

57 & 630 Squadrons' Association



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The 2024 Reunion in pictures

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The 2024 Reunion

The 2024 Reunion kicked off in the gardens of the Petwood Hotel on Friday afternoon where we met the visiting party from Oud Turnhout, followed by an informal dinner.



New friends and warm beer



Afternoon tea

On Saturday after afternoon tea, we held our Annual General Meeting, before gathering for pre-dinner drinks in the Woodland Suite where we welcomed members of the Panton family, together with a contingent of staff and trainees from 57 Squadron, led by Wing Commander Rich Elford, together with their partners.

As dinner progressed, the volume of discussions rose as we enjoyed the excellent fare provided by the Petwood. As our principal speaker, Rich Elford provided us with an update on events on the Squadron and developments in wider RAF flying training scene.



OC 57 Sqn sings for his supper

Then Jhonny Bastiaensen presented two photographs of the Lancaster monuments as a sign of connection between Oud Turnhout and the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association. In turn, our Chairperson passed these to Louise Bush who will find a suitable place for them at East Kirkby.

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. As the service in the hangar started, the heavens opened and it was decided to conduct the final part of our Memorial Service, including wreath laying, in the hangar. The wreaths were subsequently moved to the 57 & 630 Squadrons Association memorial later in the afternoon.



Memorial Service in the Hangar at East Kirby

Then it was time for refreshments in the NAAFI and the opportunity to watch Just Jane conduct a couple of taxi runs.



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.

The BBMF Spitfire crash, and tragic loss of Sqn Ldr Mark Long, in late May had led to the grounding of the entire BBMF while the investigation was underway. We were therefore denied a flypast this year, but we hope to once again see the Lanc over East Kirkby in 2025.

On Sunday evening, a 'survivors' informal dinner was held at the Petwood, before the final few attendees departed for home the following morning.

Next year's Reunion will be held over the weekend of Friday 4 July - Sunday 6 July 2025. More details are available towards the back of this Newsletter and on our website.

Chairperson's Thoughts



*Tony Gunby
Association Chairperson*

Looking back on the past 12 months, I think mainly of rain - and slugs! More seriously, political change in Europe and conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East seem to have dominated.

Against that backdrop, the D-Day 80th commemorations served to remind us of the bravery and sacrifice of thousands and the enduring costs of conflict. Ultimately, conflict is only resolved around the conference table so let's hope that our leaders reach that point sooner rather than later.

Alex Fraser, celebrated his 100th birthday this Summer with a family reunion in his home town of Kinross. Alex flew 36 ops as a flight engineer with 630 Squadron.

His first mission was to Konigsberg on 29 August 1944. His aircraft was badly shot up losing all communication systems, part of the tail and leaking fuel. He and his crew managed to fly home on just two of the four engines with no major injuries.

Not the most encouraging start to a RAF career which subsequently spanned 42 years and concluded with a period on VC10s where he held an 'A' and VIP operating Category.

Alerted to his birthday by relatives, the Association sent its best wishes to Alex and with help from RAF Community Support, we managed to get a RAF officer along to join Alex and his family.



Alex Fraser celebrates his 100th with family and friends

In May, events were held in Oud Turnhout, Belgium, to mark the 80th anniversary of two Lancaster crashes (one each from 57 and 630 Squadrons) while on the infamous raid against the synthetic oil plant at Wesseling. We were delighted to welcome a party

from Oud Turnhout to our Reunion in July and you can read more about why they came, and what they did on their visit, later in this Newsletter.

There is also the story of a new memorial to a 57 Squadron Lancaster crew lost in the Cambridgeshire Fens in 1944.

Both articles demonstrate the complexities of establishing new memorials and how determined those involved have to be to achieve their goals. I never cease to be amazed and humbled by the efforts of individuals and groups, who put in so much hard work.

In a similar vein, we heard late in the year of an ANZAC Day service held at Stonefall War Cemetery, Harrogate, where three Kiwis that flew with 630 Squadron are buried. Read more about this event later in the Newsletter.

During our Reunion, we were saddened to hear of the passing of Helen Francis, wife of the late David who's father Ray flew with 57 Sqn from East Kirkby. Helen and David were regulars at our Reunions, joining us from their home in Switzerland for many years.

The annual update from 57 Squadron provides us with an insight into the flying training task, but also the social and sporting endeavours of its staff and trainees.

We were delighted to welcome 16 new members to our Association this year which demonstrates that our Association is alive and kicking.

I should put on record our thanks to Chris Morffew for arranging another excellent Reunion, to Wendy Rothery for battling her way through the never-ending stream of research enquiries, and to Oliver Bridgman for managing our financial affairs.

My thanks also to everyone that has contributed to this Newsletter. It would be very short without your support.

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

Tony Gunby
December 2024

From the Secretary



*Chris Morffew
Association Secretary*

Well what a busy year it turned out to be. In February I represented the Association, with my wife Nancy, at a 57 Squadron Guest Night at RAF Cranwell. It was an honour to be asked to say a few words and to propose the toast to 57 Squadron. It was a wonderful evening as proved by the fact that Nancy and I didn't leave the bar afterwards until 1:30 in the morning!! It was a great opportunity to meet more of the 57 Squadron staff and trainees.

In April, Oliver Bridgman, and I represented the Association at the dedication of a Memorial at Eastrea in memory of a 57 Squadron Lancaster crew that crashed on the edge of the village in April 1944; sadly six of the crew's bodies were never recovered so the memorial will mark both their passing and their final resting place. The acquisition of the Memorial, and its subsequent dedication, was organised by Councillor Barry Wainwright and he has written a piece for this newsletter which you will find further on.



Eastrea Memorial party (Photo: RTW Photography)

On 30 June I attended the Bomber Command Act of Remembrance at the Bomber Command Memorial. The RAF Benevolent Fund is the custodian of the Memorial which it aims to preserve for future generations so that the sacrifice of the 55,573 men who lost their lives in Bomber Command will always be remembered.

Some of you may not be aware that while both 57 and 630 Squadrons served with distinction during the war, 57 Squadron served in 2 Group, 3 Group and 5 Group and sadly suffered the highest percentage loss rate in all three Groups and the highest combined in Bomber Command.



Photograph Courtesy of RAF Benevolent Fund - Matt Pereira

Oliver Bridgman, and I laid wreaths to remember all the servicemen of 57 and 630 Squadrons who lost their lives while serving in Bomber Command.

July saw our Annual Reunion and it was an absolute pleasure to catch up with so many of our members. Bill Bohanna has kindly donated a framed print of a Lancaster flying over Lincoln which we will auction next year. There was a slight reduction in the numbers attending this year and we have decided that next year's Afternoon Tea, the AGM and the Dinner will be held in the Petwood Suite. Full details, including booking forms, are at the end of this Newsletter.



The 57 Squadron Standard on parade at East Kirkby

It was an honour to once again represent the Association, and lay a wreath, at this year's Remembrance Sunday service at East Kirkby. As usual it was organised by Mike Chatterton and his team.

It was a wonderful, moving event and it was well attended by villagers, the Pantons, Association members, a representative of RAF Coningsby, representatives of 57 Squadron from

From the Secretary (continued)

Cranwell and "The Rutland Hogs" who once again laid their own wreath. It was particularly good to see so many of the 57 Squadron trainees in attendance. 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.

We enjoyed hot drinks and some beautiful cake afterwards in the temporary marquee while the "NAAFI" building is being extended. This work will double the NAAFI in size with an expanded and modernised kitchen but, at the same time, preserving the atmosphere of the old building. We very much look forward to seeing it operating when we go again in July.



The 57 Squadron Standard on parade at East Kirkby

Chris Morffew
 December 2024
secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org

Money Matters



*Oliver Bridgman
 Association Treasurer*

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

The Association's financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March and during the period ending March 2024, income exceeded expenditure by £1,143. The Association bank accounts were in credit to the tune of £7,643 as at 31 March 2024. Copies of the accounts are available from me at treasurer@57-630sqnassoc.org.

