



Issue 54
DECEMBER 09



No 50 & No 61
SQUADRONS'
ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to Issue 54. We aim to have 3 issues per year: Apr, Aug and Dec. This will enable us to provide a fairly up-to-date report on the reunion weekend (Aug) and the Remembrance Day commemorations (Dec). This newsletter also includes 2 inserts, one regarding subs and the other details of the reunion weekend and the booking form. Please return the booking form by 15 April.

We are grateful to AVM Nigel Baldwin for his piece on the 50 Sqn Dingo and to Arthur Ward (Lincoln City Council) for allowing us to use extracts from Lincoln's West End magazine to describe the early history of aviation in Lincoln and No 4 Aircraft Acceptance Park. We also reprint an evocative earlier article from Joan Frazier, then a young member of the WAAF at RAF Skellingthorpe. We still need copy from you, our members, for your newsletter. We have several stalwarts who give us input, but we are always eager for more, especially from 61 Sqn members. We also make a plea for the 2 missing issues of our newsletter to complete our archive.

We hope as many members as possible saw Jimmy Flint on the Antiques Roadshow on 8 Nov talking about his George Medal. Jimmy personally is priceless. There is a rather grainy screenshot of Jimmy included in this edition. During this year's Remembrance Day commemorations we presented a cheque, on behalf of the Association, to Cpl Dan Gordon at Skellingthorpe for Help for Heroes. Finally, we have included the names of our past vice-presidents on page 2; we think it is fitting to remember these two gallant men who gave so much to their country and to our Association.

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

PS to the editorial. Before it is mentioned by my co-editor, I must apologise for the lack of pictures of the Birchwood Memorial Service, some fool forgot to put the memory card in his camera, my apologies.

Mike Connock

(Mike, you, or whoever forgot the memory card, is forgiven).

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The clocks have gone back, the Christmas lights are on in London and the TV programmes 'X-Factor' and 'Strictly' are both closing in towards the finals. All this can only add up to one thing - yes, it's the first week in November. We have all seen preparations for Christmas creep earlier and earlier, year by year, but the earliest sign I saw on my travels was a small Christmas tree in a hotel foyer in Norwich to promote the venue for Christmas parties - at the end of August!

With a family of five children, having Christmas 'forced' upon us so early is not ideal. At least my children are now old enough to understand there are still some weeks to go but, for me, we are now in a period of Remembrance and this coming Sunday many of us will take our place at memorials all across the country as we remember those no longer with us in our own personal ways. My five children have also learnt over the years to wait for the excitement of Christmas to begin and even the youngest fully understand the importance of Remembrance Sunday and what the 11th November means to us as a nation.

What is also pleasing is that the whole Remembrance 'thing' has been resurrected in recent years. Being a serving member of the Armed Forces today means that I know only too well that Remembrance is not just about the two World Wars. This generation is continuing to suffer the loss of loved ones as the number of casualties in Afghanistan continues to increase. Whilst losses might not be on the scale some of you will remember from the Second World War, each loss today is equally as hard to bear. We now see many places where a minute's silence will be observed such as in schools, the work place, in shops and places of travel such as train stations. For me, as a serving officer, I have three events to attend this weekend - two on behalf of the RAF on Saturday and one for the Association, the Remembrance Service at our Association Memorial, on Sunday. I must also remember it is my wedding anniversary on Saturday - fortunately Claire has been married to me long enough now to know that the RAF has a major part in our lives as well!

The subject of Remembrance is quite timely as I am pleased to inform you that the Association will be making a donation of £1575 to the appeal for the Bomber Command Memorial in London, which our President, Sir Michael Beetham, has been working tirelessly on for some time to achieve. Because our own memorial at the Birchwood Leisure Centre is currently in good shape, the Association Committee has agreed to make a donation of £500 from our Memorial Account. The rest has come from generous donations from individual members of the Association.

I can also inform you that the Committee has agreed to give our own Association Room at the Leisure Centre a bit of a facelift. The management at the Leisure Centre

is currently looking at the interior layout of the building and this, I believe, will give us the opportunity to improve the Association Room. In particular, I think there are two areas we can improve on. Firstly, I believe that we can better tell the story of some of those who served at Skellingthorpe during the Second World War. For example, we are somewhat unique as an association because we have two Victoria Cross winners, one from each squadron, and that is something we should promote better. Secondly, we can show a bit more of the post-war histories of our two squadrons, such as the role of the Vulcan during the Cold War and Falklands Conflict. For example, one of the aircraft and crews that took part in the long-range Black Buck missions during the Falklands conflict was from 50 Squadron.

