



***Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe***  
***(Home of No.50 & No.61 Squadrons)***  
***Newsletter***  
***Issue no 11– Autumn 2023***



## COMMITTEE

**Mike Connock –Chairman/*Membership/treasurer***  
21 Goldfinch Close, Skellingthorpe, Lincoln LN6 5SF  
01522 683997  
comick41@gmail.com

**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

**Julian Fisk 07730 260460**

**Scott Frances 07721 562935**

**Callum Frances**

**Jon Taylor**

## FIND US AT

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

**www.friendsofrafskellingthorpe.co.uk (under construction 8/18)**  
**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://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNEMHp_c8Vg)**

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

## **CHAIRMANS REPORT**

Our AGM was held over the memorial weekend in June and all the committee were re-elected and, we welcome Jon Taylor on to the committee. Jon's father flew with 50 squadron and his uncle flew with 61 squadron. The financial accounts showed a balance of £8033.07, bearing in mind we are committed to ring fencing £3000 of this for the maintenance of the 50 & 61 Squadrons memorial.

Our Facebook page goes from strength to strength, and we came across an RAF Skellingthorpe sign via the Facebook page, more on this in a later article.

The service at Birchwood was very well attended, as was the village service organised by the parish council with a lunch for members and invited guest.

It seems this summer arrived in early June and soon departed, with the weather being less than favourable, let's hope we get an Indian summer.

The next event is the Remembrance service on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June. This held at 13.30hrs to enable others to attend the 11.00hrs services elsewhere.

We look forward to seeing as many members there as possible.

Regards

**Mike Connock**

## Follow Up to the Crash of LM 720 at Bard Hill By Dave Wiley

This 61 Squadron Lancaster was lost due to bad weather upon return from a raid to a refinery in Leuna, Germany.

Two of the Crew, Flight Engineer Sgt Earl and Mid Upper Gunner Sgt Douglas were both buried at a grave in Well-Next-the-Sea.

Whilst Dave was on his holidays in Wells, he decided to track down and photograph the graves. Not knowing exactly where they were resting, he eventually visited 3 grave yards and clocked up some 6 miles walking around them.

These images show how well the whole graveyard is maintained and of course their grave stones are in particularly good order.



## **WHEN YOUR LUCK RUNS OUT**

As well as my involvement with the Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe, I am also a volunteer with the International Bomber Command Centre and work on the Digital Archive. One of my roles is creating the Metadata for the log books that have been received by the archive.



*Image courtesy of IBCC losses database*

This story relates to a log book that I have worked on recently. It relates to a Sergeant R W Beales, a Flight Engineer who was taking off on his sixth operation to Mainz, when the starboard outer engine caught fire and he had to bale out at around 1000 ft. Sadly the pilot and navigator were killed in the resulting crash. He was lucky to survive.

Within a week he had joined another crew and on his very next operation to Frankfurt his aircraft crashed with the loss of all on board. Robert Beales who came from Lincolnshire was flying in Stirling W7562 when he died.

We come across many stories like this but this one stuck with me as it was sad that his luck had run out having had two consecutive crashes.

**Mike Connock**

## THE HOMECOMING OF THE RAF SKELLINGTHORPE SIGN

We get many posts on our Facebook page but one that caught our attention recently was relating to an item that was being sold on eBay. It consisted of a sign saying the “Former RAF Skellingthorpe”.



Unfortunately, there were a couple of adverse comments regarding the seller who had bought it at an auction quite innocently and we were disappointed to hear this. It was on eBay for a starting bid of £250. I contacted the seller who although annoyed with the comments he had got, agreed that the sign should come home to where it be-

longed, and he subsequently agreed to sell it for £150 to which we gladly agreed.

Julian Fisk then set up a Just Giving page to raise the money to buy the sign and this raised £360, more than enough to buy the sign and install it.

The plan is that it should be erected near to the main entrance to RAF Skellingthorpe and Guardroom, which was at the top of Birchwood avenue, where there is a triangle of grass.

As with all these things it will be subject to planning and Julian is resolving this with the planning authorities and the City Council.

Alongside this we hope to erect a full-size silhouette of an airman, so maybe we will need to do some more fundraising for this.

The origin of the sign was a mystery until a discussion with Pete Small of our committee, and he stated that he remembers seeing this sign at a foundry near Boston and was made as part of the North Kesteven Airfield Trail. Whilst all the signs were erected at the former airfields, the one for Skellingthorpe was never erected as the former airfield was now in the city boundary and thus not in North Kesteven.

It has now come home.

**Mike Connock**



## MEMORIAL WEEKEND

The weekend once again proved to be very successful and thanks to all those involved and to the many members of the public who attended. Our Sunday service was held at the No.50 & No.61 Squadrons Association memorial at Birchwood. We are eternally grateful to our Chaplain Kevin Hart who conducts all our services and this was no exception.



We welcomed the Mayor of Lincoln Councillor Biff Bean and Consort as well as the Sherriff councillor Neil Murray and Consort. In addition to several local councillors. The 204 (City of Lincoln) Air Cadets were on parade to support the event. Wreaths were laid by the FRAFS Chairman, the City Mayor and other

organisations. We were fortunate to have a bugler to play the last post. The chap concerned has agreed to become our official bugler for which we are most grateful.

