

57 & 630 Squadrons' Association



Chairperson: Group Captain (Retd) Tony Gunby

Secretary: Wing Commander (Retd) Chris Morffew

Email: secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org

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*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

The 2025 Reunion

The usual informal Friday evening dinner at the Petwood Hotel marked the start of our 2025 Annual Reunion. Joined once again by our friends from Oud Turnhout and new Members Deirdre Oaten and Alistair Campbell-Grieve, we enjoyed an excellent meal and lively discussions late into the evening.

The priority on Saturday morning - for the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer at least - was to find somewhere showing the British Lions rugby match, eventually securing prime viewing seats in The Inn in Woodhall Spa. Then it was back to the Petwood for afternoon tea, more catching up and our Annual General Meeting, before gathering for pre-dinner drinks in the Petwood Suite. We were delighted to welcome members of the Panton family, together with a contingent of staff and trainees from 57 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Guy Harvey, together with their partners.



All photos by kind permission of Jhonny Bastiaensen

The 2025 Reunion

It was a special pleasure to welcome former OC 57 Squadron - David Heyward - to the Dinner and to hear about 57 Squadron's recent exploits from Sqn Ldr Guy Harvey.



Sqn Ldr Guy Harvey sings for his supper

After dinner, we held our usual raffles with Jhonny Bastiaensen winning the taxi ride in Just Jane. We also auctioned a photo donated by Bill Bohana and a cartoon donated by Gary Weightman.

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.

Despite being in the middle of one of the driest and hottest summers on record, rain threatened to put a dampener on proceedings, so the Service and wreath laying were held in the hangar.

The wreaths were subsequently moved to the

57 & 630 Squadrons Association memorial later in the afternoon.



The Memorial Service in the Hangar

Then it was time for refreshments in the 'NAAFI Marquee' in use while the NAAFI building is undergoing major redevelopment.

The much anticipated flypast by the BBMF Lancaster was OFF and then thankfully back ON in the space of a few minutes, and the crowd was enthralled by a number of low passes while Just Jane carried out her taxi runs.

The weekend was rounded off by an informal dinner back at the Petwood in the Squadron Bar.

Next year's Reunion will be held over the weekend of Friday 3 July - Sunday 5 July 2026. More details are available towards the back of this Newsletter and on our website.



57 Squadron on parade at RAF East Kirkby - Sunday 6 July 2025

Chairperson's Thoughts



Tony Gunby
Association Chairperson

After last year's commemorations to mark 80 years since D-Day, this year our focus has turned to marking 80 years since Victory in Europe and then Victory over Japan.

The theme of remembrance runs strongly through this Newsletter and some of our Members have been able to attend and participate in a number of national events which are covered later.

In April, we were represented by Mike Wood and Dave Taylor at the ANZAC Day Service held at Harrogate's Stonefall Cemetery, the last resting place of three Kiwis who flew with 630 Squadron.

In May, the Association got 4 last-minute tickets to attend the VE80 Concert. Then, last month, the Association secured places in the Remembrance Sunday Cenotaph Parade, with nine Members joining the veterans march past.

At the same time as the Cenotaph Parade was underway, I was honoured to lay a wreath on behalf of the Association at East Kirkby during its Remembrance Sunday Service. Masterminded as usual by our own Mike Chatterton, the chilly and foggy morning did not deter a large turnout from the local community, 57 Squadron and the Rutland HOGS.

After the Service, and a very welcome cup of tea, we were shown round the NAAFI which is nearing completion of its redevelopment - and very impressive it is too.

Our Reunion in July was well supported with a few new faces which is always nice to see, and a return visit from our friends from Oud Turnhout.

Our guest speaker at Dinner was Sqn Ldr Guy Harvey and our raffles and auctions raised over £1500 for the Association which is amazing.

Our Sunday memorial Service at East Kirkby was supported a huge contingent of trainees and staff from 57 Squadron, along with the Standard Party. BBMF pulled out the stops and we were treated to several flybys from the Lancaster to round off the day.

While we have become accustomed to this Reunion format over many years, 2026 will herald a new format. After lengthy discussion with our good friends at East Kirby, we have decided to hold next year's Memorial Service on the Saturday afternoon of our Reunion weekend. This will be followed by the Reunion Dinner that evening, and on the Sunday we plan to offer an optional visit to the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln.

None of us like change, and this decision has not been taken lightly, but it will ensure that we can continue to honour those that have gone before us at East Kirkby during our Reunions.

In this edition we also have articles about a new book written by a Swiss historian covering the crash of a 57 Squadron Lancaster in the Jura mountains in 1944. There is also an article from our newest Association Member, Tracy Whinnett, about her great-uncle who flew with 57 Squadron in World War I.

Alistair Campbell-Grieve, who some of you will have met at this year's Reunion, writes about his research into the service of his great uncle Keith Steven (57 Squadron).

There is news of a new addition to the memorial of 57 Squadron's DX-P in Belgium, and there are extracts from letters home in 1945 by Des Reynolds of 630 Squadron.

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.

On your behalf, I would like to thank our Committee members, Chris Morffew, Wendy Rothery and Oliver Bridgman, for their sterling support during a busy year.

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 and your families a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Tony Gunby
December 2025

From the Secretary



*Chris Morffew
Association Secretary*

It is hard to believe that another year has gone by but in many respects this has been a relatively quiet one.

In March Nancy and I represented the Association at a 57 Squadron Guest Night at RAF Cranwell along with our Information Officer Wendy Rothery and her husband Dai. This year the Squadron also invited one or two Association members who they had met in 2024. I proposed the toast to 57 Squadron before a very interesting talk by Air Vice Marshall James Beck the Air Capability Director. It was another wonderful evening and a pleasure to meet more of the 57 Squadron staff and trainees.

The Bomber Command Act of Remembrance was held on 29 June at the Bomber Command Memorial in London. Once again the RAF Benevolent Fund organised a very moving ceremony attended by many Defence Attachés.

Last year the service was also attended by the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) but this year his deputy attended in person while he, CAS, was on board the BBMF Lancaster that conducted a flypast over the Memorial.

Also in attendance were the few remaining Bomber Command Veterans who are still able to travel to London for the ceremony.

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.



*The Bomber Command
Memorial in Green Park*

The numbers attending this year were similar to last year so the Afternoon Tea, the AGM and the Dinner were all held in the Petwood suite, which we had to ourselves for the day.

We auctioned a framed print of a Lancaster flying over Lincoln, kindly donated by Bill Bohanna and a great cartoon, drawn and donated by Gary Weightman. Our thanks go to Bill and Gary for their kind donations and to our wonderful members for their enthusiasm and generosity during the bidding.

The Sunday Memorial Service was well attended and we were fortunate to have a superb flypast by the BBMF Lancaster; the aircraft has now gone into deep servicing and will not be seen during 2026.

Our 2026 Reunion, in the revised format, will be held on 3/4 and 5 July and full details, including booking forms, are at the end of this Newsletter.

