



Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe
(Home of No.50 & No.61 Squadrons)
Newsletter
Issue no 13 - Autumn 2024



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 07739 103245

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

Firstly I would like to welcome Jon Taylor to the editorial team. Jon has been a member for some time now and has helped with the web site and has now offered to help with the newsletter, we thank him for his help and contribution to the content..

Our content includes the stories of four veterans who achieved the remarkable age of 100 years, sadly one have passed away. Jon also continues with his story of his trip to Germany and this time to Krupps of Essen. We have also included details of the plaque unveiled to a Avro Lincoln which crashed on Skellingthorpe farmland.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

This is our 13th edition of the newsletter since taking over from the 50 & 61 Squadrons Association, lets hope it's a lucky one.

At our AGM in June the existing committee was re-elected, the chairman gave his report and one of the items discussed was that we propose to do a feasibility study on building our own dedicated museum. Whilst we have some display at the leisure centre at Birchwood and a small display in Skellingthorpe, we do have a lot of material that is not on display which prompted the exercise. Early days yet and a lot to do, but watch this space.

We also discussed the airfield trail which Julian Fisk is following up on with the City Council.

The RAF Skellingthorpe sign which we purchased a while back has now been shot blasted and spray baked and is now with Pete Small for painting. It has been suggested that it is mounted on a piece of old runway concrete of which there are a few pieces still around, after which it will be bricked in, possibly with old bricks from the airfield. Julian is discussing with the City Council about where to site it, the proposed site is at the entrance to the airfield at the top of Birchwood avenue where it joins Skellingthorpe Road.

The accounts were presented at the AGM and showed a healthy balance of £8938.95 at the end of the financial year 30 April. We were fortunate to receive a bequest of over £1000 from the estate of the late Molly Jones, widow of Fred Jones who was a pilot on 50 Squadron.

Finally I would remind members that subscriptions of £10 are due for 2024 and can be paid by bank transfer if you wish (preferred).

Sort code 30-96-26, account No. 40517560.

Contact me at comick41@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Mike Connock

AVRO LINCOLN RF471

On 15th July we unveiled a plaque to the Avro Lincoln RF471. The aircraft had taken off from RAF Waddington on a training exercise. The aircraft crashed on farmland in the parish of Skellingthorpe with the loss of all on board. Subsequent investigations could not determine the cause of the crash. The crew were;

P/O Robert George Ratcliffe. Pilot
Gerald McCarthy. Engineer 1
F/Lt Raymond Henry Knight. Navigator
Morris Guy Waterfall. Navigator 2
James Whitecross Adamson. Signaller III
Clarence Stanley Brett. Gunner 11
Frederick George Searle. Gunner 1



The plaque was mounted on the wall of the local farm building, owned by the Scarborough family to whom we are grateful for allowing it to be placed in a prominent position.

A prayer of dedication was read by the local Rector Rev Sam Durren. Also in attendance were the chair of the Parish Council Cllr Caroline Coyle-Fox, and a representative of

the District Council Cllr Chris Goldson, who is also a member of Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe. Members of the association and the public were also in attendance.

The plaque was unveiled by the Granddaughter of Morris Guy Waterfall, Helen Bailey who had travelled down from Newcastle to be with us.



Helen Bailey with
Mike Connock, Chairman
of Friends of RAF Skel-
lingthorpe

Memorial Weekend



As usual our memorial weekend in June was held over the weekend of 15/16 June. It was scheduled a week later so as not to clash with the D-Day celebrations. The AGM was held on the Saturday and following this some of us and our visitors from away enjoyed a social evening and meal at a local hostelry.

The service as usual was taken by our chaplain Kevin Hart. Also in attendance were the City of Lincoln Civic Party, 204 City of Lincoln RAF Air Cadets, members of the scout-ing groups and members of FRAFS and the public.

Picture right shows the Mayor Cllr Alan Briggs laying a wreath with Chairman of FRAFS Mike Connock.



Following on from the service at the 50 & 61 Squadrons memorial we were invited to the community centre for lunch, provided by the Parish Council, after which a service was held at the village memorial to RAF Skellingthorpe.



As well as supporting the Birchwood service the Air Cadets of 204 (City of Lincoln) Squadron also supported the village service.



CENTENARIANS

Recently we celebrated the 100th birthday of 4 of our veterans.

Michael Heaton



Michael Heaton celebrated his 100th birthday on 29th May 2024. Michael served as a Navigator on 50 Squadron and did 20 operations



Michael and his crew in 1944

Michael Wood

Michael wood celebrated his 100th birthday on 12th of July 2024.



