

57 & 630 Squadrons' Association



Acting President: Group Captain (Retd) Tony Gunby

Secretary: Wing Commander (Retd) Chris Morffew

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2022 Reunion - and the sun shone!

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How nice it was to once again meet in July in greater numbers based at the magnificent Petwood Hotel.

The weekend was masterminded by our Secretary who has had to cope with a lot of changes of plan since he assumed that role; so thank you Chris for your patience and good humour through some trying times.

Following a familiar format, events kicked-off with a lively and noisy informal gathering for Dinner on the Friday evening. With some sore heads, Saturday saw us enjoy Afternoon Tea and our annual Dinner.



OC 57 Sqn, Wg Cdr Jamie Norris, addresses diners

Jamie gave us an update on the Squadron, reassuring us all I think that today's aviators remain wedded to the same values which underpinned the formation of the RAF in 1918.



Helen Davies with the 'Swedish contingent'

Led by the Officer Commanding, Wing Commander Jamie Norris, staff and students from 57 Squadron joined us for dinner, and were seated among Members to enable us to grill them about today's RAF.



Chris Morffew presents the Black Buck print to OC 57 Sqn



Gary Weightman holds court

To mark, the 40th Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict, the Squadron was presented with a framed copy of 'Operation Black Buck, The Longest Flight' by the renowned aviation artist Mike Rondot and signed by Victor and Vulcan participants.

A further copy was auctioned off after

2022 Reunion - And the sun shone! (Continued)

Dinner, and this together with the usual raffle of prizes, and the raffle for the taxi ride in Just Jane, kindly donated by the Panton family, ensured that it was a good night for Association funds.



Fg Off Tom Wassermann and Just Jane

The winner of the Just Jane raffle was 57 Squadron's Fg Off Tom Wassermann - what a marvellous win for a young man just embarking on his military flying career and getting the chance in ride the next day in one of history's most iconic aircraft.



The congregation assembles with Just Jane as the backdrop

On Sunday, the Squadron Standard Party was on parade at East Kirkby for our memorial Service led by Richard Benson, with music once again provided by the Swineshead Silver Band, and followed with refreshments in the NAAFI.

With a full flying schedule once again after the restrictions of COVID, the BBMF Lancaster flypast took place later that afternoon over The Petwood Hotel.



The Swineshead Silver Band in full flow



The BBMF Lancaster flies over the Petwood Hotel

In the evening, Cleo Ridgeway entertained during and after dinner at the Petwood.

Thanks are also due to the ladies that sold raffle tickets, and to Mike Chatterton for his work behind the scenes setting things up at East Kirkby for our Memorial Service. Finally, special thanks as always are due to the Panton family for the support and welcome that they give the Association, especially this year following so closely after the passing of Lucy Panton.

July 2023 							
Week	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
26						1	2
27	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
28	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
29	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
30	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	31						

Next year's Reunion will be held over the weekend of Friday 30 June- Sunday 2 July 2023. More details are available towards the back of this Newsletter and on our website. Please remember to book accommodation early and we look forward to seeing even more of you next year.

The President's Piece



Tony Gunby
Association Acting
President

After 2 years of COVID-imposed limitations, 2022 has been quite a year for so many reasons. Overshadowed by the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, there has still been much to commemorate and celebrate.

The Platinum Jubilee was a time for the Nation to celebrate seventy amazing years on the Throne for Her Majesty. The colourful and hugely varied events reflected on a reign which had encompassed huge social change.



RAF Typhoon's over central London

In June, the 40th Anniversary of the end of the Falklands Conflict was marked by ceremonies around the country, including at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

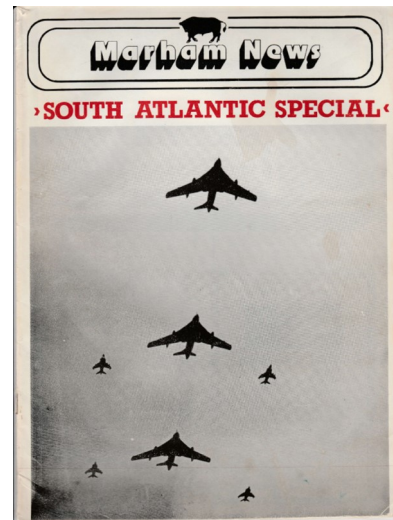


The Falklands Conflict memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum

Forty years ago, on 12 October 1982, the City of London paid its tribute to the successful recapture of the Falkland Islands by staging a military march past through the City of London, with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher taking the salute at Mansion House.

Towards the end of the march past, a RAF flypast led was led by 57 Sqn's Sqn Ldr Barry Neal. His co-pilot

and navigator being Association Members Mike Wood and Chris Morffew respectively. A third Association Member, Dave Clifton, was Editor at the time of the RAF Marham station magazine who's front cover captured the flypast.



Front cover of the Marham News -
November 1982

Further commemorations were held in Belgium, with a ceremony to mark the 80th anniversary of 57 Sqn Lancaster DX -P. David Houghton reports on this event later in this Newsletter.

Change is another word that springs to mind when reflecting on 2022.

We were surprised in late-June by David's decision to step down as our Association President. David took over the reins of the Association in 2009 from the late Mervyn Davies, at the same time recruiting me to the Committee. Since then David has done a huge amount for the Association - much behind the scenes - while holding down some very busy RAF jobs, including serving in Poland and Vietnam as the UK Defence Attaché. David remains very much involved in the RAF as a reservist and we hope that he will join us at our future reunions and dinners. For now though, I am sure that you will join me in saying a big thank you to David for all that he has done for the Association and wish him well in his future endeavours.

As Members will recall, Clare Gillard suffered a stroke last year. While I am

From the President (Continued)

pleased to report that Clare continues to make steady progress and is now settled into a very supportive routine, it was decided in the Summer that she would not be able to resume her role as Treasurer. I know that Members will join me in sending a huge thank you to Clare for all of her hard work for us over the past few years and our best wishes for her continued recuperation.

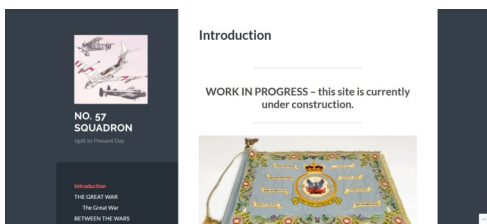
Consequently, the Committee invited Oliver Bridgman to take on this role and we are delighted to say that he accepted. Both this change, and David's departure, have got the Committee thinking about the Association's organisation and we have been working to develop a new Constitution which meets today's needs and those going forward.

The drafting work is almost complete and in early in the New Year, we will be sending you a copy for your comment, and then seeking ratification of the new Constitution during our Reunion next July.

The next, medium term, change is likely to be to OC 57 Sqn. While we were delighted to welcome Wg Cdr Jamie Norris, and his wife Helen, to our Reunion this year, Jamie has been selected attend the Joint Services Advanced Command and Staff Course next autumn. So while Jamie may not be in post by the time of our 2023 Reunion, we look forward to introducing his successor when any announcement is made.

The Association continues to receive research enquiries from around the world, and Wendy Rothery spends many hours on our behalf answering these. On the same theme, Pete Sharp is making great progress in developing his detailed, blow-by-blow, history of 57 Sqn. I really do commend Pete's separate websites for 57 and 630 Sqn to you - they are treasure-chests of information and photos.

<https://630squadron.wordpress.com/>



<https://57squadron.wordpress.com/>

Pete would be delighted to hear from anyone with information, photos etc and can be contacted via: history57and630@btinternet.com

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. This Newsletter contains a number of updates and some new articles spanning the past 80-odd years.

Next, I am pleased to report that a number of new members have joined us in the past year:

Poppy George	Gillian Moore
Beverly Davies	Janet Spencer
Barrie Munday	Riqaq Woolnough
Dave Finn	

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

Returning to farewells, we said goodbye this year to Wg Cdr Jim Wright of 630 Sqn who many of you will know, and who passed away a few weeks short of his 100th birthday. We also said farewell to Lucy Panton in the Summer who had graced us with her company at our Reunion Dinners for many years.

As I said at the outset, 2022 has been overshadowed by the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Her life of remarkable service was marked in ways which are perhaps peculiarly British, with military ceremony at the centre of events and with the RAF playing a very prominent role.



The Band of the RAF Regiment lead the RAF route lining contingent to Constitution Hill

For almost 33 years, she was my Commander-in-Chief and I had the great honour of meeting her on three occasions., the first in 1983 while serving on 57 Sqn. Then, and on each subsequent occasion that I met her, I was struck by her charm, knowledge and warmth.

