



57 / 630 Squadrons' Association

www.57-630sqnassoc.org.uk

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

Secretary: Gordon Lodge



2012 Newsletter

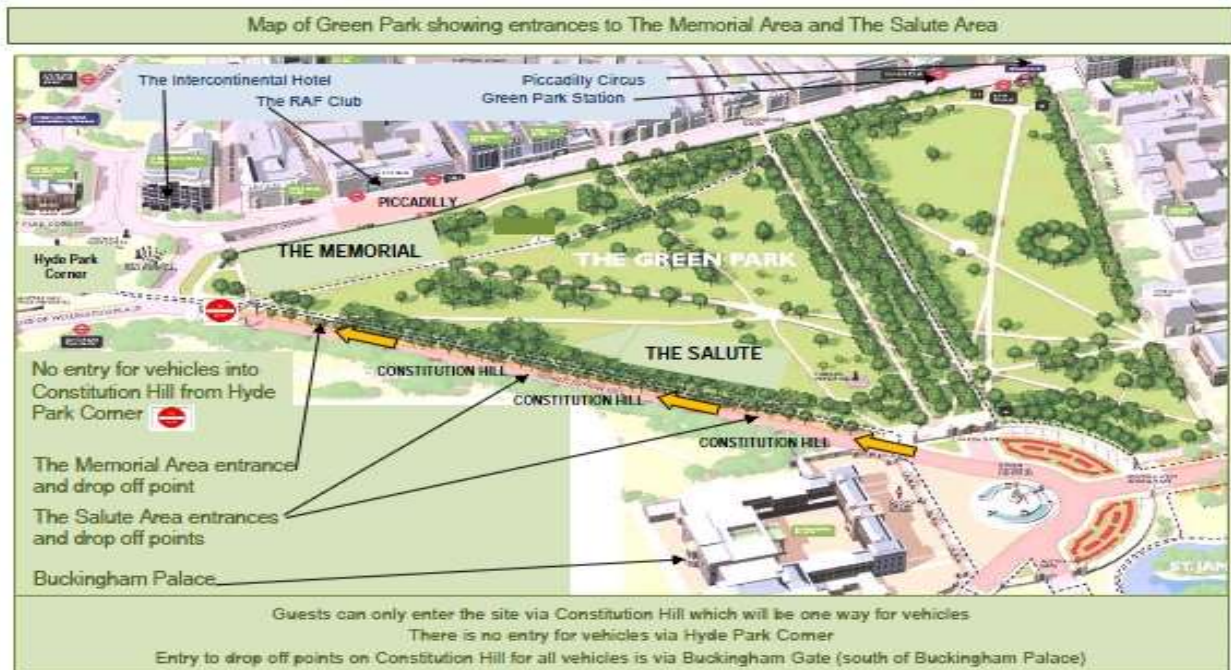


A close-up view of the central element of the Bomber Command Memorial. Some of the airmen depicted look up to the sky they have just returned from, others back towards their aircraft while some look down to the ground they have returned safely to.

Bomber Command Memorial

The unveiling and dedication of the Memorial took place in Green Park London on the 28th June 2012.

A number of 57 and 630 veterans and Association Members attended along with the current 57 Squadron from RAF Wyton. A fittingly glorious summer's day for the event and support by many veterans from all over the world. The following pictures cover aspects of the day which members may find of interest.



Obverse of ticket to Memorial Event, showing location of the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, London.



The Bomber Command Memorial, viewed from near Hyde Park Corner.



Air Commodore Malcolm White, Chairman of the Bomber Command Association, welcomes HM Queen Elizabeth II, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall as they arrive at the Memorial.



Her Majesty pictured after unveiling the Bomber Command Memorial. The roof above the 7 bronze sculptures is made from aluminium recovered from a Halifax aircraft shot down over Belgium in 1944.



The central element of the Bomber Command Memorial pictured as dusk falls. Designed by Philip Jackson CVO DL, the statues represent a typical Bomber Command crew following their return from an Operation. In their faces, one can see a mix of quiet resolve, fatigue and relief.

In Memoriam

Frederick Brown
Rev. Bob Cave
Helen Glencross
John Holmes
Tom Mackie

Bill Robinson
Harold Ruston
Jack Warwick
John Westmore
Alfie Fripp

Always a sad time reporting the loss of Members. Their support of the Association over many years will be missed. In particular the Rev. Bob Cave a former Chaplain of the Association. Tom Mackie who attended every Reunion flying from either Switzerland or America for the dinner and who was extremely generous in many ways. Alfie Fripp, the last of the '39ers'.

Squadron Leader Alfie Fripp RAF 13 June 1913-3 January 2013

Group Captain David Houghton

Association Members may have had sight of the widely-reported news of the death of Squadron Leader Bill 'Alfie' Fripp, who was serving with 57 Squadron as a Bristol Blenheim observer/navigator at the outbreak of WWII, and who was shot down on a reconnaissance mission on 16 October 1939 along with his pilot, Flying Officer Michael Casey, and Air Gunner, Aircraftsman Nelson. Alfie spent the rest of the war in captivity, and was the archetypal 'pain in the backside' for the Germans!

In today's RAF, we speak about those who are captured as 'Prisoners at War' rather than 'Prisoners of War', to reflect the fact that, although they may have been captured, our prisoners continue to fight the war, albeit in a different environment. Alfie was one of those who pre-empted the change from PoW to PaW by many decades.

I was fortunate enough to first meet Alfie in 2009, when I attended an RAF Kriegies presentation at RAF High Wycombe, and heard Alfie talk about the mission he was shot down on. It suddenly dawned on me that Alfie must have been serving with 57 Squadron at the time, a fact he confirmed when we spoke over a cup of tea later (the precursor to many subsequent beers). After that, Alfie became an integral part of our Association and a friend.

With Alfie's death, we have lost the last of the '39ers' - those who were captured in 1939, but we won't forget them. Rather than attempt to encapsulate Alfie's life and Service, it is probably best if I simply provide Association Members with a snapshot of Alfie's life taken from his website (*text in italics*) (www.alfiefripp.com).

Alfie was born on 13 June 1913. His father was a regular in the Royal Marines and had the young Alfie's career planned out for him at an early age. At the age of 12, Alfie was set to join the navy as an Artificer Apprentice through the Royal Naval Training School. Having passed the educational exam, he subsequently failed the medical for being 4ft 10ins – almost 4 inches too short!

After this early disappointment, Alfie was told that the RAF was looking for apprentices and there was no height restrictions. Invited to take the entrance exam, he passed and chose to become an electrical apprentice. Along with other new recruits, Alfie was enlisted at RAF Halton on 30 September 1930 and proceeded to RAF Cranwell to the E.W School. After two years of training, the recruits were told that the electrical training was to become the electrical instrument trade and were given the option on transferring to the Wireless Operator course. Knowing that there was more chance of becoming aircrew, Alfie took the opportunity and transferred.

Following qualification in 1933, Alfie was posted to 201 Sqn (Flying Boats) based at Calshot, near Southampton. Three years later, a transfer to 205 Sqn in Singapore – the first RAF squadron to be permanently based in the far east. A brief sojourn at RAF North Coates in 1938 was swiftly followed by another transfer, this time to 57 Sqn at RAF Upper Heyford.

At the outbreak of the second world war, 57 Sqn was transferred to Amy, France as [part of] the Air Component of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France for strategic reconnaissance duties. More importantly, three days after the declaration of war, on 6 September 1939, Alfie married Vera Violet Allen. A very short honeymoon was taken after which it was back to work for Flight Sergeant Fripp. If only Alfie and Vera has known the future they may have perhaps taken a longer honeymoon!

Alfie's story of he how he fell into Nazi hands is best told by the man himself...

"We were on a photo recce from Amy, near Amiens, to photo the railway activity from Munster to Hamburg, in Germany. The intelligence briefing was somewhat sketchy with no mention being made that Munster was a Luftwaffe fighter HQ with three squadrons attached.

We flew to Metz to refuel before crossing the border and aiming to collect a fighter escort into Germany. There were no fighters available so we proceeded to the target solo. Cloud base over the target was about 10,000 feet so we descended below to carry out a line overlap with our f8 camera in the bomb well.

Having carried out the operation, we set course for base but flak started to appear around the aircraft. The pilot decided to head for Britain so we altered course. With very little cloud cover the Air Gunner soon informed us that an enemy fighter was coming up fast. The first burst came streaming through the aircraft knocking out the rear gun but fortunately not hitting the aft gunner.

The pilot, Flying Officer Casey, then decided to dive into what little cloud cover there was hoping to lose the Messerschmitt ME109 on our tail. There was no way, however, we were able to avoid the occasional machine gun burst so we went into a steep dive to within tree top height.

After what seemed like an age, smoke was coming into the cockpit from smouldering engine covers stowed in the bomb well. Then we hit a tree top which caused the port engine to fail and the windscreen to shatter and, with it, our hopes of reaching friendly territory. Casey told the crew to prepare for a crash landing. We landed in a potato field and all the three crew got out with just shock, minor scratches and bruises. Our aircraft, though, was in a mass of flames. The Luftwaffe from an airfield a few miles away, who were spectators to the chase, picked us up. That evening we began our internment as PoWs at their HQ at Munster where we spent three days being interrogated. We were subject to solitary confinement but were allowed out together for an evening meal under strict supervision. And so by rail to my first PoW camp."



Alfie pictured shortly after capture.



Telegram with the unconfirmed report of Alfie's capture

Over the next 5½ years, Alfie was incarcerated in 12 different PoW Camps, including Stalag Luft III, Sagan (where the 'Great Escape' took place). An inveterate forager and fixer, Alfie helped to procure supplies and tools for many escape attempts, including the Great Escape itself. Although he was moved from Stalag Luft III some 3 months before the escape itself, Alfie's pilot Michael Casey took part in the escape, but sadly was one of the 50 airmen who were recaptured and murdered by the Gestapo.

