



57 / 630 Squadrons Association

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

Secretary: Gordon Lodge



November 2007 Newsletter

In Memoriam

Harry Archer
Gwen Creak
Eliz. Copeman
Michael Howley
Don Mallinson

Angela Pilgrim
Frank Pomeroy
Rhys Rawlings
John Regan
John Spencer
Jack Smith

Harry Archer

A quite ever present stalwart

Gwen Creak

She was lively, I met her and Walter at the Lyneham open days. Gwen had firm and entertaining views on most subjects.

Eliz. Copeman

Lil was Geoff's great support for which are all grateful.

Michael Howley

Walt's poems deserved a good voice and Michael's interpretations never failed to move. We shall never forget it, and, we teased each other; I was his "Unpaid Agent" arranging parts for him in Coronation Street and the like. Be happy to know that Betty's son David and his wife are at hand to support her.

Angela Pilgrim

Dear Angie; I mischievous bright spark who was a joy in any company. Her plaque now rests with Pil's on their tree at EK.

Frank Pomeroy

Frank's was a long illness and we thank Margaret for supporting him at the reunions for so long.

John Regan

When I discovered that John served on the alter in Ireland and I was a choirboy in Plymouth I identified myself in Latin and he answered instantly with the correct response. Together we resurrected the bones of the Latin Mass. John's was a long illness and sadly, we never met. Monique wishes to keep in touch via the Newsletter.

Vic Webster's ashes were laid to rest at the reunion attended by Esther, daughter Denise and the two surviving members of his crew; Ron Meeking and myself.

Regrettably I have no intimate knowledge of Don Mallinson, Roy Munday, Rhys Rawlings, John Spencer or Jack Smith but they will be remembered at the reunion.

Finally nobody needs to be reminded of the tremendous debt the Association owes to Fred and Harold and their Staff who worked so hard to ensure a smooth running reunion. They never fail, and we should be so lucky.

Mervyn Davies

Battlefield Tour

Helen and I have been on the above tour, centred on Ypres with its' wonderful Town Hall, Cathedral and Town Square. We started at Poperinge. Talbot House with its' lifelike statue of Tubby Clayton, the founder of Toc H and the restful garden untouched since 1915 and the Museum.

The Museums are quite wonderful, with lifelike figures, letters, relics and weapons. The first cemetery we visited was dominated by a Memorial to the Canadians who stood fast in the face of the first gas attack.

Words are inadequate to describe the tidal wave of emotion. Cemeteries galore: Tyn Cot, Ypres, Poperinge, Langermark and at Passchendaele the Scots were commemorating the 90th Anniversary of the Battle.

At Ypres Cathedral after the Service the Choir sang in English: "What a wonderful world" and "Land of Hope and Glory". It was all too much with the Menin Gate Ceremony still to come.

A young, uniformed English Brass Band marched in. A Welsh Choir sang two lovely hymns; The Scots piped "Amazing Grace" and a most eloquent Lament. The Buglers from the local fire brigade matched the Royal Marines with their "Last Post" and the Band finished it off with "Abide with me" and "God Save the Queen".

We survived and dined alfresco in the Ypres Square.

Mervyn Davies

Secretary's Comments

I am starting this Newsletter from an unusual location – Bradford Crown Court. Selected as a Juror, lucky me, I have so far spent three days doing absolutely nothing! Each case has pleaded guilty at the very last minute.

I have had more fun watching paint dry!

Now back to reality, the Reunion Weekend was, as usual, extremely well supported although some events were affected by the weather. Lincolnshire suffered more than most areas so that not only was the ground waterlogged so was the sky!

We therefore had no RAF Band on the Sunday at the Petwood Hotel and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight was grounded. Paul Day did however manage to give a display in the East Kirkby Spitfire.

Association members were present from Canada, Australia, USA, New Zealand and Denmark, a total of 170 at the Saturday Dinner. The Sunday Memorial Service had over 300 present with 120 going on to the Sunday Dinner Dance. More of these functions later in the Newsletter.

The dates for the 2008 weekend are Friday 4th July to Monday 7th July and for 2009 Friday the 3rd July to Monday 6th July.

There continues to be pressure on accommodation at the Petwood Hotel which is already fully booked for 2008 and nearly for 2009. The hotel is however hoping to build a further 20 rooms for 2009, subject to planning permission.

One change for 2008 I am hoping to achieve is to have the RAF Band in the Petwood Hotel grounds on the Saturday afternoon so releasing some of the time pressures on the Sunday.

The usual Reunion form is enclosed in the Newsletter and it will be appreciated if returns could be made, if possible, by the end of March. As before a stamped addressed envelope will enable me to confirm receipt and for you to know your "entry" has been received.