Chris Morffew
December 2025
secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org



The BBMF Lancaster overflies East Kirkby as Just Jane prepares for her taxi run

Money Matters



Oliver Bridgman
Association Treasurer

The Association continues to remain in good financial shape.

As the Association does not charge a membership fee, we rely on our raffles and occasional auctions, together with the generosity of members, their relatives and friends who make donations, to safeguard its future.

During the financial year to 31 March 2025, donations from members amounted to £386 for which we are very grateful. Donations can be made by cheque or via internet banking. If you wish to use the latter, the bank details are as follows:

NatWest Bank
57 & 630 Squadrons Association
Account No 94828938
Sort Code 60-22-45

In the 12 months to 31 March 2025, expenditure exceeded income by £1,009. Despite this, the Association bank accounts were in credit to the tune of £6,634 as at 31 March 2025.

At this year's Annual Reunion in July, the general raffle raised £487 and the auction of a Lancaster photograph raised £500. The much loved Just Jane taxi ride raffle raised £547. A very big thank you to the Panton family and Lincolnshire Aviation Centre for their continued generosity in donating this taxi ride to the Association. The collection at the Sunday Memorial Service raised a further £153 for the Association.

Accounts for 2025/26 will be available at the Annual Reunion in July 2026.

Oliver Bridgman
November 2025

In Memoriam



Sadly, the Association lost two of its members this year.



Alex Fraser - a few days after last year's Newsletter was published we received the sad news that Alex Fraser had passed away, having celebrated his 100th birthday just a few months previously (as reported in the 2024 Newsletter).

Alex flew 36 ops as a flight engineer with 630 Squadron. His first mission was to Konigsberg on 29 August 1944. Along with Tom Lockett, Jim Wright and 'Buck' Buckley, Alex was a regular visitor to Skarrild, Denmark where they would remember their colleagues from 630 Squadron lost when Lancaster ME650 was shot down near the village on the night of 27/28 August 1944.

Alex remained in the RAF post-War and enjoyed a career which spanned 42 years and concluded with a period flying on VC10s where he held an 'A' and VIP operating Category. RIP Alex

John Conning - a navigator on the Victor with 57 Squadron in the 1960s

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 who are 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:

Tracy Whinnett whose great uncle Lieutenant Arthur Britton was a WW1 Observer/Gunner with 57 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps and a Flying Ace credited with six aerial victories;

Jennifer Bayne and Di Thompson from South Africa whose Father, Lieutenant Desmond Charles Burse Reynolds (South African Air Force) flew 30 missions with 630 Squadron during 1944/45 and was awarded a DFC in April 1945;

Alistair Campbell-Grieve Great Nephew of Keith Steven DFM who flew with 57 Squadron and was the Signals Leader on the Squadron in 1943/44; and

Sheena Mackay whose father's cousin, pilot Gordon Burness RNZAF, joined 630 Squadron in November 1943 to lead one of it's founding crews.

A very warm welcome to you all.

News from the Frontline



Wing Commander
Steve Hindmarch
OC 57 Squadron

Wing Commander Steve Hindmarch, the Officer Commanding 57 Squadron, must be one of a very few military aviators to have served, and flown, with the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force, flying both rotary and fixed wing aircraft.

Steve's military career began in the Royal Navy where he flew the Sea King in anti-submarine and Search and Rescue roles, before becoming a Qualified Flying Instructor on fixed wing training aircraft and finishing his 16b years in the Navy flying the Defender reconnaissance aircraft.

In 2011, Steve joined the Army Air Corps as a fixed wing aviation specialist, initially on the King Air with 45 Squadron at RAF Cranwell teaching multi-engine flying. Subsequent tours included command of 674 Sqn AAC at RAF Barkston Heath, a stint at Middle Wallop, and a tour in Northern Ireland before returning to 45 Squadron flying the Phenom to complete his 10 years with the Army.

Hindmarch transferred to the RAF in Apr 21 and was promptly appointed to a staff job at HQ 22Gp within Air Command. Initially joining 57 Sqn as a Prefect Flt Cdr, he is now privileged to take up full command.

OC 57 Squadron writes:

I am pleased to provide you with an update from 57 Squadron covering this year's activity.

As ever, that activity was mainly focussed on the training of the Royal Air Force's pilots at their first stage of training. We continued to deliver this using the Grob 120TP Prefect T Mark 1 and its associated ground training facilities.

The year also saw a significant increase in those Royal Navy trainees selected for the fast jet pipeline; these pilots came to us, after selection at Royal Navy Grading, to complete both Elementary Training and the Fast Jet Lead-in. We also trained a number of Mission Crew destined for Fixed Wing Air Transport load management (historically better known as Loadmasters).



Grob 120TP Prefect T Mark 1

I will use a loose chronological flow through the update but will try and expand on a few areas of interest as I go. This year's key themes, away from direct training delivery, have been capability

News from the Frontline (continued)

capability enhancements and infrastructure upgrades - particularly at Cranwell.

January saw us facing the usual quirks of winter weather with a challenging return to flying after the Christmas break. Some days, getting our team into work proved a test due to fog, snow, ice and flooding affecting even the major roads in the vicinity of Cranwell. Nonetheless, we got underway and saw good progress for the Elementary Flying Training and Lead-in courses.

As well as training the ab-initio trainees the Squadron, in the form of 'C' Flight, trains all Prefect instructors - military and Ascent - through a conversion to type and then an instructional phase, culminating in the award of an instructor category from Central Flying School (CFS). One of our exchange officers, Flight Lieutenant Said Al-Hajri of the Royal Air Force of Oman, was promoted to Squadron Leader while undertaking the course.

The first of our capability enhancements was introduced, to provide additional situational awareness on other traffic. A carry-on ADS-B (an alternative aircraft awareness system not reliant on the traditional 'squawk' or SSR) solution was trialed using an iPad display in cockpit.

A significant upgrade to the aircraft parking area commenced, restricting the number of parking slots at Cranwell and required a rebalance of aircraft between sites.

On the adventurous training front a party from the Squadron attended the CFS-led Exercise STUBAI SNOW, a skiing expedition to Austria.



57 Sqn personnel - Exercise STUBAI SNOW

Exam Wing, an element of CFS, arrived in February to conduct checks on 'B' Flight at RAF Barkston Heath. These biennial visits look at both the individual instructors, confirming they are operating to the standard of their categories, and the unit as a

whole. While sometimes viewed with trepidation, the independent feedback provided is essential to ensure we deliver the best training we can.

The first CO's Cup event - the Station's inter-unit sports competition - of the year took place. This was a virtual golf competition and, with a strong individual performance from Flight Lieutenant Graeme Smallbone leading the way, a close second was the result.

Some poor weather presented the opportunity for some ad-hoc adventurous training to be organised by our own instructors. Indoor climbing was followed by a much damper trek up Kinder Scout.



