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



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Chairman

**Wg Cdr (Retd) Peter Jacobs
61 Fulmar Road
Doddington Park
Lincoln LN6 0LA
01522 826635
peterjacobs83@msn.com**

Vice Chairman

**Sqn Ldr (Retd) Richard Jones
26 Wadlands Rise
Farsley
Pudsey LS28 5JF
0113 2559931
richardnjones@btinternet.com**

Secretary

**Gerry Collins
35 Wetherby Crescent
Lincoln LN6 8SY
01522 681482
gerald236@btinternet.com**

Treasurer & Membership

**Mike Connock
21 Goldfinch Close
Skellingthorpe
Lincoln LN6 5SF
01522 683997
m.connock2@ntlworld.com**

Parade Marshal

**Alan Biggs
19 St Marks Avenue
Cherry Willingham
Lincoln LN3 4LX
01522 751690
alan.biggs@mypostoffice.co.uk**

Editorial Team

**Mike Connock
Richard Jones**

**Peter J Small
63 Jerusalem Road
Skellingthorpe
Lincoln LN6 4RH
01522 827002**

Dining Secretary

**Lynda Skinner
19 St Marks Avenue
Cherry Willingham
Lincoln LN3 4LX
01522 519914
Lynda.skinner@me.com**

EDITORIAL

Another year draws to a close, a year which saw another successful reunion and a celebration of the 100th anniversary of 50 Squadron. This next year see the 100th anniversary of 61 Squadron and already Richard Jones is busy researching the story for the April Newsletter.

The format for next year will be the same as in previous years, with the AGM on the Saturday afternoon, followed by the dinner on Saturday evening. The Sunday will see the service at the Associations memorial at Birchwood, followed by lunch at Skellingthorpe and a service at the Skellingthorpe Memorial. The booking from for the weekend is enclosed with this newsletter.

Sadly it is also a year which saw us lose more of our veterans and we pay tribute to them in our Absent Friends page.

Fortunately most of them had their stories preserved for the International Bomber Command Centre archives. More on its progress further on in this edition.

One final note is that the Committee have decided that existing veterans of WWII should not be required to pay a membership fee. WEF 1st January 2017

Richard Jones & Mike Connock

SECRETARY'S COMMENTS

Blessed! with dry weather, Remembrance Sunday started with some of our own members attending the Cathedral Service, taken by our new Dean. Afterwards, together with cadets & staff from 204(City of Lincoln) Squadron, along with the Deputy Mayor of Lincoln and Councillors, we stood before our memorial as our Padre Rev. Brian Stalley took the short service. Wreaths were laid, especially one from Betty Bascombe. This was laid by an Air Cadet as Betty was unable to be present. There was no March Past this time, but thanks go to the staff at Birchwood Leisure Centre and Kate Fenn who looked after our needs very well.

Gerry

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

As we approach another festive season, I find this time of year gives me a chance to reflect on what has happened during the past twelve months. You will all have your own personal memories and private thoughts about the year gone by but for me, like most years, 2016 had its highs and not-so-high moments. While the low points include the passing of loved ones and veterans, the highlights include another marvellous reunion weekend back in June when we gave 50 Squadron a centenary worthy of its proud past. We must now look forward to 2017 and I am sure that we will equally mark the centenary of 61 Squadron in a way that will be remembered for many years. There is little else for me to update you on that isn't already covered in the Newsletter. As always, Richard and Mike have done us proud and so I will not take up any more valuable editorial space. It only leaves me to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, wherever you may be.

Peter

MEMORABILIA

We do have a selection of items for sale. As you know we had some badges done to celebrate the centenary of 50 Squadron this year, and for this year we have the Centenary badge for 61 Squadron.



50 Sqn Centenary badge £2.50 inc P&P
61 Sqn Centenary badge £2.50 inc. P&P



We also have copies of the DVD “Failed to return” which tells the story of the Association Memorial and has some interesting war time clips. £15.00 inc P&P.

We also have a limited number of copies of the Associations “Roll of Honour” which are fast becoming collectors items. This lists all the losses with the two squadrons during WWII and was compiled by our chairman Peter Jacobs. These can be had for £25.00 inc. P&P.

All P&P prices quoted are for UK. Please enquire for prices overseas.
m.connock2@ntlworld.com

THE ESCAPE

Despite the constant drain on the Bomber Command aircrew resource due to enemy action, accidents in training and tour expiries and the number of trained aircrew available to the operational theatres appeared to be satisfactory.