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

God Save the King!

Tony Gunby
December 2022

From the Secretary



Chris Morffew
Association Secretary

It was difficult to know where to start this year; it has been the nearest thing to a normal year since I took over as Secretary at the beginning of 2020. That said, it has also been quite an eventful year. Two Reunions in a period of seven months was a little challenging particularly as Nancy and I were away in North America for 5 weeks in-between; an opportunity to see my son and his family for the first time in 3½ years! Of course I didn't make it any easier for myself by volunteering to take on the Treasurer's responsibilities until a new Treasurer could be appointed. But, by the time you read this Oliver Bridgman will have taken that role on; thank you Oliver.

Acting as Treasurer was extremely useful as it enabled me to appreciate the role our Reunion plays in our finances. Donations have, in the main, dropped over the last few years but the Association funds have continued to subsidise our Annual Reunion in an effort to ensure that what is after all the highlight of the year, remains attractive and affordable to as many members as possible.

The raffle and auction this year, and here I must say a special thank you to the Coadys for their spirited bidding, meant that for the first time in many years we raised more than we spent. Nevertheless, your Committee has decided that the numbers staying on for the Sunday Evening function are not sufficient to justify the cost of entertainment. Consequently, the Sunday Evening function in 2023 will be a dinner in a private room rather than a dinner/dance. I would also like to remind everyone that you do not have to be staying at The Petwood to attend the Reunion; we are conscious that there are less costly alternatives in the village.

This year's Reunion was extremely well attended with over 70 at the Saturday Dinner. I very much hope that we can at least match that number in 2023; the Reunion is planned for the weekend 1/2 July. As I mentioned above there will be one change to the format, the Sunday Evening function will now be a Private Dinner; 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 2023.

Last month, Nancy and I were privileged to attend the Association's Remembrance Sunday service at East Kirkby. The Service was originally arranged by Will Chatterton when the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association was founded, but in recent years it has been organised by his nephew, Mike Chatterton, who many of you will have met at our Annual Reunion. The Service is held every year at the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Memorial, East Kirkby; for those who don't know, the Memorial is on the site of the old RAF East Kirkby Guardroom. The village of East Kirkby holds a separate service in the village which is carefully planned so as not to coincide.

This year's event was well attended by villagers, the Pantons, some Association members, a representative of RAF Coningsby, representatives of 57 Squadron from Cranwell and "The Rutland Hogs" (a group of Harley Davidson owners who first attended last year and having been made welcome decided to attend in much greater numbers this year, and indeed laid their own wreath). The Squadron Standard was on parade, Canon Stephen Holdaway conducted the service, Elizabeth Pinnion played the keyboard and Christine Panton played the Bugle as usual.

It was a wonderful, moving event and the weather cooperated for a change. It was an honour to lay a wreath on behalf of the Association and to speak to some of those that attended as we enjoyed hot drinks and some beautiful cake in the 'NAAFI' afterwards. The hangar was open for those that wanted to see 'Just Jane' and the other exhibits in the museum. For those that don't live too far away it is undoubtedly an excellent way to remember those that are no longer with us.

Chris Morffew
December 2022

Money Matters



*Oliver Bridgman
Association Treasurer*

Many of you will know that Clare Gillard has had to step down as the Association's Treasurer following her stroke and on-going recuperation. As an interim measure, Chris Morffew agreed to manage the Association's finances until a replacement could be found. Well, I am pleased to announce that the replacement has been found and it's me, Oliver Bridgman.

I joined the Association in 2014 to find out a little more about my father's time on 57 Sqn during the 2nd World War. He was a bomb aimer who completed 31 missions out of East Kirkby before being shot down on his 32nd, ending the war as a POW at Stalgluft 7b in Poland. Like many, he was not one for talking about those very difficult times.

I also served in the RAF, from 1977 to 1984 as a propulsion engineer, finishing on 55 Sqn, one of two Victor tanker sqns at RAF Marham. The other being 57 Sqn, whom we worked closely with, especially during the Falklands Conflict in 1982. On leaving the RAF I took up a career in financial services. Beginning as a sales consultant for a large insurance company and ending up as an independent financial planner for a small firm in Cambridge.

Being asked to join the Association's committee as Treasurer is an honour and it gives me pleasure to accept the responsibility.

Members of course know that the Association does not charge a membership fee and therefore relies heavily on the generosity of members, their relatives and friends who make donations. Over the past year to 1st September 2022, donations amounted to £1,150. Thank you to all of you for your generosity and ensuring the continued success of the Association. Donations can be made by cheque but as many of us now use internet banking, if you wish to use this method, please contact me using the email address below and I can let you have the necessary bank information.

Additional funds are raised via the raffle and auction held at the reunion in July. The wonderful donation of a signed print depicting a Victor refuelling the Black Buck Vulcan at this year's Reunion secured by Chris Morffew, added £1,050 to the association's funds. The general raffle added a further £610 and the all-important raffle for the taxi run in Just Jane, raised £390.

Total out goings for the year were £4,983.20. This was more than usual because it included the cost for the 2021 reunion which was held in December 2021 due to Covid restrictions. As of 1 September 2022, the Association bank accounts stood at £6,688.30 in credit. If you would like a copy of the accounts, please contact me at treasurer@57-630sqnassoc.org

Finally, a legacy within your will is a great way to ensure the continued success of the association. If you already have a will, a simple codicil is normally all that is required and as a financial adviser, I am able to assist with preparing one should you wish to do this. Again, just get in touch using the email address above.

Oliver Bridgman
December 2022

Wg Cdr Albert James 'Jim' Wright DFC LdH

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. This year, we said farewell to one of those characters, Jim Wright. Here, David Houghton shares his memories of Jim:



Jim at East Kirby during the 2017 Reunion

Jim Wright passed away in June 2022, just 2 months short of his 100th birthday. As well as serving with distinction in Bomber Command, Jim had a long post-war career with the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) and the RAF.

Although Jim had wanted to be a pilot in the Fleet Air Arm, the Royal Navy decided that his eyesight was not good enough for that role. The Navy's loss was the RAF's gain. Jim volunteered for aircrew duties with the RAF in May 1941 and, after being called-up in September 1941, he was selected to train as a navigator.



LAC Jim Wright, pictured during his initial RAF training in 1941

Jim undertook much of his flying training at 31 ANS, Port Albert, Ontario, Canada, and graduated top of his class. He, and his close friend Mike Ward, were awarded commissions at the end of their time with 31 Air Navigation School.



Mike Ward and Jim (R) pictured following completion of their navigator training

After further flying training in the UK, Jim joined 61 Squadron at RAF Syerston in 1943. On his crew's 5th operational mission on 22 October 1943, Jim's aircraft was attacked by 3 German night fighter aircraft and damaged badly. Jim's skipper, Ken Ames, managed to bring his aircraft and crew home, and was awarded an immediate DFC for his courage and skill. During the mission, Jim's oxygen supply became damaged and he suffered from severe frostbite. The resultant injuries meant that Jim had to spend quite some time in hospital recovering, where he fought a different battle – one with the doctors, who wanted to amputate his damaged left arm.

Jim remembered the difficult life his father had endured after losing his left arm in WWI, so cajoled the doctors to try less drastic treatments, which they agreed to do and which worked. After a period of recovery Jim re-joined his crew and they were posted to RAF East Kirkby in late 1943 to become part of the newly-formed 630 Squadron. With 630 Squadron, Jim and his crew completed another 22 operational sorties by June 1944, and were then posted to 97 Squadron at RAF Coningsby to become part of the Pathfinder Force. During his time with 97 Squadron Jim completed another 16 operational sorties, and he was awarded a DFC.

After completing his final operational tour with 97 Squadron, Jim was seconded to BOAC as an Operations Officer at Bournemouth Hurn, and then transferred to the nascent Heathrow Airport in early 1946 as BOAC's Station Manager, where he also trained as an Air Traffic Control Officer (ATCO).

Wg Cdr Albert James 'Jim' Wright DFC LdH (Continued)



Jim pictured following the award of his DFC, and wearing his Pathfinder Badge



Jim being transported in style to Skarrild Village Hall in 2015

Eventually demobbed in October 1946, Jim continued to work for BOAC until late 1950, including a spell as the company's Operations Officer in Gambia. In late-1950 however, in the face of mounting financial losses, BOAC decided to make most of their operations officers redundant - Jim amongst them.

Using his ATCO 'ticket', Jim re-joined the RAF in 1951 and served until 1976 in a variety of demanding and highly complex air traffic control and radar control-related jobs, including spells at MOD Main Building and at RAF High Wycombe. After retiring from the RAF, Jim worked at the European School, Culham near Abingdon.

