



57 / 630 Squadrons Association

President: Squadron Leader Mervyn Davies (RAF ret'd)

Secretary: Gordon Lodge



NOVEMBER 2005 NEWS **LETTER**

In Memoriam

Jean Fuller
Rex Lomas

Jack Holmes
Walter Scott

Archie McIntosh

I was never in touch with Jean Fuller or Jack Holmes but corresponded with Rex Lomas.

Walter Scott (Walt)

What can one say about him that he hadn't actually said himself? His verses are at the heart of East Kirkby.

What a remarkable gift he had; the ability to roll away the years and resurrect sights and sounds as tho' it were yesterday and we relived those parts played by "Strange young men of long ago"

We can never forget him, or his words, read annually and the emotional accompanying silence.

The news of Walt's death reached us on the Sunday morning and it was most apt when Michael read the words of "Old airfield" as tho' it was Walt's epitaph.

"O remember me as you pass by
For beneath this tangled leafy screen
I was your home, your friend Silksheen"

Archie McIntosh

Archie was a 57 Sqn Navigator shot down en-route to Mannheim. He was treated kindly by a German family who bathed his badly scraped face. A young man appeared who showed his concern by offering to fetch a doctor! Archie demurred and

was then astonished to be asked, “is it true that Louis Armstrong is dead?” The news that he was still alive was received with great pleasure.

Just before the Luftwaffe took him away the same young man shook his head and said “We are on your side”. A German researcher, Peter Menges assured me that pockets of anti Nazi resistance survived in N.Germany.

We never met but wrote and talked and somehow lapsed affectionately into the Scot versus Sassenach idiom.

Mervyn Davies

Marjorie Richardson (Mead)

Following the “In memoriam” by our President I learnt, shortly before publication, of Marjorie’s death on the 30th July, from Edna and Harry Ely.

Marjorie served with both 57 and 630 and lived in Australia for the last 57 years – she always called England “Home”. Her duties at East Kirkby as Map clerk throughout the war held many secrets and she was anxious to see the Memorial completed in memory of many friends.

Gordon Lodge

Presidents Comments

I would like to pay tribute to Gordon for the splendid organisation of the last Re-union, not to mention the Danish group’s contribution. They entered into the spirit of the weekend, confirmed by the extract from Astrid’s letter.

I apologies for “my silence” during the past few weeks; a knee replacement is quite restrictive both mentally and physically. Astrid’s husband Berthel is having both knees done. I think the anaesthetic lasts longer the older you get.

I look forward to our next meeting.

Mervyn Davies

Extract from Astrid’s letter

Berthel and I would like to thank you from the very bottom of our hearts for the wonderful time we spent with you and your organisation in Woodhall Spa and East Kirkby one month ago. It was – again – one of the biggest experiences in my whole life, and I know, that Bethel feels the same, and so does the re4st of the Danish group.

I simply cannot find words to express the gratitude, I feel towards you and your organisation. You made us feel so welcome, and our stay was in many words full of love, warm feelings and gratitude. I think, I told you this, when we were in East Kirkby, but I will tell you this again, because the more I think about it, the more I feel, this is exactly the way, it is.

Being born after the war I have been brought up feeling very grateful to the fact, that Hitler did not win the war. Every time I read a book about war or watch a movie about war, I end up thinking, it is very big luck, Denmark was liberated, so that my parents could have my brother and I and give us the chance to grow up in freedom. Freedom is indeed not something, we must take for granted.

And through all these years, I did not know, what to do with my gratitude. Then you turned up in Skarrild together with other veterans from 57/630 squadrons, and I felt, I finally knew, where to put all my love and gratitude – namely towards you and your organisation.

As I sung in my song “Wind beneath my wings”: “It might have appeared to go unnoticed, but I have it all here in my heart. I want you to know, I know the truth, I would be nothing without you! Did you ever know that you are all my heroes? You are everything, I would like to be. I could fly higher than an eagle, because you are the wind beneath my wings”.

SECRETARY’S COMMENTS

As you will see through the news letter it was a wonderfully supported “long weekend” at the July reunion. We had representatives from Denmark, Holland, Canada, and Australia. Those from Denmark and Holland contribute so much to the care of 57 and 630 squadron graves and their bombs to the Association are obvious to all concerned.

