

57 & 630 Squadrons' Association



Chairperson: Group Captain (Retd) Tony Gunby

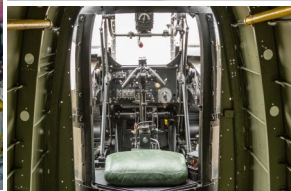
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The 2023 Reunion in pictures

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The 2023 Reunion

The 2023 Reunion kicked off with an informal Friday evening gathering for Dinner at the Petwood Hotel, with the usual stalwarts continuing discussion well into Saturday morning.

On Saturday afternoon we held our Annual General Meeting during which the Association's new Constitution was approved and Committee officers were confirmed in post.

Moving to the Woodland Suite for dinner, we welcomed the newly appointed OC 57 Squadron, Wing Commander Rich Elford and his partner Amy, along with staff and trainees from the Squadron.

Together with some Members attending for the first time, our friends from the Panton family and a number of other guests, it was great to see so many different connections with the Association assembled. If the volume of talking was anything to go by, a good time was had by all as we enjoyed the Hotel's excellent service.

As our principal speaker, Rich Elford sang for his supper and provided us with an update on events on the Squadron and developments in wider RAF flying training scene.

Richard Leedham presented a painting of 'A for Alma' - commissioned for his late mother - to 57 Squadron. This was followed by a lively auction of a copy of 'Victor Boys' signed by a number of ex-Victor aircrew, and raffles for a taxi ride in Just Jane and assorted prizes.

On Sunday, the 57 Squadron Standard Party was on parade at East Kirkby for our memorial Service led by Richard Benson, with music provided by the

Swineshead Silver Band, and followed with refreshments in the NAAFI.

Thanks are due to Mike Chatterton for his work behind the scenes setting things up at East Kirkby for our Memorial Service, and especially to the Panton family for the support and welcome that they give the Association.

Mike was on hand once again after our memorial service, to lead the dedication of a plaque to the memory of Doug Packman who flew at East Kirkby with 630 Squadron - see page 15 for more details.

Weather and technical issues prevented the BBMF Lancaster from overflying East Kirkby as planned, but it did make it later in the day to the Petwood where it thrilled Members and other hotel guests with a flypast.



The BBMF Lancaster overflies the Petwood Hotel

Next year's Reunion will be held over the weekend of Friday 5 July - Sunday 7 July 2024. More details are available towards the back of this Newsletter and on our website. Please remember to book accommodation early as it is always at a premium at Woodhall Spa.

A new Boss at the helm of 57 Squadron



Wing Commander Rich Elford BA RAF

Wing Commander Rich Elford joined the RAF in 2002. After Elementary Flying Training, he was posted to RAF Shawbury where he won his rotary 'wings' and went on to qualify on the Chinook helicopter before joining 27 Squadron.

By April 2014 he had completed nine short operational tours in Afghanistan, totalling almost 2 full years in theatre. He was awarded a 'Green Endorsement' for his handling of a serious aircraft emergency whilst in combat in 2012. He gained a series of specialist qualifications on the SqN before serving at MOD Abbey Wood in Bristol on the introduction into service of the latest variant of the Chinook.

Promoted to sqn ldr, he subsequently worked on simulation for a range of aircraft and continued to represent the RAF and Combined Services at water polo.

Returning to fixed wing flying, he qualified as a QFI before taking command of the Universities of Wales Air Squadron (UWAS). Promoted to wg cdr, he became the air safety manager for all training platforms within 22 Group.

Rich assumed command of 57 Squadron in May this year.

Chairperson's Thoughts



*Tony Gunby
Association Chairperson*

As many of you are aware, I served my first flying tour on 57 Squadron in the early 1980s as a Navigator Plotter on the Victor K2. Having been the Association's Vice-President since 2009, I was honoured to be appointed as the Association's Chairperson in July. Can I also offer my thanks to Chris Morffew, Oliver Bridgman and Wendy Rothery for agreeing to continue in their roles.

Our new Constitution sets out 3 objectives for our Association:

To foster good comradeship among current and former members of the Squadrons.

To provide a link and bond between current and former Squadron members and their families.

To encourage and promote social contact between current and former Squadron members and their families.

These objectives will help us to maintain a strong and vibrant Association which honours the service and sacrifice of those who are no longer with us, while welcoming and embracing their families and friends, and supporting and encouraging those currently serving.

However, we should not rest on our laurels. The pace of change in our society and our individual hopes and aspirations are in constant flux. So we have agreed to formally review our Constitution at least every 5 years - to ensure that it remains 'fit-for-purpose'.

Unlike many RAF Associations, ours is extremely fortunate to remain tied to a 'live' squadron. Since it rose from the ashes in 2008 and reformed as a flying training unit, 57 Squadron has provided our connection to today's RAF; a connection that I am determined to maintain and nurture.

That relationship inevitably changes over time, in style and substance, just as the environment around us evolves.

In July, we welcomed a new OC 57 Squadron to our Reunion and with Rich Elford at the helm, and Roger

Bousefield as our Association liaison officer, I am confident that we will continue to support each other in recognising past service and sacrifices, providing a warm and welcoming community, and encouraging the activities of today's aviators.

Within this Newsletter, we have stories which bridge the generations, which give some insight into the past and provide a window to the future.

We can read about the breadth and diversity of 57 Squadron's training task, and its sporting and social escapades. Adrian Stevens remembers his day at Cranwell as he handed many artefacts from his father's wartime service into the custody of 57 Squadron.

There are 630 Squadron memories of Doug Packman and Freddie Spencer, James Forsey's account of his cycle ride to site of his great grandfather's loss in 1944, and the Association's Reg Hudson shares with us his investigations into the loss of 57 Sqn's W4250 in 1942.

As we bid a final farewell to three Association Members, we welcome Lisa Valen, our newest Member, and Ed Burrows provides us with a look into his next aviation adventure and his family's future life in West Africa.

My thanks, our thanks, to everyone that has contributed to this Newsletter. It would be very short without them.

Thanks also to Chris Morffew who so expertly orchestrated yet another superb Reunion, to Wendy Rothery for meeting the endless challenge of responding to research enquiries, and to Oliver Bridgman for ensuring that we keep our heads above water financially.

But most of all, my thanks to all of you - our Association Members, families, friends and supporters - without whom there would be no Association.

Until we meet again, all that remains for me to do is to wish you all a peaceful Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

Tony Gunby
December 2023

From the Secretary



Chris Morffew
Association Secretary

It is hard to believe that this is my fourth input to the Association Newsletter. Much has happened over the past 12 months; here are some of the highlights.

As a result of various discussions last year we, the Committee, decided that a new Association Constitution should be developed to more accurately reflect what our Association is about. Following circulation of a draft for comments in January, a revised draft was circulated in May for approval at an AGM held in conjunction with this year's Reunion.

At the AGM on 1 July those members attending also approved the Association Accounts and re-elected Tony Gunby as Chairperson, Chris Morffew as Secretary, Oliver Bridgman as Treasurer, Wendy Rothery as Information Officer and Tony Gunby as Membership Officer. Our new Constitution is available on our website at https://57-630sqnassoc.org/wp-content/uploads/57-and-630-Squadrons-Association-Constitution_1-July-2023.pdf

Once again our Reunion was extremely well attended with 70 at the Saturday Dinner. This year we held a silent auction for a copy of Tony Blackman's 'Victor Boys' covering a 27 year period in which 57 Squadron operated the Victor. Signed by the author and 10 of the people mentioned in it, the winning bid eventually went to Tim Hopkins, raising a wonderful sum for Association funds. Our Sunday Evening function this year was a private Dinner held in the Squadron Bar and this seemed to work extremely well. Details of next year's Reunion, and a booking form, are at the end of this Newsletter.

It was an honour to represent the Association at this year's Remembrance Sunday service at East Kirkby. Once again it was organised by Mike Chatterton and his team, the service was held at the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Memorial on the site of the old RAF East Kirkby Guardroom.



It was a wonderful, moving event and well attended by villagers, the Pantons, some Association members, a representative of RAF Coningsby, representatives of 57 Squadron and "The Rutland Hogs" who once again laid their own wreath despite their limited numbers caused by the morning fog. 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. Wendy Rothery laid the wreath on behalf of the Association.

We enjoyed hot drinks and some beautiful cake in the 'NAAFI' afterwards. Although the awful weather in the preceding weeks had led to some flooding, the hangar was open to view 'Just Jane' and the other exhibits in the museum. All credit must go to the Panton family and their amazing team for a clean-up operation that meant the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre was only closed for a few days after the flooding!

Chris Morffew
December 2023
secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org

Money Matters



Oliver Bridgman
Association Treasurer

I am pleased to report that the Association continued to remain in good financial shape in 2023.

