

# The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine  
April 2022 Issue 60**



**Carol Bonfield visits Durnbach War Cemetery March 2022**

Durnbach War Cemetery contains 2960 burials from the Second World War, mainly airmen of whom 57 were actively serving with the 49 Squadron plus 21 crew who had previously served with the Squadron.

**WE WILL REMEMBER THEM**

## **IN MEMORIAM**

### **WE WILL REMEMBER THEM**

**Mr R Rogers  
Mr Sydney Richards—1920-2022**

#### **New Associate Member**

**Mrs Rosaline Knowles (Barlow)**

### **EDITORIAL**

Welcome to this issue of the 49er. As we continue to emerge from the Covid pandemic I trust all are looking positively to Spring and the warmer Summer months.

Part of the Association's ethos is to connect relatives of those who served with the Squadron providing contact details together with research material. We were particularly pleased to be contacted by Rosalind Knowles, daughter of Raymond Barlow. You will recall from our last Newsletter the Association contributed to the successful unveiling of a memorial honouring the crew of ED426 in France last year. We are pleased that through the work of the Association three relatives of the crew of ED426 are now in contact, Rosalind daughter of Sgt Raymond Barlow, Ann O'Leary niece of Sgt Timothy O'Leary and Alex Wares grandson of Pilot Sgt Donald Wares.

The 49ers Gathering—Unfortunately we were unable to secure enough support to make this a stand alone event. However, all is not lost as we intend to incorporate parts of the planned schedule of events into our Remembrance Sunday Weekend. Details to follow by separate email and on our Facebook page once details are finalised.

Thank you to all those who have submitted articles for inclusion in our Newsletter. We will ensure that all submissions are published, if not in this issue, then in subsequent issues as all contributions are much appreciated.

Finally a particular thank you to those who continue to make donations to the Association. Please remember our Association does not demand a subscription but depends entirely on the generosity of its members.

## **SYDNEY JAMES RICHARDS**

**1920—2022**

**102 years old**

We are sad to record the passing of Sydney Richards at the great age of 102 years. We believe Sydney was our oldest veteran and we are grateful to his son Christopher who kindly notified the Association of his father's passing.



Sydney James Richards was born in Greenwich, London and was working at the Woolwich Arsenal as a draughtsman in their Design Office before joining the Royal Air Force. He originally intending to join the Navy but changed his mind preferring Aircrew instead.

He did his training near Nottingham as a Wireless Operator Rear Gunner and was stationed at RAF Fiskerton. He became a Warrant Officer and flew twenty operations before having to bail out over the suburbs of Berlin. Captured with his Pilot, Bob Petty, he became a Prisoner of War in Stalag 1VB at Muhlberg.. He was eventually liberated by the Russians, breaking out of the camp with a friend and walking until they found the Americans who helped them get back to England.

When Sydney left the Royal Air Force he went back to his previous employment at the Woolwich Arsenal and subsequently became an insurance agent which he continued to do for the rest of his working life.

**PER ARDUA AD ASTRA**

## Letters received

***Louise Jennings Hoole continues her 10 year search for photographs of John Joseph Knowles ND474 lost returning from Stuttgart 14th/15th March 1944***

***“The research of John Joseph Knowles—Bomb Aimer—ND474—Stuttgart—15th March 1944.”***

I have for many years, scanned Facebook looking at photographs of Bomber Command crews and trying to read any names listed. I had always hoped that maybe one photograph might be the Bomb Aimer from my uncles crew—John Joseph Knowles. Our family group now had six confirmed photographs of the seven crew from ND474 but the last one, the Bomb Aimer—John Knowles has always caused us some issue.

Earlier this year while again searching Facebook Bomber Command groups, I noticed a name that was of great interest. It simply said ‘Knowles’ but could this be the same John Joseph Knowles I had been searching for. From John’s service record we knew that he had joined RAF Halton as a cadet. He was then shown as moving from RAF Halton 4(a) Wg to 224 Squadron in April 1939. The photo of the young cadet we believe but yet to prove, is John Joseph Knowles. The group photo was taken outside Springfield Hotel, Blackpool in September 1941. The airmen sitting on the front row, fifth in from the left was named on the back as Knowles. As in the photograph of the cadet, this airmen’s hat is set at a similar angle and he seems to have the same smile although a few years older, I believe but can’t prove it’s our John. Maybe John was on a training course in Blackpool but we need to prove that the airmen in the group photo was definitely John. It would be good to find out what course these airmen were attending and have evidence that John was definitely there in September 1941. This new find set me off on another track and visit to Blackpool and the museum—Hangar 42.

Squires Gate—Blackpool was commandeered for the Royal Air Force and became a key Airfield for RAF Ground crew and Aircrew Training. Night fighter cover was provided for the North West from Blackpool, with RAF and Polish Aircrews flying Night Fighter operations from Hangar 42 throughout the War. As a busy operational Airfield, running alongside the Vickers Aircraft factory, Squires Gate would have had Wellington Bomber, Hawker Hurricanes and Boulton Paul Defiant’s regularly in the circuit above Blackpool. Airspeeds Oxfords, Botha’s and the occasional Spitfire would have also been commonplace on the Airfield and within Hangar 42. The famous Aviation Pioneer and ATA Pilot Amy Johnson also flew her last fateful mission from RAF Squires Gate in 1941.

The RAF selected Blackpool as one of its training wings due to the availability of accommodation. Training was based between Squires Gate and the British Army camps at Weeton and Kirkham, utilising the large number of guest houses, plus the beaches, pier, and the Winter Gardens for exercising; 769,673 recruits received their basic training in Blackpool. The RAF also established two specialist training schools - No. 3 School of General Reconnaissance and No. 5 School of Technical Training, for air mechanics. In May 1939 Hangar 42 was constructed for the Air Ministry but it is now a museum housing five Spitfire replicas and some parts from a Lancaster that made a forced landing there during WW2. The building has been thoughtfully refurbished to its original appearance, whisking visitors back in time to 1940.

While visiting Hangar 42, I also noticed in one of the displays, a small traditional typewriter. In the typewriter was a letter dated 15th January 1944 from 49 Squadron to a Mrs Branigan about her missing son, who was a Navigator on a raid to Brunswick. It may not have been a genuine letter but I hoped that it was a sign, that I was on the right track for finding more information about John. I'm presently waiting to speak to another researcher from Hangar 42 about Coastal Command in Blackpool and to see if he can provide any information about John.

