



# 57 / 630 Squadrons Association

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

**Secretary: Gordon Lodge**



## 2010 Newsletter



THOSE ATTENDING REUNION WHO SERVED IN THE SQUADRONS 1939 – 1945  
PHOTOGRAPHED AT EAST KIRKBY JULY 4TH 2010

## Reunion Photographs

In a change to the usual format the Newsletter commences with a series of still photographs taken from the DVD of the Reunion weekend.

Following the “cover” the others are;

57 Squadron preparing for the march to the hanger at East Kirkby and positioned under the Lancaster “Just Jane”



57/630 Memorial on the site of the former Guard House.



57 Squadron Standard Party at the Memorial.



Standard party by the Lancaster.



“Just Jane” on a taxi run.



## "In Memoriam"

**Arscott Kenneth**  
**Beard Jim**  
**Cole David**  
**Ely Harry**  
**Frazakerley Bernard**  
**Gordon Bill**

**Hawker Doug**  
**Hudson Muriel**  
**Legg Ron**  
**Sheriff Joe**  
**Francis Ray**

Always a sad time when preparing the Newsletter.

We will all have our personal knowledge of those named, mine being involved during my tenure as Secretary, so they are:

Many may well have known Harry Ely over many years and his involvement with the Association together with his wife Edna.

Ray Francis, who together with his family attended the Reunions each year and was involved in the creation and running of the Association over many years.

Doug Hawker who I had had correspondence with each year and came from New Zealand to a reunion a few years ago.

Muriel Hudson, wife of Historian Allen Hudson and friend of Ron Legg and his wife Mavis who we saw every year.

The Canadian, Joe Sherriff who I corresponded with for many years. Bruce and Cheryl Mctrowe in Canada attended Joe's funeral and represented the association.

Harry Price, who regularly attended the reunion until recently.

Gordon Lodge

## Reunion Weekend 2010

The Saturday afternoon provided entertainment in the Petwood grounds by the RAF “Shades of Blue” band and singers.

### Saturday Dinner

With a total of 123 attending the Top Table consists of;

Group Captain	David Houghton	- President
Group Captain	Tony Gunby	- Vice President
Squadron Leader Flt Lt	Paul Watkins Vicky Green	- OC 57 Sqn
Squadron Leader	Mike Bracken Debbie Bracken	
Squadron Leader	Paul Day	- Speaker
Squadron Leader	Mervyn Davies	
Flt Lt	Mike Chambers Raquel Vallancey	- 57 Sqn
Rev	Richard Benson Kate Benson	- Chaplain
	Gordon & Diana Lodge	- Secretary

Grace was given by Rev Richard Benson and Loyal Toast by Flt Lt Mike Chambers.

The 2009 accounts were approved having been proposed by Allen Hudson and seconded by Alan Payne. The president welcomed the guests of the association.

The toast to Absent Friends was delivered by Squadron Leader Paul Watkins.

During the speeches the President presented two 57 Squadron plaques to our Dutch and German guests in appreciation of their enduring kindness to our fallen comrades.

### Sunday Service

The service commenced at 11.45 with a march past by 57 Squadron and the standard party. The Squadron were inspected by the president and the Vice President.

Following secretary's notice there was an introduction from Harold Panton.

#### Service details:

Hymn	- The Airmans' Hymn
Poem	- Watchtower – Walt Scott – CD by Michael Howley
Hymn	- Lead us Heavenly Father Lead us
Address	- Rev Richard J Benson Hon Chaplain
Hymn	- Jerusalem

After the grace and the national anthem all proceed to the 57/630 memorial lead by the standard party.

At the memorial short service with the Last Post, Reveille and the laying of wreaths.

57 Squadron	Steve Stevens
630 Squadron	Allan Payne
57 Squadron	Sq Ldr Paul Watkins
RAF	David Houghton
Canada	Paul Dalseg
Various personal wreaths	

On returning to the airfield the wind had increased to a level that we were advised the BBMF fly past of the Lancaster had to be cancelled. However Paul Day managed to get a Spitfire aloft and once again threatened the chicken shed!!!

We all had the thrill of “Just Jane’s” taxi run and the sound of the Merlins.

Gordon Lodge.

## **Lincoln Cathedral**

On the Monday members paid their usual visit to the Airmans’ chapel for a short service and laying of wreaths.