Our financial year runs from 6 April to the 31 March and as those of you who attended the Annual Reunion in July will know, income over expenditure for 2022/23 was £1,342.35. The Association bank accounts were in credit to the tune of £6,500.68 as at 31 March 2023. Copies of the accounts are available from me at treasurer@57-630sqnassoc.org

I'm sure that I don't need to remind you, 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, to safeguard our future.

During the financial year to 31 March 2023, donations from members amounted to £1,090. A very big thank you to all those who made donations. Your generosity and support ensure the continued success of the Association.

Donations can be made by cheque or via internet banking. If you wish to use the latter, please contact me using the email address above and I can let you have the necessary bank information.

The Annual Reunion provides an opportunity to raise further funds via the raffles and the occasional auction. Taken together, these raised just short of £2,000 during this year's Reunion.

Accounts for 2023/24 will be available at the Annual Reunion in July.

Oliver Bridgman
December 2023

In Memoriam



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

Roy Nash - a Wireless Mechanic who served with 57 Squadron at RAF Waddington from 1951-52, first on the Lincoln and then the Washington. Nobody that met Roy will forget his sense of fun and fine singing voice. Along with Jean, Roy was a stalwart of our Association and our Reunions for many years. Apart from being a very active member of his local British Legion and RAFA Branches, Roy was also a leading light in the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans. An accomplished entertainer Roy would frequently join the pianist after our Reunion dinner to sing one of his favourite Matt Munro numbers. Sadly, ill-health had prevented Roy from attending our Reunions in recent years, but he will be remembered with a smile - and a tap of the foot. RIP Roy - he did it his way.

Derek Carruthers - a Wireless Operator who flew with 57 Squadron in 1945, towards the end of the War. Derek had previously flown with 624 Sqn flying Stirlings from Maison Blanche in Algeria, on SOE-sponsored missions over southern France. He gained a commission after the War and subsequently joined the Air Ministry and the Civil Aviation Flying Unit in 1947, enjoying a successful career in the civil aviation sector.

Margaret Monk - who's father Eric John Monk (known as Jerry) was a pilot with 630 Squadron at East Kirkby and a founding member of the Association.

We will remember them

News from the Frontline



Wing Commander
Rich Elford
OC 57 Squadron

I am delighted to be able update you on 57 Squadron's activity over the last year, another busy and successful one for the unit. While using a loose chronological flow, I will hopefully be able to demonstrate the full range of our activities from flying, through sport and adventurous training, to the social events that are so important to maintaining the ethos of the Squadron. I will also cover some important interaction with the Association.

Firstly, I would like to say what an honour it has been to be appointed Officer Commanding 57 Squadron. The unit has an incredible history. We've been lucky enough this year to have artefacts donated to us that will tangibly mark those who went before us and will serve to inspire the generations of aircrew to come - more of which later. My own career has featured operational flying on the Chinook before elementary flying training experience as Officer Commanding Universities of Wales Air Squadron and staff tours in Defence Acquisition and Air Safety Management.

Last year's update included the news of significant changes to the Squadron structure, including the move back to a wing commander as Officer Commanding.



Grob Prefect

The past year has seen that structure quickly bed in. I now command three flights delivering a wide variety of flying training courses. A Flight at Cranwell, consisting of a flight commander, adjutant and 19 Qualified Flying Instructors, and B Flight at Barkston Heath, with flight commander, adjutant and 23 Instructors provide the bulk of the training for the elementary trainees passing through the unit. C Flight, also at Cranwell, delivers instructor training and standardisation whilst also supporting the delivery of the core task.

C Flight consists of a flight commander and 11 Central Flying School Accredited Instructors.

The Squadron delivers all elementary pilot training for the Royal Air Force, along with those Royal Navy pilots selected to fly fast-jets. In the period from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023 the Squadron flew just short of 7000 hours on the Prefect. In the same period our Ground Based Training Equipment (basic simulators) delivered over 3500 hours of training. This balance of 'live' and 'simulated' training is relatively new to elementary training but is something the trainees will go on to experience throughout their careers. In that period the Squadron trained:

- 93 Elementary Flying Training Course trainees.
- 49 returning 'Refresher' trainees who had been awaiting their lead-in courses.
- 36 Multi-engine Lead-in trainees bound for the neighbouring 45 Squadron and then careers on the Air Transport or Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance fleets.
- 32 Fast Jet Lead-in trainees bound for Texan and Hawk at RAF Valley and then to the Typhoon or Lightning.
- 15 trainee Prefect Qualified Flying Instructors, either new to instruction all together or with previous experience on other training aircraft.

2023 commenced with some poor weather in January and February. Nonetheless, the steady rhythm of landmarks for the trainees, such as first solos on type and End-of-Course tests, carried on when the weather allowed. During January the final four Qatari pilots arrived to undertake their English Language Reinforcement and Orientation Course. This course introduced them to UK operations before they moved onto the Hawk and eventually joined the joint UK/Qatari 12 Squadron flying the Typhoon. The month also saw a massive win for the Squadron in the opening event - ten-pin bowling - of this year's RAF Cranwell Commanding Officer's (CO's) Cup

News from the Frontline (continued)

sports challenge.

In February the bulk of Squadron flying activity at both Cranwell and Barkston was the Refresher courses and the subsequent lead-ins. Our new Royal Jordanian Air Force exchange officer, Captain Al-Huneiti, graduated from his instructor training along with two new Ascent Qualified Flying Instructors, Captains (civilian) Tariq Lewis and Lillian Kentish.



The winning CO's Cup Dodgeball Team

The CO's Cup Dodgeball event delivered another win for 57 Squadron, beating close rivals 45 Squadron on the way.

The first major social event in more than 2 years was held in the form of a 57 Squadron Dining-In at the Belton Woods Hotel near Grantham. The event provided the perfect opportunity for 150 squadron personnel and guests to gather and celebrate the successes of the previous twelve months. My predecessor took the opportunity to dine in/out 27 individuals who had not had the opportunity due to COVID. This inevitably resulted in an elongated speech which was eventually curtailed by the Squadron Executive Officer, much to the entertainment of the audience. We were lucky to be joined by Mr Nick English, co-founder of the Bremont watch company, who presented a Bremont watch to Flt Lt Chris Harrington, the winner of that year's English Memorial Award.

March CO's Cup event was Indoor Curling. Despite trying to field anyone with even vaguely Scottish roots the Squadron could only place 5 of 8. However, we were still at the top of the overall table and in a strong position to retain the trophy won in the previous two competitions. Air Officer Commanding 22 Group visited No 3 Flying Training School to conduct the Annual Formal Inspection. During his visit he presented Flight Safety awards to Lieutenant Pete Milne RN for handling a significant engine malfunction and Captain (civilian) Nick Riddin for identifying a potentially serious flying control issue.

April's CO's Cup event was a swimming gala with

57 Squadron again dominating the competition. This was, with all due modesty, impressive given that only the Squadron Adjutant and I were able to take part!

Nearing the formal handover of command, I also took the opportunity to go along with one of our courses on their Advanced Personal Development Leadership Training.



Adventurous, Personal Development and Leadership Training

At the beginning of the May seven members of 3 Flying Training School and 57 Squadron attended the commemoration service for the crew of Lancaster DX-P in Lierde Belgium.



Handover of Command Ceremony at Lierde, Belgium during commemoration of Lancaster DX-P and her crew

Jamie and I also chose this important event to formally handover command of the Squadron. Taking command at the event really brought home to me the operational pedigree of the Squadron.

On return to the UK, 'C' Flight welcomed the new Air Officer Commanding 22 Group, Air Vice Marshal Townsend. The Air Officer Commanding flew on a composite sortie (low level, general handling and instrument flying); this was his first flight in a Prefect.

A further senior visit followed from Air Vice Marshal Goldie, Air Commander Australia. This visit marked the start of a new partnership with the Royal Australian Air Force as four of their trainees began their EFT

News from the Frontline (continued)

course on exchange. This international angle would certainly have been familiar to our Bomber Command forebears!



Visit by Air Vice Marshal Goldie, Air Commander Australia and our first Royal Australian Air Force exchange trainees

A Central Flying School Graduation Dinner was held at RAF Shawbury and representatives of 'C' Flight and three graduating Qualified Flying Instructors attended from 57 Squadron. The newly allocated Concentration Cup was awarded to the best ab initio Prefect Qualified Flying Instructor student with the trophy being presented, by year, for the period graduations had not taken place due to COVID.

May's CO's Cup event was Go-Karting - my competitive nature may have got the better of me especially in terms of holding our lead over 45 Squadron.



CO's Cup Karting Champions!

