

# 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association



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## 2021 - Together again!

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It was great to be able to hold 2 of our annual events this year—the Remembrance Day service at East Kirkby and our deferred 2021 Annual Reunion earlier this month. Around 60 Members and guests attended the Reunion at a very festive Petwood Hotel

Thank you to all of you for your patience and understanding, and to those of you that helped organize and run these events (you know who you are).

Next year's Reunion will be on the weekend of Friday 1 July - Monday 4 July 2022. There is a booking form at the rear of the Newsletter. Remember to book your accommodation early to avoid disappointment!

July 2022						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
27	28	29	30	31	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## The President's Piece



*David Houghton  
Association President*

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In last year's Association Newsletter I wrote (in what, for a long time, seemed like a spirit of misplaced supreme optimism), that I hoped that the Association and current Members of 57 Squadron would be able to come together at some time in 2021.

It looked like my eternal optimism would be proven to be ill-founded (as it often is) but, finally, over the weekend of 11/12 December 2021 a cohort of Association Members and personnel from 57 Squadron were able to meet for a Reunion Dinner and Memorial Service at Woodhall Spa and ex-RAF East Kirkby.



*Just Jane undergoing winter  
Servicing at East Kirkby*

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For those who were not able to join that gathering, I hope that the pictures elsewhere in this Newsletter and on the Association's website will give you a flavour of what went on.

We were particularly grateful and honoured to be joined at the Reunion weekend by a number of our friends from 57 Squadron, including the Squadron Standard Party at the Memorial Service on Sunday 12 December, and by the current Officer Commanding (OC) 57 Squadron, Squadron Leader Gareth Cothill, throughout the weekend. In this Newsletter you will hear from Gareth about how 57 Squadron has continued its vital flying training tasks during the various Government-imposed coronavirus-related restrictions.

What is not mentioned in Gareth's update is a piece of 'stop press' he



*The 57 Sqn Standard Party and  
Padre Richard Benson at the  
Association Memorial*

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announced at our Reunion Dinner - namely that, sadly, a reorganisation of the RAF's elementary flying training units means that Gareth's tenure as OC 57 Squadron will come to an end in late December 2021 when he will be replaced as OC by Wing Commander Jamie Norris.

Gareth has done a fantastic job of ensuring that the rich history of 57 and 630 Squadrons is instilled within his pilots as they set-out on their exciting careers in the RAF - we are very sad to see Gareth depart as Boss (happily he will remain as a Flight Commander on the restructured 57 Squadron) and extend a very warm welcome to Jamie Norris as the new Boss.

So, the future of the Phoenix remains bright and we really hope that we will be able to meet-up with our friends on 57 Squadron at a Dining-In Night at RAF Cranwell sometime in 2022 and/or at our Association Reunion at the beginning of July 2022 (hopefully that's not my eternal optimism coming to the fore again!) when, as ever, we will remember the past, raise a glass to our departed friends, and look to the future with renewed hope.

Until we meet again, all that remains for me is to wish all Association Members and our friends a peaceful Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

David Houghton  
December 2021

## From the Secretary



*Chris Morffew*  
Association Secretary

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When I wrote my first input to the Association Newsletter, last year, I could never have imagined that twelve months later we would be in a similar situation and COVID would still be dictating so many aspects of our lives. However, although we were unable to have our Reunion in July we took the decision to postpone it and as you will see elsewhere we did finally manage a get together earlier this month.

I would like to thank everyone, those who managed to attend and those that were unable to roll over their bookings, for working with me to ensure we were able to hold the event. I would particularly like to thank those who sent a donation to Association Funds with their forms; your donations, and the income from the raffle at our Reunions, are our primary source of income and without them we would have to look very carefully at those aspects of the Reunion that the Association funds.

Now, however we need to focus on 2022 and the Reunion planned for 1 - 4 July. The format of the 2022 Reunion will be same as previous years and details, including booking forms, are at the end of this Newsletter. Please let me have your booking forms, by email or by post, by the end of May 2022.

You may recall that last year I said that it had been suggested it might be time to consider some possible changes to the format of our annual Reunion. Some initial thoughts were attached to last year's newsletter along with a form you could use to let us know what you think. Unfortunately, we had very few responses but we do still have to look at the issue so I will be seeking the views of those who attend next year's Reunion. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend in 2022 please feel free to fill in the questionnaire at the end of last year's newsletter and email or send it to me.

Finally, towards the end of my input towards last year's newsletter, I intimated that I might provide some insight into my experience on 57 Squadron in 1982. My recollections are not too short, so I will keep this piece short and to the point! I hope to see as many of you as possible at The Petwood next July.

Chris Morffew  
December 2021

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## Money Matters



*Clare Gillard*  
Association Treasurer

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As many of you will be aware, our Association Treasurer, Clare Gillard suffered a stroke towards the end of this Summer. It was great to see Clare's son Robin and Grand-daughter Emily join us at the Petwood this month and to hear from them about Clare's progress and her determination to attend the Reunion next year.

To allow Clare to focus on her recovery and rehabilitation, our Secretary, Chris Morffew, has stepped in to the Treasurer role on an interim basis.

Given the circumstances, Members will appreciate that we are unable in this Newsletter to provide the usual financial summary, but we will do as soon as possible and present the figures to you for your approval at our 2022 Reunion Dinner. That said, Members can rest-assured that the Association is in a solid financial position and unlike many others continues to offer membership free-of-charge.

We remain extremely grateful for the continuing generosity of Members, their relatives, and friends, who make donations throughout the year which enable us to run our Reunion and Remembrance Service, maintain our website, and cover a variety of other administrative costs.

As a reminder, please make any cheques payable to '57/630 Squadrons Association'. If you prefer to make a BACS transfer please contact one of the Committee members and they will provide the necessary account details.

I am sure that you will all join us in wishing Clare well as she continues her recovery.

## From the Vice President

After the stop-start-stop for our July Reunion, how wonderful it was to get together again at Woodhall Spa and East Kirkby earlier this month. Chris Morffew has certainly had his work cut out juggling all the moving pieces - not quiet the straightforward job he expected when agreeing to become our Secretary! The steady stream of requests for information coming in to the Association has continued unabated and added to Wendy Rothery's already very busy 'in-box' as you will read later.



*Tony Gunby  
Association Vice-President*

In this Newsletter there are stories from The Netherlands, details of a renewed focus for the work of the International Bomber Command Centre, and the remarkable story of Barrie Chaplin who served with 57 Squadron before embarking on a glittering academic career as one of the world's founding fathers of modern electronics.

The efforts made by people around the world to honour the service and sacrifice of those that served with 57 or 630 Squadrons, continues to amaze me.

Later you will read the story of the inauguration of a memorial to a 57 Squadron Wellington that crashed near Amsterdam in 1941. Sadly neither the Association nor 57 Squadron were able to be represented at the ceremony due to the travel restrictions. However, the Amsterdam branch of the RAF Association readily agreed to attend and, along with a serving member of the RAF based in Eindhoven, ensured that the wider RAF family was represented.

Closer to home, we were saddened to learn of the passing of Eric Harris in May at the age of 99 years. A veteran of 36 ops while serving with 630 Squadron, Eric had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in September 1945 and had continued to serve in the RAF until 1968. I was honoured to represent the Association at Eric's funeral in June, along with representatives from local RAFA Branches, a contingent from 57 Squadron led by Terry Jones, and the Air Advisor from the New Zealand High Commission (Eric was born a Kiwi).

Our engagements with 57 Squadron are now being coordinated by the newly appointed Squadron Association & History Officer - Flight Lieutenant Roger Bousefield. Roger is one of the Squadron's Qualified Flying Instructors having previously flown the Nimrod and Shadow

aircraft, as well as ground tours in MOD and at High Wycombe. Some of you will have met Roger at our recent Reunion and we look forward to liaising with him moving forward.

Continuing the theme of welcome, I am delighted to report that we continue to draw new members to our Association; in recent months we have been joined by:

Ron Tellis	Gary Weightman
Neil Finlay	Danielle Thurgood
Sarah Blake	Joanne Roberts
David Clifton	James Willits
Helen Wilson	Robin Davis
Barrie Munday	Tom Davis
Adrian Stevens	Laura Davis
Andrew Chaplin	Adrian Pearman
Nichola Cannock	Rebecca Coady
Norman Curtis-Christie	

Welcome to you all and we look forward to seeing you at future Reunions.

Next year marks the 40th Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict in which 57 Squadron played a major role. It is also the 40th Anniversary of me starting my first operational flying tour in the RAF - with 57 Squadron - under the guidance of our Secretary Chris Morffew who was my Navigation Leader at the time. Mike Wood, Chris Morffew and I share some memories of that period later in the Newsletter.

In May, Dirk de Quick and our friends in Belgium are planning an event to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the crash of 57 Squadron's W4234 (DX-P), which will also include the opening of a new display of artefacts from the aircraft and crew. And, in July, we will be back to our Summer Reunion which will hopefully prove to be a little warmer than earlier this month.

Once again, I am immensely grateful to those that agree to write or share a story for our Newsletter. I would be delighted to hear from you if you would like to contribute to future editions.

Tony Gunby  
December 2021

## In Memoriam



Sadly, we have said farewell to a number of Members over the past 12 months:

**Arthur 'Red' Sidney Woolf** - a Wireless Operator who served on 630 Squadron from May 1944. Shot down by a German night fighter on the night of 24/25 July 1944 while flying on a raid against Stuttgart. Badly injured, Arthur was initially cared for by a French family but was eventually tracked down by the Germans and sent to a hospital in northern France being used as a POW hospital. He remained there for 4 months before his release and return to England. Moved to an RAF Hospital in the West Country and then to the Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead, Arthur's treatment for burns and injuries to his left leg continued. While at East Grinstead he received treatment from Archibald McIndoe, the pioneering New Zealand plastic surgeon, and as a result Arthur became a member of the so-called Guinea Pig Club.

**Alma Leedham** - joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1941 at the age of 19 and trained as a driver. After a period working as a general driver at RAF Scampton, she transferred to the newly-arrived 57 Squadron as a tractor driver in the Summer of 1942. There she would take out the bombloads from the Bomb Dump to the Squadron's aircraft as they were prepared for bombing raids. Alma met her husband-to-be on the Squadron – Flight Sergeant Terry 'Lofty' Leedham who was an armourer – and they began courting in June 1943. They both moved with the Squadron to RAF East Kirkby and married in September 1943. When their first child arrived the following year, Alma left the RAF but she and their growing family continued to follow Terry as he was posted to various jobs. Terry passed away in the 1990s but 57 Squadron had made its mark and Alma was to become a stalwart of our Association Reunion for many years. Her sense of fun and radiant smile will be especially missed.

**Eric Clifton Harris DFC** - Born in Cornwall in 1921, Eric emigrated to New Zealand when he was 5 years old where he father was a gold miner. Eric joined the RNZAF in May 1942 and, after pilot and conversion training, served on 630 Squadron. He completed 36 operations, with Tom Lockett as his Mid Upper Gunner. Eric was awarded the DFC in September 1945 and following the War joined the RAF in which he served until retirement in 1968. Eric passed away in May 2021, just 4 months short of his 100th birthday.

**Barrie Chaplin** - enlisted aged 18 years old and served on 57 Squadron as a radar mechanic. Post-War he became a founding father of modern-day electronics and Professor Emeritus at the University of Essex. Read more about Barrie's remarkable life later in this Newsletter.

**Auke Noordhof** - as a young man, Auke had witnessed the crash of 57 Squadron Lancaster DX-J NE 126 over Hoogkerk, Groningen, Netherlands on 23 May 1944. Auke and his family became good friends of our former Secretary Gordon Lodge who's father had been the navigator on the aircraft. Auke attended our Reunion on a number of occasions and was a charming man to chat with.

While the passing of colleagues and friends is a time for understandable grief and sorrow, it is also an opportunity to look back with affection to better times and at some of life's characters.

***We will remember them***

## News from the Frontline



*Squadron Leader  
Gareth Cothill  
OC 57 Squadron*

It is my great pleasure to update you on the Squadron's activities through 2021. It has been an interesting first twelve months in Command! Thankfully the staff and students have risen to every challenge with the spirit and good humour you would expect from members of such an auspicious unit.

Without a doubt COVID was the most significant challenge. The Squadron operated throughout the pandemic but repeatedly had to adapt its ways of working in the face of changing Government guidance. From 'lockdown' in January to a return to near normality in the summer, each change led to ups and downs in positive tests and contact-related isolation. Nevertheless, our flow of students was maintained throughout, across all our training streams.



*A Grob Prefect T1 pictured at sunset*

The diversity of that training was remarkable for such a small unit. The Elementary Flying Training (EFT) title may give the impression that the training is at the lower end of spectrum; that would be misleading. We do still take ab-initio RAF and Royal Navy pilots (and until recently their Army peers) through their first flights, to first solo then quickly on to 'streaming' fast jet, rotary wing or multi-engine. However, this year saw our first 'wings' graduation for pilots



*A Prefect in the skies over Lincolnshire*

bound straight from the Prefect to the Hawk T2. This trial course, developed in-house, took full advantage of the capabilities of the Prefect; the first graduates are now well into their training at Valley with 2 now awaiting their Typhoon Operational Conversion Units.

