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No 50 & No 61 SQUADRONS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

We are very pleased to report that we have 2 new Honorary Members. Rev Brian Stalley and Peter Small have given so much to the Association quietly and without fuss. As ever we are indebted to Stephen Freeth for proving the excellent photographic record of the reunion weekend. We also include details of some books that may interest members, especially about the BC Memorial.

This newsletter is mostly pictures. We make no apologies for that as the major event, apart from an excellent reunion weekend, was the dedication and unveiling of the long awaited Bomber Command memorial. There was good coverage of the event by the BBC, but there were also two worthy programmes about Bomber Command. More details and pictures in this edition. We also mention an excellent book about Bomber Command and the memorial.

During the reunion weekend we met Wg Cdr Jayne Casebury, OC Base Support Wg (or as we oldies would have known it, Admin Wg). Wg Cdr Casebury represented RAF Waddington and was lately the equerry to the Prince of Wales and was awarded the MVO. She was delighted to be part of the occasion and kindly invited Pam and her ladies, who do so much for us, to visit RAF Waddington; this is being arranged now.

During the reunion weekend and Roy Davidson told me that he flew in a 61 Sqn Lincoln at the Coronation Flypast in 1953. He wondered if any other Association members also took part in this great event. Sadly, there was never an opportunity to ask the question of the members. So if any members were involved, do please let us know. There is a picture of Roy with 2 of the crew who flew with his that day, Frank Hercliffe and Danny Thomas, in this edition.

Reg Payne, a true stalwart of our Association, generously donated two of his excellent paintings to the Association to aid our funds. The paintings were bought by Sqn Ldr Bill Drinkell and Jim Bennett, Association member and past chairman of the Skellingthorpe Parish Council. The money raised, £200, is in the Association account and will be used for some worthy cause or project yet to be determined.

The annual service at Birchwood was supported by the RAF Waddington Volunteer Band and the cadets of 204(City of Lincoln) Sqn ATC. Rev Brian Stalley gave the address. We were, again, delighted to have the standard bearers. In the afternoon the short service at Skellingthorpe was addressed by Rev Christine Jewitt and supported by the cadets of 1237 (North Hykeham) Sqn ATC. There was also an excellent turnout of standard bearers. And of course the BBMF Lancaster was the star of the show. We are indebted to Peter Jacobs who arranges this³ annual spectacular.

Mike Connock and Richard Jones

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

I write at a time when the Olympics are now just days away after so many years of waiting. By the time you read this it will all be over and I can only hope that the event passes smoothly and the weather is not the dominant headline – after recording the wettest May and the wettest June, who knows?

It doesn't seem possible that our re-union weekend was well over a month ago. Yet again, this year's event was a great success and it was so nice to see so many familiar faces once again, as well as some new additions. I am always grateful to the committee for organising the weekend and the fact that everything went so well is testament to them. I was also personally delighted to welcome the Rev Brian Stalley and Peter Small as Honorary Members of our Association. Those of you who know Brian and Peter will undoubtedly join me in thanking them for their support and personal contribution to our Association over so many years; offering them both Honorary Membership was our way of saying thank you and I was delighted that both accepted.

I was also delighted to see the Bomber Command Memorial unveiled in London last month after many years of campaigning and commitment by many individuals; none more so than Sir Michael who has worked tirelessly to ensure that Bomber Command has the memorial it so richly deserves. Although I did not attend the unveiling on the day, I was lucky enough to be able to visit the memorial for myself a few days later. It really is wonderful and is located in a prominent position. Well done to all those who were involved and I hope those of you who were able to attend had a most memorable day.

Next year we will see a small change to the format as the weekend (8-9 June 2013) will start with an afternoon AGM at the Leslie Manser School, including some entertainment and afternoon tea, followed by an evening event at the Skellingthorpe Community Centre rather than at the Assembly Rooms. The format for the Sunday will remain unchanged. This will reduce the cost for those of you who attend the weekend, not least because only one night of accommodation will be required, and the cost of the Saturday evening event will be less than what we have paid at the Assembly Rooms. Exactly what the Saturday evening event will consist of will be in the next Newsletter as we have yet to meet with the Skellingthorpe community to decide what is within the art of the possible. As I say, more to come. Here's to next year – after a truly historic and memorable year of 2012, it will be a hard act to follow. My best wishes to you all.