As the RAF continues to shrink in size, it is extremely unlikely that either of our squadrons will ever re-form in the future and so I am keen that we tell the whole story as best we can given our resources and the space we have available to us. Whether or not we can complete the work in time for next year's re-union weekend will depend on the management at the Leisure Centre but we will try. We will keep you informed.

Finally, it only leaves me to wish you all a Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year. Take care and keep warm. As to who will win the 'X-Factor' and 'Strictly', it remains to be seen - I am sure those of you who watch either or both will have your own ideas!

Peter Jacobs

NEWSLETTERS

We are very grateful to members who have heeded our call and sent us back numbers of the newsletter. Our thanks to Mrs J M Fry, Michael Heaton, Johnny Firth, Joan Frazier, Arthur Smith, John Aldridge and our own Gerry Collins. Also to Reg Payne who has provided some early correspondence about the memorial. We now have 51 of the 53 past issues, including some interesting details of the task to raise funds for our splendid memorial at Birchwood. Unfortunately we lack **Issues 10 and 16**. We would dearly like to have these two elusive editions as they would complete the set. Some of the early newsletters, or General Letters as they were called, are (unsurprisingly for 20 year-old documents) a little battered. If anyone can help with a copy of General Letter 4, we would be very grateful.

If you could donate a copy of General Newsletter 4, Issues 10 or 16 we would be most thankful. If you would rather we copied them, then we will do so and return the original to you. The early newsletters will be in a file and available for members to peruse during the Reunion Weekend in Jun.

Richard Jones

ASSOCIATION MEMORABELIA

Association ties are available again at £10 each, including p&p, from the vice-chairman. His details are on page 2 of this newsletter. Your committee is also investigating whether we might offer other Association keepsakes. Possibly pins, broaches and a scarf for the ladies. Obviously cost is an important consideration and we would not want to have our funds tied up in unsold stock. We will approach a number of companies that we know of in the local area. We aim to have a small display for members during the Reunion Weekend next Jun.

Richard Jones

THE 50 SQN “DINGO” SAGA CONTINUED.....

Further to Al Butler’s short piece in the last newsletter (No 53), I am indebted to my 50 Sqn Waddington Vulcan navigator plotter, Jeff Jefford (who has been the editor of the RAF Historical Society since I became Chairman about 13 years ago and who is a real expert on the RAF’s history), for the following information about how the 50 Sqn ‘dingo’ originated. He has written:

While the RFC/RAF made extensive use of radio during WW I, this was largely confined to air-to-ground telegraphy (ie Morse via W/T). By the summer of 1918, however, some tentative use was being made of two-way telephony (ie voice communication via R/T). Leading the field in this context were the Home Defence (HD) squadrons of General Ashmore’s London Air Defence Area (LADA) which had been set up as a counter to the Gotha raids which had begun in 1917*. After some trials work in August 1918, the system was deemed to be operational by late September. Transmissions were not always of the highest quality, although No 50 Sqn is reported to have played gramophone records to entertain its patrolling pilots! Nevertheless, operational messages were kept short and encoded – for brevity as much as security.

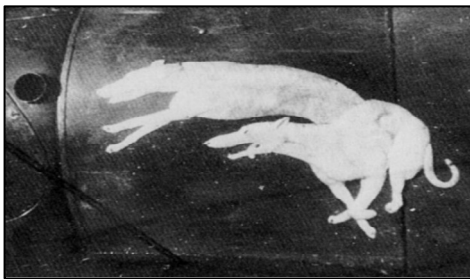
Each airfield had a code name, as did each unit (always an animal in this case). Thus No 61 Sqn (*Grizzly*) flew from Rockies (*Rochford*), No 44 Sqn (*Hippo*) from Hainault Farm (*Niger*), No 141 Sqn (*Rhino*) from Biggin Hill (*Dollar*) and No 50 Sqn (*Dingo*) from Bekesbourne (*Bark*). All of these units, and another five within the LADA (there were, in addition, five more HD squadrons assigned to the Northern Air Defence Area – the NADA), were subordinated to HQ 6 Brigade and the collective call sign for all units was *Menagerie*. There was a selection of refinements and instructions.

*For much more on this see *The Air Defence of Britain 1914-1918* by Christopher Cole and E F Cheesman (Putnam 1984).