After the war, Alfie remained in the RAF and rose to the rank of squadron leader before he retired from the Service in 1969, when he started a second career as a teacher. He eventually returned to the site of Stalag Luft III in 2009, and said at the time; 'The most important thing is saying goodbye to those who died. The huts have all gone but the ghosts of all those boys are here. I'm glad I came to remember Mike – you reflect back on all the memories and the people you knew. As for the Germans, I've forgiven them but not forgotten.'



Alfie pictured on his return to Stalag Luft III.

And so, a dramatic, action-packed life comes to an end and perhaps the only fitting way to end this piece is with Alfie's own words (again words in italics taken from www.alfiefripp.com);

"I look back over the years on my RAF career with pride and consider it a great privilege to have served from the time when the strength was only 30,000 airmen and the ration allowance five pence per day, through the turbulent war years and the introduction of the jet age to the run-down of men and machines to 1969.

It is little short of a miracle that I have survived for so long, through a forced landing in the bay of Biscay in a Scapa flying boat in 1936 whilst ferrying it to Alexandria, to a pre-war crash in a Blenheim Mk I in 1938, through my World War II experiences to the present day.

The initial training both in the naval training school and as an Airman Apprentice has held me in good stead throughout my life and for this I thank my instructors and 'old sweats' for helping me along the way.

It is my fervent hope that those who choose to make the RAF a career can maintain the "esprit de corps" which has existed along the way."

We will Alfie, and we won't forget you and your comrades. So long.

President's Piece

As I reflect on another year of Association activity, I cannot help but feel a great sense of pride at being a very small part of such a wonderful, vibrant organisation that continues to evolve and grow. While many Squadron Associations are unfortunately 'calling it a day' and disbanding, the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association seems to grow from strength-to-strength.

Of course, the unstoppable march of time means, inevitably, that some of our Association stalwarts can no longer join us at our annual Reunion or at the Dining-In Night with the current 57 Squadron. However, they remain in our thoughts (and in our toasts over the many beers that flow at these events!), and I am acutely conscious that I and all the current Membership of our Association truly are standing on the shoulders of the giants that have gone before us.

For me, a key part of what helps to keep our Association so strong is the wonderful relationship we have with the current incarnation of 57 Squadron. I know that, for the Officer Commanding 57 Squadron, Squadron Leader 'Wes' Wesley, the relationship with all the 'old boys' from 57 Squadron and 630 Squadron is equally important to him. In mid-November, Squadron Leader Wesley was kind enough to invite Association Members to a Dining-In Night at the Officers' Mess, RAF Wyton, and some 40 Association Members joined current 57 Squadron personnel for a wonderful night. Pictured below are some of the Association Members who attended, along with OC 57 Squadron and Flight Lieutenant Jim Duckham from 57 Squadron who, along with our Association Vice-President, Tony Gunby, organised a wonderful evening.



57 & 630 Sqns Association Guest Night
Royal Air Force Wyton Officers' Mess
15th November 2012



Elsewhere in this year's Newsletter, you will see some information about the historic events on 28 June 2012 when Her Majesty the Queen unveiled the long-overdue Bomber Command Memorial. Along with a number of 57 Squadron and 630 Squadron 'old boys', I was privileged enough to be able to attend the events in Green Park, London on what was an emotional day. Sadly, I know that, for a variety of reasons, many of the surviving Bomber Command veterans were unable to attend, so I hope the information will at least provide a small flavour of what the day was like.

More interesting news awaits you in the rest of this Newsletter, so it is time for me to close, but not before I mention some recent events I was privileged to take part in Poland, where I am now serving as the UK Defence Attaché to Poland (hard to believe that they think I am a diplomat!). Amongst the day-to-day trivia of being a Defence Attaché, I occasionally have the privilege of representing the UK at events that really matter to us and to our Polish friends. Three such events recently were the Remembrance Services we organised at the Commonwealth War Grave Cemeteries in Krakow, Malbork and Poznan. The support provided by my Polish military colleagues at all 3 events was, quite simply, wonderful, but I was particularly touched by the fact that at all 3 events, large numbers of the civilian population (including groups of schoolchildren) arrived to pay their respects to our fallen comrades.

As you would perhaps anticipate, the majority of the Commonwealth graves in Poland mark the resting place of RAF personnel. Indeed, particularly at the Poznan Cemetery, many of the graves are those of aircrew from 57 Squadron and 630 Squadron who were shot down on 'gardening' (mine-laying) sorties. Their graves are immaculately tended in a tranquil setting and, at Poznan, they lie alongside the graves of 49 of the 50 airmen who were murdered by the Gestapo after taking part in the 'Great Escape' from Stalag Luft III. We will never forget them.

Until we meet again, my very best wishes to you all for a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Secretary's Note

Well what a Summer, and I use the term loosely. In the garden I have slugs the size of anacondas having parties every night! Weeds are taking on the appearance of triffids!

The "Summer" also affected the Reunion in July. Waterlogged ground at the Petwood led to the RAF Band being unable to play on the Saturday afternoon. Sunday saw a slight improvement in the weather but not sufficient to allow the usual Service at the Memorial in East Kirkby. Wreaths were laid in the hangar by the 57 Squadron Standard and, later in the day, transferred to the Memorial.

Over the course of the last few years the cost of postage of the Newsletter has increased substantially. We are fortunate that, at present, we are able to secure printing of the Newsletter at no cost. However austerity measures cannot guarantee this will always be the case. Without this facility the printing costs would be enormous. A check with Staples this last year revealed a potential printing cost of £2500.

In order to counteract this potential problem and to develop some flexibility we have developed a Web Site where Members will have the ability to see the Newsletter and to print a copy if required. We will also have access to the History of the two Squadrons and information on other issues. More information is included in the Newsletter. Clearly such developments will substantially reduce our cost base.

We will, of course, continue to post the Newsletter to all who want that service.

The attached questionnaire deals with these issues and also takes the opportunity to update/check our records. Please return to Wing Commander Mike Bracken at the address shown. Members can also E-Mail replies to Mike.

I hope everyone had a really good Christmas and New Year.

Gordon Lodge

Reunion Weekend 2012-12

The problems caused by our "Super Summer" are covered in the Secretary's Note. Members and guests, however displayed their usual enthusiasm, Contributing to a successful Saturday and Sunday. The Dinner was again well supported with 118 in attendance.

The Guest of Honour, OC 57 Squadron, Squadron Leader 'Wes' Wesley gave the toast to the Association following ,the President, Group Captain David Houghton toasting Guests of the Association.

The Loyal Toast given by Steve Stevens and Absent Friends by Wing Commander Mike Bracken. Following Dinner the 2011 Accounts were approved and the Raffle took place. The Raffle Prizes donated by many Members contributing to its success.

The Bar then experienced the usual pressure with some members retiring, it is rumoured, around 4am!! Sunday's Dinner Dance, attended by some 60 members had the usual cabaret from Roy Nash.

The fact we have functions on both the Saturday and Sunday nights does enable our negotiating position with the Hotel to be strengthened so could I ask members to support the Sunday as much as possible please.

Hoping for better weather in 2013.

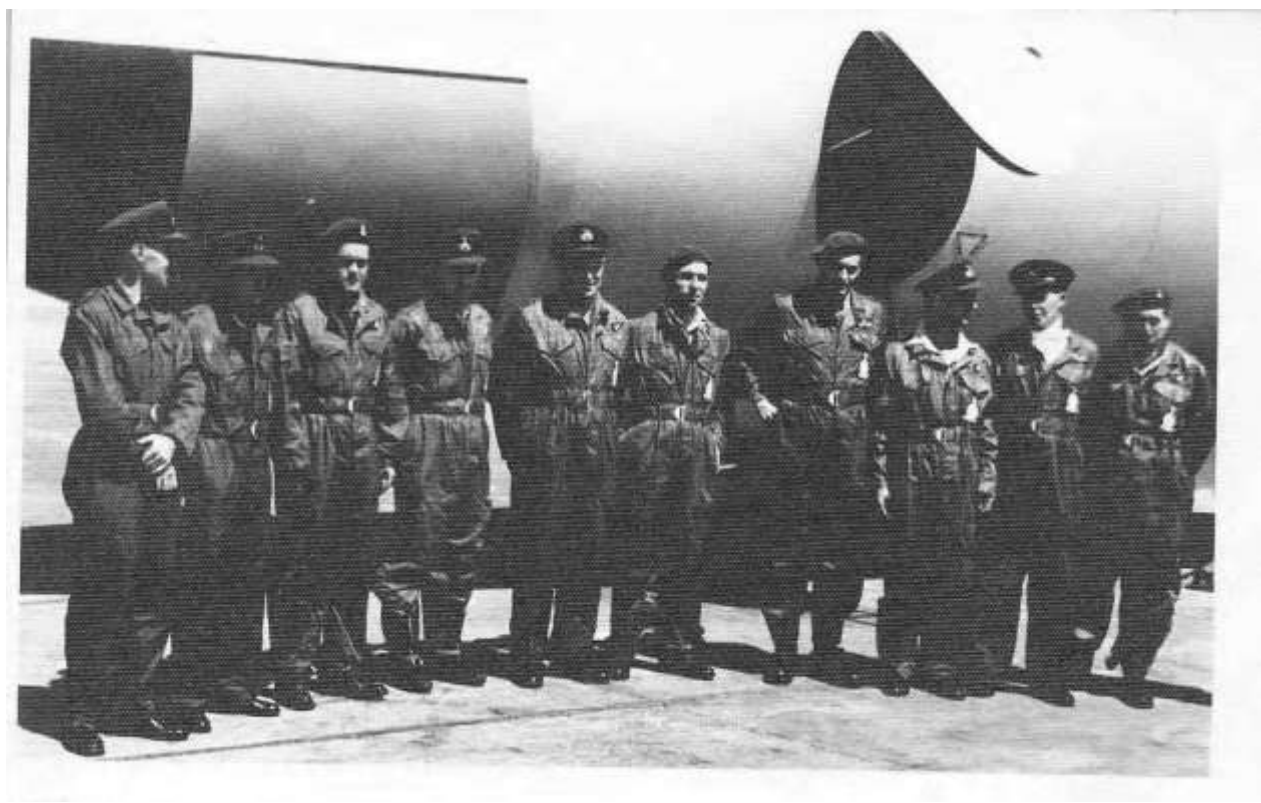
Gordon Lodge

57 Squadron Canberra Tour of Iraq and Jordan and Libya – 1955

Group Captain David Houghton

In 1955, a detachment of 6 Canberra aircraft from 57 Squadron was tasked with undertaking a goodwill tour of Iraq, Jordan and Libya. That detachment was led by the then Officer Commanding 57 Squadron, Squadron Leader Ivor Broom DSO DFC** RAF (Later Air Marshal Sir Ivor Broom KCB CBE DSO DFC** AFC RAF and founding President of the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association).

