

The 4T9er



**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
February 2021 Issue 57**



Alan Parr

TRIBUTE TO ALAN PARR

It has been a year since the last issue of our magazine was distributed, but, as the title proudly states; 'There is life in the Old Dog yet.'

But first, it is our sad duty to pay homage to its architect.

It is with great regret that we inform our members and friends of the passing of our much respected Secretary, Alan Parr. Alan had not been well for some time and 2020 was a particularly hard year for him. He quietly passed on Thursday 12th November in the West Midlands Hospital, surrounded by his loving family. Alan was 82.

Alan took over the role as our 'Skipper' and Secretary in early 2006 just before Tom Gatfield was taken into hospital. Tom had successfully led our association over many years ably assisted by his wife Marion. But Toms' passing meant he was unable to give Alan any guidance: yet it also meant Alan was free to make subtle changes to our make-up. He formed a new committee to handle research, enquiries, web site formation, history and formal representations. Alan realised these seven members were the same number that manned the Lancaster and named us his 'crew' and he was our skipper. It was a conceit that we all enjoyed.

The introduction of new member categories expanded our membership capabilities and his idea of a website put us 'out there.' His relaxed approach to our reunions retained their necessary formality while at the same time, allowing attendees a more easy and chatty atmosphere.

Alan was truly delighted in achieving the placement of our 49 Squadron memorial at The National Arboretum at Alrewas. Shaped from marble in the form of the squadron badge, few of our members knew of the lengthy, bureaucratic and trying conditions set by the Monuments Committee which Alan had to negotiate for its placement.

But above all, Alans 'new' magazine format gave us a more professional approach and successfully joined all our members together in a warm embrace of fellowship. The association gained many more members because of it.

I believe that was Alans' crowning glory and his legacy to us.

However, Alan would have been the first to acknowledge the unswerving support and assistance he received from his wife Barbara, and she will remain in our thoughts.

Alan tried hard to avoid his successor inheriting under the same, difficult conditions that he accepted; yet this was not to be.

So we welcome our new 'skipper' Robert McEaney and wish him every success.

With thanks to our Archivist Ed Norman

TRIBUTE TO PAM CRIPPS



Sadly, we also lost a member of our 'Groundcrew' on the 29th of December; Pam Cripps, wife of our Researcher, Colin. Pam had been suffering from polycythaemia for over four years which violently mutated into Leukaemia. Weakened by the disease, Pam had been taken into hospital where she fatally contracted Covid-19. She will be greatly missed by all her friends in our association and those in her community where she served with the local Women's Institute. Always smiling, full of life and fun and always first to help, Pam is a great loss to us all.

Introduction from Robert McEneaney
Nephew of Terence Colon McEneaney, Navigator ND 474



It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Alan. With his wife, Barbara, Alan made a significant contribution to the Association. As Ed Norman recalled in his tribute, Alan was the Architect of the Association as we know it today. When he took over the role from Tom Gatfield in 2006, Alan formed The Crew and introduced the new format for our Newsletter.

As a longstanding Associate member of the Association, I'm significantly aware of the important role the 49ers play. Not just maintaining contact with our Veterans, but also supporting those seeking information regarding relatives who served with the Squadron. The website has proved a most valuable asset as a means of sharing information and assisting those researching their relatives. The update page is constantly adding information almost on a weekly basis with enquiries and submissions from members and relatives groups.

On a personal note, it was my father, the youngest of his family, who kept the flame of remembrance burning as he honoured the memory of his brother. My uncle, Terence McEneaney was the Navigator on ND474 lost with all the crew returning from a mission to Stuttgart on the 15th March 1944.

A photograph of my uncle took pride of place in our living room. Although my parents' generation rarely spoke of the war years, my father did recall the devastating affect his brothers loss had on his mother who sadly passed away herself in 1952.

The first time I contacted the Association was in 1984, when my father was planning his first visit to his brothers grave at Durnbach War Cemetery in Germany. I remember the conversation with Tom Gatfield, who lived only a few miles from my family and I. Tom was incredibly generous with his time and happy to share his wealth of information. Unfortunately, our conversations pre-date even Google, which makes the content of our discussions all the more important.

My own journey with the 49ers has enabled me to make many new friends, the majority of whom are on the same journey of remembrance. Through the Association I met Louise Jennings Hoole, niece of Ronnie Hoole, Flight Engineer on ND474. Together, with the support of our families, were able to form a Relatives Group. We are proud that we were able to honour the crew of ND474, and with the help of the people of Bolstern, place a memorial at the crash in 2014.

Before his passing, Alan and I talked about the roll of Association Secretary. Sadly, we never got the opportunity to sit down and talk about the route forward. However, due to Alan's high levels of efficiency, I have a format to follow and will do my utmost to repay his trust in me.

With the Covid restrictions in place, Annette and I eagerly await the opportunity to meet with the rest of The Crew. Their collective knowledge of all things 49ers is truly remarkable and we look forward to meeting with them all as soon as possible.

It is my wish that, by the time we issue the next newsletter, we will have met with The Crew. We can then make plans for a 49ers gathering, if not later this year, then certainly in 2022.

Finally, to Barbara and Colin, you are both very much in our thoughts at this difficult and sad time for you and your families. The contribution made by Pam and Alan to the association will not be forgotten.

IN MEMORIAM

Pam Cripps	Alan Parr
J.E. Barraclough	W.H. Cooke L de H
E. Grundy	D. Hiscock

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Paul King

I regret to announce the passing of John Barraclough who died on June 13th, aged 98. John was a Cpl. Electrician who was posted into 49 Squadron on February 1st 1942.. Ever popular Bill ‘Titch’ Cooke died on August 28th aged 95.

I have pleasure in welcoming New Associate Member Paul King who is the grandson of the late Sgt. Frank Campbell. Many of you will be familiar with the story of how Alan Morgan lost his fingers to frostbite but for those who are not, I reproduce herewith Alan’s account which appeared in The 4T9er in August 2019. What has that got to do with Sgt. Campbell I hear you say? Well, read on: *‘Shortly after leaving the target the main entrance door blew open. Sgt. Campbell the wireless operator went back to try to deal with it. After a while, the skipper instructed me to go back and see if I could help. I found the W/OP had passed out from lack of oxygen but I managed to connect him up to the supply at the rest bed and he soon regained consciousness. The skipper then told me to carry on with the attempt to close the rear door. I also passed out when my oxygen bottle expired. At the same time I was close to the open door with an outside temperature of minus 42 degrees. My skipper sensed that something had gone wrong and reduced height from 22,000ft. Down to 10,000ft whilst the bomb aimer Sgt. Mackew came to my assistance.*

‘We made an emergency landing at Ford and from there I was taken to Chichester Hospital for treatment on my badly frost-bitten hands. Jack and the rest of the crew flew back to Fiskerton with the bomb aimer acting as flight engineer.’ Sgt. Campbell was Paul’s grandfather and went on to complete 32 operations with 49 Squadron.

