



Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe
(Home of No.50 & No.61 Squadrons)
Newsletter
Issue no 12– Spring 2024



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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>

CHAIRMANS REPORT

Another year is upon us and Spring is fast approaching, and before we know it the memorial weekend will be here. This is planned for the weekend of the 15/16th June 2024. On the Saturday will be the AGM at 17.00hrs, following which we will adjourn to a local hostelry for a bite to eat and a chance to catch up with old friends. If you plan to join us on the Saturday evening for a meal I would appreciate it if you could let me know, so I can book the venue. You can contact me by email or phone, both of which are at the front of this newsletter. The Sunday service will be a 11.30hrs at the Birchwood Memorial. Following this we will process to the village for lunch for members and invited guests, provided by the Parish Council. The service at the village memorial in Skellingthorpe. This will be held at 14.00hrs. However if you require lunch then please advise Lynda Skinner, who is the parish clerk, so that she knows numbers for the lunch. You can contact her at parish.clerk@skellingthorpe.org.uk, or ring 01522 683061.

We are planning to erect a memorial plaque to the Avro Lincoln of 61 Squadron which crashed near to the village with the loss of all on board. This happened on 15th July 1949, so the dedication will happen around this time in July of this year. Hopefully we will have more concrete plans by the time of the AGM.

Mike Connock

REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

The remembrance service was held on Sunday 12th November. Well attended by the Lincoln Civic Party, the 204 squadron (City of Lincoln) Air Cadets, the Birchwood Rainbows and Brownies plus

members of the public. As usual the service was taken by our chaplain Kevin Hart. Wreaths were laid by the Deputy mayor of Lincoln, Alan Briggs, a wreath on behalf of Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe and various other organisations. Thanks to our committee member Jon Taylor who took the photo's. Some of his other photos can be see on our Facebook page.



204 Squadron (City of Lincoln) Air Cadets



ABSENT FRIENDS

Arthur J Aldridge



Arthur served at RAF Skellingthorpe as an Engine Fitter.

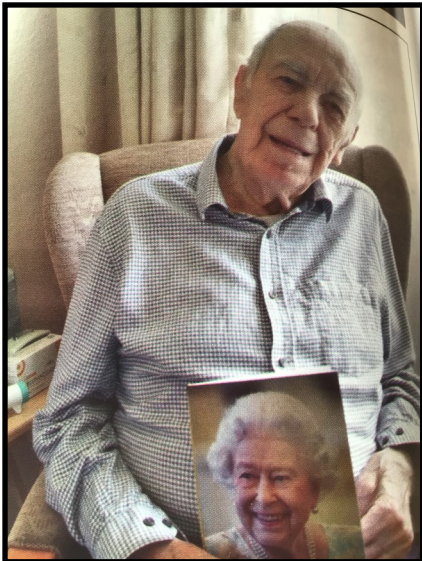
After receiving his call up letter he chose to join the R.A.F. but colour blindness prevented him from training as a pilot so when he joined on 20th November 1941 it was to train as a flight mechanic. They marched every day 2 miles there and back to attend the course, which lasted for 3 months. After eighteen months of getting fit on the beaches of Blackpool, where he celebrated his 21st birthday, he was sent to Lincoln for target training and then onto RAF Skel-

lingthorpe and Barnby. Here he worked on the Lancaster Bomber and the Lysander as an engine fitter. He flew in both a Lysander and a Martinet and also a Lancaster Bomber which he managed to get a lift on that was flying down to Kent. In 1946 he did a spell in the Azores, he flew there in a Dakota, whilst there they worked on the Wellington bombers, most of the American crews had gone home. Their journey home was by a long and then a smaller boat, it

took 4 days to get to Liverpool, and a train to Hampshire. After several months they flew to Scotland in a Halifax Bomber and soon after were demobbed.

He was a member of the British Legion which he was enlisted into by his Father in 1944 and served as a Poppy organiser for 42 years.

Passed away at 102 years old on Saturday 30th September 2023 following an accident.



We are grateful to his daughter Linda for the details on her late father. MC

DORTMUND EMS CANAL.

Many of us will have had relatives who flew on ops to this target at Ladbergen. Towards the end of the war it was one of the most frequently bombed targets, due to its strategic industrial importance to the German war effort.

