



57 / 630 Squadrons Association

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

Secretary: Gordon Lodge



November 2006 Newsletter

In Memoriam

Douglas Allen
Verner Anderson
Fred Collins
Ernest Coxall
Raymond Henley
Bob Hogg

Ronald Hurst
Leonard Knowles
Hilda McNamara
Rhoda Raine
Vera Riddell
Vic Webster

Douglas Allen

Popped up suddenly in Nova Scotia and was most grateful when we fed him with newsletters.

Verner Anderson

What can one say about the remarkable Verner who stopped growing from the age of 12 but was sustained by an indomitable spirit until he had forged the link between Skarrild and the Association.

The picture of Verner at the controls of 'Just Jane' is a perfect epitaph

Fred Collins

Royal Corps of Signals. Fred and his wife Doreen came along with Chris and Helen Chester-Jones a few years ago. Fred instantly found himself 'at home'. He loved the atmosphere, the members, and the comradeship.

Ernest Coxall

Came late upon the scene and he wasn't well. Fortuitously I told Bill McCrea who banged down the phone and got in touch with Ernest who was his Wireless Operator.

Bobb Hogg

Spoke to Bob soon after becoming Secretary. He was on dialysis and philosophically aware there was no chance of recovery.

Hilda McNamara

Hilda took Paddy under her wing and all was set fair, but sadly it was a short Spring for both.

Rhoda Raine

Widow of Tom of 57 Squadron and the news of her death came via her son Brian. She had kept all the letters from the Association. Brian has picked them up and is aiming to attend the 2007 Reunion.

Vic Webster

Joined the Association many years ago, with Esther and latterly, daughter Denys and her husband Tony. Vic, Ron Meeking and I were the three known surviving members of our crew; Ron and I survived because of Vic's alertness and exceptional gunnery. In reply to Helen's query about my navigation he said 'not bad, we only bombed Portsmouth twice'. You could take him anywhere

Raymond Henley – Ron Hurst – Leonard Knowles – Vera Riddell

I only remember speaking to Vera and Len on Sunday afternoons or on the phone. However they were all comrades. Think of them.

Mervyn Davies

President's Report

Helen and I sorely missed the last Reunion, particularly as Members have told us what a wonderful occasion it was, which reflects great credit on Gordon and Diana. They have a good grip on it which augurs well for the future of the Association. We must be the envy of other Squadrons. Let us not forget Harold and Fred who have provided us with a splendid stage.

Sadly, the occasion was overshadowed by the deaths of Verner Andersen and of Vic Webster. It is intended that Vic's ashes will be interred at EK next July.

On a philosophical note it will have dawned on us that Age is certainly making its presence felt, and the untamed 'March of Time' is gathering pace. Like so many of us I have largely ignored it but a recent experience has persuaded me that I am not the 49 year old man – about – town I fancied myself to be.

Just after a knee – replacement op, I trusted myself to walk to a Bakery along Ledbury's medieval pavements. Of course, the pavements won; I tripped and crashed into the road; unable to get up I was grateful to a charming lady who lifted me up.

Any pain came second to humiliation and shock. After incoherent thanks I went to the Bakery where another charming lady offered to drive me home. (Honestly, at my age). I went back into shock. As I walked home the realisation came to me that I had been identified as a foolhardy elderly gent who should never been allowed out on his own.

And now, instead of ‘Corpus non Animum mutō’ my coat of arms has been amended to ‘Pick your Feet up.’

I hope the foregoing will be of some benefit to all our readers.

Looking ahead: next July will see our Guest of Honour arriving from Australia namely Lionel (Blue) Rackley RAAF, 630 Squadron accompanied Maureen.

It will be a great occasion and Helen and I look forward to seeing you all.

Take Care.

Mervyn Davies

Secretary’s Comments

I am delighted to say the Reunion Weekend was again wonderfully supported by Members of the Association with representatives from Canada and Australia present. Our Dutch contingent travelled once again and they are planning on even more attending next year.

Information, so far, indicates a party will be coming from Denmark in 2007 and I expect Members from Canada and Australia will again be present.

With Membership numbers increasing the pressure on accommodation in Woodhall Spa is increasing and it necessitates early planning to ensure you have rooms available. The dates for 2007 are 30th June – 3rd July and for 2008 4th July – 7th July. Please ensure your reservations are made, they can always be cancelled at a later date.