June saw yet another victory for the Squadron in the CO's Cup; this time the event was part of the Station's 5k 'Colour Run'. The victory left the Squadron clear at the top of the table. Later in the month Exercise Dolomite Dash took members of the Squadron to Arco in Italy. They completed adventurous training including mountain biking, via ferrata and mountaineering.

On the sporting field one trainee, Chris Harrington,

was awarded RAF and Inter-Service Sports Colours for Snowboarding while one of my instructors, Rich Tomala, competed in the Inter-Service coarse angling event, winning day one.



Via ferrata during Exercise Dolomite

It was my huge honour to host Mr Adrian Stevens, the son of the late Flight Lieutenant Sydney George 'Stevie' Stevens, a Lancaster pilot who completed 31 operations on the Squadron in 1943. Flt Lt Stevens was awarded an immediate DFC on completion of his tour. Stevie and his wife Maureen, a former WAAF Corporal who he first heard over the radio waves, were hugely proud of their links to the Squadron and instrumental in the founding of the Association.



Adrian Stevens hands over some of his father's artefacts to Rich Elford

The purpose of the visit was to pass some of Flight Lieutenant Stevens' effects - including medals, uniform items and flying logbooks - into the safe-keeping of the Sqn. They now have pride of place in our Crewroom to inspire generations to come.

News from the Frontline (continued)

The newly appointed Head of Flying Training, Air Commodore Ian Sharrocks visited both sites and went flying in a Prefect out of Barkston Heath.

Cranwell experienced one of the wettest Julys on record, but our courses continued to make steady progress. I was delighted to be able to lead a party of the current team to the 57 and 630 Squadron Association annual reunion at the Petwood Hotel and the following day at East Kirkby. We were hosted with incredible generosity.

It was humbling to deliver a short speech at the Association Dinner, and then to represent, with others, the Squadron at the memorial service the following day.



OC 57 and members of the current team at the Association Reunion, pictured with the painting of 'A for Alma' donated to the Squadron in memory of Terry and Alma Leedham by their family

It was particularly great to see 'Just Jane', the Lancaster at East Kirkby, undertake some engine runs and taxiing on the day. Also in July, two of our Prefects were on show as part of a flying training static display for the Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford.

In August the Squadron welcomed Neil 'Badger' Brooks to the unit, accompanied by his grandson - an Air Cadet aspiring to join the RAF. Badger was a co-pilot and captain on 57 Sqn Victors, including during the Falklands Conflict. Badger wished to donate into the Squadron's safekeeping the wartime log of Warrant Officer George Henry Lloyd RAF POW. George was assigned to 57 Sqn flying Wellingtons based at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk; bailing out of one on 31 March 1942, he was captured and kept as a POW at Stalag Luft IIIB. The log is a fascinating collection of pictures, logs, drawings, and other entries from the era, demonstrating much about what life was like in 'Hut 1812'. (You can read more about George's story in the 2020 Newsletter - Ed.)

One of our Ascent Flying Instructors, Captain Nick Riddin, won the British Intermediate Aerobatics Championship in his own Rihn DR107 One Design aircraft.

There was a slow transition to autumn with a high flying rate maintained right through September. Our parent unit, 3 Flying Training School, held a dinner at Cranwell on 5 October. This gave me the chance to trumpet the Squadron's many successes - especially those over 45 Squadron! Later in the month Gp Capt Ian Bews took over command of the unit. A former Harrier pilot, he is very familiar with the Prefect, having been OC EFT, the predecessor of my post, only two iterations ago. He is already up-and-running as a Prefect instructor again.

I'm very proud to say, at the time of writing, the Squadron has an unassailable lead at the top of the CO's Cup table with only the quiz event remaining.



What it's all about. A graduation ceremony in College Hall Officers' Mess

I write this as we approach Remembrance Sunday. The Squadron will be parading its Standard at East Kirkby to commemorate those who went before us. That heritage is incredibly important to me and something I take every opportunity to use to inspire the current generation. I am grateful for the warm and generous support of the Association in keeping those links alive. I have enjoyed meeting with some of you during my time in command and look forward to doing so again over the coming year.



We change our body not our spirit!

Rich Elford
RAF Cranwell
November 2023

Research Update



*Air Commodore
Wendy Rothery
Association Information
Officer*

The last year has marked the 80th anniversary of a number of Bomber Command milestones, with the Dams Raid of 16/17 May 1943 amongst the most notable. As 617 Sqn was formed from C Flight, 57 Sqn, and both were stationed at RAF Scampton until September 1943, when 57 Sqn moved to East Kirkby, there is an ineradicable link between the two squadrons. I have a personal link with both as my grandfather joined 617 Sqn in April 1945 as Nav Leader, following completion of an op tour on 57 Sqn, and a short stint as Navigation Officer for East Kirkby.

The 80th anniversary has sustained a good level of interest in the 57/630 Squadrons Bomber Command years from families, friends and researchers, and the vast majority of the enquiries I have dealt with in the last year are linked to WWII. However, I am starting to see an increase in the number of enquiries related to the Post War years, and the occasional enquiry linked to the First World War.

Some of the recent highlights include enquiries related to long-standing members of the Association, which are always especially poignant; research requests linked to school projects, confirming that interest in our nation's military history, and that of other Commonwealth nations is alive and well; and interest from our friends in Europe who tend the graves of 57 and 630 Squadrons crew members and want to understand more about them.

I am encouraged that interest in the Squadrons' history remains strong, and that the memories of those who have served is kept alive. Some of the research required to respond to enquiries can be very detailed and, whilst the Squadron Operational Record Books have been digitally archived, there is no keyword search facility. The support from Pete Sharpe, who has developed a thorough historic website for 630 Sqn, and is in the process of doing the same for 57 Sqn, has been invaluable; so too support from Louise Bush at the Lincs Aviation Heritage Centre, which holds a rich seam of data for both 57 and 630 Squadrons.

Returning to the 80th anniversary theme, I recently attended the premier of a new

film, "Attack on Sorpe Dam", directed by Andrew Panton (no relation to the East Kirkby Pantons) which features a first-hand account from the perspective of George "Johnny" Johnson, a 21 year old bomb aimer, and follows his crew's story from March 1943, on joining 617 Sqn, to their participation in the Raid on 16/17 May. Johnny was a real advocate for preserving the heritage of Bomber Command and a huge supporter of the International Bomber Command Centre. As such, the film has been passed to the IBCC to raise funds for a new Learning Centre: <https://internationalbcc.co.uk/support-us/attack-on-sorpe-dam/>

I was also hugely honoured to be asked to join Adrian Stevens on a visit to 57 Sqn in June to mark the donation of his father's medals, flying logbook and wartime memorabilia. Flt Lt Sidney (Stevie) Stevens and his wife Maureen, known as Maud, were long-standing supporters of the Association, and one of my most treasured possessions is a copy of the menu from the Association's inaugural dinner in 1979, signed by Stevie alongside a number of other Bomber Command veterans, including my Grandfather.

During the ceremony at Cranwell, Adrian read a wonderful piece that Stevie wrote for the Association Reunion in 2000, marking 57 years since he had completed his tour of operations on 57 Sqn. Adrian has written a magnificent personal account of the day on page 12 of this Newsletter.

The annual Bomber Command Memorial service of Remembrance was held on Sunday 25 June in Green Park. The RAF Benevolent Fund is guardian of the Bomber Command Memorial, and hosted the event, which was attended by representatives from the Commonwealth and Allied nations. The service was live streamed around the world and included readings, stories from Bomber Command crews and a minute's silence and wreath laying in memory of all those lost. Association members are welcome to attend the service in future years; details are available from the RAF Benevolent Fund (<https://www.rafbf.org/>)

Looking ahead to next year, 2024 marks the 80th anniversary of a number of key

Research Update (continued)

milestones for Bomber Command, and 57 and 630 Squadrons in particular, including the Schweinfurt Raid on 13th April and the Wesseling Raid on 21st June. But of course, the 80th anniversary of D-Day on 6th June will be the focus of attention to commemorate all who served in that campaign.

I visited the Normandy memorials in April. On the first day we started by looking at the first British actions, visiting Pegasus Bridge where the gliders landed, the Gondrée Café and the Pegasus Bridge Museum, and on to the Ranville War Cemetery. We then travelled to the British landing beaches, Sword, Juno and Gold. One of the highlights was the new British Normandy Memorial opened in 2021, and we ended the day at Arromanches where we saw where the Mulberry Harbour was constructed and were struck by how much of it is still visible out to sea.



Allied glider assault on Pegasus Bridge

On the second day, we visited the American landing beaches, starting with Omaha, then the American Cemetery and the Overlord Museum. Later we examined the role of the US Airborne forces, Utah Beach and the German Cemetery at La Cambe.

