahead but saw no fighter activity or any of our bombers going down. However, afterwards it was found that twenty-three of our bombers were shot down on this return leg.

We landed at Fiskerton on the last of our fuel as we had been airborne for eight hours and which had included quite a bit of stress and strain. We mixed with our fellow crews at de-briefing and I've never seen such exhaustion in young men.

At the de-briefing the officers expressed doubt in our reports of the losses that we had 'allegedly' seen and it wasn't until the next day that the 'brass', realized the extent.

To be concluded.

WE WEREN'T THAT LOW – WERE WE?

By

John Chatterton

In May '45 my faithful Flight Engineer, Doug Packman, and I were at East Kirkby with No 630 Squadron, in the official posts of “Squadron Instructors”. This meant that we had to fly with each aircrew at “ten sortie” intervals to check their general competence, and make sure that they were not departing from the approved 5 Group procedures. When the German War ended, this developed mainly into checking new crews that were posted in, but I was delighted to have the work varied by other post war tasks. I was sorry to miss the repatriation of P.O.W.s from Belgium, but happily joined in with the disposal of bombs in the North Sea – fortunately “Friends of the Earth” were not yet invented! The ‘iron” bombs were quite safe to store without their fuses, (in fact my son Mike dropped some of them whilst practicing for the Falklands War forty years later) but the thousands of incendiaries were getting well past their “sell-by” date.

For all this of course I needed a crew, and luckily I inherited one from a Canadian pilot who had taken early repatriation. The first job we had together was a “Ruhr Tour”. These were 6-hour trips over the devastated cities of Germany, loaded with the dedicated ground crews who had worked so hard to make it all possible. All the other No 630 Lancs were filled with fitters, armourers, wireless mechanicss etc, but for some reason our load comprised:- the Medical Officer, the Dentist, an Accounts Officer, an Equipment man and the Padre.

It was a superb day, just a bit of low cloud over the French Coast, but otherwise clear all the way, and I was looking forward to doing a bit of serious low flying away from the restrictions over our native soil. In France we strayed over an American Air Base and stirred up a hornet’s nest, with the result that we got a prolonged series of simulated attacks from a pair of Thunderbolts. Our two gunners swung their turrets heartily but manfully resisted the urge to use their triggers. I too was mindful of the fact that my passengers had only one brown paper bag apiece, so although sorely tempted, I restrained from demonstrating my special “corkscrew”.

Back to the Low Level – I achieved my ambition of causing ripples along the Rhine, but my abiding memory is of flying down a wide lane in the Black Forest and looking up at the startled fire wardens perched in their little wooden huts on poles above the treetops. For two thirds of the time we flew at 1000ft or above to be able to get a proper view of what we had come for, and I was

particularly keen to see how many chimney pots I had loosened in places like Essen and Dusseldorf.

Having returned to base, the passengers were full of thanks to the crew who had made sure that they got good views from all the turrets etc, but as I found to my cost later, their enthusiasm didn't stop there, and they recounted their adventures to anyone who would listen that evening in the Bar at the Officers' Mess. The M.O. was shooting a line worthy of any aircrew :- "We flew so low over the sea that I had to stand up to see over the waves!", not noticing that the Station Commander had joined the group behind him. The Group Captain was not amused, and on failing to get the pilot's name from the chastened line-shooter, he searched out the No. 630 Squadron C.O. – Wing Commander Wyld, and told him to get to the bottom of this breach of discipline.

Happily ignorant of all this, I spent the night at my parents' house in the next village, and arrived for work at 8.30am to be greeted by the B Flight Commander – Sqn Ldr "Pil" Pilgrim, an ex colleague from No 44. Squadron many months previously. "You need to get a good story ready about yesterday's low flying, - Wyld is after your blood! Wants to see you at 9 o'clock!". I hastily found my crew, and asked them to do their best, as we had no time to concoct a story, and then I reported to the Wing Commander. I was not his favourite airman as he suspected that I was "living out" despite not having his permission; and he tried to catch me out; "Did you enjoy your low flying yesterday?" I pleaded ignorance, and said after further probing that I had perhaps briefly got below 700ft because of the layer of low cloud on entering France. Frustrated by this dumb (in more ways than one) pilot, he testily dismissed me, ordering the crew to be sent in one at a time.