More established business was the delivery of fast jet and multi-engine lead-in courses. Delivered by more experienced cadres of instructors, these courses introduce advanced skills such as formation flying, advanced instrument flying and composite land-away sorties.

The other pilots trained this year were several Qatari officers on their way to fly the Typhoon as part of 12 Squadron RAF/QAF – they were given an introduction to UK operations and weather prior to flying the Hawk. And, if that wasn't a diverse enough task, the Squadron also provided the first stage of training for Weapon System Officers bound for the new P-8 Poseidon and Weapon System Operators (Air Mobility) for the fixed wing air transport fleets. Finally, the collocated C Flight - also badged as 57 Squadron - delivered Qualified Flying Instructor training and standardisation for all Prefect units.

Beyond the pandemic and complexity of the task, 2021 had more to throw at us! The year started with a spell of wintry weather which led to significant periods of high winds, ice and snow. In February reconditioning commenced on the aircraft servicing platform at Cranwell which significantly affected the available parking. Then, in March, an unusually large flock of starlings took up residence on the airfield, again impacting operations. I was expecting plagues of frogs in April!

In fact, April saw a slight lifting of restrictions and a visit to the Squadron from Air Officer Commanding 22 Group. Graduations had been conducted throughout the year but began to return to a more normal footing in May, although still without external guests. In June restrictions were lifted even further, which allowed a return to the less formal 'streaming' events where the students are informed of their future career streams. The first saw 41 and 43 Courses painting at their easels, running an assault course, diving in a

## News from the Frontline (continued)

paddling pool and being doused in flour in order to find out their career streams – much to the entertainment of their peers and instructors.

June saw the delayed end of the work on the aircraft servicing platform and some good weather. This allowed a significant increase in the flying rate.

On 2 June, Flight Lieutenant Terry Jones, a Squadron QFI, and Lieutenant Chris Reynolds and Sub Lieutenant Jeremy Fitch, two of our students, represented the Squadron at the funeral of Eric Harris, a Lancaster pilot on 630 Sqn in Bournemouth. July saw the younger officers on the Squadron starting to receive vaccines but also a significant increase in those having to self-isolate due to contact-tracing, as the outside world began to return to normal. The weather again began to impact flying operations – this time a prolonged heatwave restricting our low level operations. On the social side, and in line with the wider hospitality relaxations, the bars on Station re-opened allowing the resumption of 'solo-barrels'. It was important to mark this significant milestone in our new pilots' careers and I was pleased when we could return to doing so in the traditional manner.



*'Wings' graduation for graduates of Prefect Basic Fast-Jet Training. York House Officers' Mess, RAF Cranwell, 19*

The first Prefect Basic Flying Training graduation or 'wings ceremony' was held in York House Officers' Mess on 19 August, with Air Vice Marshal Chris Snaith (Director, Saudi Armed Forces Projects) as the Reviewing Officer. Four pilots were awarded wings and two had theirs confirmed; a landmark day for the individuals and the Squadron.

Late summer into autumn saw our first significant staff turnover as 'first tours' on Prefect came to an end and a number of retirements occurred. A significant departure was our Omani exchange officer Squadron Leader Omar Al Adwani. He was promoted during his tour and he and his young family brought four years of international colour to the Squadron, we eagerly await his replacement next year. October saw the first formal event for 3

Flying Training School in nearly two years. The, normally annual, EFT Dinner brought together nearly two hundred personnel from across the three EFT squadrons in Daedalus Officers' Mess.

November saw my first face-to-face engagement with the Association leading the Squadron representation at the East Kirkby Remembrance Service – also the first outing in some time for the Squadron Standard.



*The 57 Squadron Standard and Colour Party proudly on display once again at East Kirkby on 14 November*



One of my real frustrations this year has been the impact the COVID restrictions had on with our interaction with you, the Association membership. This is something I look to address starting with the Reunion weekend in December and into 2022.

Gareth Cothill  
November 2021

## Research Update



*Air Commodore  
Wendy Rothery  
Association Information  
Officer*

As I write, we are looking forward in anticipation to the postponed 2021 annual reunion weekend. The last Reunion we attended was in July 2019 where we were fortunate to be joined by Alma Leedham, Tom Lockett and Len Manning, amongst others. I remember fondly meeting them all at my first Reunion weekend many years ago, when Alma recounted the story of being the first person through the gates at RAF East Kirkby when 57 Sqn relocated there from RAF Scampton in September 1943; she was extremely proud of that fact and rightly so. It was wonderful that they were able to attend so many annual reunions over the years and that Tom was fit and able to lay the 630 Sqn wreath; they are all sorely missed.

Happily, the last year has seen no reduction in the number of Association enquiries from family members, researchers, and friends in Europe who tend memorials marking the crash sites of 57 and 630 Sqn crews, so the interest in the Association remains strong. A quick calculation reveals that I have responded to 42 enquiries since 1 Jan, and I have a small number to catch up on over the forthcoming Festive Period - whilst I am not always able to reply within a couple of weeks, I do respond as soon as I can, and I find it really rewarding making connections between crews and putting family members and researchers in touch with one another to join the dots and discuss their findings.

One of the first enquiries I responded to last year was from Association Member Bruce McTrowe who lives in Canada and whose father, Arnold Malcolm McTrowe, was a Mid Upper Gunner on the Ainley crew, posted in to 57 Squadron on 5 May 1944. Their final operational mission was on 5 October 1944. All crew members remained together throughout their 32 operational missions with the exception of the Flight Engineer, Sergeant H Evans, whose last trip with the crew was the Wesseling Raid on the night of 21/22 June 1944. The F540 operational record shows that 2 Flight Engineers were posted from the Squadron, non-effective sick, on 11 and 12 July respectively and it is highly likely that one of these was Evans. He was replaced on the crew's next trip on 4 July by Sergeant J Patterson, who completed several trips with the crew before they had some well-earned leave in mid-July.



*(L-R): Bruce McTrowe, Phil Ainley (Pilot), Les Bradbeer (Nav), Fred Cole (Bomb Aimer) at the Memorial Tree at East Kirkby*

On 30 July, Flying Officer Blanchard flew with the crew as the Air Engineer, on 5 August it was Sergeant P Moore and on 7 August Sergeant R Francis joined them and remained with them as their Air Engineer until the end of their operational tour in October.

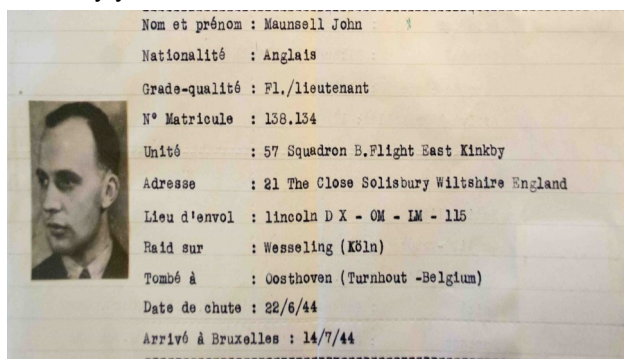
Bruce has attended a number of 57/630 Sqn reunions and got to know Geoff Copeman very well. Geoff was the Flight Engineer on my Grandfather's crew and wrote a number of books about East Kirkby, including *Right Hand Man*, *Silksheen*, and *Bomber Squadrons at War*. I greatly regret not meeting Geoff; I would have loved to have heard his personal recollections of being on 57 Sqn during the Second World War, and of course his recollections of my Grandfather who died when I was just 12. Happily, I have Geoff's publication of 'Save Me An Egg' a personal account he wrote based on recollections from the crew, of the ditching of Lancaster ND471 on return from the Wesseling Raid on the night of 21/22 June 1944. Hopefully Bruce and his wife Cheryl will be able to join us at a future Association Reunion.

A further link with the Wesseling raid, was made when the family of Flt Lt John Maunsell learned the details of the Belgian lady who had helped and accommodated him during his evasion. Mrs Verstraeten was a member of the Comète escape line which provided assistance to downed aircrews. She was responsible for providing accommodation, food, clothing and transport to Brussels.



## Research Update (continued)

From January 1944 to September 1944 she helped 13 aircrew, including Flt Lt Maunsell. John Maunsell was the navigator on Flt Lt Bayley's Lancaster LM115 DX-M and the Treasurer of the Association for many years.



*John Maunsell's Repatriation Transit record*

John wrote extensively about the events of 21/22 August 1944: "On the way back from Wesseling we were hit by a nightfighter just after we began corkscrewing to avoid it - both the gunners opened fire. Our starboard wing was on fire and both engines stopped.

The Bomb Aimer (Naysmith) and Flight Engineer (Jordan) went out ahead of me from the front hatch and the Mid-Upper (Marshall) went out of the rear door. Our W/Op (Harwood) was found with a half opened chute and the Pilot and Rear Gunner (Donovan) were presumed unable to bale out.

I came down near Oud Turnhout near Turnhout in Belgium and managed to evade. I met a Flemish farmer who found a French speaking friend to interpret - and by 5am I was sitting down to breakfast in the farmhouse. I was told to stay put until liberated, which in my case was by the 1st Canadian Army.

The rest of those who survived could not find each other and were soon rounded up and made POW. Naysmith, our Bomb Aimer found a 630 Sqn casualty whilst searching for the rest of our crew. The casualty later turned out to be Sgt MJ McNaughton-Smith, Navigator in TG Hart's crew (630 Sqn ME782 LE-N). Unfortunately he could not be revived so Naysmith closed his eyes for him and did what he could".

Given the role of the Information Officer is to research Squadron history, I thought it would be interesting to look back at what 57 Sqn was doing 80 years ago, almost 2 years before 630 Sqn was formed. In the wake of the Butt Report, which had drawn attention to the poor accuracy of much of the bombing carried out since the start of the War, and the mounting casualties, the War Cabinet decided in November 1941 that only limited operations were to

be carried out while the future of Bomber Command was debated by Government and the Air Ministry. Needless to say, 57 Sqn participated in a number of these operations, flying the Wellington from RAF Feltwell under the command of Wg Cdr J M Southwell. December 1941 was the month in which the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the Royal Navy lost two capital ships, HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse, off Malaya.

On 7 December, 2 'Freshman' crews took part on a supposedly easy raid on Calais, one of them (Sgt Roper) was hit by flak but made it safely back to Feltwell, his colleague Sgt Watson landing at Lakenheath. Four days later, both crews flew with 3 others against Le Havre. Roper was unable to locate the target because of poor weather and brought his bombs home, which may explain the heavy landing that ensued. Sgt Watson was less fortunate, he and the crew of T.2959 being killed when they crashed near East Wretham, Norfolk, on return. The full crew was Sgt Donald Watson (25), Sgt Philp Gird RCAF (23), Sgt Edwin Carter (26), Sgt John McKenzie RCAF (25), Sgt Stanley Jackson, and Sgt Ranulph Manwaring.

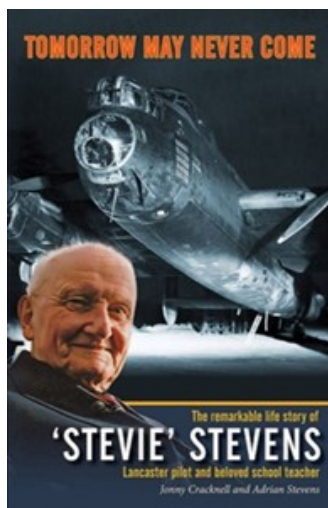
The following night, 10 crews operated, 9 against Brest and one against Calais. Sgt Richardson and his crew were attacked by 2 Me-110 night fighters, the ORB recording three of the crew as being 'slightly injured'. On the 15th, 5 crews operated against Brest, all returning safely; the same mission was repeated on the 17th with 12 crews and again on the 23rd (9 crews) without loss.

On 27th December, 12 crews operated, 6 each against Brest and Dusseldorf. W/O Thomas Purdy DFM and the crew of Wellington Z1097 were shot down by a night fighter near Someren, Holland, with 5 of the 6 crew losing their lives. The full crew was W/O Thomas Purdy (28), Sgt Maxwell Cronin RNZAF (21), F/O Ronald Scarlett RAAF (27), Sgt S Barraclough (survived as a POW at Stalag Hohenfels), Sgt Robert Aldous (26) and Sgt Walter Poulton. Barraclough was one of 39 members of 57 Sqn who were POWs by the end of 1941; their number included Wg Cdr Harry 'Wings' Day and Alfie Fripp.

Purdy was Mentioned in Despatches in February 1941, his DFM having been Gazetted in December 1940. Apart from a 3-month stint on an OTU, he had been flying on operations since 4 September 1939. You can read about the memorial to Z1097's crew later in the Newsletter.

Wendy Rothery  
December 2021

## Tomorrow May Never Come



Many Association Members had the privilege and pleasure of knowing Flight Lieutenant Steve Stevens. Prior to his death in 2020, Stevie was working on his memoirs with his son Adrian.

Following Stevie's death, Adrian and the renowned aviation author Jonny Cracknell completed the book and it has been published by WingLeader Aviation Books.

In memory of Stevie's special connection with RAF east Kirkby, an event was held on at what is now the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre on 30 August 2021 to launch the book.