I'm also hoping to find out more information about John's service with 224 Squadron and would greatly appreciate any help with additional information. In April 1941, 224 Squadron was moved to Limavady in Northern Ireland for anti-submarine duties and in December 1941 moved again to St Eval, Cornwall where 224 Squadron ( 20th December 1941 to February 1942) flew Lockheed Hudson on patrols off Brest (where a number of powerful German warships were trapped) as well as attack shipping off Brittany.

Sadly due to ill health and passing of its members, the RAF St Eval Coastal Command Association has now closed down, So I have gained new some information but must also continue the search for a confirmation on the photographs. One day we will finally place a photo of John Joseph Knowles with his other six crew members. If anyone can help, I know that myself and the family group for ND474 would be most grateful.

Please see photographs relating to this article on next page.

Readers may be able to identify a relative from the photographs below that may be able to assist with our search for J.J. Knowles. ND474



***Email received from Rosalind Knowles:-***

We have had further correspondence from Rosalind Knowles daughter of Raymond Barlow regarding ED426 and the memorial to the crew recently placed in France. The Association Website proves its importance yet again as a research and information base for relatives.

Purely by chance I viewed the 49 Squadron Association website and saw the Commercy Forest Memorial page.

My name is Rosalind Knowles, I am the daughter of the late Sgt Raymond Barlow who was the wireless operator on ED426.

Unfortunately my Mother Peggy Barlow died early last year but was always very interested anything relating to 49 Squadron and Dad's time during the war and would have been over the moon to know that a memorial had been built. Although she never saw the memorial we were able to take her to the crash site in 2001. This was the first and only time she went abroad but it did mean so much to her to actually see the remains of the plane her husband flew in.

In 1993 Raymond and Sgt Gill Atwood (who had come over from Australia) visited the site, it was an emotional trip but he was so pleased that he made it, Raymond died a few days after his return.

I would love to find out more about the memorial and possibly contact the relatives of Don Wares and Timothy O'Leary. I have attached some photographs taken in 1993 and 2001.



L to R—Ray and Peggy Barlow together with Gill Attwood.



Gill Attwood and Ray Barlow place flowers in memory of their 3 comrades who are buried in Cholet-Merillot War Cemetery.



Ray Barlow and Gill Attwood visit the crash site in the forest of Commercy.

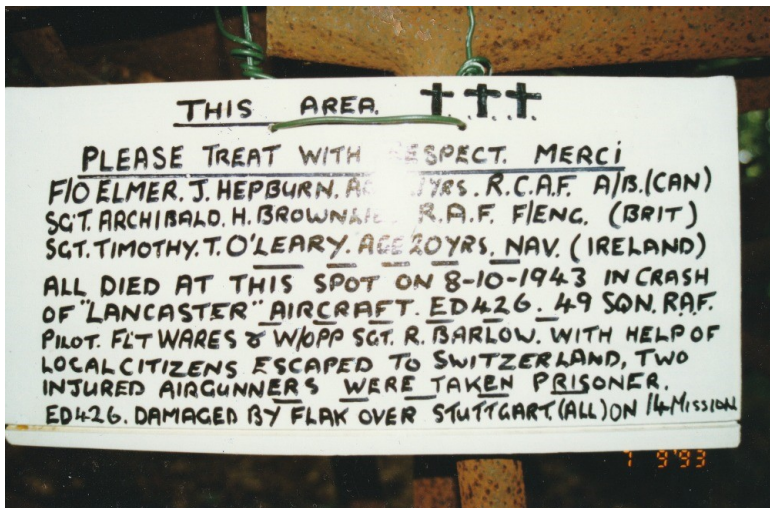
Photograph opposite show part of the wreckage of Lancaster ED426.

The remainder of the frame shown in this photograph became part of the memorial placed at the crash site in 2021.

The attached notice placed by Ray and Gill advising those travelling through the forest to respect this place as it is a WW2 Lancaster Bomber crash site where 3 young men had lost their lives.



The mangled wreckage is one of the Lancasters engine mounting frame



ED426 Photographs from crash site taken in 1993 and 2001

***Message received from Carol and Steve Bonfield, Carol is the daughter of the late Alan Parr.***

Good evening,

Hope you are all well. We had a lovely week in Bavaria, not giving ourselves any down time which meant that we packed lots in:- from mountains to monasteries we seemed to do it all! We did of course visit Durnbach as a priority. A train journey from Munich Central followed by a short bus journey then a snowy walk, we eventually arrived at the cemetery. Isn't it peaceful there, set in fields in the middle of nowhere. Everywhere was covered in snow which added to the serenity. We were very moved by the whole experience, not least standing by the graves of your uncle and his crew. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to pay our respects.

Carol and Steve

**Photographs from Durnbach War Cemetery**





Crew of ND474—P/O T.W. Waugh, Sgt R. Hoole, F/S T.C. McEneaney, Sgt W.E. Hardy, Sgt D.B Birbeck, F/O J.J. Knowles, Sgt J.G Wise



Steve Bonfield paying his respects the crew of ND474 at the graves.

*An email from Cecily Hanlon:-*

**F/O HD CLARK**

Dear Robert,

Many thanks for your letter and magazine. I did have a lot of contact with Alan Parr but this was quite a few years ago. My daughter and I were privileged to attend the dedication of the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park and met some members of the 49 Association there.

Since then my daughter Katie and two granddaughters and I with my brother, sister-in-law and niece were invited to attend the placing of a permanent memorial in the forest at the site where Lancaster ND 533 fell the night of 9th/10th June 1944. Also I have been several times back to Lyons la Foret to join local people who commemorate their families part in helping secure the success of the D-Day Landings, this is always the first weekend in September.

Sadly, it has been impossible to go for the last two years.

There should be, in the 49er archive, some copies of original letters from Hugette Verhague, a very prominent resistance worker, to my aunt dated 1946 or 1947.

I continue to have a contact in Lyons la Foret but will need to look up his email. His name is Olek Bredetski (wrong spelling). Perhaps it will turn up in your records?

Message from **Alexander Brzeski** dated 4th September 2021:-

As none of you will be able to attend our ceremony of remembrance for

Huguette Verhague and our resistant heroes I thought I would send you a copy of my speech. Tomorrow we not only have the usual local dignitaries attending but we will also have Colonel Magee from the British Embassy, Colonel Haché from the Canadian embassy and Major Gamble from the US

**"I stand here before you not only as a member of the Mortemer and French Remembrance Committee but also as a representative of the Royal British Legion, grandson of a Polish officer and French resistance fighter and ambassador of families to the stranger whom Madame Verhague touched by her bravery and kindness towards their military relatives.**

The memory of all the resistants that we remember today is of great importance and I know that if the families of the allied airmen that Huguette had kept were here today, they would give their thanks not only to Huguette but also to the resistance fighters who were brutally executed at the place marked by the cross of the shot and to all resistance fighters in the region of Lyons.