For instance, a message specifically addressed to *Gulls* was meant for the two highest aircraft on patrol; *Penguins* related to all other aircraft. Changes in patrol height were indicated in thousands of feet by ‘Step up one (or two, etc)’ or ‘Step down one (or two, etc)’. *Rum* (not Run) signalled a recall.



The fox-like Dingo



The running dog (greyhounds?)

The ‘running dogs’ emblem is said to have been designed by No 50 Sqn’s Capt G S M Insall VC and is presumed to have been inspired by the squadron’s *Dingo* call sign, although they actually look more like greyhounds than the wild dogs of Oz . . . As the pictures above indicate, the emblem on the Camel did not involve any prey and there was no inscription. That said, I seem to recall that, on the wall in the aircrew Crew Room in the later 1970s, there was a painting (or a plaque?) that featured what might have been a dingo puppy – but I have no idea of the date or provenance of that image.



50 Sqn Camel (C8372) wearing the running dogs emblem which reappeared on the Vulcan in the early 1970s

Finally, to clarify, Jeff also makes the point that the transmission “All Dingoes Run” - note not ‘Run’ - meant “All 50 Sqn aircraft RTB”.

AVM Nigel Baldwin (OC 50 Sqn 1977-79)

REMEMBRANCE CEREMONIES



Cpl Dan Gordon of RAF Coningsby cycled around Lincolnshire's war memorials aiming to raise £2,000 for Help for Heroes. He visited St Lawrence's Church, Skellingthorpe on 7 Nov and was met by villagers.

Pictured L to R: Mike Connock, Chris Goldson former Chairman of Parish Council, Cpl Dan Gordon and Rev Richard Billinghurst current Chairman.

The Birchwood Remembrance Service was held on Sunday 8 Nov; an overcast and wet day. Nevertheless, the service was very well attended by the general public. We were very well supported by the air cadets of 204(City of Lincoln) Sqn and the music was provided by a member of the Beevor Band. As well as the committee members, there were civil dignitaries including the Deputy Mayor of Lincoln and Gillian Merron the Lincoln MP. But it would not have been complete without Jimmy Flint, who spoke the Homage.



The Skellingthorpe remembrance service was held on Wednesday 11 Nov at 11am. Wreaths were laid by the Parish Council, local residents, children from The Holt School and Richard Jones, our Vice Chairman, on behalf of the Association. Richard read the Homage, Pam Connock read the Kohima Epitaph

Mike Connock

ANTIQUES ROADSHOW



On Sunday 8 November the second of The Antiques Roadshow's from Lincoln Cathedral was transmitted. It featured Jimmy Flint talking to the Arms and Militaria Expert, Graham Lay. Jimmy was asked about the award of his George Medal for extreme bravery. He spoke of the rescue of his navigator from the aircraft which he landed safely on the water off Cromer. Jimmy was characteristically reticent about his

bravery. Graham Lay said he would not put a value on the medals. Which Jimmy said that was alright because they were not for sale.

Richard Jones

LINCOLN GRANDSTAND RFC FIREPLACE

During the Association reunion dinner last Jun, the Mayor of Lincoln, Cllr David Grattrick, mentioned that the Lincoln Grandstand (from the now extinct Lincoln race course) on Carholme Road, West Common, had a splendid RFC fireplace. The Mayor was determined that the fireplace should be kept for posterity and was keen for us to be aware of it. This fine