WingLeader Aviation have done a fantastic job producing the book, which is illustrated throughout by the photos and documents Stevie kept throughout his life.

As WingLeader Aviation say so accurately,

*"This is the remarkable story of Lancaster pilot Sidney 'Stevie' Stevens DFC AE\*. After serving as an ARP Controller in London and witnessing his family home obliterated by German bombing during the Blitz, he vowed to become a Bomber Pilot, joined the RAFVR in April 1941, and completed his initial pilot's training at Carlisle.*

*In January 1942, Stevie was posted to America, and did his advanced flying training in California near Hollywood, rubbing shoulders with film stars. After gaining his Wings, he returned to the UK and learned to fly Lancasters. In May 1943 he was posted to 57 Squadron at RAF Scampton, in time to watch the Dambusters take-off on their historic mission.*

*By the end of October 1943, when the survival rate among Bomber Command aircrew was one in five, Stevie had completed a full tour of Operations as the captain of a Lancaster, been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, and met his future wife, WAAF Corporal Maureen Miller, who talked down Guy Gibson and his pilots from the control tower at Scampton on their return from the Dams raid.*

*In 1947, after nearly four hazardous and eventful years instructing on Wellington bombers, Stevie left the RAF, settling in Norwich with Maureen and their son Adrian. He became an innovative and much-loved Maths teacher. When he and Maureen passed away after 74 years of marriage, they were both given lengthy obituaries in The Times.*

*This book has been a labour of love for all concerned and is designed and printed to the highest standards using full colour throughout. We only have 350 copies available via this website so don't miss out on this unique collector's item."*

Copies can be ordered online from the publishers via <https://www.wingleader.co.uk/shop/tomorrow-may-never-come>, or can be ordered via the publisher's telephone number 0116 340 1085.

## Scampton Memorial Window

In our last two Newsletters, we have updated you on the project to install a stained glass window at Scampton Church to mark 100 years' relationship between the church and RAF Scampton. Members will recall that the Association made a donation to this project by sponsoring Panel 159 in recognition of the time which 57 Squadron spent based at RAF Scampton (September 1942-August 1943).

A commemorative book detailing the sponsors has been placed beneath the window and includes an entry recording our Association's support. Our entry reads;

In memory of all those who served with 57 Squadron at RAF Scampton – 1942/1943.  
The 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association.

Like so many other events, the production, installation and dedication of the window were delayed by COVID-19, but we are pleased to report that the window was successfully installed on 15 June 2021. You can watch the installation process by clicking this link to a video made by the artist Claire Williamson (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBa8ztMZp3A>).

Over £23,000 has been raised so far for this project and the finished window looks resplendent in the sunlight as you can see in the photos below. A date for the dedication of the window has yet to be announced, but if you are in the Lincolnshire area, why not drop in to Scampton Church, and it's RAF Chapel, to take a look for yourself. The Church is open daily from 10am-4pm.



*RAF Scampton Commemorative Window (Credit: Claire Hartley)*

## Operation CORPORATE - 112 Victor Tanker Detachment ASI

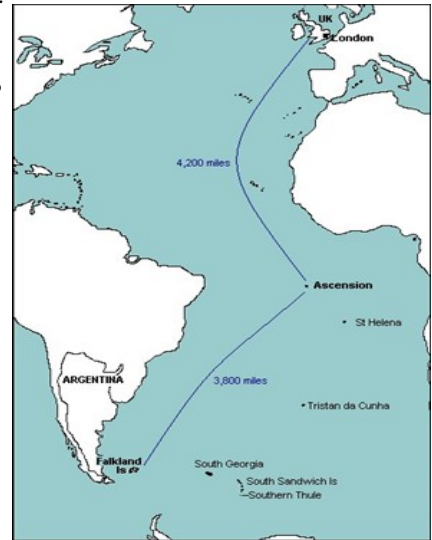
*(The Association's Mike Wood, wrote the original of this article in 1992 for the Cathay Pacific aircrew magazine)*

Where are the Falkland Islands ..... Where is Ascension Island (ASI)?

These questions were not exactly in the forefront of my mind in February 1982, but I was curious enough to visit the Intelligence Section at RAF Marham to find out. Unfortunately, I then became the squadron "expert", and had to brief the eager chaps on the geography of the South Atlantic.

At a stage when we still knew it wouldn't happen, we discovered that the nearest airfield to ASI was Roberts Field in Monrovia, some 800 miles to the north (but don't ever go there in an emergency), and that aircraft going to ASI may have to stage through Dakar (Senegal) or Banjul (Gambia).

Furthermore, gleanings from various American military documents revealed that the one runway at ASI had a cliff face at one end, a 0.6% down slope which carefully disguised the fact that the crest of the substantial hump was at the ideal touch down point; and a lava flow, home to a large bird colony, was just off the far end of the tarmac. An additional note indicated that ATC may have to clear wild donkeys off the runway before aircraft could land.



*Ascension Island sits roughly halfway between the UK and Falkland Islands*



*On final approach to Runway 14 at Wideawake Airfield. 'TACAN Hill' on the right*

The island itself forms part of a volcanic chain stretching as far south as Tristan de Cunha, and including St. Helena of Napoleonic fame, its nearest neighbour. There is one main volcanic cone called Green Mountain, some 1800 ft above sea level, and several smaller cones, together with rugged lava flows, clinker and ash fields and a few sandy beaches.



*Ascension Island basks in the South Atlantic sun*

### 112 Victor Tanker Detachment ASI (continued)

Vegetation is mostly cactus scrub on the lower slopes, but it becomes remarkably green near the top of Green Mountain. The local people are settlers from St. Helena, with American Military around the airfield and expat Cable and Wireless and BBC employees in the town of Georgetown and the hamlet of Two Boats. This then was to become our home for the duration of Operation CORPORATE.



*L-R: View from Green Mountain, Mike at the Dew Pond, Two Boats*



*ASI Police Station and the Exiles Club, Georgetown*

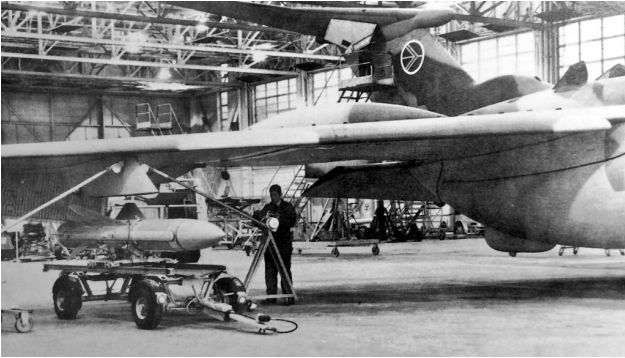


*Downtime spent playing cricket in Georgetown and golf*

During March and early April, the ageing Victor K2, which had hardly seen an upgrade since it came into service, was to see a number of improvements. Navigation upgrades included the fitting of either Omega or twin Carousel inertial navigation system for long-range navigation. The latter was installed on the plinth for the 6th crew seat, making it very awkward for the crew to reach their seats, and more importantly, to vacate them in a hurry.

## 112 Victor Tanker Detachment ASI (continued)

Improvements were made to the ground mapping radar to make it more suitable for maritime reconnaissance purposes. A number of other things were tried and "binned" including fitting cameras in the old bomb aimers position in the nose, so that the aircraft could carry out low level photo-recce runs over Port Stanley and replacing the wing refuelling pods with Martel missiles.



*XL232 with a trial Martell missile fit*

The 2 Victor squadrons at RAF Marham, Numbers 55 and 57, combined to form No. 112 Detachment (yes – even Victor crews can add!) and the first wave departed south on 18 April. After an exchange of the amber aviation nectar over Cornwall, 3 aircraft continued on the 8¾ hr transit direct to ASI. The following day, a further 2 aircraft made the same flight.

My first thought on touching down at ASI was that we had landed on the moon. There were lava flows and volcanic ash everywhere, and hardly any green. There were hills so close to the runway that no self-respecting aircraft should be operating there.



*Barrie Neal (Captain), John Ingham (AEO), Chris Morffew (Nav Plotter), Del Padbury (Nav Radar), Mike Wood*

A crude ops and engineering empire had been set up in the ubiquitous 160 lbs tents, our first task the following morning was to expand this into "tent city" sufficient to house all of our basic needs.



*Make-do facilities at the airfield*

## 112 Victor Tanker Detachment ASI (continued)

The first mission was to send one of our aircraft to carry out a reconnaissance probe over the ocean to the north west of South Georgia for signs of the Argentinian Navy, prior to the retaking of the island.

The mission was straightforward but did clock up a record for air-to-air refuelling as one aircraft remained airborne for 14¾ hrs, being refuelled 3 times in the process. The opposition were nowhere to be found, and South Georgia was retaken shortly afterwards.



South Georgia (a long way south)

## BLACK BUCK 1

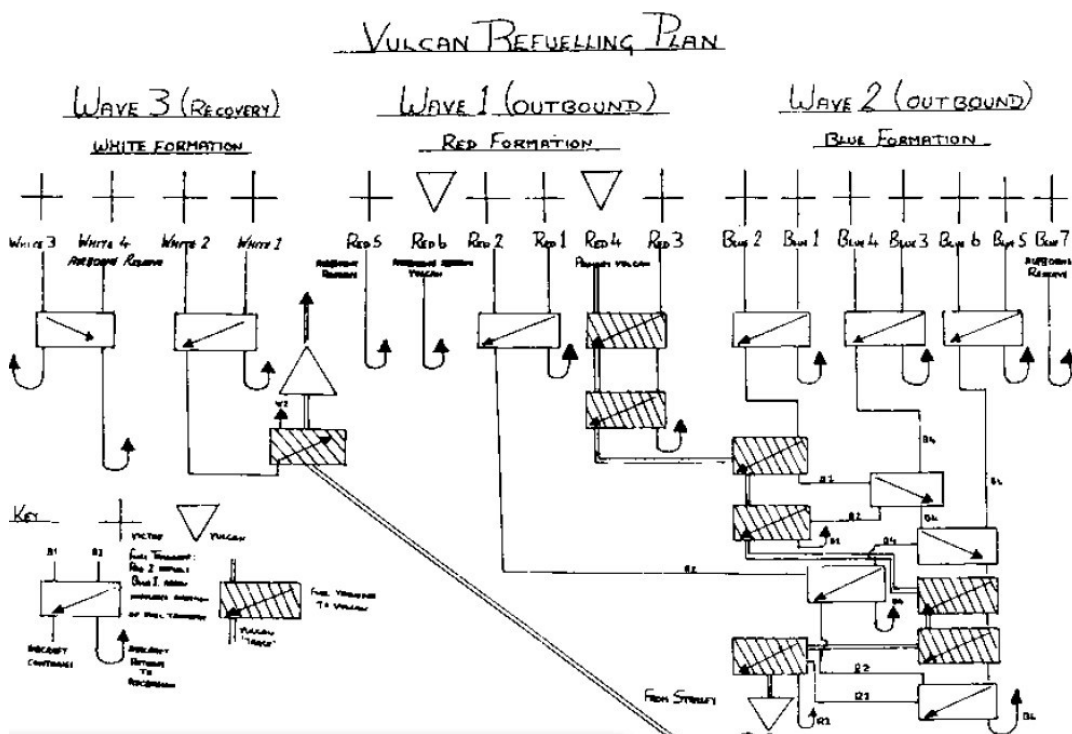
At 2200 local, the first of 11 aircraft with 2 airborne reserves rolled to commence Operation Black Buck One. A glance at the wiring diagram reveals little except that it was a complicated affair, but hopefully the following paragraphs will succeed in unravelling the wire.

In essence the Vulcan would receive a total of 7 top-ups before the target, and one after, while various transfers took place between the Victors to keep enough fuel in the formation.

The aircraft rolled in a continuous stream, 30 seconds apart, in total radio silence. Fortunately, the night was clear, but at times it was difficult to decide which aircraft you were to join formation with, as the sky seemed to be filled with red flashing lights.



Vulcans (and Harriers, and a VC10) on Ascension Island



## 112 Victor Tanker Detachment ASI (continued)

It was during the climb that a side window on the primary Vulcan cracked, and unwilling to risk the pressurisation problem later in the mission, the crew returned to base. So, the reserve Vulcan, captained by Martin Withers, was suddenly thrust into the limelight.



*Pilot's eye view refuelling from a Victor*

The first fuel transfer took place 1¾ hrs after take-off, when 4 Victors passed their available fuel to 4 others and turned back. A 5<sup>th</sup> Victor made the first of the 7 transfers to the Vulcan and continued. In the Vulcan, the aircraft was flown by a Victor refuelling instructor while it was taking on fuel. In the timescale available it was considered more expedient to train an experienced refueller to "prod" with a different type, than to train a Vulcan pilot up from scratch. Indeed, it was so long since the Vulcan had carried out this exercise that refuelling probes had to be rescued from gate guardians and museums.

It soon became apparent that all was not well with fuel plan, and that the whole formation was using more fuel than it should. The 4 Victors which turned back were all short of fuel and had to break radio silence to establish the order in which they should land, based on each one's fuel state. The landing direction in ASI is always 14. There is a turn-around table halfway down the runway, and another at the far end. The apron is accessible by an entrance at the Runway 14 threshold, and another abeam the aforementioned hump, so an aircraft landing must backtrack most of the runway length before it can vacate. Thus, the first three Victors landed and crowded into the turn-around table at the far end to give number four room to land, all fervently hoping that there would be no brake or drag chute failure.