The loss of Lancasters JB727 and JB231

2nd/3rd January 1944

Contribution from our webmaster Malcolm Brooke

Recently, the current Chairman of the Association, Stuart Keay, received a photograph of a new information board to be exhibited in an aviation museum north of Berlin. *See page 12*

The board contained information about the loss of 49 Squadron Lancaster JB727. We now strongly believe that this aircraft was involved in a mid-air collision with another 49 Squadron Lancaster, JB231 in an area about 65 miles NNE of Berlin.

The Wireless Operator of the second Lancaster was our previous Association Chairman, Ted Cachart.

Both Lancasters were recorded as 'Missing'.

Information was received from the Red Cross that the crew of JB231 had all managed to bail out and were being held as PoWs.

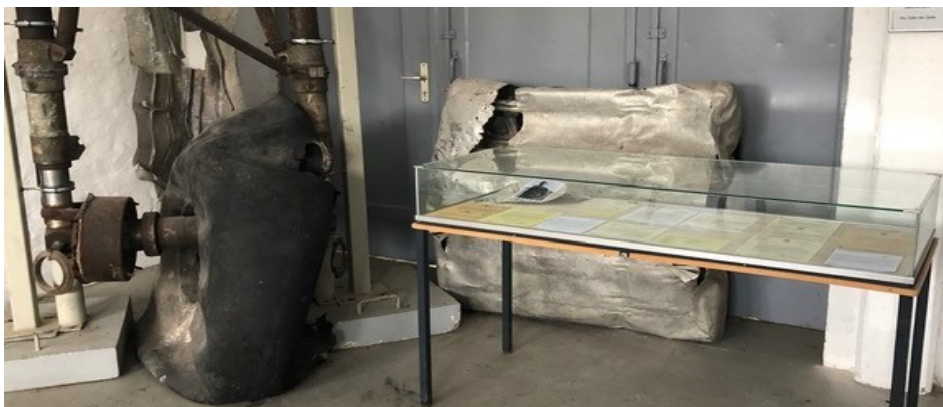
Until 1947 the fate of JB727 was still unknown. In that year, the Air Ministry informed the families of the crew that recently translated German documents informed them that a number of bodies had been recovered and buried in a local cemetery.

The actual number of bodies and their identities were not known.

The information board sent to Stuart by the museum was especially interesting to me.

The museum, the Luftfahrttechnischen Museum at Rechlin, was on the itinerary of my postponed 2020 tour of the old DDR.....Rechlin airfield was a top-secret Luftwaffe research centre before and during WW2.

I contacted the curator, Torsten Heinrichs, to ask when the museum might be reopening to the public as I hoped to visit in summer 2021.



The recovery parts of JB727 and a cabinet of documents are on display in the Rechlin Aeronautical Museum.

It was then that I discovered that in 1997 sports divers had found the wreckage of JB727 in Lake Müritz (at a depth of about 10m) and that large pieces had been recovered and were on display in the Rechlin museum.

A significant discovery was that of four regularly spaced cuts in the recovered tyre of JB727.

The experts at the museum believe these could have been caused by one of the propellers from another Lancaster (JB231). This new information now makes it even more difficult to understand exactly how the collision occurred.

It is best simply to accept that during the bomber stream making its final right turn towards Berlin, the flight paths of the 49 Squadron Lancasters merged.

In 1998 munitions were discovered and no further dives were authorised; the site was to be designated a war grave.

However, in June 2000, a specialist team recovered and defused the 4000lb 'cookie' which had been discovered in the wreck.

This recovery operation was completely unknown to the Association.

Philip and Audrey Walker of the Belton Historical Society have researched the life of Sgt Philip Camm (the Flight Engineer of JB727) and we knew from their work that, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, access to the site became possible (this invaluable research is linked from Sgt Camm's webpage)

The RAF investigation team concluded that there were six bodies in the grave but they were only able to identify two individuals.....Sgt Camm and F/L Palmer.

I visited the cemetery in 2011 during a trip to Berlin (not knowing anything about the museum) and the crew of JB727 were commemorated with three headstones.....Sgt Camm, F/L Palmer and a communal grave for four unknown airmen.

Hopefully, in 2021, I will be able to put all these experiences together.....to view the crash site near the edge of Lake Müritz, the Retzow cemetery and to visit the Rechlin museum in order to view the recovered wreckage of JB727.



In August 1998 as a result of discovered ammunition, the recovery efforts were suspended. The site was declared a 'war grave' and no further dives were permitted. However, in June 2000 a specialist team recovered and defused the Lancaster's 4000 lb 'cookie'

