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No 50 & No 61 SQUADRONS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of our President, Sir Michael Beetham, at the age of 92. Sir Michael died peacefully at his home in Norfolk on 24 October. The funeral was a private family service. There will most likely be a memorial service in St Clement Danes, the RAF Church in The Strand, London, in due time. The notice for ticket applications to attend the memorial service will most probably appear in the Times and Telegraph in due time. We are delighted that our Vice-President, AVM Nigel Baldwin, has agreed to become our Association's next President, only our third in since 1961. This newsletter has a piece about this life of Sir Michael written by Peter Jacobs, his biographer.

We are fortunate to have a copy of the photograph taken to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of 50 Sqn in 1966. Jimmy features prominently and one of the pilots depicted is Wg Cdr Charles J Chabot. Quite by chance we happened on a You Tube clip entitled "Chabot Solo". The clip shows this remarkable man flying a replica First World War aircraft and also reminiscing about his RFC/RAF career. It is a wonderful glimpse into this astonishing man's life. We urge you to watch it. You Tube is not social media; it is managed by Google and free to all without annoying pop-ups. The photograph, much prized by Jimmy, also has Gp Capt Gilbert Insall VC, a most distinguished member of the Sqn.

There is a cutting from the RAF News of Feb 71, detailing a visit by veterans to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the 50 and 61 Sqns' Association. Wg Cdr Chabot is there too in conversation with the then Sqn Cdr, Wg Cdr Don Lowe. The latter, now a gp capt, attended a Reunion dinner some years ago. We have also been given a wonderful set of photographs from 50 Sqn's earliest days at RFC Bekesbourne, in Kent. More information in our next Newsletter, which will be the 50 Sqn Centenary Edition.

October 2nd saw the unveiling of the Spire as the first stage of the International Bomber Command Centre at Canwick, further information is in this edition.

CHAIRMANS COMMENTS

Through one source or another, I am sure that most of you will have now heard of the sad passing of our Association President, Sir Michael Beetham. Given the closeness to our print deadline for this newsletter, I will only write a few words now as we intend to include a larger piece to remember Sir Michael in our next edition.

Sir Michael was a regular visitor to Skellingthorpe to attend our annual reunions, even in the latter years, and although his time was always in such high demand, I know only too well how much he valued our Association and his role as President. Those of us who were privileged to have met him, and got to know him, will have our own private memories of a great man. But more importantly, perhaps, the Royal Air Force will remember Sir Michael for his quite extraordinary career; a career that took him from his young days as a wartime Lancaster pilot, during which he completed a tour of operations and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross before his twenty-first birthday, to the very top of the service that he had joined. And it was at the very top that he might well be best remembered.

Earlier in his career he had become a pioneer of long-range flight and mastered the concept of air-to-air refuelling, and by using this experience while Chief of the Air Staff he oversaw its first operational use with the bombing of Port Stanley by a lone Vulcan bomber during the Falklands conflict of 1982. But it was not just his operational vision that will have left its mark in the history of the RAF. He had inherited the appointment of CAS at a difficult time. Recent heavy cuts and low pay had led to poor recruitment and low morale, and it was Sir Michael, along with his fellow Service Chiefs, who restored stability to the Armed Forces by taking on the government at the time – and winning!

I joined the RAF in 1977, the year Sir Michael was appointed CAS. As a young teenager I was, of course, blind to all that was going on in the higher echelons of Whitehall during that time and although we both belonged to the same service, our worlds were poles apart. I could never have imagined then that our paths would come together in the way that they did. Nearly forty years later, I am proud to say that I knew Sir Michael well; my family too. Sir, I salute you!

Peter Jacobs

50 SQN FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY 1966

Jimmy Flint's nephew, Bill, has kindly provided us with a copy of this marvellous piece of 50 Sqn memorabilia. It depicts 10 pilots who between them flew most of the different types of aircraft operated by 50 Sqn between 1916 and 1966. The pilots stand in the order of the age of the aircraft (left to right), from the BE 2c to the Vulcan B2; a span of 50 years.

