



Issue 61  
April 2012



***No 50 & No 61 SQUADRONS'  
ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER***



**President**  
**Marshal of the Royal Air Force**  
**Sir Michael Beetham GCB CBE DFC AFC FRAeS**

**Past President**  
**Air Chief Marshal Sir Augustus Walker GCB CBE DSO DFC AFC**

**Vice Presidents**  
**Air Vice Marshal Nigel Baldwin CB CBE RAF (retd)**  
**Wing Commander James Flint DFC GM DFM AE RAF (retd)**  
**Charles Swain Esq**

**Past Vice-Presidents**  
**William Reid VC; Eddie Davidson DFM**

**Honorary Members**  
**Derek Tovey; Gillian Merron; Pam Connock MBE**

*Chairman*

**Wg Cdr Peter Jacobs RAF**  
**61 Fulmar Road**  
**Doddington Park**  
**Lincoln LN6 0LA**  
**01522 826635**  
**peterjacobs83@msn.com**

*Vice Chairman*

**Sqn Ldr Richard Jones RAF (retd)**  
**58 Lady Meers Road**  
**Cherry Willingham**  
**Lincoln LN3 4BW**  
**01522 595381**  
**richardnjones@btinternet.com**

*Secretary*

**Gerry Collins**  
**35 Wetherby Crescent**  
**Lincoln LN6 8SY**  
**01522 681482**  
**gerald236@btinternet.com**

*Parade Marshal*

**Alan Biggs**  
**19 St Marks Avenue**  
**Cherry Willingham**  
**Lincoln LN3 4LX**  
**01522 751690**  
**alan.biggs@mypostoffice.co.uk**

*Membership & Subs*

**Mike Connock**  
**21 Goldfinch Close**  
**Skellingthorpe**  
**Lincoln LN6 5SF**  
**01522 683997**  
**m.connock2@ntlworld.com**

*Dining Secretary*

**Lynda Skinner**  
**19 St Marks Avenue**  
**Cherry Willingham**  
**Lincoln LN3 4LX**  
**01522 519914**  
**lynda@gardinercollis.co.uk**

*Editorial Team*

**Mike Connock**  
**Richard Jones**

## EDITORIAL

We have included a piece on the life of ACM Sir 'Gus' Walker, a former OC 50 Sqn and our first permanent president. We hope to feature in future editions other former sqn members who have reached high rank.

You will probably also know that Bill North died last December. He and his crew had an extraordinary escape when their Lancaster crash-landed in occupied France. They all survived and two crew members made it back to the UK, but five were made POWs. The story has been made into a book by Chris Keltie and we hope to be able to review the book in a future newsletter. The reunion between Bill and Dennis Bartlett his MUG, after 67 years, is most moving.

We are pleased to report that we have some new photographs in the Birchwood Memorial Room. The Association's first reunion in 1946, kindly provided by Roy Day, who happily plans to attend the reunion in June. We also have a series of photographs of the late Sgt William Wood, whose widow, May, aged 90, never re-married and visited us during our remembrance service with her grandson in 2010.

We also feature the forthcoming Bomber Command Memorial dedication and unveiling celebration on 28 Jun. We will plan to have a report and photographs in the Aug newsletter. Mike has put together a piece on how to obtain tickets, but it may be a little late. It seems that, rightly so, members of the Bomber Command Association have some priority.

Some members may remember Jack Lascelles, who features prominently in the early Association minute book. Richard has spoken to his widow and the sprightly Mrs Lascelles is kindly discussing matters with her sons. We hope to be able to copy some of her late husband's photographs in due course for our memorial room and album.

We are also very pleased to report on Michael Allman's books about Lancaster VN-M and Kenneth Ingram. It is a most moving story of fortitude, danger, capture and a war crime.

**Richard Jones and Mike Connock**

## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

As I write this entry for our latest Newsletter there is a definite feeling of Spring in the air. The cold and financially difficult months of Jan and Feb are now well and truly in the rear-view mirror and there is so much to look forward to in the coming months.