Although in danger of repeating myself each year I must again thank the Pantons for their involvement with the Association and the use of the Airfield. Will Chatterton for his help in co-ordinating the Sunday Morning Service and Mike Chatterton for his help in producing the Service sheet. Dave Houghton for organising the BBMF fly past, Jack Holsgrove for “Saying it with flowers”, he arranges all the wreaths for the Memorial and Lincoln Cathedral and Allen Hudson, Harry and Edna Ely, all three the “font of all knowledge” throughout the year and all the contacts we have all over the world in the search for information.

Our membership levels are increasing through establishing contact with ex 57 and 630 by advertising the Association in various Airforce and British Legion publications for both Air crew and Ground crew. This success also brings problems with accommodation levels in the Woodhall Spa area. With over 160 at this years Annual Dinner it is clear members need to ensure early reservations are made.

Now on with the newsletter.

Gordon Lodge

Holland 2005

As many of you will know Diana and I visit Holland on the 4th and 5th of May each year with covers their Remembrance and Freedom days. This year in addition to the Memorial Service at the 57 Squadron graves they had commemorated the actual crash site. As the development of housing around Groningen has been expanding it has

slowly encroached towards the crash site. To ensure the spot remained safe, a sizable area has been preserved through the building of a Memorial in Indian granite and marble. It incorporates the names of the crew, details of the plan and stands on a small mound with seating and a transplanted 20ft tree.

The ceremony was led by the equivalent of the Mayor of Groningen and attended by around 100 people, press and television. Paul Dalseg, the sole now surviving member of the crew, attended from Canada. Those at the Petwood reunion will remember the Noordhof and Dalseg families who were present for the weekend.

Gordon Lodge

Reunion Weekend 2005

Again I propose to report in depth on the whole weekend for the benefit of those who could not attend and to attract those who may.

Saturday Dinner

For the second year we had the use of the Woodland Suite at the Petwood hotel with over 160 people attending. In it's second year this new facility is superb with air conditioning, private bar and patio. With 15 guests from Denmark, 3 from Holland, 6 from Canada and 2 from Australia there was a true international flavour.

The top table consisted of;

Helen and Mervyn Davies	- President
Diana and myself	- Secretary
Ruth and John Maunsell	- Treasurer
Kate and Rev. Richard Benson	- Hon Chaplain
Cheryl Robertson	- More later
Group Captain Tony Gunby	- Main speaker
Wing Commander Dave Houghton	- 2006 Speaker
	More later

The Loyal Toast was given by Steve Stevens and after a natural break an address by myself followed by our President Mervyn Davies and a toast to the guests of the Association. Group Captain Tony Gunby then spoke and gave a toast to 57 / 630 Squadrons. The speeches concluded with a toast to Absent Friends by Tom Locket.

Following dinner Garth Green organised the Raffle which included a cockpit seat for the Lancaster taxi run on the Sunday. This was won by Paul Dalseg from Canada.

Sunday Service

The Service held in the hangar at East Kirkby commenced at 11:30 with a march past by 141 Boston ATC Squadron lead by Flight Lieutenant Spike Elliott accompanied by the Marham Le Fen Victory Silver Prize Band. The Squadron was then inspected by Group Captain Tony Gunby.

Harold Panton began the Service with a reading followed by the first hymn "Praise my sole the King of Heaven". Michael Howley then read a poem by Walter Scott who as you will have seen died during the year. Both were members of 630 Squadron. The poem "Old Airfield" is worthy of inclusion as it stirs emotions in many people especially in this setting and at this time.

Old Airfield

**I lie here still, beside the hill,
Abandoned long to nature's will,
My buildings down, my people gone,
My only sounds, the wild birds song,**

**But my mighty birds will rise no more,
No more I hear the Merlins roar,
And never now my bosom feels,
The pounding of their giant wheels,**

**From the ageless hill their voices cast,
Thunderous echoes of the past,
And still in lonely reverie,
Their great dark wings sweep down to me,**

**Laughter, sorrow, hope, and pain,
I shall never know these things again,
Emotions that I came to know,
Of strange young men so long ago,**

**Who knows as evening shadows meet,
Are they with me still, a phantom fleet,
And do my ghosts still stride unseen,
Across my face, so wide and green,**

**And in the future should structures tall,
Bury me beyond recall,
I shall still remember them my,
My metal birds, and long dead men,**

**Now weeds grow high, obscure the sky,
O remember me when you pass by,
For beneath this tangled leafy screen,
I was your home, your friend, "Silksheen".**

The next hymn was "Guide me, O thou great Redeemer".