I have at this stage to mention Michael Howley. You will have seen on the "Memoriam" the Presidents comments on Michael's passing. In the 10 years I have been a member of the Association, the last 4 as Secretary, I came to appreciate Michael's support and the wonderful way he brought Walt. Scott's poems to life. He will be sadly missed for many years to come.

I am going to mention those who continue to make the Reunion so successful and without who's support my job would be much harder if not impossible.

The Pantons

Without whom the impossible would not be possible.

The Chattertons

For help in coordinating the Sunday Service, printing etc.

Allen Hudson

For being our historian and information officer.

John Maunsell

Our Treasurer

Jack Holsgrove

For organising the wreaths

Garth Green

Managing the membership lists and organising the Monday Tour and Lincoln Cathedral

Edna and Harry Ely

Or reference point at East Kirkby

David Houghton

Wing Commander who organises the BBMF flypast and arranges the printing of the Newsletter

Richard Benson

Our Hon. Chaplain for conducting the Services and continuing support

Ernie Ashby

For his support with all the seating at East Kirkby

Finally could those members living abroad, and with whom I have had no contact, please confirm they wish to continue receiving the Newsletter. The cost of postage abroad is now excessive and we need to ensure members still wish to retain contact. If I do not hear I will stop the issue. Post or email contact will be fine.

Well enough from me, now to other notes and report and points of interest.

Gordon Lodge

Reunion Weekend 2007

Saturday Dinner

As usual held in the Woodland Suite, drinks were, due to the weather, restricted to the internal bars. This however did not deter members and guests from maintaining their usual levels of activity!

The top table consisted of;

Mervyn & Helen Davies	-	Our President
Lionel (Blue) & Maureen Rackley	-	Speaker from Australia
Rev. Richard & Kate Benson	-	Hon. Chaplain

Gordon & Diana Lodge	-	Secretary
John & Ruth Maunsell	-	Treasurer
David & Katherine Seymour	-	Thetford Grammar School
Air Commodore Tony Gunby	-	Note Promotion!
Spike & Helen Elliott	-	ATC Squadrons
Wing Commander David Houghton	-	O/C RAF Northolt
With Julia Rigley and Lewis Tomlinson	-	More in a minute

Spike and Helen were invited following their support over many years with the ATC Squadrons at the East Kirkby Memorial Service.

Lewis, the nephew of Julia, came with David Houghton and Julia. A young man, his mother is currently serving as a Squadron Leader in Kandahar – Afghanistan.

The formal part of the Dinner commenced with the Loyal Toast by Will Chatterton Followed by Secretaries notes and speeches from our President, Lionel Rackley and Pia Worm from Denmark. Absent friends by Steve Stevens.

After numerous requests I have included a full copy of Lionel Rackley’s speech.

Sunday Service

Prior to the Service two personal Service’s took place. First was the placement of a plaque to Angela Pilgrim who had died recently. Secondly the interment of Vic Webster’s ashes in the Memorial Garden. The Ceremony was attend by family and close friends and conducted by our Chaplain the Rev. Richard Benson.

Normal proceedings commenced at 11:30 with a march past by 141 Boston ATC Squadron and 111 Sunderland ATC Squadron which had been introduced by Lilly Taylor (Sgt. Mess 1941/45). The Boston Squadron lead by Flt. Lt. Spike Elliott who is in the process of handing over to Flt. Lt Andy Peacock. The Squadrons were then inspected by Wing Commander David Houghton. All the Service events were as usual, supported by the Marham Le Fen Silver Prize Band.

Following the Secretary’s announcements Harold Panton began the Service with an introduction. After the first hymn “Immortal, Invisible, God only wise” Helen Davies read the Walter Scott poem “Memorial Tree”

Memorial Tree

“No Trespassers”, the sign proclaims,
As I pass by it, from the lane,
Through long grass, rippled by the breeze,
Forward to the brooding trees.

Footsteps muffled by thick leaf mould,
Like skeleton hands, the low twigs hold,
They catch my sleeves, as if in fear,
That I shall find their secret here.

Now suddenly, a clearing, split,
When a dying, plunging, aircraft hit,
A brass plate, fastened to a tree,
On it seven names stare out at me.

I press my fingers to the plate,
Thinking back to that night of fate,
That night of flame, and naked fear,
When a stricken bomber crashed right here.

Memorial tree, with your long life span,
Far longer still than any man,
You can project for many years,
The memory of what happened here.

Now, as I leave this place of death,
The clearing seems to hold its breath,
On looking back, did I really see,
Seven figures there by the great old tree?

Back in the lane, back in the sun,
Back from the time, when I was young,
I have just seen what I came to see,
A brass plate, on an old, old tree.

Poem by Walter Scott (630 Squadron)

The second hymn “Oft in danger oft in woe” preceded the address by our Chaplain the Rev. Richard Benson to the 300+ gathered in the Hangar and around the airfield.