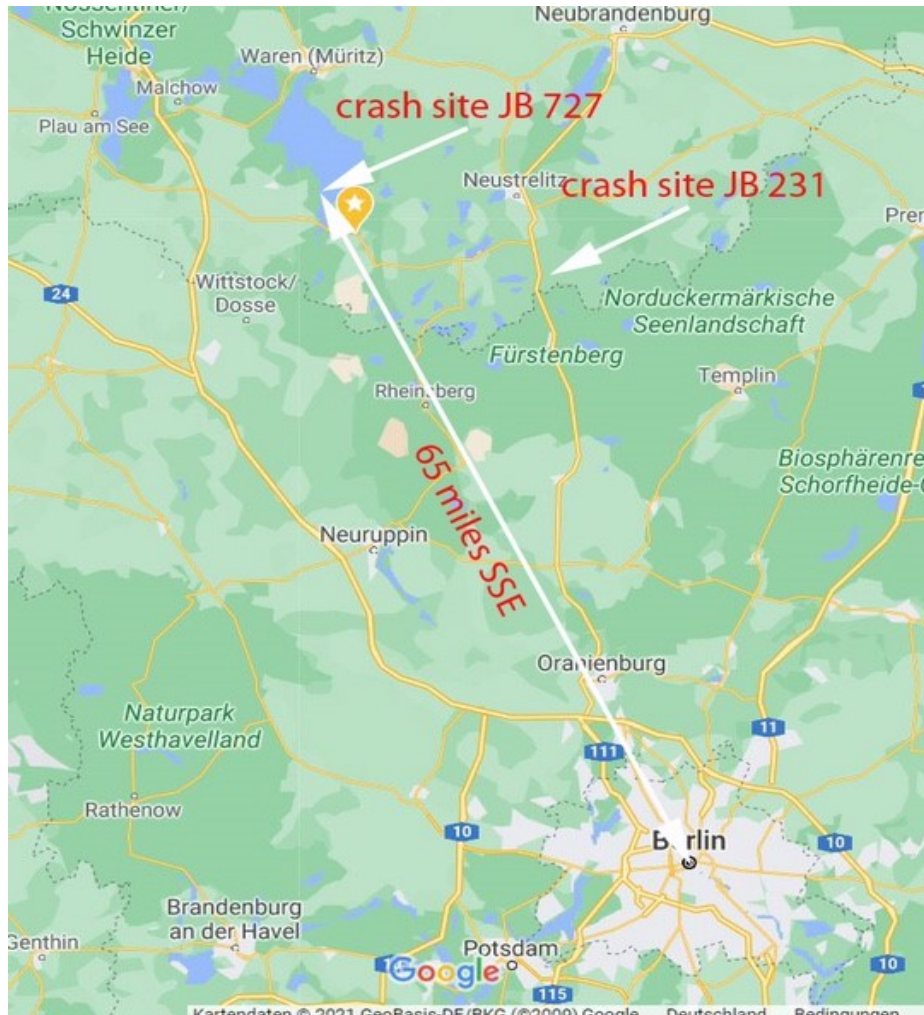


In 2002, after a lengthy investigation, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission were able to identify F/L Palmer and Sgt. Camm. Individual headstones were erected for these two airmen and a single headstone commemorated the four other bodies that could not be positively identified. One unknown crew member is still missing.

The images and much of the above information have been provided by Torsten Heinrichs from the 'Aeronautical Museum—Rechlin'.



The Recovery of JB727



It is now accepted that during the night 2/3rd January 1944, two 49 Squadron Lancaster's collided in the area 65 miles NNW of Berlin.

The aircraft involved were F/L Palmer's JB727 and F/O Young's JB231.

JB727 crashed in Lake Murtitz with the loss of all the crew but JB231, although severely crippled, remained airborne long enough for all the crew to bail out successful to become PoWs.

The abandoned JB231 finally crashed near the small town of Godendorf.



Flight accident "JB727 EA-S" on 3.1.1944

Eyewitness and Wireless Operator Ted Cachart remembers

On the night of January 2nd to 3rd, 1944, a Lancaster bomber with the registration number "JB 727 EA-S" of 49 Squadron Royal Air Force crashed over the Müritz Lake on its mission from Fiskerton (England) on its approach to the target, Berlin. The bomber, with a 4,250kg load of bombs, was brand new but the crew were flying their 11th operation. What happened?

For a long time, it was suspected that the bomber was shot down because German night fighters were active in the bomber stream that night. The cause of the crash was never determined. The recovery of the aircraft, discovered at the end of the nineties, was cancelled in March 1999 after an initial partial recovery and the wreck was declared a war grave. (See blackboard 'Avro Lancaster Airplane Crash').

At that time, the crew of Lancaster JB727 EA-S were:

Pilot F/L Cecil John Edward Palmer (21 yrs.)
Bomb Aimer F/O Ronald Stobo (21 yrs.)
Navigator F/O George Thomas Young (31 yrs.)
Flight Engineer Sgt. Philip O. Camm (23 yrs.)
Wireless Operator Sgt. Henry "Mick" Conrad (20 yrs.)
Air Gunner Sgt. Douglas Demas Russell Dallaway (20 yrs.)
Air Gunner Sgt. Derek Francis Prusher (18 yrs.)

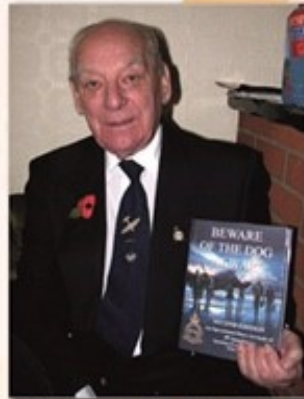


Photo with crew from a previous mission:
from left to right: unknown, F/O Robert Stobo, F/O George Thomas Young, F/L Jonny Palmer, unknown, Sgt. Philip Otley Camm

In 1947 the British Aviation Department informed the crew's families about the grave of their sons in Retzow. Investigations into the identity of Palmer and Camm in 1999 were not confirmed until 2002 by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The identification of four other crew members, who were also buried in Retzow, remained unclear, and a seventh crew member is still missing.

On July 26, 2007, the war veteran and eyewitness Edward "Ted" B. Cachart visited the museum in Rechlin. The 17-year-old at the time of the accident was a wireless operator on board the bomber JB 231 EA-N and flew laterally offset under the Lancaster JB 727 EA-S from F/L Palmer. When F/O J.E.M. Young of the JB 231 EA-N began a turn to the right over the Müritz in the direction of Berlin, the two aircraft collided with fatal consequences. A propeller of his lower four-engine Lancaster tore open the wheel arch of the other machine at the same time slashed the tire inside it four times at an even distance. (see exhibit) As a result, a wing broke off, causing the bomber to fall into the Müritz Lake with no chance of survival for the crew. The pilot F/L J.E.M. Young of the Lancaster bomber JB 231 EA-N kept his aircraft airborne until shortly before the city of Fürstenberg / Havel and the entire crew were able to bail out successfully. The abandoned machine then crashed near the small town of Godendorf. Ted Cachart and the crew members were taken prisoner of war and returned to England after the war.

The wooden crosses erected on the graves of the crew of JB727 EA-S at the funeral were cared for by a Retzow family for decades and replaced in 2002 by stone headstones for Palmer, Camm and four unfortunately unidentified bodies. Thanks to the visit by Ted Cachart and his comparison of the landing gear number with the exhibit, this officially undetected plane crash could be finally cleared up.



Ted Cachart as chairman of the 49th Squadron Association in 2010





BOMBER COMMAND / GENERAL

80th Anniversary of the Maiden Flight of the Avro Lancaster

January 8, 2021

(The photograph features the 7 squadron Avro Lancaster crew of pilot Alan Grant, whose story was told in the book 'D-Day Bombers')

Steve Darlow is an author and documentary consultant and currently developing three theatrical productions, which are set within the Second World War. In 2002 Steve founded Fighting High Publishing and he actively supports fundraising for military charities, most notably the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund.

(On 9th January 1941 the prototype of the Avro Lancaster flew its maiden flight. To mark the 80th anniversary here is a piece I wrote for the producers of 'The Lancaster: Britain's Flying Past', when they were in the process of devising the programme, trying to describe what the Lancaster represents.)