Our Honorary Chaplain the Rev. Richard Benson then addressed the 300 assembled in the Hangar and around the Airfield. We then sang the final hymn "Immortal Invisible God only wise" followed by The Grace and The National Anthem.

All then proceeded to eh 57 / 630 Memorial led by the ATC Squadron. There was a short Service followed by Last Post, Reveille and the laying of wreaths.

Wreaths laid by;

Denmark
Holland
Thetford Grammar School – note later
Ron Legg for 57 Squadron
Dennis Ringham for 630 Squadron
Wing Commander Dave Houghton
Group Captain Tony Gunby

The various personal wreaths were laid.

I should at this stage thank, on behalf of the Association, not only the Pantons for their arrangements but Will Chatterton and Ernie Ashby for their assistance every year in arranging all the seating etc. at both the Hangar and the Memorial. They are the stalwarts of whom little is heard but are a vital element in the success of the day.

Everyone then made their way back to the Hangar and runway area for the “Just Jane” Lancaster to fire up it’s engines and commence taxiing up and down the runway.

At 3:00pm Squadron Leader Paul Day, formerly OC BBMF, flew the East Kirkby Spitfire and gave all present a superb acrobatic display. We then had the flypast at 3:40pm of the BBMF Lancaster for around 15 minutes.

Throughout the Saturday and Sunday events a professional video has been produced for the Association. It really is a very good production and well worth while obtaining

Gordon Lodge

Sunday Dinner Dance

This year the Dinner Dance was held in the Woodland Suite with over 100 present and the new group selected playing during and after dinner. After last years “noise levels” this was a great improvement and proved successful, with virtually everyone staying to the end. In fact the dance floor was quite often full giving spectators great entertainment too!!

During the evening Astrid from Denmark decided she wanted to sing. It was quite simply magnificent she sang “Wind beneath my wings” to her “Heroes” and had a standing ovation, it really was that good.

Gordon Lodge

Lincoln Cathedral and Monday outing

Monday saw the usual visit and day out, which as normal was arranged by Garth Green. This year saw a substantial attendance with a full 54 seater coach and others

travelling by private transport. The first stop at Lincoln Cathedral was a Service led by The Dean, The Very Revd Dr Alex Knight which this year was held in the main part of the Cathedral due to the large numbers attending. Normally we all fit into the Airman's Chapel. Following the Service everyone had the opportunity to enter the Chapel and see The Remembrance Books.

After the Service the coach party paid a visit to R.A.F Scampton for a tour of the Airfield and places of "Dambuster" interest. The tour then made its usual sprint to a local pub The Black Bull in Scampton. There is a full report by Garth at the end of the news letter.

I might just mention that a number of reprobates consisting of the Davies, Lodge, Stevens and Holsgrove parties made a dash to R.A.F Digby and a local pub! It was decided that I should follow Jack Holsgrove to Digby which proved as frenetic as a rabbit on an 18 – 30 holiday! Foolishly I assumed that a right indicator meant a right turn – silly really!

The R.A.F Digby visit was fascinating. They have retained WW2 flight control centre from their period as a fighter base.

Gordon Lodge

Tuesday visit to Coningsby

With the parties from Denmark and Holland a visit had been arranged to BBMF. The numbers were limited to 40 and we split into 2 groups with guides allocated to each group. All the BBMF Aircraft were on base, including the Lancaster, which was being filled with Poppies for the Sunday flypast over Buckingham Palace.

The quality of the tour was outstanding allowing guests to talk to the Pilots and Ground crew at the side of all the Spitfires and Hurricanes. Guests were then allowed to board the Lancaster and up to the cockpit.

During the visit a BBC film crew was present and they took the opportunity to interview a number of our members.

Steve Stevens took the Pilots seat (he had to be prised out) and was interviewed with a current Lancaster Pilot. As he left the rear door he managed to "head butt" the fuselage – Steve lost! After visits to the R.A.F medical centre and a local hospital he was seen in the bar at the Petwood. The lengths people go to for publicity!!

We then had the opportunity to see the organisation behind the Lancaster one million poppy drop over The Mall

- It takes three of the BBMF Ground crew a full working week to remove the bomb cradles and then fit a shield to protect the "innards" from the unwanted migration of poppies.
- The loading of the paper poppies (purchased from The Royal British Legion) takes a full three days. All of the 1 million poppies have to be loaded by hand into the bomb bay, with its doors shut, through a small hatch, approx. 1ft sq, at the rear of the bomb aimers compartment, having

being carried up into the Aircraft on a ladder through the bomb aimers escape hatch.

