



Issue No 65  
August 2013



***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**  
**Rev Brian Stalley; Peter Small**

*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)**  
**26 Wadlands Rise**  
**Farsley**  
**Leeds LS28 5JF**  
**0113 2559931**  
**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

This edition of the newsletter has been produced as a larger edition, with so much happening we found it necessary to expand it to 20 pages.

There is much to commemorate, many to remember and a lot for discussion, least of all the emotive subject of the Bomber Command Clasp, for which our chairman Peter Jacobs has been very much involved, and goes to some length to explain the situation in this newsletter.

We celebrated Sir Michaels 90th and Jimmy Flints 100th birthdays during the year and at the reunion and we have include pictures of the occasion.

Sadly we are also recognising the passing of some of our veterans, including Bill Drinkell, for whom Richard has done a memorial item, and Gordon Bulmer, who passed away shortly before going to print.

As usual in this edition we include pictures of the reunion in June, and on that subject we would point out that **the reunion next year is on the weekend of 31st May/1st June. The services being on Sunday 1st June.** The reasoning behind this is to avoid clashing with the 70th anniversary of D-Day.

It was the late Don Street's wish that his ashes be strewn on Skellingthorpe airfield. This was done in a brief ceremony following the Sunday memorial service, attended by Don's widow, Doris, and his son, Neville, with several Association members. The simple service was a fitting reminder of Don, a quiet and modest man who braved danger during his operational tour with 61 Sqn as a Lancaster pilot. Neville read the poem "High Flight" and the service was conducted by our Association chaplain, Brian Stalley.

The Sunday was also the 50th anniversary of Brian's ordination in Southwark cathedral. To mark this important occasion, our vice-president, AVM Nigel Baldwin, presented Brian with a bottle of scotch. Brian did his national service in the RAF and wears the GSM. Brian and Ann, we wish you well.

**Stop Press.** We've just heard that despite being initially refused the Bomber Command clasp, members Johnny Firth and James Flowers have recently received theirs. Excellent news and you will see from Peter Jacobs' report on page 18, he has gone into bat for members; very successfully too.

**Richard Jones and Mike Connock**

## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Well, what a summer! It started with an excellent re-union weekend and if you are a sporting fan like me then there has been much to cheer since; Wimbledon, the Lions victory down-under and the Ashes series where everything is looking fine so far! And on top of all that the weather has been glorious too!

I mentioned the re-union weekend and I have to say that every year I come away from the weekend believing we cannot possibly top that. This year I felt that more than ever and I was personally very pleased that the change to the format seemed to go down very well. The Saturday evening was an occasion to remember and the Sunday was so special because we were able to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of our President, Sir Michael Beetham, and the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of our Vice-President, Jimmy Flint. What a double celebration it turned out to be!

It goes without saying that the weekend does not just happen. So much effort has to be put in by so many people – not least by members of the committee - but this year more than ever. This was particularly the case for the Saturday evening when the local people of Skellingthorpe, led by Pam Connock of course, exceeded all my expectations. It was a fantastic evening and one that I am sure everyone who attended will remember. I was particularly pleased to see so many new faces, ranging from locals to those who had travelled from across the Atlantic. This all meant that attendance for the Saturday evening was a record high. So, on behalf of the Association, I would like to say another big thank you to Pam and all her ladies and gentlemen who made it happen.

I would also like to say a personal thanks to the Reverend Brian Stalley who has supported us for so many years. After the re-union weekend I received a lovely letter from Brian thanking us all and, in particular, for marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination. I pass on his thanks to you all and Brian, on behalf of us all, it was the very least we could do as a mark of our appreciation.

I will finish there as I have written an extra piece about the Bomber Command clasp and so I must not take up any more of our valuable editorial space. I will just say that I was disappointed to learn that some of our members do not qualify for the Bomber Command clasp. If you are one of these then I encourage you to read the article. But leaving that disappointing observation to one side, take care one and all and I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer!

**Peter**

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Favoured with a nice day, the cadets of 204 (City of Lincoln) Sqn ATC put out chairs and were most willing in all of the jobs we asked of them.

Alan Biggs our Parade Marshal got the many standards bearers out on the road and we were please to see our members, RAF and Civic heads enjoy the service led by our Padre Rev'd Brian Stalley. After the Silence and the Homage, wreaths were laid and at the end of the service the march past was led by the RAF Waddington Band, with the Air Cadets and our Veterans following, marching past the new Saluting Dais where AVM Nigel Baldwin and the Mayor of Lincoln Patrick Vaughan took the salute.