You will all 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, to safeguard its future.

During the financial year to 31 March 2024, donations from members amounted to £894. 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 raffles and the occasional auction. While there was no auction this year, the general raffle and Just Jane taxi ride raffles together raised a little over £800 and a further £105 was donated during the Sunday memorial service. A very big thank you to those that provided raffle prizes and of course to the Panton family and Lincolnshire Aviation Centre, for their continued generosity in providing the Just Jane taxi ride.

Accounts for 2024/25 will be available at the Annual Reunion in July.

Oliver Bridgman
 October 2024

New Members

Our Association continues to attract new members, whether they formerly served on one of the two Squadrons, are relatives of those who served, or actively engaged in research into some aspect of our heritage. As this newsletter is published, we have around 190 members on our membership list.

This year, we have welcomed:

Anne and Maggie Appleton whose father served as an armourer on 57 Sqn at RAF Scampton and East Kirkby;

Johnny Bastiaensen, Gert Bastiaensen, Michel Haest, Jurgen Sack and Stefan Vantigchelt, members of the heritage team that have erected memorials to Lancaster I LM115 DX-M (57 Sqn) and Lancaster I ME782 LE-N (630 Sqn) that crashed on 22 June 1944 in Oud Turnhout, Belgium;

Jonny Cracknell who co-authored the biography of the inimitable Steve Stevens;

Kenny MacMillan who served with 57 Sqn as a ground technician in the early 1980s;

Alistair Campbell-Grieve who's great uncle Keith Stevens was the WOp Leader on 57 Sqn in 1943/44;

Barry Wainwright who has been the driving force behind inauguration of a new memorial to the crew of 57 Sqn Lancaster ND475;

Lisa Valen, daughter of the late Roy Nash;

Jason, Paul and Mark Tansley whose grandfather Ernest Tansley was serving as a pilot with 57 Sqn when he was lost in action in December 1943; and,

Barbara Hunter, the RNZAF Bomber Command's representative in the UK.

A very warm welcome to you all and we hope that you will be able to attend one or more of our events in the future.

News from the Frontline



Wing Commander
Rich Elford
OC 57 Squadron

It is my pleasure to update you on another busy period for the Squadron. I find it hard to believe a year has passed since my last update! Once again, the unit has been involved in an impressive range of activities, not only in our primary flying training role but also across wider sporting, adventurous training, and other Force Development activities. I will use a loose chronological flow for the update but also cover in more detail some aspects that I hope will give a deeper insight into the work of the current 57 Squadron.

The Squadron continued to operate in the Elementary Flying Training role with much of the training load early in the year being either 'refresher' or 'lead-in' courses. The refresher course brought trainees who had completed their Elementary courses (EFT) but had a delay before their next stage of training back up to speed. The Fast Jet and Multi Engine Lead-in Courses took the output of those refreshers and delivered more focussed training relevant to their future frontline roles; I will expand on the content of these courses and how trainees are 'streamed' to future role later.



Grob Prefects 'on the Line'

By the end of the year the focus had shifted, now a major stream of our throughput was the EFT course, with trainees arriving almost straight from their Officer Training courses. On completion of EFT they were moving straight to the appropriate lead-in course. This is how the training 'pipeline' should be functioning and it is pleasing to have reached that point.

During the period October 2023 to end of September 2024 the Squadron flew over 7500 hours. It also delivered over 5200 hours in the Prefect Flying Training Device, our basic simulator. Eighty-two trainees completed EFT courses and fifty

-three were refreshed after a period away from training. Thirty-nine completed Multi Engine Lead-in courses and fifty-two the Fast Jet Lead-in. Finally, seventeen flying instructors were either trained to instruct on the Prefect or taught to deliver the lead-in courses.

January 2024 brought the usual challenge of delivering elementary training in the UK winter weather. Nevertheless, Refresher, and Fast Jet Lead-in continued to progress, and a Multi Engine Lead-in completed and moved on to our neighbour, 45 Squadron, for Advanced Multi Engine Training. Despite the Prefect being capable of flight in poor weather - in fact the avionics are pretty much the same as would be found in a modern airliner! - the winter does remain a challenge, as the early syllabus still includes flight by reference to visual attitude and a 'general handling' phase that needs suitable visual horizons for circuits, stalling and aerobatic flight.

Away from flying a team from the Squadron took part in Exercise Phoenix Blizzard - a skiing expedition to Val Thorens.



Exercise Phoenix Blizzard - Val Thorens,
January 2024

Another of the instructors travelled to Bavaria to develop further as a ski instructor/leader.

Back at home, the Squadron said farewell to Squadron Leader Mike Chambers, Officer Commanding 'B' Flight as he left Barkston Heath bound for a flying instructional post in the USA.

A mixture of EFT, refresher and lead-in courses continued through February. All these courses need trained and standardised instructors. That is also a

News from the Frontline (continued)

function of part of 57 Squadron: in this case the staff of 'C' Flight. The instructors on the flight are Central Flying School Accredited Instructors and tend to be the more experienced members of the Squadron's instructional staff - a prerequisite for selection being an assessment as an 'above average', known as A2 Category, instructor. They deliver conversion to Prefect and then instructional technique training, taking pilots who have no background in instruction and training them to deliver the EFT course. At the end of this training Central Flying School will assess the candidates and, if successful, award their initial instructional category.

The team also deliver top-up training courses to allow the instructors to subsequently deliver lead-in courses and fulfil an important role standardising the delivery of training on 57 Squadron.

Away from flying the Squadron took part in a successful Formal Staff Visit by Headquarters 22 Group to 3 Flying Training School, won the CO's Cup Swimming Gala and, most significantly held the annual 57 Squadron Dining In Night in Daedalus Officers' Mess with Air Commodore Rothery very kindly acting as Guest of Honour. It was an outstanding evening and one at which I was glad to able to host representatives of the Association.



57 Squadron Dining-In, Daedalus Mess, RAFC Cranwell, February 2024

March saw an uptick in flying hours and the delivery of important milestones such as first solos and end-of-course tests. Still flying but this time on a motorcycle was Flight Lieutenant James Leslie, of 'B' Flight, as Captain of the RAF Motorcycle Road Racing Team at Round 1 of the Inter Services Competition at Snetterton.



James Leslie on a 'flying lap'

Also on two wheels Flight Lieutenant Terry Jones, of 'A' Flight led an amazing fund-raising effort - The Great Escape. A team of motorcyclists headed over 1900 miles from Cranwell to Sagan, the site of Stalag Luft IIIB.



Paying respects at the site of tunnel Harry, Stalag Luft IIIB.

Some innovative fund-raising events took place, including the issue of 'Red Cross' lunchboxes to the occupants of the Sykes Building and over £8000 was raised for the Royal Air Force Association.



The Great Escapers, including Flight Lieutenants Terry Jones, Nick Geary and Del Rowe of 57 Squadron and Mr Charlie Allen

News from the Frontline (continued)

The Squadron hosted a visit from the Flying Scholarship for Disabled Peoples scheme - giving the members of that scheme an insight into our training. The Squadron also bid farewell to Flight Lieutenant Ed Burrows, who some of you will have seen in action as our Standard Bearer. He and his young family were bound for Liberia as he left the RAF started a new job as a pilot with the Mission Aviation Fellowship charity. *(You can read about the Burrows' family's venture in the 2023 Newsletter - Ed.)*

Our four Royal Australian Air Force trainees completed their Fast Jet Lead-ins in April and moved on to the Texan aircraft at RAF Valley. The Fast Jet Lead-in course follows on from the EFT course with a focus on more advanced general handling skills such as spinning and advanced aerobatics, procedural instrument flying including use of Instrument Landing System and holding procedures, further low-level navigation, formation flying including tail-chasing and composite sorties featuring a blend of these skills. It also exposes the trainee to significantly more solo flying time.