My Uncle was the WOP in ME732 which attacked the canal on 23rd September 1944 and was shot down over the Dutch border on the return leg. My Uncle, F/Sgt Phillip Matthews and 5 of the 8 man crew (that night) were killed when their Lancaster crashed into the Dutch town of Almelo. 6 civilians were also killed. Both gunners were able to bale out, Sgt W Ravenhill becoming a POW after being treated for burns and Sgt R Fellows evading.

It was a bad night for RAF Skellingthorpe as 6 Lancasters failed to return, 2 from 50 Sqn and 3 from 61 Sqn on the Ladbergen op and a further 61 Sqn Lancaster which was attacking the nearby target of Munster. 14 out of 136 Lancasters were lost attacking the canal that night.

Last September, I was able to visit the graves of the crew, the crash site in Almelo and the target location at Ladbergen, where I took some photographs of the aiming point to share with you all.

The site is very different today as to how it was during WW2. There is now only one branch of the canal, whereas there were two in the lead up to and duration of the war. The Germans added a second branch before the war as they realised that it was vulnerable to attack. It has since been removed and the original viaduct over the River Glane has been replaced also. The viaduct no longer carries any water these days. It was quite emotional visiting all three sites, but I'm glad that I did.

Jon Taylor



Dortmund-Ems canal sign.

**The aiming point.
The viaduct over
the River Glane
can be seen on
the left**



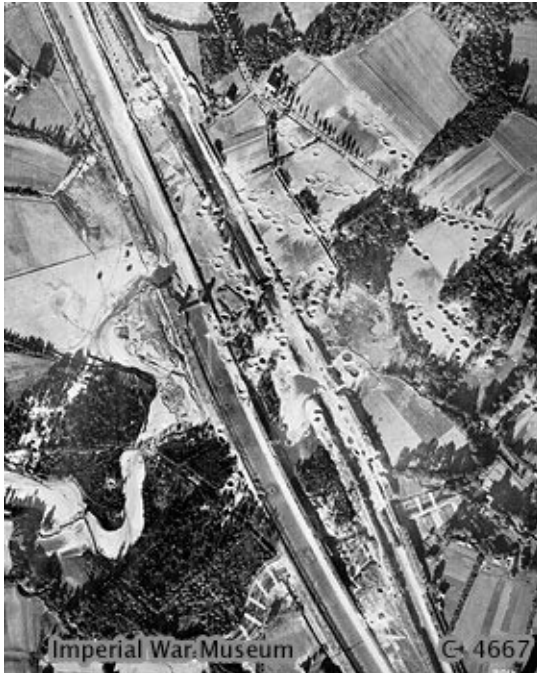
**The
replacement
aqueduct.**



Dortmund-Ems canal original WW2 viaduct.

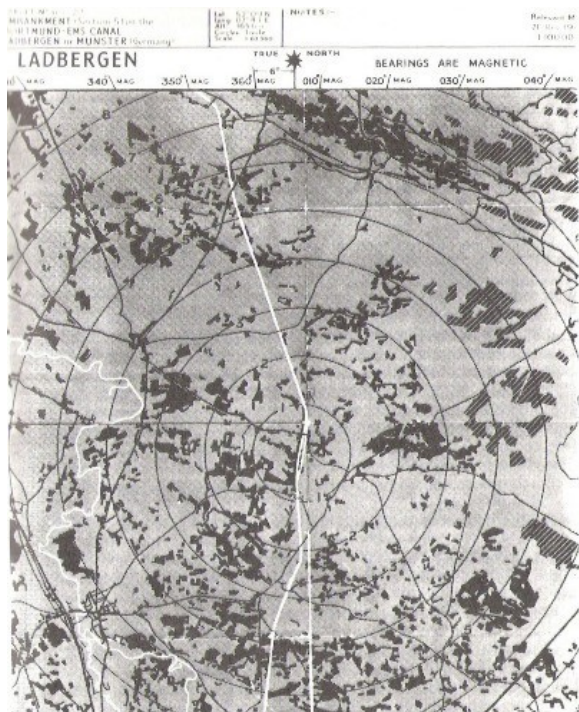


The camouflage used by the Germans to disguise the canal.



**Early war
reconnaissance
photo showing
the River Glane
passing under
the canal**

**The target map
for bomber
crews**



LINCOLN'S AVIATION HERITAGE.