For the majority of the Nation these coming months will be dominated by the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the Olympics. Whether you are at the events or sitting in front of your television, I ask that you spare a thought for the thousands of Service men and women who will be working at these high profile public events this year. This is no small task and many of our military personnel will once again be away from their homes and families for periods of up to 10 weeks in the case of the Olympics.

All this reminds us of how often in recent years the Government has had to continuously rely on the Armed Forces, whether it is to enforce Government policy abroad on operations, such as in Iraq, Afghanistan or Libya, or whether it is to provide essential manpower for natural disasters such as floods at home or abroad or for national events such as the Jubilee or Olympics. Yet we continue to get smaller and for some of those involved in the events mentioned there is the potential notification of redundancy before they deploy. These are not easy times but I know once again our Armed Forces will ensure these events are a great success, and will do so without a moan or the threat of strike.

There is also another high-profile event in London this year which I am sure will be close to many of your hearts. The unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park will be the culmination of the extreme generosity of many and will also be the result of three years of hard campaigning by many people, none more so than our President, Sir Michael Beetham. Sir Michael has worked tirelessly to ensure that members of Bomber Command get the recognition they so rightly deserve but there must have been times when he must have wondered whether it would happen at all and I, personally, will be delighted for Sir Michael and the many campaigners and donors of this great cause when the memorial is unveiled by HM The Queen on 28 Jun.

Finally, but by no means least, we have our own reunion weekend in Jun. While our event may not match the extremely high-profile events that I have already mentioned, it is no less special to us and I look forward so much to seeing you there. It hardly seems possible that it is nearly that time of year again and, once again, I would like to thank my Committee for all their hard work behind the scenes here in Lincoln to ensure that we have a weekend to look forward to and I have no doubt whatsoever that it will be yet another great success.

What a year 2012 will turn out to be and as I said at the beginning of my comments, it should be a truly unforgettable. My warmest regards to you all as always.

**Peter Jacobs**

## AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR AUGUSTUS WALKER

The late Air Chief Marshal Sir (George) Augustus Walker GCB CBE DSO DFC AFC MA served on 50 Sqn and was also our Association's first permanent president (1961). He attended many annual reunions and features prominently in our early minute book. 'Gus' Walker, as he was universally known, was an outstanding commander and a most popular and engaging senior officer. This year marks the centenary of his birth.



OC 50 Sqn Gus Walker and his dog "Fifty", with His Hampden crew - RAF Lindholme Nov 40

Born in Yorkshire in 1912, he won a place at St Catherine's College Cambridge and joined the RAF in 1934, when it became clear that air power would be decisive in future conflicts. He was already a sqn ldr when the war broke out in 1939.

He commanded 50 Sqn, RAF Lindholme, from Dec 40 to Oct 41, during which time he was awarded the DSO and DFC for his part in the famous bombings of the German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. He was promoted gp capt and took command of RAF Syerston in Apr 42.

During preparations for night raid over Turin in Dec 42, Walker noticed something fall from a Lancaster, fully armed with 1,000 lb bombs. Thinking it was a bomb, (it was an incendiary) he instinctively rushed forward to alert the crew. He was within yards of the aircraft when there was an explosion and he was thrown 100 yds by the blast and his right arm severed. Incredibly, as he was being taken to hospital he asked one of his staff to telephone HQ Bomber<sup>5</sup>Cmd to ask if they would take back a one-armed stn cdr in two month's time. Two months later he was back

on duty! One month afterwards he was promoted air cdre at the age of 30. He returned to active service, and flying, with an artificial arm and leather loops which he wrapped around the control column. He was affectionately referred to by personnel as the one-armed bandit.

Gus Walker went on to become AOC No 42 Base, RAF Pocklington; SASO 4 Gp; OC RAF Coningsby; Cmdt RAF Flying College, Manby, where he developed flying techniques for jet aircraft and was awarded the AFC in 1956 for his work in this and the techniques for flights over the North Pole. His career continued with further senior appointments: AOC 1 Gp; AOC-in-C Fg Tng Cmd; Inspector General RAF; and finally DCinC Air Forces Central Europe.



