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April 2015



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



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## **EDITORIAL**

By the time you receive this newsletter the next reunion will not be far away, and for those of you intending to join us on the weekend of the 13th/14th June, an itinerary is enclosed with this newsletter.

The new Bomber command memorial continues to make progress and we report more on this elsewhere in the newsletter.

Sadly we report that the sole surviving member of Bill North's 61 Sqn crew, Dennis Bartlett, died last Dec. There is an obituary of Dennis in this newsletter. You may remember that Bill's crew starred in an excellent book by Chris Keltie. Moreover, Chris Keltie was able to present a copy of his book to David Cameron in Oct 2013 as a tribute to the bravery of the veterans. We reported on this memorable event in the Issue 66 Newsletter.

We are also very pleased to report that the Association has been given some items previously belonging to FS Jim Mann, the WOp from Bill Reid's crew. Jim was killed during the raid which earned Bill his VC. More about this marvellous addition to our Memorial Room in Peter Jacob's Chairman's piece. Peter's piece also includes a photograph of some of the items belonging to Jim Mann.

We are always delighted to receive any memorabilia with connections to veterans of 50 and 61 Sqns. Obviously we do not have unlimited room, but unlike the British Museum we do like to display all that we have. So if any Association members do have any memorabilia from family members who served on either Sqn, we would be delighted to hear from you.

You will remember in the last edition we did a synopsis of the engineering skills in Lincoln and of the aircraft production in the area. This was followed by a notice that Peter Small would do a story on this and it begins in this edition.

Finally we have taken the liberty of publicising one of our chairman's new publications. Whilst not RAF related it is definitely worth a read.

**Richard Jones, Mike Connock**

## CHAIRMANS COMMENTS

Today feels like spring is here already and we are now just three months from our annual re-union weekend. It hardly seems possible.

I just want to bring you up to date with a couple of things. First, it looks like the Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial will not be unveiled until later this year. Those of you who have been following the development over the past couple of years will know that it had been hoped the memorial would be unveiled in June, but the latest date I now have is October. Building work to create the foundations for the site was due to have started this week and my understanding is that construction of the spire has begun. We will keep you informed.



Secondly, I would like to inform you that the Association was delighted and honoured to have recently been left some personal items of memorabilia relating to Flight Sergeant Jim Mann of 61 Squadron. Jim was the wireless operator of Bill Reid's crew and was fatally wounded on the night of 3/4 November 1943 – the night that Bill Reid won his Victoria

Cross during the raid against Dusseldorf. We are delighted to now be in possession of these items, which include Jim's leather gauntlet, medals, brevet and sergeant chevrons, as well as letters and photographs, some of which is already on display at our Association Room in the Birchwood Leisure Centre in Lincoln. After Jim's death the items were lovingly kept by his younger sister, Kathleen, who, I understand, never truly got over the death of her brother. When Kathleen died last year, the items were kindly passed on to us by Kathleen's daughter, Deborah Mitchelson. Deborah, on behalf of the Association's members, I would like to publicly thank you for your generous gift. As you have seen already, Jim will be remembered alongside others and his personal items will be seen by many of our local community over the years to come.

Otherwise, it only leaves me to say that I hope you all enjoy the better weather and I hope to see many of you in June.