Peter Jacobs

REV BRIAN STALLEY

It gave me tremendous pleasure to be installed as an Honorary Member of the Association. From the outset it has been a privilege to act in a chaplaincy capacity. As an ex-National Serviceman (in the Royal Air Force) to be so warmly welcomed amongst you. It has been an humbling experience to join you in reunion and remembrance, particularly as so many of you gave so much for the welfare of our nation in bygone days. Please be aware of my gratitude in receiving this honour: I trust that I will have many opportunities to share with you all. With my very best wishes from Ann and myself.

Brian Stalley

BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL

The Bomber Command Memorial was unveiled to great pomp and ceremony on 28 Jun. After far too long the gallant men of Bomber Command at last have a tangible reminder of their ultimate sacrifice. Sir Michael has fought for so long for this memorial, so much more impressive than a campaign medal, which would have no doubt been relegated to a dusty drawer. Much has been said in the press about the poor response from the government and the charging of VAT and security et al. But that must not detract from the glory of the monument in Green Park. Although the ceremony was only shown live on the BBC News Channel, the “Tribute to Bomber Command” shown that evening was excellent. There was even mention of Jimmy Flint who’s bravery in rescuing his navigator, Benny, from his sinking Hampden, gained Jimmy his George Medal.

Much has also been said of Churchill’s silence about Bomber Command at the end of the war. I can do no better than to refer you to the outstanding documentary, also shown on 28 Jun, “Who Betrayed the Bomber Boys?” This moving piece was narrated by Stephen Fry and featured the late Robin Gibb. The programme was written, filmed and edited by Sir Michael’s son, Alex. Sir Michael’s grandson, Rory, was also featured as a lighting assistant. I commend the programme to you. If you missed it, there is a copy on dvd held in the Association library.

Of all the letters in the press about the day and the wonderful praise heaped on the brave veterans, the one I will always remember was from an elderly disabled man who said: “I could not use public transport so I had to use a succession of taxis. Not one of the drivers charged me a fare”!

Richard Jones

FRIDAY EVENING AT SKELLINGTHORPE

James Flowers and
Reg Freeth in deep
conversation



Roger Paul. The son of Don Paul,
attends every year with his sister
Beverly



The Thinker!



Plenty of food to go around

SATURDAY REUNION WEEKEND DINNER

Reg Freeth, Jamie
Barr DFC, James
Flowers and his
sons



Freda and Reg Payne



A thorn between two roses



Danny Thomas, Frank Hercliffe and Roy Davidson. This is jubilee year, but they flew a 61 Sqn Lincoln in the Queen's coronation flypast in 1953 in which 600 aircraft took part.

SUNDAY MORNING AT BIRCHWOOD



AVM Nigel Baldwin,
Mrs Jenny Baldwin, Wg
Cdr Peter Jacobs and Wg
Cdr Jayne Casebury

The RAF Waddington
Voluntary Band leads the
march past



The standard bearers support
the reunion every year. This is
Ron Groves, late of the
Parachute Regiment.

The veterans in
the march past.



SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT SKELLINGTHORPE



Wg Cdr Richard Turner,
OC RAF Scampton;
AVM Nigel Baldwin; and
Wg Cdr Peter Jacobs.

A moving occasion as the children from local groups and schools in the village lay roses at the memorial.



No caption required!

BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL



This magnificent memorial was unveiled on 28 Jun by HM The Queen, many dignitaries and guests attended but most important of all were the 5000+ veterans and families there to see it, including our President MRAF Sir Michael Beetham.

There were two area for guests: the saluting area and the guest area with a large screen for all to see the event as it unfolded. The veterans came from far and wide, from all parts of the

commonwealth. The veterans from New Zealand were flown in by their government with all expenses paid. Those from Australia were given A\$5000 each towards the cost attending the unveiling.



The magnificent statues of a 7 man crew of Bomber Command. Note also the geodetic construction of the roof in memory of the Barnes Wallis design. Some of the materials used were from a recovered Halifax aircraft.

BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL



On the left our own members, James Flowers and David Jellett shown in front of the memorial.



AVM Nigel Baldwin and James Flowers alongside a Canadian Navigator



The indomitable Jimmy Flint, at 99, would hardly have failed to make an appearance and was very vocal regarding his exploits when joining operations and went on to detail how his first op was as a navigator. When he first arrived at his first station they were short of a navigator and asked him if he would do the job, he of course said yes, and obviously did the job successfully.

THE BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL - WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

The book, due to be published in November by Fighting High Publishing at £19.95, tells the story of the memorial from the initial idea to the unveiling on 28 Jun. The cost of the book includes a £10 donation to the Memorial Fund.



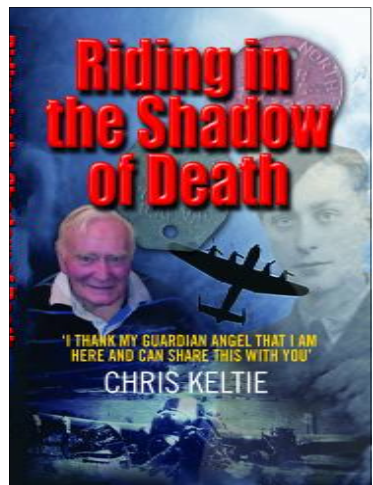
The saga of the efforts, sometimes dispiriting, to build this outstanding tribute to the 55,573 men who gave their lives for freedom, is fully covered. The book also tells the remarkable story of Bomber Command from the viewpoint of the veterans who took part, and veterans reflect on the experiences they had

and what the memorial means to them. Several veterans took part in the publicity campaign for the memorial, including one of our members, Arthur Smith, a 50 Sqn flight engineer. One of the many photographs taken is reproduced here; Arthur is standing 2nd from the left.

RIDING IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH

You may recall that in the last newsletter, we included a piece on the remarkable story of Bill North and his crew. On Sunday afternoon, during the last reunion weekend, at Skellingthorpe, the author Chris Keltie met members and veterans and handed out flyers about his book, reproduced on the right. We await details of the publication date and will put any information we receive in the next newsletter.

Richard Jones



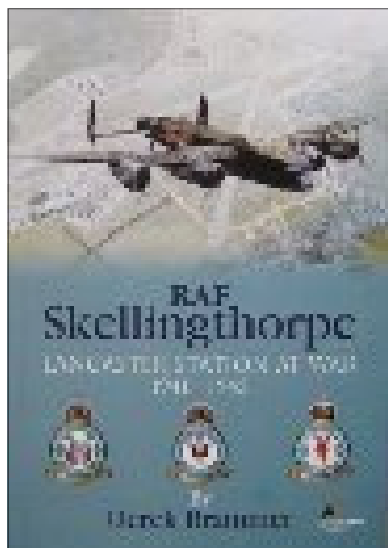
A SHAKY DO

In addition to Chris Keltie, we were blessed with another author at Skellingthorpe; Peter Cunliffe. On the night of the 16/17 Apr 43 the largest RAF Bomber Command force so far was tasked to destroy the Škoda works. It is mainly this operation, but also the Mannheim operation, which is the subject of this book. A force comprising 327 aircraft codenamed Operation 'Frothblower' set out. 271 aircraft were also tasked against Mannheim (Operation 'Chub'), the other major target and diversionary raid. The book was written as a memorial to Peter Cunliffe's uncle, FS William Dawson, 61 Sqn, who was killed during the Škoda raid on his 29th mission in Lancaster W4317 (QR-R). The book is available at £10.99 (plus £3 p&p) directly from the author at avro683@hotmail.co.uk



RAF SKELLINGTHORPE—LANCASTER STATION AT WAR 1941-1945

Many of you may remember Derek Brammer, who attended many reunion weekends. He was a very keen military historian and the author of two books: "Thundering Through the Clear Air" about 61 Sqn; and the book featured here, "RAF Skellingthorpe, a Lancaster Station at War 1941-1945. Sadly Derek died earlier this year and we had some members who wondered if his book was still available. It is and we have purchased some copies for members. They are available at £10 inc p&p. Please contact us if you'd like a copy. The book is strongly recommended and is the definitive story of this airfield and the men who flew from there.



