



Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe
(Home of No.50 & No.61 Squadrons)
Newsletter
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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

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 8th edition of our newsletter for Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe. Previous newsletters can be viewed on our web site -

www.no-50-and-no-61-squadrons-association.co.uk

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Time marches on and yet again we are making plans under the threat of the pandemic, having thought it would be all over by this time. When making plans for the memorial weekend, we need consider what implications the pandemic may have on that. We have decided the weekend will go ahead as normal, although the Saturday evening will be a meet and greet with suitable refreshments. This way we are keeping any potential losses to a minimum should anything have to be cancelled. A schedule for the weekend is in this newsletter.

Some work has been done to expose some of the Bomb Dump on what remains of the old airfield. The roadways and the bomb ramps have been cleared. The work was done by Hill Holt Wood in conjunction with the City Council. Maybe if time permits, we can do a walk round of this area in June.

Whilst our Facebook presence goes from strength to strength our subscription membership remains static, with around 110 members. A long way from the heady days when we had hundreds of members.

The Facebook page is a great forum for finding out about relatives and their crews, with a great deal of knowledge available. It currently has around 450 members.



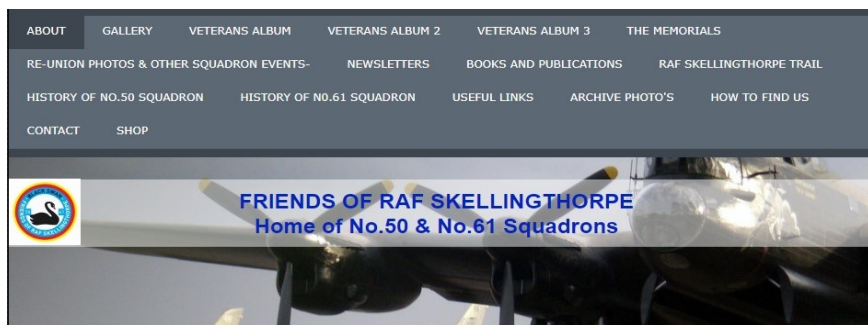
Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe (Home of...

Public group · 474 members



Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe was established in 2017, ready to takeo...

Subscriptions are now due for 2022. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you are unsure about whether you are up to date or not.



The web site continues to be run under the banner of No.50 & No.61 Squadrons Association and contains many stories and photographs, and these are added to as they come in. We also get many requests for information through the web site.

I hope to see many of you in June - *Mike Connock*

Reg Payne



We are saddened to report that Reg Payne passed away on 8th January 2022. Reg was a lovely man who was popular at all our reunions and other events. He attended all reunions with his wife Freda who passed away in 2012.

Reg was a Wireless Operator on Flt Lt Michael Beetham's crew, later to become Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham GCB CDE DFC AFC FRAeS.

Although he completed a full tour with 50 Squadron, he was lucky to survive when on a fighter affiliation exercise an engine caught fire and with the danger of part of the wing falling off the order was given to abandon aircraft. On board were Beetham's crew and a pilot and two air gunners from another crew. Reg managed to bale out. 4 of F/L Beetham's crew, Don Moore FE, Fred Ball R/G, Sgt Pudduck and Sgt King (P/O Jennings' gunners) remained trapped in the aircraft as it crashed and lost their lives.

These men are remembered on the IBCC walls of remembrance.

One of Reg's party pieces was to read an article from a newspaper or similar in morse code, bystanders could hear him going Dah-Dah-Dit etc.

Reg was also a talented artist and must have painted

hundreds of pictures, many were of his beloved Lancaster and his exploits in her.

He also painted many scenes of the villages in his local area. A lot of his painting went into print, and they can be seen hanging many homes of the people who knew him. In addition, some of his paintings are displayed on the village community Centre and Parish Office, plus of course at the exhibition in the Leisure Centre near to the Birchwood Memorial.

His painting of VN-Q Queenie is shown below.



Reg Payne's funeral was on 31st January and was attended by members of the Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe and from the community of Skellingthorpe where he was held in great esteem.