**Peter**

## **SECRETARYS COMMENTS**

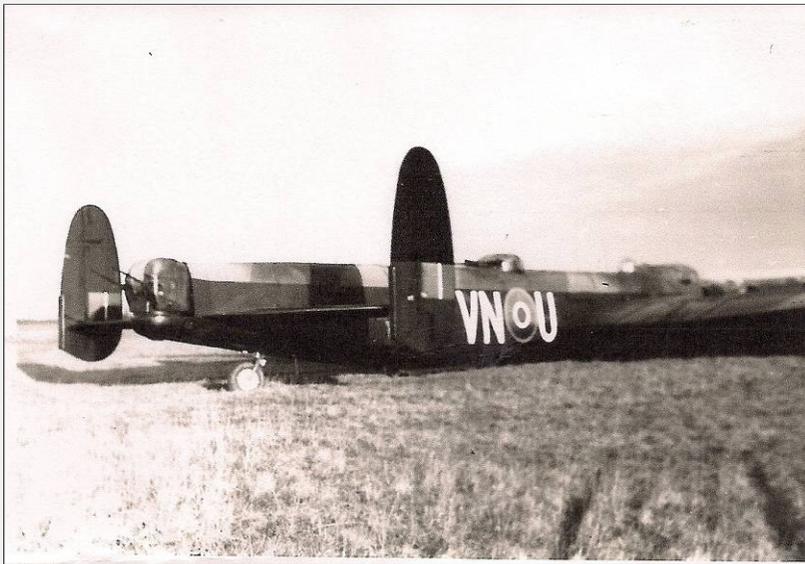
Wreaths for the Annual Service ; 14th June 2015

I can order your wreaths and if you are unable to attend the Association services at either Birchwood or Skellingthorpe, then an Air Cadet could lay the wreath for you. Type B (open ring of poppies) is £16.50 & Type C (badged RAF) is £18.00 (plus the usual donation please). I can also print a message on the card for you!

**Gerry Collins—Secretary**

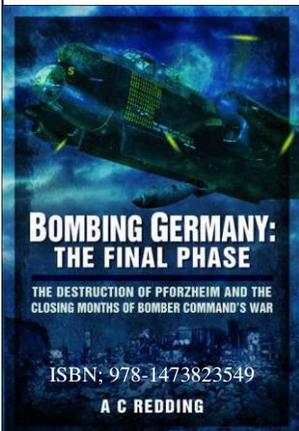
### **HELP WANTED**

Mathew Brownlow of Grantham is looking for information on a Lincoln from 50 Squadron VN-U that appears to have crashed.



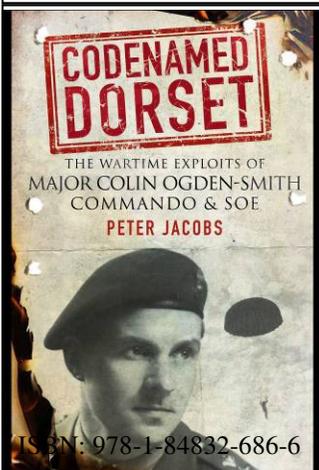
I have however come across a few Avro Lincolns that had their undercarriage collapse on landing, maybe this is one of them. If you can help with any information please contact Mathew Brownlow at Lakeside Farm, Frieston, Grantham, Lincs, NG32 3BW. Email; brownlow808@btinternet.com

### NEW PUBLICATIONS



During 1942 and 1943 the striking power of RAF Bomber Command was transformed by the arrival of heavy bombers, advanced navigation and blind bombing systems, and new tactics to concentrate the bombers over the target and swamp the German defences. By October 1944 most of Germany's cities were in ruins, yet the bombing continued to intensify, reaching unprecedented levels in the final seven months of the air campaign. The value of further area raids was questioned during the opening months of 1945, yet the Allies destroyed the remaining cities in a bid to hasten the end of the war. The handful of German cities still largely unscathed in early February 1945 included Dresden, which was obliterated on 13 February. Ten days later, the South German city of Pforzheim was destined to suffer the same fate. This book commemorates the efforts of the aircrew members who risked their lives, consolidating a host of intriguing first-hand accounts. It also

considers Pforzheim as a representative community under National Socialist rule. The city's survivors remember the horror of the raid and its aftermath, including eventual occupation by French Colonial troops and, subsequently, American forces. Tony does an admirable job of presenting historical context when considering actions in times of extreme trauma and his narrative offers an intriguing, engaging and poignant evocation of the



