



Issue 60
December 2011



***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 DFC AFC MA

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

Remembrance was commemorated by the Association wreath being laid by the vice-chairman, Sqn Ldr Richard Jones, at Skellingthorpe on Fri 11 Nov. On Remembrance Sunday, the wreath was laid by our chairman Wg Cdr Peter Jacobs. We were ably supported at Birchwood by the Rev Brian Stalley, Michelle Liddle from the Beevor Band and the staff and cadets204(City of Lincoln) Sqn ATC.

In the previous edition we printed the wonderful picture of members (clearly) enjoying a libation during the 1954 50 Sqn reunion. We asked members if they were able to help with identification. As ever, members responded and Gp Capt Hugh Everitt has enabled us to add more names.

We are also delighted to have been given copies of the very earliest reunion photographs by Capt Roy Day. We also show a photograph of 4 ex-sqn members(?) at RAF Waddington in 1966. Do please keep these old photographs coming, they are priceless and very important.

This year celebrated 4 major events for our Association: Firstly, it is the 65th anniversary of the first 50 and 61 Sqns' reunion in 1946; the 70th anniversaries of the opening of RAF Skellingthorpe, and the basing of 50 Sqn there, in 1941; and the 20th anniversary of the commemoration of our wonderful memorial at Skellingthorpe unveiled in 1991.

We have recently acquired the original Association minute book which contains the minutes from the first formal AGM in the New Inn, Westminster Bridge Road, London on 19 Nov 49 (the pub no longer exists), to the last recorded held at RAF West Drayton in 1979. This is an important document which is a fascinating history of our Association and will be available for members to peruse during the reunion weekend next year.

We have had an email from the great nephew of Edward Pullen ex 50 Sqn and 61 Sqn. We were very pleased to be able to send David Carpenter a copy of our Op Fail to Return dvd, with Edward Pullen talking on the newsreel, and also the Roll of Honour which sadly records the loss of Wg Cdr Pullen, then OC 50 Sqn, on a Frankfurt raid in Dec 43. He was lost with Fg Off Boyle's crew in Lancaster DV234 (VN-M) and is interred at Durnbach.

We wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous and peaceful New Year.

Richard Jones & Mike Connock

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

It's difficult to think that this time last year we were about to undergo the big freeze, which turned out to be the hardest winter in Lincolnshire for many years. No signs as yet of a repeat, in fact it was quite the opposite as we stood at the memorial for our annual Remembrance Service last Sunday. It was such a mild day as we remembered those who are no longer with us, not just those who gave their lives way back during the Second World War but also those who have recently left us.

From the past I spared a thought for Sergeant William George Wood of 50 Squadron who was killed on the night of 10/11 May 1944 during a raid against the rail yards at Lille; he was just twenty-two years old and Sergeant Wood was on his 30th, and what would have been his last operation of his tour of duty. I mention Sergeant Wood because we were delighted to have with us again at this year's Remembrance Service his grandson, Kevin Fielding, and Kevin's wife. Kevin had come to the service last year with his grandmother, May, who, way back in 1944, had suddenly found herself a widow in her early twenties.

Last year Kevin brought May to our service but she was not able to travel this year. Two things struck me when I first met May and Kevin. Firstly, that May had never re-married since her sad loss in 1944 and, secondly, that Kevin had found our Association and has now twice travelled all the way from Blackpool for the short service. We now have pictures and details about Sergeant William George Wood and the family can rest assured that we will find a place to remember him in our Association Room. Of those that have passed on recently, I was particularly saddened to hear of the death of Bill Kelbrick whom many of you will have known and remember as a former secretary of our Association. Ever since I first became involved with the Association more than twenty years ago, Bill was always one to offer me advice or an opinion; particularly when I first became Chairman. And so tonight I will be raising my glass to Bill Kelbrick and William Wood.

I would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Here's to 2012 and a certain event called the Olympics!

Peter Jacobs

REUNION WEEKEND 2012

Organisation for the 2012 reunion dinner is well under way, but unfortunately prices have increased again making the cost of the 2012 dinner £34 per person. However, this price does include the wine and port for the loyal toast.

The Lincoln Hotel, Eastgate, has allocated 10 double and 5 single rooms for our reunion weekend, the special price also includes breakfast. The double rooms will cost £85 per night and the single rooms £75 per night. Please make bookings **direct to the hotel**, quoting reference **SQN**, for the special rate. Details of the hotel are contained on the enclosed booking form. Please book the room you require as soon as possible with the hotel, and return the weekend booking form, with your reunion weekend dinner cheque, to me by **15 April**.

