



57 / 630 Squadrons Association

President Group Captain: David Houghton
Vice President: Group Captain Tony Gunby

Secretary: Gordon Lodge



November 2009

“In Memoriam”

John Baldwin
Mike Barnet
Malcolm Crapper
Frank Gledhill

Ruth Maunsell
Gwen Payne
Pat Snell
Earnest Ward
Colin Whiting

Always difficult to report the loss of members and to find the right words to express, not only mine, but the Associations condolences.

Mike Barnet

A larger than life character who gave the Assoc. tremendous support and latterly organised the sale of raffle tickets.

Malcolm Crapper

A stalwart of the reunion and regular attendance brought him many friends. It was good to see Alice and family this year at East Kirkby.

Ruth Maunsell

Wife of John, who was Treasurer of the Association for many years.

Gwen Payne

Married to Alan an Association committee member, both have attended the Reunion for many years.

Pat Snell

Widow of a former Association Secretary.

Colin Whiting

Another regular at the Reunion weekends.

John Baldwin, Frank Gledhill and Earnest Ward were not known to me but were long standing members and often supported through donation.

Gordon Lodge

President/Vice President

A change from the usual order of presentation as during the dinner the President Mervyn Davies announced his invitation to retire from the position. In doing so he proposed the Group Captain David Houghton, the Vice President, succeed him as President. The motion was seconded by Clare Gillard, our Treasurer, and unanimously approved by all.

Having created a vacancy for Vice President David Houghton proposed that Group Captain Tony Gunby be elected to that position, seconded by Garth Green and approved by members present.

Following their changes I have included a note from Mervyn Davies, a message from our new President David Houghton and a CV from Vice President Tony Gunby.

Gordon Lodge

The March of Time

Always, Helen and I have been carried away with the atmosphere and comradeship in our Association. The warm greetings, cheerful insults and Reunions of crews never failed to transpose us – for a few days – back to that world which time has left behind.

In my case I was reunited with our rear gunner Vic Webster and our pilot Ron Meaking. Vic was always alert on duty and with an irreverent and cheeky wit. We lost Vic last year and miss him.

The maestro Ron and I have always had much in common: a love of good music and we are each quiet and unobtrusive, except for once in Ron's case. This is interesting. Years ago I found that I was gifted with a talent for spotting faults in others, and once, looking at Ron I saw a dark shadow which surfaced one night when we were diverted to an American base. The Intelligence Officer was dragged out of bed at 3am. He wasted no time in asking for details of our operation "What was your bomb load?" Mac, our Canadian bomb aimer said "Cookie", immediately the officer went on to the next question which Mac interrupted with "6 x 1,000 pounders and incendiaries". With the most eloquent body language his pen remained frozen in mid-air for an unconscionable time. He didn't believe it. We all notice it and I saw that cloud over Rons head. Somehow it was not surprising that we were stuffed into a storeroom for the rest of the night. However, the following morning on the dispersal, American Aircrew were all over the kite but Ron had something else on his mind. Full boost on takeoff, a steep climbing turn off the runway and a beeline for the ATC. I stood under the astrodome and I swear we scraped the roof: in fact the soles of my feet recorded the controllers heartbeat. And do you know, I could feel Rons sigh of satisfaction as he returned to his quiet and unobtrusive state. He was a magnificent and unruffled pilot and I never felt the need to belt up on takeoff or landing. This is my tribute to him.

There were many other experiences and I must refer to Verner Anderson, who searched for many years to find 630 Squadron. It was humbling for those of us who visited Denmark to celebrate their liberation day, 5th May, to be hailed as liberators.

And now, instead of just fading away the 57/630 Squadron Association is to embark on a new lease of life, thanks to the transfusion from the reformed 57 Squadron and the enthusiasm of Gp Capts David Houghton and Tony Gunby, with Gordon Lodge in the operational seat.

For Helen and me this has been a great adventure and a unforgettable experience made possible by enthusiastic members and their families. Our love and thanks to you all.

Long live the 57/630 Squadron Associations.

Mervyn Davies 21st August 2009

A FEW WORDS FROM YOUR NEW ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

GROUP CAPTAIN DAVID HOUGHTON

It is with some trepidation that I put finger to keyboard to attempt to write my first piece for the Squadron Association Newsletter as your newly-elected President. I know those last 3 words will shock many of you, particularly if you were not at the Association Reunion at East Kirkby earlier this year. However, in a show of collective madness, those at the Reunion voted (in the loosest sense of the word) for me to take over as Association President from Squadron Leader Mervyn Davies. Thankfully, I have asked Mervyn to act as President Mentor to keep me on the straight and narrow and, as an additional safety net, Group Captain Tony Gunby has become the Association Vice-President. I have no doubt that, between the two of them, Mervyn and Tony will be able to point me in the right direction.