All 4 aircraft were immediately refuelled, and 2 crews were put on readiness to meet others returning short of fuel. The remaining 2 crews had the task of meeting the Vulcan, who was returning by a point off the Brazilian coast cunningly code named RV3.

This point was located such that if no tanker support was waiting at the RV, sufficient fuel remained for the Vulcan to reach Rio de Janeiro, just!

Indeed, the system was tested and found serviceable when on a later Black Buck the Vulcan finished the 7<sup>th</sup> refuelling bracket and departed leaving the tip of his probe in the tanker's basket. The mission continued, and the aircraft then flew straight to Rio. The crew apparently had a very pleasant week as guests of the Brazilians, before returning to the UK.



*Vulcan refueling from Victor viewed through rearward facing periscope*

Meanwhile, the formation continued south, with more Victors turning back having passed every drop of fuel they could spare, leaving 1 tanker leading the Vulcan to the final refuelling bracket some 400 miles north east of Stanley. This tanker had reaped the benefit of the extra fuel burn, but nevertheless passed the planned transfer to the Vulcan, knowing that he would be relying on standby tankers at ASI to avoid ditching at night 400 miles short of base.

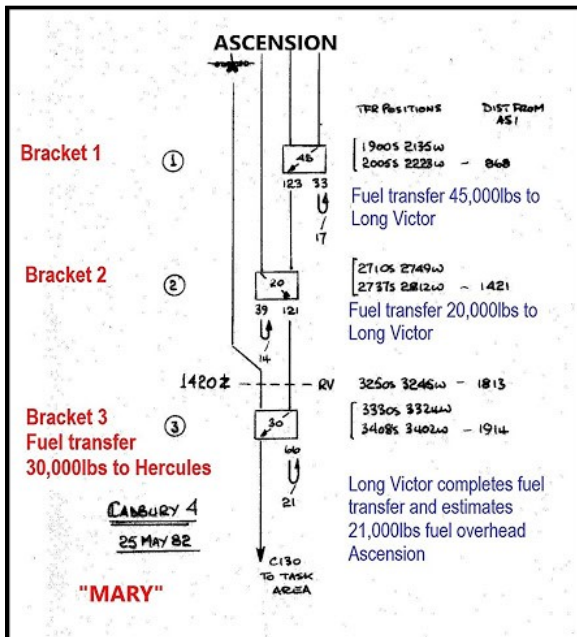
The Vulcan went on to carry out the raid, and some hours later while orbiting at RV3, we heard him call up to join us. There was only one tanker waiting at the RV, the airborne reserve having gone u/s on the ground. The rendezvous was a self-help procedure which we had all practiced many times, but because of our antiquated kit, a Nimrod had been placed close to the RV to guide us together if required. The Vulcan landed at ASI to a hero's welcome with beers while the accompanying Victor crew disappeared off to the back of the mess tent to make a cup of tea! Black Buck 1 was the first of many similar missions to be supported by 112 Detachment over the following months.



## 112 Victor Tanker Detachment ASI (continued)

### Chocolate Drops

After the excitement of Black Buck 1, subsequent missions became more streamlined. Everything going south had to be refuelled, be it Vulcan, Nimrod, Hercules, or later Harrier and F4 Phantom fighters. The Hercules flights were soon to become our bread and butter, starting with 5 per week and reducing eventually to 2 per week. We called the flights Chocolate Drops, and rumours abounded as to the contents of the loads they were air-dropping "down south". Inevitably there was a



political and morale boosting element to sending the Herc down, whether the load was essential or not, and a cartoon appeared in the ASI magazine depicting our noble troops in their tents on the Falklands, sitting on air-dropped empty cardboard boxes and eating air-dropped pot noodles!

A new type of RV developed for Victor/Herc in this theatre. The Victor launched some 2 hrs after the Hercules, catching it up after about an hour. The RV was achieved using a combination of ADF (generally good to  $\pm 45^\circ$ !), air-to-air Tacan (good, variable or totally xxx), and the Mark 1 eyeball (good for up to 25 miles).

Refuelling was accomplished in a descent, or 'toboggan', at 600 to 800 ft/min. The reason for this was partly due to the refuelling equipment, and mainly due to the Herc's lack of performance at those heights and weights.

The refuelling hose on the tanker was balanced in the airflow so that air drag pulled the basket out counteracted by a motor attempting to wind it back in. Thus as the receiver in contact moves position the slack on the hose is taken up.

A fact well known to all aviators is that as speed reduces so does drag, so there comes a speed at which the motor wins the battle, and the hose winds in.



"Toboggan"

Unfortunately, this speed was very close to max for the Hercules hence the need for a descent to give it some performance in hand to stalk and catch the bouncing basket. On one sortie, refuelling continued to 2000 ft above the waves, there was then a long pause while the Hercules regained height, and the process was then continued until he was full!

### Domestics

Accommodation arrangements for the crews evolved over the months, starting with 6 or 8 to a double room in the US transit block, through rented bungalows in Georgetown. Next, a semi-permanent settlement was created on the base known as Concertina City, consisting of collapsible huts which when erected looked rather like giant piano accordions. There were also shower blocks, and toilet blocks with no partitions, where you sat so close to your neighbour that you couldn't avoid rubbing knees.



Concertina City

## 112 Victor Tanker Detachment ASI (continued)

Later, at vast expense, RAF Travellers Hill was built from scratch on a dusty plain, complete with swimming pool, gymnasium, and of course 3 separate messes!



*RAF Traveller's Hill*

One of the many pastimes was to visit some of the 10 letterboxes. A rocky peninsula on the southeast of the island became known as the Letterbox in sailing ship days, from the custom of leaving messages there for other ships. Many years later a total of 10 scenic spots had wooden boxes installed containing a record book, ink pad and stamp.



*An Ascension Island Letterbox*

Ten years later, Maggie has gone but the good old Victor is still there, although only for another couple of years (that's what they said about the Canberra). One can't help wondering if it was all worth the loss of life on both sides, but that is for the historians to decide. For me it was an experience I will always remember.

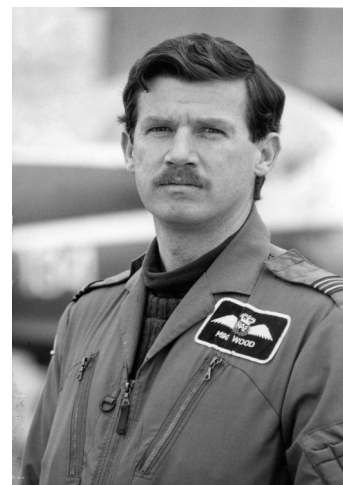
Mike Wood, Hong Kong, 1992

### **About the Author:**

Mike Wood joined the RAF in 1977 and served as a co-pilot on the Victor K2 with 57 Sqn until late 1982 and then as a captain on 55 Sqn. His final tour was as a Jet Provost QFI with 7FTS at RAF Church Fenton.

Mike left the RAF in 1989 and headed to Hong Kong for the next 17 years to fly for Cathay Pacific Airways, as a first officer on various marks of Jumbo and later as a captain on the L1011 Tristar. He moved on to become a training captain, and then check-captain, flying the Airbus A330 and A340 before returning to UK in 2006 to see out his last 7 years of commercial flying with Jet2 based at Leeds/Bradford airport on the Boeing 757.

Mike is now retired living near York and enjoys motorcycling and woodturning.



## Barrie Chaplin - Electronics Genius

During the Summer, the Association learned of the passing of Barrie Chaplin who had served as a radar mechanic at East Kirkby from its opening in 1943 until the end of the War.



Sergeant Barrie Chaplin, pictured in 1946

(Photo: Andrew Chaplin)

Aged just 18, Barrie had joined the RAF in November 1942 and subsequently completed training at the RAF Radio and Radar School, before being posted to East Kirkby. There, he was primarily responsible for maintaining H2S radar



The GEE oscilloscope

systems and GEE navigational systems on the Lancasters of 57 Squadron.



H2S display

Barrie took every opportunity to fly in the Lancaster as he found that this was the best environment in which to fine tune the aircraft's radar and radio systems. Barrie's son, Andrew, has shared with the Association the transcript of one of Barrie's flying 'experiences':

*"In 1943, or possibly 1944, I was detailed early in the morning to fly down to Manston airfield in south-east Kent where a damaged Lancaster from a night raid had managed to cross the channel and make a crash landing at the airfield.*

*A novice crew was detailed to make the trip to Manston airfield to pick up the experienced crew from the crashed aircraft there. I was detailed to fly with them to Manston in order to salvage what I could from the radar equipment in the crashed aircraft. The new crew navigated to Manston using the railway lines, negotiating London to avoid barrage balloons, and flying on to Manston itself. We taxied to the crashed aircraft, and I entered the aircraft and salvaged any radar equipment which could be repaired, loading the items into the aircraft I had flown in on.*

*The crew from the crashed aircraft were uninjured and had already been debriefed following the night's Operation. They then got into my aircraft, and immediately laid down as they were asleep on their feet, the pilot lying close to the cockpit. Although not standard policy, I frequently took advantage of flights (generally every day) where I could fine tune the radar system with the aircraft in the air rather than*

## Barrie Chaplin - Electronics Genius (Continued)



Barrie seated with legs folded on top of vehicle (date and location unknown) (Photo: Sarah Blake)

on the ground at the dispersal point; it was much more effective from a radar performance standpoint to carry out this work while the aircraft was at operating temperature and not dripping with condensation. Indeed, I was working on the radar system as we flew back from Manston to East Kirkby, having taken up my usual position directly behind the pilot with my folded hands on the armour plate behind the pilot's seat, affording me the pilot's view. My total flight hours on Lancasters exceeded 2000 hours, on average about one hour per flight.

As we approached East Kirkby to land, I saw the usual green airfield, but the runways were milky white instead of black. The pilot then called up the Watchtower asking for visibility and was told it was perfect. I said it looked to me that it was thick mist, probably about ten feet high – but unfortunately the novice pilot believed the Watchtower, who could and should have walked to the nearest runway and correctly reported the visibility within five minutes. The pilot then decided to land, making a perfect approach to the top of the mist, and then dropped through it like a stone.

Towards the end of the War, on the night of 17 April 1945, Barrie was unwittingly to become involved in a devastating accident that occurred on the 57 Squadron dispersal. Andrew Chaplin recounts that his father, together with a couple of helpers, had been servicing radar equipment on a Lancaster as it was being prepared for operations later that night. Working in the heat of confined equipment spaces, Barrie and his helpers had decided to take a tea break and were still close to the aircraft when it exploded, leaving a deep crater in the dispersal area. The force of the explosion and subsequent fire, led to extensive damage to nearby aircraft and buildings.

The final bomb exploded the following morning by which time the extent of the devastation was clear to see. Aside from the tragic death of four servicemen and injury to ten more, 57 Squadron has lost four aircraft destroyed, ten seriously damaged and six more lightly damaged. Extensive damage had also been done to nearby stores, buildings and the dispersals. It was to be 6 days before either 57 Squadron or 630 Squadron were able to mount operations once more.

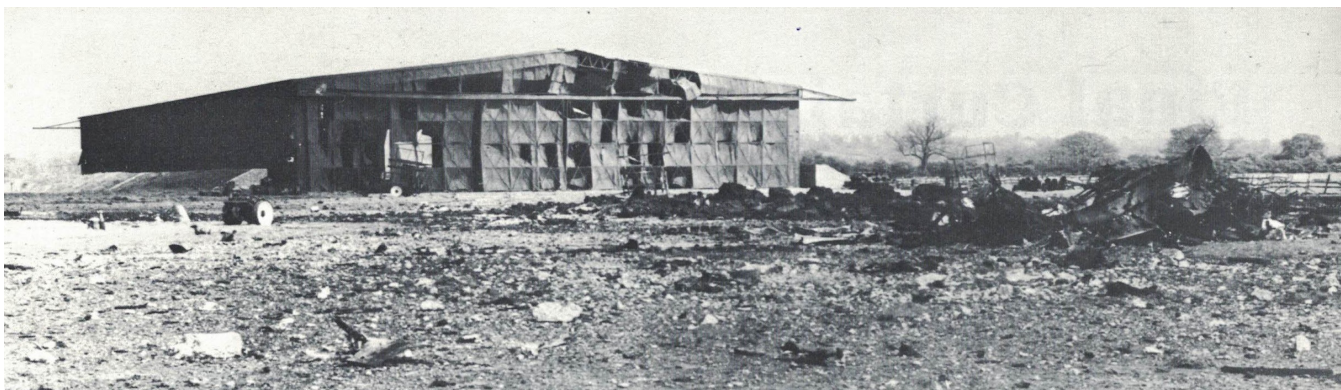
*The aircraft hit the ground very heavily, the undercarriage withstanding the impact, resulting in the aircraft proceeding to bounce along the runway. The pilot then made the right decision and attempted to take off again, applying full boost to all four engines. From then on, time seemed to stand still, but we eventually reached the end of the runway, now with the wheels on the ground.*

*Ahead of us was a closely mown field with a five-foot-high thick hedge around it. At this point the experienced pilot woke up, raising himself up on one elbow in order to see out of the cockpit. He immediately flicked the undercarriage control, positioned to his side, in order to raise the wheels.*

*This timely action of the experienced pilot certainly prevented the undercarriage from catching the hedge, saving the aircraft from cart-wheeling over the hedge, landing on its back and bursting into flames. As the wheels came up, the aircraft sank down, but suddenly stopped at a point where all four propellers were within an inch of the mown grass. I could only assume this was a manifestation of the ground effect, as the aircraft was clearly flying. The aircraft continued in this configuration across the field, reaching the hedge which the propellers proceeded to cut through, twigs and foliage filling the cockpit. The aircraft continued through the hedge into the next field, and the experienced pilot then asked the novice pilot whether the engines were still on full boost.*

*The response was that they were indeed still on full boost, causing the experienced pilot to calmly suggest the engines should be taken off boost as far as possible, preferably totally, to prevent them all melting. This was quickly done. By the time the next hedge was reached, the aircraft had gained enough height to skim over it. Thereafter, it took about twenty-five minutes to reach sufficient height for subsequent landing, by which time the mist had cleared from the runway, allowing for a normal landing. Taxiing along the perimeter track to the dispersal point was novel, because the engines had to run at high revolutions in order to provide any thrust, as the propeller blades were all bent at right angles, the only thrust being available from a few inches of blade close to the propeller boss. When we reached the dispersal point, we found a crew van and the radar van waiting for us."*

## Barrie Chaplin - Electronics Genius (Continued)



*Scene of devastation, the remains of a Lancaster in the right foreground (Photo: T L Redding)*



*PD347 of 57 Squadron, her nose riddled by shrapnel (Photo: T L Redding)*

Barrie's flair for electronics was recognised while in the RAF and he was encouraged to go on to university when the war ended. After he was released from the RAF in 1947 he did, gaining his BSc, MSc and PhD in Electrical Engineering at Manchester University by 1953.