The Lancaster Bomber

The Avro Lancaster is a weapon, of war, designed and developed to deliver explosive to a designated target. That is its prime purpose. During the Second World War thousands of young men perished in the wreckage of fallen Lancaster's. Tens of thousands died as a result of its prime function.

But it has come to represent so much more.

The comfort, indeed the safety, of the crew was secondary. So why does the Lancaster, when it is on display at air shows, at museums, on television, evoke such fond memories and sentiment in veterans—a sentiment that has been adopted by the general British public.

The Lancaster represents the circumstance in which lifelong friendships were made—the crew bond—forged through interdependency on each others skills in the face of extreme danger. And by the very nature of the fact that they are veterans, the Lancaster, which had taken them to war, also brought them home from war.

The Lancaster is a symbol of defiance, against an evil regime that threatened to engulf the world in a second dark age. Merged with this defiance, it represented hope. The hope to be free again. In the territories occupied by the Nazi's. the oppressed population could hear by night, and in the latter stages of the war, see during the day, that someone was confronting, and taking the war back to, the aggressor. It is a symbol of liberation—the delivery of food to a starving Dutch population, and the bringing home, to their families, the prisoners of war.

The story of those who flew the Lancaster is one of extraordinary airmanship and bravery, confronting and overcoming, or succumbing, to fear. It is the backdrop to the memory of lost friendships and past romance. It is certainly a tale of design ingenuity and manufacturing efficiency, but the Lancaster becomes iconic because it represents the context in which the human spirit was tested against a maelstrom of conflict and brutality.

Kind Permission of Steve Darlow—Fighting High Publishing.

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

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

By

Paul Gaunt

Part 8

49 Squadron's participation was prompted by a signal from Group received at 1000 hours, requesting 20 aircraft to attack the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau at sea. Sergeant Hamer AD968, Flying Officer Jenkins P1153 and Flight Sergeant Pollitt AE132, three of Tubby's previous pilots, were on this bombing mission. During the operation, Flying Officer Jenkins' P1153 and crew reported being attacked by a Wellington bomber off The Hague – the offending aircraft had no squadron markings!

In low cloud and rain, with extremely poor visibility, only three of the Squadron's aircraft found the primary target and dropped their bombs, but with no hits on the targets. The Squadron lost four aircraft and crews; it is now believed that two of those aircraft were shot down by German fighters, AE132 piloted by Flight Sergeant Charles Pollitt and AE396 flown by Sergeant Edward Phillips, both of which were enveloped by the cold North Sea.

The other two aircraft, AE249, piloted by Sergeant Mervyn Halt, and P5324, flown by Sergeant Thomas Downs, also came down in the sea, though the cause cannot be determined. The tragic loss of these brave young airmen was compounded by the fact that little damage had been done to the large German flotilla. At Scampton the following day, life went on as usual, no 'ops' were ordered, which gave ground crews a chance to catch up on their work.

The Channel Dash & 49 Squadron's Involvement, February 12th, 1942

The heavily armed battle cruisers and their accompanying flotilla would exact a heavy toll on the attacking aircraft. Fighter command lost 16 aircraft and the Fleet Air Arm six Swordfish destroyed. Bomber Command's contribution to the action involved 244 aircraft, of which 15 were lost in action and a further two crashing on return. 5 Group had been on a four hour 'standby', as other bomber squadrons made frantic efforts to prepare their aircraft. Later in the day, 5 Group were to contribute 64 Hampdens and 15 Manchesters to attack the German warships. In all, nine Hampdens were reported missing and one crashed on return.

In low cloud and rain, with poor visibility, only three of the aircraft found their primary targets. All three attacked, but no hits were observed. Four of 49 Squadron aircraft did not return and all their crews were lost.

Tubby had flown many times with Flight Sergeant Pollitt; he would be sadly missed.

49 Squadron's Aircraft & Crew Losses in the Channel Dash.

FTR P5324

Sgt DOWNES: pilot (killed)

Sgt D G F POXON: air gunner (killed)

Sgt B HUNTER: wireless operator & air gunner (killed)

Sgt T H F WOOD: pilot (missing)

FTR AE132

F/Sgt F S POLLITT: pilot (missing)

Sgt R J CRIDGE: wireless operator (missing)

Sgt I S GREENSTREET: air observer (missing)

Sgt W SMITH: air gunner (missing)

FTR AE396

Sgt E W PHILLIPS: pilot (missing)

Sgt A JACKSON: wireless operator (missing)

Sgt K W HEARD: pilot (missing)

Sgt L C TOGHILL: air gunner (missing)

FTR AE240

Sgt M H HOLT: pilot (missing)

Sgt S W A WAY: wireless operator & air gunner (missing)

Sgt E G GREEN: pilot (missing)

Sgt C L LEE: air observer (missing)

Aircraft & Crew Losses February 14th/15th, 1942 – Bombing Mannheim

The Squadron had 12 aircraft airborne, around 1600 hrs, bound for the railway station at Mannheim. In all, 98 aircraft attacked the target, which received only slight damage. Two aircraft from 49 Squadron were lost though the two crews survived.

Pilot Officer Ralph Allsebrook and crew ditched within sight of the English coast: a Bristol Beaufighter returning from patrol spotted the lights in the sea. A naval coastguard launch went out and rescued the frost-bitten crew. Ralph Allsebrook went on to fly Lancasters with 49, eventually transferring to 617, where, on September 15th/16th 1943, his crew were shot down and killed whilst attacking the Dortmund Ems canal.

Sergeant Hamer and crew managed to reach England after nine hours flying. Short on fuel, the pilot made a forced landing. M-Mother came to earth at Glossmore Farm on Ponders Bridge, despite the heavy landing in which the Hampden was destroyed, all the crew escaped.

FTR (ditched)

P/O R A P ALLSEBROOK: pilot (rescued)

Sgt STANBRIDGE: air observer (rescued)

Sgt WILKINSON: wireless operator & air gunner (rescued)

Sgt WOOLGAR: as above (rescued)

Crashed AT112

Sgt R N HAMER: pilot (unhurt)

Sgt HADDOCK: (unhurt)

Sgt MINCHIN: (unhurt)

Sgt WATCHORN: (unhurt)

February 16th/17th, 1942: Minelaying & Nickels (leaflets) 49 Squadron carried out their duties with mixed success. One aircraft failed to return. It is presumed that Flying Officer Jenkins (AT124) and crew came down in the North Sea. The bodies of this unfortunate crew have never been recovered - they are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

FTR AT124

F/O G R JENKINS: pilot (missing)

P/O J T B CLOUGH: navigator (missing)

Sgt J A STEELE: wireless operator & air gunner (missing)

Sgt J A WOODRUFFE: as above (missing)

Tubby flew as W/AG with Gordon Jenkins and crew on the Lorient raid November 23rd, 1941.