Our guide was charming, entertaining, and hugely knowledgeable. He seemed to have watched every film and documentary made about the Normandy campaign and would often show us where a particular scene had been shot, though he was very quick to tell us whether these scenes were historically or geographically accurate. His real skill was in putting events in context, explaining the ground and the problems, and giving us all a sense of scale, all backed up with a deep knowledge of the campaign, the units and the people involved.

As ever, it is the human dimension with all its triumphs and tragedies that really matters - an aspect brought sharply into focus by the memorials and neat rows of graves in the war cemeteries. The beaches themselves were different in many respects but all were open, wind-swept and beautiful. It is hard to imagine just how different it would have been on D-Day, though it was easy to see how exposed the landing forces would have been.

The 57 and 630 Sqn contribution to D-Day was in flying missions that would now be known as 'shaping

operations', attacking supply lines, airfields and depots before and during the campaign. On the night of 5/6 June, they bombed gun emplacements at La Pernelle, north of Utah Beach on the Cherbourg peninsula, and the crews would have seen the huge fleet heading across the Channel to begin the invasion. They were also involved in bombing raids during the ensuing battle to liberate Caen.

Throughout my battlefield tour, I gained a small insight into a colossal military undertaking that succeeded not just because of planning but because of courage and sacrifice. It was clear that the local population still very much appreciate what was done for them and recognise the human cost of their freedom. I would thoroughly commend a visit to the Normandy Battlefield sites, and it is well worth investing in a professional tour guide to enhance your knowledge and understanding.

I am also in touch with the Oud Turnhout Historical Society in Belgium which marked the turning point for returning aircraft and became a point of concentrated enemy attack for the bombers. A number of aircraft were lost on the Wesseling Raid of 21/22 June 1944 and my Grandfather's crew was forced to ditch on the return journey, their fuel tanks having been holed. The town has dedicated eight memorials, one for each of the British and American aircraft that were downed, in memory of their crews. We plan to commemorate the 80th anniversary at a memorial service near the crash sites.

The Wesseling raid took place on 21/22 June 1944. The target was an oil refinery at Wesseling near Cologne. 133 RAF Lancaster bombers and 6 Mosquitos from different squadrons took part. 37 of them were shot down, 200 crew members were killed, 44 taken prisoner of war and 9 escaped. LM115 DX-M from 57 Squadron, and ME782 LE-N from 630 Squadron, were shot down and crashed in the same street in Oud Turnhout. All crew members of ME782 LE-N were killed but 4 of the crew members of LM115 DX-M survived; 3 were taken prisoner of war but one, a Navigator called John Maunsell, was taken care of by several local families and hidden by them until September 1944 until he was able to join the liberating Allies. John was also a long-standing supporter of the Association until his death in 2005. 57 Sqn are sending an honour guard to mark the occasion, which will be a fitting tribute to all 57 and 630 Sqn crews who took part in the Wesseling Raid.

Please do get in touch if you have a research enquiry; I would be delighted to hear from you.

Wendy Rothery
December 2023
infoofficer@57-630sqnassoc.org

Corpus Non Animum Muto: A Day in the History of 57 Squadron

On 20 June my wife and I visited 57 Squadron at RAF Cranwell at the invitation of its newly appointed CO, Wing Commander Richard Elford. The occasion was special: the handover of my father's medals, tunic, log books and other wartime memorabilia into the safekeeping of his old Squadron.



Stevie Stevens looks through his Flying Logbook

It had come about thanks to the good offices of the Squadron Association and its energetic President, David Houghton. Sadly David, away in Canada, could not be present, but he had assured me that he would be lifting a glass (or several) in the direction of Cranwell.

Janey and I were joined by two very old family friends, and by Jonny Cracknell, the co-author with me of the book about my father's wartime service: *Tomorrow May never Come: The Remarkable Life Story of 'Stevie' Stevens, Lancaster Pilot and Beloved School Teacher*. The Squadron Association was represented by the Secretary, Chris Morffew, and Air Commodore Wendy Rothery, another long-standing friend of my parents.

Many readers will remember my father, 'Steve' or 'Stevie' Stevens, and my mother, christened 'Maud' but always known outside the family as Maureen. On 1 May 1943 my father had been posted to 57 Squadron, then stationed at RAF Scampton along with 617 Squadron, as a newly qualified pilot. My mother, one of



Stevie and Maureen Stevens

the first women in the RAF to be trained as a Radio Telephone Operator, had arrived at the same time. On the night of 16 May, my father had watched 617 Squadron take off, and early the following morning, Corporal Maureen Miller, as she then was, spoke to Guy Gibson and the men soon to be known as the Dambusters from the Control Tower, giving them their landing instructions.

When she passed away in December 2017, just a day before what would have been her 74th wedding anniversary, *The Times* gave her a half-page obituary, and the popular press hailed her as 'the Angel of the Airwaves', the young woman whose voice had guided our pilots home from battle.

Between May and October 1943 Dad flew on 31 missions. By the end of his tour, along with his friends and crewmates on 57 Squadron, he had been engaged, often night after night, in some of the most intense fighting of the War, when the chances of surviving a tour of operations were marginally less than one in five.

After his final op, landing on two engines, and with his air speed indicator broken, Dad had been debriefed by Air Vice-Marshal Sir Ralph Cochrane, AOC 5 Group, Bomber Command, who told him he had done his bit, and recommended him for the immediate award of a DFC.



Stevie - back in his wartime office

He took his last flight on the night of 11 April 2020. The country was in lockdown, and I was unable to visit him in the beautiful nursing home at Saxlingham Hall in the heart of Norfolk where he had spent his last months after suffering a stroke. But we were able to talk on the telephone until a few minutes before the end. He was unphased, as if he was taxiing down the runway for an op.

His trademark sense of humour never left him, and as he approached take-off, he remained as cheerful as ever. "Don't worry," he said, "you're an old man yourself now, so it won't be too long before we're having another pint together. I'll be waiting for you when you touch down!"

All of this was going through my mind as Janey and I drove from our home in London to Lincolnshire. We had booked into a hotel in Ewerby, and Wing Commander Roger Bousfield arrived to take possession of Dad's memorabilia. We sorted through them over a pint, just as Dad would have prescribed, chatting, joking and exchanging stories.

Corpus Non Animum Muto: A Day in the History of 57 Squadron (continued)

Soon afterwards, Janey and I sat down to dinner. As we picked up the Wine List, the waitress said, "You don't need to bother. The CO of 57 Squadron has sent you a bottle of bubbly!"

When Rich Elford arrived in person, we raised a glass together, and I was reminded of an entry Dad had made in his diary under the heading, '57 Squadron Years with 57 Squadron'. Dad noted that he and my mother had celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary on 4 December 2000, then he added: 'On 7 December the largest bouquet we have ever had arrived together with a bottle of Moet & Chandon champagne. With it was a card saying *Congratulations from all at 57 Squadron. Sorry it's 57 hours late. 57 Squadron years on, it's still the same old spirit. Good old 57 Squadron!*'

That spirit was very much in evidence when our party arrived at Cranwell. When we followed Rich Elford into the crew room, we found it packed with trainee pilots and their instructors. We met the Chief Flying Instructor at Cranwell, and Major Bruce Atherton of the Royal Marines, on detachment to the Squadron, and I was delighted to be introduced to Flight Lieutenant Ernie Wise from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, one of the few people still standing who can fly a Lancaster.

Squadron Leader Jane Mannering gave us a briefing on 57 Squadron's current role as the main elementary flying training unit for the RAF and the rest of the military, and Roger Bousfield gave a demonstration of the Squadron's flying simulator, with Jonny Cracknell sitting excitedly at the controls.

I imagined Dad in his place. He would have relished it. After he finished his tour of ops, he became a flying instructor on Wellingtons. In August 1945 he was posted to Abingdon, where one of his jobs was to assess the flying skills of pilots returning from lengthy spells as POWs. As most of them outranked him, the AOC 91 Training Group gave him the title 'Unit Master Pilot', a designation apparently unique in the RAF.



Lunch in the Officers' Mess

At lunch we were joined by the Station Commander of Cranwell, Group Captain Tina Jessup, who told me that as far as she knew, a donation of this kind had not happened before, and I took this as something of a feather in 57 Squadron's cap.

Wendy Rothery and I sat together, laughing as we remembered some of Dad's comic asides at Squadron Association dinners. When lunch drew to a close, Rich Elford presented me with various gifts, among them a bottle opener bearing the Squadron motto, which would absolutely have delighted Dad, and we ended up toasting "57 Squadron, past, present and future".

But the centrepiece of the visit was the unveiling of the display cabinet, specially made to house my father's memorabilia, which now has pride of place in 57 Squadron's crew room.



