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No 50 & No 61 SQUADRONS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

The most important news is, of course, the much deserved award of the MBE to Pam Connock. It was awarded in the 2010 Queen's Birthday Honours List for Pam's charity work in the village of Skellingthorpe. This includes her outstanding work for our Association. The announcement coincided with the Reunion Weekend; perfect timing! Pam and Mike also recently attended a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. They will remember 2010!

Our Reunion Weekend was made even more memorable by the 500+ photographs taken by Stephen Freeth. There are 16 of them in the 4 centre colour pages of this edition. We have seen the video taken at the unveiling of the Birchwood memorial in 1989. We hope to be able to offer CDs of the event, if there is sufficient interest from members.

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

Secretary's Piece

The annual service went very well, with an excellent attendance. Our thanks go to Dave Jackson and the RAF Waddington Band; 204(City of Lincoln) Sqn Air Cadets, who were a great help in putting out chairs and laying wreaths; and to our Padre Revd Brian Stalley for conducting the service. Everybody is welcome to attend our service on Remembrance Sunday, 14 Nov, starting at 10.00. Wreath prices remain the same.

I attended the funeral of Alan Butler, a 50 Sqn Vulcan AEO, in mid June. He was not a member of our Association, but was in the Lincoln Aircrew Association.

Mike and I were pleased to show our two Australian friends of 61 Sqn (Carol and Rob Bracey) around Birchwood and Skellingthorpe. They received a Freedom of the Parish scroll.

Gerry Collins

CHAIRMANS COMMENTS

What another excellent re-union weekend it was back in June. It hardly seems possible that two months has passed already since we were all together and for once the weather has lived up to expectation. Sitting in the garden I can now reflect on the success of the weekend, which was made all the more special by the announcement of the award of the MBE to Pam Connock. Those of you who have been members for many years will know just how much Pam has done for our Association and I was delighted that we were able to present such a strong case which led to her award. I know full well that Pam has not done all that she has for any personal recognition but it was the least we could do as a way of showing how deeply we appreciate all that she has done for the Association over so many years. I know that many of our veterans who are no longer with us will be smiling down from somewhere and offering their congratulations and applause. Well done Pam and, once again, thank you!

The weekend was also special in that we could show Gillian Merron our appreciation for her personal support over many years by offering her honorary membership of our Association. Whilst Gillian may have handed over the MP's baton for now, she has been a welcome addition to our re-union and remembrance weekends for a number of years and, again, we wanted to show our appreciation in some way. To put this into some context, this is only the second time in this committee's seven-year tenure that we have offered honorary membership and I was delighted that Gillian accepted. Welcome Gillian.

Having singled out two members, I would like to thank everyone involved in making the re-union weekend such a success, from my hard-working committee members to the local people of the Leslie Manser School and the Skellingthorpe community and, of course, to those of you who travelled to Lincoln to attend the weekend. Without the help of so many others and of course your support, the weekend would not be possible. I know it clashed with England's first game in the World Cup but on reflection I don't think we missed much!

Those of you who attended the weekend will have seen the development we have made in our Association Room at the Birchwood Leisure

Centre. Whilst the re-union weekend is very important to us all, I have always said that it is important to preserve the legacy of our two squadrons and particularly the history of RAF Skellingthorpe as a Bomber Command airfield during the Second World War. Hopefully you will agree that Phase One – which tells the history of our two squadrons - is a success and we plan to start Phase Two – which will tell the history of RAF Skellingthorpe - this autumn. I will keep you updated.

Finally, don't forget to make sure you have next year's re-union in the diary – the weekend of 10-12 June 2011 – and wherever you are, enjoy the rest of the summer. As for me, there is ongoing work with the Strategic Defence and Security Review, which will define the size and role of the Armed Forces for years to come, and a book called 'Stay the Distance' to complete – more of which another day!

Peter Jacobs

GIFTS TO THE ASSOCIATION

Bill Drinkell has given a very handsome embroidered tapestry, done by his own hand, of his 50 Sqn Lancaster (VN-T) which suffered a series of unforgettable incidents. The aircraft was holed by a bomb over Düren and returned home on 2 engines; it was involved in a mid-air collision with a Hurricane; the starboard outer engine was completely destroyed (both incidents were friendly fire); there was no radio reception; and the aircraft also suffered flak damage. It speaks volumes for the courage of the captain and crew of VN-T.

