



***Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe***  
***(Home of No.50 & No.61 Squadrons)***  
***Newsletter***  
***Issue no 5 - August 2020***



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## FIND US AT

**Facebook—Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe (Home of 50 & 61 Squadrons)**

**[www.no-50-and-no-61-squadrons-association.co.uk](http://www.no-50-and-no-61-squadrons-association.co.uk)**

## OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS/REFERENCES

**<https://www.helloblackswan.co.uk/>**

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

**&**

**<https://internationalbcc.co.uk/history-archive/losses-database/>**

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**Operation Failed to Return**

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNEMHp\\_c8Vg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNEMHp_c8Vg)**

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**<https://raflincolnshire.blogspot.com/2013/05/hidden-gems-of-housing-estate.html>**

# **Chairmans Report**

Since our last newsletter in February little has happened. Sadly, we had to cancel this year's reunion because of the Corona virus and it meant that we were unable to meet up with all our friends. Some work has been done by The Hill Holt Wood on the tracks throughout the woodland where the bomb dump is and many of the tracks have been opened up and has created greater access to this area. Hopefully as things get better with the current situation, we can get back to improving the trail and information on it. It is on our web site and you will be able to see what is happening.

The author Chris Ward has also just published his new version of the 50 Squadron Profile, which runs to some 500 pages, a very comprehensive publication. There are more details on obtaining this in the newsletter.

We will be holding our usual Remembrance day service on Sunday 8th November with the service being taken by our Honorary Chaplain Kevin Hart. Next years memorial weekend will be on the weekend of 12/13 June 2021 and hopefully there will be no interruptions to the event. Sadly, though our veterans are getting few and far between and thus it is unlikely that we will have any veterans at the event. Wherever possible I keep in touch with some of our regulars just to see how they are doing. We still look forward however to getting together with old friends and indeed any new friends that wish to join us.

## **Annual Report**

As were unable to have the AGM in June, I thought it prudent to do a report of the status of Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe.

### **Finances**

Our current finances remain reasonably healthy with the balance in the bank at year end of £7252.05. Income mainly for donations and Subs. We received a substantial sum from a fundraising event run by Pam Connock in aid of the FRAFS, which raised £416.25. Membership continues to be an issue, especially renewals, this is explained In the membership summary. Expenditure is mainly on the newsletter and web site fees.

***Mike Connock***

## Membership

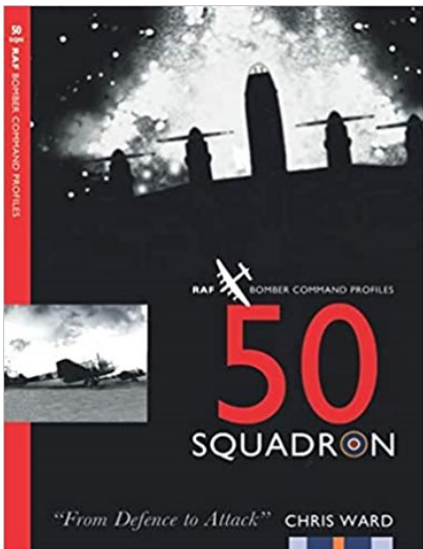
We currently have 122 members on our list, of which 19 are classed as veterans, which are honorary. Of the 103 paying members subs are overdue by 72 members despite reminders in the last newsletter and this does put a strain on our resources. We try to keep renewals in January of each year; however, I am aware that some members still renew in June and it will help if everyone pays at the beginning of the year.

## Web Site

We continue to maintain the current web site which is still under the No.50 & No.61 Squadrons Association; <http://www.no-50-and-no-61-squadrons-association.co.uk/> This is done to ensure we do not lose any of the links on the internet to our site. We have also managed to reduce the costs for the web site. We continue to get questions from relatives for information via the web site. Which are answered whenever we can.

