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



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EDITORIAL

You may know that Richard is moving to Leeds, but is remaining vice-chairman until at least the next AGM. He will also remain as co-editor of the newsletter, although the move to Leeds in Oct means that most of the work for this newsletter fell on Mike. Richard is a life member of the Association and will attend the Remembrance Day commemorations and the Reunion Weekends.

In the last newsletter Richard gave his opinion that the Bomber Command Memorial was preferable to a medal, this was only his opinion and not that of the Association or committee. Some members were offended and Richard apologises to them, no offence was intended.

You will see in one of our pleas for help someone makes comment of the excellent web site and in particular the veterans pages. Through the editorial we must once again express our gratitude to James Flowers, himself a veteran who puts many hours of work into this. Sadly as we go to press James advises us that he has had issues with Microsoft which resulted in the web site being suspended. We are pleased to say that work is under way to set up a new website, hopefully this will be successful. You can of course have a look at this website, bearing in mind that it is under construction and needs a fair bit more work. The address is:-

www.no-50-and-no-61-squadrons-association.co.uk

As we go to press I can advise you that James has been working tirelessly on the veterans section so the web site is starting to look good.

The reunion takes on a slightly different format next year, with the Friday night Skellingthorpe supper being moved to the Saturday in place of the formal dinner. There are several factors determining this decision including cost and numbers. We hope this moves proves to be successful and enjoyable. It is also hoped that for those who still wish to make it a full weekend there will still be some form of meet and greet on the Friday night.

Any opinions given in this newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Association. Moreover, the accuracy of the submissions is also the responsibility of the author.

Richard Jones & Mike Connock

CHAIRMANS COMMENTS

As the year of 2012 draws to a close, there are so many things to reflect upon. I remember saying at the start of the year that this year would be so special for many reasons. And so it was. Amongst the many highlights for me was the Diamond Jubilee, the long-overdue unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial in London and, of course, the Olympics. Whatever your personal memories of the year are, I am sure that 2012 will live long in your memory.

Remembrance weekend is now over for another year. For me the beginning of November marks a reflective period of my life for personal reasons. I find that it is a difficult time to get through but I have always taken comfort from the fact that the whole nation joins together at this time of year, and I believe the period of Remembrance is as strong now as it has ever been. With Remembrance over we can now look forward to the Christmas period, a time of great happiness and joy, and then we will enter another year. Let's hope that 2013 is also a year to remember for all the right reasons.

I am looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our re-union in June, which this year will see a change in format on the Saturday. Our AGM will be in the afternoon rather than the morning, and our Saturday evening get-together will be at the Skellingthorpe Community Centre rather than the Assembly rooms in Lincoln. These two changes will enable those of you who wish to condense the weekend into one overnight stop, rather than two, to do so, and will significantly reduce the cost of the evening function without detracting from the important point of getting together and to be amongst friends. I am sure we are in for yet another successful weekend and I would like to this opportunity to thank the Committee on your behalf and, of course, the ladies of Skellingthorpe. Year after year the ladies pull out all the stops to give us a weekend to remember and I just know that next year will be a great success. It only leaves me to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, wherever you are, and see you in 2013!

Peter

BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL VISIT

On Sunday 30 Sep, 44 members of the Association, and friends from Skellingthorpe, visited the Bomber Command memorial in Green Park. The visit was arranged by Mike and Pam Connock, what a boon to the Association they are. The memorial is beyond words, what a triumph for those who campaigned so hard for so long. Our own president, Sir Michael, was in the vanguard.

We were delighted to have one of our 50 Sqn veterans with us, Ken Ruskell DFC, and his wife Jean. Also Betty Bascombe and our two new honorary members, Rev Brian Stalley and Peter Small. During the visit we met two obvious veterans and they turned out to be Australians, but from New Zealand, and were members of 49 Sqn, RAF Syerston. They had been unable to travel to the opening ceremony but a benefactor had arranged for them to visit the UK and their old haunts. They had visited RAF Conningsby and the RAF Museum. They were returning to New Zealand the following day. They were, like so many of our veterans, calm but reticent to talk about their war-time experiences.

There is one thing I will always remember and it is the face of one of the statues. It is drained of all emotion and Ken Ruskell agreed that it was a face he could believe as he had seen so many similar faces before.

It is excellent news that David Cameron has instructed the Treasury to find the £550,000 shortfall from the memorial unveiling ceremony. Jim Dooley, the chairman of the memorial's fund-raising committee, said: "We are delighted and this takes a tremendous weight off the minds of veterans who had been sick with worry."