Following their return to the UK, Squadron Leader Broom took the time to write up his memories of the tour for 'Air Clues', the Royal Air Force flight safety-orientated magazine. That article is reproduced below, and certainly harks back to an era that has now disappeared.



Pilots and navigators of 57 Squadron pictured in front of one of their Canberra aircraft – Habbaniya, Iraq 1955.



Iraq, Jordan, and Tripolitania were visited by six Canberras of No. 57 Squadron, Cottesmore, in the course of a training and goodwill tour last autumn. In this article, Sqd Ldr Broom, who was then the Squadron Commander, describes the 7,600-mile mission.

Arab States Tour



by Squadron Leader I. G. BROOM,
D.S.O., D.F.C.

WE WERE FIRST TOLD to prepare for an autumn training and goodwill tour of the Middle East last July. It was to be a ten-day, 7,600-mile tour, visiting Arab States with whom Britain has treaty relations.

During the weeks before we left, all outstanding modifications were incorporated in the six Canberras we were to take, squadron crests and small Union Jacks were fixed to the noses, and a hunting horn and horseshoe painted on the fin of each aircraft to symbolize 57 Squadron's close association with the hunting district of Cottesmore.

Radio Compasses were fitted, small sunblinds fixed over the pilots' seats, and all aircraft were modified to permit the use of air-ventilated suits.

While the aircraft were being prepared, a comprehensive spares pack-up was arranged and the six crews, plus two reserves, chosen for the tour did a lot of formation flying and worked up a flying display which lasted 27 minutes from first aircraft airborne to last aircraft landed.

The squadron left Cottesmore on November 5 with supporting ground crew and spare parts carried in two Hastings aircraft of Transport Command. On the first day we staged through El Aouina (Tunis) to Cyprus for a night stop.

Cottesmore - El Aouina - Nicosia

It was cold, cloudy and still dark when the Canberras took off from Cottesmore, thankful to avoid the heavy rain approaching from the west and which eventually fell all that day at Cottesmore. An hour-and-a-half later we were over the Mediterranean in brilliant morning sunshine with only small puffs of cumulus cloud below. The squadron soon passed over Sardinia and let down into the pleasant warm climate of Tunis for the first refuelling stop.

The R.A.F. detachment at El Aouina comprises less than half-a-dozen men, but they quickly gave all possible assistance in refuelling the Canberras. Our only fears concerned the hard-standing on which the aircraft were parked: it was sprinkled with loose stones - not exactly ideal for engines with axial flow compressors.

After a good breakfast we took off for Nicosia in Cyprus, after first flying over the city of Tunis. There was complete cloud cover almost all the way through the Mediterranean until east of Crete. One or two cu-nimbs reached 40,000 feet and the radio compass needle seemed very attracted to these very angry looking clouds.

Our first call to Troodos Homer in Cyprus was made at about 250 miles range from 40,000 feet. The homer re-

plied immediately at strength five and with a class 'A' bearing. This was the squadron's first experience of Middle East VHF/DF. (Subsequently we were to get excellent results at long range from homers at Mafraq, Amman, Habbaniya, and El Adem.)

After landing at Nicosia we found that several compressor blades had very tiny chips out of them - presumably from the loose stones at El Aouina which we had regarded that morning with some misgivings.

Early next morning we left for Habbaniya. The flight was made at mach .78 all the way and took only one hour seven minutes. We maintained a loose formation on this leg - as on all legs - and took up close formation about 75 miles short of our destination. On arrival we were met by half of our ground crew who had gone ahead in one of the Hastings and who were already installed on the plateau airfield which was to be our base for nearly a week.

Helpful Habbaniya

Everyone at A.H.Q. Iraq and R.A.F. Station Habbaniya gave the squadron a most cordial reception and every possible assistance. Nothing was too much trouble for either the headquarters or the station staff. They forgot, however, to organize the weather



57 Squadron navigators and pilots study a map of the Middle East at Cottesmore before leaving on their 7,600-mile tour. Touching the map is Squadron Leader I. G. Broom, D.S.O., D.F.C., the Squadron Commander. He is now on the directing staff of the Royal Air Force Flying College, Manby.

clerk: for a few hours after our arrival there was a heavy rainstorm – Habbaniya's first rain for nearly nine months! We all felt immediately at home.

At Habbaniya, tip tanks were removed and arrangements made for a display at Baghdad civil airport to coincide with the last day of the British Trades Fair. The fair had been a great success and the British community was delighted that the Canberras had arrived to "round it off". There is no doubt that 57 Squadron's visit, following on the fair, gave a great fillip to British prestige.

On November 8 the ground crew rose at 5.30 and by 7.30 were airborne in one of the Hastings for Baghdad, a city which, with the Tigris winding through it, looks much more attractive from the air than on the ground. The Canberras landed at 8.30 in a thick ground haze which so reduced visibility that it caused a B.O.A.C. Constellation to overshoot soon after the Canberras had landed. To a non-flier it probably looked a perfect day from the ground with not a cloud in the sky. To the pilot it was not so perfect.

14-Minute Wheel Change

Soon after we landed and only half an hour before the British Ambassador was due to arrive, it was discovered that a main wheel tyre on one of the Canberras had been badly cut on landing. However, we were determined not to let this delay our display and the wheel was changed in 14 minutes. It was just one of many fine servicing tasks undertaken by the ground crew during the tour. There

was a good deal of wisecracking between aircrew and ground crew about the speed with which the wheel was changed, but as one N.C.O. remarked: "No vouchers had to be filled in, no transport was required to go over a mile from dispersal to stores to collect a wheel, no men had to be diverted from other jobs – everything was available on the spot."

Guest of honour was the Crown Prince of Iraq, who deputized for King Feisal, who was indisposed. Immediately after the Crown Prince arrived, our 12 Avon

engines were started simultaneously with a terrific bang from the cartridge starters and the aircraft taxied out to begin the display. A running commentary on it – and on all subsequent displays – was given by a spare pilot who had travelled in the Hastings. From time to time an Arabic interpreter summarized the commentary for the benefit of the spectators.

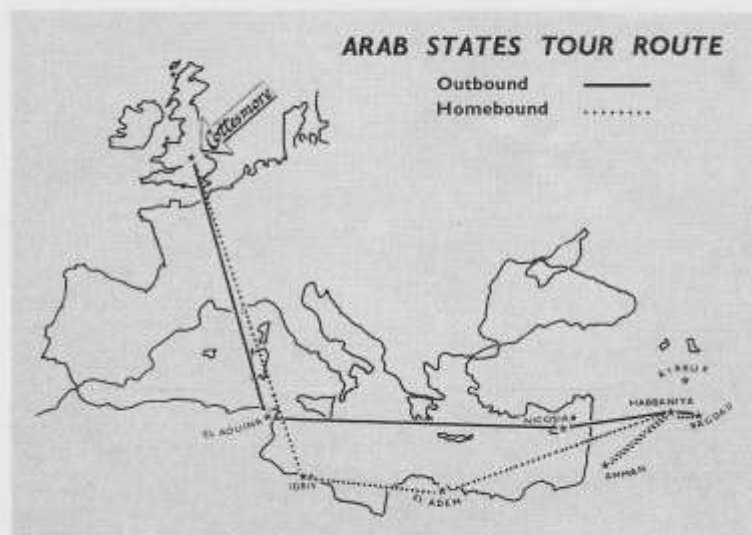
Despite the ground haze the display went off satisfactorily and after landing the squadron got an enthusiastic welcome from the crowd. The Crown Prince, wearing R.A.F. uniform – he is an honorary Air Vice-Marshal – then inspected the aircraft, aircrew and ground crew. The latter wore white overalls and their smartness provoked very favourable comments.

After the inspection the Crown Prince asked if he could have a flight in a Canberra so I took him on a short flight over Baghdad. The British Ambassador, Sir John Troutbeck, who is 60 next birthday, flew with one of the flight commanders – a gesture which was admired by many spectators.

Tables 'Groaned' with whole Sheep

The squadron was entertained to lunch by the Iraqi Air Force – the aircrew at the Officers' Club and the ground crew at the N.C.O.s' Club. The hospitality was extremely lavish and the Iraqi Air Force was obviously genuinely delighted to welcome the squadron. At both lunches the tables groaned under the weight of several whole sheep, surrounded by traditional Arabic trimmings and even one or two of the officers who were noted for large appetites paled at the sight of so much food.

It was late afternoon when we went back to the airport to return to Hab-



baniya. Three men were left behind to make temporary repairs to the tailplane of one Canberra which had been damaged when it hit a large bird during a high speed run. (Although this aircraft was able to fly back to Habbaniya a few hours later, a replacement aircraft was requested nevertheless. It arrived the following morning, its speedy arrival causing considerable comment in the local Press.)

It was dark before the ground crew had changed into working clothes to begin the day's servicing. Each day at Habbaniya was the same and work rarely ended before midnight. They were therefore "on duty" roughly 18 hours a day for four consecutive days, yet morale and pride in the squadron was very high and it is safe to say that not one man would have exchanged his place with any other member of the Royal Air Force.

Formation over a Gorge

On November 9 there was another early start when we were sent to find the Iraqi Army on manoeuvres in the 10,000-12,000 feet high mountains in North East Iraq. After attacking their positions in Ruwandez Gorge and giving a display of formation flying above the gorge and over the nearby base camp at Kirkuk, we landed at Baghdad airport where the ground crew had preceded us.

