



Issue 52
APRIL 2009



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



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EDITORIAL

This new format for the newsletter is very much part of a learning process. The Association newsletter has been around for many years and has, we believe, always been a very useful communication medium for members.

We have taken over a good product from Keith Coldron, who has edited the newsletter for almost 20 years. We are very grateful to Keith for his great support to our Association and we hope to follow his high example. I said above that this is a learning process, so it is. We aim to adapt the format, within our budget of course, to suit the wishes of our members.

One of our proposals is to email the newsletter to members who have that facility. Mike has sent an emails to members whose addresses he has, requesting their acceptance. We would appreciate you sending us an email if you have not received a message and would like to receive the newsletter in e-format. We will also see if it can be hosted by the Association website.

We have some good articles for you in this issue: Lancaster Come Home, about Betty Bascombe's late husband's aircraft which crashed in France. The first of AVM Nigel Baldwin's pieces on his time as OC 50 Sqn. A taster of our planned visit to RAF Digby. A list of new members and Absent Friends. A forum for seeking information "Can You Help? And lastly a light-hearted back page, Tail End Charlie.

Ideally we would like a bank of non-time sensitive articles sent in by members to use in future issues of the newsletter. We pledge never to have less than 16 pages, and none of them blank, even if we have to resort to big print! This is your newsletter, if you have any suggestions, comments, ideas or better still, copy for publication, please send them to one of us.

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

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

What a winter! I don't know how bad you had it but if the national weather reports were anything to go by then I don't think anyone will have escaped the big freeze. I trust that you all managed to keep warm, safe and well and we can now look forward to the spring.

In the last Newsletter I informed you that we were looking at improving the layout and style and so I hope you will have noticed a difference for this edition. You may have also received your copy by e-mail; if so, thank you for supporting this initiative, which will help us keep production and delivery costs down to a minimum. Whilst talking about the Newsletter, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Keith Coldron, on behalf of us all, for his excellent work over so many years as the Editor. Communication is vital and Keith's contribution over the years has ensured that we have all kept in touch; without this, I suspect the Association would not have survived for so long. The responsibility of producing the Newsletter has now been passed to Richard Jones and Mike Connock and I thank them both for willingly taking on this additional task. I am confident they will both do an excellent job in taking the Newsletter forward and please remember that the Newsletter is your opportunity to pass on anything of interest.

Whilst we are always pleased to welcome new members, I was saddened to hear of the passing of others. Whilst I do not often single any out, I was particularly sad to hear of the recent loss of Dennis Abrams. Many of you will have known Dennis and he will be sorely missed by us all. A former Vice-Chairman, Dennis was a stalwart of the Association from the very early days. In more recent years his contribution to the local area was outstanding. Dennis personally took on the task of re-locating the Association memorabilia to the Birchwood Leisure Centre and he was instrumental in securing the local initiative, which saw the preservation of the perimeter track, with all its artwork and information about the airfield. Dennis died on 9 Feb. The fact that his funeral was attended by many friends and members of the Association speaks volumes of the man and his widow, Joan, can take comfort from

the fact that the Association, and the local people of Lincoln and Skellingthorpe, are so grateful for all that he did to help preserve the legacy of our two squadrons and the airfield of RAF Skellingthorpe.

On a brighter note we now look forward to this year's annual re-union during the weekend of 12-14 Jun. For those of you not familiar with the format, the weekend starts on the afternoon of Friday 12 Jun, with a meet and greet at the Birchwood Leisure Centre followed by an informal supper evening at Skellingthorpe Community Centre. On Saturday the AGM will be held at the Leslie Manser School, which will be followed by a buffet lunch at the school and then a visit to a local attraction in the afternoon. The annual dinner will be held in the evening at the Assembly Rooms, Lincoln. On the Sunday we hold the annual remembrance service at the Association Memorial outside the Leisure Centre and we then move on to Skellingthorpe Community Centre for lunch and a short service. If you have any agenda items that you wish to be raised at the AGM then I ask you forward these to any committee member by 31 May. I look forward to seeing many of you during the course of the weekend.

Peter Jacobs

ASSOCIATION TIES

We have sold all our Association ties. If there is sufficient demand, we can order more, but the minimum order is 20 ties. There will be an opportunity to discuss a further order during the AGM.