As I found out later they came up with some remarkable answers:-

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Flight Engineer – | "I was very busy with my fuel consumption records and keeping my log written up, but when I did look out we were at normal heights Sir!" |
| Bomb Aimer - | "Most of the time I let one of the passengers into my position Sir, and anyway I don't like to look down – it makes me feel airsick," |
| Navigator - | "I cannot see outside from my desk Sir, and I was kept busy with all the extra course alterations." |
| Wireless Operator - | "I didn't have time to look around Sir as the Signals Leader had given me a long list of DF stations to be contacted." |

Mid Upper Gunner - "From my turret it is very difficult to see directly underneath, Sir."

Rear Gunner - "For most of the time I was busy doing sky searches Sir, as stipulated by the Gunnery Leader, and for the rest I was warning the skipper about the dangerous approaches made by some American fighters."

The Wing Commander then called us all in together and after a short homily on our alleged heinous offence he dismissed us with: -

"All I can say Chatterton is that you've either got the stupidest crew in Bomber Command – or – the most loyal!"

I said "Thank you Sir", saluted on behalf of the company; we smartly about turned and filed out, shutting the door quietly behind us.

Pil's office was nearby and he reported hearing sounds of uncontrolled glee as we left the building. I again had reason to be grateful to him, as later that evening he sought out the lineshooters and persuaded them to modify their stories in the Mess when in the vicinity of the Group Captain. Apparently only the Padre demurred, saying "Surely you don't expect me to tell a lie?" After nearly sixty years we have tended to alter our opinion of the Wing Co. He probably was quite relieved to have satisfied the demands of the Station Commander whilst preserving intact, the honour of his squadron.

But what about me? This crew had done me proud, and the lump in my throat was matched only by the one that I experienced when saying farewell to my first crew twelve months previously. Something had to be done! Although I'm virtually a non drinker, the occasion called for a few beers, so the Austin Seven was wound up for the three mile trip to the Red Lion at Revesby. We got four inside and slid open the "sunshine roof" to provide hand holds for the other three, one on the running board at each side, and the other standing on the rear luggage rack. He was originally on the bonnet, sitting astride the protruding radiator cap, but after the first mile the radiator boiled over, affecting a rather sensitive region, so after an anguished shout for us to stop, he hastily changed places. Over the next two miles the cool night air dried him out a bit, but at the pub the barmaid caused some embarrassment by pointing out the damp area on his trousers. His mates didn't help matters. One opined: - "I didn't think he scared that easily!" while another said; - "I know he was in the rear turret, but we weren't that low over the sea! Or were we?"

With Tiger Force and Okinawa beckoning, I thought: - "This crew will do for me!"

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

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

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

By

Paul Gaunt

Part 7

Fourteenth Operation:- Bombing Battlecruisers at Brest, Scharnhorst & Prinz Eugen, January 27th/28th, 1942

HAMPDEN AE112

Sgt FREEMAN: pilot

Sgt BUSH: navigator

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt OSBALDESTON: air gunner

Up 0017 hrs, down 0628 hrs (6 hrs 45 mins)

Details of Sortie: - Primary target bombed from 12,500 feet in good moon light and fair conditions. Smoke screen and landmarks assisted identification of Cap St. Mathieu and Rescanvel Promontory. Docks in sight on release, one burst seen.