Sixteenth Operation: Mining Heliogland, February 24th/25th, 1942

HAMPDEN AE368

Sgt FREEMAN: pilot

Sgt BUSH: navigator

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt OSBALDESTON: air gunner

Up 1802 hrs, down 2315 hrs (5 hrs 13 mins)

Details of Sortie: - Last resort selected – Nordeney – and mine laid at 700 feet. Cloud base below 500 feet and no results seen.

Summary of Events: - Weather: north wind five – ten mph, slight snow, generally overcast, but visibility three - six miles and improving.

15 aircraft to stand by, of which 14 to lay mines off Heligoland Bight and one to mine off Terschelling.

All aircraft took off at intervals and owing to cloud, haze and ice in the sea, seven aircraft laid mines in last resort targets, a position five-eight miles off Frisians, Nordeney, Schiermonnikoog, Ameland and Texel. Five aircraft mined in primary position and three failed to lay vegetables at all, but returned them owing to impossibility of pinpointing any target due to cloud. In seven cases, the mines were seen to enter the water in selected positions.

BCWD: -

42 Hampdens and nine Manchesters minelaying in the Frisians and off Wilhelmshaven and Heligoland. Two Hampdens lost, five aircraft on leaflet flights to France and Belgium without loss. Two Hampdens were from 144 Squadron.

Seventeenth Operation: Mining Heligoland, February 26th/27th, 1942

HAMPDEN AE368

Sgt FREEMAN: pilot

Sgt BUSH: navigator

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt OSBALDESTON: air gunner

Up 1800 hrs, down 2315 hrs (5 hrs 15 mins)

Details of Sortie: -

Vegetables returned to base owing to inability to pinpoint owing to ice around the coastline.

Summary of Events: - Weather – NE wind five-ten mph, cloud with occasional snow, 8/10 cloud, surface icing.

Eight aircraft detailed to lay mines off Heligoland approach and four to bomb German cruisers in floating dock at Kiel.

All aircraft took off at short intervals with six mining aircraft successfully finding primary mining area and leaving mines. Seeing them enter the later. Of the two aircraft of this class which were unsuccessful, one returned owing to engine failure and the other owing to inability to pinpoint. Ice around the coastline was making it very difficult for the bombers. Two aircraft were successful in attacking the main objective and one of these saw fire results from the bursts (almost successful sortie).

The other two aircraft returned their loads to base, as unable to climb through cloud on account of severe icing. Apart from icing conditions, generally weather conditions were better than usual this month, visibility being 20 miles or more.

BCWD: -

A total of 49 aircraft - 33 Wellingtons, 10 Hampdens and six Halifaxes to attack the floating dock at Kiel. Two Wellingtons and one Halifax lost. It was a night of mixed fortunes; crews claimed good results in weather with bombs close to the floating dock. A high explosive bomb scored a direct hit on the bows of the Gueisenau, causing severe damage and killing 116 men in her crew. This proved to be the end of the Gueisenau as a fighting unit. Her guns were later removed for coastal defence work and she was taken to Gdynia but never repaired. Bombing in the town of Kiel destroyed many houses and killed 16 people. A report from Denmark shows how some of the bomber crews failed to locate Kiel accurately and dropped their loads on towns on the islands and coast of east Denmark. Damage and casualties were caused in Vejle (three killed, six injured) and Odense (one killed and seven injured).

Vejle was 100 miles north of Kiel.

Minor operations, 27 Hampdens mine laying off German ports - five Hampdens on leaflet flights - no losses.

Eighteenth Operation: Bombing Essen, March 8th, 1942

HAMPDEN AE241

Sgt FREEMAN: pilot

Sgt BUSH: navigator

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Sgt LOGIE: air gunner

Up 0022 hrs, down 0630 hrs (6 hrs 8 mins)

Details of Sortie: - Attacked town from 12,000 feet, visibility being 8-10 miles. Map read, with flares, to target and bombs seen in area, with three ensuing bursts, nine fires seen. Nickels over Essen.

Summary of Events: - Weather overcast, visibility good, freezing level surface, winds light easterly. 14 aircraft detailed to attack old town of Essen. One aircraft was cancelled, one suffered undercarriage collapse prior to takeoff, but the remainder took off and 10 successfully attacked primary objective in conditions of good light and eight saw bursts and fires result from attack. These were in the target area. One pilot bombed alternative objective, Dortmund, and saw burst result. One aircraft returned with bomb load owing to intercommunication failure, landing at Waddington. One W/T failure occurred, but did not prevent aircraft from proceeding. Heavy Flak, slight damage two aircraft and one case of oxygen failure occurred.

On a clear night and despite the leading aircraft being fitted with 'GEE', the 211 bombers were prevented from making accurate attacks due to industrial green haze. Eight aircraft failed to return, but all 49 Squadron returned safely.

Results: - This was yet another major step forward, a heavy raid on the previously difficult target of Essen, with leading aircraft now fitted with GEE (Navigational aid). Eight aircraft lost – five Wellingtons, two Manchesters and one Stirling.

Industrial haze over Essen prevented accurate bombing and the raid was a big disappointment. GEE enables the aircrafts to reach approximate area of the target. Photographic evidence showed that the main target, the Krupps factory, was not hit, but some bombs fell in the southern part of Essen. Essen reports only a light raid, with a few houses and a church destroyed. Ten people reported killed and 19 missing. The most noticeable incident was the burning down of a well-known restaurant, the Blumenhof, in the Grugo Park, which was being used to house foreign workers.

Nineteenth Operation: Bombing Essen, March 10th/11th, 1942

Sgt FREEMAN: pilot

Sgt BUSH: navigator

Sgt OSBALDESTON: air gunner

Sgt GAUNT: wireless operator & air gunner

Up 1915 hrs, down 0330 hrs (6 hrs 15 mins)

Details of Sortie: - Unable to locate primary target, bombed concentration on fires on ETA alternative target, burst observed. One 500 lb GP bomb hung up, six bundles nickels dropped over target area. Crash landed Manston. No reference was made about what happened to the bomb hung up.

Tubby's logbook records (S.O.S fixes Heston) pranged Margate (cracked ribs – Margate General Hospital), it would be some weeks before Tubby would be fit for duty.

Summary of Events: - Weather mainly fair – local mist patches, wind light SW mild.