57 Sqn on Kinder Scout

Continuing the theme of climbing, one of our trainees - Flight Lieutenant Jesse Reid - was awarded her RAF Sports Colours for the sport. An informal Curry Night was held in York House Officers' Mess, a great opportunity to get together away from work - this was the last such event organised by 'Ned' Holland as he left us shortly afterwards on promotion to Squadron Leader.

March was a busy month. Better weather led to an uptick in flying activity. Our first Jordanian exchange officer, Major Faisal Al-Huneiti, completed his tour and returned home. He had added a lot to Squadron life both on the fast-jet training front and with his mischievous sense of humour!

The Squadron held its Annual Dinner in York House with some of the Association Committee present and Air Vice Marshal James Beck as guest of honour. The Chief Pilot for Prefect at Ascent changed, with Matt Walker taking on the role. The outgoing one, Pete Keenlyside, had rejoined the RAF and the Squadron; he quickly volunteered to be our new standard bearer, some of you will already have seen him in action!

A major event to honour Women in Aviation was held at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln. Not only was the Squadron represented on the ground, but it also took part in an all-female

News from the Frontline (continued)

crewed flypast over the event. At the same time, we heard one of our recent trainees had become the first female RAF pilot to fly the new F-35 Lightning! Dodgeball was the CO's Cup event for the month, with the Squadron again placing second.

The good weather continued into April. And, with a fair wind behind them, a number of candidates successfully upgraded their instructor categories. On graduating from the Qualified Flying Instructor (QFI) training course new instructors hold the B2 provisional QFI category. This allows them to complete most tasks but not send new students



solo. It also means they receive a bit more training and supervision on the Squadron. After around a year they are expected to upgrade to B1 instructor category. This involves a short return to 'C' Flight for a work-up and a check flight with Central Flying School.

After this upgrade they will quickly become supervisors and probably gain a 'lead-in' qualification relevant to their previous experience. Those who choose to can, after a period of consolidation, attempt upgrade to A2, or above average category. This involves a significant effort on the individuals' part, culminating in two weeks work up of both flying and associated ground subjects with 'C' Flight and then an air and ground examination with Exam Wing. Major Bruce Atherton, Royal Marines, was our first candidate in over 18 months.

We had our first win of the year at the CO's Cup Volleyball, while our capability enhancement this month, and its import cannot be overstated, was a new coffee machine for the crewroom!

Early May saw the Station holding and supporting events to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day. On the Squadron we remembered the repatriation activity the unit was undertaking at that time – returning liberated Allied POWs to the UK. The event also saw the opportunity for Terry Jones and team to raise funds in support of their fundraising effort by providing World War 2 style ration boxes in return for a donation.



Making-up fundraising lunches

Instructor upgrades continued with Flight Lieutenant Ollie Harbridge gaining his A2 category. Air Officer Commanding 22 Group visited 3 FTS, flying a formation sortie in the Prefect. Our winning streak continued in the CO's Cup with victory in the Indoor Curling, something in which our Adjutant - the Squadrons' own William Wallace, Craig Carlyle - took huge pride!

The Formal Staff Visit from 22 Group took place at the start of the June. Exercise Alpine Rock saw staff and students face the challenge of climbing walls in Sheffield. The Squadron placed second in CO's Cup go carting - keeping the top of the table tussle alive with our neighbours and rivals, 45 Squadron. Good weather through spring and early summer meant the courses we had were 'ahead of the line' which was a great place to be.

In July the Squadron provided its usual support to the 57 and 630 Squadron Association Reunion at the Petwood and East Kirkby. Our new Executive Officer, Squadron Leader Guy Harvey, represented Officer Commanding 57 Squadron at the dinner on the Saturday and there was our biggest ever turnout at the memorial service the following day.

I really do value these opportunities to expose the current pilots under training to the Squadron's history and there is no better place than East Kirkby to do so. The month also saw former Squadron Leader, and latterly Captain (Ascent), Tony 'Sumnutz' Sumner leave the Squadron. Those who have attended the Petwood Dinners will have undoubtedly been regaled with his tales of derring-do! He has threatened to join the Association so we may not have seen the last of him. It was 'A' Flight's turn to undergo their CFS Exam Wing visit. In the CO's Cup we had a set-back as we were unable to field a team for the Softball competition.

August was a quieter month with many away on summer leave. The parking upgrade works completed and allowed the return of aircraft temporarily shifted to Barkston Heath. This was a

News from the Frontline (continued)

significant piece of infrastructure work and should stop us being impacted by high temperatures and melting surfaces, as we have over the last few summers.

A 3 Flying Training School BBQ was held which provided the opportunity to bid farewell to our Commandant, Group Captain Ian Bews. He had been a great friend to 57 Squadron and flew the Prefect whenever he could. He was also the driving force behind the capability enhancements we saw this year.

This year's major fundraising effort, in support of the RAF Benevolent Fund, saw Flight Lieutenant Terry Jones leading a team of motorcyclists on the longest dispatch rider route in the UK - the 580 miles from Bletchley Park to RAF Lossiemouth.



'Dispatch Rider' Terry Jones arrives at RAF Lossiemouth

The team used only roads that had existed in World War 2 and Terry led the effort on his Matchless Dispatch bike from the era - interestingly he had far less issues than some of the more modern bikes taking part, one of which caught fire! The Squadron returned to winning ways in the CO's Cup with victory in the Badminton.

September saw an increase in the operating envelope for Prefect. Working with the Military Aviation Authority and RAF Centre for Aviation Medicine we gained permission for limited operations between Flight Level 100 and 130. This was new territory for unpressurised flight in the Elementary Flying Training role but matched civil equivalent practice. This allowed us to avoid the heavier traffic levels at lower levels and work around weather issues. Sorties were initially flown by 'C' Flight before being rolled out across the Squadron.

The 'JETride' cycling event in support of the Jon Egging Trust was again held at RAF Cranwell. Members of the Squadron helped organise, took part, helped to marshal or simply baked (or ate) cake to support.

The Squadron's main unit-led expedition of the year in the form of Exercise DOLOMITES DASH took place in October. This involved a trip to Italy to undertake rock climbing, via ferrata and mountain biking. 'B' Flight at Barkston Heath were impacted by smoke and road closures associated with a significant fire at the neighbouring recycling plant. CO's Cup ten-pin bowling saw the Squadron place in a mid-ranking sixth position.

The Squadron main push for Remembrance Sunday was to East Kirkby, with another pleasing turn out from staff and trainees alike (and one dog!). It was an honour for me to lay the wreath on behalf of the Squadron - my first event at what is truly our spiritual home. November also saw upgrades to B1 category for Major Al-Huneiti and Flight Lieutenant Pete Richards; while Flight Lieutenant Nick Lord achieved A2. We hit the target in the CO's Cup coming away with a win in the Archery and setting up a tense finish in the overall competition.