## Facebook

The Facebook page for "Friend of RAF Skellingthorpe" goes from strength to strength and membership of this now stands at 255 and growing every week. It is very much more pro-active than the web site and we get questions every week which are regularly answered. Many unseen pictures are posted and provide an invaluable source for members.



## 50 Squadron Profile

For the 50 squadron aficionados, Chris Ward has updated his profile on the squadron. It comprises an in-depth detail of all the squadrons operations during the war. Comprising of nearly 500 pages of A4 it is a lengthy read and an invaluable source of information on all the raids. Many of the pictures used were supplied by Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe and we pleased to be able to help with it. You will see many of our veterans represented in it. The book can be obtained from the Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe by contacting Mike Connock at [m.connock2@ntlworld.com](mailto:m.connock2@ntlworld.com). The cost is £18.00 plus £3 postage. Or it can be obtained from Amazon

## **LANCASTER Mk111 DV197 50 Squadron VN-T**

We come across many stories of bravery during world war 2 and one such story came to light whilst exploring the operational Record Books for 50 Squadron. The story relates the aircraft DV197 and its crew on the night of 30/31st July 1943.

Sgt M M Cole and his crew were posted to 50 squadron form 1660 C.U. on 29 May 1943.

### **They were :**

<i>F/Sgt M M Cole</i>	<i>Pilot</i>
<i>Sgt H Rushton</i>	<i>Flight Engineer</i>
<i>Sgt F W Dock</i>	<i>Navigator</i>
<i>Sgt R Stanwix</i>	<i>W/Op A.G.</i>
<i>Sgt R S Shellis</i>	<i>Air Gunner</i>
<i>Sgt D E Westerman</i>	<i>Bomb Aimer</i>
<i>Sgt D T Jee</i>	<i>Air Gunner</i>

Their target on this night was Remscheid. The target was attacked by 273 aircraft, 95 Halifax's, 87 Stirling's, 82 Lancaster's and 9 Mosquitoes. 8 Stirling's, 5 Halifax's and 2 Lancaster's were lost. The Oboe marking was exceptionally accurate and the raid was deemed to be very successful.

Having carried out his bombing run DV197 came under attack from heavy flack. The pilots report taken from the operational record book is as follows.

### **O.R.B. report**

*Primary target attacked at 01.02 hrs from 20,000ft. No cloud or ground haze. Visibility very good. Target identified by red T.I. Gee fix obtained over target. Only three bombs had been dropped prior to the a/c reaching the target. These were well concentrated round T.I. and started fires. Pall of smoke up to 5,000ft seen after leaving.*

*Starboard elevator badly damaged, all turrets u/s. Rear turret hit by heavy flack though clear vision panel, killing R/G instantly. Aircraft was coned in searchlights just as it was getting into open country, after coning pips were heard on the Monica and although evasive action was taken it was some time before pips were lost.*

*Tried to lose searchlights by high speed weaving towards open country but were hit by heavy flak. The artificial horizon toppled also the D. Indicator, but the D.R. Compass only fell off about 40 degrees then settled down. (It was still normal. By the time control was regained the A/C was upside down at 3,000ft and doing 400 m.p.h. In the pilot's words "during this time it was only with the aid of the engineer that I managed to stop the speed building up. The navigator got a GEE fix and found that we were really on track, so I set a course for base. Then as we could not get a reply from the Rear Gunner the W/Op went back to see him and found him dead.*

*All trimming tabs were u/s so I gave the order to prepare to abandon. We then had 220 gallons of petrol left. As we neared the English coast our height was 2,000ft. In the meantime, the crew were carrying on with their own jobs, in a manner that made me proud to belong to the same crew. After leaving the Dutch coast our height was 4,000ft. It was only the fact that we had strapped the rudders back with the aid of my belt that I was able to control the aircraft at all.*

*The mid upper turret was hit and the air gunner was out for 20 minutes or more but was later found to be unhurt. The W/Op, Navigator and Engineer did some wonderful work, especially the W/Op who had to go backwards and forwards attending to people and different things.*

**F/Sgt Cole has since been granted the immediate award of the D.F.M.  
Sortie completed.**

Reports from the supplementary ORB's state that the aircraft eventually landed at RAF Kings Cliffe after mistaking the airfield for Wittering and crashed at the end of the run way careering over railway and another field.