11 aircraft took off, five only attacked alternative target, fires seen at Essen as a result. One aircraft returned owing to failure of intercommunication, one aircraft returned due to failure of oil system, one aircraft due to failure of undercarriage not retracting, one aircraft failed to return. One returning crash-landed at Manston due to fuel shortage, the W/Op AG, Sergeant Gaunt, being slightly injured. One aircraft returned owing to sickness of pilot after approximately 45 minutes flying. All aircraft dropped nickels; one sustained numerous shrapnel holes as a result of heavy flak.

To be continued. Newsletter No.58

Thanks to our Archivist Ed Norman for digging this one out.

I'M THE LAST MAN IN THE AIR FORCE

1. I'm the last man left in the Air
Force,
I've an office in MoD
And a copy of Queen's Regulations,
Which only apply to me.
I can post myself to Leuchars
And detach myself to Kinloss,
Or Send me on courses to Halton,
Then cancel the lot—I'm the Boss.
2. I'm the last man left in the Air
Force,
But the great Parliamentary brains
Omitted, when cancelling people,
To sell off the stations and planes,
The result is, my inventory bulges
With KD and campstools and
Quarters;
Plus a signed book of verses by
Trenchard
Which I keep for impressing
reporters.
3. I'm the last man left in the Air
Force
And I bet you imagine it's great
To be master of all you survey;
But I tell you it's difficult, mate.
I inspected three units last Thursday,
As Deputy C-in-C (Strike);
Then swept half the runway at
Laarbruch
And repaired RAF Wittering's bike.
4. I'm the last man left in the Air
Force,
My wife says I'm never at home.
When I'm not flying Hercs I'm at
Manston
Laying gallons and gallons of foam,
Or I'm in my marine craft off
Plymouth
Firing flares at the crowds on the
Hoe,
Or I'm Orderly Corporal at
Bruggen.
It's an interesting life, but all go!
5. I'm the last man left in the Air
Force
I'm ADC to the Queen.
I'm Duty Clerk at St Mawgan,
I am the RAF's rugby team!
Tomorrow I'm painting the Guard
room
And air-testing several planes,
The day after that off to London
To preach at St Clement Danes.
6. I'm the last man left in the Air
Force
And I'm due to go out before long.
There's been no talk of replacement
And I won't even let me sign on.
I hope to enjoy my retirement,
For I've put up a fairly good show,
But I won't cut myself off entirely,
**There are always reunions, you
know!**

AN EARFUL OF MERLINS

By John Chatterton

It was a blue summer's day at East Kirkby, and Mike, with Engineer Ian, had just completed the first taxi run of the afternoon. Fred Panton backed his tractor up to the tail wheel, ready to position the Lancaster for the next trip. "Hold on a minute!" called out Fitter - Roy Jarman as he climbed down the stepladder, tape measure in hand. "Thirty inches!" he said, settling the discussion that had been going on regarding the distance from the pilot's head to the revolving port inner propeller tip.

My mind went back to another summer sixty-three years earlier, when I was an undergraduate student at an Agricultural College, just about to sit my second-year exams. That sky was also blue, but an ominous black cloud loomed on the horizon. France had fallen, and it seemed that nothing could stop the inexorable forward push of the German Panzers. (The miracle of the Battle of Britain was still many weeks away.) I decided that the only practical course for me was to join the Armed Forces. It was nothing heroic. It just made more sense to be trained for battle than to try and defend Lincolnshire with a pitchfork. The College Principal who had put me in a reserved occupation was not best pleased, it must have rankled over the years, because he reminded me of it when I resumed my studies some six years afterwards.

Later in the autumn I was called to an Aircrew Selection Board at Cardington. Getting there was quite an adventure as I had never been on a train before, and changing platforms at Sandy was a major hazard. The Board comprised two Group Captains and a Wing Commander. As a green civilian the number of rings on the sleeves did not impress me perhaps as much as it ought to have done, but I recognized the pilot's wings, and hoped that someday....!

They seemed quite old, and were kind and fatherly in finding out about my past. I was pretty clueless on World Affairs but at my father's suggestion I had diligently read the Leading Article in the Daily Telegraph for the last few weeks, which helped. There were none of the modern Aptitude Tests, but I did quite well in the few maths questions, a bit of trigonometry and a triangle of velocities.

They said they would train me as a pilot and sent me next door for the Medical. This too went well – until the Hearing Test, when Disaster Struck! I had to indicate by raising my left or right hand the position of a tuning-fork vibrated by the M.O. behind me. The low and middle notes were quite audible, but all I heard of the high note was a wooden "clunk" as he rapped it on the table edge.

Completely shattered, I returned next door to be gently told that alas I would never be fit for aircrew; and I was directed down the corridor to the Ground Trades Selection Board. Seeing that I was utterly confused and close to tears, the Wing Co. got up and kindly took me by the arm to the appropriate door, thus jumping the queue.

The Team here were a complete contrast, but just as kind and helpful.

There were only two of them, a Warrant Officer with W.W.1. ribbons, whose avuncular manner did nothing to prepare me for the ogres of S.W.O.s to be met later on the Drill Square. His companion was a hard-bitten looking Sergeant. I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to do, but managed to divert them away from the office jobs that fitted my student activities. Finding out that my hobby was shooting and guns, they suggested the trade of Armourer(G) which I accepted. "A wise decision" said the Sergeant, "That's my own trade, and it's quite an interesting one."

It was on a cold January day in 1941 when I became 1031972 AC2 Chatterton at Padgate, and after Square Bashing at Bridgnorth I eventually started my armourer's course at Stormy Down in South Wales. As the Sgt. had predicted, it was an interesting course, starting simply with the Signal Pistol and .38 Revolver, and progressing via the Lee Enfield rifle to the machine guns and cannon. We became so good that we could strip and assemble them blindfold.

Then came my first squadron – No 235 of Coastal Command. It took me two weeks to locate them (which is another story) but I finally tracked them down at Dyce, near Aberdeen. We had long nosed Blenheims with one Browning .303 in the wing, and another four in a "tray" underneath the fuselage. There were also two Vickers machine guns in the turret. As "fighters" they left a lot to be desired, and we lost several whilst on duty patrolling the Norwegian Coast. Things improved when we got Beaufighters, but our arm muscles had to develop to handle the 20mm ammunition, which in those early days was in drums, not belts. For this physical work I was lucky to have a "plumbers mate" in the shape of an Aircraft Hand (General Duties) who in RAF eyes was a lower form of life than a "tradesman" armourer.