Adrian Stevens alongside the display cabinet containing his father's flying tunic and other artifacts

Faced with Dad's wartime tunic mounted on a mannequin, his medals, log books, flying helmet and goggles, all meticulously and thoughtfully arranged by Roger Bousfield, I looked around me as I listened to Rich Elford making his speech.

In that moment, June 2023 seemed to blend into June 1943, and I found myself reflecting that if the young men and women watching the unveiling ceremony had been born into my father's generation, they would have been climbing into Lancasters to take the fight to Hitler in defence of freedom, just as Dad and his crew mates had done eighty years before.



A pensive Adrian Stevens

Corpus Non Animum Muto: A Day in the History of 57 Squadron (continued)



Adrian Stevens presents his father's memorabilia to 57 Squadron

"Corpus Non Animum Muto", and I'm sure I wasn't alone in feeling the sense of pride in continuity which that finest of military mottoes so perfectly conveys. It was, as Rich Elford said when we took our leave, a day which nobody who was there is likely to forget.



Display Cabinet containing Stevie's tunic, hat and other memorabilia

The memorabilia in the display cabinet may be my father's, but what really matters about them, as he would have been the first to say, is that they represent the Squadron and its proud tradition of service. In those brief minutes of the unveiling ceremony, the Squadron's past had merged with its present; its body may have changed in the eighty years since 1943, but its spirit manifestly had not. Dad and all the friends and crew mates who had flown with him had been welcomed home by the young men and women following in their footsteps. Their legacy had passed on, and it was in safe hands.

As I walked around the crew room afterwards, shaking as many hands as I could, I seemed to hear Dad's voice repeating the words he so loved to quote:

To Rich, Roger Bousfield, Jane Mannering, all the other members of 57 Squadron, and everybody at RAF Cranwell who did so much to make 20 June 2023 so special, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation.

My father, I know, would have saluted each and every one of you, and his face would have lit up with that inimitable smile of his.

And who knows, if you listen closely in a quiet off-duty moment, you might just hear the clink of glasses being raised to you in the Great Crew Room in the Sky!

Adrian Stevens
October 2023

From Cranwell to Africa

Anyone who has attended our Reunion in the past 3 years will have witnessed the parading of the 57 Squadron Standard. The Standard Bearer, Flight Lieutenant Ed Burrows, is perhaps unique in having begun his RAF flying career as a student with 57 Squadron at RAF Wyton and is today serving with the Squadron once again as one of its flying instructors. Here, Ed shares with us his plans for the next chapter in his flying career.

The RAF has been a huge part of my life for the last decade and a half and 57 Squadron has been there at both the start and the end. Next year I will be swapping military life to work for Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), a charity built on RAF heritage.



Ed Burrows pictured alongside a Grob Prefect and parading the 57 Squadron Standard at East Kirkby

From Cranwell to Africa (continued)

Born in the aftermath of World War II, MAF was set up out of a desire to use aviation for more than just an object of war.

Stuart King and Jack Hemmings, both ex-RAF personnel, flew a 1947 Miles Gemini aircraft from Croydon to the heart of Africa to assess the wide-ranging humanitarian needs.



Stuart King and Jack Hemmings pictured in front of their 1947 Miles Gemini

After this 6-month survey, plus 4 months driving the ground, the need was obvious and the role of aircraft in reaching people in isolated communities was a tantalising prospect. Almost 80 years later, this pioneering pair have laid the way for the largest humanitarian air operator in the world.



A MAF aircraft in Africa

MAF now operates in 31 countries worldwide with an MAF airplane taking off or landing every 6 minutes. MAF's vision is to see isolated people changed by using aviation to bring help, hope and healing.

I will miss my time with the RAF, especially my time serving on the frontline with the Search and Rescue Force (SARF) flying the iconic yellow Sea Kings and with 27 Squadron operating the mighty Chinook. Both have taken me around the UK and the world, and I loved my time flying helicopters.

Each role within the RAF has been very different and each very enjoyable. Living and operating with the



Ed Burrows pictured alongside a Sea King Mk3 of 202 Squadron D Flight, RAF Lossiemouth

French in Mali for a few months, going out at all hours in all weathers to rescue climbers stuck on the side of Ben Nevis, helping to place large bags of aggregate in a compromised dam in the Peak District and authorising young pilots on their first solo are all experiences that will stay with me, but there is one theme that keeps resonating within me. I have a passion for aviation and for using that passion for good.

It's that passion which is the reason my wife, Kathy and I will be moving, along with our 2 children Nathanael (4) and Eliana (3), to Liberia, West Africa, towards the end of 2024 and will be serving out there for four years as a family.



Liberia, West Africa

My family's journey with MAF has only just begun and there are still several training courses needed for Kathy and myself before we can deploy overseas and start flying the MAF aircraft of choice, the Cessna Grand Caravan.

From Cranwell to Africa (continued)

It will no doubt be a challenge, not least the environment, as we will be far away from our normal support network of family and friends.

If any of you are interested in finding out more about our journey or would like to sign up for further updates then you can visit our website www.wingingitburrows.com

Ed Burrows
October 2023

(Thank you Ed for your support to our Association over the past 3 years in your role as the Squadron Standard Bearer. We wish you safe travels, safe flying and every success to you and your family as you embark on your next adventure - Ed.)



The Burrows family - Africa-bound

Doug Packman Remembered



Doug Packman

Douglas Ernest Packman joined the Royal Air Force at 18, and served as a flight engineer with 630 Squadron at RAF East Kirkby and completed 34 Operations flying the Lancaster. This was followed by time as an instructor at RAF Syerston, before returning to 630 Squadron, and later serving with 57 and 44 Squadrons. Warrant Officer Packman left the RAF in March 1946 and, following a return to farming and a subsequent career in engineering, he passed away in 2019 at the grand old age of 93.

A plaque in Doug's memory was dedicated during our Reunion in July. Mike Chatterton led the dedication ceremony and his address follows:

"Thank you to everyone for joining us here for the dedication of Doug's plaque. You can see from the dates that we are about 4 years late, but Covid and other events have prevented us from being able to do this until now.

I'm pleased to say that we have Doug's great nephew Adrian, and Raine with us today, you are most welcome.



Association members, guests and visitors listen to Mike Chatterton tell Doug's story (Photo: Lisa Harding Photography)

Not many current members of the Association will have known Doug but he was very active in the early reunions after Association's formation. He used to go around on a farm tractor and trailer with my Father and Uncle Will collecting up chairs and tables from the local village halls for the event in the hangar; the museum wasn't quite so well equipped in those days.

Doug became an honorary member of the Chatterton family when he teamed up with my Dad as instructors at initially a No 5 Lancaster Finishing School at RAF Syerston, Dad as pilot instructor and Doug as flight engineer instructor, and then here to 630 Squadron, near our family home at Old Bolingbroke. When Dad went home he regularly

Doug Packman Remembered

took Doug with him, and he had been involved with the family ever since.

Doug was working on a farm in Kent when the War broke out. As soon as he was old enough he applied to join up and was successful. But when they found out that he was in a reserved occupation, to his dismay it was deferred. But he continually pestered the powers that be until they let him in and he then complete training to become a Lancaster flight engineer.



*Mike Chatterton talks with Doug's great nephew
(Photo: Lisa Harding Photography)*

When his crew did their conversion onto the Lanc at Syerston, my dad was their pilot instructor - they didn't realise that they would meet up again.

Doug was posted to 630 Squadron in June 1944 and survived 34 ops with his pilot Alex Swain. Their tour was not without incident.

On one trip they were attacked and badly damaged and the aircraft went into a spiral dive. The crew were ordered to bale out but with the g-forces Doug could not reach the escape hatch. The pilot told him to come back to the cockpit and help him with the controls. They managed to get the aircraft back under control and then get it all the way back home, but it was a close thing!

He then wondered what he would do next. Over at Syerston my Dad's previous flight engineer had left, so Doug was pleased to become his replacement.

Together they trained up many Lanc crews and then just near the end of the war Dad managed to swing a posting for them both to be near his family here at East Kirkby as instructors on 630 Squadron. When 630 Squadron was disbanded they moved across together to 57 Squadron. They were then the first squadron to get the Avro Lincoln and converted

crews onto that. Then when preparations were made for Tiger Force they were posted to Dad's old 44 Squadron then at Mildenhall.



*Relatives, Association Members and 57 Squadron personnel listen to Mike Chatterton's address
(Photo: Lisa Harding Photography)*

They didn't go anywhere with Tiger Force of course but did complete many Operation DODGE missions bringing troops back from southern Italy. Including one occasion when they were stuck in Pomigliano due to low clouds over the Alps for several weeks over Christmas and New Year 1945/46 with just a tooth brush.

Not long after that Doug was de-mobbed, he went back to farming initially, and then followed a career in engineering.