The Multi Engine Lead-in on the other hand introduces multi crew skills, procedural instrument flying, airways flying, formation and exposure to major civilian airports. Pilots bound for helicopters do not complete any fixed wing training after EFT. Streaming - the process to decide which route the trainee will go down - is undertaken at the end of EFT based on the trainees' performance up to that point.

On 19 April Squadron Leader Jane Mannering, the Executive Officer, represented the Squadron at the unveiling of a memorial to Lancaster ND475 which crashed near Eastrea, Peterborough in 1944. I was pleased that the Squadron and Association were invited to be present at this local commemoration.



Unveiling the ND475 memorial at Eastrea, April 2024

The approach of the 80th anniversary of D Day in May saw commemorative events being held on mainland Europe. Flight Lieutenants Roger Bousfield and Joe Stevens travelled to Oud Turnhout to mark the liberation of the town and the loss of Lancaster LM115 and were superbly looked after by their Belgian hosts. Meanwhile, Flying Officer Ruaridh Penman represented the Squadron at a memorial to a Squadron aircraft lost on the Maily-le-Camp raid.



Roger Bousefield and Joe Stevens at Oud Turnhout, May 2024

Cranwell was the venue for the annual Central Flying School (CFS) graduation and awards. Captain Ben Hull won the CFS Cup award for the QFI who best exemplified the ethos of CFS and Flight Lieutenant Simon Flynn won the Concentration Cup for best ab initio Prefect Qualified Flying Instructor. The month also saw victory for the Squadron in the CO's Cup carting event.



Captain Ben Hull wins the CFS Cup

News from the Frontline (continued)

The momentous events of 80 years before were marked in early June focussing on not only 57 Squadron activity around the event but also the US Airborne Forces who departed RAF Barkston Heath on the 5th June 1944 to drop into occupied Europe. A series of vignettes was delivered to mark the event, along with a barbeque at Barkston.

A Prefect and crew supported the busy Cosford Airshow static display. Flight Lieutenant Dunc Mason led a team of cyclists from the Squadron, following extensive training rides, on the Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA) Ride from former RAF Cottesmore. A very brief period of hot weather saw issues with the parking area surface at Cranwell again but the awful summer that followed meant the impact was much more limited than last year. 57 Squadron closed out the month with a win at the CO's Cup Touch Rugby and played our joker resulting in double points.

July saw me lead the Squadron representation to the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association weekend at the Petwood Hotel and East Kirkby. We were warmly hosted - my thanks once again for your generosity in inviting us. I'm pleased to maintain such a strong link between Squadron and Association. The event marked Flight Lieutenant Del Rowe's debut as the new Squadron Standard Bearer.



The 57 Squadron Standard on parade at East Kirkby, July 2024

The end of the month saw two Prefects deployed to support the Royal International Air Tattoo Military Flying Training System static display, with staff and trainees in support. I also had the honour of attending the Bomber Command Day event at the International Bomber Command Centre.



Bomber Command Day at the IBCC

The remaining active 'bomber' squadron standards, including ours, were on display and a 3-ship of Prefects from the Squadron formed part of the flypast for the event.

We said a few 'goodbyes' to various staff over the summer, with Flight Lieutenant Jon Taylor leaving on promotion to Squadron Leader, Flight Lieutenant Chris Porter returning to British Airways, Squadron Leader Idrees Al Balushi returning to Oman on completion of his exchange tour and Captain Lillian Kentish leaving to pursue an airline career. If nothing else that sentence shows how diverse our QFI cadre is! I was also delighted to give one of two Kenyan officers training with us the great news he had been promoted to major whilst on the QFI course.

September saw a rash of triathlon activity with Lieutenant (RN) Ben Taylor and Flight Lieutenant Simon Flynn competing in the Inter Services Middle Distance Triathlon Championships, only to be trumped by the Ascent Chief Prefect Pilot, Captain Pete Keenlyside, completing an Iron Man!

Flight Lieutenant Dunc Mason was one of the organisers of the JET Ride supporting the Jon Egging Trust. A major event mounted out of Cranwell, Dunc not only was one of the driving forces behind the event itself but also enthusiastically mustered a team including four trainees and six staff from 57 Squadron. Lots of other members supported the event whether baking (or just eating) cakes and marshalling the riders on the day.

The Squadron's main Adventurous Training event of the year Exercise Dolomite Dash saw members of the Squadron deploy to Italy to undertake hiking, mountain biking, climbing and via ferrata – returning, much to my relief, without anything worse than a few sniffles!

News from the Frontline (continued)

Our two Kenyan students, Capt Ngeywo and Major Mutiria, completed their instructor training and returned home but not before treating some of us to a Kenyan dining experience in their favourite African venue in Lincoln. They had been a credit to their Air Force and their smiling approach to all we threw at them was much appreciated.



Capt Ngeywo and Major Mutiria

I hope that this piece gives you a flavour of what a thriving, diverse unit 57 Squadron is today. We are the start point for almost every Royal Air Force pilot's military flying career. I frequently draw on the example of those who went before us to inspire the new generation as they pass through their training.

As usual I am drafting this update as the nights start to draw in and thoughts turn again to Remembrance Sunday. The Squadron will again be proudly parading its Standard at East Kirkby, our spiritual home. I continue to be immensely grateful for the warm support the Association offer to the current Squadron. I look forward to seeing as many of you as I can and continuing that relationship through 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*

This year has provided more opportunity to commemorate and celebrate the contribution of 57 and 630 Squadrons throughout the history of the RAF, and to reflect on the key role they played during WWII, not least with the incredibly moving 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings on 6th June.

As part of the RAF anniversary commemorations, three Atlas C1 (A400M) aircraft dropped paratroopers over Sannerville, mirroring the actions of RAF Dakota aircraft 80 years ago, and I was honoured to speak at the 57 Squadron annual Dining-In Night where I recounted the actions of 57 and 630 Squadrons throughout 1944. I also played a small part in the 6 June commemorations by recording a short video to mark the actions of 57 and 630 Squadrons in support of D-Day: [D Day 80 - Air Commodore Rothery Shares Tribute to Her Grandfather \(youtube.com\)](#)

The first 3 months of 1944 marked the second phase of the Berlin campaign, including diversionary raids and other attacks on German infrastructure and manufacturing capability. From April onwards, focus shifted to the shaping

operations ahead of the Normandy landings, followed by support operations and further interdiction missions aimed at disrupting enemy logistics. On the night of 5-6 June 1944, both squadrons directly supported the D-Day Mission; the Operational Record Books provide the following accounts:

57 Squadron - 16 aircraft were detailed and all took off to attack coastal guns at La Pernelle. The red Target Indicators appeared to be a little late in going down but at 0339 the controller broadcast a bombing wind and the order to bomb. Bombing ceased at 0403 hours. Most crews had no difficulty in bombing the markers or the glow reflected on the clouds. Ground defences were negligible and no fighters were seen. One aircraft (DX-F) jettisoned all bombs and all returned safely to base.

630 Squadron - Night bombing attack on La Pernelle. A bomb load of 11 x 1000 MC plus 4 x 500 GP was carried by all aircraft who also carried H2S, Fishpond and API, whilst ND-531 and ND-335 carried Mandrel in addition. The target was the gun emplacements at La Pernelle. 16 aircraft were detailed but one, ND-335, Captain Sgt Hayes, failed

Research Update (continued)

to attack owing to his inability to see the markers. Whilst it has been obvious for some time that these attacks were in preparation for the long awaited Allied invasion of Europe, it was not until this morning, 6th June, that it was possible to see how big a part in the scheme they formed. It is extremely gratifying to this Squadron to find that this, the last attack before the start of the invasion, was so successful. The red Target Indicators went down a little late, but at 0339, the controller gave a wind of 289/36 and 2 red target indicators were attacked. All aircraft except ND-335 reported no difficulty in bombing the markers. Photographs brought back show a successful attack. The ground defences were negligible and no fighters were seen. Weather 10/10ths thin layer cloud at about 10,000 feet with varying amounts of Stratocumulus at about 7,500 feet drifting across the target.