The Empire and Home Training facilities were maintained at capacity output from the holding centres that were set up to accommodate trainees between the various stages of instruction. Such a place existed in December 1943 at RAF Scampton. Written messages scribbled on the walls of the small rooms left no doubt in one's mind that it was also the home of 617 Squadron and that *The Dambusters* were here.

Standing in the gloomy cavernous atmosphere of the hanger I listened to the speculative comments of my crew and of these others around me and pondered, 'What the hell now? Will we ever get on 'ops'? How long *is* it?'

November 1941: Aircrew Receiving Centre, London; Brighton for kitting; Heaton Park; Moncton in Canada; Harrogate - in between the Initial Training Wing, Grading School; elementary flying training; senior flying training; advanced flying training back in the UK; Beam Approach Unit; Operational Training Unit and now here awaiting the four-engine conversion course.

"Pay attention everyone!" an Australian squadron leader had climbed on to a table, clutching a sheet of notes. "Now you are all going on an escape exercise tonight. You will be transported into the Lincolnshire countryside and dropped at least 30 miles away from the base. You are to find your way back using any means whatsoever. This is to be achieved without being apprehended by the Home Guard, the police force and other army units, all of whom having been alerted to what is going on. You will be issued with a set of overalls and each crew will be left at a certain dropping point. Further details and answers to any questions can be obtained from the adjudicators sitting in the offices over there."

'Mmm... an escape exercise eh? - not that we *intend* to be shot down - just *in case* - this could be a useful dummy run - get back by any means! Realistic and an exciting challenge!'

The crew was deep into a serious discussion on how to travel by rail without paying, whether to borrow a car (there could be a petrol problem), a bike and from the rear gunner (whose father rode to hounds) how about a horse? Breaking across the chat I said: "Come along you lot - let's find out what it is all about."

The Austin six-wheeled crew bus rumbled on through the stygian December evening - two crews had already been dropped off - each time the officer had descended from the front seat and quietly given the crew a verbal approximation of their position. The question in the minds of those people left in the bus was voiced by the wireless operator - a young man who had definite plans for the night - plans which only had a remote relationship to the escape exercise, providing one could get to a railway station of course!

"Skip" said the wireless operator, anxiously, "do you think we are still moving away from base - or what?"

"We'll drop off at the next stop and risk it", I said. The rattling of the ill-fitting rear doors and worn spring shackles lessened and stopped.

"OK chaps," I said "this is us - I'll go first." Lurching to my feet I opened the rear door, turned round and stepped down backwards on to the external drop step. "God, what a night," I breathed to myself. A dark overwhelming blackness oppressed everything. No stars - no hedges - no bus - no road.

I put my foot down to where it should be and as it found the ground and I transferred my weight to it, I released my grip on the crew bus and something brushed against my shin. 'What the devil's happening?' flashed across my mind as I lost my balance and fell backwards. There was a momentary glimpse of a yellow hole in the total blackness, the faint reflection of the masked headlights on the road, which I realised were moving towards me as I collapsed flat on my back.

"Christ Skip where are you, what's happened?" cried the rear gunner. No time to answer, to speak, to cry out, to...- 'On your side - roll! Miss the step. It's still rolling backwards - I'm going to be run over,' I thought. 'Lie face up? Face down? How do I get away with this - what to do next?'

I was suddenly angry - what a stupid idiotic situation to get into! I could still see the glow in the blackness. 'Keep it in the right position'. 'Missed the step,' flicked across my mind. 'The 'diff' box! I'm a gonner! It will crack my head like an egg. Roll man! Roll sideways - miss it - watch the wheels. What a way to die - no - keep going. Is this where the Reaper lurks for me? Why here - no not here. Why not that time in the Wimpey after all those hours in 10/10 cloud when we ran into the London balloon 'squeakers'. Why not when...?Ugh! Keep rolling - the second 'diff' - the wheels man! The front axle - the steering rods - they're low, you'll never miss them. Roll again. Lie flat - lie flat! Am I still alive or dead?!

After what seemed like an eternity but was only may be eight or nine seconds I lay in a crumpled heap on the roadway in the dim light of the headlamps. Not a sound had been uttered while I fought for life and limb, acting with animal instincts of self-preservation. I stayed there for what seemed to be another eternity, mind racing, but afraid to move and perhaps find broken bones or some other injury.

The cab door banged open and an Aussie officer ran towards me. "Where the flamin' hell have you come from?" There was a tone of shocked, total disbelief in his voice. The adrenalin was still pumping in my body and instinctively I was on my feet checking arms, legs, body, head, even before the Aussie had reached me. 'Incredible, I thought. 'I'm moving - alive!'