The whole squadron was then taken by the Iraqi Air Force on a short coach tour of Baghdad. This was followed by lunch at the British Embassy, overlooking the River Tigris, where a large section of the British community had gathered to meet us. Everyone made the squadron so welcome that one could not help being proud of being a member of it.

It was again dark by the time the



Four of the bone-domed pilots who took part in the Middle East tour - from left: Flying Officer E. Coles, Flying Officer J. Goodall, Flight Lieutenant R. D. Shrivell, and Squadron Leader Broom (author of this article).

ground crew had returned to Habbaniya and started their daily servicing. Another late night's work was followed by an early morning start for Amman, the capital of Jordan.

Visibility was over two miles when we climbed into our aircraft, but within five minutes fog rolled in, reducing visibility to less than 200 yards. Nevertheless the squadron took off on time, heard, but not seen, by the ground crew.

A convenient oil pipeline runs nearly all the way from Habbaniya to Amman

- a splendid aid to navigation. Visibility must have been 50 miles when we landed at the very fine airfield of Amman, nestling in the hills just east of the Israeli Border.

The R.A.F. at Amman, as at Habbaniya, went out of their way to help the squadron. Our flying display was watched by King Hussein. Afterwards he inspected us and then I took him for a flight in my Canberra, while five other V.I.P.s flew in the other aircraft.

600 m.p.h. - The King was Delighted

The King is a keen pilot who had his own Dove and he seemed delighted when he learnt he was flying at a speed of 600 miles an hour. He is probably the first reigning monarch to reach that speed. He constantly expressed regret that the squadron's stay was such a short one, and here, as in Iraq, we were impressed by the warmth of the welcome.

The Arab Legion were our hosts at lunch. Once again, whole sheep were the main item on the menu. The braver ones tried the Arab method of eating the meat with the right hand, but most of us used the knives and forks which our hosts had so thoughtfully provided. A very fine Arab Legion band played popular English music during lunch, the *pièce de résistance* being some excellent pipe music. They concluded with the Air Force March and the National Anthems of the two countries. Everyone was very sorry to leave Amman and it was well after dark before we landed back at Habbaniya.

That evening four aircrew and two



Accompanied by Flight Lieutenant R. W. Payne (a 57 Squadron Flight Commander), the Crown Prince of Iraq, in the uniform of an Air Vice-Marshal, inspects the squadron's ground crew at Baghdad airport.

Squadron Leader Broom and the Governor of Tripolitania talk about Canberras at Idris; in the background a young man listens.



ground-crew members of the squadron took part in a half-hour's broadcast on Radio Habbaniya. This radio station is one of the many spare time activities of the R.A.F. men at Habbaniya.

The following day, November 11, was a quiet one for the aircrew. Not so for the ground crew. Tip tanks had to be fitted to all aircraft and preparations made for departure for Idris at first light on the 12th.

The flight to Idris via El Adem was uneventful. The eyes of the few officers who had not been enthusiastic about Arab food fairly beamed when they saw the transit meal at El Adem was "tomato soup, roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, two vegetables, apple pie and custard"! The aircrew did their own between-flight servicing at El Adem and the Hastings with ground crew flew direct from Habbaniya to Idris.

At Idris our flying display was watched by the largest crowd of the tour. It included a large number of B-26 aircrew from the nearby American base at Wheelus Field.

After the display, the Wali, the Governor of Tripolitania, thanked the squadron and inspected us. Here, as in other countries, the local Press warmly welcomed the squadron and gave much space to report on the "thrilling display by the Canberras".



Flying Officer P. A. Brook shows the Crown Prince of Iraq how to go aboard the Squadron Commander's Canberra in which the Prince went for a flight over Baghdad.

Back to the Cottesmore Fog

The forecast for the last leg back to Cottesmore was: "Early morning fog, clearing to 2,000 yards by 14.00 hrs, with deterioration again before dusk."

This reminder of the English autumn made us specially loath to leave the Mediterranean sunshine for the fogs that were waiting for us at home. The flight was uneventful and it was very satisfying to see all six Canberras taxi in after a most successful tour in which they had flown 109 sorties in ten days with only very minor items of un-serviceability.

Apart from the training value of our flight there is no doubt that it did a great deal to cement the friendship between Britain and the Arab states we visited, and raised British prestige in these countries. It was well summed up by the Jordanian Minister of Defence when he said at a luncheon at Amman: "In a world of changing moods and changing loyalties a visit such as this has a sustaining influence. It contributes to that enduring and happy relationship which has existed between our two countries for so many years."

SHOCK ABSORBER TEST RIG

A RIG which cuts 45 minutes off an hour's job needs no further recommendation, specially when for several months it has passed the test of full employment. Corporal T. NEENAN, the hydraulic servicing bay N.C.O. at R.A.F. SYERSTON, is the time-saver - or rather the rig he has devised for filling and testing Provost undercarriage oleo shock absorbers. His initiative has earned him a £5 reward.

General arrangement of the rig - it is made from Harvard spares - is shown below. This is the set-up for handling one shock absorber, but by a simple extension of the filling pipe and jack connexions the rig can be adapted to test a battery of shock absorbers at the same time.

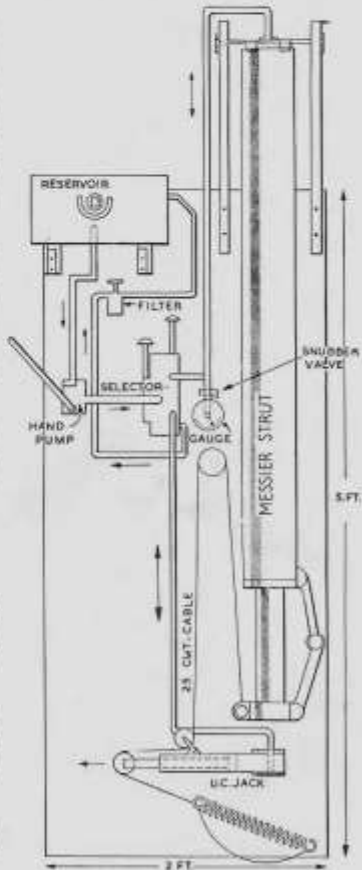
Operation of the rig is by one man, who will find that he can fill and test in 15 minutes, and without the bugbear of collapsing the shock absorbers by hand.

* * *

The top of the oleo leg fits through a bronze ring (Harvard spare) and is secured by its own locknut. To extend or collapse the leg, adjust the selector, and pump; the gauge reading will show the pressure in the leg.

The jack extends to 8 inches only, which is too short for direct use. By adapting the cable to the jack movement, 16-inch cable movement is realized - a six-inch surplus which the extending spring 'loses'.

The final movement of the collapsing leg ($\frac{3}{4}$ inch) is given by spring pressure, which prevents overstrain in the cable and pulleys.



57 Squadron Support Bombing Raids on America!

Tony Gunby

No you are not going mad, 57 Squadron did indeed support a number of bombing raids over America in 1985, but it was all in the interest of competition between the United States Air Force and the RAF.

Just 2 years after its formation in 1946, US Strategic Air Command began holding an annual bombing competition to help improve bombing accuracy. The so-called "SAC Bomb Comp" pitted US bomber squadrons and bases against each other to test the expertise of bomber crews in delivering bombs 'on target' and 'to time'.

The RAF sent its first competitor to the SAC Bomb Comp in 1951 flying the Washington and with the Lincoln the following year. The Vulcan and Valiant made their debut at the Bomb Comp in 1957, and the Vulcan was to become a permanent feature of the competition until just before the 1982 Falklands Conflict.



Vulcan B1 of 101 Sqn at Bergstrom AFB, Texas, 1959

While the USAF included tanker missions and competitions alongside those for the bombers, the RAF didn't use tankers until it was invited to participate with the new Tornado bomber in 1984. That year, 55 Sqn and 617 Sqn, both based at RAF Marham, took part in the SAC Bomb Comp, returning with silverware. The following year, it was the turn of RAF Marham's other paired units of 27 Sqn and 57 Sqn to compete in what the RAF called Exercise PRAIRIE VORTEX.

There was a keen fight to get on one of the selected crews on both squadrons, and yours truly was lucky enough to make the cut and join one of five 57 Sqn crews selected. Training began in the UK in June and ran through July and most of August, before we deployed to the USA on 27 August. The refuelling 'trail' allowed four 57 Sqn Victors to refuel four 27 Sqn Tornados from RAF Marham, via Goose Bay in Canada to Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota.

Led by OC 57 Sqn, Wg Cdr David Heyward, the Victor crews and engineers quickly set up base at Ellsworth and in the nearby Rapid City which was to become our home for the next nine weeks. Training flights were completed through September and until the competition proper began on 8 October.



Victor K2 XL512 of 57 Sqn

Although it was the Tornados that were being scored on their bombing accuracy, the Victor crews also had to navigate accurately to designated rendezvous positions and then drop off the refuelled Tornados at the right place and time. Not everything went to plan. Things became so confused one day, that I managed to navigate my Victor with extreme accuracy such that it was pointing exactly 180 degrees in the wrong direction at the specified rendezvous time. Fortunately it was not a competition sortie or I might have been on my way home!



27 Sqn Tornado refuelled by a 57 Sqn Victor K2

Each mission required two Victors to be available in close formation at each designated refuelling location just in case there were any refuelling equipment malfunctions. In good weather that was challenging, but in the frequent bad weather we experienced, it was little short of a miracle, with the fully-laden Victors bucking like broncos through thunderstorms and turbulence.

Between the flying there was plenty of time for the crews and engineers to enjoy the delights of South Dakota. Mount Rushmore with its carvings of President's Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln was just on the doorstep, as was Deadwood home of Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane.



57 Sqn crew visit Deadwood
Nick Barber (Nav Radar), Tony Gunby (Nav
Plotter), Fred Harbottle (captain)

Yellowstone National Park was a little further afield, as was the scene of Custer's Last Stand. Closer to Rapid City were the surreal Badlands wilderness.

The Devil's Tower (where the alien spaceship lands in the film Close Encounters of the Third Kind) provided too tempting an opportunity for one crew to fly around one day. The subsequent airspace violation from the National Park Authority didn't result in too much grief – mainly because RAF Marham's visiting Station Commander was the co-pilot!