At Jim's funeral in August, Jim's son, Neil, noted that his father's interest in the ceremonial and historical aspects of the RAF was galvanized by his visits to Skarrild, Denmark to remember the crew of 630 Squadron Lancaster ME650 (LE-B), who had been shot down near the village on the night of 26/27 August 1944. I was lucky enough to join Jim and other 630 Squadron veterans (including Tom Lockett, Alex Fraser and 'Buck' Buckley) on a number of the trips to Skarrild, beginning in 2002, and was always struck by the calm, gentle, but truthful way Jim and his fellow veterans spoke at the events.



Jim at Skarrild in 2015

In latter years Jim was at the forefront of a valiant, but ultimately unsuccessful, campaign for Bomber Command aircrew and groundcrew to be awarded a specific Bomber Command Medal, rather than the Bomber Command clasp awarded to some aircrew. Jim's efforts are the stuff of legend!

He worked tirelessly in pursuit of his goal, writing letters to newspapers, politicians and the 'great-and-the-good'. As his eyesight deteriorated, Jim was forced to end his campaign in 2017, but not before he had been awarded the Légion d'honneur by the Government of France in recognition of his service with Bomber Command during and after D-Day.



Jim Wright - Legion d'honneur

Jim's son Neil described his father as a 'peaceable' man, a description that chimed with me. Jim was a brave, intelligent man who enriched the lives of those around him. He and his generation have often been described as 'the finest generation', and I'm inclined to agree with that view.

Jim and most of his Bomber Command colleagues may now be in the crew room in the sky, but we'll never forget them. So long Jim - we'll miss you.

News from the Frontline



Wing Commander
Jamie Norris
OC 57 Squadron

It gives me great pleasure to update you on another successful year for 57 Squadron. I'll first outline some changes to the Squadron, before going on to look at our task - and challenges - during the year and highlighting some noteworthy achievements by the members of today's Squadron.

The major change since the last update was a reorganisation within Elementary Flying Training which led to a significant uplift in the number of personnel on 57 Squadron. This warranted up-ranking the OC position to Wing Commander and me taking over as Officer Commanding in December 2021; something I was hugely honoured to do. I'd like to thank my predecessor, Squadron Leader Gareth Cothill, for his time in command and keeping the links with the 57 and 630 Squadron Association in such good health.

The changes to the organisation took place in December 2021. They came about as a result of restructuring within the Army Air Corps and Fleet Air Arm pilot training pathway. With all Army and most of the Royal Navy pilots going on to fly helicopters, it was decided to take them straight from 'grading' to RAF Shawbury and their Basic Rotary Wing Training Course thus bypassing fixed-wing Elementary Flying Training (EFT).

As a result, 674 Sqn AAC Sqn and 703 NAS at RAF Barkston Heath were disbanded. However, most of the flying instructors were retained to carry on the RAF task. This tasking now absorbed some of the trainee throughput that had previously been delivered on the Tutor aircraft at RAF Wittering, including the training of pilots in the Remotely Piloted Air System (RPAS) Pilot branch.

The Barkston Heath-based personnel re-mustered as 'B' Flight of 57 Squadron, with an RAF Squadron Leader in charge. What had up until then been 57 Squadron now became 'A' Flight at RAF Cranwell; 'C' Flight already existed as the instructor



Grob Prefect

training and standards unit. I now have command of a traditional three-flight Squadron composed of over 50 Qualified Flying Instructors responsible for training up to 180 trainee aircrew per annum, as well as new Prefect QFIs.

A major focus of last year was the impact of COVID on our operations. Whilst its presence never fully went away, this year has been a much more traditional one. Graduation ceremonies returned to their pre-COVID form, social events recommenced and the RAF Cranwell CO's Cup sporting event was contested again. 57 Squadron was well on the way to winning that title at the time of writing - and retaining the trophy we won pre-COVID!

January 2022 saw one of the unit's oldest and boldest pilots leave, with the retirement of Flight Lieutenant (formerly Group Captain) Martin "Killer" Killen. Killer was involved from the inception of Prefect and was OC Standards for much of its time in service. The presence of a significant number of Full Time Reserve Officers on the unit is a boon to both me and the trainees. They bring a wealth of instructional experience and vast operational knowledge from a wide range of RAF aircraft types.

As well as the core EFT courses, the Squadron was delivering Multi-Engine and Fast-Jet Lead-in training. It was also continuing to expose Qatari pilots, bound for the Joint RAF/QEAF Typhoon Squadron at RAF Coningsby, to UK weather and procedures under the English Language Reinforcement and Orientation Course.



Course 205-055 visit RAF Coningsby

February output was restricted by some challenging weather. Course 205-055 took the opportunity to visit the Typhoon Force and Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at Coningsby accompanied by their Course Commander, Captain (Ascent) Dave Moss.

News from the Frontline (continued)

March saw the Qatari pilots move on, via a trip home, to RAF Valley and the Hawk T2. The next course of Prefect Basic Fast-Jet Training commenced, also aiming to progress trainees direct from Prefect to the Hawk T2.

April saw the graduation of 205-056 and 057 EFT Courses at College Hall Officers' Mess. This was the first event since the start of COVID that families were able to attend. The continuing relaxation of restrictions also allowed adventurous training to restart with a team heading for Sherwood Forest and some downhill mountain biking!



Sherwood Forest Mountain Biking

Another batch of Qatari trainees arrived on the Squadron at the start of May. The first EFT Refresher course commenced at RAF Barkston Heath. This was to help keep the trainee pilots proficient due to delays in their progress to the next stage of training.

In early May I took six members of the unit, including the Squadron Standard Party, to Lierde, Belgium to attend a commemoration service for the crew of



DX-P Ceremony at Lierde

Lancaster DX-P. The Squadron attendees took great pride in being able to pay appropriate tribute to our forebears: the body may change but the spirit remains! I'd like to publicly say thank you to Mr Dirk de Quick (History Wings) for organising the event and hosting our party.

During a busy summer, Sqn personnel took part in a raft of activities. The 57 and 630 Squadron Association reunion was held in July. Current staff and trainees attended the dinner at the Petwood Hotel and had a great time being hosted by the Association. On the Sunday morning at East Kirkby airfield, the Standard was paraded at the Association Memorial Service with OC 57 Sqn and various other current 57 Sqn members in attendance.

This year's Royal International Air Tattoo had been highly anticipated. 57 Squadron sent two aircraft and a number of supporting personnel. The aircraft were manned throughout the event as static displays. Prefect Basic Fast-jet Course 004 graduated on 27 July, with Air Vice-Marshal Paul Godfrey as reviewing officer. The event was preceded by a 4-ship Prefect flypast, with the graduating pilots aboard.



Prefect BFT Wings Presentation

The high pace of operations carried on through the summer with most Prefect operations being mounted out of RAF Barkston Heath due to infrastructure issues at RAF Cranwell. It was great to have the Squadron all under one roof but it did mean it could be a squeeze at times in the temporary office space. As summer came to an end the challenges of operating from RAF Barkston Heath started to increase. Its position high (in Lincolnshire terms!) on the ridge meant it often suffered weather impacts that the other bases didn't. Moreover, the fact the radar used for approaches is located at RAF Cranwell means the minimum heights we can descend to during an instrument approach are higher, leading to days lost due to weather.

Nonetheless, the steady drumbeat of courses continued to be delivered into the autumn. 'A' and 'C' Flights finally returned to full-time operations from Cranwell on 14 November. With that reset complete, operations continued and another successful year for 57 Squadron drew to a close.

I will close this update by focussing on the Squadron personnel – they make the unit what it is. I've already signposted the variety of our flying instructors: civilian contractor, regular RAF and RN and Full-time Reserves. We work closely with a team of Ascent operations, scheduling and support staff without whom nothing would happen. Our engineering support is provided by Affinity Flight Services and our own admin support by Civil Service staff. No 3 FTS and 57 Squadron are a great example of the 'whole force' delivering for the RAF.

News from the Frontline (continued)

As promised, I would also like to highlight some individual efforts. On 17 January 22, after 36 days at sea, Flight Lieutenant Chris Carrington-Smith of 57 Squadron, with three teammates, completed the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Flyer Challenge. After a hard-fought trans-Atlantic rowing race, covering 2800 nautical miles, they finished second in the field out of 36 boats. They raised around £45,000 for the charity Starlight, which supports family and children with serious illnesses.



Chris Carrington-Smith competes in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Flyer Challenge

Flight Lieutenant Terry Jones devised and completed Op BRASS MONKEY, a motorbike ride from England's most easterly location, Ness Point, to its most westerly, Land's End, in daylight on the shortest day 21st December 2021.



