



Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe
(Home of No.50 & No.61 Squadrons)
Newsletter
Issue no 7 - August 2021



COMMITTEE

Mike Connock –Chairman / *Treasurer*
21 Goldfinch Close, Skellingthorpe, Lincoln LN6 5SF
01522 683997
m.connock2@ntlworld.com

Alan Biggs – Membership Secretary and Parade Marshall

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

Pam Connock
21 Goldfinch Close, Skellingthorpe, Lincoln LN6 5SF
01522 683997
pamconnock2@ntlworld.com

Lynda Skinner – Secretary

Julian Fisk 07730 260460
Scott Frances 07721 562935
David Willey
Callum Frances

Honorary Chaplain—Reverend Kevin Hart

FIND US AT
Facebook—Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe (Home of 50 & 61 Squadrons)
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/>

Operation Failed to Return
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNEMHp_c8Vg

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

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 7th edition of our newsletter for Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe. Previous newsletter can be viewed on our web site.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This has been another quiet period because of the pandemic with very little happening. We did manage to have our memorial service at the 50 and 61 squadrons memorial at Birchwood. Thanks to our chaplain Kevin Hart for once again taking the service. It was a somewhat restricted event because of the unknown regarding the pandemic. We were supported by representatives from the scouts and the City of Lincoln council, unfortunately the ATC were unable to attend although we did manage to have a couple of standard bearers. However, it was good to see relatives of late veterans the who had travelled from away, Bill Drinkall's Daughter Jill Harris and her son, Ted McRae's daughter Sue and her husband.



Another service was again held at the village memorial in Skellingthorpe, the service this time being taken by the local vicar, Rev. Sam Durant, and supported by 4 Standard Bearers with refreshments provided by the parish council.

At a recent meeting of the committee, we were pleased to welcome Lynda Skinner and Alan Biggs on to the committee. Lynda will take on the role of secretary and Alan as well as being the parade marshal, has agreed to take on the membership Secretary role.

As we start to get back to normal, we hope to finalise the Heritage trail around what remains of the old airfield.

Julian Fisk is overseeing this in conjunction with the city council.

The memorial weekend next year is set for the weekend of 11/12th June 2022. We have made it this weekend because it is the Queens Jubilee weekend on the previous weekend.

We also hope to organise a dinner on the Saturday evening for members and friends to once again meet up, much as we used to and would welcome members from far and wide. More details on this will be in our February newsletter along with a booking form.

As usual we will be having a service on Remembrance Sunday at the 50 & 61 memorial, to which all are welcome, and afterwards at the village memorial.

Many of you will remember Hugh Wynter who came to our reunions in the past. Many black and brown personnel flew with the two squadrons and an interesting article is provided in this newsletter on other aircrew who flew with 50 squadron.

Mike

Two Colonial Aircrew in 50 Squadron

The story of black and brown personnel in RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War has been largely absent from mainstream accounts of the Command. Thanks to a growing interest in neglected and untold stories, we now know far more about their experiences. For one thing, they were a presence on most RAF stations:

‘Almost every sizeable RAF station had its fair complement of Westindian cricketers, bowlers, batsmen, wicket-keepers, and the hierarchies of these stations were rightly proud of some of their more outstanding Westindian cricketers, many of whom often reflected that their best times in the Royal Air Force were spent on the cricket field’.

Many of the players who made their homes in Britain after the war continued to play league cricket, as did Jamaican Ralph Ottey (pictured). He had served in Motor Transport on various RAF stations in Lincolnshire and became captain of the Carlton Cricket Club when he settled in Boston.



Several hundred black and brown volunteers from British colonies and the Commonwealth were accepted as aircrew, including from South Asia, the Indian Ocean region, West Africa, the Caribbean, not forgetting the approximately fifty New Zealand Maoris, who served mostly with Royal New Zealand Air Force squadrons in East Anglia.

Among those airmen who served with 50 Squadron were Roland Becherel and Carl Carby. Becherel volunteered from Mauritius, formerly a French possession which was ceded to Britain in 1810. The colonial government organised a training scheme for wireless operators locally; those volunteers of 'pure European descent' then joined RAF squadrons based in the Middle East, while those regarded as 'Coloured' travelled to the UK to serve in squadrons here. French-speaking Becherel was one of the latter; he was 19 years of age when he was accepted for training in 1941. Posted to 50 Squadron, he was killed on an operation on 10 May 1944 and is buried at Forest-Sur-Marque. By chance, this photo of him surfaced when a filing cabinet was being cleared out.



Carl Carby's story is a remarkable one of a 'return' to Lincolnshire. It has been traced by his daughter Professor Hazel Carby, in her award-winning study, *Imperial Intimacies*. It begins in the village of Coleby in the late 18th century, where the Carby family were agricultural workers. Several male members of the family joined the British army in the 1780s, possibly because of poor prospects on the land. One of them, Lilly Carby ('Lilly' was his mother's maiden name), reached Jamaica with the 10th Regiment of Foot in 1789, but was soon discharged, possibly because of illness.