The final hymn “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation” preceded Prayers, The Grace, and the National Anthem.

Lead by the ATC Squadrons everyone moved to the 57/630 Memorial at the entrance to the Airfield. A short Service was held, Last Post, Reveille and the laying of wreaths.

Wreaths laid by;

Canada	-	Paul Dalseg
630 Squadron	-	Lionel Rackley
57 Squadron	-	Mervyn Davies
RAF	-	Wing Commander David Houghton

Fortunately the weather remained dry throughout the outdoor elements of the Service. The afternoon began with Squadron Leader Paul Day giving a Spitfire display with the East Kirkby aircraft. Unfortunately as the weather deteriorated even further the BBMF Flypast and the RAF Swing Wing Band were cancelled.

Gordon Lodge

Sunday Evening Dinner Dance

We continued the use of the Woodland Suite at the Petwood Hotel with again over 100 members present. Roy Nash provided the cabaret, another entertaining programme from this talented member.

Gordon Lodge

Lincoln Cathedral and Monday Outing

Our visit to Lincoln Cathedral and the Airman's Chapel for the Service and wreath laying was, as usual, well supported. There was ample time for viewing what must be one of the most impressive Cathedrals in the country.

Garth Green has produced a note of the day which is attached to the Newsletter.

Gordon Lodge

Reunion 2008

Petwood Hotel

The Dinner and Dinner Dance will be held in the Woodland Suite hopefully accompanied by better weather than experienced this year. The RAF Shades of Blue Band will be present over the weekend. In the past this has been on the Sunday afternoon which incurs time pressures following the East Kirkby event. At the moment I am trying to have the Band on the Saturday afternoon prior to the Dinner

Flypast

13:30 Paul Day and the East Kirkby Spitfire

15:00 (Approx) BBMF Flypast

There is also the possibility of the Red Arrows over the weekend either Saturday or Sunday but this depends on their programme which is not finalised for many months.

Just Jane

Taxi run following the Memorial Service and the usual raffle for a Cockpit Seat on the Saturday evening.

Chief Guest and Speaker

I am delighted to report that Sir Michael Beetham and Lady Beetham are to join our Reunion. As many will know Sir Michael is a former Marshal of the Royal Air Force and did serve on 57 Squadron.

Programme 2008

Saturday 5th July

19:30 Reunion Dinner

Dress, lounge suit or blazer

Speaker – Sir Michael Beetham GCB, CBE, DFC, AFC, DL

Sunday 6th July

- 11:30 Secretary reads the notices
March past and inspection
- 11:45 Remembrance Service – Medals
Conducted by Rev. Richard Benson – Hon Chaplain
At the Memorial; Last Post – laying of wreaths
Music; Marlam Le Fen Victory Silver Prize Band
Air Training Corps; 141 Boston Squadron
- 13:30 Spitfire display
- 15:00 BBMF flypast
- 19:00 – 19:30 Informal Dinner Dance

Note: to date the timing of the RAF Band and the Red Arrows is not known. Details will be at reception at the Petwood Hotel on your arrival or by telephone to the Hotel.

Monday 7th July

Lincoln Cathedral and Garth Green Tour. Garth will send details of the Monday arrangements nearer the time.

Cost Petwood Hotel

4 nights	£230p.p
3 nights	£210p.p
B&B 1 or 2 nights	£46p.p.p.n
Reunion Dinner	£26p.p
Dinner Dance	£23p.p

Those on 3 or 4 nights have the Dinner and Dinner costs already included in the £210 or £230. For B&B at the Petwood or staying elsewhere please send cost of Dinner(s) and the Dinner Dance and numbers/names attending. All cheques payable to 57/630 Squadrons Association. Please note any dietary requirements on the Reunion form. For all Reunion forms, whether cheques included or not, please send stamped addressed envelope so I can both acknowledge receipt and we can both know your form has been received.

The Reunion form is attached.

Gordon Lodge

Constitution

It has become necessary to have a formal Constitution to facilitate certain requirements. We have recently co-opted to the Committee an understudy to John Maunsell our Treasurer. Clare Gillard, who is Ron Meeking's daughter, needed to become a cheque signatory to complete that appointment. Other signatories are John

Maunsell, Jack Holsgrove, and Allan Payne. It is not appropriate that those who receive monies for the Association should also be able to sign cheques. The Constitution also enables members to see the “Raison d’etre” of the Association and the destination of funds should the Association ever close.

If any member wishes to comment or propose any amendment, please let me know. Any proposed changes would need to be passed to me well before the Reunion so the appropriate arrangements can be made.

A Copy of the Constitution is attached.

Gordon Lodge

A Winters Dawn

During the year I was contacted by Sean Whyte of SWA Fine Art Publishers who had a painting of a 57 Squadron Lancaster at East Kirkby in December 1944. This had been produced by Philip West one of the worlds finest aviation artists.