Gus Walker retired in 1970 and remained active and a proud Yorkshireman. He became one of the first patrons of the Air Museum at Elvington and maintained a great interest in the Air Training Corps, Church Lads' Brigade (Governor and Commandant 1970-79), the RAF Association (Chairman then President 1973-81), the National Sporting Club (Chairman 1973-83 (he had been an RAF and England Rugby Player)), and the 50 and 61 Sqns' Association. Gus Walker died in 1986 at the age of 74.

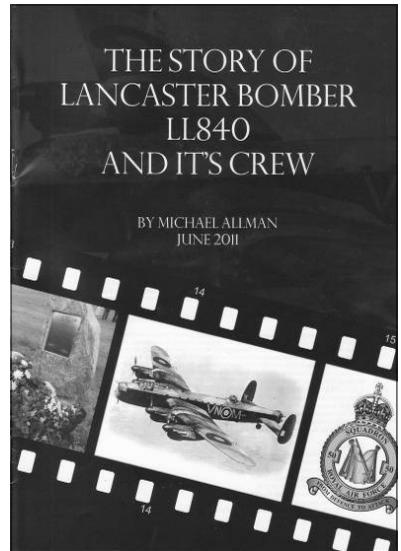
The Garforth Historical Society funded a Leeds Civic Trust blue plaque to remember one of their greatest sons. It was unveiled by the stn cdr of RAF Linton on Ouse in Oct 06, and reads: "Air Chief Marshal Sir Augustus Walker was born in Garforth and brought up in this house. Serving in the RAF, he rose to its highest ranks. An inspirational figure, he led raids with 50 Sqn on industrial targets in Germany and commanded a series of bomber stations in World war Two."

**Richard Jones** (thanks to David Layne for pic of Gus Walker at RAF Lindholme)

## LANCASTER BOMBER LL840 (VN-M) AND CREW

Michael Allman has written, and published privately, two books about a 50 Sqn Lancaster aircraft and its crew, and in particular the flight engineer, FS Kenneth Ingram. The covers of both books are reproduced in this article.

Allman is not foremost an aviation historian, but he was inspired to write the books while researching his wife's family tree. He was looking into the RAF career of one of his wife's cousins, Kenneth Ingram, who served in the RAF during the war and was killed in action. The following story is a brief overview of what Michael Allman discovered.

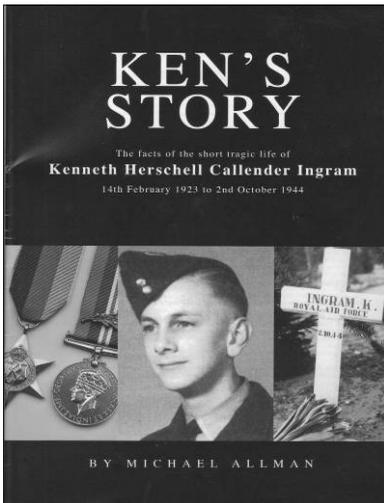


On 21 Jun 44, Lancaster VN-M was tasked on a raid to bomb oil refineries at Gelsenkirchen in Germany. The crew members were:

Pilot: Sqn Ldr Thomas Cole DFC  
Flt Eng: FS Kenneth Ingram  
W Op: Plt Off Eric Blakemore DFM  
Tail Gunner: Sgt Patrick Hayes

Nav: Fg Off John Craven DFC  
BA: FS Arthur Beresford  
MUG: FS Frederick Shorter  
WOP/AG: WO John Lane

On the return from the successful bombing mission, VN-M was attacked by a German night fighter and ground fire, it suffered heavy damage but the pilot struggled on. Sgt Hayes, having crash landed some months earlier, thought the aircraft was about to crash and bailed out. The pilot asking for a damage report and receiving no reply from Hayes, asked WO Lane to investigate. Upon reporting that the rear turret was empty, Lane was told to stay put and man it. When the aircraft reached the Dutch border the order to bail out was given. Cole, Ingram, Craven, Beresford and Blakemore landed successfully near Apeldoorn. VN-M crashed near the village of Oene, Holland, where the Germans found the remains of Shorter and Lane, who had perished in the crash.



