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



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EDITORIAL

We report on the memorial service to Sir Michael and the Centenary of 50 Sqn. The Memorial Weekend was very well attended and started well with our AGM and the children's performance at the Leslie Manser School. The 50 and 61 Sqn's Award for Achievement was presented to Charlotte Harris by our vice-chairman. Once again Adrian Jones, his wife Catherine and his staff pulled out all the stops for the Association. Sadly the weather was a little "damp" for the service at Skellingthorpe on Sunday, but all planned events happened although in the Village Hall. The enthusiasm was not diminished at all.

Mike Connock and Richard Jones

50 SQN (YOUNG) OLD LAGS



Robin Davey; AVM Nigel Baldwin; Tony Hines; Richard Jones; Mick Willmott

We were delighted to have 3 retired SNCO members of 50 Sqn at the recent 50 Sqn Centenary Reunion Weekend. These 3 Chiefs Techs were outstanding characters and members of the Sqn during our President's and my time with the mighty Vulcan. The five relatively young "Old Lags" above had not been all together for almost 40 years. We are delighted that we were able to meet up after far too long and we haven't changed a bit(!) We plan an encore in 2017.

Richard Jones

SIR MICHAEL BEETHAM - MEMORIAL SERVICE

The service of thanksgiving for the life of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham was held at the Royal Air Force church, St Clement Danes, on Wednesday 29 June. The Royal Family was represented.

The Association was represented by our President, AVM Nigel Baldwin, Chairman, Wg Cdr Peter Jacobs; and Vice Chairman, Sqn Ldr Richard Jones. WO Reg Payne, Sir Michael's last surviving 50 Sqn Lancaster crew member (WOp AG), also attended with his son David. Gillian Merron, 50 and 61 Sqn's Association Honorary Member; and Mr Bill Flint (nephew of Wg Cdr Jummy Flint) and his wife Gillian was also present. Friends and Service colleagues of Sir Michael also attended. Including AVM Eric Macey, Sir Michael's co-pilot on 214 Sqn (Valiant ac) and Wg Cdr Alan Mawby, Chairman of the 214 Sqn Association and Sir Michael's AEO.



MRAF Sir Michael Beetham
GCB CBE DFC AFC DL

ACM Sir Andrew Pulford (CAS) and MRAF Lord Craig of Radley read the lessons. Charles Risius and Rory Beethan (grandsons) also gave readings. The address was given by MRAF Sir Keith Williamson. The Ven Jonathan Chaffey, Chaplain-in-Chief (RAF) led the prayers. Sir Michael's son, Alexander, paid tribute to his father and mentioned many personal details of Sir Michael's long and very distinguished Royal Air Force career.

Following the Memorial service, the family hosted a reception at the RAF Club. Many of those attending the memorial service were present. It was a good opportunity to talk about Sir Michael with many of his contemporaries. ACM Sir Peter Squire, CAS 2000-03, asked to be introduced to Reg Payne. They had a long conversation about Sir Michael and Reg's wartime experiences on 50 Sqn.

Richard Jones

MRS MARJORIE PRITCHARD - AVRO YEADON 1940-46

I recently had the pleasure of talking to Mrs Marjorie Pritchard, aged 98, who worked in a Yorkshire mill and was among the first to be "called up" in 1940 to work at the AVRO factory in Yeadon (now Leeds Bradford Airport). She worked from 0700-1900 six days a week as a riveter on the Lancaster production line. Her section was "Floors and Bulkheads". It was hard work in a mixed environment of 17,500 staff. She remembers being instructed by the foreman: "not to climb ladders until you are issued with a pair of trousers!" Her main job may have been as a riveter, but she also drilled and fitted bulkheads, floors and aircraft skins. If she fell behind with the build, the aircraft would be moved to the "flying shed" and she would have to complete her installation task there. By then the space in which to work was more cramped and her task more difficult.

The work was hard but very rewarding and the camaraderie was excellent. She says must have fitted millions of rivets in the 6 years she was employed there! The pay was meagre (£2-3) per week, but bonuses were available to those who exceeded their daily quota or who would work overtime). This very private lady declined to have her photograph taken, but was pleased to be able to talk about her experiences. In 1946 she returned to the mill and her husband, who had returned safely from Burma. She believes there is only one other surviving lady with whom she worked at Yeadon.

The Yeadon workforce was very proud that the Lancaster flown by Bill Reid on the Dusseldorf raid, QR-O (LM 360), in Nov 1943 was built by them at their AVRO factory.