The Op BRASS MONEKY Team

The team of three completed the challenge with minutes to spare and raised over £3000 for the MAGPAS Air Ambulance.

Flight Lieutenant Dunc Mason was one of the main organisers for the JETRide in support of the Jon Egging Trust – a charity working with young people across the UK. This major cycle event featured a range of 30, 60 and 100mile routes starting and finishing at Cranwell – with a virtual option introduced this year.



JETRide start line

A large cohort from the Squadron took part and supported the event on the day. Not satisfied with that, Dunc has just returned from driving a 'banger' 4x4 across the North African desert with some of 57 Squadron's recently graduated fast-jet trainees – raising money for the Royal British Legion and Myeloma charities in the process!

And it's not just the staff, this year has also seen our trainees perform at the highest sporting level: one representing the RAF at kayak polo and one representing UK Armed Forces as a sprinter and Team GB on the bobsled. One recently graduated RN trainee went on to gain her 'Green Beret' by completing the All Arms Commando Course prior to her helicopter training and Rob Swinburne completed a 15km swim from Ailsa Craig to Girvan in traditional Scottish weather! I am truly proud to have worked alongside so many talented and dedicated individuals.

In sum this was a year of significant change for 57 Squadron. It has continued to deliver across a wide range of flying training tasks. Its people remain its main strength; their efforts were equally impressive in the cockpit as out of it. I hope you will agree, 57 Squadron continues to do important work with our output fundamental to the future of the RAF, RN and Air Forces of our International Partners.

Corpus non Animum Muto

Jamie Norris
November 2022

Research Update



*Air Commodore
Wendy Rothery
Association Information
Officer*

As I reflect on the last 12 months, there have been some truly historic moments, for both the nation, and on a more individual and personal level, that link to the 57 and 630 Squadrons Association. I have charted a number of these milestones below, but one enduring theme stands out for me, and that is the interest in the Association, from serving and retired members of the RAF in the UK and Commonwealth, their families, friends, researchers, and those who tend memorials across Europe, which remains as strong as ever. The number of enquiries continues to grow and whilst I have responded to around 25 so far this year, I have a number awaiting reply which I am planning to respond to over the Christmas break.

One enquiry was from the nephew of a Bomber Command Pilot, Sergeant Maxwell Joseph Cronin RNZAF, who served with 57 Sqn in 1941 at RAF Feltwell. His crew flew a number of missions in the Wellington 1c in Nov-Dec 41, and sadly failed to return from their final mission on 27 December 1941. Post-war research indicated they had been shot down by a German night-fighter and crashed near Somerel, Noord Brabant, at around 2030; one of the crew survived and was taken POW. The aircraft was Z1097 and had featured in a story on page 24 of our 2021 Newsletter and we were happily able to offer to connect the enquirer with the researchers in the Netherlands who had unveiled a memorial in 2021 in memory of the lost crew members, including his Uncle.

Another was on behalf of the family of WO Montague (Monty) George Colin Todd who joined 630 Sqn as a Mid Upper Gunner in February 1944 and was taken POW having baled out when his aircraft, Lancaster Mk III NG788 was shot down from 23,000 feet by flak while in the vicinity of Munster on 24/25 March 1944. The response led to the retrieval of Monty's records from RAF Cranwell, and the family visited East Kirkby with all of his grandchildren and great grandchildren. Monty's son Andrew was there, and loved seeing the Just Jane Lancaster and where his Dad had been based. Sadly, Andrew has recently passed away, but was pleased to have learned more about his father's wartime service.

A further enquirer sought a connection with a RAAF Pilot her Father had referred to in his memoirs. I was able to provide details of the crew, their missions, and the circumstances of their crash on return from operations on the night of 18/19 April 1944. Their aircraft was a Lancaster Mark III, airframe number ND475. Pilot Officer A E Oberg RAAF was aged 32 and had been a solicitor in New South Wales; he joined 57 Squadron in January 1944. At the time of the crash, the crew was almost half-way through their operational tour. W R Chorley's 'Bomber Command Losses' for 1944 records the mission as follows: Take off 2104 hours East Kirkby. Operation Juvisy to bomb rail facilities. Came down at 0100, while returning to base, at Chapelbridge near Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, wreckage being spread across the fenland a couple of miles South East of the town. Seven are commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.

On a more personal note, a colleague whose father-in-law, John Maunsell, had served as a Navigator on 57 Sqn at the same time as my Grandfather, Bill Martin sought information about his Uncle's wartime service. Although on different crews, Maunsell and Martin were both Navigators and had flown on the same missions on 13 occasions. Happily both survived the War, although their aircraft were both lost on the night of 21/22 June 1944 on the infamous Wesseling Raid.

My Grandfather's crew had ditched and were rescued from the sea, whilst Maunsell managed to escape and evade, having baled out when his aircraft was shot down. The enquiry related to the Uncle of Maunsell's son-in-law, Flying Officer John James Murray, who was killed just 24 hours later, on 22/23 June 1944, flying an Oxford Mark I aircraft tail number X6792 which had a forced landing and crashed at Church Lawford in Warwickshire.

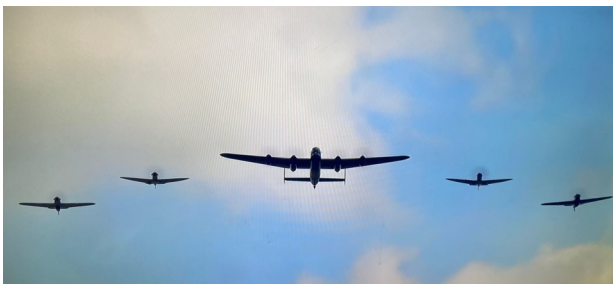
In May the film 'LANCASTER' was released, telling the story of the iconic WWII bomber aircraft through the words of her last surviving crew members, featuring wonderful archive material and aerial footage of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Lancaster aircraft PA474.

Research Update (continued)

It is an epic and poignant story of courage, fear, friendship and the moral complexities of war and was screened in cinemas across much of the UK throughout the Summer; the synopsis and trailer for the film are here: <https://www.altitude.film/page/lancaster?country=united-kingdom>



On 2 June, the world watched as PA474 flew overhead Buckingham Palace, flanked by 2 Spitfires and 2 Hurricanes; the roar of the crowd could be heard for miles around and Her Majesty The Queen beamed widely as she watched from the Palace Balcony.



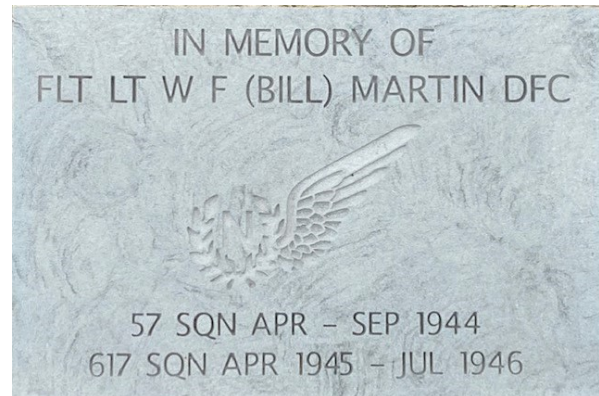
BBMF Lancaster, Spitfires and Hurricanes

Later that month, the annual Bomber Command Memorial Service was held in Green Park, London and a number of Bomber Command Veterans attended including Rusty Waughman, George Dunn, John Bell and Colin Bell.



Rusty Waughman and Wendy Rothery

The annual Association Reunion in July was especially poignant for my family as we gathered to mark the unveiling of a memorial stone to my grandfather at the International Bomber Command Centre Ribbon of Remembrance.



Although I was just 12 when my Grandfather died, I was fortunate to be with my parents at East Kirkby for the inaugural gathering of the 57/630 Squadrons Association in 1979 when he was reunited with the other 6 members of his crew. I recall there was a lot of laughter that weekend as memories were recounted and stories told of daring do. I did not know then that I would join the RAF some years later, but I remember thinking what a marvellous organisation it must be!

The horrors that my Grandfather's Crew endured have only become fully apparent years later as I have researched the detail of the 32 operational missions they endured – and they were the lucky ones. The story behind my grandfather's stone is captured on the IBCC website, and I would commend it to anyone as a fitting tribute to a loved one who served with Bomber Command: <https://internationalbcc.co.uk/about-ibcc/news/flt-lt-w-f-martin-dfc/>

2022 has also marked the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War in which 57 Sqn Victor tankers played a crucial role in the Black Buck missions. It is interesting to note that more time has passed since the Falklands War than had passed between the end of WWII in 1945 and the foundation of the 57/630 Squadrons Association in 1979.