The drained face

Richard Jones

Late June 1944, R.A.F Station Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire **No. 16, Operational Training Unit.**

This is the station where all trades of Aircrew members assemble to form complete flying crews of 7 individuals, Comprising of, Pilot, Navigator, bomb aimer, Radio Operator, Flight Engineer, plus 2 Air Gunners.

You will eventually blend into a very friendly group of individuals, where your lives will depend upon each other, whether it be in the air, or on the ground, danger lurks every-where, day or night time.

Initially, the first priority in flying is to get the pilot to take off and land safely, day or night time, commonly known as circuits & bumps. The next set of exercises is single engine flying, to simulate engine failure.

For the air gunners to prove that their guns are accurately set up while still on the ground, sighting boards are used which are placed at 25 yards away from the aircraft. The board for the rear turret would have 4 marks, which can be seen when the Breech blocks are removed from the guns. The same process would apply for the mid-upper turret. A further check on accuracy is made when a Cine Camera is fitted in place of one of the guns. The subsequent film can be viewed later in the cinema.

The Navigators job is to get you to a particular spot on the map, then get you back to base, unfortunately, one night, we got lost somewhere over England, and had to make contact with base to get us home again.

Subsequently, he was sent back to the training centre for navigators, our replacement proved to be 1st class.

Our next move was to the Barford St John airfield, which is the satellite station for Upper Heyford. Our flying exercises were much longer and much higher altitudes were reached, unfortunately I had no turret to sit in, so it got much colder as we climbed higher. There was one little task that I had to perform, that was pumping up the pressure of the oil for the engines, very hard going, especially when the oil is almost freezing.

Having successfully completed the Operational Training Course, It was time for celebrations to begin in the Sgts Mess; relaxation was the name of the game, plenty of drinks, and enjoying one-Self. Towards the end of an enjoyable evening, an interesting little situation began to emerge when the rear gunner, whispered very quietly that one of the cooks from the Sgts Mess had caught his eye, and fancied chatting her up later on.

I was rather late getting back to the billet that night and found him resting on his bunk, looking a bit depressed by the nights events, so asked him, how did you get on, we had a pleasant conversation, But was rather surprised at her re-action, and what she said, "I know all about you airmen, and I know what you aircrew want, come with me," she said, and proceeded to the back of the Sgts Mess. There followed a long silence in the billet, and everyone was wondering, what was about to be revealed. So I asked, what did you get after all that. "There it is on the table, half a loaf of bread and a big chunk of cheese." This last little episode was years later mentioned to his family.

Les Loosemore, M.U.G.

Our next Station was No. 1661 Heavy Conversion Unit. Winthorpe, Notts

SECRETARYS PIECE

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2012

As our Chairman Peter Jacobs had his orders to represent the Cranwell College Commandant, our Vice Chairman Richard Jones attended the 11am Service at Skellingthorpe and laid the wreath from our Association. At the early afternoon service at Birchwood, we had the pleasure of Deputy Mayor & Mayoress, City Councillors the Chair and his Lady from Lincolnshire County Council, our Lincoln MP and his Lady together with 70-80 Air Cadets from 204 Sqn and our own members assembled around our Memorial.

With fine weather, our Padre, the Reverend Brian Stalley took the service and gave a short but succinct address, and Michelle Liddle played us through the hymn and National Anthem with her cornet , but saved her bugle for the Last Post and Reveille - it sounded well. Gerry Collins gave the Homage. Wreaths were laid with Cdt F/Sgt Jessica Murfin laying Betty Bascombe's wreath as Betty had requested (in her absence).

I think the 'standard' of our November service improves each year.

Gerry Collins

SKELLINGTHORPE REMEMBRANCE SERVICE



Our Vice Chairman Richard Jones addresses the gathering at the Skellingthorpe Memorial. Richard does this honour for us every year and it is always held on the 11th irrespective of the day on which it falls. This year was extra special as it fell on the Sunday, being the same day as the Birchwood service. It also enabled a greater gathering than usual and it was well supported by the village people and the Cubs and Scouts.



A cold but sunny day contributed to the atmosphere, and surely the tea and biscuits afterwards helped, all provided by the community.



BIRCHWOOD REMEMBRANCE SERVICE



The Air Training Corps as they do every year support the service of remembrance

The memorial looking splendid after the wreath laying against the blue sky. The magnificence of this memorial never ceases to amaze.