By the end of D-Day, the RAF had flown 5,656 sorties and seen the loss of 113 aircraft. Without control of the air, the story both in the air and on the ground would have been substantially different. Bomber Command suffered 1,475 casualties on the day and their sacrifice was marked this year at the British Normandy Memorial in Ver-sur-Mer by an exhibition of silhouettes, 'Standing with Giants', representing the number of fatalities under British command on 6 June 1944.

With the exception of a successful mission by 57 Squadron on 3 June as part of a force which destroyed a German signals station at Ferme D'Urville, 57 and 630 Squadrons operated together on night operations throughout June and July 1944.

In May I had the great pleasure of joining the city council and the people of Oud-Turnhout near Antwerp, Belgium, together with a small party from 57 Squadron, at ceremonies to mark 80 years of freedom since the liberation of Belgium in 1944, and to commemorate the loss of aircraft from 57 Squadron and 630 Squadron on the night of 21-22 June 1944 during the infamous Wesseling raid, the most costly single operation from RAF East Kirkby (11 aircraft and 9 crews). Susan Leddy, the daughter of Flight Lieutenant John Maunsell - one of the 4 crew members to survive the loss of LM115 (DX-M) - was an honoured guest together with her husband and sons. We were all made very welcome by Jhonny Bastiaensen from the Oud-Turnhout Historic Association and his colleagues who coordinated the event, and we were delighted that they were in turn able to attend this year's Association reunion.

It was both an honour and a privilege to visit Oud-Turnhout and take part in their 80th anniversary service, which also recognised the local people who lost their lives during the War and the bravery shown by those who, in occupied territory, gave safe haven to Allied forces, at great risk to



themselves. Thank you to the people of Oud-Turnhout for all that you do to remember the bravery and sacrifice of Allied forces, ensuring that their memory is preserved.

To mark Remembrance Day this year, a short film 'Remembering The Avro Lancaster' was released on the International Bomber Command Centre Youtube Channel: [Remembering Avro Lancaster - YouTube](#)

It premiered to a live audience on 10 November, as part of a special event at The Torch Theatre Milford Haven when 'Attack on Sorpe Dam' featuring George 'Johnny' Johnson of 617 Squadron was also screened.

I am pleased to report that there remains a healthy level of interest in 57/630 Squadrons from families, researchers, and friends such as Jhonny who look after graves and memorial sites across the globe. In the last year, I have responded to a good number of enquiries, which have averaged just under one per week, and am working my way through the last few.

Many thanks to Pete Sharpe and the forensic detail contained in his websites dedicated to each Squadron, and to Louise Bush from the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, who maintains a wealth of information on both 57 and 630 Squadrons. It is due in no small part to their dedication that responses to enquiries are as detailed as possible, although it can take some time to do them justice, especially around a busy day job, so please bear with me! If you have a research enquiry, please get in touch; I'd love to hear from you.

Wendy Rothery
December 2024

Oud-Turnhout: Lancasters, monuments and commemorations

During our stay in England in July, I was asked to tell the story of the Lancaster plane crashes in Oud-Turnhout, the monuments and the commemorations for this Newsletter. First, I would like to introduce myself.

My name is Jhonny Bastiaensen and I am a member of the Oud-Turnhout Heritage Association. I mainly research war events in our municipality including the plane crashes. I am also the chairman of the committee that organises the commemorations.

History of the crashes

Oud-Turnhout is located some 40 km beyond Antwerp and close to the Dutch border. During World War II, this area was the approach route to Germany's industrial areas and on the road to Eindhoven during Operation MARKET GARDEN.

Therefore, in the Kempen, the region where we live, you will find several crash sites. Within a 30 km radius of where I live, there are a 34 monuments as a reminder.

In Oud-Turnhout itself, eight allied planes crashed; four British and four American. Two crash sites have belonged to Retie, a neighbouring municipality, since 1976 and of one crash we have little data to identify the aircraft. That is why there are only five monuments today. In this article, I want to limit myself to the British aircraft only.

The first aircraft, the Wellington R1184 BH-B of the 300th Polish Squadron, was shot down by night fighter Oberleutnant Wolfgang Thimmig on 11 July 1941. The crew was able to abandon the aircraft by parachute and all were taken prisoner of war.

Then, for the subsequent crashes, it is June 1944, a dark page in our local history. On the night of 21-22 June 1944, 18 aircraft from 57 Squadron and 19 from 630 Squadron took off from their bases at East Kirkby around 11.30pm for a mission to the synthetic oil refinery at Wesseling on the Rhine.

Losses that night were high, the reason being clear skies, heavy FLAK and the presence of large numbers of night fighters. In the end, 27% of the 139 aircraft that took part in the Wesseling raid did not return to their bases. In Lage Mierdseweg, two Lancasters crashed in the same street.

Lancaster ME782 LE-N of 630 Squadron was shot down by a German night fighter. The plane exploded in mid-air, killing the entire crew. The debris was scattered far and wide. I found little other information or photographs about this crash.

The Library and Archives in Canada do have the files of the 4 Canadians who were part of the crew. These

can be viewed online. The crew was:

Pilot	P/O Thomas Hart RCAF age 21
Flight Engineer	Sgt Ronald Jordan RAF age 26
Navigator	Sgt Michael Macnaughton-Smith RAF age 20
Bomb Aimer	P/O John Scully RCAF age 21
WOp	F/S Raymond Harwood RAF age ?
MUG	P/O Richard Walton RCAF age 20
Rear Gunner	Sgt Archie Siemins RCAF age ?

All are buried in the Schoonselhof military cemetery in Antwerp.



Memorial to the crew of ME 782 of 630 Sqn, Lage Mierdseweg, Oud Turnhout. (Source: Jhonny Bastiaensen)

Lancaster LM115 DX-M of 57 Squadron was also attacked by a German night fighter and crashed burning at the beginning of the Lage Mierdseweg barely 15 metres from the farm 'De Vossepipj'. Three crew members were killed in the crash.

The body of the pilot, Alan Bayley, was still in the cockpit. He failed to get out of the aircraft by trying to keep the bomber airborne as long as possible in order to give the others the chance to bail out.

Johnny Donovan the tail gunner was still in the turret, but had probably been killed earlier by the night fighter's forward firing.

Frank Beecher the radio operator was found near the wreckage, he still managed to leave the plane but due to the low altitude his parachute failed to open fully and he was killed.

All three are buried in Schoonselhof military cemetery. The other four crew members did manage to get out of the plane.

Lloyd Marshall, the mid-upper gunner, and Archie Naysmith, the bomb aimer, were immediately taken prisoner of war. A witness later told me that the Germans, with both sitting in front on a sidecar, took a ride through the village to proudly display their prisoners. Maria one of the witnesses who was 19 at the time described this motorbike ride to me very

Lancasters, monuments and commemorations (continued)

precisely 60 years later. Two handsome young men sitting on the sidecar looking sad behind each other. One of them was wearing a nice white jersey that you did not see in occupied Belgium. She also described to me the bodies of Bayley and Donovan as they were still in the plane.

Flight Engineer Ray Heasman had parachuted into a tree and took a long time to free himself from this predicament. He then headed towards the village where he was arrested at a tram stop.



Crew of LM115 and groundcrew. Seated L-R: Ray Heasman, Lloyd Marshall, ? (groundcrew), Frank (groundcrew), Johnny Donovan. Standing L-R: Sam (groundcrew), John Maunsell, Tiny (groundcrew), Alan Bayley, Archie Naismith. Frank Beecher is not pictured. (Source: John Maunsell family)

Navigator John Maunsell was the only one who managed to stay out of the hands of the Germans. He probably landed with his parachute near the Kievitsvenweg in some kind of swamp or pond.