December has been a frustrating month in terms of weather. Constant low cloud and strong winds have frustrated progress. Equally frustratingly, a second-place finish in the CO's Cup quiz event saw us pipped to the overall win by a single point by 45 Squadron - something OC 45 Sqn has taken great pleasure in 'milking' at every opportunity.

I hope that this provides some insight into what a busy unit 57 Squadron is today. Our output of pilots and mission crew remains critical to the defence of the UK going forwards - something more in focus now than it has been for some time.



Graduation of Numbers 105 & 106 Courses

I take great pride in commanding a unit with such an illustrious history and such an important role today. I'm very grateful for the links to the Squadron Association and the generous hosting you give us during the Association Weekends. We change our body - not our spirit!

Wing Commander Steve Hindmarch
Officer Commanding Number 57 Squadron
December 2025

Research Update



*Air Commodore
Wendy Rothery
Association Information
Officer*

The national celebrations this year marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day in May 1945 have provided plenty of opportunity to consider the 57 and 630 Squadrons WWII links. Not surprisingly, the last few months of the War saw a marked reduction in the losses suffered by both units but there were still casualties.

For 57 Squadron, the last combat losses took place on the night of 20/21 March. Fg Off C Cobern RAAF and his crew were lost when their aircraft crashed shortly after take-off for a raid against Bohlen. Flt Lt A R Palling and his crew were lost as part of the same operation during a diversionary raid on Halle; they had already completed 30 missions.

As a stark reminder that the Squadron involved more than its crews, 5 Lancasters were destroyed on 17 April during a fire and subsequent explosions at East Kirkby, which claimed the lives of 4 members of ground crew and injured several others. *(This event is also mentioned on page 20 of the 2021 Newsletter 2021-Newsletter-FINAL.pdf, in an eye-witness account from 57 Squadron technician Barrie Chaplin. Barrie's son and wife took part in this year's Cenotaph parade - Ed.)*

630 Squadron's last combat losses were on the night of 10/11 April during a raid on Leipzig. Fg Off C Richardson's crew all reportedly bailed out, although one did not survive. Fg Off Sassoon and 4 members of his crew sadly died. *(Richard Sassoon's niece has a blog about this loss at www.jmsassoon.wordpress.com - Ed.)*

A further two 630 Squadron crews were lost after the cessation of hostilities: Fg Off Hall and crew died in a training accident on 17 May, and Fg Off Cowan and crew failed to return from a sortie over the North Sea to jettison incendiary bombs.

To mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day, I attended a concert in London on 8th May, and took part in the Festival of Remembrance in November. I also had the enormous privilege of meeting veterans of both 57 and 630 Squadrons, their family and friends, on Remembrance Sunday when the Association took part in the march past

the Cenotaph - it was a gloriously sunny day in London, and the atmosphere was electric. *(See articles later in this Newsletter - Ed.)*



*The International Bomber Command
Centre, Lincoln*

I also took the opportunity during a weekend trip to Lincoln in September to visit the International Bomber Command Centre to see the Poppy Display installed as a tribute to the Bomber Command sacrifice.



*A sea of poppies with Lincoln Cathedral
in the distance*

In addition to seeing an eye-catching display of ceramic poppies laid out precisely in the dimensions of a Lancaster, I took the opportunity to put some poppies against names on the memorial panels - 8 crew members who had sadly lost their lives flying on operations with 57 and 630 Squadrons.



Research Update (continued)

If you visit, please take the time to think about placing poppies (available at the IBCB reception) on the names of 'our' Squadron casualties.

You can find them on the IBCB losses database, just add 57 or 630 into the squadron filter to see the list of 1066 and 387 men who gave their lives during WWII; lest we forget.

Turning to happier events, the Association was represented at 57 Squadron's annual Dining-in Night held in York House Officers' Mess at RAF Cranwell in March.



Wendy with 57 Sqn trainees

It was a wonderful evening which showed the spirit which had sustained the wartime generation was still very much in evidence, and I was delighted to meet a number of female trainees.

The Reunion weekend at the Petwood Hotel and East Kirkby was a great success as always, and it was wonderful to be joined by our friends from Belgium again. The smile on Jhonny's face as he taxied in Just Jane captured the enjoyment of all present!



Jhonny Bastiaensen in Just Jane

I am delighted that the interest in the history of 57 and 630 Squadrons remains strong and hope to meet more of our members over the coming year.

Wendy Rothery
December 2025

ANZAC Ceremony

25 April marks ANZAC Day, a day when we remember the landing of Australian and New Zealand forces at Gallipoli in 1915 and their involvement in subsequent conflict around the world. In last year's Newsletter, we reported on the formation of a charity to support ANZAC Ceremonies at the Stonefall Cemetery, Harrogate.

Stonefall Cemetery was begun in 1914 but the vast majority of the burials here are of airmen who died during the Second World War when Bomber Command bases were established across Yorkshire. Today, nearly 1,000 service men and women lie at rest in the beautiful war graves plot within the War cemetery.

Among these are three Kiwi airmen 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

This year's ANZAC commemoration service was held on Sunday 27 April and Association Members Wg Cdr (ret'd) Dave Taylor and Flt Lt (ret'd) Mike Wood of 57 Squadron, who both live in the York area, represented the Association and Mike laid the Association wreath.

ANZAC Ceremony (continued)



Mike Wood and Dave Taylor

Mike reports that *“At the informal gathering after the service, Mike gave a (mercifully brief) address in which he described the formation of both 57 & 630 Squadrons and acknowledged the sacrifice made by these three brave airmen.*



A moment of reflection alongside the grave of Plt Off Charles Agnew RNZAF



During a most memorable day it became very clear just how many volunteers work tirelessly to ensure that these events and so many like them are able to take place every year. Our host for the day was Kate Spencer, the chair of the ANZAC Remembrance, and she mentioned that she worked for three months solid with arrangements ranging from bookings and invitations to baking cakes and biscuits.”

Earlier this month, Kate Spencer contacted the Association to share the news that this year she had made contact with relatives of Charles Agnew - some in America, Scotland and New Zealand and Australia. Charles was one of 16 children, 11 of the boys went to War and Charles was the only one who died.

Charles Agnew married Cecelia Marchant and they had a little girl called Margaret who lost her father when she was just 2 years old. Cecelia married again (RNZAF) and they had a girl called Pauline. Earlier this month, Kate had met Pauline who showed her an amazing life in photos of her half-sister Margaret who had lost her dad, Charles Agnew. (The pursuit for more information and relatives never cease - Ed.)

You can read more about this year's service and the work of the ANZAC REMEMBRANCE CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION, or A.R.C.I.O. on its website www.anzacremembrancecio.org

VE80 Concert

At short notice, the Association was offered 4 tickets for the VE80 Concert at Horseguards Parade. Here, Wendy Rothery and Adrian Stevens, recall an evening of bitter-sweet memories and ceremony.