Cole, Beresford and Hayes became POWs, while Craven and Blakemore evaded capture and returned to England. Ingram also evaded capture but was eventually caught wearing civilian clothes together with an American airman, Sgt Bob Zercher. On 2 Oct 44 they were taken, with six resistance members, and executed. The six civilians were shot but Kenneth Ingram and Bob Zercher were bayoneted to death. Confirmed by a Judge Advocate General's Investigation in 1946.



The names of FS Kenneth Ingram, WO John Lane (who required only one more mission to complete his tour of operations) and Sgt Frederick Shorter are recorded in the 50 and 61 Sqns' Roll of Honour. The monument, above, at Oene, Holland, was unveiled on 22 Jun 09, the 65th anniversary of the crash.

The story of this brave crew, and in particular Kenneth Ingram, is an excellent read. Michael Allman has kindly donated a copy of each book for our Association library and the copies may be seen by members during our memorial weekend. Details are also on our website.

**Richard Jones**

## **BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL**

As you may be well aware, the long awaited Bomber Command Memorial will be unveiled by HM The Queen and dedicated on 28 Jun. We do not have full details of the ceremony yet, but Mike Connock has a piece on the next page about obtaining tickets.

The Memorial will honour the 55,573 airmen who lost their lives in World War II. Designed by architect Liam O'Connor, who previously designed the Armed Forces Memorial in Staffordshire, the Memorial will feature as its centrepiece a nine foot high bronze by sculptor Philip Jackson depicting a seven man bomber crew returning to base after operations. It will be built in the North West corner of Green Park, adjacent to Piccadilly. It will be almost opposite the RAF Club.

We plan to have a fuller article in the September newsletter with pictures and some words from Sir Michael who has campaigned ceaselessly for this long overdue tribute to the brave bomber crews.



Chaplain in Chief (RAF) Blessing the Memorial Foundation Stone 5 May 11

**Richard Jones**

If you wish to attend the unveiling and dedication on 28 Jun, you should be a member of the Bomber Command Association (BCA), as members can apply for tickets, and will receive some priority. If you are not a member then you can become one and then apply for tickets. We understand there will be two main enclosures, one in front of the memorial seating around 700 and a saluting area with a large screen holding about 6000 people.



We fully appreciate that by the time this newsletter arrives on your doorstep time will be getting very short. Although we would expect that many Association members, who are also members of the BCA, will already have made the arrangement if they wish to go. You can get an application form from the BCA or if you

would like to contact me I can email or send you a copy.

Further to this we are planning to run a trip to the memorial from the Lincoln area on the 30 Sep. This is of course not convenient for those of you who do not live in the area, but if anyone is able to get to Lincoln then they are welcome to join us. Cost and further details will be available once we have some idea of numbers.

The contact for membership of the BCA is: Vivian Hammer, Bomber Command Association, RAF Museum, Grahame Park Way, Hendon, London NW9 5LL. Details of the memorial can be found on the following website: [bomber.command.memorial@rafmuseum.org](mailto:bomber.command.memorial@rafmuseum.org). The telephone number for both is 0208 358 4841.

If you are interested in joining us for the trip on 30 Sep, do please contact me. Details are, as ever, on page 2 of the newsletter.

**Mike Connock**

## **ANNUAL REUNION DINNER**

Happy New year to you all. Our reunion dinner is more or less sorted now. We just need to know the names of those who will be joining us, any special diet requirements and of course payment, which this year is £34 per person, which includes wine and vintage port for the loyal toast.

After 2011's last minute fiasco with the table layout, we have decided that we shall have all round tables. These tables seat only ten people, so please can you let us know, as soon as possible, who you would like to be seated with. We will do our best to place you with your friends.

Accommodation is once again at the Lincoln Hotel, and transport will be provided from there. If you do require transport during the weekend, please fill in the form, included in last Dec's newsletter, and return it with your dinner payment chq by 15 Apr. As previous years, we are asking for donations towards the raffle, which are always much appreciated. We look forward to seeing you in June.