The Devil's Tower, Wyoming

Shopping was a major past-time for everyone, bar-b-qs, charcoal, cheap jeans and even a toy motor racing set with 57 feet of track. There was also time for sport and for crews to participate in the Rapid City charity bed race.

All good things come to end an end though, and once the final completion sorties had been flown, the crews and engineers suffered a frustrating delay due to bad weather over Canada before completing the homeward refuelling trail on 30/31 October and arriving back to RAF Marham and winter.

So how had the RAF done, specifically the Tornado crews of 27 Sqn? All was revealed 10 days later when a small party from Marham departed the UK by a 10 Sqn VC10 for Barksdale AFB in Louisiana, home of Strategic Air Command. At a ceremony on 12 November the RAF was awarded:

The Curtis E LeMay Bombing Trophy, for B-52/FB-111/Tornado crew with most points in high and low level bombing and time control. RAF Tornado crews were placed 1st and 2nd of 34 crews competing.

The Meyer Trophy – for F/FB-111/Tornado unit with highest Damage Expectancy over 6 missions. The RAF was placed 1st of four units competing.

The Mathis Trophy – 2nd place from 17 units competing for the unit with the most points for high and low level bombing including time control.



Awards Ceremony – Barksdale AFB – 12 November 1985

The highlight of the party that followed the award ceremony occurred when the armed security guard was pushed into the hotel swimming pool for telling us to keep the singing down! The next day, with very sore heads (and fortunately no gunshot wounds), we boarded the VC10 for our return flight to the UK.

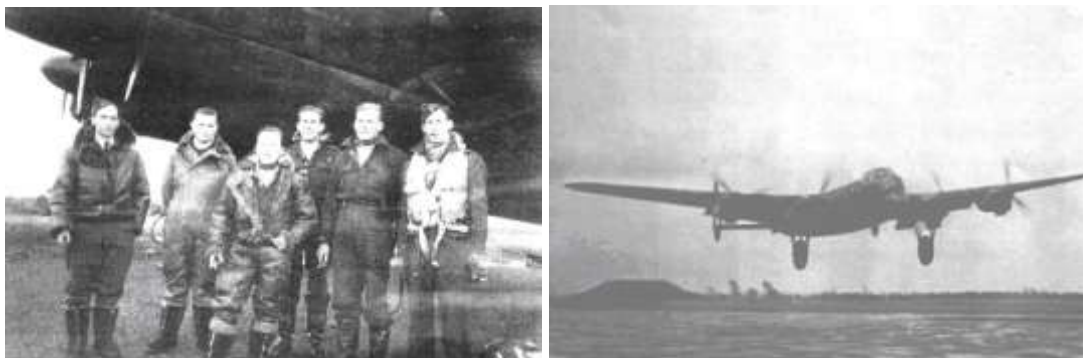
The RAF has never competed since in the SAC Bomb Comp. Maybe the RAF decided it could get better value training in other ways, or maybe the USAF was fed up with the Limeys taking away their silver?

I bet they never knew that we celebrated on the VC10 coming home, drinking champagne from the trophies!

Ceremony in Commemoration of the Crew of Lancaster W4234 DX-P of 57 Squadron - Lierde, Belgium, 29 September 2012

Tony Gunby

I was honoured to represent the Association on 29 September, at a ceremony to commemorate the crew of Lancaster W4234 DX-P of 57 Squadron which was shot down by German night fighters on 21 December 1942 over Belgium. Six of the seven crew were killed, but Sgt Roden Pickford RNZAF, managed to bale out and was taken POW in Stalag Luft III. Roden died in his native New Zealand in 1986.



The crew of DX-P (one of the crew took the photo)

On my way to the memorial ceremony, I took time out to visit the Geraardsbergen Communal Cemetery where the crew of DX-P are laid to rest alongside a crew from a downed Halifax of 426 Sqn and a Lancaster on 514 Sqn. While paying my respects, the 57 Squadron Standard Party arrived to do the same which was a very pleasant surprise.



57 Squadron Standard Party behind the graves of the crew of DX-P in Geraardsbergen Community Cemetery

Although no relatives had been able to make to trip to Belgium, there was a great turnout from the local commune of Lierde, representatives of British and Belgian veterans associations, a RAF party from SHAPE, Belgian and American military officers and representatives from the Embassies of Australia, New Zealand and Britain's deputy Ambassador to Belgium. It was also fantastic to see the 57 Squadron Standard on parade with a contingent from RAF Wyton led by OC 57, Sqn Ldr 'Wes' Wesley.



The Memorial to the crew of DX-P at Kekebeke, Lierde, Belgium



Belgian Veterans Organisations muster

The memorial is in the tiny hamlet of Kakabeke, close to the crash site and was inaugurated in 2000 when our President David Houghton was a member of the 57 Squadron party led by Wg Cdr 'Kiwi' O'Meeghan. After a moving ceremony at the memorial which involved national anthems, the laying of wreaths and so on, short speeches were given by the Deputy Mayor of Lierde, yours truly and OC 57.



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association Wreath



Tony Gunby speaking at the Memorial

(If you have access to YouTube, a video clip of the wreath laying can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGaLQqVVvCI>)

I was also asked to read a poem, specially written by George Hanks, to the crew of DX-P which appears below. The ceremony ended with a flypast by a Piper Cub aircraft of 369 Squadron and the exhortation read RAFA's Honorary Chaplain, Walter Peeters, followed by the Last Post.

(If you have access to YouTube, you can watch a video clip of the Squadron Standard being marched off parade at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bvz6VDUhdz0>)

Then it was off to the City Hall in Lierde, a fantastic modern assembly hall with catering facilities and an auditorium. Here, our hosts and organisers, Wings of Memory, Conducted a marvellous academic session telling in film the story of DX-P, her crew and their final flight in 1942.



This radio-controlled scale model of DX-P has been flown just once, but proved too unstable in flight!

On a recreation of a Commonwealth War Grave, the government representatives were invited to sprinkle some soil from Australia, Britain and New Zealand and to plant a memorial cross.



The academic session recreation of a Commonwealth Grave

Speeches followed from the government representatives and once again yours truly. At the invitation of Wings of Memory, I concluded my speech with messages from relatives in Scotland, Australia and New Zealand. It was a truly emotional session and so the refreshments offered afterwards by the Town Council were very welcome!

The Story of DX-P is told in great detail in a Commemorative brochure prepared by Wings of Memory and presented to them to the principal guests; copies will also be sent to relatives. If you are reading this report on our Association website, you can access this brochure by clicking on the logo of Wings of Memory below.



Tony Gunby
Vice-President

2 October 2012

THE AIRCREW OF LANCASTER BOMBER W 4234 DX-P

WE STAND HERE TO PAY OUR RESPECTS TO SEVEN BRAVE MEN,
THE CREW OF LANCASTER W4234 WHO RISKED THEIR LIVES, BUT WHEN?

DAILY AND ON THE 26TH OF DECEMBER NINETEEN FORTY TWO,
THEY WERE ATTACKED AND SHOT DOWN OUT OF THE BLUE.

WHAT HAPPENED WAS WELL DOCUMENTED AND KNOWN,
IT WAS THE LAST TIME THIS CREW AND AIRCRAFT WERE FLOWN.

THESE SERVICEMEN FOUGHT VALIANTLY FOR THEIR COUNTRY
AND WERE LAID TO REST IN BELGIUM NEAR A PINE TREE.

THE AIRCRAFT PILOT WAS A YOUNG MAN OF TWENTY TWO.
CAPTAINS WITH GREATER AGE AND EXPERIENCE WERE TOO FEW.

SIX OUT OF THE SEVEN CREW MEMBERS WERE LOST,
IT'S NOT ONLY THE AIRCRAFT THAT COUNT THE COST.

ONE CREW MEMBER SURVIVED THE CRASH IN THE FARM LAND,
HIS NAME IS SGT RODEN B. PICKFORD OF NEW ZEALAND.

WE UNDERSTAND THE GRIEF OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY,
HERE TO COMMEMORATE AND BY THE MONUMENT BE.

BUILT IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND
FROM STONE NOT SAND.

57 SQN RAF LOST MANY AIRCRAFT AND CREW.
BY THE END OF THE WAR WAS THERE WERE ONLY A FEW.

THIS POEM ENDS WITH WORDS FROM MR. CHURCHILL, NOT MINE,
WHO ELSE HAD THE KNOWLEDGE AND WORDS SO FINE?

"NEVER WAS SO MUCH OWED BY SO MANY TO SO FEW"
A SENTIMENT THAT I AGREE WITH AND MORE TOO

GEORGE HANKS

THIS POEM IS DEDICATED TO THE CREW OF LANCASTER W4234 DX- P
AND THEIR FAMILIES

THE AIRCREW

F/O R. BOWLES - F/O A. MULHOLLAND - SGT A. ABRAHAM - SGT M. PEARMAN -
SGT J. DRAIN - SGT C. STUBBS - SGT R. PICKFORD

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

News from the Squadron

The following update on events on the Squadron comes from the Officer Commanding 57 (Reserve) Squadron, Squadron Leader 'Wes' Wesley:

Still based at RAF Wyton, with the Grob Tutor aircraft, the Squadron's raison d'être is to deliver Elementary Flying Training (EFT) to ab initio pilots of the Royal Air Force and against the International Defence Training (IDT) task.



A Grob Tutor of 57(R) Squadron

At the time of writing this update, in early December, the Squadron's eleven Qualified Flying Instructors (QFIs) have trained four RAF courses and one Fast Jet Enrichment Course (FJEC) so far this year, with one more of each course type ongoing. We have held two graduation ceremonies during 2012; 163 EFT graduated in March, followed by a joint graduation for 165/167 EFT in August. While we have not trained any IDT students during the past year, we expect to see a substantial increase in this task during 2013.

The FJEC is a new initiative designed for students who have completed the EFT course and are about to move onto the next stage of Fast Jet flying training at RAF Linton-On-Ouse. The course serves two purposes: it refreshes flying skills for students that may not have flown for up to two years, before they move on to the demanding Tucano course; and it introduces students to a number of new flying skills which they will need at Linton, including target runs, formation take-off, landings and rendezvous and instrument approach techniques.