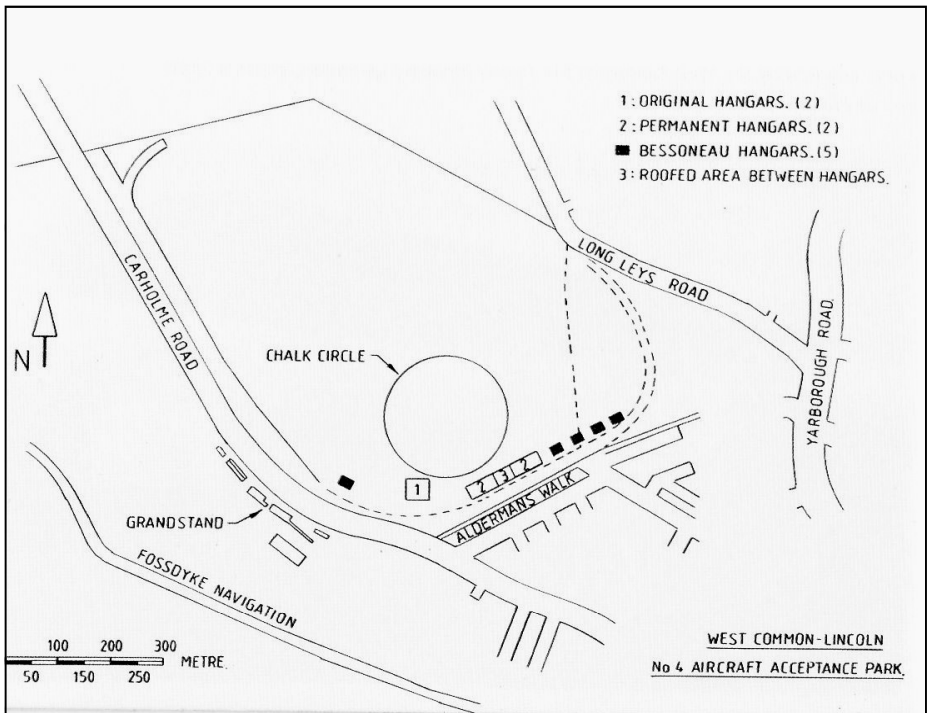


mural was painted in 1917 and in the lower right hand corner are the words "2nd A M Hunter". (This was presumably the artist, 2nd Class Air Mechanic Hunter). Why was this fine painting there at all? Well, the room containing the painting was, we believe, the officers' mess used by the pilots collecting aircraft from No 4 Aircraft Acceptance Park on West Common.

Richard Jones

No 4 AIRCRAFT ACCEPTANCE PARK (AAP)

During the early days of the RFC, aircraft were taken from the factory, often by road or rail, to AAPs where they would be test flown and sqn pilots would ferry them to operational sqns. There were many of these, including No 4 AAP at West Common, Lincoln, which had been used as the testing area for balloons and early flying objects since 1910. This site, therefore, seemed to be an obvious one for testing aircraft when the engineering works of Ruston and Proctor; Robey; and Clayton and Shuttleworth were requisitioned to change their production from agricultural machinery to the manufacture of aircraft at the start of the First World War. Hangars were needed to house the different types of aeroplanes that were produced in Lincoln. Two were built initially, later more hangars were constructed.



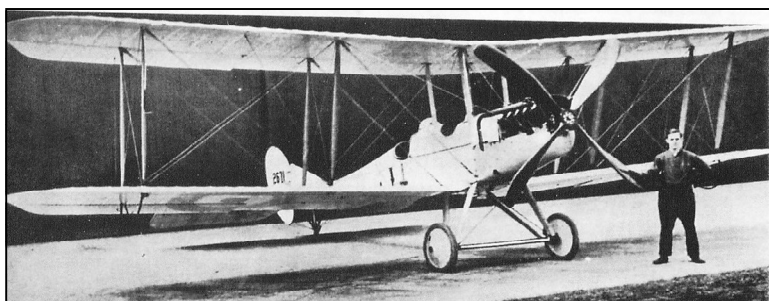
No 4 Aircraft Acceptance Park, West Common c1918

The original hangars were used by Ruston and Proctor to house Sopwith camels during testing; these were followed by 2 permanent hangars. Later, when the aircraft became much larger, 5 substantial hangars were built to house the Handley Page bombers produced by Clayton and Shuttleworth. The large chalk circle was laid down and used for the aeroplanes to take off and land.



Mr Ewen's biplane flight into Lincoln c1910

Ruston and Proctor was the first company in Lincoln to change over to aircraft production and, in 1914, employed 5,000 people and the works covered 100 acres. By the end of the First World War they had produced over 2,000 aircraft.



The first Ruston aircraft to be test flown at Lincoln; a BE2c in 1915

In 1915, Robey became the second Lincoln firm to manufacture military aircraft. Although their output was smaller than Ruston and Proctor, Robey built a variety of types of aircraft for the Admiralty designing and building prototypes. Their first aircraft was the Sopwith 806 Gunbus. In 1916 the third Lincoln manufacturer, Clayton and Shuttleworth, started manufacturing parts for the Sea Scout airships. They also built the Sopwith tri-plane and the Handley Page bomber.

No 4 AAP ceased operations at the end of the war and the hangars were sold off.

The above information was condensed from an article by Ann Yeates-Langley in Lincoln West End. We are indebted to The Survey of Lincoln and Arthur Ward, Hon Sec of The Survey of Lincoln and the City of Lincoln Heritage Team Leader, for their kind permission to publish this extract.