Summary of Events: -

Weather slight snow, ground frost, otherwise clear and bright with cloud patches. 17 aircraft detailed to attack battlecruisers Scharnhorst and Prinz Eugen at Brest Harbour. All aircraft took off at short intervals and six aircraft were successful in attacking the primary objective. Of these, four saw bursts, but no results, although all aircraft had the targets in their sights on releasing bombs. Three aircraft attacked alternative targets, dock installations in the area. Haze prevented positive identification of target in these cases – no bursts were seen here. Flak was intense and accurate. Seven aircraft failed to attack any target owing to heating failures and in four cases, inability to find target and navigational errors. No losses.

Results, BCWD: -

All aircraft returned safely to Scampton. Brest Harbour was possibly the most protected target area in Europe, completely surrounded by every calibre of anti aircraft gun. Also smoke screens were used extensively.



Sgt. Ken Bush
Killed 1944



Tubby 1941



Sgt. Freeman
Tubby's pilot

Fifteenth Operation:- Bombing Battlecruisers at Brest, Scharnhorst & Gneisenau, Light cruiser Prinz Eugen, January 31st, 1942

HAMPDEN AE132

Sgt FREEMAN: pilot

Sgt KIRBY: navigator

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt OSBALDESTON: air gunner

Up 1710 hrs, down 2320 hrs (6 hrs 10 mins)

Details of Sortie:- Alternative (Docks) bombed at 12,000 feet in 8-10 cloud. Owing to weather conditions battleship could not be seen. Bombs seen to enter dock area, but no bursts seen. Two bundles of nickels in target area.

Summary of Events: -

Weather - snow at intervals, increasing later vis. 2-5 miles, wind S.E. but variable. 18 aircraft to stand by to bomb battlecruisers at Brest. Alternatively the dock area. All aircraft took off at short intervals and eight aircraft failed to attack any target, this was due to two cases of engine failure, one of oxygen failure and the rest on account of inability to see the target because of the smoke screen. One of these aircraft jettisoned bombs which were fused near D'Oussant and in three cases Nickels were dropped from the remainder of the aircraft. One bombed the primary target and the remainder attacked the docks, six aircraft observing bursts in the area. All aircraft found the smoke screen over the docks interfered with proper identification and observation of results. This raid was perhaps one of the last raids carried out by the RAF before the German Battle Squadron moved up the channel towards their home ports. The

defences around Brest were being stepped up and as a result, three Manchesters and two Hampdens were reported missing. All 49 Squadron returned home.

Results, BCWD: -

Of the 72 aircraft that attacked Brest, three Manchesters and two Hampdens were lost. The Manchesters were from 61 Squadron, which had sent only nine aircraft on the raid.



Superb (and highly unofficial!) study of Tubby, Ken & Terry on Hampden AE132.

The Scharnhorst & Gneisenau

These two mighty battlecruisers, the pride of the German navy, were both completed 1938-9 with a displacement full load of 38,900 tons. A length of 234.9 mtrs with a beam of 30.0 mtrs and design draft of 8.3 mtrs was formidable indeed. Carrying a complement of 1,670 men, the armament consisted of nine 11 inch guns (3 x 3), twelve 5.9 inch (6 x 2), 14- 4.1 inch guns (7 x 2), 16- 37mm guns (8 x 2), six 21 inch torpedo tubes and LX aircraft. The ships belt armour was up to 13.8 inches thick and turrets up to 14.2 inches.

These ocean raiders had many successful engagements. Their main purpose was to sink allied convoys without engaging the accompanying battleships; hit and run without sustaining any damage.

On June 8th, 1940, the raiders found the aircraft carrier HMS Glorious with little protection, a few destroyers and no aircraft in the air, they quickly dispatched the carrier to the depths using gun fire - this was a huge loss to the admiralty and the accompanying destroyers as well, but not before HMS Acasto torpedoed the Scharnhorst, putting her in dock for five months. Breaking out again with some difficulty, the pair on March 15th/16th, 1941, intercepted an unprotected convoy and proceeded to sink sixteen merchant ships.

The invasion of Norway saw the Gneisenau covering the landings. The British battle cruiser HMS Renown engaged and put 3 x 15 inch shells into her. Admiral Lutjens broke off the engagement and fled among the frequent snow squalls.