With reducing numbers attending the service over recent years the use of a coach to transport members to Lincoln from the Petwood has been cancelled due to costs we do however need to review demand. The reunion “entry form” has a series of questions on this subject to enable an assessment of the provision of the service and if there is demand for transport. Could all those returning the forms please complete this section.

Gordon Lodge.

## **Reunion 2011**

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July – Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July**

### **Petwood Hotel**

The dinner and dinner dance will be held in the Woodland Suite. The RAF “Shades of Blue” will be in the grounds from 3pm. Afternoon tea will be served in the lounge at around 2.30pm.

### **Chief Guest & Speaker**

Officer Commanding 57 Squadron

### **Saturday Dinner 2nd July**

7.30pm            -Lounge suits / blazers

### **Sunday 3rd July**

- 11.45 Secretary reads the notices  
March past / Standard party and inspection  
Remembrance Service – Medals  
Conducted by Rev. Richard Benson – Hon Chaplain  
Memorial Last Post – laying of wreaths  
Marham Le Fen Silver Prize band  
57 Squadron
- 15.00 BBMF Flypast
- 19.00/19.30 Informal dinner dance.

Gordon Lodge

### **Monday 4th July**

Lincoln Cathedral and Airman's chapel. The result of the "Transport" survey could result in a coach being provided. Otherwise members need to liaise on the use of cars.

Once the result of the "survey" is known and it is feasible to provide transport those wishing to avail themselves of the facility will be contacted individually. Whilst the association can provide a subsidy to the cost of the transport the feasibility depends on numbers wishing to use the coach. The survey is at the end of the "Reunion Form" for those attending the Reunion.

Gordon Lodge

### **Cost Petwood Hotel**

4 Nights	£275 per person
3 Nights	£250 per person
BRB ½ Nights	£55 per person per night
Reunion Dinner	£30 per person
Dinner Dance	£26 per person

Those on 3 & 4 nights have the dinner and dinner dance cost 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 forms, with cheque included or not, please send stamped addressed envelope so I can acknowledge receipt.

Gordon Lodge

## **57 Squadron and 'The Great Escape'**

Gp Capt David Houghton

I have no doubt that all Association Members will be familiar with the story of The Great Escape, if only through the highly entertaining, but historically inaccurate 1963 film of the same name, which used to be a permanent fixture of the Bank Holiday television schedules.

The reality of the events in Stalag Luft III, Sagan on the night of 24 March 1944 have been chronicled by far better writers than me, suffice to say that the tenacity and courage of all those in the escape remains an inspiration to all who serve in the RAF today. Again, as I'm

sure you will be aware, of the 76 men who made it out of tunnel 'Harry', 73 were recaptured and 50 subsequently murdered by the Gestapo on the direct orders of Hitler.

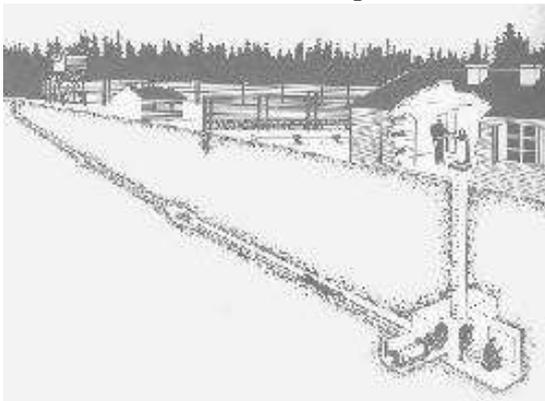


A rather grainy PoW 'mug shot' of Flt Lt Casey.

Of those 50, Flight Lieutenant Michael Casey served with 57 Squadron, as did two other key figures in the events of March 1944; Wing Commander (later Group Captain) Harry 'Wings' Day and Flight Lieutenant Eric Dowling.

### **Flight Lieutenant Michael Casey**

Michael Casey was born on 19 February 1918 and was flying as a pilot with 57 Squadron operating Blenheims when the War began. After the Commanding Officer and his crew had failed to return from 57 Squadron's first operational mission of WWII on 13 October 1939 (it later transpired that the aircraft had been shot down, with the loss of Sergeant Hillier and AC2 Moller), Michael and his crew (including Alfie Fripp as his observer/navigator) were tasked with carrying out a follow-on reconnaissance flight on 16 October 1939. They too were shot down. Over time, Michael and Alfie were both transferred to Stalag Luft III, although by the time of The Great Escape, Alfie had been moved again.