Danny Thomas, who flew with the 61 Sqn Lincolns in Kenya (1952-54), has presented an excellent first day cover, signed by him, depicting the Africa GSM and some details of the operations against the Mau Mau. An important reminder that our sqns were operational in other theatres after 1945.

Both these framed memories will be in the memorial room for all to see and admire.

Richard Jones

REUNION WEEKEND

The informal supper at Skellingthorpe on Fri evening was splendid and Pam and her ladies excelled themselves, yet again. Following the Sat AGM, well attended by members, we were again hosted for lunch by the staff and pupils of the Leslie Manser School. Following the lunch we were entertained by the children with songs and sketches with a 1940's theme. As you may recall, the Association presents a prize annually for achievement, a plaque and a voucher for £25. This year the prize was awarded to Andri Sveinsson, who also played George Formby in one of the sketches. The opportunity was also taken for David Jellett, our webmaster, to demonstrate the Association website to members.

Largely thanks to Alan Biggs, who liaised with the RAF Scampton Museum, 12 of us had a very informative and enjoyable visit on Sat afternoon. We were shown round by Roger Crisp and saw Nigger's grave and heard about the trio of ghosts who haunt the airfield. Sadly they didn't appear for us. The cockpit section of the Lightning was especially interesting for Peter Jacobs, as the pilot whose name was stencilled below the cockpit (John Carter), was Peter's best man at his wedding. We also saw a budding lady pilot in Peter's daughter Becky!

The memorabilia held by this famous bomber station is excellent. Although for us the highlight was the original painting of Flt Sgt James Flint GM! Jimmy tells the story of being whisked off to London, by train with all his kit, at almost no notice to have his portrait painted. It is an excellent picture of this brave and modest man. We have arranged for a professional photograph to be taken so it can be displayed in our memorial room. The painting can also be seen in James Flowers' veterans' section of the Association website.

The dinner was outstanding, many thanks to our new Dining Secretary, Lynda. Two of our guests was the Lord Lieutenant and Mrs Lock. During the evening an unknown auctioneer sold 2 wonderful paintings by Reg Payne. They were bought by the sons of 2 of our members, James Flowers and Reg Freeth, for their fathers. The auction made a handsome £200 for the Bomber Command Memorial Fund Appeal.

Richard Jones

Bill Drinkell DFC AFC



AVM Nigel Baldwin CB CBE
and his wife Jenny

Lady Patricia Beetham
with Peter and Clare
Jacobs



The Old and Bold
and the not so Old
and Bold



Arthur Smith (engineer) and James Flowers (air gunner) first meeting since they crewed together in 1945

Gillian Merron and Pam Connock MBE



David and Susan Jellett. Susan wears the medals awarded to her father, the late Wg Cdr W M Penman DFC AFC, OC 61 Sqn 1943

Philip Flowers, Reg Payne, Sir Michael and James Flowers with the first painting auctioned for the Bomber Command Memorial Fund Appeal



Stephen Freeth, Sir Michael
and Reg Payne with the
second auctioned painting



Our own Pam Connock MBE as we
always seem to see her. In
“Working Mode” and in deep
thought!

Dipped Standards at
Skellingthorpe



Reg Freeth and Jamie
Barr DFC



Three ex-flying instructors from RAF Swinderby: Bernard Fitch DFC, Sir Michael and Ken Ruskell MBE DFC

Wg Cdr Jimmy Flint DFC GM DFM AE reads the Homage at Skellingthorpe



The Skellingthorpe memorial after the wreaths and the children's roses. So moving

Unfortunately the BBMF Lancaster was unavailable, but the BBMF Dakota provided a excellent flypast and finale to a marvellous weekend



OPERATION FAILED TO RETURN CD

There was a video made of the unveiling of our memorial in Birchwood on 3 Jun 89 and the ceremony was the culmination of Operation Failed to Return. We had worried that the video was lost, but James Barr's daughter Pauline kindly took Reg Payne's copy and made a CD of it. We have sought copyright waiver and we will announce in the next newsletter whether we are able to provide copies to members, if there is sufficient interest.