I have to admit that I feel incredibly honoured to be elected to serve as your President. I hope that I will be able to repay your faith in me and, while I cannot hope to emulate the wit and warmth of Mervyn, I will try to serve you all in any way I can. Since attending my first Association Reunion in 1999 as a 2-day old, wet-behind-the-ears squadron leader, Mervyn has been a wonderful friend and mentor to me – he has even (on occasion) laughed at my jokes. I know that the whole Association will wish to join me in thanking Mervyn for his devotion to the Association both as Secretary and, since the death of Air Marshal Sir Ivor Broom, as Association President.

For many of us at this year's Reunion, the highlight of the Sunday was seeing the reformed 57 Squadron on parade with the Squadron Standard. Squadron Leader Paul Watkins, the latest Officer Commanding 57 Squadron was at the helm and his young officers, marshalled by Flight Lieutenant Mike 'Chalky' Chambers did the Squadron proud. The Phoenix has risen again and 57 Squadron has returned to a former home of the Squadron at RAF Wyton in Cambridgeshire and, as ever since late 1945, wherever 57 Squadron is the spirit of 630 Squadron goes with it. Squadron Leader Watkins has kindly invited Members of the Association to the 57 Squadron Open Day at RAF Wyton on 12 November 2009 and I look forward to seeing many of you then. For those unable to make it to RAF Wyton in November, I hope that we will be able to send out information about the highlights of the day to all Association Members.

Finally, some of you may have met Andrew Carruthers at this year's Association Reunion. Andrew is a volunteer with the Second World War Experience Centre, Leeds and has been coming to East Kirkby since 2004 with Harry Le Marchant, who served as a navigator with both 57 and 630 Squadrons.

The Second World War Experience Centre is a registered museum with charitable status. It is working to collect, preserve and share memories of this crucial period in history. Its aim is to ensure that these are made available for education and research and are kept safe for future generations. It has so far collected interviews and/or documents relating to nearly 9,000 people.

Andrew and the Centre would like to arrange to interview any member of the Association who is interested in sharing their memories with future generations. The interview process is straightforward. Those interested should contact the Centre on 0113 258 4993.

The Centre will take your contact details and try to arrange for someone to visit to carry out the, audio tape recorded, interview. Whilst the interviewer would come equipped with some questions, they will allow the interviewee to tell their story in their own way. The main focus will be experiences during training and service. However, this can (and preferably should!) include humorous anecdotes about military/squadron life, views on the strengths and weaknesses of your aircraft, food and accommodation etc. The tape(s) are then sent back to the Centre by the interviewer and are logged and entered into the museum's archive. The recording is then available for use by educational, research and media organisations amongst others.

Full details of the Centre's work can be found on its website
<http://www.war-experience.org/index.html>

Also on the site are some sample stories collected by the Centre.
A Bomber Command example can be found at
<http://www.war-experience.org/collections/air/alliedbrit/reynolds/default.asp>

Secretaries Comments

This reunion weekend benefited from far better weather than the previous two years.

Arriving on the Friday night we enjoyed a Fly Past over the hotel from BBMF. This Fly Past was supporting a dinner raising funds for the Bomber Command Memorial and organised by the BBMF.

Saturday afternoon had the RAF "Shades of Blue" band in the grounds of the Petwood which by popular demand is now regular feature. We also had a flyover by the Red Arrows and had planned on a fly past by the Vulcan. As they had not completed their documentation, so had to abort, not only us, but the Waddington Air show.

Sunday was a very special day and we had the new 57 Squadron present with the standard party. OC 57, Squadron Leader Paul Watkins, advised of an Association day at RAF Wyton on the 12th November 2009. The event will have been held after the printing of this Newsletter so we will probably issue a flyer later.

Next year the Reunion dates are Friday the 2nd July to Monday the 5th July.

The usual Reunion forms are enclosed in the Newsletter and it would be appreciated if return could be made by the end of March. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope so I can acknowledge.

Finally I must pay tribute to Mervyn Davies for his contribution to the Association through his years as both Secretary subsequently President. His support to me as a "newcomer" has been appreciated and invaluable.

The future of the Association is more than assured with the new President and Vice President I am sure we will go from strength to strength.