This gripping new history tells the little-known story of one of the most courageous men to have served with the newly formed Commandos and SOE during the Second World War. It is a story of extreme courage and a revealing portrait of a man who ultimately gave his life to the liberation of France. Ogden-Smith was amongst the first to volunteer for the newly formed Commandos: he took part in the daring raid on Bardia on the North African Coast and fought in the heroic rearguard action during the British evacuation of Crete. In 1942 he transferred to the SOE and joined the elite Small Scale Raiding Force to carry out raids across the Channel. He then volunteered for a new, clandestine group known as the Jedbugs whose mission was to parachute into enemy-occupied France in the aftermath of D-Day to link up with the French Resistance. In July 1944, under the cover of his codename Dorset, Major Colin Ogden-Smith parachuted

deep behind enemy lines as the leader of Team Francis. Three weeks later he was dead, killed in action fighting alongside his French comrades so that others could make their escape. Seventy years on, the French community still remember the gallant major Anglais.

## The Army was at RAF Skellingthorpe

Ron Graham contacted me recently about his Father who was in the Pioneer Corps. He was attached to the Bomb Section for a period during the war. Ron kindly sent these two pictures of him during that period.



Sid Graham, 829 Company Pioneer Corps.  
Details from Ron Graham.



**Mike Connock**

## INTERNATIONAL BOMBER COMMAND CENTRE

The Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Trust are looking to interview any former WW2 Bomber Command air and ground crew to gather their wartime memories. In addition to this they are also looking to interview on Radio or Television, or be invited to any of the IBCC gatherings and events. If anyone is prepared to help, please contact the Chairman, Peter Jacobs, on 01522 826635, or Mike Connock on 01522 683997.

Keep an eye on the IBCC web site and of course our web site for further information.

**<http://internationalbcc.co.uk>**

**<http://www.no-50-and-no-61-squadrons-association.co.uk>**

## REV GEOFFREY STUDDERT KENNEDY MC

Opinions were divided over the role of chaplains in World War One - poets Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon for example, were highly critical of them. But despite that, some became well-known, including the Reverend Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, known to the troops as Woodbine Willie.



Studdert Kennedy was born in Leeds in 1883 and educated at Leeds Grammar School and Trinity College Dublin. He had Irish parentage and always maintained he was an Irishman. Before the outbreak of the First World War, Studdert Kennedy was the vicar of St Paul's church, at the heart of one of Worcester's most notorious slums.

On the outbreak of The Great War, Studdert Kennedy volunteered as a chaplain to the army on the Western Front. In 1917, he was awarded the Military Cross at Messines Ridge after

running into No Man's Land to help the wounded during an attack on the German frontline

He earned his nickname through the unusual way of getting the attention of the troops. Even though he was an asthmatic he was a very heavy smoker and he used to go along the troop trains at Rouen, where he was based at the time, giving out the bible, but also packets of Woodbines to all the soldiers to send them off on their way to the Western Front.

There's a story about two men walking down a trench and they came across a post with a board a story on it saying The Vicarage. "One of them said to his mate 'Look - the bloody vicarage' and Studdert Kennedy poked his head out and said 'And here's the bloody vicar'." He wrote a number of poems about his experiences.

One Tommy, Arthur Savage, met Kennedy while on the front-line: "Kennedy, an army Chaplain he was and he'd come down into the trenches and say prayers with the men, have a cuppa out of a dirty tin mug and tell a joke as good as any of us. He was a chain smoker and always carried a packet of Woodbine cigarettes that he would give out in handfuls to us lads. That's how he got his nickname. He came down the trench one day to cheer us up. Had his Bible with him as usual. Well, I'd been there for weeks, unable to write home, of course, we were going over the top later that day. I asked him if he would write to my sweetheart at home, tell her I was still alive and, so far, in one piece. He said he would, so I gave him the address. Well, years later, after the war, she showed me the letter he'd sent, very nice it was. A lovely letter. My wife kept it until she died."

During the war he supported the British military effort with enthusiasm. Attached to a bayonet-training service, chaplain Kennedy toured with boxers and wrestlers to give morale-boosting speeches about the usefulness of the bayonet.