Lilly Carby worked on various plantations before acquiring his own, which he called 'Lincoln'. He named the enslaved people who worked for him, as well as his (known) children, after relatives in Lincolnshire,.

Two of his children, William and Bridget, were born to a free woman of colour, Mary Ivey Mann; one, Matthew, was born to Bridget, an enslaved woman on a neighbouring estate, in 1807. Though baptised, Matthew was enslaved until abolition in the 1830s.

Four generations down Matthew Carby's line, Carl Carby was born in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1921. Although experiencing extreme poverty, he believed that education was his only means to social mobility and attended night school while working as the family's main breadwinner. He was one of the first black Caribbean volunteers to be accepted for aircrew training at the outbreak of the Second World War.



He trained in Jamaica and Canada and was then posted to RAF Coastal Command in 1943. Towards the end of the war, he transferred to RAF Bomber Command; he did not talk about this period to his family, except to mention that he had participated in the bombing of Essen.

Photo by kind permission of Hazel Carby

By 1946, he was stationed with 50 Squadron at RAF Waddington – a mere 2.4 miles from Coleby. Carl, who died in York in 2014, never knew how geographically close he had come to his origins; this only emerged during Hazel’s research.

Carl settled in London after the war with his wife Iris, a white Welsh woman. They faced enormous hostility, even having to live separately until they could afford a house of their own. Another aspect of this hostility was that no-one believed that Carl had served ‘the mother country’ during the war. Once, when Hazel stood up in her primary school class and talked of her father’s RAF service, the teacher told her it was impossible, she was making it up. As a result, asserting the fact that he had indeed served, and with a great deal of pride, became far more important than the details of squadrons and stations.

This need to remember differently as a result of post-war experience has come through many of the interviews conducted with veterans for the IBCC Digital Archive, as well as through published memoirs.

You can listen to an interview with Hazel Carby discussing her family history and Carl’s RAF service at Interview with Hazel Carby · IBCC Digital Archive (lincoln.ac.uk)

Heather Hughes. Head, IBCC Digital Archive

Robert N. Murray, *Lest We Forget: The Experiences of World War II Westindian Ex-Service Personnel*. Nottingham, Nottingham Westindian Combined Services Association and Hansib Publishing, 1996, p. 95.

See <https://75nzsquadron.wordpress.com/maori-aircrew-who-served-with-75nz-squadron-39-45/> and Messages from Māori members of the RAF, 1943 | 28 Māori Battalion (28maoribattalion.org.nz)

Colonial Office Papers CO 323/1828/39, TNA.

IBCC Losses Database: Becherel R - International Bomber Command Centre (internationalbcc.co.uk).

Hazel Carby, *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands*. London, Verso, 2019.

Addendum:

Rolan Jean Becherel was a Wireless Operator with 50 squadron and was flying in Lancaster NN694, VN-C when it was lost on a raid to Lille on 10 May 1944. All the crew were lost.

Mike Connock

Avro Tudor Tragedy

By David Willey

In April 2021 Porthcawl author and film maker Anthony Hontoir contacted the FRAFS facebook page asking for help with a documentary film he is making on the air crash at RAF Llandow South Wales. The Captain of the Avro Tudor that crashed at RAF Llandow was Captain Denis John Parsons MBE. Denis who had trained as a RAF pilot during WW2 being later posted to RAF Swinderby and finally to 50 squadron at RAF Waddington as 657873 Pilot II Denis Parsons on the Avro Lincoln Bomber in 1947. Anthony Hontoir is desperate to find a photo of Denis and wonders if anyone knew Denis Parsons at RAF Swinderby or whilst he was serving on the Avro Lincoln's at RAF Waddington if they did, please would they contact Anthony though the FRAFS website.



Anthony DJ Parsons Grave

The Airliner involved in the RAF Llandow crash was Avro Tudor V G-AKBY called “Star Girl” and was owned by the air charter company Fairflight Ltd based at Langley Aerodrome near Slough, G-AKBY had flown in the Berlin Airlift of 1948-49, ferrying fuel supplies into the western part of the German city, with Captain Denis Parsons at the controls, Captain Parsons was very familiar with G-AKBY and had accumulated many flight hours as pilot in charge. But on its ill-fated journey to the Rugby Final between Ireland and Wales in Ireland, seemingly was a routine charter flight from RAF Llandow Aerodrome to Dublin Airport some 300 miles on Friday 10th March 1950, with a return flight two days later. The Avro Tudor crew were Captain Denis Parsons, co-pilot Andrew Graham, wireless operator Bernard O’Carroll, flight engineer John Berry and air stewardess Daphne Davidson.

The outward flight was routine, the return journey was again routine until the final approach to runway 28 at RAF Llandow, the Avro Tudor became very low – too low, according to witnesses – and then an attempt to correct it was made to reduce rate of descent by applying power. The four Rolls Royce Merlin engines were heard to go to full power and the aircraft was seen to climb steeply for a moment before stalling and diving nose down into the ground, breaking up on impact sadly killing eighty on board the aircraft including the flight crew making it what was then in 1950 the world’s worst aviation disaster.