Richard Jones

CHAIRMANS REMARKS

Once again I am pleased to report that this year's annual reunion was a great success with what, I believe, was a record turnout for the Saturday evening event at the Skellingthorpe Community Centre. Marking a squadron's centenary is an important moment and I take comfort from the thought that the founding members of 50 Squadron would have been immensely proud to know that their squadron was still being remembered 100 years on and that so many people had gathered to mark the event. And so I must say a big public thank you, on behalf of the Association, to all those who helped make it happen, including the Association Committee, the Leslie Manser School and, of course, the people of Skellingthorpe.

Since that memorable weekend, some members of the Association were honoured and privileged to be able to attend a Service of Thanksgiving for the life and work of our former President, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham, who died last year. The service was held at the RAF Church of St Clement Danes in London and needless to say, it was a moving occasion. But it was also a wonderful tribute to Sir Michael from the Royal Air Force and from his family, and we are now left with treasured memories of a truly remarkable man.

It only leaves me to wish you an enjoyable summer, wherever you are and whatever you are up to. These are interesting times, but looking ahead we must now make sure that we mark 61 Squadron's centenary in as good a way as we marked 50's this year. It will be a hard act to follow but those who served on 61 throughout its fine history deserve the squadron's centenary to be marked in the best possible way. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible next year.

Peter Jacobs

50 SQUADRON CENTENARY



This reunion marked the 100th anniversary of 50 Squadron. The Flag on the left was commissioned by the Parish of Skellingthorpe and presented to the Association by the Parish Council Chairman Chris Goldson and Vice Chairman Neil Cheeseman.

On the right is a display of airmen from the three main areas of the last 100 years. On the left is RFC of WWI, the middle two are WWII and on the right is the Jet era. At their feet is a 1:24th scale Lancaster. The Association had special commemorative badges made and one of these was presented by our President to each 50 Squadron veteran of WWII present.



Above left is AVM Nigel Baldwin presenting a badge to Jock Crozier. Six others were also presented with badges: John Tait, Ted McRae, Reg Payne, Eric Coling, John Firth and James Flowers. Above right is the wonderful cake made to celebrate the occasion and this was cut by our President AVM Nigel Baldwin, who commanded 50 Sqn 1977-79.

REUNION DINNER

A splendid turnout for the Reunion Dinner with around 115 guests in attendance. Amongst the guests were 13 veterans from both 50 and 61 Squadrons. The hall at Skellingthorpe was very well decorated for the occasion.



The photographs above, left, depicts veteran Arthur Atkinson facing camera, flanked on the left by Kenneth and Elaine Ballantyne, and on the right by Richard and Brenda Wright. The photograph on the right shows other members and guests enjoying the evening



The picture left shows a line up of the veterans who attended the dinner, and are left to right back row: John Firth (50); Jock Crozier (50); Reg Payne (50); Reg Freeth (61); Arthur Atkinson (61); and Ted McRae (50).

Front row left to right: Eric Coling (50); Jim Wright (61); James Flowers (50); John Tait (50); and Ken Johnson (61).

Not in the picture are two other veterans of 61 Sqn who served just post war on Lincoln aircraft: Danny Thomas and Roy Davidson.
Mike Connock

BIRCHWOOD SERVICE



Stalwarts of the reunion are the Standard bearers (above left) representing various organisation within the City. Amongst the veterans present were (above right) Ken Johnson (61 Sqn) (left) and Eric Coling (50 Sqn) (right), with Eric's excellent carers (who had volunteered to accompany him), Suzy Smith and Steve Southern.

The service at Birchwood was conducted by the Association Padre, Rev Brian Stalley. The salute was taken by our President and the Mayor of Lincoln.



The march past was led by the Waddington Band and followed by 204 (City of Lincoln) Sqn ATC. Shown is the flight comprising the veterans of both our Squadrons. Sqn Ldr Richard Jones (in uniform) is flanked by Danny Thomas and Jock Crozier.

SKELLINGTHORPE SERVICE



The service at Skellingthorpe was interrupted by torrential rain and we had to take refuge in the hall; thus the service was held indoors. Stepping in at short notice was one of our guests for the weekend: the Rev Canon Bailey (left above), who himself was a Padre in the Royal Air Force for 24 years. “Winging it” as he described it, maybe, but it turned out to be an excellent service. Flowers were laid by the children of the village and representatives of the local Schools, Scouts and Brownies.