He lived at Whitstable in Kent for many years but after his beloved wife Peggs passed away he moved to be near an old family friend Barbara Masters in Sussex. Barbara's family adopted Doug and looked after him very well right up to his final take-off. It was Barbara who arranged for this plaque to be made; thank you Barbara.

Doug was famous for his yarns. My Dad used to say Doug's yarns were like a fine wine - they improved with age! Right up to the end he would ring me up every 5 or 6 months, I would settle in a comfy armchair and we would have a lovely long chat. He would say - 'did I ever tell you about the time' I would say yes, but I would love to hear it again!

One my favourites was about his crew's first Lanc trip with my Dad as instructor. This is a very shortened version! Just as they got to take off speed a mainwheel tyre burst, the undercarriage leg collapsed and the aircraft pirouetted down the runway before coming to a stop. Everyone got out unharmed and

Doug Packman Remembered

after my father had checked that everyone was ok he said - right let's go and get another one, I've shown you how to crash a Lancaster now I'll show you how to fly one!

Doug was a true gentleman and his wife Pegs was a wonderful lady, it was a privilege to know them, and I know they are missed greatly by family and friends."

Mike Chatterton
July 2023

(In November 2016, Doug was interviewed for the International Bomber Command Centre's digital archive. You can listen to Doug's story in his own words via this link <https://ibccdigitalarchive.lincoln.ac.uk/omeka/collections/document/8886> - Ed.)



Doug Packman
10 January 1925 - 31 July 2019

2024 Airshows

A selection of the major airshows and events across the UK during 2024 is listed below.

18 May	Abingdon Air & Country Show
1/2 June	Duxford Summer Air Show D-Day80
9 June	RAF Cosford Airshow
13 June	Guernsey Battle of Britain Air Display
24 June	National Armed Forces Day Event, Falmouth
28-30 June	Armed Forces weekend
5-7 July	Teignmouth Air Show
6/7 July	Wales Airshow, Swansea
13/14 July	Southport Air Show
19-21 July	Royal International Air Tattoo, RAF Fairford
20 July	Shuttleworth Summer Evening Air Show
22-26 July	Farnborough International Air Show
5 August	East Kirkby Airshow
10/11 August	Blackpool Airshow
22/23 August	Clacton Airshow
29 August	Bournemouth Air Festival
6/8 September	Goodwood Revival
12 September	Jersey International Air Display
14/15 September	Duxford Battle of Britain Air Show



Retracing my great-grandfathers final flight on two wheels

On the night of 21/22 May 1944, 630 Squadron Lancaster LL950 (LE-Y) and her crew of seven were lost during a mine-laying operation over the Kiel Bay. The aircraft had been shot down and crashed in Denmark near to the village of Vesterlund.

The Association's David Whiting, the son of the Flight Engineer, Max Whiting, was just 6 years old at the time. After the War, a memorial to the crew was erected by the local Danish Community nearby the aircraft crash site. Earlier this year, David's grandson, James Forsey - Max's great grandson - made his own pilgrimage to the memorial site.



Pilot Officer Max Whiting, 1944

As part of an internal fundraising initiative this July at my company (Mace), I took the opportunity to undertake a self-supported cycle to Denmark from the UK. The route, covering ~1,100km took me through The Netherlands, Germany, and then Denmark.



James' bicycle route overlaid with LL950s final flight

The route ended in a small Danish village which was the crash site of my great grandfather, shot down in World War II. The farm which the Lancaster bomber crashed in has been inhabited by the same Danish family for 5 generations, who have built and maintained a memorial on the site ever since.

Being the same age as me now when shot down, Max had been in a reserved occupation and had not been called up. As a volunteer he had aspired to join RAF Fighter Command, but was deemed too old and drafted to Bomber Command instead.



Memorial to the crew of LL950 (LE-Y)

I feel proud to be related to such a man but it acts as a reminder of how fortunate we are to live in the times we do.

The Danish are grateful for the sacrifice made by him and the allied troops for the freedom of Denmark and Europe from Nazi rule. I was able to meet with the grandson of the farmers who lived there when the plane came down and it was an incredible moment.



James taking a break on the German/Danish Border

Not only an incredible personal journey, the fantastic Mace Foundation have awarded me a £1,000 donation to a charity of my choice for winning the 'best story' category.

This has given me the opportunity to support Versus Arthritis, a charity which does amazing work for people suffering from arthritis and has supported research which enables me to do physical challenges such as this.

James Forsey
August 2023

Freddie Spencer DFC



Flt Lt Freddie Spencer DFC - 630 Sqn

Flight Lieutenant Freddie Spencer DFC served as the Flight Engineer Leader on 630 Squadron, having previously completed an 'Op' tour with 106 Squadron. Freddie's daughter, Jane, joined us for the Annual Reunion in July which was immediately followed by the 106 Squadron Reunion. Here, Jane, draws on recollections of her father and the extensive research into Freddie's service undertaken by the Association's Pete Sharpe.

"Generations of Freddie's family were farmers but his father (who served in the Royal Horseguards during WW1) did not want his son to continue the tradition - he wanted him to have a 'proper job'. So fresh from school his father arranged for him to train as an engineer. When war was imminent, aged 18 years, Freddie joined the RAF in 1939. As my father recalled from a selection interview: *"When the Group Captain studied my educational achievements and background he asked me "what do you want to be a pilot, navigator or bomb aimer? My father replied "I'm sorry sir, I don't want to fly".*

He first trained as a Flight Mechanic completing an intensive course in aircraft engines especially the Rolls Royce Merlin engine, working on 97 Squadron. He then decided he wanted to join aircrew and after completing the necessary training courses, he graduated as a Flight Engineer in June 1942 before joining 106 Sqn at RAF Coningsby.

Initially equipped with the troubled twin-engine Manchester bombers, the Squadron operated their newly delivered 4-engined Lancasters with a 2nd Pilot because of the shortage of Flight Engineers.

Since March 1942, 106 Squadron had been commanded by Wing Commander Guy Gibson DSO DFC. At the end of May/start of June 1942 every squadron and operational training unit was required to make available crews for all serviceable aircraft in order to get 1,000 aircraft into the air to attack Cologne and then Essen.

Freddie was one of the Flight Engineers who arrived

to join 106 Squadron during this period of frantic activity of continual day and night time flight tests and training. His regular crew were P/O Cooper, Freddie Spencer, Drew, Buzza, Tucker, Bailey and Gregory.



Freddie with his regular crew on 106 Sqn.
Freddie standing 2nd from left; Jim
Copper (pilot) kneeling 1st left

The early Flight Engineers were completely 'dropped in at the deep end'. Crews who had already been flying Ops in Manchesters and the new Lancasters with 2nd Pilots were to lose this team member with whom they had been sharing the risks over Germany and instead were allocated a 'sprog' (a new member who had little or no combat experience).

Surviving veterans reported that in the main the 'new bods', who were regarded as 'Gen Kiddies' (technically minded clever chaps) were welcomed into their crews and soon fitted in. Flight Engineers assisted with the Lancaster training process from the moment of their arrival at Coningsby and would be selectively added to crews who were ready to 'have a bash' the new way with a 'new bod' obviously needed to 'step up' and take on their own crews as Skipper.

Freddie's first Op with 106 Sqn was to be on the 'Maximum Effort' attack on Bremen in the early morning of 25 June 1942. His pilot was John Coates RAAF, a 30 year old from Queensland, Australia.

During the day they would have followed a standard routine which would be followed before every single Op they flew. The crew would have flown briefly to air-test their allocated Lancaster ensuring that it was serviceable in all aspects.

There would have been an afternoon briefing in which the routes to and from the target were unveiled, usually in the form of ribbons stretching from base across a huge wall mounted map, out across the North Sea towards the target, passing over the target area

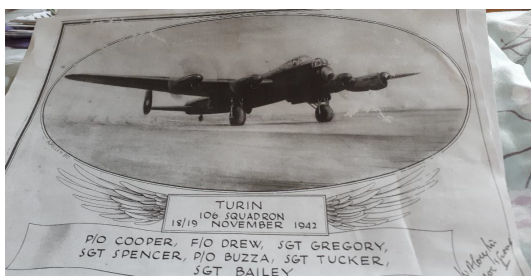
Freddie Spencer DFC (continued)

and indicating the route home. Survivors recalled that very distant targets or those known to be 'hairy' often led to sharp intakes of breath or muttered profanities.

Potential search light and flak belts along with known Luftwaffe night fighter airfields were pointed out for the Observers (Navigators) to mark on their charts and try to avoid. The Wireless Ops were given the callsigns and frequencies allocated for the night.

Met officers forecast expected weather conditions particularly warning of potential icing on wings which might bring an aircraft down. They also reported any forecast head or cross-winds which might push a crew way off course consuming fuel which may not be spare. Flight engineers worked to calculate and re-calculate the fuel loads based on the required routes, distances to be covered and bomb loads.