Schematic of Tunnel 'Harry'.



Post-war Memorial Marking the Position of Tunnel 'Harry'.

Michael was elected to be the Treasurer of the Escape Committee strongbox and was also the Concealment Officer, responsible for hiding all the forged (and real) money and documents that were so vital to any escape attempt. For the Great Escape, it was decided that it would be realistic to try and get some 200 prisoners through the tunnel in one night. The number of prisoners who wanted to escape was obviously far, far higher, so a draw for places as one of the

potential escapees had to be held. However, it was agreed that the first 25 places in the escape 'queue' would be reserved for those prisoners with particular language skills, or those who had been key members of the Escape Committee, including Michael who was Number 24 in line to escape.

Again, as has been well documented elsewhere, during the actual escape, things did not go as smoothly as had been hoped, with 'Harry's' roof and walls suffering occasional cave-ins, despite the extraordinary efforts made by the tunnel diggers to shore up the soft, sandy Sagan soil. Coupled with the fact that the tunnel exit inadvertently came out a tantalizing 10 feet short of a tree line, the pace of the escape was much slower than anticipated. Then, as the 77<sup>th</sup> man made his exit from the tunnel, the escape was discovered by the Germans.

Michael made it as far as Görlitz, where he was recaptured. On the night of 31 March 1944, Michael was murdered at Görlitz by Gestapo officers Lux and Sharpwinkel, along with a number of his fellow escapees. Lux was later killed in fighting in 1945. Sharpwinkel initially evaded justice by disappearing into the post-war Soviet-occupied zone of Germany, but was imprisoned and died in a Russian prison in May 1948.

Eighteen of those responsible for the murder of the 50 airmen (rightly classified as a war crime) were tracked down and brought to trial by a tenacious RAF investigation team, led by Squadron Leader Frank McKenna. A policeman before the war, Squadron Leader McKenna flew as a flight engineer on Lancasters before transferring to the RAF's Special Investigation Branch. Of the 18, 14 received the death penalty and were hanged, 2 were sentenced to life imprisonment and 2 were sentenced to 10 years' in prison.

### **Flight Lieutenant Eric Dowling**

Eric 'Digger' Dowling was born on 22 July 1915 and volunteered to join the RAF as aircrew at the outbreak of WWII. After completing his navigator training, Eric was posted to 57 Squadron, flying Wellingtons. Eric was shot down in April 1942 on his 30<sup>th</sup> mission, an attack on Hamburg. Attacked by night fighters, Eric's aircraft was badly damaged and eventually crash landed. Eventually, Eric ended up in Stalag Luft III, where his skills as a fearless tunnel digger soon brought him to the attention of the Escape Committee.



A young Sergeant Dowling (later flight lieutenant) pictured shortly after completing his navigator



Eric (left) pictured in Stalag Luft III with a fellow PoW.

As a tunnel ‘mole’ Eric worked on ‘Tom’, ‘Dick’ and ‘Harry’, but, in the lottery for the 175 ‘unreserved’ places for the escape itself, his name was not drawn. In hindsight, what at the time seemed like bad luck may have saved Eric’s life. As the war drew to an end, Eric was amongst the PoWs forced to march West by the Germans to keep them ahead of the advancing Soviet troops.

The notorious Death March resulted in the deaths of many PoWs who had endured years of hardship and privations in PoW camps. Eric survived and, after being liberated was sent to Norway by the RAF as an air crash investigator. While in Norway, he met his wife Marie and had 2 children. After leaving the RAF, Eric worked for his father before joining British Aerospace at Filton, Bristol, where he was a procurer of parts for Concorde. Eric died on 21 July 2008 at the age of 92.



Eric (pushing pram) pictured post-War.



Eric pictured in later life.

### **Wing Commander Harry ‘Wings’ Day**

Harry Melville Arbutnot Day was born on 3 August 1898 and joined the Royal Marines in 1916. For his actions while serving on HMS Britannia on 9 November 1918, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Day was awarded the Albert Medal (replaced by the George Cross in 1971). After the ship had been torpedoed, Harry twice braved smoke and flames below deck to rescue 2 trapped men.