During my time at Dyce I was aware that on the various Notice Boards, alongside S.R.O.s, a form would appear at monthly intervals requesting Ground Staff to remuster for Aircrew Duties. So I put in repeated applications, only to be cut short each time when they got to the Medical Records. Stalemate and Despondency were settling in, when, by a stroke of luck a "Good Fairy" appeared. He was a bluff, middle-aged doctor called up from a country practice in Norfolk who was standing in for the regular Station M.O., and was making the most of any available local Scottish field sports. I had a nasty gash on my hand which was not healing due to the constant contamination by gun oil, and the Armament Flight Sergeant had arranged for me to "go sick" at 5 pm after our heavy afternoon workload was finished. The M.O., unlike me, having had his tea, was in an expansive mood, and soon discovered that I was a country lad who shared his passion for shooting. Somewhere in the conversation, between the wild geese and the woodcock he found out about my problem with aircrew applications, and not being a regular RAF officer, or a stickler for convention, he expressed the opinion that medical documents could sometimes get LOST. Amazingly, when I next applied a few weeks later, I was told that I was in the pipeline for an aircrew medical. This came only just in time as I had been given a series of injections for an overseas posting, and was only saved

by the squadron C.O. (whose guns I serviced), who arranged for me to attend immediately the next Board in Edinburgh.

Fate again lent a hand, and instead of the unbeatable tuning forks, the hearing test was conducted by a corporal medical orderly whispering words in one corner of the room, while I stood with my back to him in the opposite corner. Although alphabetical order should have sent me in quite early in the day, I got lost in the toilet when my turn came, and as a punishment was put at the end of the list. This gave me the opportunity to interrogate the other twenty-nine candidates about the hearing test and I found out that the corporal used only five or six from a list of about twenty words, each of three syllables. I rehearsed all these thoroughly, and when my turn came I found that I could recognize the structure of the half-heard words, and so got them all right. To this day I shall always be grateful for AUS-TRA-LIA and MAR-GAR-INE. It helped of course that it was the end of a long day for the board and they were all anxious to get home to tea.

It is intriguing to note, that apart from the odd F.F.I. (Free From Infection exam), I had no more medical exams over the next four and a half years of continuous flying, and Bomber Command would have been most unlikely to have relinquished my services on account of a small matter like high-tone deafness.

Of course I did not get an earful of Merlins straight away. The Vultees and Harvards of my Arizona training were quite noisy, especially in fine pitch, but the pilot was behind the propeller, and I only started to sit alongside it when I got back to the U.K. on Oxfords.

From then on it was nothing but Merlins. I must have been quite close to the prop tip in the Whitley at O.T.U., and after that it was four Merlins all around me until I was demobbed. For five hundred hours my left ear was battered by the vibrations from the port engines as I sat in the left-hand seat, but to share things out equally, my right ear had similar treatment over the same number of hours whilst instructing from the starboard side. Perhaps at this stage I should add that Adolf Hitler did his best to reduce the noise damage by instructing his henchmen to take out an engine from time to time, but alas this was counteracted by all those loud bangs that were often uncomfortably close.

In the 1990's our energetic Welfare Officer discovered that many members of the Aircrew Association were potentially eligible for a War Pension due to "Sensory Hearing Deficiency - Noise Induced". My application was favourably received, those thousand hours sitting within a couple of feet or so of the propeller arc must have made an impression, and after a month or so I was called to see a specialist in Nottingham.

The settee in his waiting room was the most uncomfortable I have ever experienced, and would have greatly excited the experts on the Antiques Road Show: but the ear test next door used the latest hi-tech equipment. It showed me to be suffering from hi-tone deafness, which was duly entered in his report, and this, in leisurely fashion, made its routine way to the appropriate authority.

About a year after my application, the first payment entered my bank account, and has continued, with cost-of-living increments to this day.

Among the many happy memories of my time with the RAF, this is one facet that gives me extreme satisfaction, especially when I remember the words of the Cardington Group Captain- "I'm afraid you'll never be fit for aircrew!"

Thank Heaven for those Merlins!

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



John Chattertoon's son Mike flies the BBMF Lancaster over the family home on the occasion of his parent's Golden Wedding Anniversary.

Venray War Cemetery—Netherlands



In August of 2020, I was contacted by Kevin King, the Chairman of 'Friends of 75 Squadron' on behalf of Henk Bruhl, a Dutch researcher. Henk had adopted the grave of Alwyn Amos, a 4T9er and was seeking information on him. Sgt Amos completed a Tour before going onto train others at O.T.U. and then commence a second Tour with 75 Squadron.

While with 49, Sgt. Amos had completed 25 operations as a mid-upper with his Canadian pilot P/O Hales and 4 with P/O Hilderley as his rear gunner.

Promoted to Warrant Officer, Amos was shot down and killed along with the rest of his crew on 21st March 1945 while on an operation to

Munster. He was just 24 years of age. His body was the only one recovered from the crash site by American forces in the area who transported his body to Holland and he was buried at Margraten. His six companions have no known grave and are remembered at Runnymede. W/O Amos' body was later exhumed and reburied at Venray War Cemetery.

We had very little information about the Hales crew nor W/O Amos since none of the crews' families have enquired after them and it is the families who kindly supply us with photographs and details for our website. Henk Bruhl managed to contact W/O Amos's family and kindly his research with us.

There are several Dutch research groups who excavate crash sites and many 'ordinary' people who loyally tend our veterans' graves, for which we are eternally grateful. One 'new' tradition remained hidden from me (and I suspect almost everybody); the act of placing a candle on each commonwealth grave. Henk Bruhl sent evocative the photo is on next page.

Venray War Cemetery. 'Every year at X-mass Eve we pay special attention to our hero's. Even this year despite covid-19 we did. It became a tradition to put a candle on every grave which will burn for at least 3 days.'

Photo by Stefan Borninkhof

Venray War Cemetery



Henk writes:

By "we" I mean the members of the different association all over the Netherlands .

Almost every War cemetery has its own association. And at all of them the members who adopted a grave place a candle. The graves which are not yet adopted will of course get a candle also.

For example in my birth town Culemborg there are 3 graves, none of them adopted by one person but all " adopted " by the local veterans association: one of an unknown paratrooper who was killed during the battle of Arnhem ended up in the Rhine river and washed a shore and 2 members of an Whitley bomber crashed in the early 40ties. The veterans association of Culemborg place every year a candle on those graves. At Venray Cemetery, normally the members of the association place the candles like on all graves.

It started long ago, first time just a few cemeteries but it became more and more.

Also those men who are buried on a civilian cemetery get a candle on their grave.

This year there were participating 230 locations who placed candles on about 15000 graves. And every year it become more and more.