NEW MEMBERS

Peter Cunliffe of Preston is the Nephew of William Dawson a Bomb Aimer on the McFarlane crew of 61 Sqn, who failed to return from a raid 16/17 Apr 43.

Kevin Fielding of St Annes is the Grandson of Sgt W G Wood of 50 Sqn flying in Lancaster NN694 who failed to return 10 May 44.

Chris Keltie of London was a great friend of the late Bill North who passing was reported in the last Newsletter. Chris has written a book about Bill North's exploits.

Gordon Catling of Ipswich is a former 50 Sqn rear gunner. He decided to make contact as he saw Jimmy on the television and thought he would see if the Association was still going. He has recently turned 87 and remembers Jimmy as a Sqn Ldr and subsequently his CO; they called him "Twitcher" Flint. I had never heard of this, but he says that Jimmy's moustache used to twitch every time there was an op on.

ABSENT FRIENDS

Sidney J King. Sid was a rigger for several years during the war on 50 Sqn. He passed away in Sep 11 and was a regular supporter of the Association and was always in attendance with his wife Margaret. His family left several items of memorabilia to the Association, including air drop leaflets, aircraft training manuals, and various photos.

Hugh Wynter. Hugh sadly passed away in Mar 12. He was an air gunner on 50 Sqn and had attended the reunions in 2010 and 2011 after a gap of many years.

Don Street DFC. Sadly we are advised by his son Neville of the passing of a staunch supporter of the Association Don Street, a 61 Sqn pilot. He passed away on 18 Jul. Neville will provide a fuller obituary to his father in the Dec newsletter.

Sqn Ldr Gordon Hickmore MBE. Sad to report, but Gordon Hickmore, ex 50 Sqn, died 7 Jun 12. He was a stalwart and gave much assistance to the annual Poppy Appeal in Burton Village.

David Rigley. Although not a member of the Association, David attended the Sunday memorial service at Birchwood, during the memorial weekend, for many years with his faithful dog, Benji. David was a member of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans' Association and Benji their national mascot. Sadly David died at the end of last year.

Eric Baldwin. Eric Died in Mar after many years in a care home in Skellingthorpe. He was an Australian air gunner who flew from Skellingthorpe and stayed in the UK after the war. Gerry Collins represented the Association at the funeral in Waddington.

ACCOUNTS AND MEMBERSHIP

I am pleased to confirm in this newsletter the Treasurers report as presented at the AGM in June. A summary of the accounts is shown below.

General Account

Income	£1984.72	Opening balance	£1990.44
Expenditure	£2109.52	Excess	-£124.80
Excess	-£124.80	Closing Balance	£1865.64

Memorial Account

Income	£1.51	Opening balance	£3021.08
Expenditure	£0.00	Excess	£1.51
Excess	£1.51	Closing balance	£3022.59

The General account as you can see shows a small deficit, this can be attributed to the fact that we made a purchase of stamps prior to the large price increase. The benefits of this should show in next years accounts. The Memorial account remained fairly static apart from some small interest.

Membership

There are currently 206 members listed. 117 Annual paying members and 89 life or honorary members. Of the 117 Annual members, some 39 or so members have not paid subs for the current year. This continues to be a problem year on year. As in previous years, I am in the process of contacting these members to resolve the issue. The total membership is 6 less than last year. There are still a few members who have not changed their standing order to £10. It would be appreciated if you pay by standing order, you check and make the necessary changes.

Mike Connock

ASSOCIATION MEMORABILIA

The following are available from the treasurer, Mike Connock:

Association ties, blue with crests of both sqns: £10 inc p&p

Operation Fail to Return (Birchwood memorial): dvd £5 inc p&p

15

Rolls of Honour: £5 + p&p

Richard Jones



One of the many tributes to former Bomber Command members on the new memorial.
This one to a former 50 Sqn member.



View of the guests in the area with the large screen to witness the events
of the day