Although we had decided not to hold a Saturday event because of the falling numbers, we did have a get together for those who had travelled for the weekend at the Stone



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Arms in the village where we enjoyed a meal and social evening. Around 24 of us attended including veterans families and village supporters. Although it became a bit ad hoc in organising it proved to be successful, so we will try and formalise it for the future and get people who are interested in joining us on the Saturday evening to express their interest. We will include more

details in the Spring 2024 newsletter..



Following on from the Birchwood service, members and guests were invited to lunch provided by the parish Council, which was followed by the service held at the village memorial. This was sup-

ported by several standard bearers. The service was taken by the local vicar Rev Sam Durren. Following the service, refreshment were available to all those attending, in the community centre. This was followed by a fly past by a Spitfire of the Battle of Britain Memorial flight, which proved to be a fitting end to an excellent day.





## LES LOOSEMORE

*During his time as a member of the squadrons association the late Les Loosemore submitted many stories for publication. This one seems to have been missed so it is included as a final salute to Les who passed away in 2016. This story he tells of his time at Lanacaster finishing school to joining 61 squadron.*

Arrived at L.F.S on	11-12-1944
Flying commenced on	29-12-1944
Flying ceased on	08-02-1945

The purpose of this course was to prepare us, as a crew, to serve and survive on an operational Station with a squadron. Much had to be learnt about putting the finishing touches to our flying training in such a large aircraft. very important for our eventful survival in such a dangerous time. Most exercises while in flying short distances, were for the benefit of the Pilot, to practice his landings and take offs, known as Circuits and bumps, followed by flying on 3 engines to simulate engine failure on operations.

We did go on a special training flight, to simulate the conditions of carrying a very heavy bomb load to the target.

A trip to the Wash, just off the East coast to drop a flare, for any of the other crew members who would like to fire our guns at it, then the long climb started by heading to the south coast turning West for Cornwall at Wadebridge in Cornwall. We turned North and had gained a very good height, unfortunately our flight path took us over Milford Haven and Pembroke Docks! A very sensitive area.

We carried on flying North and climbing all the time, till we reached the point where we could not climb any more. It got that cold, I could not move my mid upper turret I checked with the rear gunner, and he had the same problem. This taught us to keep our turrets moving, as we would not be able to defend ourselves over enemy territory.

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One frosty day, while joining the circuit to land, I noticed a large black shadow on the ground, it was edged in a blood red band no one was to talk about it . Prohibited! Keep Out I noticed a live shell burst 200 yards to our starboard side and notified the Pilot and informed him he was over enemy territory from a rugby playing point of view, Just like N.Z, and Australia. We watched as the Gunners below adjusted the height of the shells to explode at the same height as us, they only used about 4 shells to match our height.

The reporting of crashed or missing aircraft, on training or operations, were discouraged to avoid lowering the morale of the surviving crews, even though you may have witnessed many aircraft go down, it could always be said, the missing aircraft had gone to another station to Form a new Sqn.

Having successfully completed the L.F.S. course, we were posted to 61 Sqn. at Skellingthorpe, Lincoln, where a spanking brand-new Lancaster awaited us courtesy of His Majesties Government, Its delivery test and checks had been carried by the ground staff, so we did our own ground test, such as running the engines, checking turret manipulation etc. Each crew member would check and set up his own equipment.

Records prove, we lost our aircraft, QR-T, 4 times when taken out by other crews, it was decided not to issue the letters any more as they had become jinxed.

As we had successful trips with QR-T, and many other aircraft of B flight I mentioned it might have been we were alerted to the possible dangers awaiting us each trip however we got our QR-T letters painted on our new aircraft, and no one else flew in it from then on. and here we are still living to tell the tale.

Les Loosemore

## HARRY CAMMISH 100



Harrison Stanley Cammish was born on 21st September 1923. We wish him a very happy 100th birthday .

Harry was born in Scarborough. He volunteered for aircrew duties and was trained as a Flight Engineer at RAF St Athan. Following this he did his heavy conversion

and was posted to 50 Squadron at RAF Skellingthorpe .

On his sixteenth operation their aircraft was attacked and he was forced to bale out over occupied France. He was flying with P/O W H Taylor and crew on a raid to Augsburg, the aircraft crashed near Embermenil, 40Km ESE of Nancy. (Ref Chorley).

He managed to evade the Germans and heading west along a railway line, he came to a small station where he knocked on the office door from where he was taken to a nearby cottage. After



arriving at Toulouse ready to cross into Spain he and his comrades were attacked by the Germans. After a narrow escape over the mountains, he made it into Spain and was put in contact with the British consulate. He was repatriated back to the UK via Gibraltar.

Post war Harry emigrated to New Zealand in 1956, where he now lives.

*Photo's courtesy of Barbara Hunter NZBCA.*

## ITS THAT MAN AGAIN

Help us solve the mystery. We are unable to identify the photo of a Lancaster bomb panel. The panel was purchased by a resident of Skellingthorpe during the war at an auction in the local village hall to raise funds for the war effort.

Several theories have been discussed. The Shamrock suggests that the pilot was Irish. Also the IT-MA we believe was based on a radio programme at the time called "Its that man again" and was hosted by Tommy Handley, so was the pilots name Handley? Why the hyphen between IT and MA?



There is also evidence of a DFC that has been overpainted.

It can be assumed that if it was sold during the war it must be from an aircraft that was written off on site and damaged beyond repair.

We will continue our research to try and identify it from air-field crashes, but any help would be appreciated.