On to Skellingthorpe where the guests of honour Sir Michael Beetham and Jimmy Flint were in good form and waiting for us. They each had a birthday cake presented by the Parish Council, which they cut. Sir Michael said that Jims should have been larger as he was older (90 - 100).

The ladies of Skellingthorpe provided a buffet lunch for us and then it was everybody outside to watch the BBMF Lancaster fly past. The short service was conducted by Rev'ds Christine Hewitt and Richard Billingham.

The Standard Bearers had followed on from Birchwood and 1237 (North Hykeham) Sqn ATC took part after they had carried out their car parking duties. Wreaths and roses were laid at the memorial by the children of the village, while the choir sand "You raise me up". Last Post, Homage and Reveille concluded the service.

Remembrance Sunday 10 November 2013, I will take orders for any wreaths to be laid/

**Gerry Collins**

### **April 2013 Newsletter page 6, Lancaster W4769 of 61 Sqn. F/O Tickle K.I.A**

I am so pleased that we were able to pass on this story, because one of our members is his sister, Joan Tickle. I received a lovely informative letter from her. She is now very well looked after by her 2nd and 3rd cousins in Derbyshire. I have given her address to Mark Havoort in Holland.

**Gerry Collins**

## WG CDR JAMES FLINT- THE FIRST 100 YEARS

On 24 May, Our Vice-President and oldest Association member, Wg Cdr Jimmy Flint DFC GM DFM AE celebrated his 100th birthday. His nephew, Bill, and family, arranged an excellent reception in the Perkins Carriage Hall in Plumtree, Nottingham. There were 100 guests and it was a most enjoyable day, the guest of honour was in fine form and enjoyed the attention. Unfortunately, the Lancaster flypast had to be cancelled due to poor weather, but the email from the BBMF said the aircraft was booked for 24 May 2014!

Jimmy had been interviewed a few days before for local television and the cameras were at the reception. There was a good piece on the evening and late night news. The following pictures provide only a small glimpse of the wonderful day and the sparking, although tired, guest of honour. One of the guests, a fellow member of 49 Sqn with Jimmy, was Flt Lt Eric Clarke. Eric is 1 month 2 days older than Jimmy and believed to be the oldest surviving member of Bomber Command.

**Jimmy with Bill and his family**



**The congratulatory letter from  
HM The Queen**



**Jimmy on local TV**



**Jimmy and veteran 50 Sqn members  
James Flowers and Fred Jones DFC**



**Jimmy and his guests celebrating a great day**



**Jimmy and 50 Sqn veterans AVM Nigel Baldwin and Sqn Ldr Richard Jones with James and Fred**



**Bob Heywood (61 Sqn) and Flt Lt Eric Clarke (49 Sqn)**



**The Big Blow!**



**(Above) Peter and Claire Jacobs and fellow guests**



**(Left) Mike Connock, Peter Small and Alan Biggs**

## SATURDAY SUPPER

The change of venue for the weekend proved to be a great success, judging from the comments received. The formal Saturday dinner had been replaced by a less formal evening in Skellingthorpe, although many still chose to wear black tie. The numbers however increased dramatically with around 100 people attending.



**Mary Allen, James Flowers, Chris Cant and Brenda Wright. Mary was here from the USA.**

**During the evening two of Reg Paynes paintings were auctioned off for the associations funds at Reg's request. This one won by Mary is on its way to the USA.**



**Reg and Mrs Freeth with their Grandson**

## REUNION - BIRCHWOOD



The reason for the weekend, the march past of the veterans, and remembering those who are no longer with us.

The memorial service as always ably supported by the ATC, the future of the RAF.



Comrades in arms; Reg Freeth, Jamie Barr, Richard Wright and James Flowers

The association Vice President AVM Nigel Baldwin and the Mayor of Lincoln Patrick Vaughan take the salute.



## REUNION—SKELLINGTHORPE



**Two cakes presented by the Parish council to the two veterans, Sir Michael Beetham celebrating his 90th Birthday and Jimmy Flint his 100th Birthday.**

**Three old comrades, obviously with plenty to talk about. From L to R James Flowers, Bill Drinkell & Reg Payne.**

(Courtesy Anna Draper, Lincolnshire Echo)



**The veterans enjoy a glass of bubbly to toast the birthdays of Sir Michael and Jimmy Flint**

**Below; The Choir entertains.**

(Courtesy Anna Draper, Lincolnshire Echo)



## SQN LDR WILLIAM GEORGE DRINKELL DFC AFC

Bill Drinkell, who died last month, was born on 23 Nov 21, he lived a full life and served with distinction and gallantry in Bomber Command. Bill was a very welcome visitor, with his companion, at our reunion weekends.