Richard Jones

SKELLINGTHORPE REMEMBERED

(The following piece is re-printed from Newsletter Issue 21 kindly donated by the author. It is so evocative, we reprint it here - Ed)

I remember the mist on the runways in the early morning and picking mushrooms before the airfield was astir; going down to wave the crews off as they left on their missions; the faint sound of the first returning Lancaster and everyone listening for the rest to come; the news gradually spread around if one hadn't returned; the sound of ammunition exploding when a plane made a crash landing. And I remember the music circle run by Ken Hodges where we listened to gramophone records with the lights low; the warmth and kindness of the people in Skellingthorpe; the overflowing last bus from Lincoln; cycling across the airfield feeling that I was quite separate from normal life; swimming in the quarry; going out in a van (I think it was snowing) with aircrew to liberate a Christmas tree.

Does anyone remember the time in the autumn of 1943, coming back on the last bus, when someone mentioned that the Group Captain had masses of apples on the trees in his garden? I can't recall how many, or who most of them were. Alma Kitchener was the only other WAAF. Fg Off Pritchard was amongst them; I remember because he was Canadian and stood out because of it. And one was a wg cdr, perhaps an Australian. We arrived at the garden wall, the wg cdr called out, "Come on boys", and everyone swarmed over.

Joan Frazier (WAAF at RAF Skellingthorpe)

GERRY'S PIECE

Our Remembrance Sunday Service went quite well, the only disappointment after a glorious morning whilst sat in the Cathedral, was that just before our own service, the rains came along! With umbrellas out, Padre Brian Stalley took the service and Michelle Liddle, now principal cornet at the Beavor Band, played us through the service. We had a good turnout with cadets and staff from 204 (City of Lincoln) Sqn ATC helping with wreath laying, the Deputy Mayor of Lincoln, City and County Councillors together with our own members which included from 'away' Betty Bascombe and Jim Flint.

This brings me to the Antiques Road Show on Sunday 8 November, which started with Fiona Bruce in Lincoln Cathedral's Airman's Chapel. She told about the losses of Bomber Command including Leslie Manser, and then related Bill Reid's gallantry, finishing with Wing Commander Jim Flint who had to ditch his plane off Cromer. The show then started and near the end of the show, Jim appeared with his medals. The BBC made a good job knitting it altogether!

REUNION WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

Susan and David Jellett have been our dining secretaries for many years and done an outstanding job. We are very grateful to them both and we look forward to seeing them at the reunion weekend when they can just relax and “go with the flow”. Susan and David have handed the dining baton over to Lynda Skinner. We welcome Lynda and know the dining arrangements stay in caring and safe hands. Initial details of the reunion weekend activities are below and the insert in this newsletter asks for confirmation by those attending the weekend. Members are requested to complete the booking form (on the enclosed insert) indicating attendance at the Skellingthorpe supper (pay £8 per head on the night); the reunion dinner (£29 per head returned with the booking form); and the number of seats required on the transport. This year we are specifically asking if wheelchair access is required for the transport.

Richard Jones

SKELLINGTHORPE FRIDAY NIGHT

Hi everyone. I can't believe we are already planning the 2010 reunion, but I am told by Mike & Richard (Newsletter Czars) that this is so. Each year on the Friday evening we have tended to cook a hot meal. However we thought that next year we would serve a cold carved buffet, with a full range of meats, salads and of course desserts. (good news - Ed). We hope this will be a popular choice. The cost will be the same as last year at £8 per head. Please indicate on the booking form if you will be attending and as always it is acceptable to pay on the night; the important part is knowing the numbers. Barbara, myself and the gang look forward to seeing you in June and wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Pam Connock

REUNION WEEKEND BOOKING FORM

As the new dining secretary, I have now started to organise the 2010 reunion dinner. Unfortunately prices have increased considerably for next year, making the cost of the 2010 dinner £29 per person. I do apologise for this increase, but it is the lowest price we could negotiate with the Assembly Rooms. However, this price does include the wine and port for the loyal toast. The Brayford Holiday Inn has allocated 15 double and single rooms for the weekend, but again there is a price increase on the double rooms which will cost £85 per night, inc b&b. The single rooms remain the same at £60 per night, inc b&b. Bookings are made, as usual, **direct to the hotel** quoting Reference “SQN” for our special rate. Please book the room you require as soon as possible. Return the weekend booking form, with your reunion weekend dinner cheque, by **15 April**. Thank you.