A Frustrating Sight – Squadron Aircraft Parked in the Hangar

Overall on the flying front, 2012 has been a frustrating year. As RAF Wyton does not have any instrument aids, we can only fly in relatively benign weather conditions. As you will know, 2012 has been a particularly wet year, regularly preventing the Tutors from flying. On top of this, various technical issues grounded the fleet for a further 2 months – including the loss of a propeller from a Cranwell-based aircraft in-flight which grounded us for six weeks from the end of August.

However, as every aviator knows, every cloud has a silver lining, and we have taken the opportunity to undertake a number of other activities and visits during the no flying periods. On the Adventurous Training front, we sent a number of staff and students skiing in January, followed in May by a week's mountain biking for the staff and a trip to Granton-On-Spey for the students. Other visits included a staff visit to the Belgium Air Force in August, a week's tour of the UK's main flying training bases (RAFs Cranwell, Shawbury and Valley) by staff and students in September, and student trips to the Imperial War Museum and Churchill War Rooms in London, and to RAF Marham.

March saw staff and students attend the annual Pathfinder Association dinner at RAF Wyton. This proved to be a very interesting evening, highlighting RAF Wyton's extensive WW2 heritage. In July, I had the privilege to attend the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association Reunion at Woodhall Spa as guest of honour, and the following week the Squadron Standard was paraded in front of Her Majesty at the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial in London. In September, the Squadron was honoured to attend a memorial in Belgium commemorating the loss of 6 members of 57 Squadron during WW2; five staff members attended and forged some close ties with the Wings of Memory organisation.



Geraardsbergen Community Cemetery, Belgium
September 2012

In November the Squadron was delighted to once again host the 57 and 630 Squadrons' Association at a Guest Night at RAF Wyton. During the Dinner, I was delighted to award the Phoenix Trophy to the Squadron's Adjutant, Mr Jess Rahamn. Since joining the Squadron in February 2012, Jess has transformed the admin office, and assumed responsibility for many admin tasks, leaving the QFIs to concentrate on flying. Jess is the staunchest, most loyal supporter and defender of 57(R) Squadron and his untiring commitment to improving the Squadron's efficiency, work ethic and morale made him a natural choice for the award.



Mr Jess Rahamn pictured with Association President David Houghton, receiving the Phoenix Trophy, November 2012

All in all, 2012 has been a busy and productive year for 57(R) Squadron – albeit not always in terms of flying. However, despite the various problems and challenges, we have completed around 1,400hrs of flying training. The next course is currently scheduled to arrive in February and the Squadron can look forward to another busy year ahead. Rumours of an imminent move abound and we may soon move from RAF Wyton, with RAF Cranwell or RAF Wittering, possible future locations. However, it seems that the future of 57(R) Squadron is assured within EFT.

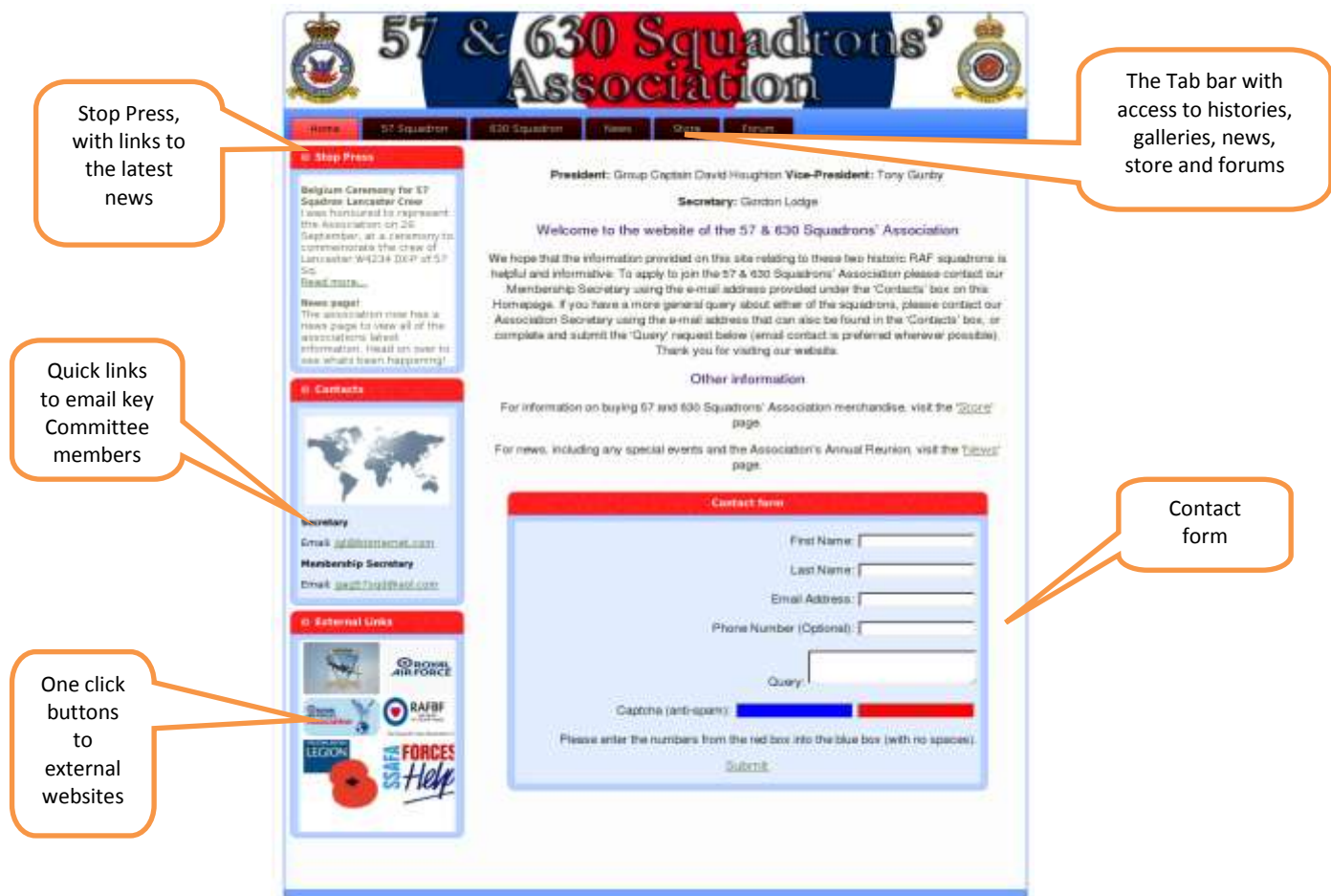
Wes Wesley, OC 57(R) Squadron, RAF Wyton

December 2012

The Association's New Website

Your Committee is delighted to announce the launch of a new Association website www.57-630sqnassoc.org.uk which provides a 'one-stop shop' for Members and a valuable source of information for non-Members alike.

The **Home Page** of the website is shown below. On the left side are quick links to the most recent news items, quick links to enable you to contact Association Committee members, and one click buttons which will get you to a range of other useful and interesting websites: the RAF website, RAFA, SSAFA, Royal British Legion, RAF Benevolent Fund and the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre (East Kirkby).



At the top of the Home Page are tabs to the histories of both squadrons together with web stories and photos, a 'News' tab which latest stories and an Events area with a calendar, a 'Store' tab where you can see Association merchandise and order online, and a 'Forum' section where you will be able to view the Association Newsletter and also engage in interactive exchanges on specific issues.

At the mid-centre of the Home Page is an online Contact Form. While we hope that you will be able to find everything you need yourself, a Contact Form will allow you to send in queries that are not answered directly elsewhere on the website.

The Squadron Tab. Each squadron has a tab at the top of the Home Page, clicking on this tab will lead you to a history of each squadron. Within each history, you will see underlined and highlighted words which provide a link to external websites, like Wikipedia, to provide you with even more information about specific events, aircraft and people. Also, there is a Gallery & Archive tab which will lead you to web stories and photos. For 57 Sqn only, these are arranged to coincide with specified periods of the Squadron's life.

Your help in providing stories and photos for these areas would be especially welcome. There is no minimum (or maximum) length and no specific format, so if you have an idea, give it a go, or at the least speak to one of the Committee members about your idea. Don't worry if you don't have all the details, we can help with research and fill in any gaps.

On the **News** tab you will find recent stories of activities and events (which are highlighted to you on the Stop Press box on the Home Page), and an Events area which contains a calendar. Over time, we will enter events into the calendar – both Association events and others of interest.

Via the **Store** tab, you can view items of Association merchandise and there is the facility for you to order items online (but not pay online – yet at least!).

Finally, the **Forum** tab will lead you to an open access area for the exchange of comments. To post comments anywhere on the Forums, and to access the Members Only area, you will need to register which only takes a couple of minutes. To register you will need to nominate an email address and select your own username and password. The website Administrators will verify your registration as a Member against the Association’s membership list and then give you access to the Members Only areas. Only registered **Association Members** will have online access to current and back copy Newsletters and information about the Annual Reunion.



Click Register and follow on screen instructions for access to the Members Only area

To get an email alert for new posts, click 'subscribe'

Once registered as an Association Member, simply login with your username and password to access the Members Only area

If you would like to follow a particular discussion or maybe get an alert when a news Newsletter is available, tick 'Subscribe' at the bottom left of the relevant page and you will receive an email whenever there is new information posted.

We hope that as many Association members as possible will in future choose to view future Newsletters via the website. This will help your Committee to reduce costs and also ensure that you can see the Newsletters (and back-issues) immediately that they are ready. However, for those Members without access to a computer, don't worry – we will still provide a hard copy of the Newsletter and other information if you prefer.

The website has been designed by a professional company, working closely with your Committee Members. We believe that we have developed a means to encourage exchanges of information and which will provide a valuable and interesting source of information. The day-to-day management of the website will progressively shift from our designer to a small number of Committee Members who will administer the site and also moderate comments which are posted – you can read the 'website rules' for making comments when you register.