NO. 50 SQUADRON FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY GUEST NIGHT

Held at Royal Air Force Waddington on 30th May 1966

"THE MEN AND THEIR MACHINES"



Left to right:—Wing Commander E. A. Chilton, RNZAF B.E.2c; Flying Captain G. S. H. Insall, VC, RFC/R.A.F.—W. E. Flint;
Flight Lieutenant W. F. Horner, DFM, (B.E.2c); Air Marshal Sir Augustus (Gus) Walker, KCB, CBE, DSO, DFC, AFC, MA—Hampden;
Wing Commander R. M. Horder, AFC—Mystere; Flying Commander J. Frost, DFC, QM, DFM, AFC, Westland;
Flight Officer E. Potts—Javelin; Wing Commander P. J. Leggate, DFC, AFC—Catalina;
Squadron Leader W. A. Harvey—Vulcan B Mk 1A; Wing Commander J. W. W. Fawcettbridge, AFC—Vulcan B Mk 2.

Jimmy is prominent front and centre. As is also the pilot who flew the Hampden: the then AM Sir Augustus (Gus) Walker. In addition, we are very proud to have had Gp Capt Gilbert Insall VC as a member of the Sqn in 1917-18. He won his VC in 1915, aged 21, whilst a member of 11 Sqn RFC flying a Vickers Gun Bus and destroying a German aircraft and rocket battery. Bill Flint will present a framed copy of this photograph during the Reunion Weekend.



Lt Gilbert Insall VC



50 Sqn Royal Aircraft Factory BE2C at Duxford

Remarkably, one of the 50 Sqn flying machines from 1916-17 still survives. The fully restored Royal Aircraft Factory BE2C 2699 is on display at the IWM, Duxford. It may not be too fanciful to believe that Wg Cdr Chabot may well have flown this particular aircraft.

In addition to Sir Gus, three other officers shown also commanded 50 Sqn: Wg Cdr Flint, Wg Cdr Stacey and Wg Cdr Pembridge (the CO during the 50th Anniversary). We believe six 50 Sqn



RE 8 Flown by 50 Sqn in 1917 for only 2 months

COs achieved Marshal Rank: MRAF Sir Arthur Harris (CO Dec 18 - Jun 19); ACM Sir Gus Walker (CO Dec 40 - Oct 41); ACM Sir Anthony Heward (CO Jan - Jun 44); ACM Sir John Stacey (CO Jul 63 - Jun 65); AVM Nigel Baldwin (CO Jul 77 - Jul 79) and AM Lord Garden (CO Jul 79 - Jan 81). Wg Cdr Lagesen (third from right in the photograph) was not a 50 Sqn CO, but retired as AM Sir Philip Lagesen.

WARTIME CREWS REVISIT 50 SQUADRON



PAST MEMBERS of 50 Squadron meet in front of the present headquarters at Waddington during their recent visit. Talking to Wg Cdr D. W. Lowe, the squadron commander is Wg Cdr C. J. Chabot (Ret'd), aged 81, who was the squadron's first flight commander in 1916.

Sixty former members of 50 Sqn visited the Strike Command bomber base at Waddington. The occasion was the 25th anniversary of the first 50 and 61 Sqns' Association reunion. Many of the guests were wartime crews from the days when the Sqns' operated from nearby Skellingthorpe, but they included some from more recent times and a veteran from the Royal Flying Corps. He was Wg Cdr Charles J Chabot who still takes a lively interest in Sqn affairs at the age of 81. He was the first flt cdr on the Sqn in 1916, flying BE2Cs from RFC Bekesbourne, Dover. He was given special permission to fly in a Sqn Vulcan aircraft in 1966.

The guests were shown various aspects of life on a bomber stn, including a visit to the Waddington Lancaster. This brought back nostalgic memories for some visitors. Most of the visitors remarked how the aircraft had "shrunk" since they last flew on their wartime missions, and one ex-rear gunner, who had spent many a cold and lonely hour in his turret, found that his old crew position now fitted his frame a little too close for comfort. During the evening the visitors were guests of the present Sqn Cdr, Wg Cdr D W Lowe, and other officers at a reunion dinner in the officers' mess.

(Acknowledgements to the RAF News w/e 7 Aug 71)

REMEMBRANCE EVENTS

Birchwood 8 November 2015



Three ATC Sergeants with their Standard

The service at the associations Birchwood memorial was well attended as usual, with the Mayor of Lincoln, chairman of Skellingthorpe P.C. and other dignitaries.