(And I know that there are places who are not among those 230 and still place candles)

On the website www.lichtjesopoorlogsgraven.jimdo.com

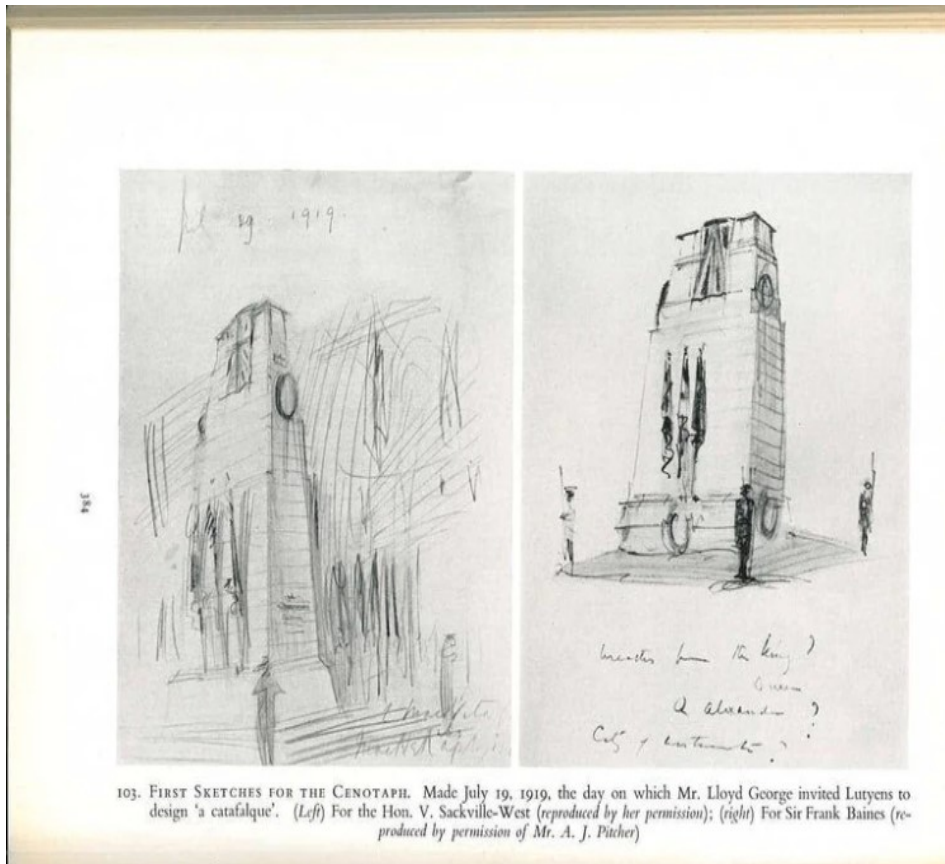
you can find more information There is a brief history how it started and who are participating in this tradition."

Henk is a W/O in the Royal Netherlands Airforce at the Defence Helicopter Command at Gilze Rijen Airbase. He has 32 years of service and is a technical advisor / groundschool instructor on helicopters, specializing in the Avionics of the Ch47D Chinook, Nh-90 frigate helicopter, the Cougar (same as a super Puma), Alouette III and Bölkow 105.

The Lockdown Remembrance Sunday

The Cenotaph, London. 2020

Sunday 8th November, Remembrance Sunday, marked 100 years since the unveiling of the Cenotaph.



This year, we witnessed fewer crowds, fewer veterans...but the same deafening silence.

Winston Churchill once spoke of The Few, those Battle of Britain pilots to whom so much was owed. At the Cenotaph, where crowds have stood in silent commemoration on Remembrance Sunday for the past 100 years, 'The Few' took on an entirely new meaning.

Every year some,10,000 veterans march down Whitehall to honour Britain's War Dead. Due to the restrictions, there were only 25 attendees were able to pay their respects at the Cenotaph. Among the few who bore a heavy weight of symbolism on his shoulders, John Aitchison, 96, a veteran of the Normandy landings, was a sole surviving serviceman from the Second World War who took part in the slimmed down, socially distanced ceremony. The 28th time that he had done so. Every other time, there had been crowds and thousands of veterans like John taking more than an hour to march past the Cenotaph. This year there were no crowds, the march past was over in a matter of minutes and the number of servicemen was a fraction of the number we are accustomed to.

There was still a military band and a service of Remembrance in which they sang *O God Our Help In Ages Past*, and of course, there were the wreaths. The Queen, now watching from the Foreign Office balcony overlooking Whitehall as the Prince of Wales led the royal tributes.

General Sir Nick Carter, Chief of Defence Staff, summed up the feelings of the nation when he said, "We are living through really demanding times at the moment and of course, those who feel remembrance closest, are our veterans and the fact that they are not able to march past the Cenotaph and pay their respects publicly and together in this particular year is really sad".

Fiskerton

Plans were in place to attend the Remembrance Sunday Service at St Clement of Rome Church, Fiskerton. In line with all other public events we were unable to travel but remain forever grateful to Reverend Penny Green for ensuring a service of Remembrance took place. A wreath was placed on behalf of the Association at the Airfield Memorial to commemorate all those that had left from Fiskerton airfield during the war years and failed to return.

"A fitting tribute to our fallen".



HIGH BARNET WAR MEMORIAL

In recent years, we have placed a wreath on behalf of the Association at the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park.

This year we attended an exceedingly small gathering at the War Memorial close to our home in High Barnet. As the hour approached 11 o'clock, a muffled bell rang out from the church to signify the start of the two minutes silence.

The short service of Remembrance was led by the Rev Tristan Chapman with wreaths placed at the memorial by the Monarch's Representative, followed by Theresa Villiers MP and finally by representatives of the Armed Forces.

Once the dignitaries left the memorial area, members of the public were allowed to place a wreath. On behalf of the Association our wreath was placed at the Memorial by Emma and Eleanor McEneaney, relatives of Flight Sgt Terence McEneaney, ND474 lost with all the crew returning from Stuttgart 15th March 1944.

Marc Stephenson, a member of our family, also placed a wreath on behalf of my wife's family to honour her great uncle Joseph Corden, WW1 remembered at the Arris Memorial, France, final resting place "Known unto God."

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.



DONATIONS

We have received very generous donations from the following people:-

David Clarke (Eric's son)
Phil Griffiths
Doris Madden
A Rossi
D. Etherton

I would like to thank everyone else who regularly donates to the Associations funds.

There was a virtual Service for the commemoration of the Green Park Bomber Command Memorial held on 31 October 2020, with Sue Holderness presenting and Steve Darlow in attendance telling us more about the sort of adversity our boys faced.

The service can be found on YouTube by searching Bomber Command Memorial service.