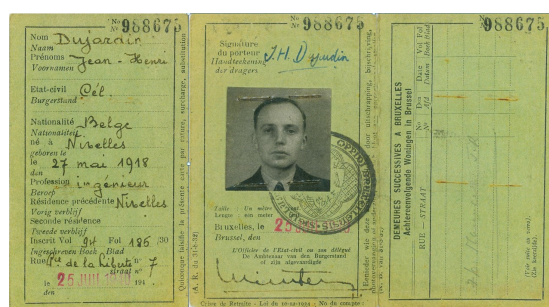
After hiding his parachute and life jacket, he tried to escape from the Germans who were already on their way. At the first farm he knocked on the door, and he was chased away by the terrified farmer's wife. Perhaps, unsurprisingly - when leaving the plane he hit his head on the door and had a bleeding wound on his face. After landing in the swamp, he was covered in mud. He will not have looked so neat.

At the second farm, on Schuurhoven, farmer Ferdinand 'Nand' Vueghs was outside watching the glow of the burning planes on the Lage Mierdseweg when John arrived there. Nand took him inside where he washed up a bit and they feed him.

As the farmer could not communicate with him, someone who did speak French was called in and made contact with the Resistance. The following morning John was picked up by bicycle by Mrs Van der Biest, a lady from the 'Belgian National Movement', a resistance group who worked closely with the Comète escape line, and taken to the Kwakkelstraat in Turnhout at Zosine Verstraeten's house.

Zosine would shelter and transfer 13 Allied aircrew to Brussels from February 1944 until liberation in September 1944. John later told me that this was a very brave lady who was well aware of the danger her work entailed. After the war, she was awarded the US Medal of Freedom with bronze palm and the British King's Medal for Courage in the Cause of Freedom.

After staying with Mrs Verstraeten for a few days, John received a false passport in the name of Jean-Henri Dujardin, an engineer from Nivelles. He was housed in Turnhout until 12 July 1944, when he was brought back to Oud-Turnhout by Mrs Van der Biest by bicycle. Here he stayed with Fernand Martin and his wife Clara Delatte on Steenweg 108 Ravels until the Liberation.



John Maunsell's fake Belgian passport. (Source: John Maunsell family)

The Martins were from Auvalais a commune in the French-speaking part of Belgium. John told me there was a woodpile behind the house which he would crawl under in case of danger. On his return to England, he completed 19 more missions over Germany with 223 Squadron. After liberation, he went to Burma for a technical mission on research into the engineering of Japanese aircraft.

The monuments

In 2007, we first heard about planes that had crashed here during World War II and wanted to investigate further. Soon we found close witnesses to the crashes, giving us a clear picture of these events. The story impressed us, especially because there were 10 fatalities.

Everyone agreed that this history should not be forgotten, so the idea of erecting 3 monuments to the two Lancasters and the Wellington was born. After presenting this to the board, we got approval for the project.

A working group was given the task of developing it further. The two main agenda items at that time were, what type of memorial we wanted and who would pay for it all. Our choice was for a marble stone for durability and a local stonemason supplied us with three marble stones measuring 1.44m x 1.00m and

Lancasters, monuments and commemorations (continued)

also provided the text on the stones. After negotiations, the municipal government, the Heritage Association and Tourism Oud-Turnhout agreed to pay for a stone each.

The unveiling took place on 10 July 2008 in the presence of the British military attaché and relatives of the Polish crew who had come over from Australia, Canada and Scotland for the occasion. The Belgian air force flew two F-16s over the monuments of the Lancasters at Lage Mierdseweg as a tribute.



Family of the Polish crew of R1184 with the British military attaché attend the unveiling ceremony in 2008. (Source: Roger Van Meirlo)



John Maunsell pictured alongside the memorial to LM115 in 2010. (Source: Jhonny Bastiaensen)

An unexpected surprise

In 2010, we receive a surprising message from Switzerland. Susan, the daughter of John Maunsell the navigator of the LM115, informed us that her father was still alive aged 92 and that he would like to come to Oud-Turnhout with her. This was great news because we had assumed that all the crew members had died by now.

On 16 September 2010, we were pleased to welcome John and Susan to Oud-Turnhout. That evening we had arranged a meeting with the Vueghs family who had given him shelter during the war. During his visit, they also had all his photo albums and logbook with them, which were busily viewed. We were allowed to scan all these wonderful documents.

John had said that he would like to visit the graves of Bayley, Beecher and Donovan again, as he had last done in 1947. On Saturday morning, John, Susan, my son Gert and I went to the military section of the Schoonselhof in Antwerp. This was a very emotional moment for him and he took the necessary time for this.

In the afternoon, we then went to see the monument. He was very pleased and moved with the result. This visit was an unforgettable moment for me. John Maunsell DFC passed away on 26 January 2015.

Commemorations in Oud-Turnhout

In 2019, at the celebration of 75 years of the Liberation of Belgium, I asked the board for permission to also organise a commemoration here in Oud-Turnhout. As it was the first time, we wanted to keep it simple. We received a grant from Erfgoed Noorderkempen for the expenses.

The commemoration went ahead on Saturday 22 June 2019, the day of the crashes at Lage Mierdseweg, at the ME782 memorial in the presence of the city council, the Australian consul, the British military attaché and a delegate from the Australian Air Force. Susan Leddy, John's daughter had also come from Switzerland with her family. As everything had gone well and everyone was satisfied with results, we then decided to organise a similar commemoration every five years.



2019 commemoration at the memorial to ME 782. (Source: Jef Sauvillers)

This year on the occasion of 80 years since Liberation, the commemoration went ahead on 4 May 2024. We had chosen this date because that is when the BBMF's Lancaster will fly over our region

Lancasters, monuments and commemorations (continued)

on its way to the Netherlands. We had applied for a fly past over the monuments but unfortunately it could not take place due to mechanical problems.

Thanks to the enthusiasm of the organising committee and the financial help of the city council, Erfgoed Noorderkempen, Oud-Turnhout Heritage Association and Tourism Oud-Turnhout, we had more opportunities than in 2019. There was also a lot of interest from outside the organisation to participate. For instance, the two Oud-Turnhout's musical societies were willing to support us..

Susan Leddy put us in touch with Air Commodore Wendy Rothery, whose grandfather had also taken part in the Wesseling raid with 57 Squadron. She informed us that she would like to attend the commemoration with her family which was no problem for us.

Normally the ceremony would again take place at the crash site at Lage Mierdseweg but due to the bad weather forecast it was decided in the morning to hold it in the Heischuur, a hall of the municipality.



80th anniversary commemoration - 4 May 2024. (Source: Jef Sauvillers)

Some special guests were again present. Besides the town council, there was a representative of the Australian Embassy, Susan Leddy and her family, Wendy Rothery and her family, a delegation from 57 Squadron, a representative of the Turnhout police zone and a delegation from the 3rd Battalion Para. There were some speeches first and Air Commodore Rothery presented the mayor with a photograph of 57 Squadron taken at East Kirkby in April 1944. This photograph now has a place in the town hall.

During our commemorations, the names of all the war victims of Old Turnhout and all others who died here during the War are always read out, including the names of the British crew members. This part is also always concluded with the national anthems of the countries involved.

After the ceremony inside, we went under police escort to the Lage Mierdseweg for a floral tribute and the playing of the Last Post at the memorial stones.

At the LM115 memorial, Susan Leddy made a nice speech and said her father would have been proud and moved because we do not forget the victims of these events.

Flight Lieutenant Roger Bousfield of 57 Squadron outlined the history of his unit and their activities today. Later, Flight Lieutenant Joe Stevens laid a wreath on behalf of 57 Squadron.