The usual Reunion form is enclosed with the Newsletter and an early return would be appreciated. During 2006 I experienced problems with the Post Office with some forms and cheques being lost. Consequently I may not be aware of all ‘Entries’. To avoid these problems can you please send a stamped addressed envelope so I can confirm receipt, and you have confirmation I have received your form.

Early indication of intended attendance helps me ensure we have space available at the Petwood and East Kirkby for seating arrangements.

I must again thank the many people who quietly assist with all the work to ensure a successful weekend.

The Pantons

Without whom the weekend would not be the same. The Airfield and its facilities ‘Just Jane’ and all their support staff.

The Chattertons

For help in co-ordinating the Sunday Service, seating, printing, food etc. And of course Will’s inimitable style.

Allen Hudson

The whole year fielding letters and queries about 57/630 as our information officer or even historian.

Michael Howley

The rhythm and style of the poems he reads at the Sunday Service.

Jack Holsgrove

For all the Wreaths and their organisation.

John Maunsell

Our Treasurer, the financial management.

Garth Green

Managing the Membership lists and arranging the 'Monday Tour'

Edna & Harry Ely

Our reference point at East Kirkby.

Dave Houghton

Wing Commander who organises the BBMF fly past and who is now O.C. Operations Wing RAF Northolt.

Richard Benson

Our Hon Chaplain for the services he holds and his continuing support.

Finally I must mention how much we missed our President Mervyn Davies and his wife Helen at this years Reunion. It is rumoured he was 'Seeing to his mother in law' which really needs no further comment!

We did however have, at short notice, an excellent deputy in Steve Stevens who again showed his verbal dexterity during the after dinner speech.

Gordon Lodge

Reunion Weekend 2006

Saturday Dinner

Again held in the Woodland Suite with pre dinner drinks in the suites private bar or in the Hotels Terrace bar with superb views over the grounds. Many people use the patio or terrace tables on a warm summers evening. Some even continued to use them post midnight! Or pre breakfast!

Top Table consisted of;

Maureen & Steve Stevens	-	Speaking for his supper
Diana & myself	-	Secretary
Ruth & John Maunsell	-	Treasurer
Kate & Rev. Richard Benson	-	Hon Chaplain
Group Captain Tony Gunby	-	Golf partner
Wing Commander Dave Houghton	-	Speaker
Julia Rigley	-	Speakers main support
Betty & Michael Howley	-	Our Poet!

Following the Loyal Toast and Secretaries notes Steve Stevens deputising for our President gave the toast to our guests. Dave Houghton the spoke and gave the toast to 57/630 Squadrons.

I mentioned Tony Gunby as a golf partner as he and I were successful in a golf match that morning against Jackie & Mike Boden. Jackie is the daughter of Ted Wilcock who I believe won some money on a side bet! No doubt I shall have a abusive reply to this Newsletter!

Following the dinner Garth Green organised the Raffle with the cockpit seat for the Lancaster taxi run being won by Tom Mackie.

Sunday Service

As usual the Service was held in the hangar at East Kirkby and commenced at 11:30 with a march past by 141 Boston ATC Squadron under Flight Lieutenant Spike Elliott supported by the Marham Le Fen Victory Silver Prize Band. Their continued support each year is welcomed by all members.

The Squadron was then inspected by Wing Commander Dave Houghton.

Following the Secretaries Announcements Harold Panton began the Service with an introduction and reading. After the first hymn 'O Ruler of the Earth and Sky' Michael Howley read the Walter Scott poem 'Merlin Song'

Merlin Song

To some the Merlin is a bird,
Or a magician in the written word,
To us an engine giving flight,
Through the darkness of the Wartime nights,

The East Kirkby Lancaster, standing proud,
Facing the Reunion crowd,
The preparations have begun,
For the starboard – inner engine run,

All eyes now on propeller blades,
Unmoving now for two decades,
Jerking movements, a blast of sound,
Then the ancient blades are whirling round,

Faster, faster, until I see,
The airscrew arc confronting me,

And mirrored in the shimmering blades,
I see every flight I ever made.

Slowing now, then sound is gone,
But East Kirkby echoes linger on,
With the many gathering in time and space,
This single voice will take it's place.

We know that 50 years before,
Here every night the Merlins roared,
More than a hundred of them hurled,
Their challenge to a darkened world.

From many Merlins, to just this one,
Youth to age, until all are gone,
But we heard again the Merlins roar,
On a summers day in Ninety Four.