Transferring to the Fleet Air Arm in 1924 and training as a pilot, Harry served with the RAF on exchange duties, before transferring to the RAF in 1930 in the rank of flight lieutenant. Already over 40 by the time WWII began, Harry agitated for an operational job and was rewarded with command of 57 Squadron in July 1939. On 13 October 1939, Harry and his crew took off in their Blenheim for 57 Squadron’s first operational mission of the War, a

reconnaissance sortie to Metz. As previously mentioned, they were shot down, and Harry was the only survivor from his crew.

An inveterate escaper, Harry made escape attempts from all of the camps he was housed in, many of them initially successful. Indeed, Harry had already escaped from Stalag Luft III before The Great Escape attempt. After that attempt, he was transferred to Oflag XX1-B, before being transferred back to Stalag Luft III.

On the night of 24 March 1944, Harry emerged from 'Harry' and paired up with Flying Officer Pavel Tobolski. The pair travelled by train through Berlin, and made it as far as Stettin. There they sought help from some French forced labour workers, but were betrayed and handed over to the Gestapo. Flying Officer Tobolski was subsequently murdered by the Gestapo.

Although his life was spared, Harry was sent to the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp (from where he escaped) and then to Dachau, before ending his captivity in Niederdorf on 30 April 1945. For his outstanding leadership and inspirational courage as a PoW, Harry was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire. Subsequently promoted to group captain in 1946, Harry retired from the RAF in 1950 and spent his later life in Malta, where he died on 11 March 1977 at the age of 79.



Harry Day pictured as a young 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Lieutenant RM.



Group Captain Harry 'Wings' Day  
OBE GC DSO RAF.



‘Wings’ Day (3<sup>rd</sup> from left) and fellow



Wing Commander ‘Wings’ Day (middle row, seated 4<sup>th</sup> from left) and fellow PoWs, including Flight Lieutenant Michael Casey (middle row, seated extreme left).

## **Presidents Message**

### **Archivist / Historian**

Information Officers report for 2010

This year has been the quietest year I have known in my term of office as the Association Information Officer. There have been no out of the ordinary requests, no medals to take care of, and only routine matters easily dealt with by reference to the many books I have got together over the years. That said there is still a great deal of satisfaction in the job and I am delighted to receive a large number of letters of thanks when the information I have supplied closes another chapter in the life of those who flew with us from East Kirkby. Out of curiosity a few days ago I checked the folders I have had to raise to contain the vast amount of papers, letters and Emails I receive and have sent out. I have now started Vol 6 and in all, the total has reached 287. Quite a large number to say the least and it is just as well that I have always called the third bedroom "The Office". Turning in another direction I would like to pass on an item from my visit to Dronten this year with the few remaining members of the Air Gunner Association. We gathered at the town hall of Dronten for the usual welcoming ceremony and to meet our hosts. Two days later we made our annual pilgrimage to Epe for a service at the graves of two Lancaster crews buried in the town cemetery. As is always the case the grave headstones and the surrounds were immaculate and many of the senior class pupils of the local middle who carry out this maintenance were present. Prayers having been said and wreaths laid, our party moved on the senior citizens club where we had a small mid-day meal. Following speeches of welcome we air gunners were then presented with a lapel badge worn by the Broken Wings Association, which I suppose made us Honorary Members. The Broken Wing Association is unique to the Netherlands and requires an explanation. When an RAF aircraft crashed in Germany the dead crew members were buried locally, normally the nearest parish church or cemetery with full military honours. Come the end of the war special teams were sent out from the UK to recover the bodies and these were re-interred in special war cemeteries set up by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. I know of no graves in Germany that remained other than in CWGC cemeteries. This was not the case in Holland where many of the graves in local cemeteries remained there at the request of the local population. The graves of Wing Commander Guy Gibson and his navigator are a typical example. I assume that the CWGC needed some form of understanding that the parish graves would be carefully maintained and it was with this in view that the Broken Wings Association was formed. They have made themselves responsible for the care of a large number of graves located in their district, this work being carried out by themselves, members of the local population and as is generally the case pupils from the senior class of the local middle school. Their badge is a silver three bladed propeller and it is a badge that I am proud to wear. Later during our visit I attended another ceremony at the memorial stone for the crew of a Lancaster that crashed in the forest near Herdenking. Again the senior pupils from the local school have made it their responsibility to care for the memorial and the surroundings and they do a wonderful job of it.