Research enquiries are beginning to focus on the post Bomber Command years and I expect this to increase – suffice to say I would be delighted to hear from you if you have a connection with 57 or 630 Squadron from any time in their history.

Wendy Rothery
December 2022

Operation BLACK BUCK 1- 40th Anniversary Dinner

On the 1 May 1982 the first BLACK BUCK mission was conducted by Vulcan bombers, supported by Victor tankers from 55 and 57 Squadrons. Each mission took off with two Vulcan bombers and up to 11 Victor tankers.

Departing Wideawake Airfield on Ascension Island on the evening of the 30th April 1982, the first mission took approximately 16 hours to complete. After travelling over 3,000 nautical miles and with air-to-air refuelling taking place a total of 14 times, including seven times for the bomber, the Vulcan arrived at Port Stanley on the 1 May 1982 and dropped twenty-one 1,000-pound bombs, with one bomb causing damage to the runway. The BLACK BUCK raids were the longest-ranged bombing raids in history at that time.



Forty years on, and veterans of the first BLACK BUCK mission, gathered at RAF Waddington over the weekend of 30 April/1 May 2022. Rounding up the Victor troops was the Association's Bob Tuxford (a 55 Sqn Flight Commander in 1982 and Captain of "White 2") representing Marham, and Air Cdre Simon Baldwin, former OC 44 (Rhodesia) Sqn representing Waddington. Here is Bob's account of the anniversary weekend:

The Black Buck 1 40th anniversary was a great success, and it was wonderful to 'make contact' with all the Tanker participants once again.

Dick Russell was there, courtesy of his son Guy who did the driving, as was Jeremy Price similarly assisted by his son Jonathon.

With most people staying at the Damons Hotel in Lincoln, I planned a Friday night rendezvous for those who wanted to make a long weekend of it. I am very pleased to say that a whole formation of personnel turned up for Happy Hour - kick starting the weekend in classic style.

Among those renewing acquaintances, some for the first time in 40 years, were Bob & Eileen Tuxford, Alan & Alison Bowman, Martin & Wendy Todd, Bill & Liz Lloyd, Badger & Midge Brooks, Andy & Julie Barrett, Paul & Sharon Mulcahy, Glynn & Theresa Rees, Tony & Margaret Beetlestone, Tony & Rose Angell, Taff and Angela Bland, Tony & Sarah Inglebrecht, Gary & Sue Weightman and a few others flying solo - Steve Biglands, Mike Wood, Dick Evans, Dave Barradell, Norm Christie, Simon Hamilton and Terry Anning.



Guests gather for Dinner, pictured in front of Vulcan XM607 which dropped its bombs at Port Stanley on Black Buck 1

Saturday afternoon began with a series of events on the base, which gave us an opportunity to meet up with many other faces from the past.



Jeremy Price (RAF Marham Station Commander in 1982 and Commander British Forces Ascension Island)

One of our former ground crew, David Bragg and his wife Pamela, took the opportunity to hand out to the veterans knitted scarves in South Atlantic Medal ribbon colours. David informed us that a 5th generation Falkland Islander called Sarah had taken it upon herself with her knitting group to make and distribute to all those involved in the return of the Falkland Islands these beautiful scarves, all numbered individually.

Other former ground crew engineers who joined us over the weekend included Rob & Andrea Parlett, Brian Barker & Ms Kate Stacey and Steve & Christine Parker.

In the evening, we all assembled in one of Waddington's hangars for a Black-Tie dinner. Twenty-six Victor and 25 Vulcan veterans along with their wives made up half of the richly decorated tables spread across the hangar floor. Seated at the top table was the Station Commander Gp Capt

Operation BLACK BUCK 1- 40th Anniversary Dinner (Continued)

Lorriman-Hughes and his wife, together with invited guests, and the BB40 Organising Committee members. Making up the honoured guests at the top table was the former Station Commander Gp Capt John Laycock who, alongside Simon Baldwin, master-minded RAF Waddington's preparation for war back in 1982.

Alongside the six Victor Tanker tables was a similar number of Vulcan tables. Seated with Martin Withers' group was the author of 'Vulcan 607' - Rowland White and his wife Lucy. 'Monty' Montgomery and John Reeve headed up two more of the 'Tin Triangle' contingents together with some of their crew members. We all dined



Guests at one of the Victor tables, including the Association's Bob Tuxford, Bill Lloyd, Badger Brooks and Steve Biglands

under the shadow of the famous Vulcan Bomber - XM607 - Martin Withers' mount during the first Black Buck raid. Only partially painted, she will receive her full 1982 livery over the course of the next few weeks.



The Association's Gary Weightman, Mike Wood and Norman Curtis-Christie with fellow guests

Throughout the evening, we were serenaded by a Royal Air Force Band with a selection of familiar background music.

The programme got under way with a welcome video presented by Dan Snow MBE. Dr Ben Jones, the senior lecturer in Naval History at Portsmouth University, then gave an overview of the Falkland Islands Conflict, and this was followed by an address from the Station Commander.

Concluding the after dinner speeches was an address by Simon Baldwin who spoke of the preparations for war at RAF Waddington, followed by personal memories from Martin Withers, the captain of Vulcan XM607 during Operation Black Buck 1.

In a touching moment to conclude the dinner, Dick Russell was presented with a 90th birthday cake, which of course followed some 40 years after the very night of BB1 during which Dick celebrated (if that's the right word) his 50th birthday. We all gave him a rousing chorus of 'Happy Birthday', something he received with great aplomb.



Dick Russell (centre) celebrates his 90th birthday sat alongside the Association's Alan Bowman, OC 57 Sqn in 1982.

The weekend's celebrations continued with a service of remembrance at the nearby International Bomber Command Centre on the Sunday morning. ACM Sir Michael and Lady Graydon graced us with their presence and unlike the Falklands Service at the National Arboretum, the weather at the Lincoln IBCC was kind to us for the outside service.

A trumpeter from the Band of the Royal Air Force College sounded the Last Post alongside the impressive Spire standing as tall as the wingspan of the Avro Lancaster. A Pipe Major resplendent in full highland dress played a lament to conclude a very appropriate commemorative service.

The whole weekend was a wonderful occasion, marking a very significant anniversary in all our lives, and I would like to thank Wg Cdr Lisa Mullineux and her organising committee at RAF Waddington for making the Black Buck 40th an event to remember.

Bob Tuxford
May 2022

ED761 Memorial in Bloom

It was good to hear from Bob van Wyk about his recent trip to Europe and visit to see the memorial to 57 Squadron's ED761 (DX-Z) at Waverveen in The Netherlands (see story on page 35 in the 2020 Newsletter). Bob wrote:

Hi Tony

As we discussed in an email earlier this summer, please find attached two recent photos of the Lancaster ED761 memorial near Waverveen. I also added 2 photos from the memorial for Blenheim L9477 (see text below). As discussed in a previous email, perhaps you will have space to add this story to this year's newsletter...feel free to edit as needed.

After a 2.5 year wait due to COVID restrictions, Dianne and I travelled to the Netherlands this past June. As always, I visited the ED761 Memorial, specifically on June 7th, the day after our arrival. I was surprised to see that someone had removed the middle paving stone in front of the memorial and



Memorial to the crew of 57 Sqn ED761 DX-Z, Waverveen (Photo: Bob Van Wyk)

planted a red begonia in its place. These flowers were not present when the memorial was unveiled in November 2018. After some quiet reflection, I added a little sunshine on a cloudy day by placing some freshly cut sunflowers.

Upon my return about 10 days later, I went to the memorial to remove the cut sunflowers as, of course, they had withered and died. I was delighted to find that someone else had visited the memorial while I was away and placed roses in the laser-cut "3's" of

the memorial's title text...a single white rose on the left, and a red one on the right. It was a very nice & thoughtful touch, and proof positive that the crew of 57 Squadron's ED761...Alfred Fisher, Frank Bandeen, Roy Taylor, Jack Westerdale, Don Simmons, Alick Deane & Harry Richardson...are not forgotten by the Netherlands' locals.

There is a memorial of similar style about 2 kms away from the ED761 memorial that I regularly visit too. It was erected for a Coastal Command Blenheim L9477 from 235 Sqn that was shot down June 27, 1940 across from my Dad's home farm (he witnessed this specific incident, with 2 crew



Memorial to 235 Sqn Blenheim shot down 27 June 1940 (Photo: Bob Van Wyk)

KIA and 1 POW). I placed sunflowers there too on the same day as above, and then later found two roses there too, just like on ED761's memorial.