The pair were not together again until January 1941. They arrived at Brest on

March 22nd, 1941, for a period of three months, to complete the necessary refitting. The RAF raids kept the ships there for 11 months until the breakout on February 11th, 1942.

Operation Cerberus

The Channel dash by the Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Prinz Eugen and accompanying ships 2300 hours, February 11th, 1942 This powerful squadron, under Vice-Admiral Ciliax, slipped their moorings at Brest, moved out and rounded Ushant, following a narrow channel previously swept of mines and marked at various viewpoints by small anchored patrol craft moving in an eastward direction, up through the English Channel. A catalogue of errors enabled the squadron to move unopposed, right up and through Cap Griz Nez.

Various attempts were made to attack the Squadron, but with little or no success and sustaining high losses. Six Fleet Air Arm Fairey Swordfish aircraft from Manston were shot down in one raid. Bristol Beauforts from their Cornwall base also took heavy losses, scoring no hits on the battleships. The early gardening operations were to have some success for the RAF: the Gneisenau and Scharnhorst, moving eastward of the Dutch island of Terschelling, hit mines; the Scharnhorst was seriously damaged and struggled to Wilhemshaven on one engine, while being seriously flooded by an estimated 1,000 tons of water. The other ships reached comparative safety of various Elbe ports.

The earlier mine-laying operations by No 5 Group were concentrated in an area to the North and West of Terschelling, where the Scharnhorst struck one



**The German warships lying at anchor,
Brest, July 21st, 1941.
Photo by George Webb.**

mine at 1430 hrs, off Flushing, and another at 2134 hrs north of Terschelling. So we can, with some justification, accredit this success to No.5 Group's earlier efforts.

The movement of the capital ships brought to an end perhaps the largest combined effort of the RAF against naval power, a task that would not be missed. During the period the ships were at Brest and La Pallice. The RAF despatched 3,599 aircraft sorties, 2,692 aircraft had attacked with the loss of 53 machines, 4,118 tons of bombs had been dropped on the two docks and ships.

These capital ships would never again be ocean raiders. The Scharnhorst was sunk by British warships after a classic gunnery duel; early in the engagement the Scharnhorst suffered a direct hit on her radar scanner. The engagement that night rendered her blind, the British war ships stood off and shelled her at will. Loss of life was enormous, many sailors were drowned, help was not on hand and fearing U-boat attacks, the British ships could not stop and pick up survivors.

Scharnhorst's sister ship Gneisenau was bombed whilst in harbour at Kiel with her forward end virtually blown off. She was never re-commissioned and was dismantled in 1943. The attack was carried out by 49 Squadron and other Wellington and Halifax squadrons. Both 49 Squadron Hampdens involved reported hits on the Gneisenau.

Aircraft & Crew Losses

February 11th, 1942 – The 'Channel Dash'. In recent months, Bomber Command had dropped over 3,000 tons of bombs on the battle cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and the light cruiser Prinz Eugen, as they resided in the French port of Brest. The two larger ships had both been badly damaged and the threat of further damage had prevented the ships from sailing out into the Atlantic on another raid against allied shipping.

As previously stated, in a daring and well executed operation, the Germans sailed their three battle cruisers with accompanying destroyers and minelayers straight through the English Channel in the most appalling weather, to the protection of the German ports. What followed on behalf of the British Command has been labelled a catalogue of catastrophes. The capital ships arrived at their destinations, but not before striking mines dropped by 5 Group and 49 Squadron in particular. The Scharnhorst hit two mines and the Gneisenau one. Most of Bomber Command was stood down for the day; only 5 Group was at four hours notice. The bomber squadrons made a frantic effort to prepare planes for attacks which were mounted in three waves. Other aircraft of Coastal and Fighter Commands and of the Fleet Air Arm were also involved.

To be continued.