They took off from Coningsby at 23:45 hours and had an uneventful outward flight arriving over Bremen on time with the Main Force. They landed back at base at 04:05 hours. Freddie was doubtless exhausted and would have eaten breakfast in the mess with his crew.



Jim Cooper, Freddie and crew had survived their tour of Ops with 106 Sqn receiving many successful certificates

Freddie completed his second 'Op' tour with 630 Squadron at Raf East Kirkby. There his regular crew were Ken Ames - pilot, Freddie Spencer - 2nd pilot/flight engineer, Jim Wright - navigator, Tom Savage - bomb aimer, Tex Glasby - wireless operator/bomb aimer, Bill Leary - mid upper gunner, and Paddy Parle - rear gunner.

Freddie had now been appointed Flight Engineer Leader by Malcolm Crocker, he was to head up all of the Flight Engineers assigned to the squadron. His responsibility was to ensure the operational and technical competency of every Flight Engineer.

His duties would also extend to their personal well being, health and discipline. In the air each flight engineer reported to his Skipper who shared responsibility with Freddie, but on the ground, on and

off duty, on leave or in hospital they were Freddie's engineers. He held lectures and shared his experience with his engineers.



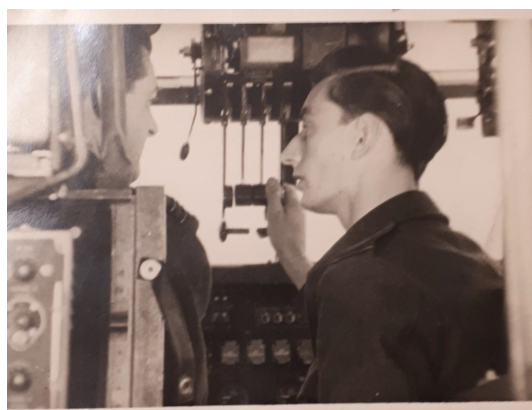
Standing (left to right) Tex Glasby, Ken Ames, Paddy Parle, Freddie Spencer, 2 ground crewmen. Squatting (left to right) 2 ground crew, Jim Wright, Bill Leary, a member of ground crew, Tom Savage.

At this point in his wartime career Freddie had the option to only fly once or twice a month but he chose to put himself on the 'Battle Order' almost every single time Ken Ames and crew was assigned and flew through the thick of a period of terrible losses setting an extremely high standard of courage.

The workload for a leader such as Freddie in his role as Flight Engineer Leader would have been enormous following so many losses, there would be 'sprog crews' arriving on the squadron and needing to be trained to bring them up to standard ready for their own first Op, replacement Lancasters arriving and being checked over and a mountain of paperwork.

After his second tour he was instructing at 1654 conversion unit, then the 1332 Heavy Conversion Unit.

Freddie was posted to 511 Squadron as Flight Engineer Leader on 25 January 1945. The first Squadron in the RAF to receive the new Avro Yorks, based at RAF Lyneham.



Freddie with the pilot on an Avro York

Freddie Spencer DFC (continued)

During Freddie's time with 511 Sqn there were numerous very long range flights from RAF Lyneham to Cairo, Colombo/Ratmalana and Calcutta. Frequently 511 Squadron flew heads of state and VIPs such as Winston Churchill, General De Gaulle, Lord Mountbatten. It is estimated that he flew 40-50 trips during his time with Transport Command.

Freddie's final posting was to RAF Luqa in Malta where the RAF was making instructional films. He de-mobbed on 9 May 1946.

Freddie's initial statement to the Oxford RAF recruitment officer that he did not want to fly must have caused much amusement to him in later life. After completing two tours with Bomber Command - almost 60 trips with 106 and 630 Squadrons. Even after his two tours, as Flight Engineer Leader, he amazingly put himself on 'battle stations' many times to join other crews who were short of a flight engineer. Then 40-50 trips with 511 Squadron.

After the war he joined BOAC for a short time until they had to ditch a plane in the sea after a bomb placed on the aircraft badly damaged the undercarriage. This convinced him to stop flying - so a new successful career in farming began. He and his wife successfully built up 3 farms. His beloved wife, Olive Julia, who was in the ATS during the war, died at just 51 years of age, devastating the whole family.

Flying again, privately, in his early 50's he was asked to be a pilot for a merchant banker based in Guernsey. Renting out the farmland he began life as

a commercial pilot flying all over the UK and Europe. Still managing to fly back to his landing strip on the farm each week.



He retained his commercial licence until he semi-retired on his Oxfordshire farm at the age of 76 years. He still took great pride in keeping the grass runway cut with his tractor and grass cutter up until a few weeks before he died aged nearly 82 years old."

Jane Spencer
November 2023

Detailed accounts of Freddie's wartime history can be found on the website of The International Bomber Command Centre Digital Archive <https://ibccdigitalarchive.lincoln.ac.uk/omeka/collections/document/35683>

W4250 - 57 Squadron

On Thursday, 9 December 1942, 227 aircraft took off from various bases across Britain to bomb Turin. Amongst the 115 Lancasters included in the raid was W4250, a 57 Squadron aircraft piloted by Flt Sgt Gordon Ramey. The outward journey proved uneventful, helped by a gusty 20 – 25 knot south westerly wind. On reaching the Italian city things started to go wrong.

The Pathfinders found marking the target difficult due to smoke over the city from the previous night raid. Ramey released his bombs but to what effect no one knows. As he turned for home the aircraft was shook by a series of flack bursts. Realising they were in trouble a new southern route was chosen instead of the Alps heading. Conditions became critical so Ramey requested to ditch, but permission was refused. Instead, he was instructed to make for base or Woodhall Spa.

Nearing the end of what must have been a nerve-wracking journey, Ramey circled Woodhall Spa several times, constantly in contact by radio. Their luck ran out with just one mile to go on final approach. W4250 crashed and burnt on Roughton Moor, only one crewman survived.

In 1989, ongoing research by Reg Hudson, who visited the crash as a boy, and the need for Gordon Ramey, the pilot's son, to know what had happened to his father, led to W4250 being recovered in 1990 by the Lincolnshire Aircraft Recovery Group (LARG), watched by Gordon Ramey Jnr. Due to only being a surface crash, only limited items were recoverable, the majority being molten aluminium from the ensuing fire.

Here, Association Member, Reg Hudson tells the story of his investigations into the crash of W4250.

"Like many schoolboys who lived in Woodhall Spa during the war years, I spent a lot of time watching flying at the airfield and visiting crash sites in the area. One such crash was on Roughton Moor, and although I visited several sites during the war this one always stood out in my memory.

Little did I realise as I stood looking at the smouldering wreckage that in later life it would occupy me in three very interesting years of research and make me many new friends both in Canada and nearer home.

It had always been my ambition to research the crash and if possible trace the survivors. In 1988, realising that the people involved had passed on or moved out of the area, I decided to start before it was too late.

I first contacted Tony Pell, whose late father, with Mr. Dixon and soldiers from the 367 Battery, LAA, helped rescue the crew from the aircraft. Tony could remember his father silhouetted behind the flames of the burning aircraft and coming home covered in oil, however he had no idea of the date of the accident, but his mother thought it was 1943, and she remembered that two crew were killed.

Consulting the Air Britain Lancaster Crash File showed a 97 Squadron aircraft, R5553 had crashed at Woodhall on the 5th May, 1943. After several weeks of research and no progress I contacted the Bomber Command Association. Mr. H. Ling of their research department came up with the answer that the crash was on the 5th May, 1942, and that the Air Britain date was wrong. In fact, although R5553 was a write off, the crew were uninjured. The pilot was F/O Maltby who later flew on the 'Dams Raid', and was killed on operations on the 14th September, 1943.

Talking one night to Bill Skelton, the local journalist,

he suggested I contact Mike Hodgson, who had a good knowledge of local crash sites. This I duly did but although Mike knew of the crash site, he did not have any knowledge of the aircraft involved. However, he said there were only about 200 crash sites in the county, and wished me luck!

Knowing that 619 Squadron was operating from Woodhall in 1943, I contacted Air Commodore Clark, of 619 Sqn Association, who was very helpful and sent me a complete history of the Squadron from 1943 - 1945, however none of the incidents would tie in with the Roughton Moor crash.

I then received a telephone call from Tony Pell. He had mentioned the crash to Bill Kent, who was in the Woodhall AFS, and had in fact attended the crash. Bill knew for certain the crash was in fact during 1942 and he thought the crew were killed.

More burning of the midnight oil showed two Lancasters had crashed in 1942 in that area, W4239 of 97 Squadron and W4250 of 57 Squadron. Transcripts from the accident cards showed two killed in the 97 Sqn crash and six killed in the 57 Sqn crash.