Squadron Leader Bill Drinkall



Many of you will remember the wonderful Bill Drinkall who was a regular at the reunions. Whilst the story of his RAF career is on our web site, I would like to add to his exploits.

Recently a story came to light of his time in the far east. The story of him finding and escorting a flight of Mustang's back to base, that had become lost in Bad weather is told on the web site.

However, the recent story that emerged was found in an article in an Australian Newspaper from 1947.

Daring Mercy Flight

Racing against time to save the life of an Indian serviceman of the British Common-wealth Occupation Force, Flight-Lieutenant W. Drinkell flew his Royal Air Force Transport aircraft for more than 100 miles along dangerous winding valleys of Central Japan in a recent midnight flight. Drinkell was called from his bed at Iwakuni just after midnight and told that Miho Station, 120 miles away, had urgently requested transport for an Indian serviceman.

He was told that a few hours' delay might mean the difference between life and death for the patient.

Because of night flying hazards, Drinkell called for a volunteer crew and with Flight Lieutenant John McMillian as radio operator, and Flying Officer Foy as navigator, he took off on the mercy flight. An experienced pilot, Drinkell knew every mile of the area and he made the trip in almost record time.

An ambulance with the patient and a medical orderly was waiting on the air strip at Mino, where Drinkell was warned that, because of the patient's injury, he would have to keep the aircraft at the lowest possible altitude on the return journey.

He flew the aircraft back along the deep winding valleys, often coming lower than the mountain crests to make sure the sick man suffered no harm. A second ambulance was waiting on the landing strip at Iwakuni to rush the patient to hospital. The mercy errand was successful as the serviceman reached hospital in time.



It was during his time in the far East that he was awarded the Air Force Cross.

Thanks to Bills Daughter Jill Harris for bringing this story to our attention.

Mike Connock

FRIENDS OF RAF SKELLINGTHORPE

ITINERARY FOR MEMORIAL WEEKEND 2022

A table confirming the event Itinerary will be included within the newsletter and advertised on the Website.



REMEMBRANCE



As is usual the Skellingthorpe village service was held on the 11th of November at 11.00.

The service was taken by the Revd. Sam Durant, the Rector of St Lawrence's Church.

Many parish residents attended along with representatives from the Parish Council, local school children and Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe



Wreaths were laid by the Vice Chairman of the Parish Council, Chris Lamb and by the chairman of Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe, Mike Connock.

Refreshments were provided after the event by the Parish Council.

On Remembrance Day, Sunday 14th of November, our service was held at the 50 & 61 memorial at Birchwood. We were pleased to welcome the full civic party from the City of Lincoln, including the Mayor and Consort, the City Sherriff and Consort and several Councillors. Also in support were the 204 (City of Lincoln) Air Cadets and the Scouts.



The service was taken by our Chaplain Kevin Hart.



Wreaths were laid by the Mayor, the Chairman of Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe, and the other organisations.

We are grateful for the refreshments which were provided beforehand by the leisure centre.

Avro Lancaster 80th Anniversary

by David Willey

March 2022 marks the 80th anniversary of the Avro Lancaster entering RAF Service. During March several events are being organised in the UK, Australia and Canada to commemorate the event. The first operational Lancaster sortie was on the 2 March 1942 by 44 Squadron based at RAF Waddington to Heligoland Bight to lay naval mines.

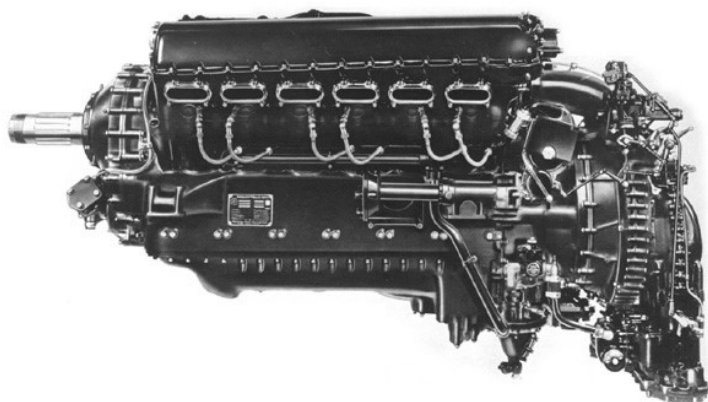
The Royal Airforce Amateur Radio Society and the Lincoln ShortWave Club are taking part in special event stations around the country between the 1st of March to 28th March 2022 at RAF Waddington, RAF Halton, RAF Cosford and RAF East Kirkby to commemorate the event using the call sign GB80LAN.