"You've just run over me, damn it," I said wonderingly. "But I think I am OK, -all in one piece." Normality was returning and my actions slowed as I examined myself more carefully for injuries. It was suggested that I got back into the bus and returned to camp but the opportunity to miss the exercise didn't appeal somehow - there was this feeling that I was involved in a real thing - perhaps I was slightly concussed. "No", I said slowly. "No, there's nothing broken, bit shaken maybe, but who wouldn't be after bailing out!"

So I walked back to camp, dodging imaginary Home Guard 'enemies' for the whole thirty miles, arriving at base half way through the following day, one of the last 'escapers' reporting to very disinterested adjudicators. There was no inquiry and the incident was never mentioned again by the crew or anyone, such was the pace of life and death in wartime conditions.

My crew finally became operational on Lancasters and although completing a lengthy tour, the escape exercise was never tested in reality. However, the possibility did arise on more than one occasion giving cause to reflect upon what a chancy occupation operational flying was - almost as dangerous as getting off a Royal Air Force crew bus on a dark winter's night!

By Pilot Officer Don Street, DFC.

A wonderful story by the late Don Street, with thanks to wife Doris and son Neville. **Mike C**

FG OFF LESLIE MANSER VC - SURVIVING CREW



We have just acquired this piece concerning the presentation of Leslie Manser's VC to OC 50 Sqn on 31 May 1965. (The article was in the Apr newsletter commemorating the Centenary of 50 Sqn.)

Shown (left to right) are: Leslie Randle (nephew); Wg Cdr Norman Horsley (W Op); Flt Lt Richard Barnes (B/A); (Sgt) B W Naylor (Rear Gnr); and (Sgt) A Mills (Front Gnr)

Leslie Manser VC rests at peace in the Heverlee Commonwealth War Cemetery in Belgium.



SKELLINGTHORPE ACT OF REMEMBRANCE



11th November at 11.00 hrs saw the Act of Remembrance at the Village Memorial to RAF Skellingthorpe. Sadly Richard Jones who has led the proceeding for the last few years was unable to attend, but his place was ably taken by Alan Biggs. The act was simple affair with Alan Biggs addressing the gathering which was followed by the playing of the Last Post, two minutes silence, and Reveille. Prior to the last post Alan read the following

from an oration by Pericles

“Each one, man for man, has won imperishable praise, each has gained a glorious grave – not that sepulchre of earth wherein they lie, but the living tomb of everlasting remembrance wherein their glory is enshrined. For the whole earth is the sepulchre of heroes; monuments may rise and tablets be set up to them in their own land, but on the far off shores there is an abiding memorial that no pen or chisel has traced; it is graven, not on stone or brass, but on the living heart of humanity. Take these men as your example. Like them remember that prosperity can only be for the free; that freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it.”

Following this wreaths were laid on behalf of the No.50 & No.61 Squadrons Association, the Parish Council and the youth of the village.

The event was also supported by children from the local Holt School, who laid crosses on the memorial. After which, all enjoyed the hospitality of the Community Centre with Tea and scones.



BIRCHWOOD REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

This service took place on Sunday 13th November, remembrance Sunday in the afternoon. This was timed to follow on from the service at Lincoln Cathedral in the morning.

The service was led by the Association Chaplain Rev Brian Stalley.



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

The event was well supported by 204 (City of Lincoln) Squadron ATC. Wreaths were laid by the Mayor of Lincoln and by our Chairman Peter Jacobs.



REMEMBERING

It never ceases to amaze the number of memorials to the aircrew who failed to return, that are erected, looked after and maintained by our friends throughout Europe. Where possible they are included on our web site under UK & European Memorials.

Although not a memorial one such event to place to commemorate the loss of two aircraft. On 9 September 2016 a remembrance service was held to remember the crews of two aircraft. The crew of Whitley T4279 KN-F of 77 Sqn. And the crew of Lancaster W4769 QR-V of 61 Sqn.



Relatives gathered to lay wreaths in remembrance of the crews. Laying a wreath on behalf of the association were Mr Barry Davis and Mr Gavin Davis the Son and Grandson of Flight Engineer Sgt Davis.

The local service was organised by Mark Hakvort, who did all the research, contacted the farmers, the

Historic Association of Wieringemeer and the local government of Hollands Kroon. In addition he gathered as many members of the airmens families as possible. On the right is the Wreath laid by Barry Davis, on behalf of the association and in memory of his Father. Barry and his son Gavin were presented with a memento of the occasion



Sadly the two complete crews were KIA. Both Bombers crashed within about 1000 Meteres of each other, although at different periods in the war. The Whitley crew crashed 13 June 1941.