To honour Madame Verhague and the resistants who fell in this forest, I would like to read a short passage that is read when we in the UK remember our war dead.

"They will not grow old, like we who are left to grow old, Age will not tire them, nor the years will condemn. At setting of the sun and in the morning We will remember them."

I ask everyone here today to help us keep the flame of memory alive for those who fell for our freedom in the forest of Lyons by any means possible.

Thank you".



Pictures above credited to Alexander Brzeski

More information on Lancaster ND533 can be found on our website.

## PROFILE

Article submitted by Ed Norman Associations Archivist

### **Air Chief Marshall Sir Lewis Hodges KCB CBE DSO DFC**

*' Since being awarded a Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross, this officer has undertaken many sorties. The successes obtained reflect the greatest credit on the efforts of Wing Commander Hodges whose efficiency and personal example, both in the air and on the ground, have been outstanding.'*

So read the accreditation to L.M Hodges award of the DSO in 1943. It was a far cry from the disparaging reference given by his teacher on leaving school to join the RAF.....

*'They'll take anyone these days.'*

Born on March 1, 1918 in Richmond, Surrey, Lewis MacDonald was the son of Arthur Hodges and educated at St Paul's School before enrolling at RAF Cranwell in 1937. As a Cadet in 'C' Flight,

P/O Hodges was on leave with his family in Wales when war broke out and was hurriedly recalled back to Finningley. Early sorties entailed using the new Hampden bombers as minelaying craft, but flying a Hampden in the dark had not been a common practice and many pilots found this disconcerting. Instead of being able to see the lights of nearby towns for guidance, blackout had destroyed this method of navigation. But Hodges was a very able pilot, having gained his officers cap and a permanent commission on 'passing out' in 1938. He joined No. 76 Squadron as a pilot in December of that year and became a flying instructor for the squadron in September 1939, before moving on to become a Staff Pilot at No.16 O.T.U. in April 1940. Promotion to Flying Officer followed in July 1940.

The following month, he was posted into 49 Sqn having spent just three weeks with No.106 Squadron,. In quick order, F/O Hodges flew three sorties - bombing German airfields, Lorient and then Stettin. But every capable pilot also required a modicum of luck and he was shot down on return from Stettin while over occupied France in Sept 1940. Having taken off from Scampton, in Hampden P1347 D-Donald on September 4th 1940, D-Donald was hit by flak from an airfield in Brittany. Hodges ordered the crew to bail out before making a successful force-landing in a field near St. Brieuc and discovered that John Wyatt, one of the air gunners, had not heard the order to abandon the aircraft and together they set the Hampden on fire and attempted to evade capture.

Hodges and Wyatt set off in the direction of Spain and moving from farm to farm they scrounged clothes to wear over their uniforms. However, arriving at Marseilles in Vichy France, they were arrested and imprisoned. Hodges escaped, although re-captured, made a successful second attempt and eventually reaching Spain by crossing the Pyrenees; only to be arrested again and confined in a Spanish prison. After some diplomatic negotiations, he reached Gibraltar and returned to his squadron in June 1941.

Repatriated from Gibraltar, he returned to 49 Squadron, still at Scampton. 'Apparently when asked what he had missed most while on the run, he responded without hesitation: "my pyjamas". Rumour has it that, from that moment, he always wore them under his uniform when flying! ' \*

Hodges returned to operations some eleven months later in August 1941. Promoted to Flight Lieutenant, he completed a further sixteen operations flying Hampdens over Europe. In May 1942, now as a Flight Commander, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for these operations which had included an attack on the battle-cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* during their successful dash through the English Channel in February 1942.

His rapid rise through the ranks continued with a promotion to Squadron Leader and a posting on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1942 as 'B' Flight Commander with No. 24 O.T.U., a recently formed unit at RAF Honeybourne, flying the outdated Whitley bomber. In November of the same year, he progressed to operations with the newly-formed No.161 (Special Duties) Squadron. No.161 squadron was part of the Royal Air Force Special Duties Service, tasked with providing services to the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the Secret

Intelligence Service (SIS) during the Second World War.

Flying from RAF Tempsford in Bedfordshire, their primary role was to drop and collect secret agents and equipment into and from Nazi-occupied Europe in support of S.O.E. Commanding a Flight he initially flew Halifaxes to carry out these duties, before transferring to the wing operating Lysanders; and ironically, deliberately landing in fields in France! May 1943 saw him take command of the squadron.

One sortie had been very different from others as it involved two Hudsons, one flown by him and the second by F/O John Afflick, in which they collected 20 passengers and returned them to Britain. He did not find out until 1945, however, why the mission had been different and it was only when that he

was invited to the French Embassy in London and presented with the Legion d'Honneur AND the Croix de Guerre, he learnt that one of his passengers had been Monsieur Vincent Auriol, the President of the French Republic, another being Francois Mitterand, a future President.

However, in October 1943 he gained the award of a D.S.O for...

*' Acting Wing Commander Lewis Macdonald HODGES, D.F.C. (33408), Royal Air Force, No. 161 Squadron. Since being awarded a Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross, this officer has undertaken many sorties. The successes obtained reflect the greatest credit on the efforts of Wing Commander Hodges whose efficiency and personal example, both in the air and on the ground, have been outstanding.'*

'Rested' in November 1944, he was due to become Personal Staff Officer to Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, who was to become Air Commander-in-Chief, South-East Asia. However, following the death of his younger brother, Hodges requested a return to operations and was appointed OC of No. 357 Squadron, tasked with performing similar duties to No. 161, but in South-East Asia. If he had accompanied Leigh-Mallory, he would have been killed when the aircraft carrying him crashed in the Alps en-route to India.

No.357 squadron was equipped with Liberators, Dakotas and Lysanders operating over longer distances throughout Burma, Thailand and Malaya. The new squadron used its Hudsons for short range missions, dropping supplies to guerrilla troops fighting in Burma, while the Liberators and Catalinas were used for longer range missions, reaching out as far as Malaya and Sumatra.