The event was as usual well supported by 204 (City of Lincoln) Squadron ATC. The service was taken by our chaplain, the Reverend Brian Stalley. Wreaths were laid by the Mayor and by our Chairman Peter Jacobs.

Skellingthorpe 11 November 2015



This event held at 11am on the 11 Nov was well attended by villagers and members of the association. As well as the association, wreaths were laid by the Parish Council, and a wreath laid on behalf of the youth of the village. Also in support were pupils from the Holt Primary School, shown left, who all laid a cross in memory.

Richard Jones, our Vice Chairman, as usual addressed the gathering and reminded us that 100 years ago to the date the battle of Loos was being fought with enormous loss. Remembering those who failed to return from 50 and 61 Sqns, we were also asked to remember Captain Dan Shepherd GM, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2009; he is buried in Skellingthorpe Cemetery. His parents attending the buffet lunch in the Village Hall after the ceremony. John Roberts, right, attends every year in memory of his father Sgt A E Roberts 50 Sqn. KIA.



2016 REUNION

Plans are well underway for our next Reunion Weekend during the weekend of 11/12 June 2016.

Saturday will of course as usual be the AGM at the Leslie Manser School followed by the dinner at Skellingthorpe Community Centre on the Saturday evening. The usual booking form for the weekend is enclosed with this newsletter and the itinerary for the weekend will be in the April 2016 Newsletter.

2016, as you may know, is the 100th anniversary of 50 Sqn and we intend to commemorate this in some form yet to be confirmed, no doubt a cake will be involved. It is thus important that we have as many veterans and relatives present as is possible. Please attend if you possibly can. We also propose to honour 61 Sqn's Centenary during the Reunion Weekend in 2017.

The photograph below is one of the many that will be exhibited at Skellingthorpe during the Reunion weekend. The RAF was only formed on 1 Apr 1918 and thus there is a mix of RFC and RAF uniforms.



Maj Alfred de B Brandon DSO MC, OC 50 Sqn, and Officers RAF Bekesbourne 1918

ABSENT FRIENDS

Squadron Leader Edward Hearn DFC & Bar



When I contacted the 50 and 61 Sqns' Association, they asked me, after a long and heart-warming conversation, whether Pap talked much about his experience in WWII. My answer was 'Did he ever!' He would always return to the subject, especially his Normandy experience. He also spoke about his training as an RAF pilot in Canada, where he said he crashed a few Tiger Moths and his being stationed in India as Station Chief during the last year of the war, where he flew Liberators.

It's not surprising, WWII did shape his whole life. After the war he returned to Normandy to thank his Resistance rescuers. He was invited to a local wedding to make up for the lack of men. He was introduced to Paule, sister of the bride and promptly decided that she was the one for him.

They married in France a few years later and have been inseparable ever since. They honeymooned at Barbizon. The Resistant in whose attic Pap had been hidden was a collector of paintings from the School of Barbizon, a community of artists near Paris. Monsieur Drambarréan would invite the Nazis for a drink and a look at his paintings. With a glass of Cognac he would prompt them to salute his paintings. The paintings were hanging from RAF parachute-strings perfectly concealed by the picture-frames. Monsieur Drambarréan only revealed this several years later and with great bursts of laughter.

Earlier this year he said that when he dies, one should not cry. After he had died, I heard Mum one evening when she had just gone to bed. Mum was singing, perfectly in tune and with all her strength. I went to see and I sat by her. She turned to me, still singing, and smiling at me, the tears pouring gently down her face. It was a hymn in Latin, *Veni Creator*. She sang it a second time, this time translating every Latin phrase. Mum said to me - 'He is in a better world now, of which we know nothing yet.' - 'Il est dans un monde meilleur, que nous ne connaissons pas.' Edward Hearn died on 29 Aug aged 94.

(Richard Hearn)

Sqn Ldr Hearn had an illustrious career with 50 Sq as a Bomb Aimer. Gaining his DFC following a raid to Cologne where his skipper was awarded the CGM. Although shot up and wounded, they continued on to the target. Following his tour and after more training, he returned to 50 Sqn as Bombing leader. Volunteering to go on a raid when the regular Bomber Aimer reported sick, Hearn thought it his duty to take the man's place. Over the River Seine, a German night fighter shot down his Lancaster.