Sgt K R Wainwright, P/O G V Heslop, Sgt L S Dyer, Sgt D K McFarland, Sgt D H J Pingle

and the Lancaster crew of 61 Squadron Which crashed 3 January 1943.

F/Sgt R M Bird	Pilot
Sgt Davis	Flight Engineer
P/O H J R Tickle	Navigator
Sgt S J Inglis	Bomb Aimer
Sgt R J Kee (RCAF) W/Operator	
Sgt R C Gait	Air Gunner
Sgt L G Gunning	Air Gunner



At the ceremony the last post was played and wreaths laid by all the relatives and officials The guests were made welcome by the local community, and as well as a tour of their museum.

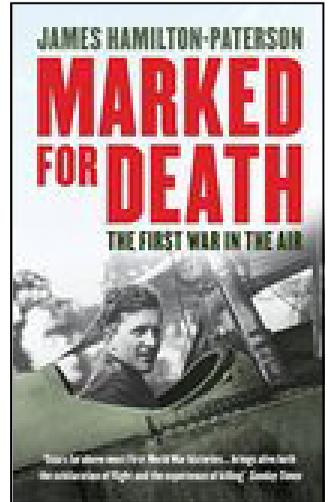
Inside the museum are various exhibits from the research done by the Association Remember Wieringermeer. The Netherlands.



BOOK REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION

I recently read an excellent book about the Royal Flying Corps in its very early days. The book, "Marked for Death" by James Hamilton-Paterson, is published by Head of Zeus Ltd and is available as a paperback from bookshops and online.

"Little more than ten years after the first powered flight, aircraft were pressed into service in World War One. Yet the romantic image of gallant 'aces' belied the horrible reality of air warfare: of flimsy aircraft, often collapsing in midair; of unprotected pilots with no parachutes; of pilots freezing and disorientated as they flew across enemy lines". In this unforgettable book, Hamilton-Patterson reveals the brutal truths of wartime aviation and shows how those four years of fighting in the air would change the nature of warfare for ever.



At the time the RFC was a part of the army; the General Staff did not like aeroplanes as they believed such action in the air was detrimental to the real weapons of warfare: the cavalry. These were the real "Death or Glory" boys and the General Staff did not want airmen stealing their glory. Thus parachutes were never part of the RFC inventory because pilots and observers could jump out if they were in difficulty instead of staying to the bitter end (which of course they had to). The obvious conclusion: death or serious injury. Parachutes could have been purchased privately, but no pilot or observer was known to have done so.

There is much in this book to interest aircraft (and First World War) enthusiasts. The details is excellent as are the photographs. The Air Aces are given much detail. The pilot on the cover is Billy Bishop VC, actually Canadian, with 72 victories. The fighting all takes place in France thus our 2 Sqns are not mentioned. But the types of aircraft they flew are and one can only be astounded at the bravery of these men.

Richard Jones

ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

I wonder if you could help by putting a request for information into the next Association newsletter? During my research into 1942 I have found a 'mystery' which I would like to resolve. Details are scant, however.

"Seeking any information into 1253117 Sgt E. Sunderland, Flight Engineer, 50 Squadron RAF, 1942.

Sgt Sunderland was posted in to 1654CU at RAF Wigsley on 10/8/42 direct from Flight Engineer Training. He appears to have flown a couple of times with the Knight Crew in November, 1942 but on 25 January 1943 he is listed in the Squadron Operational Record Book as 'posted' to RAF Uxbridge, meaning he is missing in action (normally). There is no corresponding entry for an aircraft with him on board being lost and the reason for his 'disappearance' using any other hypothetical event can not be logically ascertained. I cannot find him either in Prisoner Of War records, Aircrew Association Indexes or the 50 & 61 Association Roll Of Honour.

Would any of the Association's members have any information on Sgt. Sunderland from the period 1942 to early 1943 they could share, and if so would they be willing to pass it via the Association to myself"?

This is by far the most baffling and mysterious case I have come across to date during the Diary research. There is unfortunately also a Sgt Sutherland in the same crew which does not help but I've cross checked this gentleman as well with nothing found. **Alan Toccock. atoccock@hotmail.co.uk**



Marlene Margach is looking to identify the person in the picture with the forage cap. Her uncles' name is Harry Mayo Richard Broadhead. Was an Air Gunner with 61 Squadron and was killed in September 1942. If you are able to help please contact Marlene.