The Chairman of Skellingthorpe Parish Council Chris Goldson (left above) welcomed everyone to the afternoon service and reaffirmed the councils commitment to support the Association. The heavens may have opened, but our stalwart supporting cadets of 1237 (North Hykham) Sqn ATC, were not daunted and braved the downpour with panache.
Mike Connock

THE 50 SQN 50th ANN PHOTOGRAPH PRESENTATION



During the late Jimmy Flint's Centenary Birthday Party we saw one of his prized possessions: his copy of the 50 Sqn 50th Anniversary photograph. Taken in the RAF Waddington Officers' Mess in 1966, entitled "The Men and Their

Machines" it depicts 50 Sqn pilots who had flown 50 Sqn representative aircraft from the BE2c to the Vulcan B2.

Jimmy's nephew, Bill, his daughter Katharine and his wife Gillian are shown above presenting a copy of the photograph to AVM Nigel Baldwin, during the recent Reunion Weekend. The photograph will be displayed proudly in our Association Room in the Birchwood Leisure Centre.

Richard Jones

SECRETARY'S PIECE

We had very good support from members and civic dignitaries for our annual service at Birchwood, though the 'uniforms' were a fewer as the RAF Waddington Band was very busy, but were able to provide sufficient musicians for the Service and March Past. Our chaplain, Revd Brian Stalley, has just finished his yearly 'stint' as Mayor of Lincoln's Chaplain, and took our service with his usual aplomb. Alan Biggs managed the parade; and cadets from 1237 (North Hykeham) Squadron ATC controlled car parking at Skellingthorpe. Unfortunately, the BBMF was unable to provide an aircraft this year. The Lancaster had a full display commitment in the West Country. Once again the ladies excelled with refreshments at Birchwood and Skellingthorpe.

Gerry Collins

ABSENT FRIENDS

ERIC BOOTH



Born 16 Jun 21, Eric joined the RAF in Jan 39. Trained as a flight mechanic at Scampton then moved to RAF College Cranwell as ground crew until early 1941. From there to 600 Sqn as an engine fitter as they were converting from Blenheim Mk1V to Beaufighters. In early 1942 he volunteered for training as a Flight Engineer, did an Air Gunners course at Walney Island on the Defiant followed by an airframe course at Avro Manchester and a Rolls Merlin course at RAF St Athan.

Finally posted to 61 Sqn and the crew of John Harrad. One fateful night as he was preparing to take off he was suddenly replaced and that night John Harrad's crew were shot down over Spain; sadly all the crew were lost. He then joined Peter Joslin's crew but his luck ran out in the early hours of 5 Sep 42 when they were hit by flak and got finished off by a night fighter over Holland on their way to Bremen. Eric bailed out and ended up in a prisoner of war camp in Lamsdorf – Stalag V111B/344; POW number 27054. Four of his crew survived, 3 were killed (one is still MIA but may be found when the wreckage is removed from the crash site in a canal later this year).

Food was in short supply, mainly swede soup and black bread if they were lucky. They relied on the Red Cross parcels, but sometimes the Germans would not pass them on to the prisoners. In Jan 45 they were taken on the "Long March" walking over 600 miles with little food and temperatures of -30 C. He was released in Apr 45 and on 30 May 45 married Peggy Stapleford in Melton Mowbray church; he was discharged from the RAF on 7 Jan 46. His wife died on 8 Feb 2016 aged 93; they had been married for 70 years. Eric died on 22 Apr aged 94.

Neil Booth

CHARLES SWAIN

Charles Swain (shown flanked by Reg Payne and James Flowers), at RAF Coiningsby in 2009, was a Vice President of the Association for many years. He died on 17 Feb aged 92. He joined the Air Defence Corps (the forerunner of the Air Training Corps) in 1937 and then the RAF in 1941 and served as an electrical mechanic on 50 Sqn at RAF Skellingthorpe. He went on to forge a successful business career.



Charles was much involved in the early days of the Association and had a fondness for luxury motor cars .



LEONARD GREEN

Warrant Officer Len Green, Wop/AG , had the distinction of serving with three squadrons. Initially with 50 Sqn he completed 14 operations before contracting Pneumonia. After a year off he was posted to 61 Sqn back at Skellingthorpe, completing a further 10 operations till the end of the war. He then carried out by several Operation Exodus missions (bringing home the POWs from Germany). Post war he was posted to 83 Sqn completing several Operation Dodge trips (bringing home British troops from the Mediterranean, until his demob early 1946. After his time in the RAF and a short spell in civilian life, Len joined the Metropolitan

Police, retiring from the force some 35 years ago. A keen supporter of the Association, Len made several large donations to us in recent years, and on death on 2nd March 2016, Len very generously bequeathed £5000 to the Association in his will. A wreath was laid on behalf of the Association at his funeral service

FRED JONES DFC



Flt Lt Fred Jones completed a full tour of 31 Ops with 50 Sqn as a pilot at RAF Skellingthorpe Sep 44 to Jun 45. Serving with and under Wg Cdr Jimmy Flint, then OC 50 Sqn. The picture left shows Fred with James Flowers at Jimmy Flint's 100th Birthday Party on 24 May 2013. Fred Passed away in Jan 2016. The Association was represented at his funeral service by Pam & Mike Connock. We had the great pleasure of the company of his widow, Molly, and his family at the

recent Reunion.