At Manchester University, he worked alongside the father of modern computing, Alan Turing. He then moved on to the Atomic Energy Research Establishment (AERE) Harwell in 1953 as Principal Scientific Officer, being promoted to the post of Special Merit Senior Principal Scientific Officer in 1955, before becoming Technical Manager in 1959 at the Plessey research facility and promoted to Chief Scientist in 1960.

He was a founding father of modern electronics, having been one of the first to devise circuits for the transistor which, in its initial form, saw the light of day in 1949. These circuit designs, devised by Barrie (some with co-authors) principally in the 1950s, have since become standard building blocks for the complex analogue and digital electronic systems of today.

In 1966, Professor Chaplin was invited to join the University of Essex where he established the Department of Electrical Engineering Science in that same year, the forerunner of its School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering.



*Barrie Chaplin, right, with Tony Benn, the technology minister, at the University of Essex in the 1960s*

*(Photo: The Times)*

## Barrie Chaplin - Electronics Genius (Continued)



*Professor Barrie Chaplin  
27 January 1924 - 12 January 2021*

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Professor Barrie Chaplin was possibly the last survivor of the group of truly great innovators that represented the golden age of modern electronics which flourished in the aftermath of WWII.

For more than four decades he pioneered many important technological breakthroughs such as the invention of the world's first transistorised digital computer, the invention of the world's first transistorised sampling oscilloscope, and the invention and development of active noise and vibration cancellation technologies. His inventive output was prolific and wide-ranging, producing an extraordinarily long list of patents and important technical papers and publications throughout his career.

Barrie's son, Andrew, recalls that "Dad's creativity helped revolutionise much of the technology we now take for granted. His focus was always on progressing his scientific research, coming up with the next concept and making it happen.

It was his work in the research laboratory that was his great love. His inventiveness continued unabated until he retired in 1989, enabling him to focus more on his passion for sailing around the East Anglian coast."

Barrie's wife, Sarah, recalls the last time that he attended one of our Reunions in 2014, when she experienced with him the immense interest of being with colleagues, the thrill of seeing the magnificent Lancaster and hearing the unmistakable roar of the Merlin engines. Sarah remains convinced that Barrie's early years as a radar mechanic had a profound influence on his extraordinary career.

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## Safeguarding the History of Bomber Command

Many Members of the Association will have visited the International Bomber Command Centre on the outskirts of Lincoln. Sat across 'the Gap' from Lincoln Cathedral, the IBCC is a world-class facility which provides a centre for recognition, remembrance and reconciliation for Bomber Command. It houses, the most comprehensive record of the Command in the world, and ensures that generations to come can learn of its vital role in protecting the freedom we enjoy today.

Lincoln was chosen for the site for the IBCC as it provides a central point for all 27 bases, over a third of all the WWII Bomber Command stations, that earned Lincolnshire the title of 'Bomber County'. Lincoln's Cathedral provided a landmark for crews both leaving and returning from missions and, for those who failed to return, the Cathedral was often their last image of home.

The 72 tonne, 31 metre high (102 feet), Memorial



*The Memorial Spire and Walls of Names at the International Bomber Command Centre*

Spire dominates the site and is surrounded by the Walls of Names in a series of circles framing the view of the City and the Cathedral. There are 271 individual panels, each formed from weathered engraved steel, and collectively remembering the almost 58,000 men and women who lost their lives serving or supporting Bomber Command during WWII.



*One of the 271 Walls of Names*

Two peace gardens, laid out across 10 acres of landscaped grounds, surround the Spire and Walls of Names. The Lincolnshire Peace Garden includes 27 native trees marking each of the operational Bomber Command stations in the county during the War, while the International Peace Garden pays homage to the 62 nations from 5 continents who served or supported the Command.



*Interactive audio-visual displays in the Chadwick Centre*

While continuing to remember the courage and sacrifice of those who served with Bomber Command in WWII, the IBCC has this year announced that it is expanding its focus to commemorate all those who served with Bomber Command - from its formation in 1936 until 1968 when Bomber Command was subsumed into the RAF's Strike Command.

The IBCC is very keen to capture 'oral histories' from veterans who served in Bomber Command at any stage during this period, and to expand its digital archive of documents (such as diaries, letters and photographs).

While 630 Squadron operated exclusively from RAF East Kirkby, 57 Squadron's Bomber Command's history was more wide-ranging. From August 1940 until the disbandment of Bomber Command in 1968, 57 Squadron operated from the following aircraft bases and flew the following aircraft types:

Bases: Lossiemouth, Wyton, Feltwell, Scampton, East Kirkby, Elsham Wolds, Lindholme, Waddington, Coningsby, Cottesmore, Honington, Marham,

Aircraft: Bristol Blenheim, Vickers Wellington, Avro Lancaster, Avro Lincoln, Boeing Washington, English Electric Canberra, Handley Page Victor

If you are interested in contributing to these objectives, the IBCC would be delighted to hear from you. You can contact the IBCC's Chief Executive Officer, Mrs Nicky van der Drift (Telephone 01522 514755; email [nicky@internationalbcc.co.uk](mailto:nicky@internationalbcc.co.uk)), who will then connect you with one of the Centre's researchers.

## Z1097 - Not forgotten

In Spring 2019, the Association was contacted by Harry Bakermans in The Netherlands about the loss of a 57 Squadron Wellington in December 1941. Harry and friends in the village of Someren, south-east of Eindhoven, were making preparations for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation in 2020. This was to include the unveiling of a memorial to the crew of the Wellington.

These plans were to be thwarted by the arrival of COVID, but in July this year, the memorial was finally unveiled. This is the story of the aircraft and crew, and the memorial to those that perished.

On the night of 27 December 1941, 57 Squadron launched 12 Wellington 1C bombers from its base at RAF Feltwell in Norfolk. Six aircraft were tasked to attack Brest and six to attack Dusseldorf. One of the aircraft asked to attack Dusseldorf was 57 Squadron's Z1097 (DX-T?), named 'Gorakphur' after an Indian Rajah that had paid for it and which had arrived on the Squadron in the autumn of 1941.

Taking off at 1700 hrs for Dusseldorf, no communication was subsequently received from *Gorakphur* captained that evening by Warrant Officer Thomas Purdy. Tom Purdy, from South Shields, was already a decorated pilot when he joined 57 Sqn, having been awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal and a Mention in Dispatches in 1940.



*Tom Purdy (centre) and colleagues relax in the Sergeants' Mess*

The aircraft was attacked by German night-fighters on their homeward leg and shot down at 2030 hours by a Messerschmitt BF110 flown by Hauptman Werner Streib of I.NJG1, crashing near the village of Someren, south-east of Eindhoven in the south of the Netherlands.

The full crew that fateful night was:

WO Thomas Purdy DFM MiD	Pilot
Sgt Maxwell Joseph Cronin RNZAF	Pilot
Fg Off Ronald Cave Scarlett RAAF	Observer
Sgt Stan Barraclough	Wireless Op/ Air Gunner
Sgt Robert Frederick Aldous	Wireless Op/ Air Gunner
Sgt Walter James Poulton	Air Gunner

Ron Scarlett and Stan Barraclough were able to parachute from the stricken aircraft before it crashed. Ron was not seen again but Stan survived, taking refuge in a farmhouse, only to be turned over to the Germans by his collaborator hosts. He spent the remainder of the War incarcerated at Stalag 383 at Hohenfels, Bavaria. None of his crew mates survived the crash and are today buried in the Eindhoven (Woensel) General Cemetery.

After the War, Stan Barraclough recalled how the aircraft had been 'coned' by searchlights just after it had released its bomb load. Realising the danger they faced, Tom Purdy had pushed the aircraft into a steep dive until it lost the searchlights at about 1,000 feet above the ground. The sense of relief was short-lived however, as incendiary shells ripped through the bottom of the aircraft, fire broke out, and Tom had ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft.

Roll forward to 2021, and 10 July - the date chosen for the unveiling of the memorial to the crew of *Gorakphur*.

Due to the travel restrictions in place, it was not possible for the Squadron or Association to attend the unveiling, but we were delighted to be able to contact the Amsterdam Branch of RAFA who enthusiastically ensured that the wider 'RAF Family' was represented. Led by Branch Chairman, Wilbert Mulders, the RAFA standard was on parade and the RAF was represented by Flight Sergeant Nigel Dutton who is currently serving on the Movement Coordination Centre Eindhoven.



*Memorial to crew of Z1097 (Harry Bakermans 2<sup>nd</sup> from right)*



## Z1097 - Not forgotten (continued)

There were speeches by Gerard Verdonschot, chairman of the Wehrmachthuisje Foundation (<https://wehrmachthuisje.nl/>), WWII expert Harry Bakermans and Alderman Theo Maas. Harrie Muijen and Ad van Seggelen, board members of the Wehrmachthuisje Foundation, laid wreaths and Willie Volmering of the Someren-Heide fanfare played The Last Post.



*The memorial stone and artwork depicting Z1097*

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The monument, a boulder, was donated by Astrid van Kol-Meeuws and family. It sits at a crossroads of footpaths and cycleways in the forest near Someren. The artwork on the boulder was made by Darius Verheijden of Blood Sweat and Steel in Someren-Heide.

The Association is extremely grateful for the efforts of Harry and his friends in Someren to commemorate the loss of the crew of Z1097 with this memorial, and to our friends in the Amsterdam Branch of RAFA and at the MCC Eindhoven for supporting this ceremony.

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## Lancaster ED706 (DX-A) - 57 Squadron

On the night of 30 April/1 May 1943, twelve Lancasters of 57 Sqn departed RAF Scampton to join an attack force comprising 305 aircraft: 190 Lancasters, 105 Halifax and 10 Mosquito against Essen. Eleven 57 Squadron aircraft returned safely, but nothing was heard after take-off from ED706 (DX-A) and its crew of:

Sgt William John Glotham	Pilot, 23 yo
Sgt John Kenneth Mansley	Flight Engineer, 21 yo
Sgt Albert Victor Ansell	Navigator, 22 yo
Sgt Michael James Grace	Bomb Aimer, 21 yo
Sgt Joseph Hodgson	Wireless Operator, 22 yo
Sgt William Nugent	Mid-Upper Gunner, 31 yo
Sgt Cyril Douglas Todd	Rear Gunner, 18 yo

The aircraft is believed to have been brought down by flak outbound to its target and crashed into the IJsselmeer, east of Amsterdam. There it lay until 1978 when it was discovered and salvaged.

During the salvage operation, the remains of two crew member were found, but could not be identified. They were laid to rest as unknown airmen in the war cemetery in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, The Netherlands, while all seven crewmembers of ED706 are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial

Last year, the Association was contacted by David van Coolwijk who had taken a particular interest in this story - inspired by a childhood fascination with aviation.



David van Coolwijk

As David wrote in April 2021.....