After this, there was a reception for the invited guests and the event concluded with a barbecue for our British guests, the town council, and the board of the Heritage Association and Tourism.

Visit to England

During the commemoration, I was invited by Wendy Rothery, together with Michel Haest, the new president of the Heritage Association, Jurgen Sack, the treasurer and Gert Bastiaensen, the vice-president of Tourism Oud-Turnhout, to the annual reunion of 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - an invitation we accepted with great pleasure.

With the help of Chris Morffew and Wendy Rothery, we were able to plan everything we wanted to visit during our stay. Chris also took care of hotel reservations in Woodhall Spa.

We arrived in Hull on Friday morning and our first destination was the city of Lincoln. What struck us during the drive was the many references to airports. We would later learn that Bomber Command had 29 bases in Lincolnshire during World War II. We also passed Scampton airfield, the home of the Dambusters.

Lincoln is a beautiful city with many attractions; in the morning we visited the cathedral and castle there. At 13:00, we had an appointment at the International Bomber Command Centre with archivist Peter and guide Phil. I donated photos from my archive about the crashes in Oud-Turnhout to the IBCC and Susan Leddy some photos of her father.



International Bomber Command Centre, Lincoln. (Source: Jhonny Bastiaensen)

Lancasters, monuments and commemorations (continued)

Our guide gave us a detailed account of the origins and purpose of the IBCC. The memorial with its 32-metre spire, as tall as the wingspan of a Lancaster bomber, is impressive. Around it are walls in Corten steel with the names of nearly 58 000 men and women who gave their lives in the service of Bomber Command during World War II.



IBCC memorial. (Source: Jhonny Bastiaensen)

Our guide had brought 10 poppies to place near the names of the victims of the Oud-Turnhout crashes. We were impressed after this visit by this memorial and the many names of Bomber Command victims who are respectfully commemorated here.

Then it was off to the Petwood House Hotel. This location is monumental, you stay exactly in a museum. During the War, this was apparently a RAF officers' mess and used by Guy Gibson the commander of the Dambusters. So in the area you will find several things that remind you of this operation.

Here we had a first meeting in the beautiful gardens with chairman Tony Gunby, secretary Chris Morffew, treasurer Oliver Bridgman and their spouses and padre Richard Benson. After dinner and more talking in the bar, we were able to conclude our first day.



New friends in The Petwood Hotel garden. (Source: Jhonny Bastiaensen)

As we had to leave East Kirkby for Hull early on Sunday, we had decided to visit the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre in East Kirkby extensively on Saturday morning.

Visiting the former airfield from which Lancasters ME782 and LM115 departed gave us a good idea of where they stayed at the time and what conditions they lived in. The NX611 'Just Jane' is beautiful and starting the engines is great.

At 15:00 we wanted to be back at the hotel for afternoon tea. Here we had a pleasant reunion with the Rothery family, Wendy, her husband Dai and Tony and Margeret her parents.

In the evening there was the Association's annual dinner. Here we met Roger Bousfield and Joe Stevens who also attended the May commemoration in Oud-Turnhout and OC 57 Squadron, Rich Elford.

After dinner, there were the traditional speeches. Tony Gunby, the president, spoke about the workings of the Association, followed by Wing Commander Elford talking about the current duties of 57 Squadron.

Then it was my turn. We had informed the board that we wanted to donate 2 photographs of the Lancaster monuments as a sign of connection between Oud-Turnhout and the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association. These were received by Tony Gunby. As the Association does not have its own room to hang them, he passed them on to Louise Bush of the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre to give them a place there.

This was followed by an unexpected surprise for me. Wendy Rothery handed over in Susan Leddy's name the photograph of the Squadron taken at East Kirkby in April 1944. I was moved by this and didn't know what to say. I am very grateful to both of them.



Jhonny with the photo of 57 Sqn taken in April 1944

Lancasters, monuments and commemorations (continued)

The evening ended with a raffle with the main prize being a taxi ride on the Lancaster 'Just Jane' from East Kirkby. This was won by Wendy Rothery and she wanted it given to me. Due to circumstances I gave it to Jurgen Sack, who was very happy with it.

After a delicious breakfast, we headed to East Kirkby on Sunday for the memorial ceremony of the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association. This took place in the main hangar in front of the aircraft which is quite a special location. The service was led by Reverend Richard Benson who brought beautiful texts. Due to the bad weather, the floral tribute was held in the hangar.



Pictured in front of Just Jane (L-R): Gert Bastiaensen, Wendy Rothery, Jhonny Bastiaensen and Jurgen Sack. (Source: Jhonny Bastiaensen)

After Jurgen's taxi ride in the 'Just Jane', it was time to say goodbye to the people we got to know this weekend and leave for Hull. Michel, Jurgen, Gert and I had a great weekend that we will not easily forget.

Special thanks

I would like to thank some people personally for the help we received from them. Susan Leddy for the good contact, her help and the use of her father's archive. Air Commodore Wendy Rothery and her family for their presence in Oud-Turnhout and the contacts she made for us.

Tony Gunby, Chris Morffew and Oliver Bridgman of the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association and their spouses for the opportunity they gave us for this visit and the help we received from them to make this weekend a success. Sorry if I forgot to mention anyone.

Jhonny Bastiaensen
Oud-Turnhout, Belgium
July 2024

(It was a real pleasure to welcome our friends from Oud Turnhout to the Reunion this year and we are delighted that they have accepted our invitation to join the Association - Ed.)

ANZAC Day - in Yorkshire

In 2008, I had the good fortune to spend a year with the Australian Defence Force. We travelled extensively throughout the Asia-Pacific region as part of our studies, including to Japan. There I was privileged to participate in an ANZAC Day service in the Yokohama War Cemetery - Ed.

Every year on the 25th April, dawn services are held all over the globe to remember the historic day in 1915 when the Australian and New Zealand forces began their offensive on the Gallipoli Peninsula in northern Turkey. It was an offensive that would see 16,000 ANZAC troops go into battle with their allies, with more than 100,000 lives lost in that campaign.

With more than 1,000 Commonwealth war graves, Harrogate's Stonefall Cemetery is one of the largest Commonwealth War Graves Commission sites in the North of England. The majority of burials are airmen from bomber crews who died during the Second World War. There are 97 Royal Australian Air Force and 23 Royal New Zealand Air Force servicemen buried at the site.

In April of 2022, Kate Spencer, dual citizen of both England and New Zealand, established and organised an ANZAC day ceremony at Stonefall Cemetery in Harrogate, North Yorkshire. With the help and support of both Harrogate International Partnerships and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the ceremony has now been running for three years.

"The ceremony was extremely well attended this year", explains Kate who was also pleased to see a great attendance by the general public.

Among the airmen buried at Stonefall are three from 630 Squadron who lost their lives on 22 November 1944 when Lancaster LL949 LE-E crashed into sandbanks on the north side of the Humber, returning from a raid against Trondheim:

Fg Off George Flood - pilot, aged 20
Plt Off Charles Agnew - navigator, aged 25
Flt Sgt William Ritchie Ingram - WOp, aged 22

ANZAC Day - in Yorkshire (continued)

“There are 23 New Zealand Aviators buried in Stonefall, together with 97 Australians. These young men who were mostly trained in Canada before joining the Royal Air Force in the Second World War, were on average 23 years old when they died,” explains Kate. Now completing the final stages of her book entitled THE TWENTY THREE, Kate says she will be in New Zealand next year to visit family and promote her book.

“Let me be clear... I have not written a reference book. I have however attempted to give these young men a life that they didn't have, Each one of them came from different backgrounds - farmers, painters, plumbers, office workers - just ordinary young men who were thrown into a war and died for their country. The book is about their young lives, their family, and their ultimate sacrifice. This has been my passion for the past three years. First the ceremony, then the book and now the charity. I'm quite exhausted but so happy.”

“Following three successful years, I set about establishing a charitable trust in order that the event could stand alone. When I am unable to organise the event, I need for the ceremony to continue,” says Kate.