Three members of the crew were killed but Hearn managed to bail out. He hid in a wood for 3 days before meeting a Frenchman who gave him shelter and put him in touch with the

Resistance; they escorted him across the Seine, heading west in the hope of meeting the advancing Allies. The villagers of Marais-Vernier sheltered him until word of his position was passed to a British Army unit. Finally, on 28 Aug, an officer in the airborne forces collected him and he was soon returned to England. Edward Hearn was awarded a Bar to his DFC for his “unflagging zeal, courageous bearing and coolness in face of the enemy”.

A most moving obituary by his son, Richard.

Mike Connock

Warrant Officer Terence William (Bill) Jackman.



Bill Jackman was an air Gunner with 61 Sqn, completing 37 ops in 1942. An Australian, he was called up in 1941 and joined the RAAF. Initially training as a pilot, then a W Op and finally as an Air Gunner. He flew with David Scholes' crew.

He visited the UK in 2012 with his family, and the photo shows him at the Skellingthorpe

Memorial. He died on 7 July 2015 aged 93. A Service was held at Gregson & Weight Chapel, Caloundra, Queensland, Australia on Friday, 17th July 2015.

SECRETARY'S COMMENTS

The unveiling of the International Bomber Command Memorial Spire and Walls at Canwick Hill, Lincoln was attended by members of 50 and 61 Sqns' Association on 2 October. Many of us were given a lunch, well prepared and served inside the main marquee and we were pleased to find ourselves sitting opposite Betty Bascombe, whose husband was a flt eng who failed to return, and her daughter, Gaynor.

Remembrance Sunday was observed in the Cathedral and afterwards at our memorial at Birchwood, where some 50 cadets from the 204 (City of Lincoln) Squadron came for their second service of the day.

Thanks to Kate Fenn, the Lincoln City Council and the Lincolnshire Police for all their continuing help and assistance.

Gerry Collins

IBCC MEMORIAL OPENING

October 2nd saw the unveiling of the first stage of the International Bomber Command Centre. This comprises the spire and the first stages of the memorial walls. These walls have inscribed into them the names of the 26,000+ aircrew who failed to return flying from 1 and 5 Group.



The event was attended by over 300 veterans of WWII., with a total guest list of some 2600.

The unveiling was performed by the Rt Hon Earl Howe who is Minister of State for the Ministry of Defence, Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and a Conservative member of the House of Lords.

Designed by Stephen Palmer of Place Architecture, the Memorial Spire is based on two wing fragments, tapering as they rise towards the sky. The height of the memorial is 102ft (31.09m), which is the wingspan of the Avro Lancaster; the width at the base is 16ft/5m, which is the overall width of a Lancaster wing. After the ceremony the veterans were treated to a lunch. The official unveiling ceremony was treated to an amazing fly-over of a Vulcan, Blenheim, Dakota, two GR4 Tornadoes, three Hawks and the current MacRobert's Reply. Dan Snow provided the commentary on the day.

The next stage will hopefully be the building of the Interpretation Centre and Fundraising continues to support this. The next stage from that will be to complete the memorial; walls with the names of all 55,573 men who failed to return.