The story however was further enhanced when I was contacted by Tony Hibberd who is based at RAF Wittering and RAF Kings Cliffe is a satellite of this base. According to the ORB's for Wittering when the aircraft crash landed at 03.00hrs Sgt Jee was still alive (although mortally wounded) when the Lancaster crash-landed at Kings cliffe at 0300. 31/07/43) He was rushed to SSQ (Stn Sick Quarters) at Wittering but died of his injuries shortly afterwards. Tony Hibberd was responsible for compiling the Wittering Roll of Remembrance Sgt Jee is remembered in Vol III of the RoR and is buried in the adjacent All Saints Churchyard.

DV197 was issued to 50 Squadron on 13 July 1943. According to the ORB's the aircraft was on its 5th operation. It was declared Cat E on 31 July and struck off charge on 14 August 1943.

This story is one of many acts of bravery during operations. Many are told through our newsletters and web site. Many like this are forgotten in the archives and when discover it is imperative that we bring them to light and recognise what these men went through.

**Mike Connock**



**This is the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Lancaster with the VN-T markings**

## **Avro Lincoln RF 471 Memorial**

### **Update by David Willey**

In 2015 the group were asked by an author researching local history if the group could identify an Avro Lancaster that had crashed within metres of the Bomb dump at RAF Skellingthorpe near the end of the WW2. After an exhaustive search for information and the landowner's permission and together with the invaluable help from a local aviation archaeology group being able to locate some small fragments of the aircraft during a field walk in 2017. We identified the aircraft as an Avro Lincoln which crashed in 1949. More research told us the aircraft was Avro Lincoln RF471 QR-Q from 61 Squadron RAF Waddington which crashed during a training flight on the 15th July 1949 sadly killing all the crew on board.

The cause of the crash at the RAF inquiry could not be established. The Avro Lincoln RF471 took off from RAF Waddington's 020 runway in appalling weather with heavy rain and low cloud they changed course to a heading WNW. We believe the cause of the crash may have been a serious mechanical failure or fuel fire on take-off and P/O Ratcliffe but may have then tried to carry out an emergency landing on the intact disused runways at RAF Skellingthorpe. The Avro Lincoln RF 471 was airborne approximately only 5 minutes before it crashed in the field only metres from the bomb dump at RAF Skellingthorpe which still had large bombs stored on the ramps from WW2.

At a FRAFS committee meeting in 2019 the committee unanimously decided to commemorate the tragic accident and especially crew of Avro Lincoln RF471 with a memorial plaque by locating it close to the bomb dump where the Avro Lincoln crashed in 1949.

Throughout 2019 FRAFS group chairman and his wife Mike and Pam Connock MBE kindly organised some fund-raising events to fund the purchase of a Plaque and its engraving. A plaque was duly commissioned in the Autumn of 2019 and plans were made to dedicate the plaque with a memorial service early in 2020. Sadly, due to the Corona virus lockdown the dedication service had to put on hold. Meanwhile the group were thrilled to have been contacted by several of the crew's families through the FRAFS Facebook page who have supplied information and photos of their loved ones that were killed in the crash. The idea now is to put together a small memorial booklet for the memorial service.

The FRAFS would like to thank Mat Knight (Nephew) for the use of F/L Raymond Henry Knights Photos in this Avro Lincoln Update

Note. F/L knight must have transferred from a wartime Air Bomber to Navigator later in his RAF Service .