Michael served as a Engine Fitter on 61 Squadron at RAF Skellingthorpe age 18. At the end of the war he was posted to Palestine age 20 and returned to RAF Coningsby age 23, where he was finally demobbed.

Michael's 100th Birthday Cake.



Harry Cammish

Harry served as a Flight Engineer with 50 Squadron. And was shot down on 25-26 February 1944.

He celebrated his 100th birthday in September 2023.

Here he tells his own story;

When I was 17, I joined the Local Defence Force and was issued with a rifle, 40 rounds of ammunition and a bayonet, and sent out to patrol the beaches and protect essential services such as the gas and electricity works. A year later, I volunteered for the Royal Air Force and trained as a flight engineer on Lancaster bombers. They were beautiful planes – the queen of the skies. The crews were a mixture of French, Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders. I liked the Kiwis – they were a bit quieter than the rest of them. I did 16 runs over Germany until, without warning, we were jumped by a German fighter in February 1944. The whole plane shuddered and went into a dive that we couldn't bring her out of. There was no choice but to bail out. Seven of us jumped – five were captured by the Germans, the navigator died, and I was eventually picked up by the French Resistance. It was night, it was winter,



and I was only wearing battledress and it was freezing. It was the first time I'd ever parachuted so I was lucky to come down just this side of the German border and in about two foot of snow. I walked for ages before being picked up by members of the Resistance who put me through the third degree to establish that I was in fact an Englishman. Their caution was understandable because there were Germans posing as Englishmen who were turning in Resistance fighters and uncovering their safe houses.

With the help of the Resistance, I was moved slowly across France towards the Spanish border. It was nerve-wracking at times. On the day we were due to cross the Pyrenees, we were woken by machine gun fire and dogs barking, and saw people being made to assemble with their hands in the air. I don't know what came over me, but an inner voice said to me 'you've come too far to be stopped now', so I took off for the forest and just kept running. I was wearing a railway porter's uniform and a pair of thin shoes, but for two nights and three days I walked without food and with only the snow to quench my thirst, doing my best to avoid the German patrols. How I wasn't caught, I'll never know. When I finally made it into Spain, I was a mess – my mouth was swollen and I was suffering from frostbite, and although I was starving, I couldn't swallow a thing.

I finally came under the protection of the British Embassy and flew to Britain, from Gibraltar, on the day the D-Day troops were flying out, 13 weeks after I'd taken off on the mission to Germany. My mother, of course, was already coming to terms with the fact that I was missing in action so it was a pretty traumatic homecoming and everywhere I went, I would be greeted by 'I thought you were dead!'

After the war, a society was formed of men who had been saved by the Resistance. We raised money to help the families of the Resistance fighters, many of whom had put their lives on the line and been killed. I still have the Dutch, French and Belgium money that all airmen were given as part of their Escape Kit. Although I had offered it to many people on many occasions throughout that 13-week period, none would accept it. The 'rank and file' really are the salt of the Earth.



When I was fit to work again, they re-trained me as a flying control officer, based just out of Bath. That's where I met Betty and knew, almost immediately, that I'd found the right one. We met in April, got engaged in June and were married in Bath Abbey on Boxing Day 1945. The war was over at last, I was demobbed and we set-up house in Scarborough. In 1987, Betty and I went back to England to visit places like Scotland and Wales, but I never got to France again. I wish I had.

Above- Harry with his bride Betty

Right- Harry with Barbie Hunter from the NZ Bomber Command Association



PETER GOULD.

It sadly came to our notice in April this year of the death of Sgt Peter Gould, formerly of 61 Squadron, who passed away aged 100 years on 11th March. Peter was a RAF Halton trained Flight Engineer who flew in the crew of Sgt Cyril Woolnough RAAF from Skellingthorpe, where they flew 13 operations during 1944 before being posted to 97 Pathfinder Squadron at RAF Coningsby. With 97 Squadron, they then flew a further 32 operations to complete a Pathfinder Tour of 45 Op's.

Our condolences go to his family.



Sgt Peter Gould



Peter Gould and his crew
At RAF Skellingthorpe

Lancaster LL791

We were recently contacted by Benoit Howson from France and he has been working on memorials to lost aircraft. His latest is a plaque dedicated to the loss of Lancaster LL791. He has kindly offered a copy of this plaque to us in English for us to display.

A photo of this plaque is shown on the back page of this newsletter.

Our gratitude goes to Benoit for his dedication to our lost airmen.