Lynda Skinner

ABSENT FRIENDS

Mr G Crichton of Aberdeen passed away on 5 Apr 08

Mrs I Bankin, a former WAAF, passed away on Easter Sunday 09

NEW MEMBERS

Susan Bankin of Ruislip

George Cook of Lechlade

John Roberts of Hull

Arthur Smith of London

John Manning of Colchester

Christopher Manning

Susan is the daughter of Mrs I Bankin

Great uncle, Sgt M J Cook, was an air gunner with 50 Sqn

Father, Sgt A E Roberts, was a member of 50 Sqn 1943/44

Former flight engineer with 50 Sqn

Former air gunner with 61 Sqn

Son of John Manning

MEMBERSHIP

I am reviewing the membership listing and would like some help from existing members. The following members are listed but I do not have any address for them and they are thus not receiving the newsletter. If anyone can help fill in the details I would be most grateful:

Mrs G Jones, Pays by Standing Order

Mr K Marshall, Pays by Standing Order.

Mr J Mitchell, Pays by Standing Order.

“O”

This last unknown member (O) is a strange one. He/She(?) pays by standing order and that is the only detail on the bank statement, I have a suspicion the member may be an Australian.

Finally I would remind all who pay subscriptions annually that a form for your renewal is included with the newsletter. On the envelope address if your name is followed by (A), this signifies annual subs are due, if it is followed by (Aso), this signifies that annual subs are due and that you pay by standing order. If nothing follows your name, it indicates that you are a life or honorary member and no subs are due.

Mike Connock

CAN YOU HELP?

My great uncle, Sgt Michael John Cook, was an air gunner on 50 Sqn and I would like to find out more information about him and others on his sqn. I have visited the 50/61 Sqns, memorial room in Skellingthorpe, but could not find any further information there, I have spoken with family members and to the Imperial War Museum. I should like to find more information about my great uncle and to pass on all the information I have regarding him to others to build a greater understanding of the Sqn. Furthermore, it would give me a greater opportunity to commemorate all that were lost during the war. Here is all the information I have found out so far:

Sgt Michael John Cook (1853768) was a member of 50 Sqn; he died on a raid over Munich on 16/17th December 1944. H is buried at the Durnbach war cemetery in Germany. I believe he was on his 30th sortie when he sadly died. The aircraft in which he was killed was a Lancaster Mk 3 Serial No LM656 VN-W. He took off from Skellingthorpe at 1615 and the aircraft was destroyed by flak. Two crew were thrown from the aircraft by the blast; debris fell on the city barracks. His crew during that last fateful mission was:

Fg Off R E Amey DFC
FS D M McCray RAAF
FS G W Lane DFM
Sgt R Shackleton

Sgt F Livesey
FS D R Kennedy
Sgt M J Cook

I believe Fg Off Amey died later of pneumonia and Sgt Livesey was taken as a prisoner of war.

Furthermore, I believe that on George Cook's 27th or 28th sortie his aircraft was hit and caught fire. The pilot gave the orders to bail out but the communications had failed so my great uncle didn't receive the order to abandon the aircraft. We believe the pilot managed to get the aircraft back to England but we are unsure where; we think the other members of the crew bailed out.

Any information you can give me would be very much appreciated.
George Cook (email: gjcookie2003@yahoo.co.uk)

Mike Connock

TAILEND CHARLIE



“The Other Lancaster”

FM213 from the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, Ontario

During a staff meeting, a squadron leader disagreed with everything being discussed. The chairman, an air marshal, grew annoyed and let the squadron leader know it. “Well sir,” smirked the squadron leader, “I doubt you made air marshal by agreeing with everything someone else recommended.” “That’s true,” said the air marshal, leaning in “but that is how I made wing commander.”

Winston Churchill was always insistent that an officer knew his men. During the war he visited a Royal Navy vessel and asked the Captain if all the divisional officers knew the men in their division. He was assured that was so. Churchill then turned abruptly to one young sub-lieutenant and barked, “Is that your division?”, “Yes Sir”, was the terrified reply. “Do you know the names of all your men?” Churchill asked. “Yes Sir” replied the now shaking sub-lieutenant. “Very well”, said Churchill, “Who is that man over there”. “Able Seaman Brown, Sir” squeaked the sub-lieutenant. Churchill walked up to the seaman and demanded, “What is your name?”, “Able Seaman Brown, Sir” replied Able Seaman Jenkins loyally!