Richard Jones

REUNION DINNER RAFFLE PRIZES

With our annual dinner looming , we are again asking for donations towards our grand raffle held on the night. Over the past years, you have been very generous, and we are hoping you will be again this year. If you could bring your contribution to the raffle with you on the night, this would be very much appreciated

Alan Biggs

DON'T THE MONTHS FLY BY

Recalling our second gathering of 2008 when on Remembrance Sunday we held our service at our Memorial. We had a good congregation especially with the Mayor of Lincoln, Cllr Ron Hills, coming, after he had been at the Cathedral. (I said to him that we usually had the Deputy Mayor, but he replied that Birchwood was his 'patch' and he was pleased to come – he is ex RAF). Rev Brian Stalley conducted the service, Jimmy Flint read the Homage and Michelle Liddle of the Beevor Band played the Hymn, Last Post and National Anthem and gave us a professional finish to the service. Many thanks to Rev Brian and Michelle. At Skellingthorpe, Remembrance Day the 11th was observed and Richard Jones our Vice Chairman laid our wreath . The months will quickly roll by and it will be time for our special weekend from 12th to 14th June.

On Sunday 14th June – this year we welcome back the staff and cadets of both 204 & 1237 Sqns, Air Cadets, because a word in the right ear means that the ATC Wing Field Day will not now interfere!! We did miss them last year as the Field Day fell on the same day as our service and parade. Wreaths have not gone up in price, so for those who wish to lay, or have a wreath laid by a cadet, the prices are: - Type C £18.00 with the insert; or Type B £16.50. There is a smaller one at £15.50. We always ask for a little to be added as a donation, which my customers do very well! The card can also be printed so please let me know in good time.

Dr J H Mountjoy of Richmond N Yorks sent me a copy of her uncle's flying Log Book – Thomas W Mountjoy, who flew most of his missions with a Dave Rolston. This Log Book will be kept in our Memorial Rooms at Birchwood, especially as it has a reference dated 31.7.45 – a 50 Minute flight checked by Wing Commander Flint!! Perhaps this was necessary after a return from HLB (Overshot runway on landing). In the last newsletter we told you of the passing of Geoff Gilbert, 61 Squadron Air Gunner. The Air Gunners as St Neots collection raised a magnificent £587.50 in Geoff's memory.

Gerry Collins

LANCASTER COMES HOME

On the night of 24/25 April 1944 Lancaster LM359 took off from Skellingthorpe to bomb Munich. Its crew were;

Pilot	Pilot Officer C W J Newman.
Flight Engineer	Sergeant R C H Jones.
Navigator	Sergeant R A Taylor
Air Gunner	Flying Officer E R Alston
Bomb Aimer	Flight Sergeant EJ Outram.
Air Gunner	Sergeant R C Gardner.
Wireless Operator	Sergeant C Ratner

Unfortunately the Aircraft failed to make it to Munich and came down on a farm at a village called La Chappelle Thecle, in the Burgundy region of France. Of the seven crew only one survived, Sergeant C Ratner. According to an eye witness account from the person on the farm, who incidentally is still alive, had the plane not clipped a tree there would probably have been more survivors. The plane exploded as the crew were trying to escape.

Betty Bascombe who is a member of the association is the widow of sergeant R C H Jones. Until 1988 she had no idea of the existence of her husbands' grave. The Crew are now buried in French Military Cemetery near Lyon.

The local village erected a memorial to the airmen who died and have held a service there ever since it was built. Betty has visited this memorial and the graves in Lyon since 1988.

Since 1994 the service has been organised by the Swiss branch of RAFA, ably assisted by the Lyon branch. All the locals turn out for the service including the survivors of the local Resistance, who have many stories to tell.

In 2007 the current Chairman of Skellingthorpe Parish Council had a letter from the Mayor of the area inviting him to attend with a view to setting up a friendship between the two villages. The population of La Chappelle Thecle is about 500.

It was thus decided by the Chairman Chris Goldson to make the trip to La Chappelle Thecle, with his wife, Christine, myself and my wife Pam.

The logistics of the trip was generally arranged by liaising with Betty Bascombs' daughter Gaynor who was in close contact with the Swiss Branch of RAFA. In addition one person who had been very much committed to setting up the meeting was a lady called Sylvie Monin-Badey. She is a lecturer in English at the University of Lyon.