The CD begins with a Feb 44 newsreel of RAF Skellingthorpe crews. The speakers are a wg cdr and his 3 flt cdrs. Although the wg cdr is not named, we believe him to be Wg Cdr R N Stidolph DFC, OC 61 Sqn. The 3 named flt cdrs are: Sqn Ldr Benjamin, Sqn Ldr Pullen and Sqn Ldr Moss. The Roll of Honour shows that a Sqn Ldr E H Moss (61 Sqn) was lost during a Nuremburg raid on Mar 30/31 44, but we are not sure if it is the same man. Does anyone remember them?

Richard Jones

WG CDR R M COAD AFC OC 50 AND 61 SQNS

During the preparation of the rolls of sqn COs, I noticed that a Wg Cdr R M Coad AFC commanded both sqns. It was, and still is, extremely unusual for one man to command 2 sqns. Wg Cdr Coad was OC 61 Sqn Jun 42 - Feb 43 (handing over to Susan Jellett's father Wg Cdr W M Penman). He was also OC 50 Sqn Jan - May 46 (he assumed command from Jimmy Flint, who unfortunately never met him).

I could find out little about Wg Cdr Coad on the internet save that he was closely involved in the trials of the Lancaster Mk II (with the Bristol Hercules engines) in early 43. On its first test, against Essen on 11/12 Jan, two Mk IIs joined a force of Mk Is. While the Mk I operated at 22 000 feet, the best the Mk II could achieve was an altitude of 18 400 feet, while the second aircraft only reached 14 000 feet! Wg Cdr Coad's report was scathing! They did subsequently improve the operational ceiling of the Mk II. If members have any more information about Wg Cdr Coad, we should be delighted to receive it.

Richard Jones

REUNION WEEKEND DINNER

I hope every one enjoyed the dinner at the Assembly Rooms. I am sure you will agree that as usual the food and service we received was excellent. Thank you for your participation in the raffle, you will be pleased to know that we made £237. Next year the dinner will be on Saturday 11 Jun which is already booked at the Assembly Rooms.

The hotel accommodation has been booked at The Lincoln Hotel in Eastgate for next year. The double rooms will cost the same as the Holiday Inn at £85 per room, but the single rooms will be £70 which is a £10 price increase. There are disabled rooms available and disabled access. To book a room will be the same procedure as the Holiday Inn, you should quote the ref: **SQN**. The hotel tel no is **01522 520348**. May I suggest you do this as soon as possible as this is a very popular hotel. We have booked 10 double rooms booked and 5 single rooms for Fri 10 and Sat 11 Jun 2011. To secure a room, phone the hotel and give them your card details, no money will be charged to your account until you check out on the Sunday morning. The hotel is situated opposite the Cathedral, within walking distance of the Assembly Rooms and Lincoln's Cultural Area. There is also a small bus that stops outside the hotel, which will take you in to the town centre should you wish to do so. Enjoy this summer holiday season and we look forward to seeing you all again next year.

Lynda Skinner

NOTE FROM PAM CONNOCK MBE

This year's reunion! How do I put it into words, the emotions of the award of the MBE in the Queens Birthday Honours list which coincided with our reunion weekend. To be awarded such an honour is for anyone a really great moment, for myself it is extra special, having been nominated for "Services to Skellingthorpe"

Over more than 20 years we have made friendships that are to be treasured. The week was made extra special by the birth of our first Grandchild, Emmeline Florence, on 5 Jun.

Pam Connock

ACCOUNTS AND MEMBERSHIP

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

General Account

Income	£3533.74	Opening balance	£2129.85
Expenditure	£3070.80	Excess	£462.94
Excess	£462.94	Closing Balance	£2592.79

Memorial Account

Income	£1.55	Opening balance	£3417.89
Expenditure	£400.00	Excess	-£398.45
Excess	-£398.45	Closing balance	£3019.44

The General account was as shown in surplus, this was however due to one or two large donations, without these we would have about broke even on the year. The deficit on the Memorial account is because of the transfer to the general account to pay partly for the donation made to the Bomber Command Memorial Fund.

Once again sincere thanks go to Gloria Poole for auditing the accounts.

Membership

There are currently 216 members listed. 123 Annual paying members and 93 life or honorary members. Of the 123 Annual members, some 24 or so members have not paid subs for the current year. As in previous years, I am in the process of contacting these members to resolve the issue.

The total membership is one less than last year. Whilst we do inevitably lose some members, we still get some veterans joining as well as relatives of veterans.