Marlene Margach
21 Preston Street
Batley
W Yorks
WF17 5BQ

ABSENT FRIENDS

F/Lt Jeff Gray



Jeff Gray flew with 61 squadron during 1943/4 and was a comrade of , F/Lt Bill North. Jeff and Bill flew alongside each other on Operations during 1944, and their story is told in my book - *Riding in the Shadow of Death*. Eight weeks before he died Jeff got to fly a light aircraft over the Isle of Wight, and said it was like riding a bike; it all came back to him like it was second nature. Jeff Gray took part in some of the deadliest operations of the war. His 21st Operation with 61 Squadron was to Nuremburg, 30/31 March 1944, in Lancaster LM478, QR-K. During the Battle for Berlin, Jeff Gray visited the 'Big City' 9 times on his tour of Ops. After the war, Jeff flew for

BOAC, which had been amalgamated with AVM Don Bennet's airline, British South American Airways, and which many ex-Pathfinders had found themselves flying for. They were at the forefront in the change from piston engines to jet engines for long haul flights, therefore reducing journey times. He flew many aircraft including the de Havilland DH 106 Comet, on its maiden flight to Melbourne, Australia, and also the Boeing 377 Stratocruiser. In 2015. Jeff received the French medal, Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur on the 11 May 2016 Jeff said he accepted this decoration on behalf of all his comrades who had taken part in the liberation of France.

Jeff Gray - 17 August 1922 - 4 October 2016. R.I.P. **Chris Keltie**

Terry Goodwin



American born H Terry Goodwin joined the RCAF in 1941. Following his pilot training in Canada he served on 61 Squadron from 5 December 1942 until 29 April 1943 stationed at Syerston. This was followed by a Brief period of instruction after which he served with 692 Squadron and did 75 trips. Terry was married in 1948 in Toronto and was granted Canadian citizenship. Terry passed away in August 2016.

Flight Sergeant Emlyn Williams



Emlyn served with 50 Squadron as an Air Gunner. He was posted in to 50 Squadron on 30 August 1944 from 51 Base. Completed a tour of 35 operation in the crew of F.O Farrer being posted out from the squadron on 10 May 1945 to the Air Crew Allocation Centre.

Emlyn was a staunch supporter of the association and for many years stayed with a family in Skellingthorpe during his visit for the reunions. Emlyn passed away in August of this year.

Warrant Officer J B Firth.



Bernard as he was known at home was John or Johnny to his RAF friends and flew with 50 Squadron, being posted in on 11 June 1944. He flew with F/Lt Palandri and crew and they were shot down on their 20th operation on 7 August 1944. one of four survivors of the crash he was taken POW. He spent most of the rest of the war in Stalag Luft V11 in Silesia, before finishing up on “The Long March” on which he was fortunate enough to survive. He never missed a reunion and for many years stayed with Peter & Barbara Small.

John passed away on 15 November 2016. The association will be represented at his funeral on 14 December by Peter & Barbara Small and Pam & Mike Connock and a wreath laid on behalf of the association.

INTERNATIONAL BOMBER COMMAND CENTRE

Progress on the centre has again picked up momentum. With the completion of the Spire and the first phase of the Memorial Wall, some of the landscaping has now been done.



The good news is that work has started on the Chadwick Centre with the steel-work arriving on 14th November.

There is of course a lot more work to be done at the site, and fundraising continues.

The latest event was the release of the Single called “Tears of the World”.

This is sung by the YOUNGSTARS.

This is to help raise funds for the International Bomber Command Centre. YOUNGSTARS are a group of children from Lincolnshire that have joined together to help raise the funds. The 17 children are age between 8-15yrs old with an average age of 11years old. The music can be downloaded from i-Tunes store.

In the background of course is the work being done by the Digital Archive team, working in



conjunction with the University of Lincoln. Leading the team is Professor heather Hughes of Lincoln University. The digital archive consists of Intangible heritage: the voices of those who served and suffered in the bombing war, 1939-1945; especially those who still form a living link with that period • Tangible heritage: letters, log books, diaries, photographs, scrap books and so on, donated by individuals, squadron associations and other bodies whose material is not currently available in any archival collection.

Through this archive, such material will be made available to a wide audience.

- A vast Losses Database, which currently contains the details of over 26 000 aircrew who lost their lives in active service flying from Lincolnshire, and will ultimately contain the details of the total of over 55 000 who were killed while on duty elsewhere in the UK and further afield.