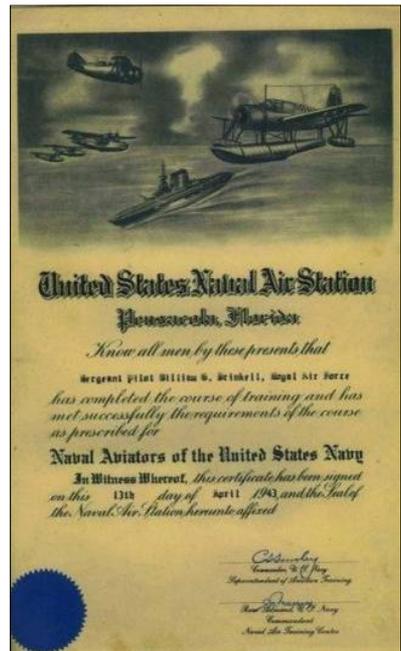


**James Flowers, Bill Drinkell and Reg Payne  
Skellingthorpe Reunion Weekend 2013**

In Sep 39, he enlisted as an Aircraft Apprentice at RAF Halton. On graduation, he joined 266 Sqn (Spitfires) as a fitter, firstly at RAF Wittering, then at RAF Eastchurch, Isle of Sheppey, Kent, and following a devastating air attack, 266 Sqn moved to RAF Hornchurch. In 1942 Bill began pilot training, initially at St Andrews, then Perth; Bill flew solo after 7 hours.

He completed flying training in Canada on the Catalina flying boat, and was awarded his wings on 26 Apr 43.. He expected a posting to a flying boat Sqn, but with such heavy bomber crew losses, instead he was posted to Bomber Command.

Although not in the best of health for a number of years, Bill was a delightful man with a good wit and always immaculately dressed. He attended the recent reunion weekend with his son, Graham. We will miss Bill and we extend our sincere sympathies to his children, John, Jill and Graham; his grandchildren; and his great-grandchildren.



**Bill's USN Wings Certificate**

First he converted to the twin engined Wellington bomber, then the Stirling and finally the Lancaster. Newly commissioned, he joined 50 Sqn; his allocated aircraft was VN-T. He completed 30 missions and was awarded the DFC in Nov 43. He made a tapestry depicting his aircraft and this wonderful piece of memorabilia now hangs in our memorial room at Birchwood.

In 1946 Bill joined the British Commonwealth Occupation Force Air Contingent (BCAIR) flying the Dakota. During this tour he was awarded the AFC. Much more importantly, Bill met his future wife. Miss Liliias Blaen, a Scot from Kirkcudbrightshire, was a PMRAFNS sister accompanying a badly wounded army officer to hospital; she sat in the co-pilot's seat with the pilot, Bill Drinkell. Liliias, know as Sally because of her beautiful singing voice, became Mrs Drinkell in Apr 47.



**Flt Lt and Mrs W G Drinkell**



**Jimmy Flint and Bill Drinkell**

After 30 years service, Bill retired and worked as an instructor with the Royal Saudi Air Force. Sadly, Sally died in 2002. Bill died on 21 Jun 2013. A Spitfire, flown by Caroline Grace, flew over in salute to this brave, gallant and modest man.

We are indebted to James Flowers for the details contained in his excellent Veterans' Album.

**Richard Jones**

## **ABSENT FRIENDS**

### **Gordon Bulmer**



We are sad to report the passing of Gordon Bulmer. He and Mary have been attending the reunion weekend for many years. Gordon Passed away on 18th July aged 91. A veteran of 50 Squadron, he completed 35 operations as a Flight Engineer with Bill Firmins crew on VN-H. According to Terry Barber another member of the crew they actually completed 37 ops but because they returned without bombing for various reasons they were not allowed to count them as part of their total. Gordon was also successful in obtaining the Bomber Command clasp, which Mary now proudly holds.

His funeral was held in Stourport on Seven and the association was represented by Alan Biggs & Lynda Skinner.

### **Arthur Hollis OBE DFC**

We had a call for the son of Arthur Hollis OBE DFC to say that Arthur dies on 20th April. Sadly he recently requested a form for the BC Clasp and we hope he got it completed.