A review of the membership contact list, to include email addresses where you have one, is underway to support launch of the new website. So don't delay in making your returns to Mike Bracken and in registering for the website!

The website is now live, we hope you enjoy it, and of course we look forward to receiving your feedback.

Tony Gunby Vice-President

Searching for Uncle Jim

As this story from Association Member Nicola Gaughan shows, the hunt for information about past events can be a long and tortuous path.

From an early age I had known about my Uncle Jim, one of my father's six brothers, whose aircraft had gone missing during World War 2. Apparently, the youngest ever Pilot Officer flying the Wellington, Uncle Jim had also possibly been a navigator. I knew that the family had been devastated by his loss, particularly my Grandmother, who for years hoped he would one day return. Sometimes I heard stories of other WWII planes being found together with the remains of the pilot and I would think to myself "wouldn't it be nice if they found Uncle Jim one day".

Over the years, the brothers (my uncles) died until just two were left after my father died in 2006. Eventually there was just Uncle Pat and his health was fast deteriorating. At this stage the thought came to me that perhaps I could find Uncle Jim's plane myself and tell his last brother what had happened, before he too passed away. I was daunted by the task. How on earth could I find a plane lost over 70 years ago, when the RAF hadn't been able to? Where and how should I start?

After just a couple of hours on the internet, I had found details of the raid, the weather, and the names of the five crewmembers that had died with Uncle Jim. It had never occurred to me that other people were involved and it suddenly brought things home – five other families probably didn't know what had happened to their loved ones. So I decided that I had to continue the search and to share any information I discovered with the families of the other crew members.

So the internet search continued and I discovered various war forums, and through one in particular, *ww2talk.com*, I got lots of guidance, information and encouragement. After creating a forum thread I was able to post information as I went along: to help me keep a record, to ensure important discoveries weren't lost if I had a computer failure at home, and to share the information.

This forum led me to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) website and I was able to locate personal and family details for all of the crew, except one (more of that later). I also discovered how to retrieve Uncle Jim's service record, and after a very frustrating 3 month wait, I finally received photocopies of Flt Sgt James Edward Linehan's service records. It was fascinating to try and decipher the various entries, and with the help of the Department of Research & Information Services at RAF Hendon, I learnt that my uncle had joined the Volunteer Reserve in July 1940, progressed through various flying schools and gained his wings in April 1941.

He then joined 52 OTU to fly Spitfires however, according to my family, after crashing a couple of Spitfires, he was transferred to Bomber Command and joined 11 OTU in July 1941, then joined 57 Squadron on 6 November 1941 whilst they were based at RAF Feltwell. Uncle Jim became a Sergeant in December 1941 and was promoted to Flight Sergeant in February 1942.



James Edward Linehan
(Photo: Patrick Linehan and the Linehan family)

From the National Archives at Kew I discovered that he had flown Wellington Mk1s, Mk2s and Mk3s, and that he was lost on his 12th mission - a raid on Hamburg. He had flown as 2nd pilot and with two different crews, and there were further details of the targets and bomb loads for all the raids and the 'trades' of the other crewmen: Plt Off Noel Percy Morse RNZAF (Pilot), Flight Sergeant George Hillary Vogan RNZAF (Observer), Sergeant Graham Lakeman (W/T 1), Sergeant Norman Joseph Naylor (W/T 2) and the Rear Gunner, Sergeant Ronald Richards.

It was a great feeling to learn more about the other crew members, but the information on the CWGC website was pretty patchy, with Morse's family details being the most complete and Richards' being non-existent; I started with Morse.



Noel "Bill" Morse
(Photo: Russell Wenzholz and the Morse family)

His father was Percy Algernon Morse and with a name like that it didn't take too long to find his obituary in the Sydney Morning Herald from 1946. My search for more information continued with the Herald, a variety of genealogy web forums, and I checked the Australian White Pages, even telephoning a couple of Morse families until I realised this might be a bit too much.



Hillary Vogan

(Photo: Dawn Prattley and the Vogan family)

The internet didn't help much with Vogan; I posted a request for information on Cousinconnect.com, and also a Facebook message to a friend in New Zealand asking if she could help via her network. From friends on *ww2talk.com* I got the NZ white pages which listed several Vogans, including two from Vogan's home area. Then I got an email via Cousinconnect.com from a distant Vogan cousin, who passed my request to nearer family and I finally received an email from the granddaughter of Vogan's father's younger brother, and who was able to give me more detailed information as well as a photo of him.

The previous month I had received a fantastic Christmas present - a response from Australia via the Sydney Morning Herald from Russell Wenzholz, who was one of Noel Morse's nephews. We shared the information we had, including letters from Percy Morse to the RNZAF and others. Russell and his family were extremely grateful, and sent me information and some pictures of Morse, who preferred to be known as Bill.

Having traced the Antipodean families, I turned my attentions to the UK crew members, starting with Sgt Graham Lakeman. According to the CWGC, he had been born in Plymouth and had been an only child. I thought I might not find any living family, but then I found his family in the 1901 census and discovered Lakeman's father Sidney Harold was one of 8 children - surely I would find someone.

I contacted the local newspapers and was interviewed on air by BBC Plymouth, but to no avail. Then, within some of my father's paperwork, I found a letter from Lakeman's father to my grandfather - Uncle Jim's father - asking if they had heard any news. It was addressed from Greenock in Scotland. Wondering if the family had been bombed out during the Plymouth bombing and moved north to stay with friends or family, I contacted the Greenock Times and they ran an article for me, but again no luck. In desperation I started to ring Lakemans whose numbers I found on the Internet, but always it was the same thing - they weren't the right family.

Just as I thought my enquiries were running cold, I was contacted by Ken Lakeman's son Terry Lakeman, a keen genealogist and researcher. Terry didn't know anything about Graham, however, quite by chance, Terry was told of a surviving relative of Harold Sidney Lakeman, brother of Sgt Lakeman's father Sidney Harold Lakeman. Reta Riddler, a lady of 88, was the last child of Harold; Terry decided to visit her and to tell her of my search.



Graham Lakeman
(Photo: Reta Riddler and Terry Lakeman)

The following week I met both Terry and Reta. We spent two emotional hours with her, talking about Graham, telling her about my search, what I'd found out, and I showed her the original letter from Sidney Lakeman to my Grandfather. It was such an incredible afternoon and I felt so pleased to have been able to bring her such comfort, as she had been about 17 when he went missing and remembered how distraught their family had been. She kindly allowed me to photograph a photo of Graham that she had in an album.

Now it was a case of three down, two to go. These last two proved a little more difficult, but once again fate, luck, synchronicity, whatever you want to call it came to my aid.

I had made contact with Douwe Drijver, Treasurer and researcher at the Stichting Missing Airmen Memorial Foundation in Leeuwarden, Holland. The Foundation searches for crash sites of planes lost in Friesland and traces families of the crewmen lost or injured. In the summer of 2011, I was invited attend a Memorial Ceremony for a crew they had traced. They held a small reception for the families which were interviewed by the Friesian press and a Daily Express reporter.

Douwe and the Foundation obtained various records to help with my search, including Sidney Lakeman's death certificate and the service records of Sgts Naylor and Richards. From these, I was able to discover that Sgt Norman Joseph Naylor had been born in Dunfermline and I was then able to obtain his birth certificate. I also got my first solid information about Richards, his date and place of birth, but it soon proved to be more complicated than that.

I contacted various newspapers in the Dunfermline area, but had no luck. Continuing the search for Richards, I asked the guys on ww2talk.com to cross check his details on Ancestry.co.uk, but nothing matched, not marriages, births or anything - all very frustrating.

The Internet is a funny animal. You can draw a blank one day, but another day, using the same search criteria, something can pop up; this was the case with Sgt Naylor. Having scoured Scotland, I found him listed on the Royal British Legion Chipping Norton branch website. I contacted the Branch, local newspapers and the Chipping Norton museum. There, the curator Pauline Watkins was able to confirm that Naylor's brother, Robert, had been a fireman in the town. Robert's daughter, Kay had lived in the house but had moved to the USA, although she still kept in touch with the new owners. So we were able to contact Kay and I hope to pursue this contact soon. Meanwhile the Chipping Norton museum was able to find me a photo of Naylor.



Norman Naylor

(Photo: The Chipping Norton Museum c/o Pauline Watkins)

So, to Sgt Ronald Geoffrey Richards - my mystery man. None of the information seemed to make sense, he didn't exist. Perhaps he was using a false name or had been adopted. My enquiries with various children's charities and Wakefield institutions led nowhere. Then I got a lead from someone via the *ww2talk.com* forum who thought he was distantly related. He was able to tell me that not only had Sgt Richards changed his name, but the whole family had changed their name from Cheetham. Now things started to come together; I started to investigate Ronald Cheetham and using the family details from my contact, I discovered that he had been born on 14 May 1923, not 1922 as stated in his service records.

Almost simultaneously I found another person on a forum called *Rootschat* looking for a RAF crewman called Sgt Roland Geoffrey Richards who had been lost on 8 April 1942, the same day as **MY** Sgt Richards. After several exchanges, we realised that we were both looking for the same man. Things still weren't 100% clear as I had also been researching the passenger records for Shanghai and Singapore for the period 1923-1937 and there was a Ronald Cheetham, born within 6 months of Roland Cheetham, travelling between Britain and Singapore on several occasions, but his parental details didn't match and this proved to be just a coincidence.

My contact from *Rootschat* was a distant relative of Richards, and I learnt that Sgt Richards' father was Horace Cheetham, and his uncles Augustus Alexander and Leslie Alexander Cheetham. Roland had two brothers called Oswald Victor and Sydney Theodore Cheetham. In 1934 they all changed their name by Deed Poll. They were all photographers, including their great grandfather Richard Cheetham, photographer to the Royal Court (later Richard Richards or 'Dickie twice').

Jean, my *Rootschat* contact, was able to put me in contact with Sydney Theodore's (Roland's brother) son Jeremy. Three weeks later I got a phone call from a very shocked but happy man, Jeremy Richards, nephew of Sgt Richards. The letter that I had written to him had finally arrived, having done the rounds of Wakefield as the address details had been slightly wrong. Apparently he had just been up to the attic to retrieve the photo of Sgt Richards, which for many years had taken pride of place on the family's mantelpiece, when my letter dropped through his door.