READER'S LETTERS

Associate Member Antony Edwards added a postscript to his message:

“p.s. This year my Family and I had an engraved stone laid in memory of our late Father at the IBCC. He would have been impressed by and proud of, the IBCC. It would have been wonderful if he had lived to see it. (RIP 1997).”

**FLT LT JIM EDWARDS DFC
49 SQN NAVIGATOR
SN 121941**

The following message was entered in our website guest book by Richard Frohm, Williamsburg, Virginia:

“I am in the process of doing research on my father-in-law (John ‘Jack’ Flynn). He was a flight engineer / top turret gunner on a B17 bomber. They flew out of Rattlesden Army Air Force Base in England. They were shot down over Zeitz, Germany, on the 30th November 1944. There were only two other survivors. He was held at Luft Stalag IV(sic) from early December until the forced march in February 1945. He was able to survive and was liberated by British and Canadian troops. I have a photo of him in a British uniform. I must say he looks good in it.

“I want to thank you for this website. It has been a help in my research. I hope to get his history published here in the states. His story of survival is truly amazing. Current generations need to know of the sacrifice of all the young men of the allied air forces. We are free thanks to all of them.

By one of those strange coincidences, five days later Stalag Luft IV cropped up again. I suppose that this e-mail should come under a different heading as Susan Morley, the writer, is neither a member or reader:

“...in case anyone is interested in taking part in the re-enactment of The Black March that the local Poles commemorate each year.

“They walk from the site of Stalag Luft 1V at Gros Tychow to the railway station on February 6th (I am told it's approximately 2 miles).

“Having been in touch with the daughters of American Airmen whom my father treated, they tell me that they wish to commemorate the march in early May this year alongside the liberation of our fathers from Fallingbostal (My father was liberated there on April 17th) or at Gudrow (May 2nd) so apart from myself and my daughter, I am not sure any British or American relatives of POWs held at Stalag Luft 1V will be present on February 6th. I have made contact with a local whose father was a POW at Stalag Luft 1V to ask for more details about the day.”

Following my acknowledgement of her message Susan replied:

“The American airmen's daughters are planning on retracing part of The Black March in early May of this year since a number of their fathers were liberated at Gudow on May 2nd 1945 (My father was liberated at Fallingbostal on April 17th by The British Army. He remained behind at the camp to care for those too weak to march.) Cecil Room told me this when I met up with him after I'd discovered 'The Last Escape.'

“Cecil kept a journal on the march noting dates, places, and distances travelled.

“The German TV Channel are planning on filming this May event for German TV. I don't know whether the Americans are going to film as well. I do think this will be an important event to record. I hope to join them.

“My siblings and I had no idea how many men my father thought he'd lost on The Black March from Stalag Luft IV until we read the number that he disclosed to Cecil Room that's quoted in 'The Last Escape' (as many as 150). He rarely spoke about the war until his latter years when he and Cecil rekindled their friendship.

“I know that the British were few in number compared to the thousands of American airmen who were held at Stalag Luft VI and IV, and have only recently discovered how my father ended up at Stalag Luft VI having joined The Royal Army Medical Corps. He volunteered to go there as doctors were needed.

“I always thought it strange as a child that my father was invited to The RAF reunions and not ones held by The Army.

“I don't want to step on anyone's toes re this coming May's planned commemoration, but I do think relatives of British ex POWs might be interested.

“From what I've heard via my American contacts there is a commemoration planned to remember the liberation of Stalag Luft 1 at Barth.”

There was a fine example recently of the service that we, the association, are able to provide for those seeking information. This enquiry was received by the secretary from non-member Gerry Panter:

“My Father, Norman Douglas Panter, was a POW at Stalag 4B and then later at another camp until the end of the war. I have paid for his war records but could not find out anything about his time as a POW.

“I understand that he was flown back to the UK to Dunsfold, Surrey and so assume that he would have been de-briefed at that time. Could you please let me know if it is possible to get a copy of that de-briefing as it appears that the International Red Cross will hold all POW records for one hundred years which is a long time to wait for families to be allowed to learn about their relatives.”