The second hymn 'I vow to thee, my country' led into Thee Address by our Chaplain the Rev Richard Benson to the 300 assembled in the Hangar and various points around the Airfield. The final hymn 'And did those feet in ancient time' – Jerusalem was followed by The Grace and The National Anthem.

Led by the ATC Squadron those assembled proceeded to the 57/630 Memorial. A short Service, Last Post, Reveille and the laying of wreaths.

Wreaths laid by;

Holland	- Auke Noordhof
Canada	- Paul Dalseg
Thetford Grammar School	
Jean Rogers	- 630 Squadron
Malcolm Crapper	- 57 Squadron
Wing Commander Dave Houghton	
Various personal wreaths	

We all made our way back to the Hangar and Airfield for the 'Just Jane' taxi run. At 13:30 Squadron Leader Paul Day formally OC. BBMF flew the East Kirkby Spitfire on a dazzling display. The BBMF Lancaster with a Spitfire on each wing displayed at 15:30 which really was an amazing sight.

Everyone then returned to the Petwood Hotel where we had the RAF Swing Wing Band and singers performing in the gardens. A big band sound in the Glen Miller tradition. Some stayed on the terrace, nearer the bar, and listened at a distance. A very successful event we hope to have again next year.

Sunday Evening Dinner Dance

A great evening in The Woodland Suite on an informal basis and supported by some 100+ members. In addition to the band one of our members Roy Nash provided a Cabaret slot of singing and comedy which really was very good. Roy has promised to appear next year.

Over the whole weekend, and for the first time, we have recorded on video and DVD all the events. For those who have attended or cannot attend you can see what a great time we have each year. It may tempt you to come! See what happens - no health warning!!!

Lincoln Cathedral and Monday Outing

On the Monday we followed our usual practice and visited Lincoln Cathedral for a Service in the Airman's Chapel. We had a three generation family from Canada, the Dalseg's from Sault Ste Marie and the Grandson of Paul Dalseg of 57 Squadron, Graham Dalseg was asked to lay the Wreath for the Squadrons.

Those on the coach then proceeded in the Garth Green tour to the Usher Gallery for a bit of culture.

Diana and I with Maureen and Steve Stevens went to RAF Scampton as Steve had arranged a tour of air traffic control, the museum, and the Red Arrows Base. All the Red Arrow's planes were at home and we had the opportunity of seeing the workshops and talk to the engineers. More of the Red Arrows later for 2007.

Gordon Lodge

Reunion 2007

Petwood Hotel

The Dinner and Dinner Dance will be held as usual in the Woodland Suite. The Band has been booked and Roy Nash will do his cabaret.

The RAF Swing Wing Band has been booked for the Sunday afternoon in The Petwood grounds.

Fly Past

13:30 Paul Day and the Spitfire

15:00 BBMF Lancaster

Both these times are subject to confirmation.

I also been in contact with the Red Arrows for a display on their return journey to Scampton. They have not as yet finalised their 2007 programme and cannot confirm our display until 6 weeks before. There are 3 windows, before the Dinner on the Saturday at the Petwood or over the Airfield on the Sunday. I hope it can be achieved.

Just Jane

Taxi run following the Memorial Service and as usual a cockpit place raffle on the Saturday night.

Programme 2007

Saturday 30th June

19:30 Reunion Dinner
Dress lounge suits or blazer
Speaker – Blue Rackley from Australia

Sunday 1st July

11:30 Secretary reads the notices
March past and inspection by Wing Commander Dave Houghton and Group
Captain Tony Gunby

11:45 Remembrance Service – Medals
Conducted by Rev Richard Benson – Hon Chaplain
At the Memorial; Last Post – laying of Wreaths
Music; Marham Le Fen Victory Silver Prize Band
Air Training Corps; 141 Boston Squadron – Flt.Lt.Spike Elliott
111 Sunderland Squadron – Flt.Lt.Peter Dixon

13:30 Spitfire Display – Squadron Leader Paul Day

15:00 Fly Past BBMF

16:30 RAF Swing Wing Band – Petwood Hotel

19:00 – 19:30 Informal Dinner Dance – Petwood Hotel

Note. Red Arrows to be advised.

Note.

The Sunderland ATC Squadron have become involved through Lily Taylor a 57/630
Association member who was in the Sergeants mess at East Kirkby to 1945

Monday 2nd July

Lincoln Cathedral & Garth Green tour

Cost Petwood Hotel

4 nights	£220p.p
3 nights	£200p.p
B&B 1/2 nights	£44per person per night

Reunion Dinner	£25p.p
Dinner Dance	£22p.p

Those on 3 or 4 nights have the Dinner and Dinner Dance costs already included in
the £220 or £200.