*My interest in aviation started when I was still a young boy, that would have been in the mid 80's.*

*As a present my parents gave me a book about famous airplanes from WW2. In there was a very nice photo of a USAAF B-17 Flying Fortress. That airplane made a huge impression on me, all those turrets looked very cool to me as an eight year or so old boy!*

*After that the movie "Memphis Belle" was aired on the television and I was completely hooked. This meant that my main interest was actually only the Boeing B-17 and I read and learned a lot about that particular airplane.*

*1995 was the 50th anniversary of the defeat of the Germans and I read in the local newspaper that B-17 "Sally" was coming over to The Netherlands to re-enact Operation Chowhound. The flyover would be also in Muiden, near my hometown.*

*I went there on I think it was May 5th, when I learned that there were 6 RAF Airmen buried in Muiden. I had no idea that a Halifax bomber had crashed near my hometown. I didn't think much of it back then because I was still only interested in the B-17.*

*Many years later, in 2016, I heard about a national initiative, "kaarsjes op oorlogsgraven" - Candles on War Graves. That is an annual event on Christmas eve where people from all around The Netherlands place candles on Commonwealth war graves. I mentioned it to my wife and said, that would be a nice thing to do with our children, then 2 and 4 years old, to teach them about WW2 and how to remember our liberators.*

*I always make a short video of the event - this is now our own family tradition on Christmas eve. My plan was to send these videos to the relatives of the crew and started researching the event that took place on May 1st 1943, not knowing that this was an interesting date.*

*After a while, I found most of the relatives and started researching the Halifax a bit more when I stumbled on another crash in Muiden, my hometown; also on May 1st 1943. I couldn't remember anything about a second airplane crashing in Muiden/Muidenberg; I thought they must have mixed up something.*

*Later, in the national archives, in the Hague I found out that a Lancaster had crashed in Muidenberg, that was a mystery to me. I had never heard of that before. But a simple*

## Lancaster ED706 (DX-A) - 57 Squadron (continued)

Google search on the Lancaster ED706 said it crashed in Almere, The Netherlands. Almere was the Zuiderzee at that time, Almere didn't exist yet!

Meanwhile, I contacted our local historian, he was looking for volunteers to build a monument for the crashed Halifax in Muiden, because I had loads of information on the crew and on Halifax JB803 of 77 Squadron.

I thought, why not build a monument for Lancaster ED706 in Muiderberg, but it seemed that there was no interest for that in Muiderberg, because everyone said it crashed in Almere. I did not agree because Almere wasn't there when the Lancaster crashed but the people of Muiderberg thought otherwise.

Meanwhile I started to search for relatives of the crew of Lancaster ED706. This was very hard, but Facebook is a powerful tool!! I knew where the crew were from so I posted some articles on the Facebook pages of their last know city's/ towns. And with success! Within a year I found all the relatives!

So, I built an online memorial for Lancaster ED706 instead ([www.lancastered706memorial.nl](http://www.lancastered706memorial.nl)) and started to organize memorial services with a history teacher from Almere, Vincenzo Militello, at the crash location.

There was a "small" monument in the form a wind turbine with a large sticker of a Lancaster there.

In February 2020 I learnt that the owner of the wind turbine, Vattenfall, was going to remove the wind turbines and that they were not going to replace the monument. I thought, this cannot be!! They didn't even inform the relatives.



The original wind turbine memorial at Birkpad, Almere

I wrote several emails to the city council of Almere and Vattenfall asking them to consider a new monument. Vattenfall wrote me that newer wind turbines were to be built and asked me if I wanted to design a new monument that would be placed on the turbine and also a design for an information plaque near the crash site.

The designs are finished now and both approved!

## Bemanningsleden Avro-Lancaster



**Sgt. A.V. Ansell**  
Navigator  
RAFVR MIA



**Sgt. J. Hodgson**  
Radiotelegrafist  
RAFVR MIA



**Sgt. J.K. Mansley**  
Werktuigkundige  
RAFVR MIA



**Sgt. M.J. Grace**  
Bommenrichter  
RAFVR MIA



**Sgt. W. Nugent**  
Rugschutter  
RAFVR MIA



**Sgt. C.D. Todd**  
Staartschutter  
RAFVR MIA



**Sgt. W.J. Glotham**  
Pilot  
RAFVR MIA

## Lancaster ED706 (DX-A) - 57 Squadron (continued)



*Vincenzo Militello lays flowers at the original memorial site*

*The information plaque will probably be unveiled on May 1st 2021 and not long after that, the new*

*wind turbine with the Lancaster silhouette.*

*But Covid is still around and we do not know for sure if we can invite relatives or a lot of people. I guess we just have to wait and see!*

*More information on Lancaster ED706 can be found on my website at [www.lancastered706memorial.nl](http://www.lancastered706memorial.nl)*

David van Coolwijk, April 2021

(Post-script: Despite the best laid plans, COVID has continued to disrupt progress towards unveiling of the new memorial to the crew of ED706. The plan had been to unveil the memorial in October, but when I last corresponded with David in September, he was still waiting for news from the energy company Vattenfall that would enable him to make the necessary arrangements with local groups. We will keep in touch and bring you an update in a future Newsletter. Ed)

## 2022 Airshows

Coming to locations around the UK: the 2022 air display season which sees the return of many favourites. A selection of the major events is listed below. If you want further details about these and significant anniversaries, go to the website at <https://57-630sqnassoc.org/events/> and browse the calendar for events, then click on an event for links to further details.

4-5 June	English Riviera Airshow, Teignmouth
12 June	RAF Cosford Airshow
25 June	National Armed Forces Day Event, Scarborough
25 June	National Armed Forces Day Event, Plymouth
25/26 June	Weston Air Festival, Weston-super-Mare
2 July	Wallop Wheels and Wings, Middle Wallop
2/3 July	Wales Airshow, Swansea
9 July	Teignmouth Airshow
15-17 July	Royal International Air Tattoo, RAF Fairford
19-22 July	Farnborough International
22-24 July	Sunderland Airshow
13/14 August	Blackpool Airshow
18-21 August	Eastbourne International Airshow
27/28 August	Rhyl Airshow
1-4 September	Bournemouth Air Festival
8 September	Jersey International Airshow



## 40 years on - Ascension Memories

I arrived on 57 Squadron in early April 1982 exactly 3 years after I had joined the RAF; the previous 3 years spent on officer training, basic navigator training, an abortive attempt at the Phantom conversion course, and now newly graduated from the Victor K2 conversion course with 67 hours on type.

I was on leave, somewhere quite remote in Yorkshire, when Argentine forces invaded the Falkland Islands, but these were pre-internet and pre-mobile telephone days, so I was oblivious to this news and out of contact with the Squadron. Only when I returned to RAF Marham did I begin to realise the impact of this event on the Squadron which deployed its first aircraft to the South Atlantic on 18 April and by the end of the month fourteen aircraft of the 23-strong Victor Force was basking in the sunshine on Ascension Island.



*Victors packed onto the apron at Wideawake Airfield*

As a new arrival on the Squadron, I was swept up in this whirlwind of activity and by the end of May, I had more than trebled my flying hours on type. Having only ventured once out of UK airspace while on the conversion course, I was now a veteran of 3 operations to deploy Harriers and Phantoms to the South Atlantic via stops in Banjul, The Gambia and Dakar, Senegal.

In Banjul we stayed overnight in a hotel which bore the pock marks of bullets from a recent attempted coup, were enthusiastically welcomed by expats in the Fajara Club, and once ran the gauntlet of Senegalese troops enforcing the overnight curfew. This was the closest I came to personal harm, when late one night we had to wake up the air traffic controller asleep in the tower to file our flight plan, my captain treading on a startled Senegalese soldier cuddling his AK47 rifle! The Victors passing through Banjul very quickly exhausted the fuel supplies available, so we switched to nearby Dakar and the delights of the Café de Bruxelles and its horse steaks.

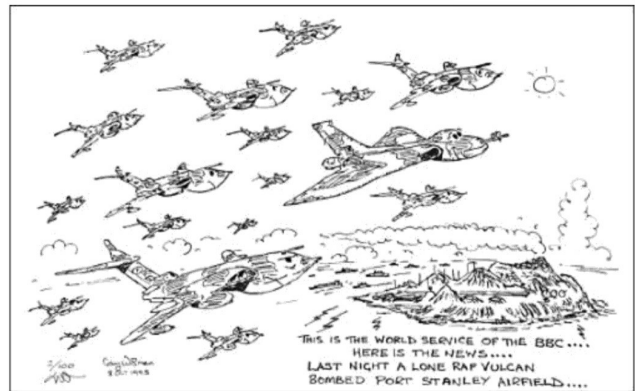
The Task Force had now sailed south from Ascension Island and was soon to engage with the Argentine Air Force. Back at Marham we were glued each evening to the news channels and the soporific voice of the MOD Spokesman Ian McDonald.

On 1 May, the BBC World Service reported the news that overnight a lone Vulcan bomber had attacked the



*Ian McDonald, the MOD spokesman during the Falklands Conflict*

airfield at Port Stanley, but failed to mention the 11 Victors that had made this possible. 57 Squadron co-pilot and Association member, Gary Weightman, was to draw a cartoon which captured the operations more accurately!



*Gary Weightman's cartoon of the Black Buck formation (Gary Weightman)*

The following day Argentina's General Belgrano was sunk by HMS Conqueror, but the tables were turned on 4 May with the sinking of HMS Sheffield following an attack by Argentine bombers. The UK Task Force was to suffer further losses - MV Atlantic Conveyor, HMS Ardent, HMS Antelope and HMS Coventry - either side of the amphibious landing on the beaches around San Carlos Water on 21 May.



*HMS Antelope explodes in San Carlos Sound as fire reaches her magazine*

## 40 years on - Ascension Memories (continued)

As the Task Force secured its' foothold, the Victor focus switched to supporting the non-stop Hercules resupply flights that operated from/to Ascension Island. Without a useable airfield in British control, these flights could last up to 23 hours and required several refuels from Victors on the outward leg.

On 2 June, I deployed to Ascension Island with the Air Officer Commanding, Air Vice Marshal Mike Knight, acting as co-pilot for the 9-hour transit from Marham. Our crew settled into our assigned hut in Concertina City - expeditionary accommodation provided by the United States, complete with camp beds, tables, chairs, lighting and air conditioning, but powered by a jet engine generator which ensured that sleep was extremely hard to come by.



*Crew relax outside their concertina*

Six days later, our crew (supported by three other Victors) completed an 11½ hour flight deploying a single Harrier to HMS Hermes which was operating just north of the Falkland Islands.

On 12 June, our Captain - Pete Standing, an experienced air-to-air refuelling instructor - was tasked to fly with the Vulcan crew of Black Buck 7 and bomb Port Stanley. Two days later a ceasefire was declared as Argentine troops surrendered to the advancing British forces.

However, the daily routine of Hercules resupply flights continued, switching from air dropping supplies, to landing at Port Stanley once the airfield was repaired.



*Hercules taking fuel - viewed through the Victor periscope*

Victors were to remain based on Ascension Island supporting these tasks until the summer of 1985.

Much of the flying was utterly boring. It involved long distance flights with only brief bursts of activity when refuelling operations were underway. There was no air traffic control in the South Atlantic, and little radio chatter. Most crews managed the boredom reading books or writing airmail letters home; my crew often played Scrabble with the board perched on the spare seat between pilots and rear crew members!

Downtime was spent exploring Ascension and learning about its fascinating history as a mid-Atlantic staging post, base for anti-slavery patrols and sometimes yellow fever outpost, its role in global communications from undersea cables to satellite links, and as a relief landing ground for the Space Shuttle.



*Satellite tracking and communications facilities*

The Island's bars also saw plenty of us of course, as did the beaches and sports facilities which included two golf courses where tar was poured into the sand to create black 'greens'.



*My crew (L-R): Pete Standing, myself, Vic Poole, Ash Mountain, Roger Higginbottom*

Looking back 40 years, I do so with very fond memories. Of a professional baptism of fire and operational high. Of some great characters and enduring friends. And to a military campaign which, with the benefit of hindsight, we were extremely fortunate to win.

Tony Gunby  
December 2021

## 1982 - Memoirs of a(nother) Tanker Navigator

Life on 57 Squadron all changed when Argentina invaded the Falklands on 2nd April 1982. Initially, there didn't seem as if there would be much for us to do, since so few aircraft were capable of receiving fuel from a Tanker. Indeed, Easter fell on Sunday 11 Apr that year and although there were a lot of contingency plans being looked at, we were allowed to take the long weekend providing we left contact details. I and my family went down to stay with my parents in Berkshire, but we were not there long before we were recalled to Marham.

Most of our crews were no longer qualified to receive fuel at night so currency had to be regained. At the same time, the Vulcans were having their AAR probes brought back into operation and work was going on which eventually led to Nimrods being fitted with them. On the Victor it was decided to re-activate the old F-95 camera system and three crews, captained by Sqn Ldr Martin Todd, one of our Flight Commanders, and Sqn Ldrs Bob Tuxford and John Elliott from 55 Sqn, were told to start training for photographic reconnaissance missions.

However, it was clear that if we were to operate the Victor in the South Atlantic we would have to do something about its navigation system; we had the old GPS 6 which was kept updated through the radar system and Astro Navigation (sun and star shots). Clearly, operating in the South Atlantic would mean that we would have to rely on Astro Navigation which really wasn't that accurate. We trialed two fits; the Carousel Inertial Navigation System and an Omega VLF fit. Both worked quite well and both fits were subsequently used on operations.

On 14 April Marham started to qualify the Vulcan pilots. On 17 April RAF Will Forms were handed out - I had never thought of writing a will despite the fact that I now had three children! On 18 April the first Victors were sent to Ascension Island; a secret destination that even our wives were not allowed to know. Our crew refuelled the outbound aircraft before returning to Marham and then heading south ourselves the next day.