Thanks to Kate's persistence the ANZAC REMEMBRANCE CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION, or A.R.C.I.O. has now been



ANZAC Memorial Service - Stone Fall War Cemetery, 2022 (Photo: Harrogate Twinning)

established and registered with the Charity Commission. “We are now in the process of raising funds, not just for next year's ceremony, but for the years to come” explains Kate.

In acknowledgement of the role played by Australian and New Zealand airmen with 57 and 630 Squadrons, the Committee has agreed to make a modest donation to ARCIO to enable it to organise future ceremonies.

The next ANZAC Remembrance ceremony will take place on Sunday 27th April 2025 at 1pm at Stonefall Cemetery, Harrogate. All are welcome to attend.

2025 Airshows

A selection of the major airshows and events across the UK during 2025 is listed below.

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



ND 475 - A Memorial 80 Years On

In the early hours of 19 April 1944, Lancaster ND475 of 57 Squadron, crashed into the fens near Peterborough. All eight crewmembers were killed. The aircraft had been one of 35 tasked to attack rail marshalling yards outside Paris - a precursor operation to the D-Day landings in June. To crash so close to home after a successful raid was a tragedy and for all but one of the crew, the fens remain their final resting place.

In April 2023, the Association was contacted by Barry Wainwright who lives near the crash site seeking advice on how to go about establishing a permanent memorial to the crew of ND475. This is the story of that project which led to the inauguration of a memorial in April this year - 80 years after the crash.

The date is 18 April 1944. The sun is just setting on a cool, dry night. A thin crescent moon is visible between light clouds but sheds little light.

RAF East Kirkby is a hive of activity. Crews are in final briefing, bombs being loaded, guns being checked. The noise level builds as more and more of the aircraft of 57 and 630 Sqns start their engines.

Thirty-five aircraft will be taking part on a raid on the rail marshalling yards of Juvisy-sur-Orge, just outside Paris: seventeen from 630 Sqn and eighteen from 57 Sqn.

The crews don't know it, but this is part of the build-up to D-Day - just 6 weeks away. This raid is intended to disrupt the German communications and transport - a necessary preparation for the Normandy Invasion.

The roar of Merlin engines reaches a crescendo as the aircraft lumber into the sky, climbing to altitude before regrouping and heading south in formation. They have about two hours of flight time until they arrive at their target around about midnight.

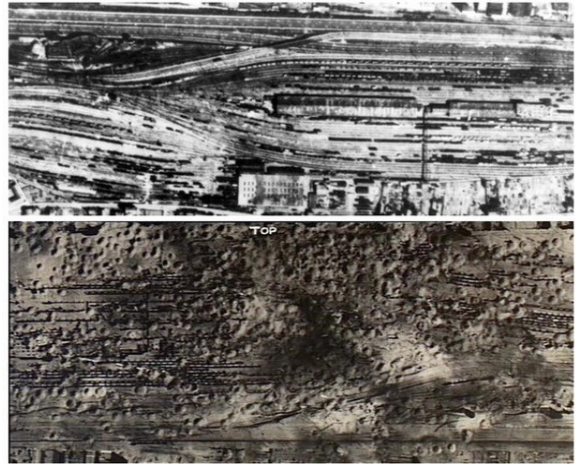
One aircraft is destined to not return - ND475 of 57 Sqn. The first and second pilots (Plt Off Oberg & Plt Off Culliford¹) were Australians; the remaining crew British - all RAFVR apart from Plt Off Adams RAF².

The raid was considered to have been extremely successful. Two aircraft returned without dropping their bombs - one returning shortly after take-off due to 'Communications Failure', the other as they could not identify the 'red fire' target markers. The crews reported little to no flak or enemy fighter activity over the target.

¹ This appears to have been the first time that Plt Off Culliford had flown with 57 Sqn. Only 4 of 57 Sqn's 18 aircraft detailed on this raid carried a 2nd Pilot - all apparently on their first flight with the Squadron.

² Plt Off Adams is believed to be one of the oldest and possibly the oldest member of Bomber Command to have been killed in service in 1944 aged 40 years.

Aerial photographs taken before and after the raid show significant damage inflicted - the marshalling yards were most certainly unusable for several weeks.



Before (top) and after (bottom) reconnaissance photos of the marshalling yards at Juvisy-sur-Orge. (Photos: IWM)

So successful was the raid, it was even featured on the front page of the Daily Mail a few days afterwards - a great boost for Squadron and national morale.



The Daily Mail report of the raid.

The one sour spot in the whole raid was the loss of aircraft ND475.

On their way home, and only about a half-hour from base, ND475 was suddenly lost. The aircraft crashed in what was described as 'a high-speed, vertical impact' in a field on the outskirts of the village of Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire.

It was not possible to determine any definitive cause of the crash, but there was speculation that it may have been due to the actions of a lone German night-fighter. Two other returning bombers from another squadron had been attacked within a few miles of this spot on that same night.

ND 475 - A Memorial 80 Years On (continued)

The site of the crash is only about 200 yards from the farmhouse of the Brown Family who owned the field. A farm worker was despatched, by bicycle, to nearby Whittlesey (two miles away) to alert the authorities. Other farm workers attended the scene, but it was immediately apparent that there were no survivors.

RAF recovery crews were on site at first light and removed the tail section of the aircraft by lorry, recovering the body of Rear Gunner Sgt Willis. Most of the wreckage and the remaining seven bodies were never recovered and remain deep within the Fenland soil.

The body of Sgt Willis was returned to his hometown of Bury, Lancashire and his grave can be seen in the local cemetery there.

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I moved into the village of Eastrea in 2013 and first saw a tribute at the side of the road the following year - a small wooden cross, with a poppy.

I was intrigued. I asked around and only a very few people knew of "the crashed Lancaster" - and that simple fact was all that most of them knew. A little more research and I was able to discover the bare facts of ND475. The following year I started to place my own tribute in the "Lancaster Field" (so-named by the Brown Family) on the anniversary of the crash.



The crew of ND 475 remembered in the fields where they met their death

It was about eight years ago, that I first started to think about a local memorial to the crew. I knew they were commemorated at the Runnymede memorial, but my own initial enquiries in Eastrea had shown that very few local people knew anything about the aircraft, or that seven crew members were never recovered. The lack of a local memorial just didn't seem right.

It was a chance meeting with Brian Brown, shortly after the 75th anniversary of the crash that cemented my determination. Brian was the father of the current farmer and, as a 10-year-old in 1944, he remembered being woken by the crash. He described his bedroom being lit by the flames, the wreckage strewn across the fields and the tail section of the aircraft being taken away by an RAF lorry.

The Brown Family have taken their custodianship of the site very seriously over the years. Temporary memorials have been placed each year since 1944 - first by Brian's father, then by Brian himself, and now by his son and grandson.

I raised the possibility of a permanent memorial and quickly ran into a strongly defensive attitude. The family's concerns were both practical and emotional.

The field is bounded by a drainage ditch (as so many fields in Fenland are) and there is a legal requirement for the landowners to maintain a 9m wide strip clear of obstruction alongside the ditch for maintenance purposes. However, the over-riding reason for the Brown family's reticence was more emotional. They are extremely concerned that any memorial could encourage souvenir hunters.

On several occasions they had witnessed people searching the field without permission. Though the field is still farmed and regularly ploughed, leaving no visible sign of the crash site, they consider it to be the site of a War Grave and are therefore reluctant to encourage any disturbance of it.

The family told me of an approach received some twenty years ago, from an aircraft preservation organisation, which sought to recover what was left of ND475 for display in a museum. The family were strongly against this and were supported by the MOD in their resistance to disturbing the final resting place of the seven airmen.

My thoughts then turned to finding another suitable place for a memorial. The roadway near the field and farm is a remote place, and a memorial there would have been invisible to most people, whilst still being separate from the crash site.