Lynda Skinner

SECRETARY'S PIECE

We again had a very good turnout for our Birchwood Remembrance service, with 204(Lincoln)Sqn Air Cadets joining us after their attendance at Lincoln Cathedral Service. The reading was given, and the wreath laid, by Cllr Eddie Strengiel, representing the Mayor of Lincoln. Thanks also to Kate Fenn of Lincoln City for organising our refreshments.

Part of RAF Skellingthorpe is now Birchwood Nature Park and there is an information board designed by Barry Short at the entrance. A copy is also displayed by the Airmen's Chapel in Lincoln Cathedral. Recently, the Cathedral "flower lady", Mickey Phelps, told us that her father is on the 50 Sqn Hampden photograph. I will arrange a tour of our history room for her.

More recently, I received an email asking for details of LAC G W F Hart who was killed on the airfield 19 May 44. His widow will be 101 years in the New Year, and they appear to have no information. They were pleased to learn that he was buried in Skellingthorpe churchyard and that on Remembrance Day, a poppy cross is laid at the grave by Pam Connock. I am getting full details of his death to send to her. He is also recorded in our Roll of Honour.

We were pleased to hear that the portrait of Jimmy Flint, painted to commemorate the award of his George Medal for outstanding bravery, has been brought out of the RAF Scampton museum and now hangs in the Station Conference Room with the portrait of Sgt John Hannah VC, 83 Sqn. We have a photographic copy of Jimmy's portrait in our memorial room.

Gerry Collins

EARLY ASSOCIATION REUNION PHOTOGRAPHS

We are truly indebted to Capt Roy Day for the 2 photographs on page 7. The photograph shown of the first reunion is only a small part of it. The whole photograph is some 15in by 6in and would not fit on our pages, unless made too small to be useful. We have copied Roy's original photograph and they will be framed and displayed in our memorial room at Birchwood; the Leslie Manser School (to be presented for their memorial room during the Reunion Weekend in 2012); and in the Skellingthorpe Village Hall.

Roy is shown in the First Reunion picture at top right. The fellow to Roy's left, with his hand on Roy's shoulder, is Peter McDonald (MUG) and behind and between them both is Roy Skinner (BA). We believe it may be Bill Reid VC front and centre, but we'd welcome clarification.

Roy is sitting on the floor in the front row extreme right in the lower picture. We also see Jimmy Flint in that picture too, left of centre in the first seated row, with Felix Brown and Dennis Abrams in the back row. If you are able to put names to other faces we would be very pleased to have them.

Richard Jones

CAPTAIN ROY DAY

Roy Day joined 50 Sqn as a FS pilot in Oct 44 with an NCO crew, apart from his BA, Plt Off Roy Skinner. Roy Day was commissioned and his first op with his crew was in late Oct to Nuremberg. He was on duty over Christmas 1944 and his Christmas OM menu is displayed at Birchwood. Jimmy Flint was OC A Flt at the time and Roy believes he probably owes his life to Jimmy, who was constantly sending him on courses. Roy also suffered bouts of ill health, thus by D-Day Roy says he had done only 23 trips ("only" 23 trips!!)

Roy was then posted to 207 Sqn on Lancaster Mk VIIIs, and destined for the Tiger Force, to complete his operational tour. But Hiroshima and Nagasaki put paid to all that. So he remained in the UK. But at the end of "one boring training session", went low flying and was sent for court martial. Roy says he was made a scapegoat to discourage others and dismissed the Service.

This setback did not stop his flying career as he became a captain in civil aviation and retired from a very full flying career, with 10 different outfits, in 1981. Roy holds a NPPL and still flies Cessna 172s from Perranporth. An eventful and full flying career and no mistake!

Richard Jones



Detail from the First 50 and 61 Sqns' Reunion 1946



2nd (1947) or 3rd (1948) 50 and 61 Sqns' Reunions

BERNARD CHARLES FITCH DFC

You will recall we announced the sad news of the death of Bernard Fitch, one of our most loyal Association members, in the last edition. Bernard was born



End of Tour Photograph

on 13 May 1920 and educated at the Stationers' Company's School in Hornsey, where he was a keen sportsman and gained his colours at cricket and football. He joined the RAF and served on 61 Sqn, where he completed 28 missions. He named his trusty aircraft, QR-S, Sheila after his wife. Bernard flew his last mission in Apr 44.