Wendy: Thursday 8 May 2025 marked 80 years since VE (Victory in Europe) Day when the Second World War came to an end in Europe and was observed by celebrations and commemorations across the country.

As part of those celebrations a televised concert was held on Horseguards Parade in the presence of HM the King and Queen, and other members of the Royal Family. Also in the Royal Box were veterans and civilians who had witnessed VE Day itself, and their memories were broadcast along with music and dance representing the time.

Many people had dressed for the occasion in 1940s clothing; some wore uniforms and, as you might expect, dress for the rest ranged from the King's suit right the way through to remarkably casual attire, and there were plenty of medals on display.

I was fortunate to be offered tickets through the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association and my husband, Air Commodore (Ret'd) Dai Whittingham and I were joined by Adrian and Janey Stevens.



Dai Whittingham, Andy Rothery, Adrian and Janey Stevens at Horseguards Parade

Adrian's late father, Flt Lt Sidney 'Steve' Stevens DFC, was a 21-year-old Lancaster pilot on 57 Sqn in 1943, serving at RAF Scampton and then at RAF East Kirkby; my late grandfather, Flt Lt Bill Martin DFC, was a navigator on the Sqn at East Kirkby in 1944, so the occasion was a special one for us all.

Anyone with a smart phone or OneDrive account will be familiar with a daily automated email entitled "Your memories from this day". On the morning of 8th May, my husband duly received his email from the system, and the first photograph to be displayed caught his attention. It was a photograph of me with Steve, taken when we had visited him at his home in Norwich. It surprised us both, and it was quite a surprise to Adrian when we showed him that evening.

What was slightly unsettling was that neither of us remembered visiting him in May - in fact the metadata for the photograph showed it had been taken in February 2018, so it was even more surprising that it appeared in the daily memories email on that day of all days.

Imagine then our delight when the concert started with an unannounced overflight by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Lancaster, which appeared suddenly from behind the Royal Box and disappeared into the sunset. Both families thinking about two men in their twenties who had gone into the Bomber Command cauldron and survived the experience - it was an emotional moment.



The BBMF Lancaster overflies Horseguards Parade

Adrian: On 9 April, out of the blue, an email arrived from Tony Gunby saying that the Squadron Association had been offered tickets for the celebration of the 80th anniversary of VE Day at Horseguards, and asking whether my wife and I would like to attend.

Needless to say, we leapt at the chance, and were delighted to be able to accompany Wendy Rothery and her husband Dai Whittingham to Horseguards on the evening of 8 May.

Wendy and Dai were both wearing their medals, and Janey and I wore our fathers' miniatures. Many members will remember my parents, Steve and Maureen Stevens, both of whom served with 57 Squadron in 1943, and had proud war records.

Janey's father, a Canadian artist who had set up a studio in London in 1936, volunteered for the Royal Navy. His first posting was to Bristol Docks in 1941, during the Blitz, where he was put in charge of the Naval Bomb Disposal Squad, and became the first Canadian to be awarded the George Medal for

VE80 Concert (continued)

defusing a 500lb bomb which had lodged in the hold of a fully laden tanker on the approaches to the port. After his release from bomb disposal, he was transferred to escort duty, and by the end of the War he had been awarded the Atlantic Star, the France and Germany Star and the Pacific Star. He was acquainted with the RAF, having been flown back to England in a Lancaster at the end of the war against Japan.

Arriving at Horse Guards, we discovered that there was no programme of events. We did not know quite what to expect, but the celebration got off to an unforgettable start. Immediately after the King arrived and took his seat among the veterans, we heard the unmistakable roar of Merlin engines, and the Lancaster from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight flew low overhead into the setting sun. Everyone started cheering and waving, and I found myself calling out "Hello Dad!" with tears in my eyes.

Two years ago, when I had presented his medals, logbooks and other wartime memorabilia to 57 Squadron at Cranwell, I had met Flt Lt Ernie Wise, the pilot of the BBMF Lancaster. When I emailed Ernie, I was delighted to discover that he had been promoted to Sqn Ldr and would soon be assuming command of the BBMF. The message he sent me says it all: "It was a great honour to meet your Dad at 57 Squadron and it's why we continue to do what we do."

Wendy: Reflecting back to VE Day itself, in 1945, the long anticipated news resulted in spontaneous celebrations breaking out across the nation. A national holiday was declared and people from all walks of life came together to mark the moment.

The 80th anniversary was a time for the Nation to come together to learn more about the stories of those who served and the VE Day generation.

The concert brought together music, storytelling and tributes to those who served during World War II. The line-up included performances from stars of stage and screen, including Samantha Barks, Fleur East, Freya Ridings, and renowned cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason.



There was also a revival of the 60s and 70s TV classic Dad's Army, featuring Kevin Eldon, Iain Glen, Nigel

Havers, Sir Derek Jacobi, Larry Lamb, Alex Macqueen and Daniel Mays. Callum Scott sang the wartime classic The White Cliffs of Dover, while Samantha Barks performed We'll Meet Again.

During the concert, the King delivered a speech at the precise moment 80 years after King George VI spoke to the nation to celebrate VE Day. He said we owe the "greatest debt" to all those who died in the conflict and commented on how the Second World War impacted the lives of everyone living in the UK.



The King addresses the audience and the Nation

"We unite to celebrate and remember with an unwavering and heartfelt gratitude, the service and sacrifice of the wartime generation who made the hard-fought victory possible," the King said. "While our greatest debt is owed to all those who paid the ultimate price, we should never forget how the war changed the lives of virtually everyone."

The King's speech was part of the finale to the nationwide VE Day 80 celebrations and he impressed on us all the need to continue remembering and commemorating the stories of World War II as the number of veterans declines *"to ensure their experiences are never to be forgotten"*.

Adrian: The evening was a wonderfully British occasion. There was the King giving his speech 80 years to the day and the hour after his grandfather had broadcast to the nation to give thanks for the end of the war in Europe; there were moving interviews with veterans; tear jerking renderings of "Land of Hope and Glory" and the famous Vera Lynn songs, but also pop, comedy and humour, a Dad's Army skit, and above all an overwhelming sense of pride and gratitude amongst all the people gathered at Horse Guards.

They had come to celebrate the Greatest Generation, and had reached out to give them a collective hug of love and gratitude. As we left with Wendy and Dai, I found myself repeating the words of the 57 Squadron motto which Dad so loved to quote: "I Change My Body, Not My Spirit", and they seemed to capture the mood of that extraordinary event, which nobody fortunate enough to be present is likely to forget.

Arthur Frederick Britton

During the Summer, the Association was contacted by Tracy Whinnett the great-niece of Arthur Frederick Britton who served with 57 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps on the Western Front in 1917. Here, Tracy tells Arthur's story and the recovery of his medals.

I am proud to be the Great-Niece of Arthur Frederick Britton. Arthur was a WW1 Observer/Gunner and a Flying Ace having been credited with six aerial victories with 57 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps. He was awarded the Military Cross and French Croix de Guerre.