The Lincoln Short Wave Club will also be operating from the International Bomber Command Centre. Lincoln using the callsign GB6IBC on March 5th, 2022.



In the late 1930's the Avro Aircraft Company undertook to design a twin engine medium bomber to the British Air Ministry Specification P.13/36 the bomber was designated the Avro Manchester. The first test flight of the Avro Manchester was in July 1939 with Avro chief test pilot Captain H.A. (Sam) Brown at the controls.

Sadly, the Manchester was ultimately deemed an operational failure due to the unreliability of its 1750 horsepower Rolls Royce X 24 Cylinder Vulture engine. Avro test pilot S.A (Bill) Thorn made 5 forced landing with the Avro Manchester due to engine failure caused by lack of lubrication to the conrod bearings. Eventually the Rolls Royce Vulture engine was discontinued in favour of the new Rolls Royce Merlin. Only 202 Avro Manchester's were built. Below—Rolls Royce Merlin



Avro Manchester BT 308 was redesigned by Avro Chief Designer Roy Chadwick and originally named the Avro Manchester 3 but was later renamed the Avro Lancaster after increasing the wingspan and adding four Rolls Royce V12 Merlin Engines.

The first prototype Lancaster BT 308 maiden flight was on the 9th January 1941 at RAF Ringway it was test flown again by Captain H.A.(Sam) Brown. The Lancaster was an immediate success and eventually 7,337 were produced for the Royal Air Force.



Avro Manchester L7486 1A taken during a test flight over **Saxilby in Lincolnshire** during 1942 (notice the lack of squadron markings) L7486 eventually went on charge with 207 squadron then 50 Squadron and was eventually written off at RAF Skellingthorpe on the 25th March 1942. This happened during a training flight when it bounced on landing and stalled. Flt/Sgt J.C. Atkinson DFM and crew walked away unhurt.





Above—Lancaster Cockpit



Left - Radio Amateur Brian Milne G4HIV from the Lincoln Short Wave Club demonstrating the working vintage T1154/R1155 Avro Lancaster wireless equipment at the LAHC East Kirkby.

***All Photos Supplied
Supplied by David Willey***

Vickers Wellington BK 158

By David Willey

Just recently the Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe Facebook page were contacted by 199 squadron researcher Carol Wharmby - Gordon who is trying to locate the crash site of Vickers Wellington III BK158 near Skellingthorpe for the families of the crew.

On the 14th March 1943 Pilot Sgt Hockley and his crew boarded BK158 for a test flight to check engine boost. They took off from RAF Ingham at 15:32. Some 30 minutes later BK158 was seen approaching Skellingthorpe from a northeast direction at about 3000 feet. Seconds later BK158 was witnessed to complete two full rolls before plunging from 500 feet nose down vertically into a field near the perimeter of the RAF Skellingthorpe, killing all the crew.

The wreckage was examined the next day and it was thought that the cause of the accident was possibly the dinghy cover had broken away from its securing pins and had fouled the elevator surfaces causing loss of control.

Members of the FRAFS are going to meet up with Carol in early April to see if we can locate the field where Sgt Hockley and his crew were sadly killed.

Crew of Vickers Wellington III - BK158 EX-G

Ft/Sgt.	T.F Hockley	RAFVR	Pilot.
Sgt.	L.G. Vaughan.	RAFVR	Navigator/ Air Bomber.
W/O.	A.G Shorten.	RCAF	WOP/AG.
Sgt.	A.M Cormack.	RAFVR	AG.
Sgt.	L. Joiace.	RAF	WOP/AG.