A measure of the impact made by Studdert Kennedy was the reaction to his death in 1929, at the age of only 46. King George V sent a telegram of condolence

to his family; ex-servicemen sent a wreath with a packet of Woodbines at the centre; 100 unemployed men marched from the



Labour Exchange to Worcester Cathedral to pay their respects; 1,700 people filed past his coffin in a single day as it lay in a Liverpool church.

**Richard Jones**

## **Clayton & Shuttleworth**

As a true Yellowbelly, I hope that the members of our Association are only too aware of the kindly feeling that there is and has been in Lincolnshire towards the Royal Air Force, both past and present.

This is due in no small part to the courage, loyalty and self sacrifice of the “Bomber Boys” stationed in Lincolnshire, and long may it continue.

Lincoln’s love affair with aeroplanes started much earlier than the 1939-45 war and at one point Lincoln was considered for becoming the centre of aircraft production for the whole nation, I am of course talking of WWI between 1914-1918.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th century Lincoln was a thriving manufacturer of all goods agricultural, such as Carts, Wagons, Ploughs, Steam Engines, Threshing Sets and not a little heavy engineering. There were several firms involved in this work, with such famous names as Ruston, Ruston Procter, Robeys, Fosters and Clayton & Shuttleworth. All were destined to become, with the exception of Fosters (Who became famous for the Tank) to become aircraft manufacturers of some note.

Clayton & Shuttleworth was formed as an iron foundry in Lincoln in 1842. From small beginnings they built the Titanic Works between the Great Northern and the Great Central railway lines in Lincoln. The older works being sited at Stamp End next to the river Witham in the east of the city. These new works were so named because they were built at the same time and the same length as that ill fated White Star liner.

At the start of the Great War the firm was involved in building railway rolling stock and the works covered approximately one hundred acres, and employed around five thousand souls.

Early in 1916 Clayton & Shuttleworth were asked to manufacture parts for S.S. Airships (Submarine Scout) for the Navy. These were non-rigid “blimps” using the fuselage of a BE2c aircraft with a 75HP Renault engine. They also built the 9ft four blade propellers for these machines, which were used for coastal and anti-submarine duty.

Clayton received their first order for aircraft in early 1916 for the Sopwith Triplanes for both the RFC and the RNAS, but all went to the RNAS after

some political pressure was applied. A machine was sent from Sopwiths as a pattern aircraft and the first Clayton built Triplane was delivered in early December 1916.



They were powered by a 130HP Clerget 9B rotary engine (Which may well have been built by Ruston Proctor in Lincoln).

The machines were built in the eastern end of the Titanic Works and pushed outside for engine tests, then dismantled and taken to “Robeys Aerodrome” at Bracebridge Heath for test flying and delivery. This procedure being followed later when production switched to the Sopwith Camel. A further eight examples were built after the initial order was finished, three of which were supplied to the French.

In March 1917 C & S became the fourth contractor to build the Sopwith Camel and these remained in production until 1919. Most of these machines were for the admiralty but some went to the Belgian Government, (One of which still exists in Brussels), and some to Greece.



After the first batch the Camels were fitted with 150HP Bentley Rotary engines and an aircraft from this batch B7270 flown by RAF Captain Roy Brown shot down Manfred Von Richthofen, the German ace on 21st April

1919. In all some seven batches of Camels were built totalling some 530 aircraft.

In 1916 the firm continued growing by building the Abbey & Tower Works as aircraft shops using POW’s who were housed in a camp to the west of the new works.

In October 1917 the company received an order for 50 Handley Page O/400 bombers and these were erected in the Abbey works 3 abreast and were towed out and flown from a field next to the works, which is still known as



Handley Page field today. The HP O/400 were flown to the West Common where there had been since 1915 an Aircraft Acceptance Park complete with 2 large canvas hangers. Clayton were also delivering Camels to the common by road. The test pilots were housed in the Grandstand and the western most room of the complex still sports the preserved RFC crest painted on the wall.

In 1918 the company had orders for 100 Vickers Vimy bombers but only one was complete at the wars end and the rest cancelled.