The facilities on Ascension Island were quite interesting! Tanker Ops was basic but functional; it consisted of a couple of tents on the airfield.



*Tanker Operations - Ascension style!*

But domestic accommodation was something of a problem; we had the use of a single block and

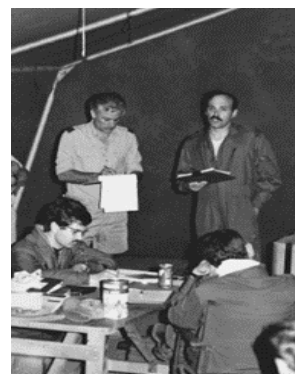
initially it was a case of squeezing a complete crew into one room. One of the navigators decided he would rather sleep in the corridor; at one end he erected a sort of barricade to create a room which he then had to himself. He was happy and it seemed to work well. A much bigger problem was the Navigator Radar who snored so loudly he kept getting thrown out of rooms!



*Victors crowd the dispersal on Ascension*

Initially the flying was fairly straight forward. Victors would go out on reconnaissance sorties and they would need AAR to give them the necessary endurance. Some were doing Maritime Radar Reconnaissance (MRR) and of course some had been training for photo-reconnaissance. On 22 April we flew in support of one particular MRR sortie; it was the mission that resulted in a Victor taking evasive action when one of the RN Task Force ships locked on to the aircraft with its fire control radar! We flew again on 24 and 28 April, and on 29 April the Vulcans arrived.

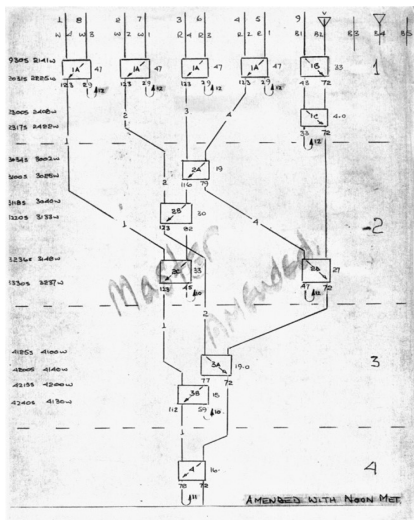
Our Squadron Commander, Wing Commander Alan Bowman, had been made the Victor Detachment Commander and as his Squadron Navigation Leader I took on the role for the Detachment. We had a full Tanker Operations team which did all the fuel planning, run by Squadron leader Trevor Sitch so there really wasn't that much for me to do, other than the normal pre-flight briefings, until it came to Operation Black Buck.



*Sqn Ldrs Trevor Sitch (L) and Chris Morffew (R) brief crews*

## 1982 - Memoirs of a(nother) Tanker Navigator (continued)

One of the problems we had been wrestling with was how to get thirteen aircraft (11 Victors and two Vulcans) which took off at one minute intervals together in the same piece of sky. Normally there would only be three or four aircraft, and we would conduct a snake climb where the leading aircraft would make slow, partial turns to right and left to let the chasers catch up. This couldn't work with a formation of 13 large aircraft. We resorted to world war two procedures by establishing a Rendezvous (RV) point where aircraft could join up before setting off on route.



*Black Buck 1 Refuelling Plan*

The first two waves, Red and White Sections, each consisted of four Victors and the third wave, Blue Section, consisted of three Victors and two Vulcans. Two Victors and one Vulcan were acting as reserves in case another aircraft became unserviceable. Red Section was to RV at F360, White at F340 and Blue at F320. The Ops Team briefed the refuelling plan and I briefed the RV and Join Procedures; it was amazing; some 70 aircrew packed into a large briefing tent with paper cups, charts etc scattered everywhere.

Problems started on the ground when one of the Victors had difficulty on start up and we had to use the first reserve. But, twelve aircraft got airborne before the next problem revealed itself; Flt Lt John Reeve, Captain of the primary Vulcan, and thus planned to actually drop 21 x 1,000lb bombs on the runway at Port Stanley, was unable to close his DV (Direct Vision) window. This meant the aircraft could not pressurise properly and John had no choice but to abort and handover to the in-flight reserve flown by Flt Lt Martin Withers.

Next, all the tankers had to check the HDU (Hose Drum Unit) to check the refuelling equipment was working properly; Wg Cdr Alan Bowman was in White 4, planned to accompany the Vulcan all the

way to the final transfer point. Imagine his disappointment when his Navigator Radar discovered he could not trail the hose; another aircraft aborted and returned to Ascension. We were now down to the minimum required to achieve success.

The first transfer point was at 19°30'S 21°41'W and was due to last just 11 minutes. We were in Red 3 and planned to transfer 47,000 lbs of fuel to Red 4 before returning to Ascension for a couple of hours rest and then getting airborne again to meet the Vulcan on his way back. The fuel transfer was fine although we had to transfer a little more than planned but as we headed back toward Ascension it became clear that the fuel plan had been optimistic; we were short of fuel. We had enough to get back but only just. More to the point, there were another three Victors on their way back and they were probably just as short of fuel as we were. What made this a problem, was the fact that at Ascension there was only one runway and no parallel taxiways; each aircraft had to land, drop its brake chute at the end of the runway and then taxi back to the dispersal via the runway. However, we were all so short of fuel there simply wasn't time to do this.

The decision was made to land all four aircraft on the runway before any taxied back to the dispersal. The first three aircraft would continue right to the end of the runway, without getting rid of their brake parachutes, and position themselves right, left and centre on the turn around button at the end. Since we had the most fuel we were to come in last; if anything went wrong with the brake chute or the aircraft brakes there could be a potential disaster as we crossed the hump in the middle if the Wideawake runway and bore down on the other three Victors.



*A Victor lands at Ascension Island*

Our Captain, Sqn Ldr Barry Neal, one of the 57 Sqn Flight Commanders, flew a great night approach and touched down right on the markers. In the final few feet of his approach he completely lost sight of the other three aircraft, lights blinking at the end of the runway, as they were hidden by the infamous hump.

The rear crew, with no ejection seats, held our breath as the brake parachute was streamed and then Barry tried the brakes. As we came over the



## 1982 - Memoirs of a(nother) Tanker Navigator (continued)

hump the lights of the three Victors at the end of the runway came back into view and the breaks started to slow us down. A huge sigh of relief as the speed came off; Barry did a 180° turn as soon as we had reduced to taxi speed and as he turned he released the brake chute and applied a burst of power to the engines to try and ensure the parachute did not block the runway. We were all back safely but for our crew there was just a couple of hours before we were due to get airborne again.

This time we were going all the way to the RV with the Vulcan to give him the fuel he needed to get back to Ascension. Four aircraft were to take-off; two of us would be refuelled by the other two and then proceed to the RV. The intention was to provide redundancy at the RV and double the chances of a successful refuel.

The primary tanker was Sqn Ldr Frank Milligan's crew, with Wg Cdr Bowman as the Navigator and Flt Lt Harper as the Nav Radar. They were flying the same aircraft which had failed them earlier and despite the efforts of the groundcrew it failed them again – the hose still wouldn't trail. We took over as primary but it also meant that we could no longer get two tankers to the RV. We either made the RV, and met up with Martin Withers and crew, or they would have to divert to Rio with all the political ramifications that would go with it.



*A Nimrod MR2 at Ascension*

At this stage of the conflict we had a couple of Nimrods based at Ascension. Although they were not yet capable of in-flight refuelling they still had good endurance and one was positioned off Rio to assist with the RV. Without him we would have to rely on air-to-air Tacan and radio bearings; a RV procedure that worked but was quite time consuming – a luxury the Vulcan didn't have. We got to the RV on time and the Nimrod identified us, but there was no sign of the Vulcan. We knew the raid had been successful because it had been released on the BBC World service but where were they?

Almost an hour passed and the Nimrod was getting close to minimum fuel; he would soon need to turn for Ascension. We had enough fuel to loiter quite a

bit longer but we would have no way of knowing the Vulcan was near unless air-to-air Tacan worked and it was notoriously unreliable. As the Nimrod turned for home he picked up the Vulcan and was able to put us on converging headings but I needed range to be able to tell Barry Neal when to turn so that the Vulcan ended up behind us.

With a lot of help from the fast disappearing Nimrod I gave Barry the instruction to turn and hoped that just for a change it would be spot on; all too often it didn't quite work and only by getting a succession of radio bearings and using the air-to-air Tacan would you eventually find yourselves in the right relative positions. This time it worked perfectly but when the Vulcan told us they were visual we couldn't see them, and they couldn't be cleared in to the hose until we could. I asked for another radio transmission for bearing and it showed us they were right behind.

A rather exasperated Flt Lt Dick Russel, the Air-to-Air Refuelling Instructor (AARI) flying with the Withers crew, came up on the radio and said they were right behind us at a range of three or four miles. Our Navigator Radar, Sqn Ldr Del Padbury, finally picked them up in his rear view periscope and cleared them in.



*Vulcan refuelling from Victor*

It took three attempts but finally they made contact and fuel was flowing. We could see that it was a wet contact with fuel leaking around the probe and onto the Vulcan but they were short of fuel and were not going to risk breaking contact again. To us it seemed as if the fuel was gushing in but because of the leak around the probe it was a little slower going into the Vulcan's tanks. Eventually they had enough and dropped back. They broke contact and then positioned themselves on our starboard side while I guided the formation back to Ascension.

The scenes after landing, the Vulcan went first of course, were amazing; I am not even sure if we managed to speak to them.

And then of course there was the post-mortem, why was the fuel planning so wrong. It was essential to

## 1982 - Memoirs of a(nother) Tanker Navigator (continued)

find out before another raid could be mounted; fortunately the crew records allowed us to work out which aircraft used how much fuel. Also, the Vulcan had been heavy throughout its trip south and was therefore using more fuel; finally, nobody had really been able to take into account the effect of formation flying on fuel consumption.

Lessons were identified and applied to the rest of the Black Buck missions; six were flown but one was aborted after take-off because of AAR failure (once again a HDU would not trail). Three were bombing missions and the other two Anti-radar Strike missions.

The most interesting sortie we flew after Black Buck One was in support of a Nimrod, now fitted with a refuelling probe; a fit that was to lead, many years later, to the loss of an aircraft and its complete crew.

The Nimrod was tasked to confirm the position of the Argentinean fleet. It was believed that after the sinking of the Belgrano the fleet had retreated to port but since final preparations were now being made for the amphibious assault on 21 May, the Nimrod was tasked to carry out a reconnaissance of the Argentinean ports by effectively flying along the Argentinean coast.

We took off on 14 May and landed back on 15 May. Our sortie was relatively short, about 11 hours, but the Nimrod flew for over 19 hours. The only danger was the risk of intercept by Argentinean Air Defence aircraft but there was no evidence they had a realistic night intercept capability. Although the danger was minimal, the crew was very quiet until we were well out of range of the Argentinean bases and I asked the pilots to turn on to a Northerly heading; all of a sudden everyone became talkative!

On 28 May we became the first crew to rotate back to Marham, primarily for an aircraft change. While we were away, the accommodation problem was finally solved with the delivery of collapsible cabins. They were erected very quickly and the site was christened Concertina City! Compared to the rooms we had all been squeezed into up until that point they were pure luxury. The Victor crews even built a small shelter to use for socialising.



*Concertina City - Victor Aircrew Social Shelter*

We were to do two further detachments to Ascension, one from 11 Jun to 20 Jul and another one in August. By then the flying had become routine, refuelling the Hercules aircraft which were operating the airbridge, but in a very demanding five day cycle.

We returned to Marham at the beginning of September to be told that we would be leading the Falklands Victory Flypast on 12 October. This was quite a bit trickier than it probably sounds because we had to be exactly on track, or we would not be seen from the Mansion House, which was also the Saluting Base, and on time so that we passed over the Saluting Base at the precise time of 1205. We carried an extra Navigator, from PR Canberras, whose job was to lie in the nose of our aircraft and tell us our precise position in relation to a number of fixed points which had previously been photographed by a PR Canberra. I established two final timing points, at 35nm and 17.3nm and worked out a table to adjust our groundspeed to ensure a timely arrival. It worked a treat and we passed over the Saluting Base about two seconds late. Somewhere I still have a copy of the signal we received after landing that congratulated us on our 'timely arrival'.



*Three Victors, led by 57 Sqn's Barry Neal and crew, and flanked by Harriers, overfly the Mansion House, London, 12 October 1982*

We returned to Ascension Island on 28 Oct and this time we stayed for a full month, until 26 Nov. By now the cycle was a little less intense. After our return to Marham, I needed to get back into a more routine set of flying, starting with six sorties to carry out annual checks on 57 Squadron Navigators. 'Normal' life had resumed but none of us were ever likely to forget the previous seven months!

Chris Morffew  
December 2021

## 2022 Association Reunion

July 2022						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The 2022 Association Reunion will be held over the weekend of Saturday 2 July and Sunday 3 July. Prices have once again been frozen at 2018 levels and outline details are below.

A Reunion Booking form is available at the back of this Newsletter and also on the Association website.