Mike Connock

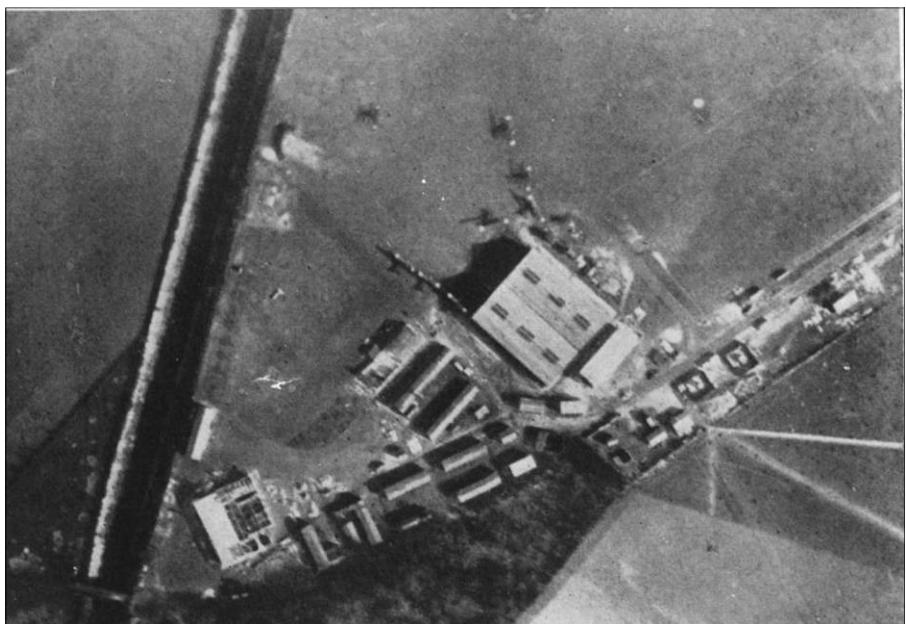
50 SQN AT RFC BEKESBOURNE 1918-19

The photograph below, taken at RFC Bekesbourne in 1919 just before the Sqn disbanded for the first time, has the tremendous advantage of naming the 6 officers. The officer on the left is perhaps the most famous RAF officer after Lord Trenchard; Major Arthur Trafford Harris, later MRAF Sir Arthur Harris, CinC Bomber Command, and arguably the architect of victory in the Second World War. He was known as "Sandy" Harris, owing to his carrot-coloured hair, and was the last 50 Sqn CO before the first disbandment. Although his rank is Major, he also has "sqn ldr" braid on his sleeve. Very informal poses and hands in pockets seem to be "de rigueur". The only reminder of the military past in Bekesbourne village today is Aerodrome Road. (Acknowledgements to the Kent History Forum).



Maj A T Harris (OC 50 Sqn); Lt Cooper Goddard; Lt H K Boksen
Lt A Koch (USA); Lt R S Carroll; Lt Apps

The photographs on the following pages depict 50 Sqn at RAF Bekesbourne in Kent, are merely a taster. The full set will be displayed in the Skellingthorpe Community Centre during the 2016 Reunion Weekend. An excellent pictorial history of the Sqn's earliest days.

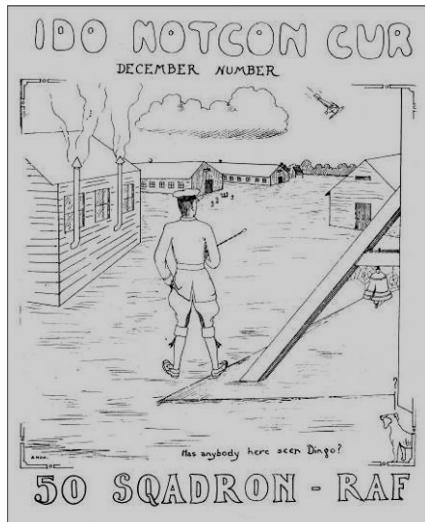
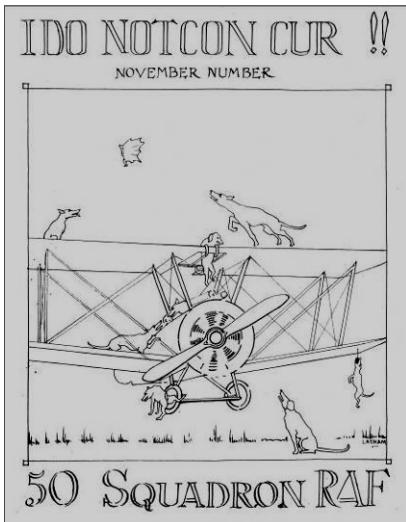