Lincolnshire is well known as Bomber County, having more bomber station during World War 2 than any other county. However, Lincoln itself has a proud association with the provision of aircraft.

Whilst Lincoln is remembered as the birth place of the tank, it has a proud association with the manufacture of aircraft.

Lincoln engineering expertise was put to good use in both world wars. Names such as Robey & Co Ltd, Clayton & Shuttleworth, Ruston Proctor & Co Ltd.

Ruston Proctor & Co. Ltd

During the first world war Ruston's expanded to become the largest manufacturer of



This BE2c no. 2699 was built by Ruston Proctor & Co Ltd of Lincoln in 1916 by February 1917 it was with No.50 Home Defence Squadron based at Dover (IWM Duxford)

aircraft engines in the country, and was among the leading five constructors of aircraft, being the first to build many of these, such as the **BE2c**, and later developments up to the BE2E, it was also the first constructor to build the **Sopwith 11/2 strutter**, this was followed by the **Sopwith Camel**, by the 4th January 1918 Ruston's had built 1000 aircraft. Ruston's last machine was the

Sopwith Snipe, the first one being delivered in October 1918. After the war Ruston's went into car production and merged with Richard Hornsby & Son to become Ruston & Hornsby.

The BE2c was flown by 50 Squadron during 1916-17, and the Sopwith Camel 1918-19.



[Sopwith Camel - Wikipedia](#)

Robey & Co. Ltd

Early in 1915, Robey & Co. Ltd became the second Lincoln firm to manufacture aircraft for the great war. It produced a variety of aircraft for the Admiralty and despite being one of the smaller producer of aircraft was the only one in the area to design and build their own machines. The first type built was the **Sopwith Gunbus**, this was followed in November 1915 by the **Short 184 Seaplane**. In May 1916 an order was received for 30 **Maurice Farman Longhorn** aircraft. Then came their own aircraft the **Robey Peters Fighting Machine**, this was a novel design with a crew of 3, with 2 gunners in the wings. The next was the **Robey Seaplane**. Robey's continued their war work in WW2 producing various items including depth charge cases, corvette engines, gun mounting etc.

Clayton & Shuttleworth

At the outbreak of WW1, the company were making railway rolling stock and pioneered the use of tracked vehicles. Their first venture into aviation was making parts for the Sea Scout Airships operated by the Royal Navy. The first aeroplane to be built was the **Sopwith Triplane**. In March 1917 they became the fourth contractor to build the **Sopwith F1 Camel**. A national Aircraft Factory was planned for Lincoln, however the plans were changed and the company built a new works and construction of the **Handley page 0/400** in October 1917, this was flown in May 1918 by the **Vickers Vimy**, however these were cancelled due to the armistice.

A. V. Roe & Company

Now we come to WW2 and whilst aircraft production did not continue in Lincoln for various reasons. However, it was concluded that as the Royal Air Force expanded, there was a need a repair organisation and the Ministry of Supply requisitioned all the buildings on the Bracebridge Heath site for aircraft repair and salvage work. With the advent of the Manchester and subse-

quently the Lancaster the works were put to good use with AVRO personnel working alongside RAF ground crews. The aircraft repaired aircraft were then take over the road to RAF Waddington for test flying. Many modifications

were carried out
by the works, such
as modifying the
aircraft for the
dam's raid. At the
end of the war,
they continued

[Avro 707 - Wikipedia](#)

their work on the Avro Lincoln and York. Worked also continued on the Avro Anson and the conversion of Lancaster to the Lancastrian. Development of the Avro Vulcan was preceded by the Avro 707, two of which were constructed at Bracebridge Heath.

The site was also used as a production facility for Hawker Siddeley including work on the Shackleton, Meteor, Avro 748, and the Argosy. Avro were incorporated into the Hawker Siddeley corporation in 1974. In later years the site provided substantial support for the Avro Vulcan. The site being closed by British Aerospace in 1984.

No.4 Acceptance Park

situated on the west common where most of the aircraft produced in Lincoln during the first world war were test and flown from.

We are grateful for the information sourced from an excellent paperback produced by the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archeology, entitled "Aircraft made in Lincoln" and written by John Walls & Charles Parker. ISBN 0-903582-16-3

Mike Connock