My cousin, Jan van Wijk, who lives on the "home" farm now, told me that he regularly sees people stop at the Blenheim memorial to read the text plate. Thus, one can safely assume that it must be the same for ED761's memorial.

Chris van der Linden, my late friend who was instrumental in seeing both of these memorials erected (plus 4 more in the area), would be so pleased about all of this.

Cheers!

Bob
Harley, Ontario, Canada
October 2022

The Bombers



*Sarah Churchill pictured with
her father, Sir Winston*

I recently came across this poem by Sarah Churchill, daughter of Sir Winston Churchill, which I thought I would share

The Bombers

Whenever I see them ride on high,
Gleaming and proud in the morning sky,
Or lying awake in bed at night,
I hear them pass on their outward flight;
I feel the mass of metal and guns,
Delicate instruments, deadweight tons,
Awkward, slow, bomb racks full,
Straining away from downward pull,
Straining away from home and base,
And try to see the pilot's face,
I imagine a boy who's just left school,
On whose quick-learned skill and courage cool
Depend the lives of the men in his crew
And success of the job they have to do;
And something happens to me inside
That is deeper than grief, greater than pride,
And though there is nothing I can say,
I always look up as they go their way
And care and pray for every one,
And steel my heart to say,
'Thy will be done.'

Sarah Churchill



Merlin Song



Walt Scott (R) pictured with his brother

Walt Scott was a Wireless Operator/Gunner with 630 Squadron. He wrote several poems about his time at RAF East Kirkby and its Lancasters. One of his best known and most evocative poems is 'Old Airfield' written about East Kirkby which during World War II was known by its call sign 'SILKSHEEN'. The poem is displayed on a plaque at the East Kirkby memorial which is on the site of the airfield's old Guardroom.

This poem, Merlin Song, is less well-known and was written to mark Just Jane's first engine run at East Kirkby in 1994.

Merlin Song

To some the Merlin is a bird,
Or a Magician in the written word,
To us an engine giving flight,
Through the darkness of the Wartime nights.

The East Kirkby Lancaster, standing proud,
Facing the Reunion crowd,
The preparations have begun,
For the starboard-inner engine run.

All eyes now on propeller blades,
Unmoving now for two decades,
Jerking movements, a blast of sound,
Then the ancient blades are whirling round.

Faster, faster, until I see,
The aircrew are confronting me.
And mirrored in the shimmering blades,
I see every flight I ever made.

Slowing now, then the sound is gone,
But East Kirkby echoes linger on.
With the many gathered in time and space,
This single voice will take its place.

We know that fifty years before,
Here every night the Merlins roared.
More than a hundred of them hurled,
Their challenge to a darkened world.

From nay Merlins, to just this one,
Youth to age, until all are gone.
But we heard again the Merlin roar,
On a Summer day in Ninety-Four.

Walt Scott

You can listen to the poem, read so wonderfully by Michael Howley, a navigator, also of 630 Sqn, via this link [Merlin Song - written by Walt Scott and performed by Michael Howley \(both of 630 Squadron\) - 57 & 630 Squadrons Association \(57-630sqnassoc.org\)](https://www.57-630sqnassoc.org/merlin-song-written-by-walt-scott-and-performed-by-michael-howley-both-of-630-squadron)



Michael Howley

Remembering the Crew of Lancaster W4234 DX-P

Regular readers of the Association Newsletter or Website may recall that, in September 2012, Tony Gunby travelled to Lierde, Belgium to join a ceremony commemorating the crew of 57 Squadron Lancaster W4234, who were shot down near the village on the night of 21/22 December August 1942.

Tony's recollections of his visit to Lierde can be found at <https://57-630sqnassoc.org/news/> Of the seven crewmembers of DX-P (Pilot Officer Ronald Bowles, pilot; Flying Officer Alexander Mulholland, navigator; Sergeant Cecil Stubbs RAAF, flight engineer; Sergeant Maurice Pearman, bomb aimer; Sergeant John Drain, air gunner; Sergeant Arthur Abraham, wireless operator/air gunner; Sergeant Roden Pickford RNZAF, air gunner), only Sergeant Pickford managed to escape from the aircraft before it crashed and exploded, but he was taken prisoner.



Ronald Bowles



Alexander Mulholland



John Drain



Cecil Stubbs



Arthur Abraham



Maurice Pearman



Roden Pickford

On 4 May 2022 the people of Lierde came together as they do every year to remember the 6 men who were killed when DX-P was shot down, and to remember the bravery of all of the crew of W4234.

This year's ceremony to mark the 80th anniversary of the crash of DX-P was arranged in May 2022 rather than in December 2022 in the hope that the RAF's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) Lancaster could carry out a flypast at the ceremony (the BBMF's aircraft do not routinely conduct flypasts during the winter months).

Remembering the Crew of Lancaster W4234 DX-P (continued)

I was fortunate to attend the ceremony in Lierde on 4 May, along with Wing Commander Jamie Norris, Officer Commanding 57 Squadron, Flight Lieutenants Gavin Connolly and Duncan Mason, and Flying Officers Ben Hallas, Chris Harrington and Ben Renton from 57 Squadron, who paraded the 57 Squadron Standard at the ceremony.



57 Squadron Standard Party at the Memorial to the Crew of DX-P

For me, visiting Lierde to mark the 80th anniversary of the loss of DX-P was particularly special as I had had the honour of attending the ceremony in 2000 to inaugurate the Memorial to the crew of DX-P. Returning to Lierde 22 years later, I was struck by the enduring respect and love shown by the local people and by people from across Belgium to the memory of the crew of DX-P.



The Lierde Memorial to the Crew of DX-P

As ever, the ceremony was arranged by our friends from History Wings (<https://en-gb.facebook.com/HistoryWings/>), particularly Dirk de Quick and Koen Vantorre who were the driving force behind creating the memorial to the crew of DX-P that was dedicated in 2000, and who every year arrange the ceremony that keeps alive the memory of our comrades from DX-P within the community around Lierde.

Thanks again to the efforts of Dirk and Koen, the bid for a flypast by the BBMF Lancaster was successful, and the crowd at the ceremony were delighted and

transfixed by the 3 superb flypasts the Lancaster crew made over the memorial, part of which can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfW6SXtfiYU>.

The Lancaster flypasts were the centrepiece of a moving ceremony in which the bravery of the crew of DX-P was remembered by the people of Lierde, representatives of the Belgian Parliament, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Belgium, representatives of the Australian and New Zealand Embassies, senior representatives of the Belgian Air Component, NATO HQ Brussels and Belgian veterans groups. Elements of the ceremony can be viewed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRoV5P6KyDU>.



Belgian Veterans Organisations at the Ceremony

Following the ceremony, we travelled to the Lierde Community Centre to share our memories of our comrades and to see a wonderful and moving re-enactment by Mehdi Schneyders of Sergeant Pickford's initial interrogation on 22 December 1942 at the pub in Lierde.



Mehdi Schneyders enacts the thoughts of Sergeant Roden Pickford

I hope that Association Members will be heartened to know that, 22 years after they inaugurated the Memorial to the gallant crew of DX-P, the people of Lierde and Belgium continue to remember the sacrifice of our comrades, and continue to hold a special place in their hearts for Pilot Officer Ronald Bowles, Flying Officer Alexander Mulholland, Sergeant Cecil Stubbs, Sergeant Maurice Pearman, Sergeant John Drain, Sergeant Arthur Abraham and Sergeant Roden Pickford.

David Houghton
June 2022

XH 648 - A Remarkable restoration

In the 2019 Newsletter (see page 19), the Association's Badger Brooks alerted us to restoration work under way at Imperial War Museum Duxford on a former 57 Sqn aircraft. Here Bob Tuxford recounts the day in April this year when XH648 was rolled out of the conservation hangar following 5 years restoration work.

On a gloriously sunny day at the IWM Duxford on 20th April 2022, Victor XH648 – the last surviving example of a Mk 1 Victor in the guise of the 2-point tanker designated Victor B1A/K2P – was rolled out of the conservation hanger following 5 years of conservation. To witness the event were former Victor B1 pilots Brian Mace and Garden (Gary) West. Also invited were Bob Tuxford and Badger Brooks who both flew K1 and K2 tanker variants.