I must also thank those at East Kirkby who give enormous to the Reunion and Association. In particular, the Panton Family, Harry and Edna Ely, Will and Clare Chatterton, Ernie Ashby, and the Marham Le Fen Band.

Gordon Lodge

Reunion Weekend 2009

Saturday Dinner

Numbers slightly lower this year at 120 due in part to fewer visitors from abroad.

The top table consists of :

Mervyn and Helen Davies	-	President
Group Captain David Houghton	-	Vice President
Group Captain Tony Gunby	-	Speaker
Squadron Leader Paul & Judith Day	-	Sunday Spitfire Display
Squadron Leader Mike & Debbie Bracken		
Flt. Lt Mike Chambers	-	57 Squadron
Laura Tansey	-	Cadet RAF Cranwell
Rev. Richard & Kate Benson	-	Chaplain
Gordon & Diana Lodge	-	Secretary

Amongst the members we had a visitor from France David Whiting and his wife Maria. David's father served in 57 and was KIA. Subsequently David's mother remarried with his stepfather being Lord Dowding of Battle of Britain fame.

We also had a new member Alfie Fripp at age 95 probably our oldest member and who flew Blenheims.

The formal part followed the usual format of Speeches and the Annual Accounts being approved during the one minute AGM!!

The Loyal Toast was given by Alma Leedham and Absent Friends by Tom Lockett.

A copy of the Annual Accounts is attached to the Newsletter.

Following the dinner Harry Le Merchant presented an oil painting to the Pantons to thank Fred and Harold for their support to the Association and the wonderful efforts at East Kirkby. The oil painting and Harry's own work, depicts Lancasters and Crew at East Kirkby.

Sunday Service

Prior to the service the Chaplain held a small Service for the planting of trees in remembrance of Geoff and Lil Copeman who for many years were great supporters of the Association.

The service commenced at 11:45 with a March Past by 57 Squadron and the standard party led by Flt. Lt Mike Chambers 141 Boston ATC Squadron also participated in the March Past. The Squadron were inspected by President Group Captain David Houghton and Vice President Group Captain Tony Gunby.

The following Secretaries announcement an introduction by Harold Fanton began the Service.

Details of the Service:

Hymn – all people that on earth do dwell.

Poem – crew Reunion – Walt Scott read by Allen Hudson.

Hymn – The Lords my Shepherd.

Address – Rev. Richard J. Benson Hon. Chaplain.

Poem – Old Airfield – Walt Scott – CD by Micheal Howley.

Hymn – I vow to thee my country.

After prayers, the grace and the National Anthem all proceeded to the 57/630 Memorial led by 57 Squadron standard party. At the Memorial a short Service with the Last Post, Reveille and the laying of wreaths

630 Squadron Alan Payne
57 Squadron Steve Stevens
57 Squadron Sq Ldr Paul Watkins
RAF Gp Capt David Houghton
Canada Diana Lodge for Paul Dalseg

Returning to the Airfield we had the Spitfire display by Sqn Ldr Paul Day who again managed to miss the chicken sheds and various buildings!!! The BBMF Lancaster, Spitfire and Hurricane provided their wonderful flypast and very welcome after the weather cancelations of the last two years.

Taxiing of the East Kirkby Lancaster was the usual success, the sound of the engine recalling memories to many of those present. The winner of the Cockpit seat at the dinner was Squadron Leader Mike Bracken with the pilot of the Lancaster having taught him on the flying of Tornados. Small world!

The evening had our usual Dinner Dance at the Petwood and the cabaret from Roy Nash, a member of the Association.

Lincoln Cathedral

On the Monday members paid their usual visit to the Airmans Chapel for a short Service and wreath laying.

Reunion 2010

Petwood Hotel

The Dinner and Dinner Dance will be held in the Woodlands Suite. The RAF “Shades of Blue” will be in the grounds from 3:00pm.

Chief Guest and Speaker

Squadron Leader Paul Day will entertain members prior to his Spitfire display on the Sunday.

Programme 2010

Saturday 3rd July

15:00 RAF Shades of Blue Band
19:30 Reunion Dinner
 Dress – Lounge suit/blazer

Sunday 4th July

11:45 Secretary Reads the notices
 March past/ Standard party and inspection

 Rememberance Service – Medals
 Conducted by Rev. Richard Benson – Hon. Chaplain
 Memorial: Last Post – Laying wreaths
 Music: Marham Le Fen victory silver prize band
 57 Squadron
 ATC: 141 Boston Squadron

13:30 Spitfire display
 Sqn Ldr Paul Day

15:00 BBMF Flypast

19:00/19:30 Informal Dinner Dance

Monday 6th July

Lincoln Cathedral and Airman's Chapel. Members will need to liaise on transport arrangements.