LES LOOSEMORE

Sgt Les Loosemore Air Gunner, Joined on 7 Feb 1944. He served with 61 Sqn during Feb-May 45 completing 12 operations plus two Operation Exodus missions and a "Cooks Tour". Les was demobbed in July 47. He remained a supporter of the Association and contributed several articles for our Newsletter, stories about his early day, his OUT training and his time on 61 Sqn. Les died in Dec 15.

MICHAEL PLUMMER

Sgt Michael Plummer served with 61 Sqn post war as a Wireless Operator. He passed away 12 March 2016.

WG CDR BOB HORSLEY DFC AFC

Bob Horsley was shot down during a raid on Cologne but evaded capture and escaped over the Pyrenees with the aid of the Comet Line escape organisation; he later flew with 617 Sqn, after re-training as a pilot in Canada.



Horsley at Buckingham Palace for the presentation of his DFC by The King

Horsley was the recently commissioned wireless operator of a 50 Sqn Manchester bomber piloted by Fg Off Leslie Manser. The crew took off on the night of 30/31 May 1942, on the first of the “Thousand Bomber” raids. The aircraft was severely disabled over the target and one of the two engines was

set on fire. Horsley and another member of the crew jettisoned equipment to lighten the aircraft as Manser nursed the crippled bomber until it was over Belgium, by which time he was losing control. Manser ordered the crew to bale out, ignoring pleas to don his own parachute. Seconds later the last man left a perilously low altitude, the bomber hit the ground and exploded.

Horsley landed in Limburg, Belgium, where a farmer sheltered him. He was passed to a local resistance, and then met two other members of his crew and they were taken together to Liège. Unknown to them, they were in the hands of the Belgian Comet Line, an organisation established by one of the war’s greatest heroines, the 24 year old Red Cross volunteer, Andrée “Dédé” de Jongh. In Liège, the 3 men were reunited with 2 other members of the crew. One member of the crew was captured and became a POW.

They were sheltered in separate safe houses and a young Belgian woman escorted them in small parties to Paris. They were handed over to Dédée, who then took Horsley, a fellow crew member and a Canadian by train to Bordeaux and on to St-Jean-de-Luz near the Spanish border.

They were taken to a remote farmhouse at Urrugne, known as “The Last House”. On the night 12/13 June, a Basque guide and Dédée took the three airmen across the Pyrenees and on to San Sebastian, from where they were driven to the British Embassy in Madrid. A week later the guide and Dédée escorted the other three of Manser’s crew into Spain. They were all taken to Madrid and on to Gibraltar before sailing for Britain.

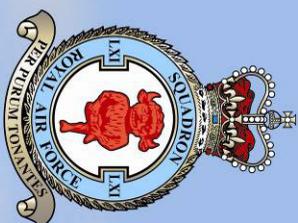
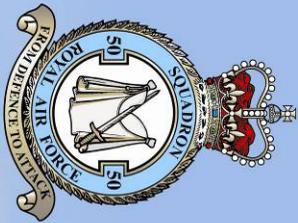
On return to London, the five evaders were debriefed by officers of MI9, during which they related the conduct and sacrifice of their pilot. As a result, Manser was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. Horsley was awarded a DFC and the other four evaders were also decorated. Dédée returned to Belgium and continued to escort more evaders before she was eventually betrayed to the Gestapo and sent to Mauthausen and Ravensbruck concentration camps.

She survived the war and received The George Medal from the British; The Medal of Freedom from the US; the French appointed her a Chavalier of the Legion of Honour; and the Belgians appointed her a Chevalier of the Order of Leopold and the Croix de Guarre with Palm. She died, unmarried, in 2007 aged 90 years.



**Countess Andrée
“Dédée” de Jongh with
a clock presented by
the RAF in 1946**

Robert Milham Horsley was born in May 1921 and joined the RAF immediately on leaving school and trained as a wireless operator and air gunner. He joined 50 Sqn in August 1941. He died at home in Australia on 19 January 2016. (Acknowledgements to the Daily Telegraph)



50 SQUADRON 1916-2016
61 SQUADRON 1917-2017

CENTENARY



RAF SKELLINGTHORPE

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