His post war career was no less busy. He joined the RAF Staff College in Haifa in 1945, followed by the Joint Services Staff College at Latimer in 1947 and a stint at the Air Ministry from 1949 to 1952, and then back to Bomber Command. An inevitable and just promotion to wing commander came in 1950. He led the RAF team of three Canberras in the London to New Zealand Air Race in October 1953 and was in the lead overall until his aircraft suffered engine problems, finishing fourth. Commanding RAF Marham from 1956, while the RAF converted to V bombers he received an 'Officer of the Order of the British Empire' in 1953; became a group captain in 1957, and advanced to Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1958.

He became Assistant Commandant of the RAF College in Cranwell from 1959 to 1961, and promoted to air commodore in 1961. While attending the Imperial Defence College in 1963, Hodges was promoted to air vice marshal, and appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath, before moving to

SHAPE headquarters. Then, after serving as Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Operations) from 1965, and Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief at Air Support Command from 1968, this year also saw a promotion to air marshal and advancement to Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath.

As Air Member for Personnel from 1970, he was promoted to air chief marshal in 1971 before serving as NATO Deputy Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Central Europe and as Air Aide-de-Camp to the Queen from 1973 to 1976.

ACM Hodges retired from the RAF in 1976 and became a director of Pilkington Brothers (optical division) from 1979 to 1983, and a governor of BUPA from 1987. He also served as chairman of the governors of the Duke of Kent School and of the education committee of the RAF Benevolent Fund from 1979 to 1986. He was also president of the Royal Air Forces Escaping Society from 1979 to 1995, of the Royal Air Force Association from 1981 to 1984, and of the Special Forces Club and the RAF Club.

Domiciled near Sevenoaks in Kent, he became a Deputy Lieutenant of Kent in 1992.

Phew !

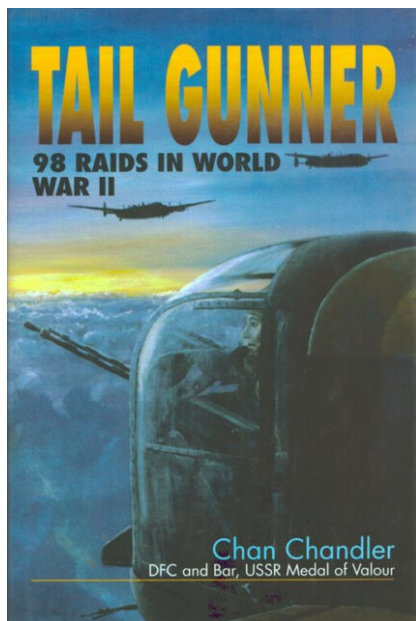
Air Chief Marshal Sir Lewis Hodges, KCB, CBE, DSO and Bar, DFC and Bar, died on January 4, 2007, aged 88 having lived a remarkable life of service.

\* Lincoln shire Echo 2015

## *Synopsis of 'Tail Gunner'*

*by Chan Chandler*

*A member of 49 Squadron*



By the close of the Second World War. Flight Lieutenant Chan Chandler had flown a remarkable 98 missions, 65 of them with No. 49 Squadron and 28 with the famous Dambuster Squadron, No.617. In addition he flew five trips with No.1 Photo FU. His career started early in the war, flying the twin-engine Handley Page Hampden, an aircraft that did not boast any power-operated gun turrets and which was particularly vulnerable in the presence of night-fighters. Later, he moved into the lonely end of the venerable Avro Lancaster. In that aeroplane the tail turret was power driven and boasted four 303in (7.7mm) guns. Chan describes in vivid detail, the experience of the remote tail gunner's position, what it was like to be cramped into a Perspex cocoon for seven hours, your only link with the crew via RT.

The majority of the targets raided were as renowned as they were heavily defended; the names are familiar—Peenemunde, Antheor, the Saumur Tunnel, the Dortmund—Ems Canal. Chan was involved in several crash landings and one Channel ditching—an occasion on which he was adrift with the crew for eight perilous days. This is an extremely vivid recollection of life with Bomber Command, and more significantly, life with 617 Squadron under Lenonard Cheshire, VC.

## **A snippet from Nick Brazil's book 'A Brush with the Gestapo'**

I am currently completing a new edition of my book about the experiences of Flight Sergeant Wilf Davies during the Second World War. Much of the material for the book comes from interviews I had with Wilf before he died. One incident he related to me occurred at the very end of the war when he was in the company of Laurence Reavell-Carter. They were in the area of Bad Odersloe in Northern Germany at the time. I am attaching the account of the incident from the book in which the two men were detained by Gestapo officers partly for your interest and information, but also because you may be able to add some details regarding it. I would also be very grateful if you could provide me with contact details of any of Laurence's surviving close relatives such as sons or daughters since they might not even be aware of this story or they might have his recollections of the incident written down in a letter or diary somewhere.

### **A BRUSH WITH THE GESTAPO**

**Bad Odesloe near Lubeck**

**(Extract from "The Gunner Who Defied Death - The story of PoW Flight Sergeant Wilf Davies by Nick Brazil)**

At the end of a month the POWs arrived at Bad Odesloe near the Northern German port of Lubeck. It was now the summer of 1945 and although they were still officially prisoners, the authority of their captors was uncharacteristically lax. Released from the fear of being shot, the men felt free to wander around the town and the surrounding countryside.

It was in this balmy and surreal atmosphere that Wilf and a fellow prisoner called Flight Lieutenant Laurence Reavell-Carter decided to take an evening walk in the countryside. Like Wilf, Laurence had also been in Stalag III and had also managed to cheat death a few times during his imprisonment.

His closest brush with The Grim Reaper had been his almost immediate capture during The Great Escape. Having emerged from the tunnel, he made it to the cover of the woods. He then saw fellow escaper Squadron Leader Len Trent being challenged by a guard. To prevent Trent from being shot, Reavell-Carter shouted "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!". He had given up his own chance of escape to save the life of a fellow prisoner. However, had he been one of the PoWs to get away, Reavell-Carter would doubtlessly have been murdered along with the other 50 airmen who were shot on Hitler's orders.

After a longish stroll in the softening light they finally arrived at a farmhouse. Both the farmer and his wife made them very welcome providing the two men with a substantial meal. This was served up not only by the woman of the house but a young girl in her twenties. Although there was obviously a great bond of affection between the couple and the girl she did not appear to be their natural daughter. Her features with high slavic cheekbones bore no similarity with either the farmer or his wife. Wilf also noted that the girl spoke German with an accent. Her pleasant face was marred by an ugly scar down its left side.