The best option appeared to be to site a memorial adjacent to the existing War Memorial in Eastrea. Although about one mile from the crash site, this is central to the village.

Being unwilling to disturb or change the existing memorial to the men of the village who fell in the two World Wars, I started to prepare for a separate memorial adjacent to the existing one, but within the same garden.

But, how to go about it? Arranging a memorial to people lost over seventy years before was not something I had any experience of!

Initial enquiries to the Royal British Legion and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission resulted in non-committal replies; while supportive of the project, they could not fund it and had no set procedures to follow. It appeared that it was up to me to design a memorial and get the necessary permissions to have it placed.

A briefing document was produced that detailed the basic facts about ND475, the case for a permanent memorial and an initial draft design scheme for the style of memorial and its location. This document was circulated to all the interested parties that I could identify: the MOD, the RAF, 57 Sqn., the Squadron

ND 475 - A Memorial 80 Years On (continued)

Association, the local Town, District and County Councils, the Royal British Legion, the Brown Family and other local individuals who might have an interest in the matter. This resulted in a lot of interest, but not much in the way of practical help or guidance. At least, thankfully, there had been no objections.

The next step appeared to be to contact the owners of the existing War Memorial to request permission to place a new one next to theirs. That proved to be a major stumbling block. It was quickly established that Cambridgeshire County Council owned the grass verge on which the memorial stood, though it was managed on their behalf by Fenland District Council.



Eastrea War Memorial

Neither of these councils claimed any ownership of the memorial itself. It was suggested to me that the memorial had probably been placed there by Whittlesey Town Council (the local council for Eastrea Village). The stone plaque of the War Memorial is built into a brick wall about five feet high but had been moved from the old Chapel building some 35 years before when it closed.

That prompted me to search the archives of Whittlesey Town Council, working through the minute books from 1980 to 1990. The war memorial was mentioned twice in 1987, with councillors expressing concerns that it might be lost if the chapel closed; no resolution to the problem was recorded. Similar searches of the archives were conducted at Fenland District Council, by an employee there which took a long time and yielded no results. Nobody appeared to own the memorial.

Cambridgeshire County Council (as landowners) declared that they were unable to grant permission for a new memorial as they did not own the current memorial, although it was on their land.

All enquiries to official bodies had yielded nothing. Talks with locals and members of local Historical Societies were also fruitless. Nobody appeared to own the war memorial. My best guess is that a local, who had cared for the memorial for many years, had had the memorial built and the garden planted without permissions in the late 1980s.

A lot of time had passed by now. In my mind the 19th April 2024 (the eightieth anniversary of the loss of ND475) would be the ideal time for unveiling a memorial. But, that was less than six months away. Little enough time to organise the manufacture of a memorial, let alone a fitting unveiling event.

Getting rather desperate by now, a little lateral thinking was required. Rather than asking for permission to place a memorial, I wrote to the various departments who may have had an interest to ask if they had any objection to a memorial being placed there.

All, except for one department, had responded with 'No Objection' by my internal deadline of the end of February. I, and another local Town Councillor, pestered the one outstanding department for a reply and eventually we got one. No objection. But, the date of the anniversary was less than a month away!

It was far too late to get the planned stone plinth made, but a temporary wooden mount for the engraved stainless steel plate could be made - and was made in my garage from an old cutting board and pieces of a wooden pallet. It's amazing how good things can look after a lot of sanding and a good coating of stainer and varnish!



The 'Temporary' memorial to the crew of ND475

ND 475 - A Memorial 80 Years On (continued)

Invitations were fired off to all the interested parties and an amazing response was received. I was gratified that, despite the very short notice, the commemoration was attended by representatives from the RAF (57 Sqn), the RAAF, 57 & 630 Sqns' Association, Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, The Royal British Legion, dignitaries from Whittlesey Town Council and Fenland District Council, Mr Brian Brown (the 10-year old witness of the crash) and his wife, Mary and around 60 local residents.



Commemoration Service - 19th April 2024. (Photo: Robert Windle Photography)

It is right that the loss of these young men should be marked in this way and that we never forget the tragedy that war always brings. If we forget, we are all too likely to repeat the same mistakes of yesterday.

And, I must admit, I feel a touch of pride in the part that I was able to play.



The new permanent memorial to the crew of ND475



Barry Wainwright (L) with Brian and Mary Brown. (Photo: Robert Windle Photography)

As I walk past the memorial now, with the temporary wooden mount replaced with the stone plinth and the surrounding garden planted with flowers, I feel grateful that future generations of Eastrea residents can remember the sacrifice of those poor souls who never expected to end their days in an Eastrea Field.

The Crew

Pilot	Plt Off Albert Oberg RAAF 33yo
2 nd Pilot	Plt Off Ronald Culliford RAAF 22yo
Flight Engineer	Sgt William Kinnes Age unknown
Navigator	Plt Off Edmund Crossley 34yo
Bomb Aimer	Plt Off Herbert Pizzey 23yo
Wireless Operator	Sgt Joseph Richards 20yo
Mid-Upper Gunner	Sgt John Willis 19yo
Rear Gunner	Plt Off Henry Adams 40yo

Barry Wainwright
November 2024

(Barry's curiosity about the roadside tribute, and his dogged determination that the crew of ND475 should get a 'proper' memorial, led him on an 11 year bureaucratic, but ultimately successful, journey. I am delighted that Barry has accepted our invitation to join our Association - Ed.)

Time Trap



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.

In this poem, Time Trap, Walt reflects on the sights and sounds at East Kirkby during the War

Time Trap

This is the place, this rural scene,
This field of corn, and meadows green,
Now I recall the distant days,
When aircraft stood, where the cattle graze

Standing here, I am aware,
Of strange vibrations in the air,
Developing until I know,
The airfield sounds of long ago.

Once again the booming roar,
Of the Rolls Royce Merlin 24,
Enchanted sounds, which changed their course,
To radio voices, and bursts of morse.

Where the billets stood, in far off days,
A gramophone, an old tune plays,
A crooner sings, across the land,
To the music, of a long dead band.

Now as suddenly the sounds are gone,
Only memories linger on,
Just the rustle now of waving corn,
For the sounds are back, when they were born.

Lonely fields, and empty skies,
The cows look on with their gentle eyes,
Watching as I turn my face,
Away from this deserted place.

In this old lane of memories,
Saplings then, are now towering trees,
But whatever I now leave behind,
There is a time trap in my mind.

Walt Scott

You can listen to the poem, read so wonderfully by Michael Howley, a navigator with 630 Squadron, via this link [Time Trap - 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/time-trap-written-by-walt-scott-and-performed-by-michael-howley-both-of-630-squadron)



Michael Howley

2025 Association Reunion

July 2025 							
Wk	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
27		1	2	3	4	5	6
28	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
29	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
30	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
31	28	29	30	31			

The 2025 Association Reunion will be held over the weekend of Saturday 5 July and Sunday 6 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 4 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 5 July - Petwood House Hotel

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

Sunday 6 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 in Squadron Bar

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



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 & 630 Squadrons' Association was formed in the late 1970s, and on 7 October 1979 the memorial to 57 Squadron and 630 Squadron 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, and a Remembrance Service in November at East Kirkby.

In 2023, Association Members approved a new Constitution which sets out the Association's goals and objectives. You can see the Constitution on the Association website at https://57-630sgnassoc.org/wp-content/uploads/57-and-630-Squadrons-Association-Constitution_1-July-2023.pdf



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2025

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 5 July)	
Dinner (Sunday 6 July)	

If staying elsewhere 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 5 July)	£48.50		
Dinner (Sunday 6 July)	£48.50		
Sub Total			
Donation to Association Funds			
Total Enclosed			

Memorial Service – Sunday 6 July	Number in your party attending



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2025

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 2025.**

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

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

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

Email: chrismorffew@rocketmail.com