The wars end brought about the collapse of orders for many aircraft firms and Claytons finally went in to receivership and were liquidated in 1936.

The Shuttleworth name is still known to aviation buffs at Old Warden nr Biggleswade. This site was left to Richard Nephew of Alfred Shuttlworth (The Chairman) in 1925. Richard founded the collection but was killed whilst an RAF Pilot in 1940. The trust continues to this day and continues to fly the Sopwith Triplane replica and has recently received a replica Sopwith Camel from the now defunct Northern Aeroplane Workshop, which is expected to be flying in the very near future.

### **Peter Small**

With acknowledgments to John Wall

*We are grateful to Peter for this story and he hopes to continue with further stories of aircraft production in Lincoln*

**ED.**

### **ABSENT FRIENDS**

#### **Mrs Hilda Horsfall**

We were recently advised by the family solicitor that Hilda had passed away recently. She had been a life member of the association for many years.

#### **Joy Capon**

We were advised by her daughter that Joy passed away last November

### AVM Norman Hoad CVO CBE AFC

AVM Norman Hoad CVO CBE AFC, was born in 1923, joined the RAF in 1941 and flew as a pilot with 61 Sqn, until shot down and taken prisoner in 1944. He held a variety of flying and staff appointments including command of 192 Sqn, flying B-29s and the Canberra, and 216 Sqn flying Comet ac. He also commanded RAF Stations Lyneham and Abingdon.



In January 1969 Hoad became the defence and air attaché in Paris. This coincided with a period of extensive Anglo-French collaboration involving the joint development and introduction into RAF service of the Gazelle and Puma helicopters, the Jaguar strike attack aircraft and the Martel air-launched anti-shiping missile. In his final months in Paris, Hoad helped to plan the Queen's state visit to France in May 1972 . He was appointed CVO.

After 18 months at the MoD as a director on the Defence Policy Staff, Hoad became chief of staff of 46 Group, operating the RAF's fleet of transport aircraft. Within 6 months he became the Air Officer Commanding, until the Group was absorbed into No 38 Group at the end of 1975. For his final tour of duty, he was the senior RAF member of the directing

staff at the Royal College of Defence Studies, retiring in March 1978.

A highly talented artist specialising in aviation and animal subjects, Hoad studied under the renowned aviation artist Frank Wootton . With Wootton and others (including David Shepherd), he was a founder member of the Guild of Aviation Artists, later becoming a life vice-president. His works are on display at the RAF Museum, Hendon, and in many public and private collections. Horses were a favourite subject in his paintings, and in 1979 the Society of Equestrian Artists was formed under his chairmanship. Among his best-known works is one of the Queen reviewing Trooping the Colour on her favourite trooping horse, Burmese.

AVM Hoad died in Nov 2014.

**(Acknowledgements to the Daily Telegraph)**

## Dennis Bartlett



It is with great sadness that I have to pass on the news, that the last member of Bill North's Lancaster crew has left us. Dennis Bartlett - Bill's mid-upper gunner - passed peacefully away on Sunday morning, 14 December 2014. Strangely this is the day before Bill North left us on 15 December 2011.

I feel like I have known Den all my life, and this is linked to my relationship with Bill North, and the photo of his RAF crew that I



first saw in March 1970, when I was 7 years old. Den (first on the right) was in this picture that I had stared at many, many times

over the years, wandering who these men were and what had happened to them.

Dennis hadn't shared his wartime experiences with his family, as he had like so many veterans internalised them. The first time we met, I showed him the pictures of their crashed Lancaster EE186. He was amazed when he saw his smashed mid-upper turret and couldn't believe he had survived. He then shared what had happened on the 4/5 July 1944, when they were shot down over France. Thanks to pilot Bill North's tenacity and courage the whole crew survived their night time crash landing. Daphne - Den's sister - said that this was the first time that she had ever heard this story. Over the next 3 years, I spent many hours with Den talking to him, and he really opened up and shared many more experiences. We became great mates, and attended many events and book signings together.