I referred the query to 'The Crew'. WWII Archivist Ed Norman came back:

“PoW debriefs are held at the PRO at Kew under WO344.

(War Office: Directorate of Military Intelligence: Liberated Prisoner of War Interrogation Questionnaires)

“But from memory they do not contain much - 'Did you try to escape? Did you see any atrocities?’

“There are quite a few stories available via Google that will tell a more enlightened story about the camp.”

Our Researcher Colin Cripps also replied: The file he requires at the NA is WO344, he might like to order with a phone in to Kew, here is a hyper link and info page. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-prisoners-second-world-war-korean-war/>

This was passed on to Gerry together with a request, as prompted by Webmaster Malcolm Brooke, for photographs of his father. Gerry responded with photographs of his father plus one of the crew and ground crew:

“Thank you for your prompt reply. Please find attached photo's of my Dad that you are welcome to add to his record.

“He was captured after three days on the run and sent to Stalag 4B. He was involved in the camp magazine and found guilty of taking photos of the starving Russian prisoners. He was then sent to another prison for the remainder of the war and was in constant danger of being executed. It is this part of his POW period that I would like to find more about.”

After a short time, in which he did some 'digging', Ed e-mailed Gerry:

“Alan has copied your enquiry and photos to me - thank you for those. ED438 was a reliable aircraft, going down on its 53rd sortie. My father's crew took it to Hanover on the 8th October and were shot down on the 22nd in a rather new P-Peter. Dad also ended up in Stalag 1VB and it was your comment that your father was transferred to another camp that intrigued me. I found him in 'Footprints on the Sands of Time' by Oliver Clutton-Brock. The information there gives his pow number - 261525 - showing he was registered as a pow at Muhlberg. But there is a note stating: 'sent for court-martial to Fort Zinner (Zinna) 4/45' (see p.240 *No Time for Fear.*)

“I have this among my collection somewhere and will try to find it, though it should be available online. Try Abe Books.

“Fort Zinna was a German prison for conscientious objectors, insubordinate personnel and deserters but also allied military personnel. Your dad must have been quite a pain in the backside to them to get sent there. He was also a lucky man; quite often offenders were executed there but the prison was liberated by the Americans probably days after he was incarcerated.

<https://en.stsg.de/cms/node/887> “

Thus there was a good result all round. Gerry had some leads to follow up and Ed and Malcolm had some photographs for their respective files. Just another interesting day's work by 'The Crew' of 49 Squadron Association!

Associate Member Arthur Burn's e-mail continued:

"...Secondly, I have over recent years renewed my interest in Orders and Medals research and have been very fortunate in acquiring some campaign medals and awards to 49 Squadron when they have come up for sale.

"I fully understand that the subject of medal collecting can be emotive. I assure you my interest in medals is not for financial gain. I regard myself as a temporary custodian and my interest is the military and social history surrounding the circumstances of awards and the genealogy of the medal recipient.

"To that end, I would be happy to share copies of photographs, documents and logbooks etc for incorporating into your website. Do I contact the archivist or researcher?"

I directed him to both Ed and Malcolm and suggested that the IBCC would like to have copies of the logbooks that he holds and he agreed to contact them.

We are contacted by some interesting people in the course of our association work. Following is a series of e-mails resulting from an approach by non member C. J. Thompson F.R.Ae.S to our Archivist Ed Norman:

"Subject: FLYING OFFICER HAROLD DOD KILLED IN ACTION
5 JULY 1944

"While going through my late father's extensive photo collection I came across this photo of his great pre war friend Harold who I understood was killed in the second world war. After extensive research I managed to get his full details and the fact he was on 49 Sqn and based at RAF Fiskerton. My father visited Harold's grave in late 1945 and attached for interest is the paperwork authorising his visit and details of Harold and his crew's grave location in France. My father was in the 79 Armoured Brigade and fought his way from Normandy (D Day plus 2) all the way into Germany.