Roland Richards
(Photo: Jeremy Richards and family)

We had a long chat and it seems that Sgt Richards may have signed up under age and not told his family of the details that he gave the RAF. The family had tried to trace his service records but had been looking for Roland Richards born 1923 and the RAF files had him as Ronald Richards born 1922. The family is now looking at having the details on the Runnymede Memorial changed.

I was able to contact all the families and invite them to the dedication of the Bomber Command Memorial on 28 June. Along with members of my family and Jeremy Richards, we attended the ceremony in the blazing London sunshine. Just before the Ceremony, my cousin Jennifer handed me a beautifully carved wooden box and urged me to open it. Inside was a brief note from her mother, my Auntie Joyce, thanking me on behalf of herself and the Linehan brothers for looking for Jim. She also gave me the only thing she still had of his, his RAF service handkerchief, still ironed and folded neatly, wrapped carefully in tissue paper. I was in bits, but very honoured.

Uncle Jim never had a funeral or a memorial service as the family had always hoped he would come home. The Unveiling Ceremony proved to be a very fitting Memorial Service for him. It's not every day that Her Majesty the Queen comes to your funeral.



The Bomber Command Memorial, Green Park, London
(Photos: Nicola Gaughan)

I've found the search to be very interesting, frustrating, exciting and unexpectedly emotional. On many occasions I've been brought to tears. Each snippet of information has added more to the story leading me onwards to the next connection. I'm proud of what I've achieved and what I've been able to do for the crew and their families; the closure of sorts that I've been able to bring to families still grieving for their loved ones. I'm also immensely proud of what my uncle and his crew, and many thousands like them did for us.

I am continuing the search for the plane itself and hopefully one day I will be able to write about its recovery and the repatriation of any remains.



The Bomber Command Memorial
(Photos: Nicola Gaughan)

Per Ardua ad Astra

Nicola Gaughan

November 2012

Falkland Islands



In April 1982, I was stationed at RAF Marham as a Sergeant in the Supply Squadron. News broke of the activities in the Falklands and Operation Corporate was with us. On the Sunday evening after Easter I was told to report to OC Supply Squadron, where he briefed me that I was to deploy with the Station Fly Away Packs with Cpl Hyndman and SAC Shelton as my assistants.

We were to deploy direct from RAF Marham in a VC10 to Ascension via RAF Brize Norton. If my memory is correct, it was 18th April I have lasting memories of OC Supply running up the aircraft steps and handing me a Nav Bag full of documents. I opened it to find 'WAR TIME ACCOUNTING INSTRUCTIONS' I think most of us remember flying via Dakar to Ascension and setting up the ops tent and all the ancillary sections before moving up to Two Boats Village with the remaining 12x12 tents where we were to be accommodated using a 'hot bed' system.

As more and more Victors arrived over the coming days, followed by the two Vulcans, Black Buck One was almost upon us. The rest is now history that we will never forget. Some years after the conflict, a group of veterans got together and formed SAMA82-The South Atlantic Medal Association.

This Association is open to all holders of the Campaign Medal irrespective of rank or unit. After the 25th Anniversary, Derek 'Smokey' Cole a former Navy Midshipman had an idea to build an accommodation in the Falklands for Veterans to use when visiting the islands.

He managed to attract financial support from the Royal British Legion and other service units as well as the Falkland Island people and in February 2010, Liberty Lodge was opened.

I was able to secure an 'indulgence' flight in November 2010 and spent a week visiting the islands. In the Liberty Lodge Reception, units that took part in the conflict have placed wall shields. I noticed that there were no RAF units present.

To commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the conflict the MOD introduced a concessionary flight scheme where veterans and one member of their family were guaranteed 20 seats on every flight at a cost of £275 per head.

In October, I took my wife down for 2 weeks and presented Liberty Lodge with a 57 Squadron Wall Shield at the end of our visit.

"Where are they now?"



Several years of investigations were rewarded when I was able to relate the story of the loss of Lancaster ND580 of 630 Squadron . After finding how, when, where and by whom the aircraft was lost “without trace”, I set about trying to discover if there were any surviving relatives other than myself. My Uncle was the Pilot P O A.T. “Bob” Jackson and his crew were:

Navigator : Flt Sgt. D. Muddiman RAF

Air Bomber: F O J. Feldman RCAF

Flt Eng: Sgt. H. Owen RAF

Wireless Operator: Sgt R. Cartlidge RAF

M/Upper Gunner: Sgt A. Seago RAF

Rear Gunner: Sgt E. Louis RAF

Mission: Bourg Leopold 11th/12th May 1944.

Despite extensive searches, I had no luck with the RAF crew members but decided to look for relations of Joseph Feldman who had lived in Hamilton, Ontario.

I sent an e-mail to the Editor of the local Hamilton newspaper and had my account of the loss of ND 580 published thinking that this might be read by a relative. Several months lapsed and I had given up hope when I received an e-mail from Michael Feldman, the nephew of Joseph and who now lives in Switzerland. He told me he had seen the article by chance whilst on the internet. I was subsequently in touch with Michael’s cousin Neil who lives in Toronto. Both told me of the Feldman family and the loss of Joseph was recalled by Michael although quite young at the time.

Although Michael is still a very busy person and travels extensively, he hoped to become involved with the 57/630 Squadrons Association and I have kept him in touch with events I hope this short account is of interest to members, and who knows may spark an interest in the search for surviving relatives of those who lost their lives in Bomber Command. Like the Feldmans, many do not know the stories surrounding the loss of their forebears.

Jack Porter.

Information Officers Report 2012

Another year has passed and interest in our two Squadrons continues to grow. The most contact these days is from the Continent in the main, from Holland, Belgium, France and Scandinavia. Looking through the enquiries, I have noted that those from the U.K. have tailed off and in 2012, they were at the lowest level ever since I took over the job in 1981. However contact with the Continent continues to grow especially where recovery teams are searching crash sites. One case in particular is quite fascinating. On the night of 20/21st April 1943, 339 aircraft were briefed to attack Stettin. Of this force 21 aircraft failed to return including Lancaster W4254 DX-? from 57 Squadron, piloted by Flying Officer R. F. Collins RCAF. The aircraft was declared lost without trace and the crew names are recorded on the Runnymede Memorial.

Consequent to a recovery team in the area of Halskov near Korsør in Denmark, finding items which could belong to Lancaster W4254, there is now a possibility that the crew could be buried in the Bispebjerg Cemetery in Copenhagen. In this cemetery there are headstones which record the burial of the remains of 7 unidentified airmen, and the Danish team are of the firm opinion that these remains are the crew of W4254. In support of their reasoning, they have obtained a copy of a report originated by No. 18 Section M.R.E.S. The M.R.E.S. Units investigated the crash sites of downed aircraft, with a view to locating and naming the crew. In their report on the crash site now being excavated they record that a German officer stated that identity discs were forwarded to Berlin for onward transmission to the headquarters of the Red Cross in Geneva. Bearing in mind the importance of this information, I decided that this matter should be dealt with by the Air Historical Branch so I forwarded all of the paperwork to them for further action. I have yet to hear if there has been any progress in the matter. It would certainly be a happy ending if the headstones of the unknown aircrew could be replaced with headstones recording name and rank.

I travelled to Dronten this year to support the Dutch Liberation Day ceremony, but sadly the number of air gunners attending has dwindled to 7, and the town have announced that 2013 will be the final air gunners visit. Dronten is suggesting a twinning with the City of Lincoln, but these are early days. Once again I was met by my contact Chris Van Der Linden. We visited the site of the crash of my crew's Lancaster near Havert on the Dutch German border, but there was little to see. I was introduced to the present owner of the land, and he showed me various bits and pieces of the aircraft that that have been ploughed up. A journey then to the cemetery at Rhineburg in the Rhur valley where 5 members of my crew are buried. My final visit was to the Dutch air museum at Wavereen. This excellent museum is based on military aviation, both first and second world war, and is located in a 1918 block house. I was shown around by one of the many volunteer staff on duty, and I was very impressed with the style of presentation. Guessing that this visit was in the offing, I was able to take with me and present to the museum a number of propaganda leaflets and forged German ration coupons I had collected from my operational flying days. If perchance you are in the area, I can strongly recommend a visit to this informative and interesting museum.

With this comment, I close my contribution to the 2012 newsletter, and look forward to meeting everyone at the 2013 gathering.

Allen Hudson
Information Officer

Bomber Command Award

Whilst finalizing the Newsletter the morning paper reported the Prime Minister had announced a Medal to be awarded to the Seamen who took part in the Arctic Convoys. The Prime Minister also said the "heroic" veterans of Bomber Command should receive a new Clasp commemorating their service during WW2. Apparently it will be several months before eligibility criteria are specified.

Credit should be acknowledged to all those veterans and their supporters who have campaigned for many years for justice.

Reunion 2013 **Friday 5th July – Monday 8th July**

Petwood Hotel

Dinner and Dinner Dance in the Woodland Suite. Afternoon tea on the Saturday will be served in the lounge at around 2,30pm followed by the RAF Band playing in the grounds.

Chief Guest & Speaker

Officer Commanding 57 Squadron

Saturday Dinner

7.30pm Lounge suits/blazers

Sunday Service East Kirkby

11.45 March Past/Standard Party/Inspection
Remembrance Service-Medals
Service-Rev. Richard Benson-Hon.Chaplain
Memorial-Last Post-Laying of Wreaths
15.00 BBMF Flypast
19.00/19.30 Informal Dinner Dance-Petwood Hotel

Cost Petwood Hotel

4 nights £295 per person (including function meals)
3 nights £235 per person (including function meals)
1or2 nights £50 per person per night
Reunion Dinner £30 per person
Dinner Dance £30 per person

For B&B at the Petwood or staying elsewhere please send cost of functions for the numbers attending.

Please note any dietary requirements on the form. For all forms, with or without a cheque, please send stamped addressed envelope so I can acknowledge receipt.

Gordon Lodge