I was asked if I could provide four 57 Squadron Pilots to sign each of the prints being produced for sale by the publishers. The following negotiations produced a £200 donation to the Association and ten signed prints for our use. These were subsequently sold at the Reunion for £50 each substantially below the market price of £250. We therefore raised £700 for our funds.

The Pilots who signed were;

Sir Michael Beetham
Flt. Lt Phil Ainley
Flt. Lt Ron Meeking
Flt. Lt Steve Stevens

I have attached a note which accompanies each print detailing the background to each signatory.

A ‘flyer’ is enclosed which shows ‘our print’ placed second up from the telephone number. The Lancaster is in the snow as East Kirkby.

The publishers have contributed £100 towards our postage costs.

Gordon Lodge

Bruce & Cheryl McTrowe

Bruce and Cheryl from Alberta in Canada are members of the Association and have attended many Reunions. They have produced an article for the Newsletter “Our East Kirkby Experience” which is attached and well worth a read.

Sergeant Richard Stafford Parle
1795270 Air Gunner 630 Squadron

There is a full report attached from Allen Hudson, our Historian, who has done an amazing job on the Medal awarded to Sgt. Parle. How this Medal came to our possession and the process involved is fascinating. It is proposed to present the Medal display to the East Kirkby Museum at next years Reunion.

The commendation appearing in the London Gazette dated 7th April 1944 read;

“Sergeant Parle was the rear gunner of a Lancaster Aircraft detailed to attack Frankfurt on the night of 18/19 March 1944. When over the target area, he sighted an ME109 and immediately opened fire. Shots were exchanged and when last seen the enemy aircraft was going down out of control and on fire. This is confirmed by the mid-upper gunner and other members of the crew. At all times, this rear gunner has shown an excellent fighting spirit and he is an outstanding gunner. He is an excellent example to the other gunners in the Squadron and he is recommended for the immediate award of the Distinguished Flying Medal.”

Gordon Lodge

It's amazing what one can get up to in retirement

I have received an article from Walter Hunt (630) which he wrote many years ago. A loft insulation contractor created the need for Walter to clear the loft in preparation an the article was discovered. A good contribution and attached to the Newsletter.

Gordon Lodge

Squadron Leader James Eric Swift

Daniel Swift is looking for anyone who may have know his Grandfather.

He was a pilot on Wellingtons with 57 Squadron while they were based at Feltwell between January and September 1941 when he was posted to 11-OUT at Bassingbourn. He subsequently joined 83 Squadron at Wyton and was lost on a raid on June 11/12 in 1943. Daniel would like to hear from anyone who knew him, or who was with 57 Squadron during 1941.

Gordon Lodge

57 Squadron Lancaster
JA914 DX-O

A grim reminder of the war over Germany is on show in the heart of Berlin. The right wing, still with the undercarriage, and a large part of the fuselage, of the Lancaster has been preserved in the Deutches Technikumuseum and dedicated to the Battle over Berlin. The Lancaster DX-O was lost over Germany while on a mission to Berlin. The Bomber crashed in the Wunsdorfer See, a large lake, all seven crew were killed. The aircraft was recovered in 1997 and after being preserved has recently been put on

display. Four of the crew are commemorated at Runnymede, the other three are buried in the 39-45 War Cemetery.

Gordon Lodge

Wing Commander Blom-Jones DFC **630 Squadron**

Following the issue of the 2006 Newsletter I was contacted by a Squadron Leader Doug Tidy who is with Blom-Jones in a retirement home in Bishopsteignton, Devon. Doug found the Association through the internet so I sent Blom-Jones the Newsletter. I advised Alex Fraser who visited Blom-Jones and discovered he was 95 on the 17th January. His sister lives in Sidmouth, Alex and Molly were very kind in taking her for a birthday lunch with her brother.

Raffle 2008

Garth Green has relinquished his involvement with the running of the raffle. The Association owes him its gratitude for running the event over many years.

For 2008 Roy Nash has agreed to run the raffle and we will be delighted to learn of those who would like to assist. The more we have the less time each person will be involved in selling tickets, which could start on the Friday evening so making Saturday evening less pressured. Tickets will be in two parts, one for the normal raffle the other for the Cockpit Seat on the Sunday taxi run.

Could those prepared to help please let me know when returning the Reunion form. I can then advise Roy.

Raffle prizes will also be welcome.

Gordon Lodge

Nocturna Mors

I have attached a note from Douglas Packman on the value of the Squadron badge and the Memories and thoughts brought to mind.

Closing Thoughts

Every year the level of friendship prevalent amongst the membership, both at the Reunion, and throughout the world is a motivation for all concerned with the Association. Long may it continue.

Thank you all, and have a very happy Christmas and an exciting New Year.

Gordon Lodge