"As an ex RAF pilot (1961 – 1976 72 Squadron) the story of Bomber Command and the great human sacrifices

resonates and I hope the addition of Harold's photo on your 49 Squadron websites will add another small piece to the squadron's history and ensure his and his crew's sacrifice will continue to be remembered."

The letter below has been trimmed for editing purposes.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to your letter dated 9th November, 1945, and to inform you that the burial place of Acting Flying Officer H.F. Dod, Royal Air Force, has been located just south of Gouchelles, France, on a wooded hillside between the road and the railway. Gouchelles is a small village approximately 25 miles south-west of Amiens.

The grave, which is surmounted by a cross bearing your friend's name, is close by the wreckage of his aircraft.

These burial details have been conveyed to Acting Flying Officer Dod's next of kin.

I am to express the hope that this information may be of assistance to you in your proposed visit to your friend's graveside.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

L. Schaff

for Director of Personal Services.

As Mr Thompson had signed his e-mail 'Bob'. Ed queried the 'C.J. initials:

"If I may be familiar - a nickname? re signature. Thank you very much for the photo of F/O Dod and for the letters. As you had noticed, we don't hold much information on him nor his crew as of yet; no one has contacted us concerning them. So your offering is quite valuable to us. I will copy your email to other members of our 'crew' including our webmaster who is always keen to expand the website. F/O Dod did his "2nd Dickey" trip with P/O Bell on 28th April 1944 before going down on his eighteenth operation to St Leu D'Esserent.

"May I ask the name of your father; I like to include the source of material as does Malcolm who will no doubt add your father's name to the photograph. I assume that you were a helicopter pilot? Difficult machines to fly apparently, though my knowledge is limited - being a non-Raf wallah."

'Bob' Thompson then responded:

"My given name is Clive but on joining the RAF in 1961 at RAF Halton as an

CERTIFICATE.

Subject:- Short Leave - Visit.

Re. Lieut R.J.Thompson. (RME)

Gard	R/T-00
14	12 45
- PARIS -	

The above mentioned officer has permission to visit Gouchelles, near AMIENS to inspect the grave of his deceased friend. Under Secretary of State (Air Ministry) P.419716/44/P4.MR(2) dated 19 Nov.45. refers.

This visit will be carried out during his return journey to his unit from short leave to Paris.

Cushman.

BAOR.
5 Dec.45.

Major.,
O.C. 327 Armd Tps Wkshp.RMCE.

RD.

ARMED
SET 22. Tps. Wks. 11
5 DEC 1945
REF. :

Instrument Fitter Apprentice I thought the name Clive was a bit sissy so I told everyone my name was Bob and it has stuck as a nickname. My service career was a bit convoluted - getting commissioned after RAF Halton as a pilot and undertaking training on Jet Provosts and Folland Gnats before being posted to Photo Recon Canberras but getting suspended halfway through the course due to being too tall for the aircraft. I was posted to Hunters but again was suspended for being too tall and so ended up on helicopters flying the Wessex on 72 Sqn at RAF Odiham. Volunteered for fixed wing flying instructor course and got posted to RAF Leeming as a basic flying instructor as I was OK to fly the Jet Provost. In 1971 I ejected at low level after a multi bird strike and lost nearly an inch and after recovery was declared fit and able to fly other ejection seat aircraft. Got selected to lead the a two aircraft display team The Gemini in 1973 and then to lead a four aircraft team The Swords in 1974. Got a posting to Buccaneers but volunteered for redundancy as the RAF said they had too many pilots and left the RAF in 1976 and pursued an extensive fixed wing and rotary career in the civilian world. I ended up as Chief Test Pilot at Martin Baker involved with ejection seat testing and development. If you are interested you can see some of my videos on you tube at

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsNBTDsg_vG2aolcAHCZ9Fg

“My father’s name was Robert Thompson and he and Harold were great friends before the war and they lived in Southall West London.”