Skellingthorpe coincided with a period of very heavy losses. 61 Sqn alone lost 22 crews in the 8 months Bernard was a member of the Sqn. He was the very



Bernard at the NMA

Bernard's tour at Skellingthorpe coincided with a period of very heavy losses. 61 Sqn alone lost 22 crews in the 8 months Bernard was a member of the Sqn. He was the very first 1st tourist to complete an operational tour since Aug 43. Bernard had several close shaves and 2 are described in detail in the Veterans Album section of our website.

Following Instructor tours, Bernard left the RAF in 1950 and joined Air Charter. Bernard died on 9 August 2011. (We are indebted to James Flowers for the above details gathered from his excellent Veterans Album on our Association website).

I last saw Bernard during the 2011 reunion weekend when he was full of his recent visit to the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in Staffordshire. He showed me several photographs and asked if we could put together an article in a future newsletter. The visit had clearly moved Bernard greatly and

this short article is a too brief tribute to a gallant, brave and honourable man.

Richard Jones

REMEMBRANCE WEEKEND

Children from The Holt School who laid flowers at the Memorial on the 11 Nov.



The Skellingthorpe Memorial showing the wreaths and the floral wreath laid by the family in memory of Ron Packer, who's funeral service was the day before. Ron was a fitter on 50 Sqn at Skellingthorpe.

Cadets from the 204 (City of Lincoln) Sqn with our secretary, Gerry Collins, preparing for the service at Birchwood.



Association Chairman Wg Cdr Peter Jacobs with his wife Clare and twin daughters Becky and Rachel, at the Birchwood service on 13 Nov.

PLT OFF PERCY PRUNE

Anyone in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War will instantly recognise Percy Prune as the fictional, cartoon character (created by Bill (Raff) Hooper) who appeared in a pamphlet called Tee Emm (Short for Technical Memorandum). He was the buffoon who got everything wrong in order for the manual to explain what was right or correct. Tee Emm was written by the staff of the magazine Punch (and particularly Anthony Armstrong), who had been seconded to the Air Ministry for the duration of the war to make technical manuals readable.

We have been given a set of Prune postcards and will feature them in Tail End Charlie over future editions. We kick off the series in this edition with Percy, Patron of the Most Highly Derogatory Order of the Irremovable Finger, at his daft (and dangerous) best.

Richard Jones

RAF WADDINGTON 1966



We believe this picture to be four 50 Sqn and/or 61 Sqn members during a visit to 50 Sqn at RAF Waddington celebrating the 20th Anniversary of our Association on 14 May 66. We should be very grateful if members could identify them for us.

Photographs such as these are very important for keeping alive the history of our 2 sqns. We would welcome any of your pictures which we can copy, if necessary, and keep in a dedicated album or display in our memorial room at Birchwood.

If you are able to help, do please contact me. Thank you.

Richard Jones

50 SQN REUNION 1954

Felix Brown

“Beetle” Oxley

“Sonny” Lloyd



Gp Capt Hugh Everitt CBE DSO DFC AE has very kindly provided the 3 names above to help with our quest to name all the faces. With Jimmy Flint and Dennis Abrams, we now have 5 out of the 10. Gp Capt Everitt was the stn cdr of RAF Gaydon 1960-62 and then Gp Capt Tng at Bomber Command, where he served with Sir Michael. Gp Capt Everitt adds the following:

“Felix Brown was 50 Sqn Adj at Hatfield Woodhouse (now Lindholm) in 1940-41. He was ad admin officer who had been a pilot (he wore the brevet) in the 1914-18 war.

“Beetle” Oxley (later Gp Capt R J Oxley DSO DFC) was OC B Flt (Hampdens) on 50 Sqn 1940-41 and I was in his flt. He assumed command of 50 Sqn, taking over from Gus Walker, in Oct 41. I was OC B Flt (Lancasters) from Jun 42. In Oct 42 I took over from Beetle Oxley as Chief Instructor of 1660 Heavy Conversion Unit, RAF Swinderby.

“Sonny” Lloyd, a likeable character, was, Gp Capt Everitt seems to recall, on 50 Sqn at Hatfield Woodhouse and possible Waddington on an early Hampden tour in 1939-40.”