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

For all Reunion forms whether cheques included or not please send stamped addressed envelope so I can both acknowledge receipt and be certain of who is attending.

During 2006 I am aware of some cheques not received and one couple not logged for Dinner as the forms never arrived.

Gordon Lodge

The Petwood Hotel

As many members who do not attend the Reunion or who live abroad may wonder the connection with the Hotel here is a 'Potted History' and the relationship with the RAF.

Petwood Hotel – an unusual name. The house was built in 1905 for Lady Weigall on a site chosen by her in the area of her favourite 'pet wood'

The only child of Sir Blundell Maple, the furniture store magnate, Lady Weigall and her husband Sir Archibald Weigall lived here at Petwood.

During the Second World War the hotel was requisitioned by the RAF and in 1943 it became the Officers Mess for 617 Squadron – 'The Famous Dambusters'

Today the Squadron Bar is dedicated to this famous group of men.

The lovely building stands in 30 acres of mature woodland, rhododendron walks, extensive lawns and gardens, with a lake and a variety of wild fowl.

In February 1942 RAF Woodhall Spa was completed and ready for operation. In late February Handley Page Hampdens of 106 Squadron flew on a mine laying sortie in the English Channel. The first week of March saw the arrival of 97 Squadron, the Officers of which use the Petwood as their Mess. Several Squadron also used the Petwood during the war including 617 'The Dambusters'. They remained until the end of the war.

The Petwood received many interesting visitors. On the 24th March 1944 a Flying Fortress B17 flew into the base for a few days and the Officers stayed at the Hotel. Later in the same month RAF Woodhall Spa was visited by General Spaatz, Commanding General of the US Airforce, with him was General Doolittle, Commanding General of the US 8th Airforce and who was famous for the raid on Tokyo.

During 1944 a Dinner was held to celebrate the first anniversary of the famous Dams raid followed by a Dinner Dance with Wing Commander Guy Gibson and Leonard Cheshire present.

With the prominence of 617 Squadron many VIP guests attended the Petwood. One Dinner during 1944 to celebrate the attack by 617 Squadron and 9 Squadron on the German Battleship Tirpitz using the 12000lb. 'Tallboy' bombs.

RAF Woodhall Spa was closed on the 10th December 1945 and The Petwood returned to it's pre war owners and reverting to the Hotel we see today.

Gordon Lodge

Memorial in France

There is a proposed Memorial to a 630 Squadron crew in the French village of Aincourt to the north of Paris.

On the night of the 7/8th July 1944 a force of 208 Lancasters and 13 Mosquitoes was sent to bomb the V weapons storage site at St. Leu d'Esserent.

German night fighters intercepted the bombers and 29 Lancasters and 2 Mosquitoes were lost. 630 Squadron lost its Commanding Officer Wing Commander WI Deas. On that night he was the Master Bomber for the St. Leu raid.

Those who died when ND 688 LE-R crashed and who rest in Omerville Communal Cemetery were;

Wing Commander WI Deas DFC and Bar
F/O JT Taylor DFC
P/O CN Wright
F/Lt. GGH Farara DFC DFM
Sgt LAA Page
F/Sgt RJ Locke

F/O WT. Upton managed to escape from the aircraft before the crash and spent of the rest of the war was a POW.

I included Walter Upton's story in the 2004 Newsletter.

I am awaiting details of the proposals to unveil the Memorial, so if anyone is interested in attending, please let me know.

Gordon Lodge

Lincoln Cathedral 27th August 2006

A Ceremony took place to commemorate all those of Bomber Command who gave their lives during WW2. Jim Wight attend and has sent me a note of the proceedings. There was a large turnout with the BBMF Lancaster making three passes over the Cathedral to the great appreciation of all assembled. A Choral Evensong followed and the dedication of the Bomber Command Ledger Stone then began.

The Dedication covered the history of Bomber Command from the onset of WW2 through the Countries and types of personnel involved. Types of raids and method were outlined and over the whole of the WW2 the loss of 55,888 lives of Bomber Command.

A copy of the Address is attached.

Gordon Lodge

Bomber Command Medal

You will no doubt have read and heard about the many attempts to persuade the Government to award a Campaign Medal to Bomber Command Veterans of WW2.