Noting their guests' curiosity, the farmer explained that the girl was actually a Polish servant called Wanda Ponitofski. He then asked the girl to tell them her story:

Wanda was born and brought up in the Polish capital of Warsaw. When Poland was invaded in 1939 this "Paris of The East" rapidly changed from a centre of culture to something that increasingly resembled a prison camp. Very early on in the occupation Wanda had a taste of Nazi brutality when she was kicked in the face by a soldier. Sadly this disfiguring blow was not the last act of violence she would suffer at the hands of the invaders.

The Ponitofski family were herded into the Warsaw Ghetto by the Germans. After the uprising, the whole family were executed with the exception of Wanda. She soon discovered the reason for this apparent act of mercy when she was raped repeatedly by German soldiers. When they were finished with her Wanda was sent to Germany to be a slave worker for the Reich.

It was here that her luck finally changed and she was sent to this farm near Bad Odesloe in Schleswig Holstein. The farmer and his wife were kindly people at heart and soon made the girl one of the family. Perhaps this was because in Wanda they saw the daughter they had never had. Or perhaps it was because she had obviously suffered greatly. In spite of everything she yearned to return to Poland.

As the evening wore on Wilf put his knowledge of German to good use by holding a long conversation with the farmer. As the old man puffed on his Meerschaum pipe he told Wilf in vehement terms that he had never been a Nazi and had always hated Hitler.

"This was totally out of character," Wilf recalled. "From 1940 onwards every German I met showed nothing but great enthusiasm for Hitler and his

regime.” Now five years later, Nazis were becoming as rare as hen’s teeth in the German heartland.

As it was quite late Wilf and Laurence readily accepted the farmer’s invitation to spend the night at the farm. Drifting off to sleep Wilf began to realise that his wartime ordeal was finally drawing to close. This sense of wellbeing was rudely shattered the next morning by a rap on the farmhouse door. Opening it the farmer was confronted by three men dressed in the distinctive black uniform of the Waffen SS.

Barging in they demanded to see the “British Spies”.

Completely deaf to Wilf’s protestations that they were captured airmen the Gestapo officers bundled them into their Mercedes and drove off to Bad Odesloe for interrogation. Both men had no illusions about their imminent fate at the hands of the SS. It seemed that death would have the last laugh after all.

The next twenty four hours in those police cells was a nightmare of fear and violence for the two PoWs. After slapping them around and screaming repeatedly that they were spies not airmen, the Gestapo guards threw them into a cell.

As if to mock them, the barred window looked directly onto a large statue of the Fuehrer in the town square. Throughout the following night Wilf did not sleep much.

During those dark hours, he looked back over his life as a PoW with all its deprivations and horrors. Most of all, he thought about his young wife and their baby son whom he would never see grow to manhood. Even condemned men can not ward off sleep for ever and Wilf finally drifted into an uneasy slumber.

It was the silence that woke them the next day. In the place of the banging and shouting of the SS guards, there was nothing but an eerie calm. It seemed to Wilf as if they had already been killed and were now in some strange limbo. As daylight streamed through the cell window there was a distant rumbling that gradually grew louder and louder.

Warily the two men peered out onto what was an unbelievable scene of jubilation in the cobbled square below. The source of the rumbling soon became apparent as British Tanks roared into view. No, Wilf was not dead, but gloriously and incredibly alive saved at the very last moment by Field Marshall Montgomery’s armored troops.

After being released from the deserted police cells, the two dazed

prisoners were plied with chocolates and cigarettes by the delighted British troops. Of all the many flavours of that first heady day of true freedom, one still remains indelibly stamped on Wilf's memory. It was his first mouthful of fluffy white bread after the years of coarse chunks of rye loaves.

During that day, British sappers demolished the statue of Hitler. They used its shattered remnants as hardcore to repair the road churned up by their tanks.

"Poetic justice at last!" Wilf recalled exultantly.

It was also on this first day that Wilf and Reavell-Carter were offered some much more comfortable accommodation in the town than the police cells. Fearing the plundering hordes of Russians, the local wine merchant said they could have free board and lodging indefinitely. No doubt the tradesman naively believed that the presence of British airmen would deter the Russians from looting his stock and raping his wife.

However, Wilf was too anxious to return home and they reluctantly turned down the invitation. Instead he and Reavell-Carter went in search of transport out of this cursed land. After all the euphoria this proved to be the ultimate frustration. They may have been free and more than ready to return home, but they were now shackled by a lack of transport. With all the military vehicles travelling East, England seemed as far away and unobtainable as ever.

Salvation came in the no-nonsense form of an Army Sergeant. Pausing from his task of directing traffic at a crossroads he listened to their story. When they finished he simply said:

"I'll get you a car, hang on."

Almost immediately a black Mercedes appeared and the Sergeant stepped in front causing it to slither to a halt. The group of Germans in the car were abruptly ordered out and were left protesting loudly on the side of the road as Wilf and Reavell-Carter drove off towards Belgium.

After two days, they arrived at an airfield outside Brussels where Reavell-Carter knew the Commanding Officer. Whether by luck or good judgement it proved to be the right choice. The officer authorised the use of twin engined Airflow Oxford to fly back to England. The men's spirits soared with the little plane as it lifted off from the airstrip and headed out towards the Channel and home.

## **Christmas Island(s)**

*Article submitted by Malcolm Brooke—Webmaster 49Sqn Association*

The Squadron is very familiar with the name Christmas Island. This was their base for 'Op Grapple' in 1957.

The first thermonuclear bomb was dropped from a 49 Squadron Valiant in May 1957 over Malden Island.

During the Squadron's time on Christmas Island, one of the ground crew, Sgt Percy 'Phil' Phillips died from a heart attack at the age of 37 and was buried at sea off the west coast of the island.

Some time ago, the Association set up a project to visit every location where a 49 Squadron or ex-49 Squadron airman was buried.

Using Facebook, appropriate groups were contacted and I received pictures from difficult to reach locations such as Burma (now Myanmar) and Mount Gambier in Australia.

The same was tried with Facebook groups based on Christmas Island. Coordinates of the sea burial were provided but there was no response.

Sometime later, I was preparing a presentation about the history of 49 Squadron which would include a map showing Christmas Island and Malden Island. I was surprised to discover that the distance between the two islands was over 10,000km. Considering that the range of a Valiant (with underwing tanks) was just over 7,000km this seemed to pose a bit of a problem!