Richard Jones

LOSS OF 61 SQN LINCOLN RE 297

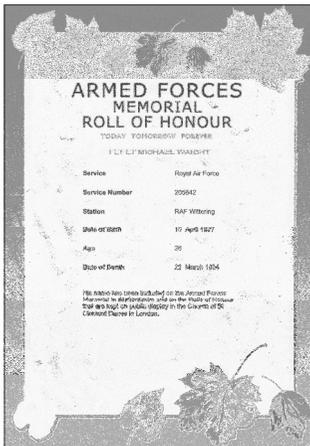
Danny Thomas was a signaller on 61 Sqn in Kenya (1952-54). Last year Danny kindly presented a first day cover, signed by him, depicting the Africa GSM and details of operations against the Mau-Mau, for our Memorial Room.



Lincoln Aircraft

He has sent us information about a tragic accident involving Lincoln IIb RE 297 on 22 Mar 54. (The aircraft shown is actually from 5 Sqn, although (coincidentally) 61 Sqn had the Sqn designation LS before changing to QR in Sep 39)

RE 297 was on detachment to RAF Eastleigh from RAF Wittering and tasked to carry out anti-Mau-Mau bombing sorties. The crew comprised: Flt Lt Michael Waight (pilot and captain); Fg Off Malcolm Owen (nav); Fg Off Robert Robinson (2nd nav); MEng William Beesley DFM (FE); and Sgt James Atkinson (RG). The captain had stood the sig down before the flight.



NMA Certificate

The crew were briefed to fly at 13,000 ft and bomb visually on markers. They were also briefed to note the high ground (Mt Kinankop) at 12,818 ft asl. Cloud conditions necessitated bombing from 11,000 ft. After completing the bombing run the aircraft flew into high ground at 10,500 ft and all the crew perished. No R/T was made prior to the accident.

The crew's names are inscribed on the memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in Staffordshire. Danny knew the pilot, Michael Waight, and visited the NMA to pay his respects. He obtained the Roll of Honour certificates for each member of the crew and the pilot's certificate is reproduced here.

We believe the crew may have been buried in Kenya.

Richard Jones

NO BREAKFAST TODAY SARGE

In early Apr 1945, I used a 48 hr pass to spend a weekend in the YMCA behind Paddington Station; I had been there many times before. The building had a large hall on each of its 3 floors, making it ideal sleeping quarters for the many military personnel who wanted a good night's sleep after enjoying the first class entertainment provided by the West End's theatres, cinemas, pubs and clubs. Many clubs had resident bands and stayed open nearly all night. Even after all those years, I still remember entering the almost darkened building with its dim safety lighting. It was way past midnight and the small booking office was closed, so made my way up stairs to find a bed. The first floor hall was full up, no spare beds. It was just the same on the second floor. But on the third floor luck was with me; the hall was deserted. To make sure I would not be disturbed, I picked the bed behind the door and naturally, given the state I was in, I slept like a log.

I woke a bit later than normal, tidied myself up and went downstairs. I then stopped dead in my tracks. The hall at the bottom of the stairs was a sea of military police, bomb disposal officers, rescue personnel, civilian police, Red Cross first aid workers, you name them, they were all there, and looked as if they had been working all night. A policeman came towards me and demanded to know where I thought I was going. I replied "Breakfast, Sir", "What time did you book in?" he asked. I explained I hadn't booked in as I arrived after the office was shut. I explained that I had found a bed on the third floor and slept there.

I gave the same reply to the many other questioners. I was beginner to suspect something serious had happened when an RAF Police cpl told me to look outside. So I looked out of the broken window and could see lots of rescue teams milling about. "What else can you see, something you can't miss?" he asked. "Well", I replied "You must mean the big hole next to us". "Good" he said, "now we're getting somewhere at last". "When you went to bed last night you could not have seen across the road, because a V2 landed next to this building, and destroyed all those blocks of flats and many people have been killed and injured. What's more, this building was evacuated. Didn't you not hear anything at all, or feel anything of the explosion? How did the staff miss you completely when they thought they had evacuated everyone?" I was treated very suspiciously.

It took a lot to convince them and I confirmed my identity with my pay book, 48 hr pass and return train ticket. This proved I was a sgt air gunner. I took the RAF Police cpl to one side and told him we had been out 3 times on heavy raids that week and suffered heavy losses. All aircrew were given passes and rail warrants for R&R. I had to report back to base for the ops briefing 1000 on the Mon. He seemed to accept my explanation and told me that not only had all Service personnel been evacuated, but the kitchen staff as well, so he told me, "No Breakfast Today Sarge".

I just grabbed my bags and left, saving myself 2/6 for bed & breakfast.