XH648 emerges into the sunshine at IWM Duxford

Gary West, 83, from Oakham was stationed at RAF Marham between 1965 and 1969 and flew in the aircraft "I think it's absolutely great that they have gone to all this trouble and worked very hard on this to bring it back in," he said. "It's sat here for some time in the open air and deteriorated quite a lot shining now and I think it's wonderful." Bob Tuxford recalled that whilst serving on



Gary West, Bob Tuxford and Brian Mace pictured in front of XH648

No.214 Sqn, he had flown XH648 an interim 2-point tanker in August 1975

Victor XH648 was originally built as a B1 model. Its first

flight was on 27 November 1959, and it was delivered to No.57 Squadron at RAF Honington on 21 December that year. In October 1960, it returned to Handley Page at Radlett, Hertfordshire for conversion to a B1A status.

This involved equipping it with new electronic countermeasure equipment, improved radio and radar equipment and changing the engines to Sapphire Mark 20701s. Following conversion and test flights, XH648 was delivered to RAF Cottesmore on 11 May 1961 to join No.15 Squadron and flew as part of the Far East Air Force during the confrontation with Indonesia in 1962-63. On return from Indonesia, XH648 remained with 15 Squadron until it was delivered back to RAF Honington to join No.55 Squadron on 3 April 1964. Less than a year later, in 1965, it was converted by Handley Page into a two-point tanker, making it a B (K) IA model. This



Wing tips, tailplane and refuelling pods to come

involved the fitting of a Mark 20B refuelling pod under each wing. It then returned to 55 Squadron, moving to RAF Marham shortly afterwards, where XH648 resided for the next ten years. On 23 June 1975, Victor XH648 was transferred to No.57 Squadron, also based at RAF Marham, where it supported the Squadron's final year as a Mark I tanker squadron. It was retired to Duxford on 2 June 1976.

Resplendent in her former camouflage livery of the day, she has not yet been reunited with outer wings and refuelling pods, fin and tailplane combination, and bomb bay doors. After languishing exposed to the elements at Duxford for the best part of 40 years, the restoration team at Duxford have clearly done a stellar job. The condition of the landing gear and internal bomb bay structure and fittings was remarkable, and the freshly painted white of the underside positively glistened. After press interviews with her former pilots, the aircraft continued its journey to the Conservation Hall where the final 6-weeks of conservation will continue.

Bob Tuxford (April 2022)

You can see and hear more about the n project from one of the engineers involved here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDOzi9uWH9E&t=10s>

XH 648 - A Remarkable restoration (Continued)

As Bob wrote in April, the aircraft moved to the Conservation in Action Hall where work continued to re-fit the aircraft's wing tips and tail plane. This work was completed at the end of September when former aircrew and groundcrew were invited to see the aircraft complete once again.



Former aircrew and engineers pose in front of a resplendent XH648 in the Conservation in Action Hangar at IWM Duxford



Neil 'Badger' Brooks pictured in the cockpit of XH648 (Photo: IWM)

Among former aircrew were Association Members Box Tuxford, Badger Brooks and Alistair Sutherland.

The Conservation in Action Hangar at IWM Duxford has undergone a major refurbishment in recent months but reopened to the public in mid-November. If you are in the area, the Museum is home to a fantastic array of aircraft and aviation artefacts and well worth a visit. More details are at www.iwm.org.uk

2023 Airshows

A selection of the major events is listed below.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 20 May | Abingdon Air & Country Show |
| 11 June | RAF Cosford Airshow |
| 24 June | National Armed Forces Day Event, Falmouth |
| 24/25 June | Duxford Summer Air Show |
| 1 July | Wallop Wheels and Wings, Middle Wallop |
| 1/2 July | Wales Airshow, Swansea |
| 14-16 July | Royal International Air Tattoo, RAF Fairford |
| 19-22 July | Farnborough International |
| 22-24 July | Sunderland Airshow |
| 5 August | East Kirkby Airshow |
| 12/13 August | Blackpool Airshow |
| 17-20 August | Eastbourne International Airshow |
| 24/25 August | Clacton Airshow |
| 25 August | Sidmouth Airshow |
| 31 Aug - 3 Sep | Bournemouth Air Festival |
| 8/9 September | Ayr International Airshow |
| 14 September | Jersey & Guernsey Airshows |
| 16/17 September | Duxford Battle of Britain Airshow |



Our Twin Uncles Bob and Ben



Arthur Edgar 'Ben' Foster & Alec Leonard 'Bob' Foster

When I was a boy, my mother used to draw my attention to a framed photograph at home in Ottershaw, Surrey. It depicted two young men, her younger identical twin brothers. I came to realise how their smart RAF uniforms disguised their youth. Not till adulthood did my impression of the twins' loss change from one of heroism to that of tragedy.

I wanted to be able to record and pass on to my grandchildren the story of their short lives. Having recovered their long-lost logbooks, the following words are just the thread of a history which I have written on their behalf.

My maternal grandfather Frank Easton Foster from Egham set up a general store in Chertsey in 1904, named Fosters Bazaar. He married, but only months after the birth of their second child in 1910, lost his wife Ada to pulmonary tuberculosis.

Two years later he married again - to Ellen Maud Clark. My mother Betty was born exactly a year later, losing Frank a bet over her timely arrival! By November 1920 the family had grown to six children with the birth of identical twin boys Alec and Arthur, on November 25th, 1920. Even when grown, Frank could often not tell them apart. They acquired the nicknames Bob and Ben, which stuck.

My mother described the twins' academic abilities at school as 'good but not tip-top'. In 1937, Bob got work as a clerk at Byfleet Railway Station later to handle the transfer of Service casualties to an expanding local hospital at Botleys Park, where Ben was also taken on as a clerk.



Betty and the Twins

It is likely that Ben met Rene Pibworth here, an RAF officer cadet, who was deployed to the hospital to organise the repatriation of deceased RAF aircrew. It is evident that they became very close and at some point were engaged, although the date is unknown.

My father Joe moved from Swindon to work at Weymann's bus builders near Chertsey in a factory built in 1916 by Louis Bleriot. He met Betty at the

local tennis club and they married a few months before war was declared.

When the four Foster brothers joined up, it would have been unthinkable for Bob and Ben to have chosen separate services - they had always been inseparable. Did they egg each other on, aspiring to aircrew duties when they applied to join the RAF as Volunteer Reserves?

Passing their initial assessment resulted in several weeks at a Reception Centre, with brutal haircuts, inoculations and route marches administered by permanent staff with a low regard for grammar school 'types'.

They were billeted in No 7 ITW (Initial Training Wing) in Newquay, given dog-tags with their service numbers - Alec Leonard (Bob) 113415, Arthur Edgar (Ben) 113416. In March 1941 they were re-classified as LAC's and introduced to flying in a DH82.



de Havilland DH.82 Tiger Moth

By November they were both 'Discharged on appointment to Temporary Commission' as 'Pilot U/T' and shipped out to the US wearing 'mufti' to avoid the risk of embroiling America in Britain's war.

Across the Atlantic, the Chief of the Military Flight Training, Henry 'Hap' Arnold, oversaw the speculative creation of Southwest Airways, by 'a pilot and a group of Hollywood stars' including Henry Fonda, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, James Stewart and Hoagy Carmichael, all friends of the founder!

Our Twin Uncles Bob and Ben (Continued)

The first Southwest training site was at Glendale, near Phoenix and referred to as Thunderbird Field. Two more airfields were created in nearby Scottsdale and Mesa, all serviceable by September 1941.



Phoenix, Arizona Times, July 1941

The boys were among 550 RAFVR recruits, running the gauntlet of the North Atlantic U-Boats with two destroyers as escort. Their cohort of forty-seven cadets was among the first to arrive from Britain, travelling by train from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Thunderbird Field.

In short order the boys were introduced to their flight instructors; then to their aircraft: the Stearman PT-17 biplane, resplendent in bright yellow with a sky-blue fuselage.



Stearman, instructors and pupils

The boys flew the following morning. Their instructor referred to both twins as 'Red', no doubt confused as to which cadet they were flying with! After half an hour over the hot Arizona desert, Ben sent an elated cablegram to Rene and both wrote letters to their mother, Ellen.

The new English cadets were feted by local residents and with American cadets, enjoyed swimming parties, dances and introductions to local girls.

The flying training continued apace, weather rarely curtailing their introduction to stalling, spinning and aerobatics. Soloing in July they graduated onto complex aircraft. In September, they moved to Thunderbird III at Mesa, now renamed Falcon Field and dedicated to UK training on the AT-6 Texan. Their cadre suffered only one fatality. Overall, 45% of those early intakes were washed out.

Meanwhile in their time off they swam, went to drive-ins, and over longer leave periods visited the Grand Canyon, Los Angeles and Hollywood. Ben was of course exchanging airmail letters with Rene at every opportunity.