Gerry Collins

### **Les Morton**

Bill North's Flight Engineer Les Morton. has passed away on 4th April peacefully in his sleep after a long battle . He had been in hospital for about a month fighting off infections with leukaemia in Australia where he moved to after the War. His funeral was on Tues 9th April.

### **Peter Ling**

Peter passed away on 18 December last year age 80. He was the Flight Engineer on Frank Hercliffe's crew on Lincolns. Frank along with Danny Thomas and Roy Davidson still attend the reunions.

## ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

I write you for a special reason.

Our organization is studying Air War 1940-1945 over Europe since 1972 and one important focus is looking for missing airmen during WWII. We did find the crash site of an RAF bomber of which we are convinced it's the wreck of Lancaster ED470 of 61 Sqdn RAF Skellingthorpe and of which still six men are missing. Their names are on the Runnymede Memorial.

In cooperation with the local authorities of the Community of Bronckhorst and the Royal Netherlands Air Force there is plan to excavate the site in October 2013 trying to find the remains of four airmen from the UK and two from Australia. We already have contacts with three families of the crew. Apart from the future reburial project for the missing airmen in cooperation with their relatives and the embassies of the UK and Australia in the Netherlands we also have started a DVD-documentary for a school project for the local 30 schools for history education. (History WWII) We already have a lot of film material for this but would like to add some film material from the former Skellingthorpe airbase and if possible also some wartime pictures of the Skellingthorpe airfield if these should be available.

ED470 departed from Skellingthorpe on 23rd September 1944 at 7.20 hrs. PM for a mission to the Dortmund-Ems canal near Gravenhorst in Germany. That's why we are looking for someone who is able and willing to make a short film of the former airfield Skellingthorpe. Maybe there is a member within your Association who is able and willing to help us ? I like to emphasize that this project is not for commercial but only for idealistic purpose. The names of the 6 missing airmen are:

F/O Albert Keith HORNIBROOK RAAF 426346 from Wilston, Q'land Australia (Pilot)

Sgt. Tegwyn ROBERTS RAF 2205764 from Denbigh / Wales (Flight Engineer)

F/O John James CONDON RAAF 412056 from Double Bay, N S W Australia (Navigator)

F/O Derek Cecil HEATHER RAF 153571 from Reigate, Surrey, England (Bomb Aimer)

Sgt. Robert Stanley MEACHEN RAF 1124861 from Billingham, County Durham  
(Wireless Operator)

Sgt. Thomas BROWN RAF 1171420 from Southport, Lancashire (Mid-Upper-Gunner)

The Rear Gunner was the only one who did manage to escape with his parachute he was Sgt. John C. MILLER who was helped by the Dutch Underground and he returned to the UK in April 1945. I hope there will be someone who is able to assist us.

Regards,

Peter Monasso

Dutch Aviation Historian WWII AVOG's CRASH MUSEUM FOUNDATION

The Netherlands

[www.crashmuseum.nl](http://www.crashmuseum.nl)

E: [monassop@xs4all.nl](mailto:monassop@xs4all.nl)

For more info about the bomber excavation project:

<https://sites.google.com/site/bommenwerperzelhem/home>

## LANCASTER ME 725 (QR-G) 61 SQN

Continuing the story of this remarkable incident. In the last newsletter, we reported on the incident concerning ME 725 from the German perspective. Thanks to Oliver Clutton-Brock, we were able to learn what became of the surviving crew and also details of the aircraft that shot down ME 725.

Oliver is an expert on prisoners of war and has written an excellent, and extremely comprehensive and detailed, book on the subject of RAF Bomber Command prisoners of war entitled "Footprints on the Sands of Time". The book is highly recommended and available from Grub Street Publishing (milhis@grubstreet.co.uk).



In the last edition we told of the crash of ME 725 and the loss of Sgt Albert Steers and Sgt Leonard Ayres, whose headstones are shown on the left. The 5 surviving crew members were taken into captivity and held at Oberursel POW Camp, close to Frankfurt.

### **The graves of Sgt Albert Speers and Sgt Leonard Ayres in Hanover**

The Crew of ME 725 were:

Pilot: Fg Off Clarence Donnelly RAAF- POW  
Flight Engineer: Sgt Albert Steers RAF- KIA  
Navigator: Ft Lt Jack Vincent RAAF - POW  
Bomb Aimer: Sgt Ronald Brock RAF - POW  
Wireless Op: Flt Sgt Francis Green RAAF - POW  
MUG: Sgt Leonard Ayres RAF - KIA  
Rear gunner: Sgt Thomas Kerrigan RAF - POW

There is a photograph of 6 of the 7 crew members , but only the pilot is identified.