At the Court of enquiry, the cause of the crash was not established, but the subsequent Court of enquiry pointed to the likeliest reason being for the crash that the aircraft's centre of gravity was out of accepted limits.

Note

The type 689 Avro Tudor was the commercial version of the Avro Lincoln bomber, it first flew in 1945.

Sadly, Avro Lancaster designer Roy Chadwick and Avro chief test pilot Bill Thorn, David Wilson, co-pilot, John Webster, flight engineer and radio operator were killed when Avro Tudor II G-AGSU crashed whilst on a production test flight on the 23rd August 1947 at the Avro Factory at Woodford Greater Manchester. Eddie Talbot, flight engineer, Stuart Davies, chief designer was also on board they survived but were badly injured.

The cause of the accident was loss of control due to an aileron control fault. Roy Chadwick, Bill Thorn and David Wilson are buried in the local graveyard at Woodford Greater Manchester.



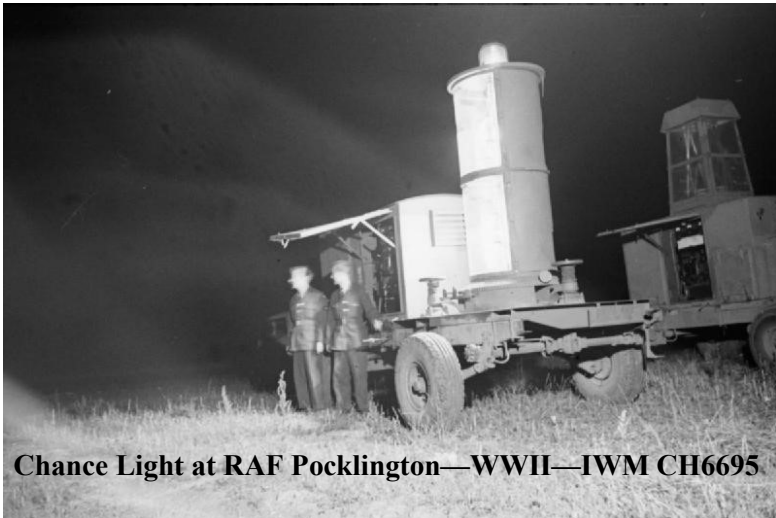
Tudor g-akby

Spotted

By David Willey

During a visit to my friend Tim's farm the other day I spotted a very rare piece of WW2 RAF airfield equipment. Tim who has been collecting WW2 military equipment for many years was looking for an airfield pundit to restore and he located and purchased this Chance Light from a farm in Bedfordshire. Tim's Chance Light is very complete but needs major restoration around the engine and generator housing area.

Chance Brothers and Company who built the airfield floodlight started their business in 1824 based in Spon Lane, Smethwick, West Midlands. They were pioneers of British glassmaking technology. The Chance Brothers specialised in a great number of glass products including the Fresnel lenses for lighthouses.



Chance Light at RAF Pocklington—WWII—IWM CH6695

The Chance Light was basically a mobile airfield flood light tower illuminating the landing area and apron area at night. They were positioned at several locations around the aerodrome pointing in towards the centre to illuminate the landing area usually on the left of the runway when viewed from the approach.

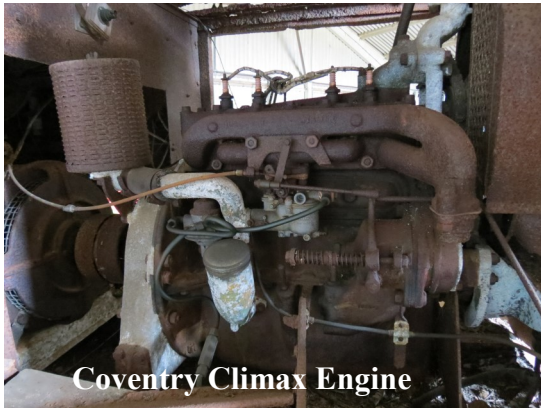
The Chance light is mounted on a Brockhouse fore carriage independent torsion bar trailer and is powered by a 16.9 hp Coventry Climax hand swung side valve petrol engine directly driving a GEC AC generator which is coupled to a GEC 106 volt exciter generator. On the top of the light tower is a red avoidance light powered by 12 volts dc. The battery is charged by a Lucas 12volt dc dynamo driven from the engine with an auxiliary belt. Also, on the trailer is mounted a reel of cable to supply power for airfield runway Glms.

Photo Below—Chance Tower



The light tower has two 2400-watt bulbs fitted with adjustable reflectors and the light tower can be rotated 270 degrees adjustable by a segmented lock.

I would like to thank my friend Tim Sheldon for letting me write about his Chance Light and Dr Malcolm Dick BA, PGCE, PhD senior Lecturer at the University of Birmingham for his help with information of the Chance Brothers.



Coventry Climax Engine



Makers Plate



Chance Light on a Lorry