While investigating this issue I discovered that there were two Christmas Islands, both, according to my old school atlas, administered by the UK. The island I had contacted for assistance was in the Indian Ocean, less than 500km south of Jakarta.....hardly surprising that nobody had responded.

Further research elicited the information that 'our' Christmas Island is now called Kiribati and is located a much more likely 700km north of the target, Malden Island.

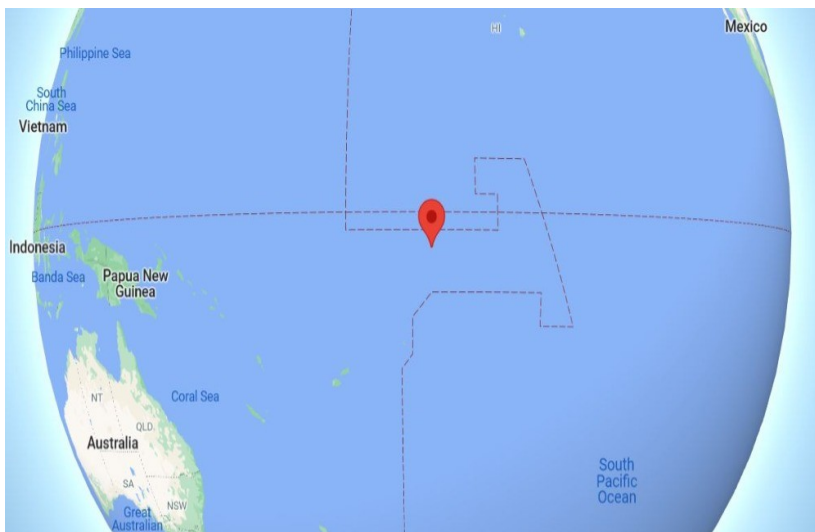
A second attempt at contacting the island via Facebook produced immediate results. A member of a Kiribati Facebook group, Vincent Guglielmelli (who actually lives in Marseille) contacted a friend on the island, Tataraina Sarah Taukaroon and sent her the coordinates of the sea burial.

She visited the beach directly opposite the burial location and photographed the sea and the beach. These images are now on the Kiribati 'cemetery' webpage. The location is quite easy to find on the Association's new interactive world map and the 'cemetery' is linked from Sgt Phillips's page.

Note: Kiribati was granted independence from the UK in 1979 and in 1958 the other Christmas Island became an Australian territory. I obviously need a more up to date atlas.

We still have two outstanding locations, Habbaniya, 70km west of Baghdad and Ramleh, 20km south-west of Tel-Aviv.

If any readers are passing by these two locations in the near future, then please contact the Association!



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

## **SHADOWS OF THE PAST**

**By  
Paul Gaunt**

Twenty-second Operation: Bombing Dortmund, 15th/16th April, 1942 HAMPDEN AT191 Sgt FREEMAN: pilot Sgt BUSH: navigator Sgt WELCH: navigator Sgt GAUNT: air gunner Up 2255 hr, down 0558 hrs (7 hrs 3 mins) Details of Sortie: - Last resort target attacked from 16,000 ft. at 0145 hrs. Aircraft iced up in target area and forced down, bombs believed to have fallen in vicinity of Bonn. Nickels released in area. Aircraft observed to be shot down in Ostend area at approx. 0033 hrs. Summary of Events: - Weather fine, wind light SE. Six aircraft detailed for bombing operation and one for nickel operations. One aircraft took off for nickel operation, which was successfully carried out over the Lille area. Six aircraft took off for bombing operation at Dortmund. One successfully located the primary objective by concentration of Flak. No results observed. Nickels released in the area. Three aircraft located and attacked the alternative target. Bombs fell in built-up area. Flak and searchlights immediately engaging when bombs were released. Severe icing experienced near Bonn in thick cloud.

One aircraft unable to identify primary or alternative targets. Two captains observing aircraft shot down in vicinity of Ostend. BCWD: - 152 aircraft despatched - 111 Wellingtons, 19 Hampdens, 15 Sterlings, seven Manchesters. Three Wellingtons and one Sterling lost. Eight aircraft claimed to have bombed Dortmund, which reports that only the equivalent of eight bomb loads fell on Dortmund built up area. Aircraft & Crew Losses April 19th/20th, 1942: Minelaying. On the evening Sunday, April 19th, 1942, the Squadron despatched three aircraft on a gardening operation to lay mines in the Terschelling area, all three Hampdens were airborne from Scampton by 2046 hrs heading for Ameland. Two aircraft carried out their sorties in very different conditions. Both crews were forced to carry out time and distance runs to plant their vegetables before returning to base. The third aircraft was reported missing without trace. Sergeant Frank Slingo (AT217) and crew are believed to have come down in the North Sea of the Frisian Islands. On July 13th, the body of Flight Sergeant Ernie Jackson was washed ashore on the island of Rottumeroog and is buried in Sage War Cemetery near Oldenburg, Germany. The bodies of Sergeants Ian McLaren and Ray Webley were never found; they are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial. They were the final Hampden crew to be lost by 49 Squadron during the Second World War. FTR AT217 Sgt FW SLINGCO: pilot (killed) F/Sgt EW JACKSON: wireless operator & air gunner (killed) Sgt I McLAREN: air observer (missing) Sgt RJ WEBLEY: wireless operator & air gunner (missing)

## Goodbye to the Hampdens.

The raid of April 23rd/24th, 1942, to Rostock was the last operation by 49 Squadron using Hampdens. Sergeant Hamer, Tubby's pilot on the Huls raid had the honour of being pilot in the last 49 Squadron Hampden crew to take off on an operational sortie. On Monday April 27th, all 49 Squadron Hampdens were transferred to 144 Squadron.