**Six of the 7 crew of ME 725. The pilot, Fg Off Clarence Donnelly, is on the left**



In what must be a rare event, we have been able, thanks to Oliver and his researches, to obtain details of the crew of the aircraft that shot down ME 725. The German crew were Pilot (FS) Dieter Erichsen (top); Wireless Op (Sgt) Willi Janus (bottom left); and Flt Eng and gunner (Sgt) Otto Armbruster (bottom right).

Research had shown that there was only one ME 110 in the area that night that could have engaged ME 725. That was an ME 110 G-4 from Gp IV NJG 6, aircraft ident B2Z+V. In 1997, the pilot, Dieter Erichsen was interviewed and told reporters that he remembered the incident and it was the fourth of his five victories in his career as a night fighter pilot.

Our thanks once again to Horst Jeckel and Oliver Clutton-Brock for giving us this remarkable story.



**ME 110 G-4**

**Richard Jones**

## **Bomber Command Clasp by the Chairman, Wg Cdr Peter Jacobs**

During our annual re-union weekend, some members brought it to my attention that not all Bomber Command aircrew veterans would qualify for the new Bomber Command clasp. From my brief understanding of the qualification criteria for the clasp, I could not understand why some of our members had not been awarded the clasp and so I agreed to take up one case as an example to test the principle of the award of the clasp and to understand what appeal process had been put in place.

After several attempts to talk to someone - lasting nearly an hour and having been routed around various automated messaging services - I eventually managed to talk to the Civil Servant who heads the Medal Office at the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (located at Imjin Barracks at Innsworth in Gloucester). I was not surprised to learn that the Medal Office would only deal with the person making the application – i.e. the veteran or the next of kin – but I did have a long and very useful conversation. Clearly, and as you would expect, the qualification criteria for the Bomber Command clasp have been set and are being strictly adhered to. Personally, I believe the criteria to be overly complicated (but that is very much my personal opinion) as it is not just a matter of the number of days served on a Bomber Command squadron but there is also a link to the individual's qualification period for the 1939-45 Star.

For what it was worth, I gave the Civil Servant my personal views regarding the qualification criteria and how the whole application and appeal process is being managed. Given that our surviving veterans are now in their 90s, I explained that the whole process for application and appeal was not easy and used my case of spending nearly an hour to actually talk to someone as an example (and I am a serving wing commander with access to the Service military network and all the names and numbers I needed!). But I was never going to get anything changed on the basis of one telephone conversation – nor did I expect to!

I do sympathise with those in the Medal Office at the moment because they are currently dealing with thousands of applications, and no doubt appeals, for the Bomber Command Clasp and the Arctic Star, which was announced at the same time. Nonetheless, I do believe people should appeal and so all I can do is advise anyone who has had their application

rejected to appeal in writing to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency using the address at the top of the letter (Imjin Barracks at Innsworth in Gloucester). It may take some time but if your appeal is still unsuccessful then you must decide what, if anything, to do next. I am sure you will understand that as a serving wing commander it is not for me to tell you what to do next but you may choose to pursue your case and raise it with anyone or any organisation with more clout than me.

I have mentioned this issue to our President, Sir Michael Beetham, who was disappointed to learn that there will be a number of veterans who will not qualify for the clasp. Those of you who are members of the Bomber Command Association may wish to raise awareness of your case through the Secretary and I would hope that if there are enough cases then the Association may decide to take the matter forward – but that is not for me to decide.

I do believe that if anything is ever to change then it will only happen through cases being highlighted in the public domain through anyone or any organisation with some authority – people power has certainly been successful in the past. I am sorry and I only wish there was something I could do but I strongly believe that any change will only come about through the veterans who so strongly deserve the award of the clasp.

\*\*\*\*\*

**“One of the best”**

Yes it was perhaps the best. Saturday evening followed by Sundays special birthday tributes to two very special gentlemen, will be a hard one to follow.

Our amazing team at Skellingthorpe pulled out all the stops and gave us one of the most warm and memorable weekends anyone could have hoped for.

Thank you to all who came and made it so special.

Looking forward to seeing you next year.

Love and best wishes

Pam Connock MBE



The winning design for the Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial. The steel structure contains the names of the 22, 611 crew who lost their lives flying from Lincolnshire. For anyone wishing to make a donation, further information can be found at <http://www.lincsbombercommandmemorial.com/>