Cost Petwood Hotel

4 x Nights £255 per person
3 x Nights £230 per person
B&B 1/2 Nights £50 pppn

Reunion Dinner £28.50 per person
Dinner Dance £24.50 per person

Those on 3 or 4 nights have the Dinner and Dinner Dance already in the price. For B&B at the Petwood or staying elsewhere please send cost of function for the numbers attending. Please note any dietary requirements on the Reunion form. For all Reunion forms whether cheque included or not, please send stamped addressed envelope so I can acknowledge receipt. The Reunion form is enclosed in the Newsletter.

Gordon Lodge

Flight Sergeant Glencross

During the year I was contacted by Helen Glencross who was concerned over the long term future of the DFM awarded to her husband.

In donating the medal for safe keeping together with Log Book and Caterpillar Badge the official presentation was made at the dinner.

Allen Hudson has arranged for a Display Case to hold the medal etc. and placed in the Squadron Museum at RAF Wyton at the Dinner on the 12th November.

I have thanked Helen Glencross for the donation of the medal.

Gordon Lodge

Association Ties, Badges etc

Garth Green with the assistance of Roger Bayford and Robin Lloyd-Williams have produced high quality accessories.

Attached to the Newsletter are full details, costs etc.

Gordon Lodge

St Clement Danes

Many members will be aware that St Clement Danes is the Central Church of the RAF. Located opposite the Royal Courts of Justice, the Temple and Fleet St, the Church is placed on an island in the middle of the Strand.

57 and 630 have the Squadron Badges in the commemorative floor and I have attached photos of the Plaques.

For over 1000 years a church has stood on this spot and the history stems from the Danes and features;

Domesday Book (1086)
Knights Templar (1170-1312)
Fire of London (1666)
Rebuilt-Wren (1681)
Gutted by incendiary (1941)
Given to the Air Council (1953)

Re-consecrated in 1958 as a shrine of remembrance to those killed an active service and those of the Allied Air Forces killed during WW2. There are many gifts and memorials from all over the world. On the wide pavement that leads to the sanctuary the high altar has around 1000 squadron badges of Welsh state let into it.

Services are held during the week and on Sundays. Members will be warmly welcomed.

Gordon Lodge

Hit by Flak

Eric Blanchard has sent me, with Steve Stevens' permission the tale of a night in the summer of 1943.

The story is attached to the Newsletter.

Gordon Lodge

Sgt. J (Johnny) B Johnson

A request for information from Bill Habergham, East View Cottage, Otley Road, Pool in Wharfedale, LS21 1EE tel: 0113 2842629

Serving in 57 during 1944/5 as a mid-upper gunner in a plane piloted by Plt Off AEN Nicklin RN2AF and ditching off East Anglia on the night of the 21/22 June. All the crew survived and Sgt. Johnson survived in the war.

Any information contact direct or through me.

Gordon Lodge

Loss of Lancaster ND580 630 Sqn

I have attached a report of Jack Peters research into the loss of his Uncle Bob Jackson who was the pilot of ND580. There is much supporting material which is too large to include with the Newsletter.

Gordon Lodge

Archivist/Historian

Attached to the Newsletter is the report from Allan Hudson on the activities during the year.

Gordon Lodge

Bouzy La Foret France

During 2008 we were contacted by the Mayor of Bouzy regarding the crash of a 57 Sq Lancaster ND560 on the 24/25 July 1944. The town have erected a Memorial at the

site and held an unveiling ceremony on the 25th July this year Allen Hudson attended and his report is attached.

Gordon Lodge

Closing thoughts

An amazing year with the 'Phoenix' rising again and attending the Reunion under Squadron Leader Paul Watkins. The standard party under Flt. Lt Mike Chambers gave a moment to remember by all who were at the airfield that day. We are a very fortunate Association in having East Kirkby and we can never thank the Panton family enough for their achievements in the development of the airfield and the facilities they make available.

There are many others from the area who do a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes to make the day successful. The design and printing of the service sheets, the seating arrangements, the band and Last Post. Members tell me that the articles and memories that members submit for the newsletter are enjoyed by all. Any submission will be welcome from both Air Crew and Ground Crew.

Both Diana and I wish you all a very happy Christmas and 2010.

Gordon Lodge