Continuing our theme on Centenarians, the number seems to be increasing and by the time you receive this newsletter we will be celebrating another 100th birthday, that of James Flowers. We wish James a very happy birthday

James Flowers



The Indomitable James will be celebrating his 100th Birthday on 9th October. James is well known in Bomber Command circles. As well as flying operations with 50 Squadron, he has also written a book about his exploits as a Rear Gunner. That book also tells the story of his post war career as a driving test examiner.

James was married to his late wife Eunice on 21st October 1944.



James' pilot was John Strathern Lawrey from New Zealand

More can be found about James and his career on our web site, where his story is told. [No.50 & No.61 Squadrons Association - F/ Sgt James Flowers \(no-50-and-no-61-squadrons-association.co.uk\)](http://No.50 & No.61 Squadrons Association - F/ Sgt James Flowers (no-50-and-no-61-squadrons-association.co.uk))

KRUPPS OF ESSEN.

Following on from my article on The Dortmund Ems Canal in our last newsletter, which I visited in September last year in connection with my Uncle and the crew of ME732 of 61 Squadron, I next went to The Mohne Dam to have a look at it and admire the bravery of the men, many of whom originally came from 50 & 61 Squadrons, who attacked it and the other dams on the 16th of May 1943.

From The Mohne Dam, I then drove down to the Rhur Valley, or "Happy Valley" as it was known to the crews who were attacking it in 1943 during the Battle of the Rhur, which was a costly campaign for Bomber Command due to the heavy defences around the major industrial cities there.

Krupps of Essen was a major armaments factory and vital to the German war effort. It was a regularly bombed target. My Father had flown there on the 30th April/1st May 1943 in the crew of W/C Baxter when he was with 50 Squadron prior, to being posted to 106 Squadron on 9th May. He went there again on the night of 27/28th May with 106 Sqn in the crew of Sgt Robbins where they were hit in the port wing between the engines over the target as the bombs dropped and were unable to close the bomb doors. Flying on only the starboard engines, the inner of which packed up soon afterwards, they made it to near Lieden in Holland before force landing on a lake and ending up on an island, where they were captured nearby and spent the rest of the war as POWs.

So, Essen too, was of particular interest to me and after some research, I found the site of the original factory and took the following colour photographs of how it is today, which I thought would be of interest to you as there are probably many of us that have had relatives who bombed there too. As you can see, the site is now the headquarters of Thyssen Krupps as it is known today. They have several operational factories here in the UK today.

As with Ladbergen and Almelo for my Uncle, visiting here for my Dad was emotional too.

Jon Taylor.



Bomber Command target map for Krupps of Essen

Photos of the Krupps factory taken at the end of the war showing the heavy damage inflicted. Images courtesy of IWM.



Part of the locomotive shop of the Krupps AG works at Essen, Germany, seriously damaged by Bomber Command in 1943

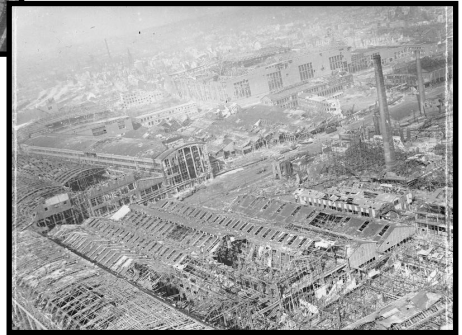


RAF officers inspect an unfinished siege gun in a wrecked building of the Krupps armaments works at Essen



Part of a vertical photographic-reconnaissance aerial taken after the major raid by Bomber Command on Essen

Oblique aerial photograph of part of the devastated Krupps armaments works at Essen



Road sign showing both Essen and Bochum
Both heavily bombed targets during the war



Signage at the site,
now the headquar-
ters of Tyssen
Krupps



The following 4 Photographs
are of the buildings in 2023 at
the former site of Krupps Arma-
ments factory in Essen.





REMEMBERING THE NO. 50 SQUADRON CREW OF LANCASTER LL791



Sgt Olson, RAAF



Sgt Benson, RAAF



F/Sgt Ansell, RAAF



On the night of February 25th, 1944, No. 50 Squadron Lancaster LL791, was shot down by two enemy fighters on route to Augsburg. It had taken off from RAF Stallingborough, Lincolnshire, at 18:37. Aft Lancasters, 42 Mustangs and 10 Mosquitos were taking part in this raid. On board LL791 was the crew of pilot P/O Taylor, who had completed 4 operations. The other members of his crew had completed 13 (including 7 over Berlin), when they boarded the bomber for the last time. Sgt Cammish, who was 25 years old, had failed in for the crew's usual flight engineer, who was ill, at very short notice. This was the aircraft's seventh operation. Shortly after the attack, which took place at 22:00, the pilot, who was unable to pull the burning aircraft out of the fire, gave the order to bail out. F/Sgt Benson, the 20-year-old Australian wireless operator, struggled to open the nose hatch; he was the first to jump, at 19,000 feet. He was followed by the flight engineer, the pilot, the 21-year-old Australian wireless operator F/Sgt Ansell, John gunner, Sgt Acchini, a 19-year-old Canadian, and Sgt Taylor, and by the navigator, Sgt Olson, who seemed to have had trouble finding his parachute. He jumped, probably too late, and lost his life at 22.