**Lynda Skinner**

## **SKELLINGTHORPE INFORMAL WELCOME SUPPER**

The Skellingthorpe ladies are again pleased to provide the popular Skellingthorpe supper on Fri 8 Jun. Details are in the enclosed weekend programme. The evening serves as a welcome to friends old and new. The price remains the same as last year, £10 per head; pay on the night.

I would appreciate it if you could let me know if you are attending; I do need some idea of numbers in advance. My contact details are:  
01522 683997 or [pamconnock@ntlworld.com](mailto:pamconnock@ntlworld.com).

**Pam Connock**

## **WREATHS**

Please contact me for a wreath, if required during weekend. The wreaths can be laid on your behalf, if you wish. The Type C, with badge insert, is £20 and the Type B, without insert, is £19.

**Gerry Collins**

## ASSOCIATION MEMORABELIA

Just to remind you that we are still able to offer the following items for sale to members and friends:

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

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

Rolls of Honour: £5 + p&p

We can also supply members and friends with copies of the book of the life and times of our President, MRAF Sir Michael Beetham, "Stay the Distance", written by our Chairman Peter Jacobs.

Please contact the Vice-Chairman to purchase any of the above. Details of page 2 of this newsletter.

**Richard Jones**

### PILOT OFFICER WILLIAM (BILL) NORTH RAFVR



Plt Off Bill North

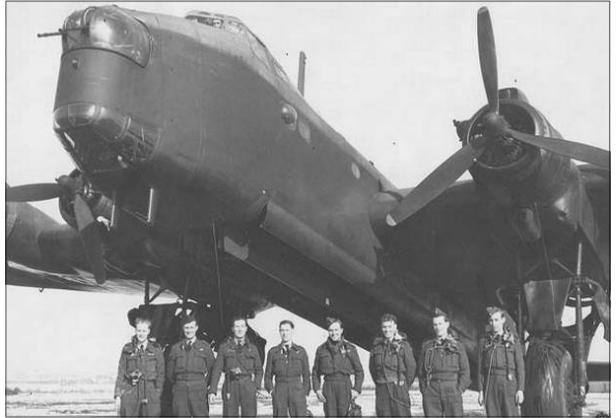
You may know that Bill North (61 Sqn) died on 15 Dec last year aged 89 years. This brave man leaves behind a host of memories about him and an amazing story. Chris Keltie has written a book about Bill and his experiences entitled: "Riding in the Shadow of Death".



AC2 Dennis Bartlett

The story of Bill North and Dennis Bartlett is told in James Flowers' outstanding Veterans Album. I summarise the story here for those without access to the internet. My<sup>12</sup>sincere thanks to James Flowers, Chris Keltie and Mike Connock.

Bill North and his crew first crewed together at RAF Winthorpe in Feb 44 when they converted from the Wellington to the Sterling aircraft. In May 44 they joined 61 Sqn and the first ac they flew was QR-M (Mickey the Moocher).



On 4/5 Jul 44, Bill and his crew, with Les Morton temporarily replaced by Sgt Dennis Hatchett as FEng, flew QR-D as a part of OP CROSSBOW to bomb the V1 sites at St Leu d'Esserent.

L-R: PO Bill North (pilot); FS Norman Jarvis (BA); FS Dave Crowley (Nav); Sgt Monty Monteith (WOp); (Sgt Jock Pork (FEng (supernumerary crew))); Sgt Les Morton (FEng); Sgt Eddie O'Shea (Rear Gunner); Sgt Dennis Bartlett (MUG) with their Stirling Bomber

The outbound leg was uneventful and the target bombed successfully. On the way home, however, the aircraft was attacked by an ME 109 and severely damaged. Dennis Bartlett's mid-upper turret exploded and he was badly wounded in the left arm and thigh. Bill North gave the order to abandon the aircraft. Eddie O'Shea, Norman Jarvis and Dave Crowley successfully baled out. Unfortunately enemy action had damaged Dennis Hatchett's and Monty Monteith's parachute harnesses and they could not jump; Dennis Bartlett would not leave them and stayed with the aircraft. Bill, although injured, displayed magnificent airmanship and crash-landed the aircraft. He did not know who was still on board, but was determined to crash land rather than jump.