The Rev Brain Stalley, the associations Chaplin and honorary member takes the service, alongside the invited dignitaries.

Remembrance

Remaining on the theme of remembrance from the previous pages, Richard Jones read the following poem out at the Skellingthorpe Service of Remembrance, he in turn obtained it from the Rev. Brian Stalley. We had many comments as to the poignancy of the poem that we thought it appropriate to print it in the newsletter. We hope you find it equally uplifting.

TWO MINUTES

by

Eddie (Bungy) Williams late of HMS Bramble

Two minutes isn't much to give
To those who fought and died,
And not forgetting loved ones
Who till this day have cried.

To Flanders fields where poppies grow
Our thoughts return to long ago,
And in Remembrance they still live.
Two minutes isn't much to give.

A lonely field so far away,
A jungle in the heat of day,
A raging sea so cold and deep,
Are memories we all should keep.

This debt is ours to those who died.
Repaid each year with loving pride.
They fought our fight so we could live.
Two minutes isn't much to give.

So don't forget those long days past
And live in hope that peace will last.
They gave their lives so we could live
Two minutes isn't much to give.

ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

On behalf of the Moseleians Association, former pupils of Moseley Grammar School, Birmingham I write to ask whether your association or perhaps one of its members has a photograph of former Moseley pupil and 61 Squadron member Sgt.570285 Cedric Nils Coldicott, KIA 25/9/1942 and commemorated in Grave 28 of the Allied Plot at Fredrikshaven Cemetery.

The school commemorates its 96 known war dead by means of a plaque situated prominently in its entrance foyer and with individual pages on our website, www.moselaians.co.uk and we would greatly appreciate an opportunity to add a photograph of Sgt. Coldicott to his commemorative page, <http://www.moseleians.co.uk/index.asp?id=154&bid=P133&Title=Coldicott>

Should anyone be able to help please contact Keith Townsend at ktownsend@blueyonder.co.uk

Congratulations with the ever expanding web site and in particular the veterans pages.

I wonder if anyone within the Association can help with regard to a former 50 Squadron member.

70850 P/O Kenneth Andre Cockerell is listed as being lost on active service on 19th June 1940 while based at Waddington, aged 21. He was buried at St Michaels Churchyard , Waddington. The operational record book gives his branch a GD.

He flew in Hampden L4097 on the previous night of June 17/18th on a mission to Hamburg, safely returning with his colleagues Brooker, Taylor and R L Smith. Can anyone fill in some details, such as his aircrew position, and more importantly how he came to be killed on 19th June 1940.

Any information would be gratefully received– I'm no relation, simply interested in aviation history.

Alan Toccock atoccock@hotmail.co.uk

NEW MEMBERS

Mr R A Crawford (Alan), of Grantham. Brother of P/O A V Crawford who failed to return on June 14/15th 1943 during a raid to Oberhausen. He was the pilot of Lancaster ED810 VN-Z.

2012 REUNION

In this edition of the newsletter you will find a booking form for the reunion weekend, please complete it and return to Lynda Skinner if you wish to attend the Saturday Evening in Skellingthorpe. I know in previous years when the Friday at Skellingthorpe, booking has been a bit casual, and that was not a problem, however this year it would help if Pam Connock has more notice. It will be a similar occasion to the previous Friday nights but with the addition of Wine and Port and a more formal layout. Although not a black tie occasion, you can of course wear one if you wish. The intention is to make it a pleasant social evening without too much formality.

The menu will be;

Cold Carved Buffet
(Wine on Tables)

Selection of Sweets
(Pam's famous selection)

Cheese & Biscuits
(Served with Port)

Coffee & Mints

Mike Connock

SUMMER VISITORS

This summer proved to be a busy year for visitors to the two memorials.

Lynnette and Ross Ryan In the early part of the year we met up with a couple by chance at the community centre, who were from Australia and touring the UK and wanted to visit the airfield where her father flew from. He was **Geoffrey Allen** a Rear Gunner who was part of Peter Sculthorpes crew. These two crew were both from Tasmania and returned there after the war.

Mr R A Crawford (Alan) visited the area with his family who were over from UAE. He was the brother of **P/O A V Crawford** who failed to return on June 14/15th 1943 during a raid to Oberhausen. He was the pilot of Lancaster ED810 VN-Z. It was only his brother fifth trip. Alan has subsequently joined the association.

Vic Heasman came with his Daughter Lin Atkinson and their family. They were tracing the steps of Vics brother **Sgt Gordon Edward Heasman**. He was a flight engineer on Lancaster DV401 QR-Z which failed to return on 2/3rd January 1944 on a raid to Berlin.