- When loaded the poppies lie some three feet deep along the bomb doors.

We were then entertained to lunch in the Mess. In total the tour lasted some four hours and included visits to the Radar and Air Traffic Control centres. There was the most amazing experience of watching the new Typhoon or Euro Fighter taking off. In all a fantastic day which certainly the Danes and the Dutch will never forget.

Gordon Lodge

Flypast 60th Anniversary End of WW2 – 10th July 2005

Attached is a note from Wing Commander Dave Houghton on the Buckingham Palace flypast he has entitled;

“A Salute to heroes”

Reunion 2006

Petwood Hotel

The dinner and dinner dance will continue to be held in the Woodland Suite with the 2005 band having been booked for next year.

Fly Past

The BBMF Lancaster is planned for 13:30 to 14:00 hours although final timings await confirmation next year.

I am also, together with the Petwood, hoping to have the R.A.F College jazz band playing on the Sunday afternoon in the gardens with another BBMF Lancaster flypast in the late afternoon. Again confirmation will be early in 2006.

Just Jane

Taxiing of the Lancaster will take place on the Sunday following the Memorial Service. The Pantons have again very kindly agreed to a cockpit place available to the Saturday night raffle winner.

Programme 2006

Saturday 1st July

19:30 Reunion Dinner

Dress: Lounge suit or blazer

Speaker: Wing Commander Dave Houghton

Sunday 2nd July

11:30 Secretary reads the notices

March past and inspection by Wing Commander Dave Houghton

- 11:45 Remembrance Service – Medals
Conducted by the Rev. Richard Benson – Hon. Chaplain
At the Memorial: Last post, Silence, Laying of wreaths
Music: Marham Le Fen Victory Silver Prize Band
Air Training Corps. 141 Squadron Boston
- 13:30 – 14:00 Fly Past BBMF
- 19:00 – 19:30 Informal Dinner Dance – Petwood Hotel

Monday 3rd July

Garth Green's Tour
Service at Lincoln Cathedral
Details to be sent by Garth Green in the new year

Costs – Petwood Hotel

4 Nights £210pp
3 Nights £190pp
B&B 1 / 2 Nights £44pp per night

Reunion Dinner £24pp
Dinner Dance £21pp
For guests at the Petwood 3 / 4 nights Dinner and Dinner Dance included – just indicate numbers/names attending.

For B&B at the Petwood or elsewhere, please send cost of Dinner(s) and numbers/names attending. All cheques payable to 57/630 Squadrons Association.

Gordon Lodge

Cheryl Robertson

Cheryl was an Association guest at the reunion and the story of her efforts are worthy of recording.

She is the niece of an Australian W/OP on 106 Squadron (Metheringham) who was KIA on a trip to Konigsberg 29/30 Aug. 1944. Five of the crew were listed as having no known grave, two were POWs. When her Grandfather died Cheryl came across correspondence which led her to believe her uncle may have been buried by the German army near Konigsberg. She had been trying for sometime to establish this as fact but not receiving any help from "Officialdom". It also meant that many others may have been listed as KIA with NKG but might well have been buried and their details passed to the Red Cross in Geneva and to our Government. But the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, in accord with their specific rules of confirmation on site by their own investigators that casualties had been buried, could

never obtain such evidence because the Russians overran the area and continued to occupy over the Cold War period.

In desperation Cheryl wrote to President Putin and through him the Russians have been co-operative. Through her initiatives and good will on all sides around 110 graves have been identified including two crews from 57 and one crew from 630.

Gordon Lodge

Thetford Grammar School

As you will have seen pupils from the school were present at the Remembrance Service and laid a wreath on behalf of Pilot Officer Claud Houghton of 630, and old boy of the school, who was killed on the 10th June 1944. In fact the school lost a total of eight old boys killed in Bomber Command.

You can visit the school website at www.thetgram.norfolk.sch.uk to see what they have done for Remembrance in recent years.

Gordon Lodge

Flight Sergeant William Fraser Sutherland

The 2004 news letter contained a request for information covering the P.O.W. Camp at Bankau Luft 7, the forced march that was made, the subsequent escape, and escape route through Odessa.

Paul Dalseg from Canada and Malcolm Crapper responded to the family in Australia.