What The Angels see

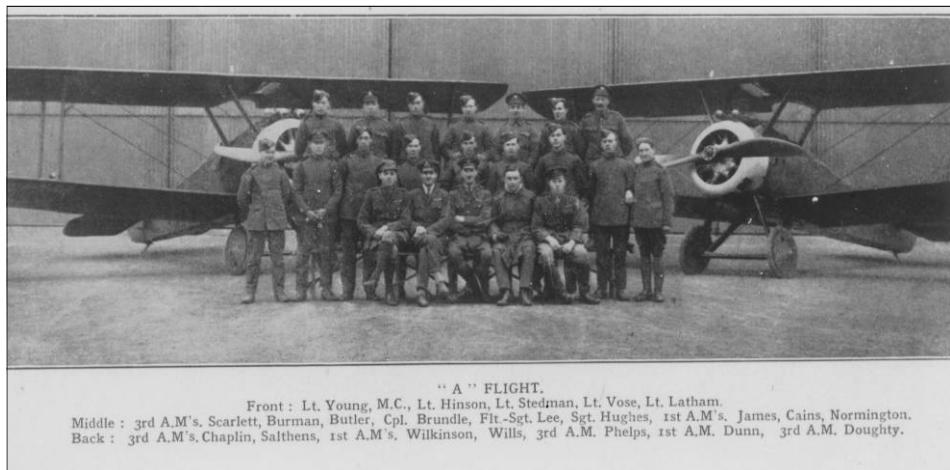


W.R.A.F.—“THE DEARS.”

Thomas, Elsey, Edney, Knight, Paterson, Clayforth, Penn,
Penn, Baldock ; Paine, Weaver.



Covers of early 50 Sqn Magazine front covers with Dingoes VERY prominent



These photographs are just examples of the 40+ we have recently received of 50 Sqn at RAF Bekesbourne. They are even more precious because many of them have the names of the officers, men and women pictured. The photographs will be displayed at Skellingthorpe during the Reunion Weekend in June. Sadly the covers are all we have and we do not know, which, if any, of the photographs appeared in which magazine. As the Sqn disbanded in June 1919, the magazines were probably dated 1918.

A SNCO ON 50 SQN

I served on 50 Sqn at RAF Waddington as a Sgt Avionics Technician for 3 years in the 1970s. It was a good time to be on the Vulcan Force as the very high level of readiness (QRA) had passed and things were much easier. It was a very enjoyable tour; the Vulcan was an imposing aircraft with an enormous public appeal. She “wowed” every air show she appeared at. I was very fortunate to get 3 trips in the aircraft, twice to Goose Bay and once in Norway. She was, however, a rather large but very proud, elderly lady and we had some very elusive snags to fix; but we always managed. She rarely let us down.

Sqn morale was high; although changing the cumbersome outboard Frequency Changer (a 3 hour job) standing on a ladder in the nose wheel bay in winter in Lincolnshire's rather too frequent 30kt horizontal fog was a bit of a challenge! However, OC 50 Sqn staying behind after midnight, when landing late and requiring the aircraft for the following day, and spending an hour talking to us over coffee helped no end.

The Strike Force Dispersal exercises, where the Vulcan Sqns were dispersed around the country after a simulated rise in tension and readiness states, was an enjoyable time for us. 50 Sqn dispersed to Thurleigh, the RAE Bedford site. We were self-contained and supported our own aircraft. Thurleigh was a fairly tight secure civilian site, and our dispersals, aircraft and accommodation was also well-guarded. “Intruders”, sometimes RAF or Army personnel, were a means to test our ability to protect the aircraft by posing as protesters and those who generally did not much care for the idea of an independent nuclear deterrent. We may have known they were coming, but we never knew exactly when, so we remained alert and we never allowed them too close to the aircraft.

The Sqn also had the first female Junior Engineering Officer (Fg Off Cathy Hay) posted to an operational sqn; a splendid young lady who fitted in right well and was respected by us all. She also appeared on TV, much to her great embarrassment, in “Women at War”. She was shown in the Vulcan left hand seat doing an engine run. Out of shot was a crew chief in the right hand seat “just in case”; he was not needed. After the programme she received a letter, containing a 10 shilling PO (long after decimal currency), from a former suffragette who was delighted that another blow had been struck for womankind!

And then there was Cpl B. A real throwback to the 1940's. He always wore a “hairy blue”, sported a small moustache, with a forage cap clamped to the side of his head. Now Cpl B was a happy, cheerful and competent single tradesman who enjoyed a drink. One memorable day, after a rather heavy night with his old friend, the local baker, he woke up late and needed to get to the Sqn pdq. The sight of the bread van careering around the perimeter track at high speed, the 50 Sqn Dispersal was on the far side of the airfield, was a sight to behold; and never to be forgotten. Although the traffic lights at the end of the runway were obeyed, the SATCO was not amused! I believe the Sqn CO may well have had a word to placate the SATCO and probably informed Cpl B what should and should not be done! Every Sqn has a “character” and ours was a winner!