The crew saw the Lancaster crash from the air. They landed in deep snow a few miles from Eindhoven and were picked up by local resistance networks. Sgt Cammish later explained: "I kept waiting for several hours and eventually came to a small station. I don't know whether we were in Germany or in France to be quite honest but I saw the name on the board. Eindhoven, and I thought, well, that doesn't sound German and passed through the window and there was a table in uniform sitting over the table and he didn't look German either so I thought, well, I'll risk it. So, I opened the door and went into the office and he looked up at me. You can imagine his surprise seeing a fat force man in flying gear standing at the doorway and told him, RAAF? And he put his finger up to his mouth, so, I gathered there were some Germans somewhere in the vicinity. And he took me into the village, knocked on the door of the cottage and he said something in French to the lady and they dragged me into the house and he went back to the station. Once the villagers were satisfied that the woman was telling the truth, Sgt Cammish was sent to Lumville, then in Nancy, A Mazerville, he met up with P/O Taylor, Sgt Taylor and P/O Taylor. They went back to Nancy, where Sgt Acchini and F/Sgt Benson joined him. They were part of a group of women which included Sgt Charles William Jackson, the only survivor of Halifax WNC3, shot down on March 2nd at Calais-sur-Plume. They took the train to Paris at the beginning of April, then to Toulouse on the 17th. Unfortunately, they were arrested on April 24th, while resting in a hotel in the Pyrenees, near Bagatelle de Luchon. Only Sgt Cammish managed to cross the border. Bullets were flying everywhere and one of the guests came in and said 'Get out! Then everyone started running for the door and I was trying to get on my shoes. I was, I think, the last man out. I don't know which way to go. I was running and there were one or two sitting with their hands up. And a little voice said to me, 'Well, Harry, you're can't this far. You might as well go all the way. So I went on and I don't know what happened to them. The others got caught, of course, but I don't know why they didn't get me.' Sgt Cammish returned to England in a Douglas Dakota on June 8th.

The prisoners were interrogated by the Gestapo and sent to Stalag. In the notebook he kept, Sgt Acchini wrote: "Shot down on the night of February 25 over France. Taken prisoner on April 24, one mile from the Spanish border, in the mountains near Luchon. Frantically betrayed by one of the guides. Spent four days in Luchon prison, 10 days in Toulouse, 34 days at Frénes and 25 days in Frankfurt. Sent to Dülag Luft and arrived at Bensau prison camp on Monday, July 10, 1944. Sgt Ansell recalled: "we were treated like spies. The Gestapo took us separately and interrogated us. We were beaten with belts. Three of us were beaten with truncheons. The woman, who was an accomplished musician and could play the piano, learned to play the accordion after the liberation of the camp. It was a long march and in the snow, I pulled my piano accordion behind me as a shield, but had to leave it out in the snow at night when we were housed in barns. I brought it back to Australia on the 17th. Sgt Acchini wrote: "Today, the Yanks bombed all around us. The exposures were terrific, with plenty of smoke. 'LIBERATED'."

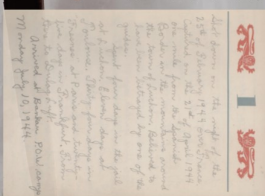
John Ansell was a successful jazz musician until his death in 1990. John Acchini died in Canada on September 18th, 2005 and David Thomas Benson died on December 25th, 2013. In Australia, Harry Cammish emigrated to New Zealand in 1950 and still lives there. Last we hear of:



Sgt Acchini, RAAF



Sgt Cammish, RAAF



LANCASTER LL791
NO. 50 SQUADRON
RAF STALLINGBOROUGH



P/O Officer William Herbert Taylor, RAAF, pilot, POW
Sergeant Harrison Stanley Cammish, RAAF, flight engineer, evaded
Sergeant Kenneth Eric Olson, RAAF VR, navigator, died
Sergeant David Thomas Benson, RAAF, bomb aimer, POW
Flight Sergeant John Ansell, RAAF, wireless operator, POW
Sergeant John Acchini, RAAF, mid-upper gunner, POW
Sergeant Thomas James Taylor, RAAF, rear gunner, POW