Born in 1888 in Balham he was the eldest of five children. His three brothers which included my Grandad fought in the Great War.



*The Britton children in 1902. Arthur, marked with an 'X', is second from right
(Photo: Tracy Whinnett)*

Arthur enlisted in the Surrey Yeomanry in 1914 and saw action in France, before being commissioned as a 2nd Lt in Prince Albert's Somerset Light Infantry. He then transferred to the Machine Gun Corp, and in June 1917 was promoted to Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps and posted overseas with 57 Squadron as an Observer.

He gained his first victories on 3 July 1917 with pilot Captain Laurence Minot, shooting down two Albatros D.IIIs over Zonnebeke.

On 7 July, with pilot Lieutenant Pryor, he shot down another D.III north-east of Ypres. Finally, on 27 July, with Minot again, he shot down three Albatros D.Vs over Houthulst. On 20 August 1917 he was seriously wounded as a result of which his left leg was amputated.

The citation for the award of a Military Cross stated:

"From July 1917 until August 20th 1917, on which date he was seriously wounded, this officer carried out exceptionally valuable work in the taking of aeroplane photographs and on reconnaissance far behind the enemy lines. He has taken part in numerous combats in the air, and he has destroyed three hostile machines. His courage has always been beyond praise."



*Arthur Britton
(Photo: Tracy Whinnett)*

The award of the Croix de Guerre followed and the War Office published the King's permission to wear decorations and military medals awarded by Foreign Powers in April 1918.

Arthur was declared permanently unfit for duty following the gunshot wound to his knee (stray shots from a French SPAD) which resulted in the amputation of his leg. He convalesced in Countess Carnarvon's hospital for wounded officers in London for six months, but eager to return to work, he took up a post as Flying Officer at the training depot RAF HQ. Sadly, his wound was not healing satisfactorily, and he retired from the force on September 1918.

He did not survive long after his retirement, and died during the Spanish Flu pandemic in February 1919 aged just 30 years.

During my research into my Great-Uncle's service, I came across Spinks auction site, and an entry that his medals had been sold. They have never been in my branch of the family tree. Spinks kindly agreed to forward an email I had written to the buyer, and two

Arthur Frederick Britton (continued)



Arthur Britton's medal group: Military Cross, Croix de Guerre 1914-18 with Bronze Star, The British War Medal (1914-18) and The Allied Victory Medal (1914-1919)

(Photo: Tracy Whinnett)

years later, after negotiations, last month I travelled down to Dorset to take possession of Arthur's medal collection.

He is my hero, and I will never forget the sacrifice he made. The average life expectancy for crew in the Royal Flying Corps was between 3-6 weeks. It's so tragic that he survived the horrors of war is those old flying machines, only to die in the same week as his mother of pneumonia.

In early August this year, I wrote to 57 Squadron based at RAF Cranwell expressing my interest in setting up a legacy in memory of my Great-Uncle. I am pleased to report that this was warmly accepted by the Squadron and a prize will be awarded annually to a trainee pilot on each course who best embodies the fighting spirit of Captain Minot and Lieutenant Arthur Britton.

(Members may wish to look back at the 2011 edition of our Newsletter (page 9 onwards) in which David Houghton wrote about Laurence Minot. We are delighted to report that Tracy has joined our Association - Ed).

Testimony and Truth - Exploring latter family testimony and my connection with 57 Squadron

Having introduced him to you earlier, new Member Alistair Campbell-Grieve gives us an insight into his research into his Uncle Steve, where all is not always as it first seems.

I only met Uncle Steve twice in my life so no one could describe our relationship as close. The annual air-mailed Christmas cards that flew in both directions around the world kept the various sections of our family connected. I think that it was my childhood fascination (read geekery) with military history, encouraged by my late father, that meant I always felt quite connected with Steve and his wartime exploits.

Of course, as a child I wasn't downloading Operational Record Books or spending hours pouring over obscure pages from the Bombing Development Unit papers. I was simply armed with the 'Boys Own' style tales of daring do that had trickled down through family legend.

Not being a child anymore and working in a profession where information, intelligence and evidence are at my core I find that I cannot approach wartime accounts with anything but an analytical mind. I am conscious that this is easily confused by some as being forearmed with deep cynicism. This couldn't be further from the



Flt Lt Keith Stevens RAAF

truth, and I would argue that maintaining an analytically critical attitude can coexist with being respectful, honouring and where appropriate celebrating the bravery and professionalism of our veterans.

What does this have to do with 57 Squadron? Well, the aforementioned Steve might be more officially known to some as Flight Lieutenant Keith James Stevens RAAF. Having already flown his first operation in Wellingtons whilst at OTU, Steve joined 57 Squadron at Scampton as a Sergeant Wireless Operator in late 1942.

Testimony and Truth (continued)



The Hawkins crew (Steve back row, 2nd from left in slouch hat) having landed back in North Africa following a raid on Spezia (June 1943)

Most of Steve's first tour is broadly concerned with the Battle of the Rhur; Duisburg being his most frequently visited location. A DFM and a commission later, his tour is completed in June 1943. Rather than being posted away to a training unit or moving onto a Pathfinder squadron Steve becomes 57 Squadron's Signals Leader. He flies further operations filling in where there is a maximum effort or a lack of wireless operators, occasionally flying with the CO.

This period sees trips to Berlin and Aachen and culminates in July 1944 where, whilst attempting to bomb V1 facilities in the caves of St Leu D'Esserent their aircraft is shot down. Miraculously all manage to bail out. Three of the crew are captured and four manage to evade. Steve is assisted in his evasion by the Resistance and is finally returned to the shores of England in September.

Steve's account of his wartime experiences was self-published in 2003. A few copies of 'Flack, Fighters and Fighters' exist. I am lucky to have a copy. I believe there is a copy in the Australian archive. It was only really during the Covid-19 pandemic that I sat down to read it properly. This I regret, as Steve is no longer with us in order that I might ask him to expand upon his stories. I have therefore embarked upon my own quest to flesh out the detail in this book.

This, I suppose is where my pride in Steve's achievements first butted heads with the evidence – in the detail. This itself seems like a necessary occurrence because it illustrates the fallibility of memory but also that of the record keeping of our esteemed RAF. The evidence is there to support the broad arc of Steve's career. I now have in my possession his service records, various course reports, commission and posting recommendations, citations and so forth. His MI9 interview summaries following his return from evasion help

to corroborate or otherwise his antics whilst hiding from occupying German forces.

Through the National Archives, RAF Museum and IBCC Archives, the IWM and of course the collection at East Kirkby I have begun to flesh out Steve's account with detail and the project is growing legs. I have an ambition to turn it into a book (whether published or not) as I feel there is a story to tell and of course such a project will keep my enthusiasm going.