No doubt somewhere Political Correctness has reared its ugly head in another part of our lives. However to not consider such a medal is an insult to all those who served and those who died.

Jack Warwick as written to me on the subject suggesting we should write to the Prime Minister. Whilst an Association letter will carry some merit the weight of individual letters may well have greater effect.

I have enclosed a copy of Jacks Letter to the Prime Minister which will give a basis to any letters you individually decide to send.

Gordon Lodge

Information Officer Allen Hudson

Allen has produced his annual note for the Newsletter, a copy of which is attached.

Imperial War Museum

I have received a request for information from Dr. Roderick Bailey SOE Project Historian.

Very recently, the family of the late Wing Commander James (Jimmy) Blackburn DSO DFC past his log book and surviving personal papers to the museum for preservation. They are now trying to find out more about W/Cdr Blackburns life, with a view to preparing a biography.

57 Squadron was the first with which he flew. Before the war he had been a contemporary of Leonard Cheshire and Richard Hillary on the Oxford University Air Squadron. On the outbreak of war he was called up immediately and, either late in 1939 or early in 1940, joined 57 Squadron in France. He left in March 1941, posted to the Middle East ferrying duties. Later he flew with 70 Squadron and then commanded 104 and 148 Squadrons in the Middle East and 159 Squadron in the Far East.

The Museum would like to speak to or hear from any members who hold papers or private memoirs of any ground or air crew who served in 57 Squadron in 1940-41.

Contact can be made through me.

Gordon Lodge

Imperial War Museum North

Based at The Quays, Trafford Park, Manchester there is a new exhibition on the story of Bomber Command. It covers ground and air crew and factory workers.

Gordon Lodge

Developments at East Kirkby

I was very fortunate, by accident, to be visiting both the Petwood Hotel and East Kirkby and to witness the latest development. Fred and Harold Panton have either acquired or opened up the field at the end of the taxi run area.

Mike Chatterton, ex BBMF Lancaster Pilot, and a team were running 'Just Jane' across the field and at right angles to the normal taxi area. These runs were at a speed sufficient to raise the rear wheel off the ground! The intention will be to carry out such runs on a number of occasions through a year although I believe Mike Chatterton would have to be present and in control of 'Just Jane'

With Mike based at Waddington with the RAF and as our Reunion clashes with the Waddington Air Show we may not have this bonus at the Reunion.

Gordon Lodge

Alma Leedham

At the Reunion Dinner, Alma presented the Association with a 57 Squadron photo from 1943 at Scampton. The photo will be on display at East Kirkby.

Gordon Lodge

Thetford Grammar School

Those who attended the Memorial Service at East Kirkby will be aware of the involvement of the School and the laying of a wreath for P/O Claud Houghton AFM of 630 Squadron KIA 10th June 1944.

The School has recently made contact with Claud's Nephew and have seen his Service record and photos but not the log book.

They are keen to meet anyone who knew Claud or his Bomb Aimer F/O DC Percy who survived the crash as a POW.

David Seymour who is Head of History has made this request and I am pleased to say he will be attending next years Dinner. Any information please forward through me.

Gordon Lodge

Membership Secretary and Monday Outing

Enclosed is a note from Garth Green on the 2006 outing and details of the arrangements for 2007. All bookings should be made direct with Garth, returning to him the form attached to his note which is included at the back of the Newsletter.

Gordon Lodge

Arab States Tour

Lady Jess Broom has sent me a copy of a RAF magazine in which Sir Ivor describes a 57 Squadron good will tour to Iraq, Jordan and Tripolitania. At the time Sir Ivor was a Squadron Leader on the 7600 mile mission. A copy of the article is attached, the whole magazine will be retained by Wing Commander Dave Houghton.

Our thanks to Lady Jess for presenting this to the Association.

Gordon Lodge

Verner Andersen

All those who attend the Reunion will have been saddened to learn of Verners death in the 'In Memoriam' section by the President.

I was advised of Verner's death by Jim Wright in an email which covers the history of Verner's connection with the Association.

I have therefore attached a copy of this email to commemorate Verner.

Gordon Lodge

Wartime Memories – Buck Buckley

Many thanks to Buck for submitting this attached 'Good Read'

Closing Thoughts

Well, I have had a tremendous time and I must say as I get to know everyone a little more each year that becomes a great part of being your Secretary.

In addition to those I meet, the contact by letter or email with members all over the world is an added bonus.

I happy Christmas and New Year from Diana and myself.

Gordon Lodge