### **The Crew of Avro Lincoln B2 RF471 QR-Q (Queenie)**

Pilot Officer Robert George RATCLIFFE 745200 Pilot  
Born 10 November 1919  
Age 29  
Date of Death 15 July 1949  
Cemetery name MINSTER THANET CEMETERY KENT

Flight Lieutenant Raymond Henry KNIGHT 154335 Navigator  
Date of Birth 16 June 1923  
Age 26  
Date of Death 15 July 1949  
Cemetery name ST. MICHAEL CHURCHYARD WADDINTON, LINCS

Navigator 2 Morris Guy WATERFALL 1606265  
Date of Birth 05 July 1925  
Age 24  
Date of Death 15 July 1949  
Cemetery name ST. MICHAEL CHURCHYARD WADDINGTON, LINCS

Engineer 1 Gerald McCARTHY 1869938  
Date of Birth 09 April 1925  
Age 24  
Date of Death 15 July 1949  
Cemetery name HORNCHURCH CEMETERY HORNCHURCH ESSEX.

Signaller 3 James Whitecross ADAMSON 412331  
Date of Birth 21 June 1926  
Age 23  
Date of Death 15 July 1949  
Cemetery Name ST. MICHAEL CHURCHYARD, WADDINGTON, LINCS.

Gunner 1B Clarence Stanley BRETT 1601189  
Date of Birth 21 November 1923

Age 25  
Date of Death 15 July 1949  
Cemetery Name PUTTENHAM CEMETERY GUILDFORD, SURREY.

Gunner 1 Frederick George SEARLE 1850136  
Date of Birth 28 April 1913  
Age 36  
Date of Death 15 July 1949.  
Cemetery Name EMSWORTH CEMETERY, HANTS.

**Photos of RH Knight**





. Above —R H Knights Funeral



## **ALLAN McDONALD**



We saddened to report the passing of Allan McDonald. Allan flew as a rear gunner with Hugh Skilling and crew on 27 operations between November 1944 and April 1945.

Allan always had a great smile for everyone and was regular at our reunions and made several visits to the International Bomber Command Centre, where he was a favourite. He passed away in May 2020.

## **Memorial Weekend**

This year sadly the memorial weekend was cancelled because of the Covid 19 virus. However, a group of members of the Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe decided to pay their respects on the Sunday.

The photo on the right shows Lynda Skinner with Chris and Christine Goldson along with family and friends. Flowers were laid by the children.



The photo left shows Lynda Skinner and Alan Biggs.



## **Arthur's Swan Song.**

### **By David Willey**

The committee and members of the Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe have been mourning the sad death of Arthur Atkinson one of the FRAFS greatest supporter and friend. Arthur died suddenly at his home on 21st February 2020. Arthur's funeral was held at Lincoln Crematorium on the 25th March 2020 with just close family and friends attending due to the Corona virus lockdown. The service was conducted by the FRAFS Honorary Padre Reverend (Wing Commander) Kevin Hart MA and Arthur's eulogy was read by Neil Cheeseman a member of the FRAFS.

Arthur was born on the 19th September 1922 in Lancaster, Lancashire and was educated at elementary school, owing to a scholarship won in 1933 not being accepted for financial reasons, but supplemented by evening classes during employment with a local Chartered Accountant. Arthur became reluctantly employed as a shop assistant with the Lancaster Co-op Society. Arthur was thrilled by the thought of enlistment into the RAF, and in 1941 Joined at the No 10 (Signal) Recruiting Centre at Blackpool as trainee wireless operator learning Morse code above the Blackpool Branch of Woolworths. After many weeks of RAF training at several RAF Training units around the UK it was at RAF Stormey Down, Wales, Gunnery School on the completion of Arthur's training he was awarded his AG brevet and Sgt's stripes.



Arthur was posted to 1661 Heavy Conversion Unit at RAF Winthorpe, Newark, converting onto four engine bombers where he joined the other 6 members of his wartime crew. Finally finishing his training at No 5 Lancaster Finishing School at RAF Syerston Notts.

On Sunday 13th February 1944 Arthur joined No.61 Sqn at RAF Coningsby for active duty.