Betty Bascombe and Chris Goldson at Memorial in La-Chappelle-Thecle

The main events were on the Saturday, this started with the parade of Standards along with veterans from the resistance, village people etc. finishing up at the Memorial where speeches were made by the head of the resistance association and the Chairman of the Swiss RAFA. This was followed by the laying of wreaths by the Mayor of the Village, the Resistance, the chairmen of the Swiss and Lyon branches

of RAFA, the Chairman of Skellingthorpe Parish Council, and me representing the Squadrons Association. This was followed by a presentation by the Chairman of Skellingthorpe Parish Council of a Picture of a 61 Squadron Lancaster to the Mayor of the village. Additional presentations were made by the chairman to the head of the resistance and to the Farmer who had witnessed the crash. Everyone was then invited back to the local town of Louhans for refreshments. This was followed by a lunch organised by RAFA. Further visits were made by the Skellingthorpe party the following day, they met different families in the area and the hospitality was overwhelming.



Parade of Standards at La-Chappelle-Thecle



Parts of the Lancaster behind one of the buildings.

A presentation was made to the local Farmer. In return he presented a part of the original Lancaster to Chris Goldson.

This part of the Lancaster has returned to Skellingthorpe over 64 years.

It is the intention that this will be mounted and displayed in the village. The most amazing part is the fact that the farmer has left a lot of the parts of the wreckage where they fell, and to this day you can wander round and find a part of a wing, or tail plane, part of a turret, Olio leg and ammunition, still apparently live I might add.



Local farmer who was a boy at the time of the crash, and actually saw the aircraft come down

We hope this will be the start of a long friendship between the two villages.

Mike Connock

MEMORIES OF BEING THE CO OF 50 SQN—PART ONE

When I arrived as a wg cdr at Waddington in July 1977 to take over as the CO of 50 Squadron, I had one advantage over many of those who had been before me: all my operational flying experience had been on the Vulcan B Mk 2 - as a copilot on IX Sqn at Coningsby, as a flt Lt captain on 35 Sqn at Cottesmore, and as a Flight Commander on 35 Sqn at Akrotiri, Cyprus. Now, of course, I didn't know much else (although I had done a 2 year tour as a flt Lt ADC to AOC 11 Gp at Bentley Priory so I had learnt a bit about Lightning air defence fighters and the defence of the UK's airspace) so some may well have muttered about my narrow background and perhaps, they thought, inevitable parochialism. But I had also completed the year's course at the Staff College at Bracknell which did much to broaden my horizon and, on balance, I was comforted and encouraged by knowing what I was talking about when it came to operating Vulcans not least at low level around the United Kingdom and wider afield.

I have always felt that it must have been quite an additional challenge to be appointed CO without any previous experience on type: if you were a pilot, you had to demonstrate your flying and captaincy skills from day 1; if you were a wg cdr navigator, you had to rapidly master the Vulcan's systems and work well with a crew (perhaps with a 1st tourist flying officer navigator radar next to you and an 'old hand' Vulcan AEO at your other elbow). And then that mixture would be compounded by having a flt Lt pilot captain. (Because in those days, presumably as on 50 and 61 in WWII, the first pilot was always the captain).

So, although all three of my brother Waddington Vulcan squadron commanders (IX, 44, and 101) were older and more experienced in the round than me, I had plenty of Vulcan flying hours in my log book to enable me to keep 50 Sqn up to speed and not be left behind. I was also blessed by having two excellent flt cdrs and sqn ldr pilot, navigator and AEO leaders.