I've also now committed to such a project in these very musings so you can all keep me accountable! Amongst some of the interesting occurrences I have come across concerns what would be the final operation of the tour for (most of) the crew. This flight neatly illustrates the fallibility of Operational Record Books and the importance of seeking multiple sources. It also, pleasingly supports Steve's memory of events on this occasion.

On the 28 June 1943 Pilot Officer Hawkins took off along with Steve and the rest of the crew to bomb Cologne. Steve recounts that over the North Sea there was quite a 'to-do' up front. It was clear that Paul Hawkins had taken ill and passed out at the controls. Steve and crew took him beyond the spar to the bed and hooked him up to the Oxygen.

If the Operational Record Book was to be believed one of the remaining crew would have taken on the flying duties. Thankfully the aircraft had a second pilot on board - a Canadian airman by the name of Alexander Holmes A'Court.

Steve's log book was stolen in late 1944 from his car outside a Grantham pub (I have the signed report of loss) so I was very grateful to the archive at East Kirkby which contains copies of the log books of both John Kimber (Rear Gunner) and Charles Roach (Bomb Aimer) who cite pilot illness and Sgt Holmes A'Court taking the controls.

Alexander Holmes A'Court would go on to complete a first tour with 57 before volunteering with 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron for a second. He was killed along with his crew on a raid to Berlin in January of 1944.

Steve's memory doesn't always come out on top versus the evidence. For example, he claims to have flown a few operations that are not confirmed by the ORB. We have of course seen though from the example above that the official records are often not to be relied upon so where does that leave me?

Within the account there are a couple of operations which fall within a period where I have alternative evidence to say that he was posted for two weeks to the Bombing Development Unit - during which

Testimony and Truth (continued)

time the records have them conducting, amongst other things, the deployment of the radar counter-measure 'window' from B17 and B24 aircraft - specifically from the Wireless Operator's position. No BDU aircraft involved in this are noted as joining operations mentioned by Steve. It is also interesting that Steve doesn't mention a short attachment to the BDU in his account. Perhaps that's because whilst I might find it interesting he may have considered it a fairly mundane few weeks or perhaps as it wasn't at 'the sharp end' it wasn't worthy of note.

In the wake of Max Hastings' history of Bomber Command a slew of accounts were written and most would, perhaps understandably focus on the dirty work of bombing rather than the minutiae of research and development or heaven forbid - administration.

There will be little I can do to corroborate much of the memories that Steve recounts during his initial few days on the run in France though I am blessed that living relatives travelled to France with Steve in the 1990's to stay with the family that kept Steve safe and so I can explore the characters of these people and the geography. It is also my intention to explore French and German archives (hopefully with the assistance of fluent speakers or a heavy reliance on Google Lens).

Steve celebrated his service as so he should. He was a regular attendee of annual dinners in

Australia be it RAAF or Caterpillar Club. He returned to France to meet Mayors and Maquis alike. Steve in later years was awarded the Legion d'Honneur.

Memory is a complex thing. I know that I would struggle to give you an accurate account of my experiences of combat operations in Afghanistan albeit that was only some 12 years ago rather than the 60 that had elapsed between events and account for Steve. I seem to be gathering a wealth of material that I intend to use to tell Steve's story with added context, detail and depth.

From an extremely rural Australian upbringing to operations during Bomber Command's most deadly period becoming the squadron's signals Leader, a shooting down and evasion is a tale in itself albeit not the most unusual it seems to encompass a range of Bomber Command experiences. Importantly I hope it will add to the story of 57 Squadron and the characters that weave throughout it's wartime history.

I'll be speaking on my research, Steve's career and the issues surrounding veteran testimony as a source with the International Bomber Command Centre Digital Archive's very own Dr Dan Ellin as part of the IBCC Supper Series on February 5th 2026.

(A great taster Alistair - we look forward to reading the book!. Ed)

2026 Airshows

A selection of the major airshows and events across the UK during 2026 is listed below.

29-31 May	English Riviera Airshow, Paignton
6-7 June	Manston International Air Show
14 June	RAF Cosford Airshow
14 June	Abingdon Air & Country Show
4-5 July	Duxford Summer Airshow
9-12 July	Goodwood Festival of Speed
17-19 July	Royal International Air Tattoo, RAF Fairford
20-24	Farnborough International Air Show
25 July	Shuttleworth Summer Air Show
5 August	East Kirkby Airshow
13-16 August	Airbourne: Eastbourne International Airshow
27/28 August	Clacton Airshow
4/5 September	Ayr International Air Show
10 September	Jersey International Air Display
12/13 September	Duxford Battle of Britain Air Show



Festival of Remembrance



Wendy Rothery & Dai Whittingham

On Saturday 8th November, I had the honour and privilege of attending the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall, a truly moving and memorable evening that hit all the right notes in terms of commemorating sacrifice, celebrating those who serve, and inspiring the next generation.

palpable, a powerful reminder that the freedom and peace we enjoy today were built on the bravery and selflessness of those who came before us.



Muster complete - a packed Royal Albert Hall

This year's event was attended by His Majesty The King, Her Majesty The Queen, The Princess of Wales, and Prince George. It commemorated the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, honouring the courage and sacrifice of all those who fought and lost their lives and to whom we owe the freedom we enjoy to this day.

It also honoured those who have served and continue to serve in more recent operations, from humanitarian missions to peacekeeping operations, connecting the past with the present and highlighting the enduring strength and resilience of military families and children, whose support, personal sacrifice and unlimited liability are vital to supporting the Armed Forces Community.

The Festival was hosted by Hannah Waddingham, whose grandfather, now 109, served in the Royal Navy and was watching the performance from the comfort of his home, and featured performances by Sir Rod Stewart, Sam Ryder, Blessing Offor, the Wellermen, and Keala Settle.

They were joined by the Bach Choir and awe-inspiring performances from the very best of military bands and musicians including The Central Band of the RAF, The RAF Squadronaires, The King's Colour Squadron, and The Band of HM Royal Marines. As the iconic poppies fell during a two-minute silence, all present honoured the sacrifices made.



The Drumhead Altar with the Union Jack and RBL Standard

The event focused powerfully and poignantly on bereaved families, the spouses, children, parents and wider families who have lost loved ones through Service and who continue to carry the heavy burden of loss. The event also marked the 25th anniversary of the lifting of the ban on gay, lesbian and bisexual personnel serving openly in the Armed Forces, reflecting on past discrimination and celebrating the strength found in diversity and the progress made since 2000.

It was a deeply moving experience being amongst so many courageous and resilient veterans, Service personnel, and families; the energy and emotion was



Poppies rain down during the 2 minute silence

Congratulations to all at the Royal British Legion on a very fitting tribute to the Armed Forces, and to all members of the Armed Forces Community who participated. It was an honour and privilege to attend.

We will remember them

Remembrance Sunday at The Cenotaph

It was in February this year that Jennifer Bayne from Cape Town, South Africa contacted the Association. She and her sister had been trying to secure places in this year's Cenotaph Veterans Parade to honour their late father, Captain Desmond Charles Burse Reynolds DFC (South African Air Force), who completed 30 missions with 630 Squadron.