Malcolm was able to recount his experience of Bankau and included a report on the forced march by the Camp Medical Officer. Also included was a air photo and map of the Camp.

Gordon Lodge

Air Gunner Charles Hay

I have been asked to see if any members recollect the above who completed his tour at East Kirkby. There is no information on which Squadron.

Gordon Lodge

Memorial Books – Airmen’s Chapel of St. Michael Lincoln Cathedral

I have received from Allan Payne a booklet covering the laying of the Memorial Books.

On the afternoon of the 8th November 1949 with all the pageantry of Church and State, the Memorial Books of Nos. 1 & 5 Groups, Bomber Command were laid in the Airmen’s Chapel of St. Michael.

The Books, of exquisite craftsmanship and bound in Morocco Leather of Air Force Blue, contains the names of 21 000 aircrew of the two groups who were lost on operational missions during the War.

The choice of Lincoln for such a ceremony was singularly appropriate, for it was from Stations in Lincolnshire and close to its borders that the Squadrons of 1 & 5 Groups flew out against the enemy, and, in their brief off duty hours, it was to Lincoln that these men, who faced death nightly, turned for friendship, comfort and entertainment. To them the three square towers of the Cathedral became a familiar landmark; No better or more glorious setting could be asked for a Memorial to those of their number who did not return.

It is therefore worthwhile including an extract from The Bishops Sermon of that day.

The Bishops Sermon

“I bare you and eagles wings and brought you unto Myself” (Exodus, chap.19, V.4.)

We proudly and gratefully receive into the safe keeping of the Cathedral Church the Memorial Books containing the names of the 21000 men who served in 1 & 5 Bomber Groups and went from this Diocese and County on their dread errands of duty, never to return.

It is right and proper that the names of these gallant men should be recorded and the Books containing them deposited in the Airmen’s Chapel in this Cathedral Church over which they flew and which was their last and loveliest sight in England.

The inscription on the title page of the Books reads:

“In Memory of those members of aircrews of number 1 & 5 Group, Royal Air Force, who on Operational Missions against the enemy, flew from bases in Lincolnshire and the neighbouring Counties and did not return”

Gordon Lodge

A Special Meeting

During 1944 Ray Francis (57 Sq.) and his crew had completed 8 trips together. The upper gunner Arthur Baker and Ray Francis then went in separate crews on a raid to a V2 base in France on the 7 / 8th July. The Squadron lost 3 aircraft out of 32 and

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Unfortunately Arthur Baker was in one of the lost aircraft. He was only married member of Ray's crew and left a wife, and small daughter and another baby on the way.

So Arthur in fact had two daughters. A cousin Carl Thomas decided to explore their father's service in the R.A.F. to help them piece together a part of their family history.

His research spanned many years and enabled him to locate and visit the grave in France. He also heard about East Kirkby and the Annual Reunion. For many years he came on the Sunday hoping to collect more information but without success. In 2004 he decided that it maybe his last visit and bought a picture of a Lancaster and approached members for signatures.

Ray was asked to sign and on seeing he was 57 Sqn Carl repeated the question "Did you ever know Arthur Baker?" The reply of "Yes, he was in my crew and we did 8 trips together" created a somewhat emotional meeting.

After a considerable exchange of information Carl, Ray, Arthur's daughters and families were able to visit Arthur's grave in France.

This year saw both families meeting for the Memorial Service and the connection extending to Grandchildren.

Thanks to Barbara Francis for this story.

Gordon Lodge

Association Visit to Skarrild Denmark

At the end of the news letter I have enclosed a note from Jim Wright covering the events about and around the visit during May 2005. It provides a background to the various Danish references within the news letter.

Gordon Lodge

Information Officers Report

Allen Hudson has sent me a note of issues during the last year which I have attached to the news letter. Allen has an extensive level of records and in any member can help to add to his knowledge it will be appreciated. His final paragraph refers.

Gordon Lodge

Closing Thoughts

With so many Associations reducing in number and/or closing it is very encouraging to see 57/630 becoming stronger. Advertising our presence in many magazines and journals is producing members who never realised we existed. A blend of Aircrew

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and Ground crew are joining and from both during and following WW2. Our presence is also on various websites, again a source of members.

In addition to articles for the East Kirkby Museum presented by the Danish party they also presented the Association with a Bell inscribed “a gift from Skarrild 2005”. I propose to use this at the Annual Dinner – so beware!

A Happy Christmas and New Year from Diana and Myself.

Gordon Lodge