In remembrance of Dennis Bartlett, a true hero and an extraordinary man. Reunited with your crew.

From all at the 50 and 61 Squadron Association. RIP.

*Per purum tonantes "Thundering through the clear air"*



To our lovely Den, reunited with your crew and lost friends, we will miss you. xxx

**Chris Keltie**

We are grateful to Chris for representing the association at Dennis Bartlett's funeral.

**Mike Connock**

## **Squadron Leader Ken Ruskell MBE DFC**



Born in Liverpool on the 14th of June 1922, the younger son of William and Eleanor Jane Ruskell, As soon as he was old enough he became a Cub in the local church Boy Scout Troop. On merit he progressed to become a Patrol Leader, and finished up with the chest and both arms of his Scout shirt covered with proficiency badges, including the prestigious King's Scout award. he left school in 1936 at the age of 14, Ken got a job with a motor engineering company and went to night school three times a week with the intension of becoming a mechanical engineer. In March 1941 at the age of 18 he volunteered for aircrew service in the Royal Air Force, and after a rigorous selection process he was accepted for pilot training. He was formally sworn-in as a member of the RAF on the 12th of June 1941. Ken did his flying training in Canada during the summer of 1942 and on the 9th of October he was presented with his pilot's wings and commissioned in the rank of Pilot Officer. Training continued on his return to the UK, and in June 1943 he was posted with the six other members of his newly formed crew to number 50 squadron at RAF Skellingthorpe, as a trained Lancaster bomber crew. They went on to successfully complete a tour of operations, including eight times to Berlin. On the 11th of February 1944 Ken was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Ken was posted as a flying instructor to Number 5 Lancaster Finishing School at Syerston. On the 14th of June 1944, Ken's 22nd birthday, he was "Mentioned in a Despatch for Distinguished Service". Ken was anxious to get back on operations and after a year he realized his wish and converted onto the Mosquito aircraft and joined the Bomber Command Film Unit whose role it was to fly alongside the bomber stream during daylight operations taking action photographs. Soon after that the film unit disbanded and Ken was promoted to the rank of Squadron Leader and posted back onto Lancaster's as the Commanding Officer of Number 149 Squadron, and at the age of 23 he was the youngest Squadron Commander in Bomber Command at that time, and he remembered with great pleasure taking part in operations to fly British ex prisoners of war back home from Italy to be more quickly re-united with their families. Ken stayed in the RAF and after service in Egypt, Palestine, and Malta flying Lancaster's in the Maritime Reconnaissance Role he returned to the UK and was posted to RAF Jurby where he met and married Jeanne. Commanding Officer of the RAF Germany Communications Squadron, and Staff Officer at a NATO Headquarters near Oslo in Norway. In 1964 Ken was appointed as a Member in the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. In 1976 he was posted back to The Isle of Man as Commanding Officer of the NATO Air Weapons Range at Jurby Head. Retiring from there on 14th June 1986, completing 45 Years and two days in uniform Ken passed away on 12th January 2015.

We are grateful to Jean Ruskell for supply a copy of the eulogy to ken from which the above story has been extracted.

**Mike Connock**

**FIFTY SQUADRON SONG**

----oOo----

**Oh.....**

**We are Phif Tee Squadron,  
We're the boys who know the score,  
If anyone denies it,  
We will lay them on the floor,  
At bombing, beer and billiards,  
And all the Lincoln”Hops,”  
We've got the gen, we're the leading men,  
We certainly are the tops.**

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**While the bombs go “Bang”,  
And the flak goes “Clang”,  
And the searchlights blaze away,  
We weave all over the starlit sky,  
And wish we'd gone by day,  
Oh, Flinty, Flinty save us,  
For we cannot abide the noise,  
A credit to Butch Harris,  
Are the Phif Tee Squadron Boys.**

**Ta – Ra – Ra – Ra, etc .....**

We are indebted to Jim Blan for supplying this song from the records of his late Father Flt. Lt. Douglas Bland, who served with Jimmy Flint at the end of World War II.