I opted for the 97 Sqn aircraft and placed letters in 'Flypast' and 'Air Mail' to try and trace the survivors. Meanwhile I contacted Les Ovens of the 57 Squadron Association to see if he could be of assistance. Les, by a coincidence, had received a letter from Gordon Ramey, in Canada, whose father was the pilot of the 57 Sqn aircraft and was seeking information about the crash. I wrote to Gordon, who by this time had recovered his father's log book from the National Archives in Ottawa, and also traced Sgt Bill Lundy, the bomb aimer, and the only survivor of the 57 Sqn crash. Owing to his severe injuries, all Bill could remember of the crash was a

W4250 - 57 Squadron (continued)

British soldier pulling him from the wreckage. He next woke up in the Rauceby Hospital and spent several months recovering before returning to Canada.

The aircraft had been on a raid to Turin and had been hit by flack over the target. On return the pilot had requested permission to ditch in the Channel, but was told to try and bring the aircraft in. The crew had the option of baling out but they chose to stay with the aircraft and take their chances. After circling the airfield several times they crashed. Of the one hundred and fifteen Lancasters which took part in the raid on Turin only one, W4250, was lost. A sad end and six more names to be added to the total of aircrew killed, a list that was to total 55,473 in Bomber Command by the end of the war in 1945.

Having had no response to my request in the two magazines I decided to put a letter in the Horncastle News in the hope someone local might be able to help. This brought a reply from Miss Rushby who had been an ATS cook at the RAMC sick quarters at St Hugh's school, and their ambulance had gone to the crash scene. After talking to Miss Rushby I had no doubt that the aircraft had been W4250 of 57 Sqn, which had crashed on the 10th December, 1942.

The crew were:

F/Sgt G.H. Ramey, Pilot RCAF
 Sgt A.J. McLaughlin, Navigator RCAF
 Sgt R.B. Dion, Air Gunner RCAF
 F/Sgt T.N. McLeod, Air Gunner RCAF
 Sgt W.O. Lundy, Bomb Aimer RCAF
 Sgt J.F. McPherson, W/Op RCAF
 Sgt R. Pharoah, Flt Engineer RCAF

Sgt Lundy was the only survivor and returned to Canada, where, still troubled by his injuries, he lives today (as at 1992).



The crew killed when W4250 crashed were buried at Coningsby with full military honors

Following an article in the 'Horncastle News', by Bill Skelton, about my research into the crash of W4250, I received a letter from Martin Nutman of the Lincolnshire Aircraft Recovery Group (LARG),

seeking information on the crash. I was able to help him with records from my research and I agreed to contact the owner of the land to try and obtain permission for a dig.

Although Mrs. Ackroyd was the owner of the land and lived in London, she was a former resident of Woodhall Spa and I knew her from wartime days. I contacted her and she gave her kind permission for us to carry out a dig on the site.

On Saturday, 4th August 1990, I met Martin and other members of LARG and showed them the crash site. During the day we recovered countless spent .303 bullet cases, bits of alloy and the navigator's broken rule. As time ran out, Martin asked me to approach Mrs. Ackroyd again for permission for another dig when he could arrange a larger team. This I duly did, and permission was once again given for a final dig and the date was arranged for Sunday, 9th September.

On Monday, 3rd September, I received a telephone call from Gordon Ramey in Canada, asking if we had fixed a date for the dig on his father's crash site. I informed him the date was set for next Sunday. He said he would do his utmost to get over if he could get a flight and permission to take time off work.

On 7th September, I received another call from Gordon; he was at Winchester Station. After collecting him and introducing him to my wife, we took him to our local for British bitter and pub grub. He seemed most impressed!

We had planned a 05:00 start to Lincolnshire on Saturday morning. In the event we were both up at 04:30. It was difficult to decide who was the most excited. After arriving at Horncastle we got Gordon fixed up at the Red Lion and agreed to pick him up on Sunday morning.

On Sunday morning we drove over to Woodhall and met Martin and his fellow diggers. After Martin had welcomed us on behalf of the group we proceeded to the site.



Gordon Ramey (L) and Reg Hudson at the crash site

W4250 - 57 Squadron (continued)

During the day we recovered a vacuum pump, perspex dial, pieces of rubber tyre, more pieces of alloy and the navigator's protractor. It was a beautiful autumn day spent in good company and I know Gordon appreciated everything that had been done by the LARG.



Gordon Ramey at the dig, holding a brake shoe

We returned to Hampshire leaving Gordon to spend a few days in Lincolnshire where he visited his father's grave, the 57 Sqn memorial and museum and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. He then spent a day at the RAF Museum at Hendon before returning to stay with us before flying back to Canada on Friday morning.

On the 6th July, 1991, Gordon and Edna Ramey and myself met members of the 57 Squadron Association after their dinner at Petwood Hotel, where Les Ovens, the Secretary invited Gordon and Edna to lay the wreath on behalf of the Association at the Memorial Service the next day.



Gordon and Edna Ramey at East Kirkby

After laying the wreath at the 57/630 Squadron memorial at East Kirkby, we all met at the nearby Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, where a display of the remains of W4250 was unveiled. A

presentation of the pilot's fuel dump handle mounted on a shield was made to Edna by the LARG, which was a very moving occasion."

One of the air gunners killed in the crash of WD 4250 was Canadian Sgt Raymond Dion, 22 years old.



Sgt Raymond Dion, RCAF

Earlier this year, Dion's grandson visited the UK to see his grandfather's grave and view the display to WD 4250 at East Kirkby.



Paul Dion by his grandfather's grave in Coningsby Cemetry

(Our thanks to Reg Hudson for allowing us to include this article in our newsletter. It was originally published in Aviation Archaeologist Magazine. The dig took place in 1990 watched by the pilot's son, Gordon, and the following year he and his mother Edna, Flt Sgt Ramey's wife, met members of our Association at the Petwood Hotel. Our thanks also to Dave Stuble of the Lincolnshire Aviation Recovery Group and Louise Bush from the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre for kindly supplying the various images. Ed.)

The Memorial Tree



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 callsign '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, The Memorial Tree, is less well-known but recalls memories of Reunions past.

The Memorial Tree

"No Trespassers", the sign proclaims,
As I pass by it, from the lane,
Through long grass, rippled by the breeze,
Forward to the brooding trees.

Footsteps muffled by thick leaf mould,
Like skeleton hands, the low twigs hold,
They catch my sleeves, as if in fear,
That I shall find their secret here.

Now suddenly, a clearing, split,
When a dying, plunging, aircraft hit,
A brass plate, fastened to a tree,
On it seven names stare out at me.

I press my fingers to the plate,
Thinking back to that night of fate,
That night of flame, and naked fear,
When a stricken bomber, crashed right here.

Memorial tree, with your long life span,
Far longer still than any man,
You can project for many years,
The memory of what happened here.

Now, as I leave this place of death,
The clearing seems to hold its breath,
On looking back, did I really see,
Seven figures there by the great old tree?

Back in the lane, back in the sun,
Back from the time, when I was young,
I have just seen what I came to see,
A brass plate, on an old, old tree.


Walt Scott

You can listen to the poem, read so wonderfully by Michael Howley, a navigator also of 630 Squadron, via this link [The Memorial Tree - 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)



Michael Howley

2024 Association Reunion

July 2024 							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
27	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
29	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
30	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
31	29	30	31				

The 2024 Association Reunion will be held over the weekend of Saturday 6 July and Sunday 7 July.

I am pleased to say that prices have been held at last year's level and the 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.

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 5 July - 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 if you do not book in advance.

Saturday 6 July - Petwood House Hotel

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

Sunday 7 July - East Kirkby/Petwood House Hotel

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



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Committee Members

Chairperson/Membership/Webmaster:

Group Captain (Retd) Tony Gunby

Secretary:

Wing Commander (Retd) Chris Morffew

Treasurer/Memorabilia:

Oliver Bridgman

Information Officer:

Air Commodore Wendy Rothery

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

In 2023, a revised Constitution for the Association was approved by Members at an AGM. You can see the Constitution on the website at https://57-630sqnassoc.org/wp-content/uploads/57-and-630-Squadrons-Association-Constitution_1-July-2023.pdf



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2024

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 6 July)	
Dinner (Sunday 7 July)	

<u>If staying elsewhere</u> please enclose a cheque, payable to 57 Squadron/630 Squadron Squadrons' Association, when you submit this form			
Function	Cost pp	Number Attending	Total Cost
Dinner (Saturday 6 July)	£48.50		
Dinner (Sunday 7 July)	£48.50		
Sub Total			
Donation to Association Funds			
Total Enclosed			

Memorial Service – Sunday 7 July	Number in your party attending



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2024

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 2024.**

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
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