Les Loosemore (61 Sqn MUG)

ABSENT FRIENDS

David Charles Davies DFM. Son David tells us that his father passed away last month aged 90 years. His funeral included considerable references to his career in the RAF and his war record including his DFM medal, a flag and bugler were supplied by the local RAF branch and it was a very moving tribute. He is greatly missed by his wife Natalie; they were married for 64 years.

Bill Kelbrick. A 50 Sqn veteran, Bill died on 9 Nov. He unfortunately had not been well enough to attend recent reunions but had always been a very keen supporter of the Association. He had been secretary and a very active member for many years. He also took a great interest in the veterans' welfare.

Larry Wahts. A rear gunner on 50 Sqn, Larry was a member of Paul Firmins crew. Other crew members were Association veterans Terry Barber and Gordon Bulmer. Larry sadly passed away in November after a long illness.

NEW MEMBERS

Peter Cunliffe, Preston. Peter is the nephew of FS William Dawson, 61 Sqn BA, killed on a raid to Pilzen 16/17 Apr 43. He was a member of Plt Off McFarlane's crew, killed on the same raid. Peter has written a book, following extensive research, about his uncle's exploits.

H Terry Goodwin, DFC DFM, Ontario, Canada. Terry served as a pilot on 61 Sqn Dec 42 - Apr 43. He later instructed at Silverstone and Turweston, and served on 692 Sqn completing 75 trips on Mosquito aircraft based at RAF Graveley. (See the piece from the Memory Project on p 15).

Brian Olsen. Clayton, California USA. Brian's great uncle was FS Charles Joseph O'Conner of 50 Sqn, who perished during the St Leu d'Esserent raid 7/8 Jul 44.

Linda Ralph, Edinburgh. Linda's Uncle George Smith was the FE in Plt Off C M Brown's crew. They carried out 14 ops Aug - Oct 43 before transferring to 97 Sqn, where sadly they were killed on their first mission.

CAN YOU HELP?

If you knew or served with the late Wg Cdr Edward Pullen (61 Sqn flt cdr then OC 50 Sqn) do please let us know to pass on to his family. Please see the piece in the Editorial on page 2

Richard Jones

H TERRY GOODWIN DFC DFM

"I'm Terry Goodwin and I served with the Royal Canadian Air Force. When I was lining up to get my uniform in February of 1941, somebody said, "Who's from the West?" And a lot of hands went up. "Who's from the East?" A few more hands went up. And then somebody said, "And who's from the States?" And a lot of hands went up. In fact, at that particular time, 50 percent of the intake here in Toronto were from the States.



Now, I'd never been in an aircraft until I got my first dual instruction in a De Havilland Tiger Moth on July 15, 1941. And I got my wings on a Harvard St. Dunville December the 5th. Now that's two days before Pearl Harbor. Christmas of '41 was in Halifax in a blizzard and then 17 days in convoy to England. I flew Lancasters, which are four-engine aircraft had a great deal of flexibility in their bomb loads and did an excellent job. They did have a loss ration in Bomber Command, at that time, of approximately 5 percent on each raid. So that after you'd done ten trips, you'd used up 50 percent of your chances. Twenty trips, you'd used up all your chances, but your tour was thirty trips. It didn't work out quite that way because some people afterwards, pulling all the figures apart, figured that maybe 10 or 11 percent got through their first and second tours.

But then after instructing for six months I was sent back and this time on Mosquitoes, which were a wooden aircraft designed to carry a thousand pounds of bombs. When they test flew it they decided it should carry two thousand. And that's the way we got it. Ours had all bombs and no guns. But, obviously, there were other models that had lots of guns for various different purposes. Or mixtures of guns and bombs. So we had these two thousand pound Mosquitoes, Mark IV B, and then they went ahead and increased the bomb bay and we carried a four thousand pounder. A cookie. We carried that first to the Ruhr and then, eventually, all the way to Berlin. And it kept Jerry awake many, many nights.

Now as far as flying on Mosquitoes are concerned, that aircraft was a joy to fly. It had an unfortunate habit of wanting to swing to the left on take off because of the high torque, perhaps rotating. It was touch and go getting off. But the loss rate was considerably lower on Mosquitoes. They were very fast and on our very first trip when we were making this white condensation trails... con trails... we were chased by a Focke-Wulf 190 and actually ran away from him. It was an advantage to fly them even though there were no guns. You just did everything you were supposed to do and it worked out okay in my case."

The above is the text of a piece by Terry Goodwin, a new member (see p 14), recorded for the Memory Project (<http://www.thememoryproject.com>) in Canada. Wonderful.
Mike Connock

TAILEND CHARLIE



Wheel Landing