The aircraft did not catch fire so Monty Monteith returned to set it alight, but just could not do it. Fortunately for us he enabled us to see the amazing picture of the wrecked Lancaster and wonder how on earth there were any survivors.

Dave Crowley and Dennis Hatchett evaded capture and returned safely to England. Bill North, Dennis Bartlett, Eddie O'Shea, Norman Jarvis and Monty Monteith were captured and spent the last months of the war



Bill North's crashed Lancaster Bomber

as POWs. It is a wonderful story of guts and bravery and there is also a very satisfying conclusion.

Chris Keltie first met Bill North in 1970, when Chris was 7 years old; his family moved in next door. He became very close to Bill and was fascinated by Bill's wartime experiences, especially the picture of the crew in front of the Sterling. He eventually coaxed this story from Bill. In 2008 Chris told Bill that there was a story here that needed telling, so Bill said "Well, tell it then". The result is Chris's book.

Bill's dearest wish was to see his friend and old crew member Dennis Bartlett again. They had last seen each other in Beauvais hospital in 1944. They were reunited in Mar 2011 after 67 years.

The story featured in the Daily Mirror last Dec.

**Richard Jones**



Bill and Dennis reunited after 67 years in Mar 11

## ABSENT FRIENDS

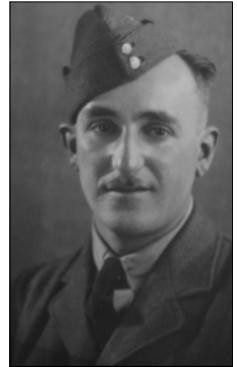
**Patrick Sears.** We have been told that Patrick Sears passed away last June. He was a member of 61 Sqn.

**Bill North.** Sadly Bill died on 15 Dec and we have a piece in this edition about his 61 Sqn service and the book about Bill and his experiences.

**Bill Kelbrick.** Bill died late last year and we aim to have a feature about his life and tremendous work for the Association in the next edition.

## CAN YOU HELP?

**Sgt Sturgess Herbert Rayner** (1202331) RAFVR. 50 Sqn RAF Skellingthorpe. Missing on a raid to Turin on the night of 12/13 Jul 43, in Lancaster DV 156.



The Lancaster, VN-C, was the only one of the 12 ac not to return to base on that fateful night. His usual and fellow 7 crew members were Plt Off E J Burnett, Plt Off T Stenhouse, Sgt F O'Carroll, Plt Off A J Holloway, Plt Off J E A P Manning, Sgt J T Wilson and Sgt S H Rayner. Sgt G Batey. Their names are recorded in our Roll of Honour.

If you have any information regarding the crew or my maternal grandfather, please make contact with me [pinkelephant77@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pinkelephant77@yahoo.co.uk) or telephone 07749425918 thank you. Robert Spencer

**Ted Stone.** A pilot on 61 Sqn who flew Lancaster ED860 (QR-N) to Nuremberg. John Nichol (Gulf War navigator who was captured with his pilot John Peters in 1991) is writing a book on the Nuremberg raid (30/31 Mar 44). Ted Stone emigrated to Australia after the war and John is trying to trace Ted Stone's family. Ted's daughter and grand daughter were both named Nan, after his 61<sup>st</sup> Sqn Lancaster. If you can help please contact John at [john@johnnichol.com](mailto:john@johnnichol.com)

## TAILEND CHARLIE



IT WAS SERGEANT STRADDLE (BOMB-AIMER, ROYAL NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE) WHO REPORTED THAT — “THE FLAK WAS SO THICK OVER HAM’ THAT, JUST FOR A LARK, THE SKIPPER SELECTED ‘WHEELS DOWN’ AND WE MADE A TEMPORARY LANDING ON IT!”

Sergeant Straddle