April finished on a sad note: no less than seven aircraft and all their gallant crews were lost. 49 Squadron were to carry out more Hampden sorties than any other squadron in 5 Group. Hello to the Ambiguous Avro Manchester. Late April 1942, 49 Squadron received a large influx of additional aircrew personnel, all trained on the Manchester, from 25 OTU, Finningley. On Friday morning, May 1st, 1942, the posted strength of 49 Squadron stood at 29 officers and 655 airmen. Aircraft held on charge were 11 Avro Manchesters, which represented the operational equipment, with a further seven Manchesters awaited. The Squadron also held one Puss Moth and one Tiger Moth for training purposes. The next four months would see Tubby on conversion training, which started April 8th. An example of a typical training Sortie, Skipper Wing Commander Stubbs: - Hr Aircraft Pilot Duty Self 1500 Manchester R772W/Com. Stubbs Wireless Operator The reputation of the Avro Manchester was appalling; it was everything the Hampden never was. The crew who flew this underpowered, troubled aircraft took an instant dislike to it. The mechanical problems were its hydraulic systems and generally the Rolls-Royce Vulture engines, which were just not man-enough for the job to be done. All too many sorties were being aborted. It was from this aircraft that the Lancaster was born, using four engines instead of two, the proven Merlin engines (as used on the Spitfire) powered this magnificent aircraft, which would take the brunt of Bomber Command's fight across to the mighty industrial cities of Germany.

The Manchester was to be used for only about four months by 49 Squadron and the last operation that 49 Squadron Manchesters flew was the Bremen raid June 25th/26th, 1942. 960 aircraft assembled for this raid, losses were high - 52 aircraft lost, representing 5% of aircraft despatched. The heaviest losses were suffered by OTUs of 91 Group, which lost 23 aircraft from a total of 198 - 11.6%. Tubby was to go through conversion on the Manchester, converting again onto the Lancaster, having not flown any operations on the Manchester. Conversion on the Manchester started April 8th, and finished on July 15th, 1942. Conversion on the Lancaster started on August 4th, 1942, after just two days. With five hours and 25 minutes flying-time on Lancasters, Tubby was posted to 23 OTU Pershore, to train on Wellingtons as Staff W/Op; this posting was a stopgap. Tubby had applied to become a pilot, was accepted and spent six months at No 2 ITW, Cambridge. Before long, after a mid-air collision, he would be on a troopship taking him to South Africa to start his pilot's flying training. May 19th, 1942 Conversion to the Avro Manchester Mid-air Collision Over Grantham Flying with Sergeant Freeman as wireless operator, Tubby and other crewmembers were settling in with the new aircraft when on the May 19th, 1942, during a night-time manoeuvre (dummy raid, searchlight co-operation) on London, their aircraft L7484 was in collision with a Lancaster of 83 Squadron, piloted by Squadron Leader Hinton The two aircraft, flying towards each other, touched wing-

tips. Damage to the Manchester was underside the starboard wing and the Lancaster lost its wingtip also starboard and outer engine stopped. Both aircraft landed safely at Scampton a few minutes later, to the relief of their respective crews.



Tubby on a training sortie in Manchester L7398, June 1942



Above left & below: snaps of the Isle of /sky, taken from the same Manchester and also on a training flight, April 1942



S/L Peter de Mestre  
DSO DFC, 49 Sqn. One of  
Tubby's pilots, he was  
killed on June 7th 1942,  
whilst converting from  
Hampdens to Manchesters.

## HONOURS AND AWARDS

### JANUARY 1942

P/O R J Robinson DFC

### FEBRUARY 1942

Sgt J C Price DFM  
Sgt J Mossop DFM

### MARCH 1942

F/O Walker DFC  
F/O Wood DFC

(F/O Wood was killed at Finningley May 1942).

### APRIL 1942

F/O R A P Allsbrook DFC  
F/S T W Bell DFM

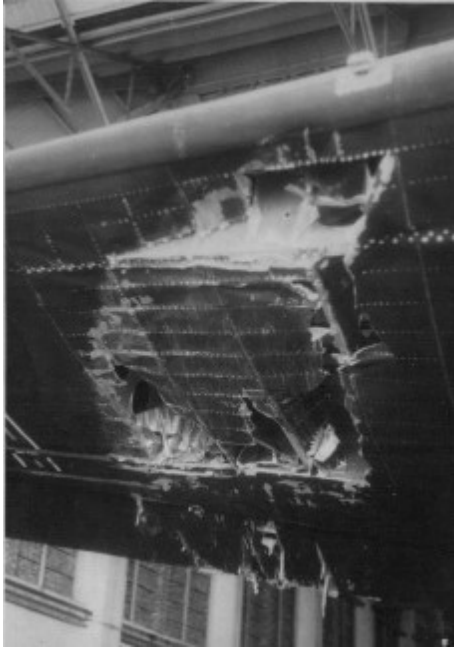
### MAY 1942

S/Ldr P M deMestre DFC/DSO  
S/Ldr P D S Bennett DFC, Bar to DFC  
F/Lt L P Massey AFC/DFC  
S/Ldr I O Hodges DFC  
F/Lt L F Ratcliff DFC

### More Pilot Training

With 5 hours 25 minutes flying time on Lancasters, Tubby was posted to 23 OTU Pershore as W/OP Staff Instructor. He would be there for one month from 8 th August to 8 th September 1942. He then moved to 14 OTU Cottesmore, again, as S taff Operator from 8 th September to 19 th October 1942. During this period of time Tubby had applied for pilot training. He was accepted and moved to No 2 ITW (Initial Training Wing) at Cambridge. His studies were carried out at (Maudling) University and practice flying at Marshals Airfield. On completion of this training he was transferred to ACRC (Aircrew Reception Centre) Heaton Park, with draft 7713 South Africa. A troopship from Liverpool to Cape Town, South Africa, took from 17th June to 21st July 1943. From Cape Town, he moved to 2 PDC, 24 AS Witbank. Tubby was to train here for approximately 15 weeks, moving on to finish his pilot training at No 26 AS Petersburg, completing and gaining his wings and qualified to pilot twin engine medium bombers. This was to be the Wellington (X), the main medium bomber to be used in the Mediterranean theatre of war. Tubby was the winner of the intake bombing trophy and can be seen proudly holding it in the photograph! He was immensely

proud of his achievement and displayed the small replica cup on my mother's mantle shelf above the fireplace and it is still there today, 62 years later.



Damage to starboard wind  
of Manchester L7287,  
'EA-G'

### Stan Day Remembers

My pilot training was carried out in Rhodesia, our port of entry was Durban. The two troopships operating between Liverpool and Durban, South Africa were the *Otranto* and the *Orontes*. Each ship carried 5,000 personnel, Army, Navy, Air Force and nurses. These ships were of 25,000Ton displacement. (Tubby's troopship was the liberty ship *George WGoethals* which sailed between Greenock and Cape Town.)



No. 2 ITW, main entrance to St John's New College, Cambridge, November 1942. Photo by Arthur Hornby, who appears on Tubby's



Cape Town, from the Liberty Ship George W Goethals.