At course completion in October 1941 Bob and Ben's logbooks showed that they were short on dual time after some 70hrs. Following a leaving parade, a large crowd wished them well on their return to England.

November saw them posted to No3 SFTS in South Cerney, flying Airspeed Oxfords in various training roles. Then to No. 25 OTU at RAF Finningley on Ansons for I/F and night practice. By March 1942 they first flew the Wimpey at Dishforth for air-firing practice, wearing Taylor Suits against the cold at 18,000ft which could freeze your fingers to the aircraft skin.

The boys suddenly found themselves at war. Both twins were second pilots while attached to the No 92 Operational Training Group. Their logbook entries for 30th May 1942 are brief – 'Cologne', the first Thousand Bomber raid. Home on leave they gleefully told Joe, Betty and Rene that although their training was not finished, they flew Operation Millennium in Wellingtons. Further offensive sorties followed whilst still in No. 25 OTU, the first of three missions in which they both participated.



The Twins on leave

They converted to Manchesters at RAF Wigsley under No 1654 Conversion Unit in July before the type was withdrawn, although conversion to the Lancaster was made easier, and in August 1942 the twins were posted 18 miles south to RAF Syerston, Nottinghamshire, to active duty with 61 Squadron of 5 Group.

Our Twin Uncles Bob and Ben (Continued)



Avro Manchester

Both boys were rostered to bomb Karlsruhe on September 2nd. One of the twins would naturally seek news of the return of his brother. But on only his second sortie with the squadron Bob's was one of two Lancasters that did not return. Immediately below Ben's official Squadron report in The National Archives, was Bob's, in Lancaster W4136:

"S/L Forsyth sent out a wireless message to the effect that he had been attacked by a fighter and was returning on two engines. His I.F.F. (Identification Friend or Foe) plot faded out over France, and nothing further has been heard of the crew. We understand that other crews from the Karlsruhe raid saw W4136 struggling and witnessed it ditching."

On confirmation that none of Bob's crew had survived, Betty told me that Ben immediately broke off his engagement to Rene, who was 'heartbroken', but he was resolute.



It may be that knowing his life was precarious, he became fatalistic. Or he may have been keen to avenge the loss of his brother. Two days after Bob's death Ben aborted a second mission to Bremen due to a faulty rear gun turret. Betty later paraphrased his C.O.'s warning: "you must go back until you are successful".

He determined to fulfil his role as skipper with the support of his now regular crew. On the Dusseldorf sortie of September 10th, he suffered an engine fire

and subsequent loss of a second engine but got home safely, partly earning him a DFC.

A string of successful missions culminated in the Munich raid in December 1942, the last of his tour:

"P/O Foster made a timed run, and the bombs were released at 10,000ft over fairly heavy defences. On return, their aircraft was caught in very accurate heavy flak over Mannheim. No damage was caused due to the skilful evasive action of P/O Foster who completed his first tour of operations on this trip".

In January 1943 Ben moved to RAF Winthorpe, still in 61 Squadron, but attached to No 1661 Conversion Unit to learn the art of instructing on heavies which he then carried out at No 5 Lancaster Finishing School, Syerston for sixteen months, enjoying somewhat improved survival odds.

In the summer of 1943 at the age of 23, accompanied by his parents, Ben received his DFC from the King.



"This officer played a conspicuous part in two daylight raids on Le Creusot and Milan. In September 1942, while participating in an attack on Dusseldorf, one engine of his aircraft was hit by enemy defences and set on fire. Displaying coolness and determination, Flying Officer Foster extinguished the fire and continued his attack. At all times, he has shown fine fighting spirit".

Returning to active service with 630 Squadron shortly before D-Day, he was no doubt aware of its reputation as a 'chop' squadron. Beginning on June 6th, he flew three 'softening-up' missions behind the retreating German lines to Caen and Forêt-de-Cerisy. Then in a letter to my father post-marked June 19th he referred to the remoteness of the airfield with no chance

of socializing off the base. He was also 'peev'd' that although his new crew members were mostly veterans of 61 Squadron, he had flown with none of them.

Our Twin Uncles Bob and Ben (Continued)

The Wesseling mission on the summer solstice followed an interlude of nine days which he spent on leave with my parents in Ottershaw. As he left to return to East Kirkby, in a gesture untypical of the family, he hugged his sister Betty, voicing his conviction that he could not survive long, at which my mother later reported her deep foreboding.

The details of the raid are well documented and Ben's aircraft LE-K ND531 was one of ten Lancasters from East Kirkby lost without trace, just as his brother's had been in 1942. It is conjecture whether his aircraft fell to Schrage-Musik.

At the 57 and 630 Squadron Association Reunion in 2004 I was amazed to be introduced to two veterans of the Wesseling raid. But Ben's name did not register with them even though he was a Squadron Leader with a DFC.



2004 Reunion Hangar Service

I arranged with Harold Paton to plant a commemorative Rowan tree on behalf of my mother Betty on the East Kirkby airfield perimeter. It is now flourishing and has been regularly visited by my family and grandchildren.



Rowan tree in Ben and Bob's memory at East Kirkby

In 2005 I planned to contact Ben's one-time fiancée Rene, then widowed and in her eighties. But the meeting failed to materialize. I contacted her daughter Mary in 2020 following Rene's death. She kindly passed on all her mother's memorabilia from Ben, retained despite her having married another RAF pilot in 1948.

One of the items was a letter from Ben posted on 20th June 1944, clearly seeking to re-kindle their relationship nearly two years on. We know that Rene had replied by return, because after the Wesseling raid, the squadron chaplain wrote comfortingly to Rene expressing his certainty that Ben would have received her response before departing on the mission.

Amongst Rene's other possessions is a Post Office notification form. It was filled out by the Coningsby Postmaster, stating that a telegram to Squadron Leader Foster received by them on 26th June was undelivered, and returned to Rene by order of the Air Ministry.

The question of brothers acting as aircrew within the same squadron may never have been addressed by the Command. Since Alec and Arthur were also identical twins, one wonders that Ben was not stood down after his brother's loss, to spare their parents a double tragedy. Their mother Ellen died from cancer shortly after the war's end and the effects still ripple down the family.

Hearing from aircrew who survived to relate their stories, to me emphasizes the silence of those who did not. And in the telling they have openly acknowledged that our thoughts should be with those who were lost.



The young Foster twins - a photo instrumental to Martin Allen's research

Martin Allen
Nephew to the Twins
December 2022

2022 Association Reunion

July 2023 						
Week	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa Su
26						1 2
27	3	4	5	6	7	8 9
28	10	11	12	13	14	15 16
29	17	18	19	20	21	22 23
30	24	25	26	27	28	29 30
31	31					

The 2023 Association Reunion will be held over the weekend of Saturday 1 July and Sunday 2 July.

Unsurprisingly, prices have risen by around 10% for next year, having been held at 2018 levels for the past 4 years.

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.

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

There are, of course, other hotels in Woodhall Spa some of which are significantly cheaper.

If you wish to stay elsewhere the cost is simply £48.50 for each function dinner on the Saturday and Sunday nights.

Friday 30 June – Petwood House Hotel

For those arriving on the Friday and staying at the Petwood Hotel, dinner is informal with reserved tables in the main restaurant. Tables can be booked prior to arrival if you wish to eat at a specific time otherwise book on arrival; please be aware that non-residents also book meals on a Friday so your preferred time might not be available.

Saturday 1 July - Petwood House Hotel

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

Sunday 2 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

Accommodation and Function Rates

Petwood House Hotel Residents

- 4 Nights B&B, 2 restaurant dinners, 2 function dinners (Sat & Sun) £430 pp
- 3 Nights B&B, one restaurant dinner, 2 function dinners (Sat & Sun) £345 pp
- 2 Nights B&B (Fri & Sat), one restaurant dinner, and one function dinner £240 pp
- 2 Nights B&B (Sat & Sun), 2 function dinners £245 pp
- 1 Night B&B (Sat) and function dinner £145 pp

Non Residents

£48.50 pp for each function dinner

57 & 630 Squadrons' Association



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Committee Members

Acting President/Membership/Memorabilia/Webmaster:

Group Captain (Retd) Tony Gunby

Secretary:

Wing Commander (Retd) Chris Morffew

Treasurer:

Oliver Bridgman

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 2023

Surname		First Name(s)	
Address		Telephone Number	
		Email	
Squadron Number			

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 1 July)	
Dinner (Sunday 2 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 1 July)	£48.50		
Dinner (Sunday 2 July)	£48.50		
Sub Total			
Donation to Association Funds			
Total Enclosed			

Memorial Service – Sunday 2 July	Number in your party attending



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2023

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 2023.**

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

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

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