Look forward to seeing you at the Petwood in 2011

Allen Hudson

### **Wings Presentation R.A.F Cranwell**

During the year I was contacted by No.3 Flying Training School based at Cranwell about their Graduation Ceremony. The Station Commander at Cranwell Group Captain Dave Waddington wanted to invite Bomber Command Veteran to present the newly qualified pilots with the "Silver Sixpence" when they received their wings.

Steve and Maureen Stevens accepted the invitation to attend and I have attached Steve's notes on the day plus some brief notes by the training school.

## **Group Captain Tony Gunby**

The association Vice President Group Captain Tony Gunby was involved with 57 Sqn and the bombing raids in the Falklands. The following article by Tony is a fantastic read.

### **The Black Buck Raids**

On the morning of 1 May 1982, the BBC World Service news bulletin began with the line...

*“Earlier this morning, a lone Vulcan bomber attacked the airfield at Port Stanley.”*

After almost four weeks of news updates from Ian McDonald at the Ministry of Defence, at last here was news of a quite remarkable and daring attack against the Argentine invasion force on the Falkland Islands. Prepared and conducted in great secrecy, the Vulcan raid not only closed the runway at Port Stanley to Argentine fast-jets but also sent a powerful message to General Galtieri's junta - Britain had the ability to bomb mainland Argentina.

What the BBC World Service said little about was the role of the eleven Victors of 55 and 57 Squadrons, and the spare Vulcan, which had also flown in the same raid, enabling Vulcan XM607, captained by Flight Lieutenant Martin Withers, to complete what was then the longest bombing mission in history - almost 8000 miles and 16 hours. One other little known fact is that some of the Black Buck raids were also flown by Victor pilots who would clamber into one of the Vulcan pilot's seats to do each of the in flight refuels.

A total of seven Black Buck raids were planned, although weather forced the cancellation of one before takeoff and a second mission was aborted in-flight. Of the five raids flown, the Vulcan carried conventional 1000 lb bombs on three, and on the other two raids the Shrike anti-radiation missile was carried to attack Argentine radar installations on the Falkland Islands.

All of the missions followed a similar plan, involving a total of up to 18 in flight refuelings, most by night and many in poor weather. Getting eleven Victors and 2 Vulcans airborne from the single runway at Wideawake Airfield on Ascension Island was a triumph in organisation and ensured that the roar of Olympus and Conway engines lasted for several long minutes on departure. Then, flying in radio silence and in the dark, the formations of aircraft headed south west, the Victors transferring fuel between each other and to the Vulcan, until eventually just one Victor remained with the Vulcan.

On the night of 30 April/1 May, with twenty-one 1000 lb bombs, XM607 was operating at the extremes of its maximum weight and was burning fuel at a higher rate than expected. Ultimately this led to the Victors giving away more fuel than planned to make certain that the Vulcan could reach its target and to them flying further south than expected. This left the final Victor, XL189 of 57 Squadron commanded by Squadron Leader Bob Tuxford, with insufficient fuel to make the long flight back to Ascension Island. Because of the radio silence imposed on the mission from this point, Tuxford was unable to radio for help - an extra tanker which rendezvoused with him south of Ascension - until the codeword transmission from the Vulcan indicating a successful strike was received.

Meanwhile, after the final refuel, Withers and his crew continued to their target on the Falklands, flying at low level to avoid detection by Argentine radar and 'popping up' to 10,000 feet for the final bombing run. Leaving the target, XM607 then climbed and headed nearly due north to a planned rendezvous with a Victor some way off the coast of Rio de Janeiro. Again, it had taken 3 other Victors to get this single Victor to the rendezvous with Withers, with enough fuel to get Withers back to Ascension. The news of

the bombing raid was reported on the BBC World Service before either the Vulcan or the last tanker arrived at Ascension. Which brings me full circle to that rather misleading headline:

*“Earlier this morning, a lone Vulcan bomber attacked the airfield at Port Stanley.”*

For their role in the first Black Buck raid, Martin Withers was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Bob Tuxford the Air Force Cross.