No 26 AS, St Petersburg, No 11 War Course, April 28th 1944. End of training, Tubby front row with Intake Winner Trophy. Norman Moseley 4th left, middle row standing, Howard Jones, 5th left, 2nd row. All three survived

Left: Tubby receives his  
'wings', April 28th 1944



Below: Tubby receives, Best  
of Intake' bombing trophy.



Above: the trophy's inscription.

Right: a proud Tubby with trophy





‘Wings Parade’. April 28th 1944

When we sailed we had no idea where we were going, security prevented the troops from knowing the destination. Going out from England we sailed due west, we all thought we were going to America, then we turned south, to miss the Bay of Biscay round the U Boats. We lived 50 men to a mess deck, where we ate, slept and drank together. At night we would take out our hammocks and string them from hooks in the deck head and positioned our clews (piece of wood) at the head shoulder end, this kept the hammock open. During the day we packed all the hammocks away and sat around the mess tables. I personally spent most of my time on deck, singing, telling stories, playing cards, etc. We spent very little money, the only thing to buy were cigarettes. We did however play housy-housy (bingo) for 2p to 3p a game. The ablutions and showers were basic, showering with seawater is not recommended, as it felt sticky and it was difficult to lather the soap.

When our ship reached the Equator the ship's crew organised a huge crossing the line party. A small swimming pool was made from canvas and wood, one member of the crew in fancy dress acting as Neptune would dunk as many men as possible and present them with a certificate to prove their initiation and crossing.

Leaving 26 AS South Africa, Tubby moved up through Africa, as a passenger in various aircraft, finally reaching Quastina on June 3rd. Here he met his crew and began training on the Wellington X. Maurice Sandell, Tubby's bomb aimer, remembers crewing up, as it was called, was carried out by bringing together an equal amount of aircrew in a room: 12 pilots, 12 rear gunners, 12 navigators, 12 bomb aimers, and 12 wireless operators (the front gunner would be a spare 'bod' to complement the six man crew). The crewing up party was simple: a pilot met a navigator, who knew a bomb aimer, and just chatted together. It was not long, may be half an hour, and all the crews were self selected and started the rapport that would, with training, make them a happy crew and effective fighting unit. Ten weeks of training at the OTU gave the new crew a thorough insight into the Wellington X, and on September 10th, the crew flew into Foggia and joined 37 Squadron.

## **Chapter Five**

### *Foggia (Tortorella)*

#### *37 Squadron, 'B' Flight, CMF, No 205 Group*

It was October 17th, when Tubby and his crew arrived at Tortorella. The conditions in which they would be both living and operating were totally different from those at Scampton, where there were cosy billets with central heating radiating warmth around the beds, drying and airing clothes and smalls - what a cosy life!

The city of Foggia is situated on the east side of Italy, 50 miles north of Bari and 15 miles inland of Manfredonia on the Adriatic coast. The large flat areas around Foggia were perfect for the quick building of airfields for the Allied air forces. No 205 Group was based on the Foggia plain.

No 231 Wing with 37 and 70 Squadrons was based at Tortorella, which was known as 'Foggia 2'.

No 236 Wing with 40 and 104 Squadrons was based at 'Foggia Main'.

This was actually the Group's only permanent airfield throughout the war. No 330 Wing with 142 and 150 Squadrons was based at Cerignola and Torretta (known as 'Cerignola No 3'), then Amendola, later moving to Regina, near San Severo in July 1944.

No 240 Wing was at Celone. No 614 Squadron was at Stornara and later moved to Amendola on July 15th, coming under the command of No 240 Wing.

Tents were the only shelter for most of the air and ground crews; the odd farm house gave shelter to the more senior ranks (37 Squadron camped in an olive grove and most of 70 Squadron were in a wheat field). Conditions were generally not good.



Left: Dave 'Jock' Scanlon, Tubby's navigator.

Right: Maurice 'Scats' Scandell, Tuddy's bomb aimer.



Above: Frank 'Geordie' Hazelden, Tubby's rear gunner, 3rd from left in front of an Avro Lincoln, Scampton, 1952.



Left: Geordie Hazelden today, Golden Beach, Australia.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **SHADOWS OF THE PAST**

By  
Paul Gaunt  
Part 11

Page 101—Pilot Officer Bill Hunt Foggia Main 1944/45: A Navigator Recalls

To be continued in the next newsletter.

## **DONATIONS**

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

Mrs Diana Wares  
Ms Louise Jennings-Hoole  
Mr Paul McLocklin  
Rossi  
Mrs Moxon  
Mr R R Hounslow

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

**Cheques to the Association should be made payable to;  
49SA PETWOOD**

**Internet Banking:  
Nat West Bank,  
49SA Petwood  
Account No. 18546889  
Sort Code: 52 21 00**

### **Chairman**

Stuart Keay. 39, Station Road, Moulton, Spalding, Lincs. PE12 6QE  
Telephone:- 01406 371547 Email:- chairman@49squadron.co.uk

### **Association Secretary**

Robert McEneaney. 23 Galley Lane, Arkley, Barnet, Herts. EN5 4AR  
Telephone:- 02084410673 Email:- secretary@49squadron.co.uk

### **Archivist**

Ed Norman. 14 Woodbrooke Way. Corringham. Essex. SS17 9DP  
Telephone:- 01375 672441 Email:- archivist@49squadron.co.uk

### **Archivist (Post War)**

David Boughton. 59 Redland Drive. Kirk Ella. East Yorkshire. HU10 7UX  
Telephone:- 01482 656324 Email:- postwar@49squadron.co.uk

### **Researcher**

Colin Cripps. Sunrise Villa. Redlingfield Road. Occold. Eye. Suffolk. IP23 7PG  
Telephone:- 01379-672945 Email:- researcher@49squadron.co.uk

### **Webmaster**

Malcolm Brooke. 23 Foresters Walk. Stamford Bridge. York. YO41 1BB  
Telephone:- 01759 373769 Email:- webmaster@49squadron.co.uk

### **Photographer**

Dominic Howard. 29 Yewdale Road, Carlisle, Cumbria. CA2 7ST  
Telephone:-07506100959 Email:-photos@49squadron.co.uk

**Association Website address;** [www.49squadron.co.uk](http://www.49squadron.co.uk)



‘The 4T9er’ is compiled & edited by Robert McEneaney  
Photographs by the editor unless credited otherwise.  
All enquiries to the Association Secretary.

### **© Copyright 2021 49 Squadron Association**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means, recording, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.