By this stage of the Vulcan's life, the V-Force had gone through many years of Centralised Servicing - where a powerful wg cdr OC Engineering Wing 'owned' all the many hundred ground tradesmen and all 32 Vulcans were held in a central pool and were distributed, theoretically equally, to squadron aircrews to fly. For years, argument had raged about 'squadron servicing', 'semi-autonomous servicing', and 'centralised servicing'. The efficiencies of lumping all the aircraft and ground crew together seemed so obvious. (This had been my experience at RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus where IX and 35 were quite separate - both geographically and mentally - from Bomber Wing HQ which 'owned' the aircraft). And yet we know well that people like working for small and easily identifiable groups rather than as an amorphous mass so a momentum began to break up the monolithic idea. By the time I became OC 50 Sqn, the 4 Waddington squadrons (and those at Scampton) had become 'semi-autonomous'. That meant that each squadron had about 100 ground crew (looked after by a sqn ldr engineer, a flying officer 1st tourist JEngO, a engineering warrant officer, and the 2 working shifts run by a flt sgt each). It meant, of course, that our ground crew thought of themselves as members of 50 Squadron, and were very proud of the fact. It meant, too, that each squadron had 8 of its own aircraft and that unofficial squadron markings could be painted on 'our' fins. (Two scarlet 'dingoes' in our case - do you know where they came from?). Because of the complexity of the aircraft, and not least the nuclear weapon system generation requirement and the demands of major servicing cycles, it would be misleading to say that, in my two years in command, we always flew a '50 Sqn' aircraft. But mostly we did - and certainly if we were going overseas where the flag would be waved, I and my fellow squadron commanders would not expect to fly anything else - even if, late at night, a 'new' transfer had to be stuck on the fin!

AVM Nigel Baldwin

(Picture of 50 Sqn Vulcan with Dingoes at Tail End Charlie—Ed)

RAF DIGBY SECTOR OPS ROOM

At midnight on 2 Sep 39 Great Britain issued an ultimatum to Germany and on the following day Neville Chamberlain broadcast to the nation that a state of war existed between Great Britain and Germany.

On duty on 3 Sep 39, within the Traffic and Receiving Room of the Operations room at RAF Digby, was 19 years old AC2 Charles Mayhew. Shortly after midday, he received a signal over the 12 Group teleprinter circuit and brought it to the attention of the Duty Fighter Controller. The Fighter Controller briefed the Operations staff and broadcast the information to the station, 'War has broken out with Germany'. The signal was returned to Charles Mayhew, who was then expected to file the signal or destroy it. Instead, he took one of the copies and held onto it for the next 58 years. When the RAF Digby Operations room museum opened in May 97, Charles Mayhew returned and presented us with a unique document marking the moment when our station went to war. This document is on display today.

Other exhibits include:

Scale Models

Photographs

Uniforms

Every day items from the era

RAF Documents

Merlin engine from 46 Sqn

Engine from Hurricane aircraft

1660 HCU Lancaster engine

Propellers

Lancaster bomb sight

Contemporary radio equipment

Squadron histories

Operation record books

Recordings of aircraft and speeches

Examples of 'Pipsqueak' and 'Coceral'

Excerpt from RAF Digby Station Web Page

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs Mary J Allen-Meilinger, Colorado USA. Mary's Father was Dennis R Allen of 50 Sqn, who failed to return 28/29 Jul 44 in LM210.

Mrs Gladys Thorpe, Freshwater, Isle of Wight. Gladys is the Cousin of Gerald Postins who failed to return in Jul 44 in LM452

Terence William (Bill) Jackman, New South Wales, Australia. Bill was a member of 61 Sqn.

Mr & Mrs David McLachlan, Oswestry, Shropshire. Friends of Skellingthorpe and ardent supporters of the Association.

Mr & Mrs Chris Goldson, Skellingthorpe. Chairman of Parish Council and his wife.

Mr C Rees, Carmarthen, Wales. Son of Thomas John Lloyd Rees of 50 Sqn.

Group Captain Don Lowe, Walton on Thames, Surrey. A former OC of 50 Sqn.

David Layne, Irvington, Alabama, Father was Walter Henry ("Walley") Layne of 50 Sqn.

Mr W Ivory, Whisenden, Rutland. Son of Bill Ivory.

Hilton Spratt, Lincoln. Former Mayor of Lincoln.

Mathew Grey, Irthlingbrough, Northants, Relative of Sgt AC McBray of 50 Sqn, Failed to return from a Nuremburg raid in ED387, Feb 43.

Alan Butler, Coleby, Lincolnshire.

ABSENT FRIENDS

DENNIS ABRAMS DFC CdeG

“Was it a Brown or White Loaf”.