Bill Jackman. We had the pleasure of a visit from an association member, W/O Terence William Jackman, an Air Gunner with 61 Squadron. Bill flew on 37 operations. He was over from Australia accompanied by his family, doing a tour of the sights.

We were very pleased to meet these people and show them around Skellingthorpe and Birchwood.

Pam & Mike Connock

ABSENT FRIENDS

William Edward Armstrong. Billy's wife Ruth advises us that he passed away last February. He was a Bomb Aimer on 50 Squadron and very proud of his association with the squadron. Married for nearly 50 years he is missed very much.

Gp/Cpt G H Everitt CBE DSO DFC Group Captain Hugh Everitt, who died aged 94 on 31 July 2012. He was decorated three times for his gallantry as a bomber pilot and later commanded a V-Bomber base. Joining the RAF Volunteer Reserve in June 1938 and training as a pilot. Called up at the beginning of the war, he trained as a bomber pilot before joining No 50 in September 1940.

Mrs Ada Eager. Unfortunately she passed away on the 2nd August at the age of 94. She was active until the very end, taking an interest in 61 squadron as that was the squadron of my late father Flying Officer William Eager RCAF, DFC who was killed in action in 1943. My mother Ada Eager nee Cox was attached to 44 squadron. She attended each year your reunions, lately just on the last Sunday and we were at the unveiling of the 50/61 memorial. As in fact we were all at the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park. My mother had happy memories of 50/61 Squadron reunions. *Susan Skinner.*

Mr C J Dempster. Mrs Dempster advises us that Joe passed away some time ago. Joe was a member of 61 Squadron.

Freda Payne. Sad to report that the lovely Freda Passed away on the 28th August, she accompanied Reg to every reunion weekend and they were seldom seen apart, having been married for 23 years.

Roy Hornsby. Keith Hornsby advises us that his Father passed away on 2nd August 2012 aged 91. Roy was an Engine Fitter on 50 Squadron.

Flt Lt R L Bartley DFC.

Passed away on 2nd November of this year. Affectionally known as "Bart" he was born on 22nd February 1922 in Shanghai, China. Following his schooldays at boarding school in Grays Essex, both he and his elder brother Peter volunteered for service in WW11, enlisting in the RAF in 1938/39. He trained as a pilot and first saw active service with 50 Squadron flying Hampdens in which he won his DFC.

In 1943 he transferred to 627 "Pathfinder" Squadron flying Mosquitoes, and won a bar to his DFC in 1944.

He continued to fly for the RAF until 1948, after which he began a career in civil aviation, mainly flying the transatlantic routes. One of his last jobs for BA was to fly Pope Joannes Paulus II (The Polish Pope) on his world tour in 1982.

Mike Bartley

Donald Street, DFC 1921 - 2012



Don Street joined the RAF at 17 years old. Having carried out some initial training in Skellingthorpe during 1940 he returned to 50/61 Squadron in April 1944. He flew 37 operations, made the rank of flying officer and was awarded the DFC.

On leaving the RAF in 1945, he worked in the construction industry and lived in various areas of the country. He eventually settled in Albrighton, near Wolverhampton in 1956 with his wife Doris and their two sons Roderick and Murray. Third son Neville was born in 1964. He retired in 1983 as a director of Tarmac (now Carillion).

Don maintained close links with the RAF through its base at Cosford and the ATC. He was a volunteer for many years at the RAF museum, a member of the officers' mess and for a time, the vice president of the Air Crew Association, Shropshire. Don also led the project to raise money for a stained glass window, commemorating the links between the village and RAF Cosford and installed at St Mary Magdalene church in Albrighton,



Talking about his father Neville said: "Dad's RAF experiences and in particular meeting up with his old crew after 40 years, reignited his interest in 50/61 Squadron. He looked forward to attending the annual reunion, catching up with old friends and sharing stories. Dad was a gentleman – modest; especially about his RAF achievements; decent and generous. We are extremely proud of him and will love and miss him always."

Doris and Neville hope to scatter the remainder of Don's ashes over his former airfield during a short service at next year's reunion weekend.

This amazing picture was sent to us by one of our members Mary Allen-Meilinger who lives in Colorado in the USA. 350 homes were destroyed by this fire but fortunately her home was only smoke damaged



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

Rolls of Honour: £5 + p&p

RAF Skellingthorpe by Derek Brammer. £10 inc. p&p

Richard Jones