During the course of Operation Corporate, Victors of 55 and 57 Squadrons were to fly over 3,000 hours in 600 air refuelling sorties supporting not only the large aircraft, but also the Harriers being deployed as replacements directly from the UK.

The story behind the Black Buck raids and that of Black Buck One in particular is told in riveting detail in the brilliant book by Rowland White “Vulcan 607.”

Tony Gunby,  
Belgium, August 2010

## Ernest Graham Joy

A request for information was received during the year from a Staff Sergeant Matt Scales of the USAF historical research agency at Maxwell Air Force Base. The request was for a high quality image of the 57 Squadron emblem, their project being a study of Aces with ties to the state of Alabama. One of the Aces Ernest Graham Joy was born in the North of Alabama subsequently moving to Canada. During WW1 he flew with 57 Sqn.

The requested was passed to David Houghton who provided Matt Scales with a copy of the “Phoenix”.

In the process David found that Major Joy died in Toronto in 1993 aged 105. He enlisted in the army in 1915 then moving to the Royal Flying Corps. With 57 SQ he flew the De Havilland DH4 and scored 7 victories between July and August 1917 while flying with his observer, Lieutenant Forde Leathley. Major Joy then moved to 205 SQ where he flew the DH9a and scored his 8<sup>th</sup> victory in November 1918.

Major Joy returned to Canada and practiced law before joining the RCAF in WW2.

### Membership Report

#### ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2010 ON MEMBERSHIP LEVELS AND MONDAY OUTING

Dear Members,

I am pleased to once again offer my report on the Associations Membership Levels for 2010, at the time of writing our membership levels are holding up very well, **they stand at 214, only 8 down from last year.** We have of course unfortunately lost members during the past year but generally our Veterans are holding their own very well. The Association has benefited by gaining many new members and to all our new friends I wish you a fond welcome. At a time when we would expect to be steadily decreasing in numbers we are holding our own very well, let us hope it will continue well into 2011 and beyond. The Association has also benefited from our close contact with the newly reformed 57(R) Squadron based at RAF Wyton, they have once again invited members to visit them on the 11th November. Unfortunately I am unable to attend this year as I shall be abroad but I know that all those who do attend will be very well looked after and will have a great time. The Association was very pleased to welcome as Honored Guests the Regional & Local Burgomasters of Apsen together with their wives. These guests have been

instrumental in helping Roger Bayford, Robin Lloyd – Williams and myself in not only discovering our fathers Crash Site but also in digging out parts of the plane. These have been returned home and are now on display in the glass cabinet inside the Hangar at East Kirkby.

The Monday Outing while at the July Reunion has become ever more difficult due to the problems with parking near to Lincoln Cathedral and a number of members who would have joined us were not able to do so this year. I had thought that after all these years of arranging this outing it was perhaps time to call it a day. However thanks to our President we have decided to re-instate the Coach for 2011, I would urge all members who will attend the 2011 Reunion and who are able to join the Lincoln Visit to please join us on the coach. **Cost will be £10.00 per head** and if need be subsidized by the association. We will only be able to run this visit if there is sufficient demand.

I look forward to meeting all members who are able to join us next year at East Kirkby. I am in the process of updating our new Web Site so please keep checking in on [www.57sqn.co.uk](http://www.57sqn.co.uk)

Garth Green.  
Membership Secretary

## Closing Thoughts

Over my period as Secretary I have become increasingly amazed by the support given to those K.I.A abroad WW2.

Whilst I have personally experienced the efforts taken by the local communities in looking after the graves and flowers I became more and more aware this was by far not an unusual occurrence throughout Europe.

On numerous occasions over the years the Association has received requests, official and unofficial, for information to either support the erection of a memorial to a crew or to provide information for services. There are many local schools who in the course of teaching history on WW2 include details of planes and crews crashing in their area.

There is a Belgian town where a candle ceremony is held at midnight, the time of the crash.

Dronten in Holland invite Air Gunners to their town each year and accommodate many of them on their own homes.

Skarild in Denmark have representatives from 57/630 each year in honour of the crew buried in their town.

In all these towns we are aware of there is tremendous and gratitude for the RAF. During the darkest times of the war the sounds of the bombers travelling to Germany maintained their hope of salvation.

As a country we have never been occupied and suffered as many have in Europe or we may have a greater understanding of their feelings.

Best wishes from Diana and Myself.

Gordon Lodge