We look forward to welcoming a contingent from 57 Squadron, led by OC 57 Squadron who will be our guest speaker during the Saturday Dinner, and the

Squadron Standard Party at our Sunday Memorial Service.

It would be great to see more Members attend the Sunday evening Dinner/Dance when the excellent Cleo Ridgeway will be entertaining us once again.

Please note the deadline for returns. Rooms are always at a premium at the Petwood Hotel, so do remember to book early.

For those of you that like to plan ahead, the dates for the 2023 Reunion are 30 June - 3 July!

### Friday 1 July - Petwood House Hotel

As arranged                      Informal Dinner for hotel residents with reserved tables in the hotel restaurant

### Saturday 2 July - Petwood House Hotel

3.00pm                              Afternoon tea (Woodland Suite)  
 7.00pm for 7.30pm              Dinner – dress lounge suits/blazers (Woodland Suite)

### Sunday 3 July - East Kirkby/Petwood House Hotel

11.45am                              Memorial Service in Hangar – medals may be worn  
     57 Squadron Standard Party  
     Memorial - Last Post & Laying of Wreaths  
 3.00pm                              BBMF Flypast (To be confirmed)  
 7.00pm for 7.30pm              Informal Dinner Dance (Woodland Suite)

### Accommodation and Function Rates

#### Petwood House Hotel Residents

- 4 Nights  
 B&B, 2 restaurant dinners, 2 function dinners (Sat & Sun) £410 pp
- 3 Nights  
 B&B, one restaurant dinners, 2 function dinners (Sat & Sun) £315 pp
- 2 Nights  
 B&B (Fri & Sat), one restaurant dinner, and one function dinner £210 pp  
 B&B (Sat & Sun), 2 function dinners £215 pp
- 1 Night  
 B&B and function dinner £115 pp

#### Non Residents

£45 pp for each function dinner

## Association Memorabilia

The following items of 57/630 Squadron memorabilia are available (prices include UK P&P). We do not stock large quantities of these items as to do so would tie up Association funds.

### 57 Squadron



Print of the 57 Squadron 100th Anniversary painting\* £21.00

57 Squadron enamel lapel badge £2.50

57 Squadron tie\* £20.00

### 630 Squadron



Embroidered blazer badges £16.00 (very limited stock)

630 Squadron tie £6.50

630 Squadron/Association enamel lapel badge £2.50 (very limited stock)

Items marked\* can be bought directly from the Squadron - please contact the Squadron Adjutant on [3FTS-57Sqn-Adj@mod.gov.uk](mailto:3FTS-57Sqn-Adj@mod.gov.uk) or by telephone 01400 227154

Other items can be bought through the Association website Store at <https://57-630sqnassoc.org/store/> or by contacting Tony Gunby directly at [vicepresident@57-630sqnassoc.org](mailto:vicepresident@57-630sqnassoc.org)

## Other Aviation Memorabilia

From time to time, we receive information about other aviation-related memorabilia which may be of interest to Members looking perhaps for a unique memento for a special occasion or special person. A small selection of these is set out below with contact details for the suppliers. The 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association does not endorse any particular item or supplier, and you should contact the supplier directly for further information and to place an order.

**Asali Designs** Specialise in personalised aviation gifts made from leather, such as travel bags, key rings and luggage tags. Asali offers a 15% discount for members of the RAF Club. <https://asalidesigns.co.uk/>

**Icarus Originals** Manufacture bespoke jewellery handmade from reclaimed aluminium, upcycled from aircraft. <https://icarusoriginals.com/>

**Terrane Limited** Offer coffee mugs with the 57 Squadron crest and Lancaster pin badges. <https://www.terrane.co.uk/>

**Military Direct** Offer a selection of leather and wooden items with the 57 Squadron crest and options for further personalisation. <https://www.military.direct/search?type=product&options%5Bprefix%5D=last&q=57+Squadron>

### EBay

It is also possible to find numerous items, themed for 57 Squadron, 630 Squadron and RAF Bomber Command available for sale on EBay, including at:

The UK Gift Shop <https://www.ebay.co.uk/str/theukgiftshop>

Generations Gone <https://www.ebay.co.uk/str/generationsgonebyhosteddie1010>

Should you come across any other items that you think may be of interest to other Members, please let us know - or post a comment in the website Forums areas.

## 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association



### **57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Committee Members**

**President:**

Group Captain (Retd) David Houghton

**Vice-President/Membership/Memorabilia/Webmaster:**

Group Captain (Retd) Tony Gunby

**Secretary:**

Wing Commander (Retd) Chris Morffew

**Treasurer:**

Wing Commander (Retd) Chris Morffew (interim)

**Information Officer:**

Air Commodore Wendy Rothery

Following a discussion between interested parties at RAF Scampton in 1977, the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association was formed in the late 1970s, and on 7 October 1979 the memorial to 57 and 630 Squadrons was dedicated on the former site of the RAF East Kirkby guardroom.

The Association provides former members of these two historic squadrons, their families and friends, with a forum through which to honour and remember those that have served with one of the squadrons. It also maintains the link between the two squadrons and their wartime airfield base at RAF East Kirkby which, since 1988, has been home to the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre.

The Association is fortunate to remain closely linked with today's 57 Squadron based at RAF College Cranwell, where it is responsible for pilot training for today's RAF. The Association holds a Reunion in early July each year, in Woodhall Spa/East Kirkby, Lincolnshire.



## 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2022

<b>Surname</b>		<b>First Name (s)</b>	
<b>Address</b>		<b>Telephone Number</b>	
		<b>Email</b>	
<b>Squadron Number</b>			

**If staying at the Petwood Hotel function costs will be included and charged to your room. However, any donations would be appreciated either prior to, or during, the Reunion**

Function	Number Attending
Dinner (Saturday 2 July)	
Informal Dinner Dance (Sunday 3 July)	

**If staying elsewhere please enclose a cheque, payable to '57/630 Squadrons' Association', when you submit this form**

Function	Cost pp	Number Attending	Total Cost
Dinner (Saturday 2 July)	£45		
Informal Dinner Dance (Sunday 3 July)	£45		
Sub Total			
Donation to Association Funds			
Total Enclosed			

Memorial Service – Sunday 3 July	Number in your party attending



## 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2022

Special Requirements	
Names of party – First Name and Surname	
Any dietary requirements	
We/I wish to sit with	
We require additional facilities (e.g. wheelchair)	
Any other remarks	

Signature .....

### **Payment**

Those staying at the Petwood Hotel will have functions included in the price of their rooms. Those staying elsewhere should send cheques, with this form, to the Secretary, Chris Morffew, **NO LATER THAN 31 May 2022.**

All cheques should be made payable to '**57/630 Squadrons' Association**'

Donations to the Association, in addition to function costs, are always gratefully received.

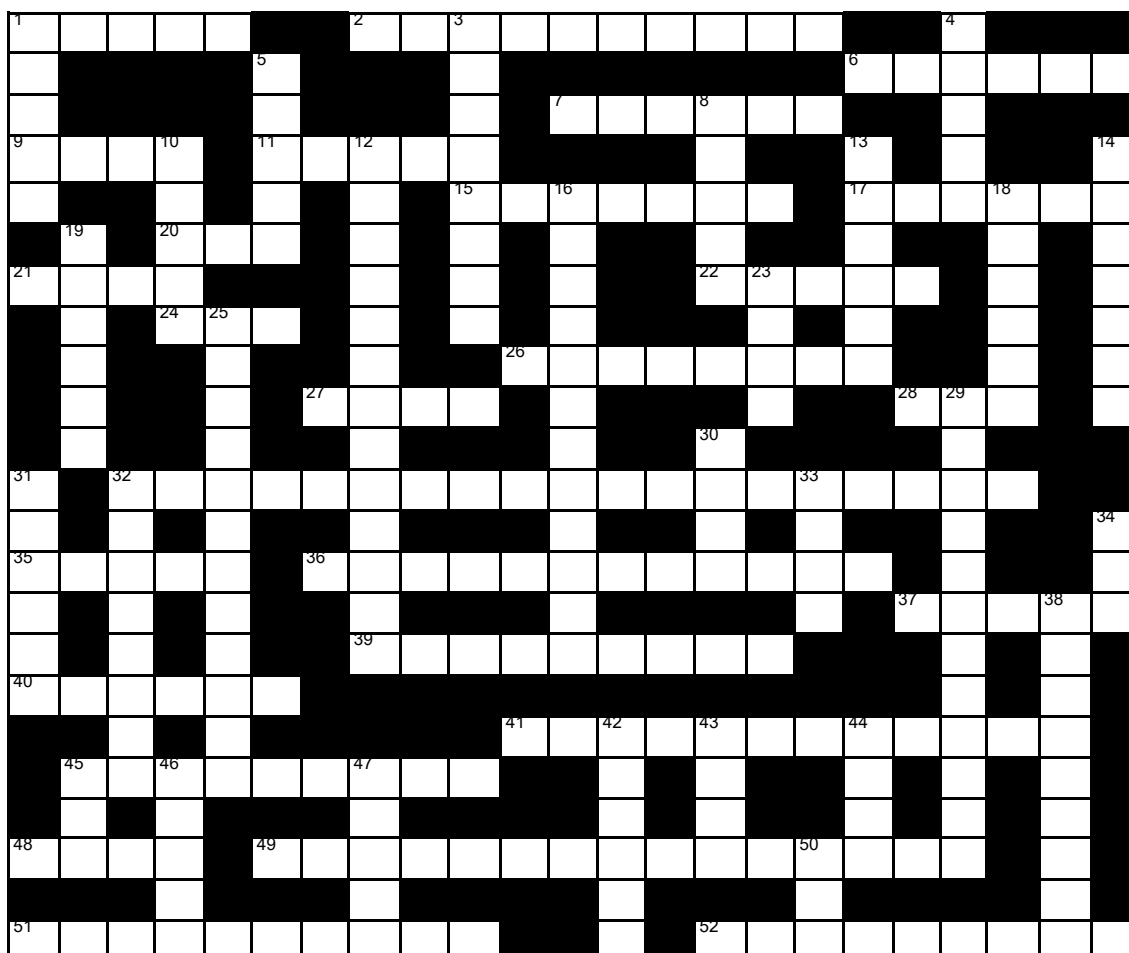
Chris Morffew  
Cedar Tree  
135B Shelford Road  
Radcliffe-on-Trent  
Notts  
NG12 1AZ

Email: [secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org](mailto:secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org)  
[chrismorffew@rocketmail.com](mailto:chrismorffew@rocketmail.com)



## Crossword - just for fun, answers will be made available at Easter 2022

All clues and answers have a connection - however tenuous - with the Association.



### Across

- 1 Three times home to 57 Squadron (5)
- 2 American bomber? Its capital! (10)
- 6 Engine and bird of prey (6)
- 7 Engine and English pianist (6)
- 9 Manufacturer of the Tutor and Prefect (4)
- 11 Centre of Gravity (5)
- 15 Fred, Harold, Andrew, Phillip (7)
- 17 Metalled landing strip (6)
- 20 Thirty of these to a Tour in WWII (3)
- 21 Dog keeping airfield open in bad weather?  
(1,1,1,1)
- 22 Crew in a Lanc (5)
- 24 Lancaster crew position (1,1,1)
- 26 NX611, a plain girl (4,4)
- 27 Home to the Chadwick Centre (1,1,1,1)
- 28 Endless reflex causes side-to-side movement (3)
- 32 *I change my body but not my spirit* (6,3,6,4)
- 35 For bombing practice (5)
- 36 Our Reunion base (7,5)
- 37 Sitting atop the crest (5)
- 39 RAF East Kirkby radio callsign (9)
- 40 Brownish-red flare (6)
- 41 57 Squadron formed here in 1916 (12)
- 45 Sowing sea mines (9)
- 48 Sounds like signal pistol (4)
- 49 Repatriation of WWII POWs (10,6)
- 51 The boot given to French Emperor (9)
- 52 Missile carried by Victor (4,5)

### Down

- 1 Pilot's badge (5)
- 3 Lincolnshire village, commemorative stained-glass window (8)
- 4 Practice on rails? (5)
- 5 Signal lamp (5)
- 8 Nickname of Wg Cdr Harry Day (5)
- 10 Sir Ivor cleans up? (5)
- 12 The hole in the wall gang (3, 10)
- 13 PoW - short German form (6)
- 14 Wiltshire training base for 57 Squadron (7)
- 16 630 Squadron motto (8,4)
- 18 Chaff letting the light in (6)
- 19 The winner - a multi-role aircraft (6)
- 23 Short test (4)
- 25 Oxfordshire airbase - home to 57 Squadron in 1939 (5,7)
- 29 Bomber Command chief (6,6)
- 30 Short rounds? (4)
- 31 Flow of aircraft taking-off (6)
- 32 Australian bomber? Its capital! (8)
- 33 Chaos in canteen (4)
- 34 Cooking pot for aircraft parking (3)
- 38 Not asleep on Ascension Island (9)
- 42 Two-wing master race (6)
- 43 Talented - phonetic alphabet (4)
- 44 Stag made by Hawker (6)
- 45 Gosh, a navigation aid! (3)
- 46 \_\_\_\_\_ Air Force (5)
- 47 Unfused bomb (5)
- 50 Specialist training organisation (1,1,1)