On Sunday 13th February 1944 Arthur joined No.61 Sqn at RAF Coningsby for active duty. Arthur's crew's first operation was to Stuttgart on the 15th March 1944. This operation should have been aborted as the master compass failed due to an onboard engine generator fault. Arthur said his first operation proved to be a most traumatic flight, but for the observance of a ground crew manning an isolated Pundit Beacon site in Somerset they would have continued on across the Bristol Channel using up the last few gallons of fuel before crashing into the Welsh mountains on the other side of the Bristol Channel. In response to their distress signals, the flare path lights at RAF Westonzoyland, which was directly below, were illuminated, their first attempt to land had to be aborted because of an hydraulic failure which prevented the wheels and flaps from lowering by normal means. After a nail-biting overshoot, involving emergency procedures the flare path lights were about to be switched off. However due to the vigilance of the Pundit beacon ground staff, who realised that another landing was being attempted the crew finally managed to land using the onboard emergency hydraulic blow down system.

Arthur flew two more operations from RAF Coningsby before the squadron moved to RAF Skellingthorpe on 15th April 1944 where he completed his tour of operations. Arthur finished his tour of operations with an operation to Givrons on 26 July 1944.

Arthur was awarded the Legion D'Honneur by the French government for his part in the Normandy campaign.



After the war Arthur, managed Navy, Army and Air Force institutes on a civilian basis all over the world. Sadly, Arthurs wife who came from Grimsby died in 2007 after they had been together for 63 years. Arthur had a really busy year in 2019 with various visits and interviews and attendances at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln.

In June 2019 Arthur had a busy evening and attended the annual reunion dinner at the Community Centre in Skellingthorpe during a very enjoyable evening Arthur entertained us all with a serenade of memorable tunes on his keyboard which we all enjoyed very much.

On the following day, Arthur was present at the 50/61 Squadron memorial service at Birchwood Avenue. In the afternoon at 2pm at the community centre at Skellingthorpe a memorial service led by our Honorary Reverend (Wing Commander) Kevin Hart MA took place followed by afternoon tea.

On August the 8th 2019 Arthur was invited over to the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre East Kirkby as guest of the Panton Family and The Lincoln Short Wave Club to fulfil his desire to once again after 75 year operate a Avro Lancaster Radio installation. After an enjoyable time listening about Arthur's wartime service it was time to go on the way back to the car, we then took Arthur for an external tour around Avro Lancaster NX 611 Just Jane. As we approached Just Jane, we met up with one of the museums owners Louise Bush. Louise asked Arthur "would you like to go inside Just Jane". With that Arthur ejected himself from his wheelchair that he had been sat in all day and unbelievably scampered up the crew ladder into Just Jane. It was an absolute memorable day we all enjoyed it tremendously.



Finally, Arthur and Mike Connock attended the Lincolnshire Lancaster Association day at The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at RAF Coningsby in the September. It rained heavily for most of the day and the flying programme was cancelled. Most of the day was spent in the BBMF hangar looking at the Museum and Trade stands and sheltering from the heavy rain.

Whilst in the hangar Arthur was approached by Canadian Avro Lancaster Pilot John McClenaghan who was visiting the UK on holiday. John and Arthur spent nearly an hour talking to each other about their flying experiences. John talked to Arthur about flying and serving in the Canadian Air Force and flying for Air Canada and then flying the Canadian Lancaster Mk10 Vera. Arthur then told John about his WW2 31 operations as a wireless operator on Avro Lancaster with 61 Squadron starting his tour at RAF Coningsby some 74 years ago. It was super listening to their recollections.

Finally, it stopped raining and Arthur and Mike wandered out the hangar straight into a photo call by John Squires a professional photographer who asked Arthur if he would pose for some photos with the BBMF Lancaster as a backdrop. Arthur was then joined by a lovely lady called Linda dressed in period clothes. John took some magnificent photos. I think it made Arthur's day. Arthur Atkinson was a true gentleman and we shall miss him very much. RIP