Dennis was a founder member of the Association and they used to meet at the Cock Inn in London. He served as a Navigator on 50 Sqn and was shot down over France. For many years Joan and Dennis organised the annual dinner. (Always getting a fair price). When our Museum at the Lawns had to be dismantled and re-erected in two rooms at the Birchwood Leisure Centre, Dennis and a friend did all the hard work. It is said that on the day he was shot down, Joan had asked him to come back with a loaf. Ten months later, and having had no word of him, Dennis with his quiet humour, walked in and said, “Was it a white or brown loaf you wanted?” Dennis died on the 9th February and his service at Lincoln Crematorium on the 25th February was attended by many friends. This is a brief eulogy of a man with many facets.

Gerry Collins

TED ADAMSON

Ted served on 61 Sqn during 1940-42 as a sgt fitter. He then volunteered to become a flight engineer. His first operational flight engineer tour was with 106 Sqn during 1942-43 at RAF Coningsby followed by an instructor tour at RAF Swinderby. His second operational tour was with 50 Sqn in 1943-44 with the crew of the then Plt Off Michael Beetham. Ted later became Flt Lt Eng Leader on 50 Sqn. He attended our annual reunion dinner in 2008 when he joined the surviving members of his former crew: Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham (pilot), Reg Payne (radio operator) and Les Bartlett (bomb aimer). It was the first time they had all been together since 1944. It was a poignant moment. Ted died in Nov 08 aged 87.

Richard Jones

PETER SMITH

Peter passed away last June quite suddenly after an operation for a minor bladder problem. Peter was a member of Frank Mouritz's crew who flew 61 Sqn's "Mickey the Moocher" for their first time on "Mickey's" 120th trip.

Nancy Smith

CAN YOU HELP

Les Loosemore, from Richmond N Yorks asks some searching' questions, and he hopes someone can provide some info! A WW2 crashed aircraft in Germany Group researcher is seeking info of Sgt W G D Brock, 61 Sqn, a/c QR -G, MW725, shot down 06.12.44 at Giessen. POW camp L1. 5 of the crew were taken prisoner.

Also can anyone confirm which of these 3 raids were carried out by 42 a/c flying in BOX formation, 6 a/c flying in line abreast, with 6 a/c behind and below? Master Bomber was a Mosquito. 3 Lancaster's shot down and disappeared from view, from starboard side of formation, by an ME262. Copied from his Flying Log Book 1945; The three raids were; -

9 Apr t/off 1430 hrs QR T Hamburg (Oil storage)

5 Apr t/off 05.45 hrs QR Q Nordhausen (Blitz)

? Mar t/off 10.40 hrs QR U Farge (This raid? 22 Mar after a night raid on Bohlen). Les has also asked Doug Radcliffe of BCA.

Through your magazine, I would like to try and make contact with some 50 Squadron air crew from 1942, or their relatives, I would greatly appreciate it. The only information that I have on the following names is that my brother 404420 Sgt. Stanley Gregg RAAF (K I.A on the 24 Oct 42.) flew on most of his operations over Europe with the following personnel.

R Eyres (Pilot)

T McKerrow (Nav.)

N Bohn (WOAG)

M H Rawlins (Pilot) K.I.A 12/13 Oct 42

D J Poole (AG) K.I.A. 23/24 Dec 43

J L Haywood (?)

I can be contacted at raygregg@tpg.com.au or Ray Gregg,
72 Andall Road, Park Ridge South Queensland, Australia, 4125

TAIL END CHARLIE



A story related by the late Cliff Chapman, a rear gunner. Whilst on route to the target decided he would have time for a coffee, and just in the process of pouring the coffee, they were attacked by a fighter and the skipper immediately corkscrewed. With the Perspex having been removed in the turret, the coffee and flask went flying. He claimed to be the only person to have bombed Germany with a Thermos flask

Now a very old one, that some say is true, but.... A crusty old general was visiting a training unit and he asked to see the soldiers' barracks. Word was sent to the men to ensure that the rooms were immaculate. The general, accompanied by the CO, veered off and headed towards one door and the petrified soldier still in the room hid in his wardrobe. The general, of course, opened it and asked the man who he was. "The billet orderly, sir" was the quick thinking reply. The general grunted and strode off. In the next room the general opened the wardrobe and turned to the CO demanding to know where the billet orderly was!