Given the rising costs, members voted unanimously at the AGM to increase the annual subs to £10 from the £6. It is a least 8 years since the subs were last increased. This to take effect from 1st January 2011.

Mike Connock

ABSENT FRIENDS



Ron Code

Eric Coling informs us that his friend, comrade, and wartime pilot died in Ottawa April 24th 2010. Ron was a pilot with 50 Squadron from early July 1943 to the end of September 1943. On that last day he was returning from Gydinia when there was

an argument with a Ju88 night fighter off the Denmark coast. The Lancaster was badly damaged but flew on for 50 miles before it had to be ditched in the North Sea. Ron and his crew were rescued by a Danish fishing boat 5 days later and taken to Alborg, which was occupied by the Germans.



After many tribulations, Ron arrived at Luft 3, where he remained until the camp was evacuated by the Germans at the end of January 1945. Ron was then marched and travelled in cattle trucks to Luckenwalde, south of Berlin, from where he was liberated just before VE Day, and repatriated to Canada.

After the war, Eric lost contact with Ron until he traced him to Ottawa in year 2000. In September 2003, Ron and his wife visited and stayed with Eric in Harrogate. During this time they visited the memorial at Skellingthorpe and attended Evensong at Lincoln Cathedral. They also visited East Kirkby, where Ron, once again sat in the pilot's seat of a Lancaster.

Ron was a very active member of the Legion in Ottawa. He had enduring Christian faith, and with his wife, regularly attended his church service. Over 200 people were present at his funeral service. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.



William Charles Dixon

Terry Dixon advises us that his father passed away on 1st July 2010. He was the last surviving member of B Burns crew on Lancaster QR-F, LM 274. The picture shows the crew with William Dixon on the left.



Joseph Taylor DFM AE

Kenneth green advises us that Joseph died on 16th May 2010.

Joe did his first tour with 61 Squadron on Hampdens at Hemswell, and was awarded his DFM on 17th January 1941. He was subsequently commissioned and did a second tour on Manchester's and Lancaster's following which he was at HCU Winthorpe



Howard Farmiloe DSO

Flight Lieutenant Howard Farmiloe, who has died aged 88, brought his bomber back from Berlin on two engines in 1944 and was awarded an immediate DSO, an extremely rare award for a pilot officer, the most junior of the RAF's commissioned ranks.

At the height of Bomber Command's winter offensive, Farmiloe and his crew had twice pressed on to Berlin to drop their bombs despite losing one of the four engines of their Lancaster before reaching the target. On the night of March 24/25 1944, his eighth visit to the "The Big City", Farmiloe's skill and determination were put to an even sterner test. En route to the target, the port outer engine failed and caught fire. Shortly afterwards the port inner had to be shut down. Farmiloe would have been fully justified in jettisoning his bomb load and turning for home, but he decided to continue despite steadily losing height and speed. After dropping his bombs on the target he chose to take the most direct route to England. An SOS was sent and the crew jettisoned all the loose equipment, including the guns, ammunition, some of the navigation equipment and the portable lavatory.

The failed engines provided much of the aircraft's electrical power and hydraulic functions, so most of the aircraft's "services" were not functioning. The Lancaster was returning alone and away from the main bomber stream, it was continuing to lose height and it had no means of self-defence. Farmiloe had great difficulty holding the aircraft on course but received crucial assistance from the bomb aimer who, for two hours, locked his arms around the rudder pedal to ease the load on Farmiloe's leg.

The crew prepared to ditch in the North Sea, but the Lancaster finally reached the east coast – where a searchlight directed it to the nearest airfield, Little Snoring in Norfolk. Farmiloe managed to get the undercarriage down, but with no flaps he had to land faster than normal and, without brakes, the aircraft ran off the end of the runway into a field before tipping on to its nose in marshy ground.

The citation for Farmiloe's DSO concluded: "This gallant pilot displayed outstanding determination in pressing home his attack and his great skill and coolness in the face of increasing difficulties on the homeward flight set an example of the highest order." His navigator was awarded a DFC and the bomb aimer and wireless operator received DFMs.

Mike Connock

TAILEND CHARLIE



Blériot Experimental (BE) 2c
First aircraft flown by 50 Sqn at RAF Swingate Down May 1916



Sopwith Pup
First aircraft flown by 61 Sqn at RAF Rochford July 1917