After some enquiries, it was discovered that Associations could bid to participate but that we had missed the deadline for 2025! Undeterred, we contacted the Royal British Legion (RBL) and we were eventually allocated places in this year's parade which we believe is the first time that our Association has participated.

Nine Association members responded to our invitation to bid for a place and their names were submitted to the accreditation process. The parade is strictly capped at 10,000 for security reasons and with just 9 days to go before the Parade, our nominated marchers were still anxiously waiting for the RBL to issue their tickets - Jennifer and Di especially so as they were flying-in from South Africa.



*The 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association marchers assemble at Horse Guards Parade (L-R):
Gordon Charlton, Di Thompson, Andrew Ross, Jennifer Bayne, Andrew Chaplin, Sarah
Blake, Lisa Valen, Bob Tuxford, Neil Brooks*

And so, on a gloriously sunny 9 November, our 9 marchers joined the other 9,991 marchers at Horseguards Parade to assemble into their columns ready to proceed to the Cenotaph. As the columns were directed in sequence onto Whitehall, Bob Tuxford and Badger Brooks took on the roles of Left and Right Marker for designated marching section D24, forming two rows abreast for the march past.

Many of you will have watched the TV coverage from the Cenotaph where the Act of Remembrance was led by His Majesty The King. Bob Tuxford writes "... (frustratingly) *the marchers could not see events unfolding at the Cenotaph, and could only hear some of the music and Service. However, once the Service was complete, the march past began and two poppy wreaths were laid as we marched by. On return to Horse Guards, we were received by HRH Prince Edward, the Duke of Edinburgh to mark a fitting end to the ceremony.*"

From an organisational point of view, there had been lots of questions about dress, wreaths, medals and so on, only some of which were answered by the instructions eventually received by the marchers. However, having now participated, and thanks especially to a comprehensive debrief report from Bob Tuxford, we are in a much better position to provide more detailed information to prospective marchers in the future.

The weather this year was very kind and having started to assemble from 0800, marchers were not able to make their way off Horse Guards Parade until around 1300, so it had been a very long morning with lots of standing around. But for those participating it had been a hugely emotional and rewarding experience, as the following comments and reflections from the marchers attests.

Remembrance Sunday at The Cenotaph (continued)



Andrew Ross (L)

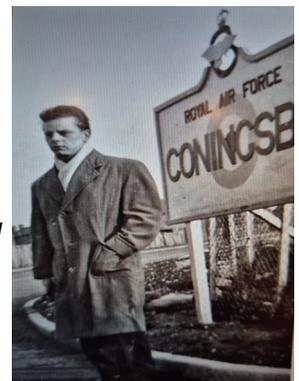
"It was an amazing experience. It was very special to be formed up with all of the veterans in Horse Guards Parade and emotional to feel the total respect from the public for the people that represent those who gave their lives or put them on the line for our country."

Andrew Ross, son of Andrew Ross a Lancaster pilot who served with 57 Squadron



"My lovely Dad never missed a Remembrance Day parade... and being given the opportunity to represent him on such a momentous day was a feeling I will never forget. A day full of so many emotions..... and overwhelming pride in our country and the sacrifices of those brave men and women that gave their lives for our freedom. I hope with all my heart that my Dad was looking down on us all...and honestly, I can't thank you enough for the experience"

Lisa Valen, whose father Roy Nash served on 57 Squadron.



Roy Nash

".... I was delighted to be included in the Association contingent marching past the Cenotaph. It was a memorable (if not very tiring!) experience. I've not stood on my feet and marched that sort of distance since my graduation at The Royal Air Force College Cranwell in 1970! Luckily, the weather could not have been more agreeable with autumn sunshine for the majority of the day. Along with my 57 Sqn friend and colleague Badger Brooks, we met up on Horse Guards Parade Ground and friendships were quickly established with the rest of the group."

Bob Tuxford, a former pilot with 57 Squadron and veteran of the Falklands Conflict



"It was a very special gift for me to be given the opportunity to join a marching column of people, all with common mind and reverence for those that are no longer with us, for those that gave their all for us. My father always spoke with a quiet pride concerning his service with the RAF during WWII, maintaining radar and radio navigation systems on the Lancaster aircraft of 57 Squadron, constantly requesting to take flights on the Lancasters in his care so that he could exact the last ounce of performance from the systems that the aircrews relied on so heavily to get them to their target and return safely home. Thank you, Dad."

Andrew Chaplin, son of Barrie Chaplin a Lancaster Radar Mechanic based at East Kirkby



Barrie Chaplin

Remembrance Sunday at The Cenotaph (continued)



"The weather - so typical of Remembrance Day; bright and sunny. The sense of warm, friendly comradeship - so tangible in Horse Guards Parade. It was wonderful to meet Associate Members and to share such meaningful links of loved ones. The vast crowded streets with their rapturous applause and cheering, in utter contrast to the stillness at 11am with just the rustle of leaves through the trees. In our current turbulent world, it was such a privilege to be surrounded by so much light and good – thank you for this unique opportunity."

Sarah Blake, wife of Barrie Chaplin a Lancaster Radar Mechanic based at East Kirkby



Barrie Chaplin



Des Reynolds

"I was not prepared for the huge impact that the Armistice Parade had on me, of the enormity of the occasion, so many people in uniform and when we started marching the crowds started clapping - I have never experienced this and the emotions that arose in me - and then we marched and at the end had to say goodbye to our marching comrades, to break that bond I felt with you all. My huge appreciation and gratitude to the 57/630 Squadron organizations for making, and increasing my understanding of the war effort and in some way what our Dad faced.... ..as Di and I leave tonight and return to SA our hearts are full, our memories very precious - thank you..."

Jennifer Bayne & Di Thompson whose father Desmond Reynolds DFC flew 30 missions with 630 Squadron



"Sunday 7am, excellent breakfast. 8am caught a taxi, chatted with the driver. On arrival his last words were "I don't require any money, you deserve your ride." The rest of the day was better than good, weather fine, the rest of our group fabulous, especially those who came from South Africa. Marching past the Cenotaph was one of those events you will remember for the rest of your life. By the end of the parade my back a bit tiresome. A different taxi driver this time & a train on time, fell asleep but Midge kept nudging me! Home by 7.50pm."

Neil 'Badger' Brooks, a former pilot with 57 Squadron and veteran of the Falklands Conflict



Ray Charlton (Rear Row, 2nd from Left)

"Thank you for being included in the band of nine, as it was an honour to represent my late Father, who served in 630 Squadron - Bomber Command. It was the first time that they had been included in the Cenotaph Veterans Parade, I felt his presence as I marched.. It will be a memory I carry with me for a long time. Also very interesting to learn about other former members from their relatives."

Gordon Charlton, son of Ray Charlton, a Lancaster flight engineer with 630 Squadron



Remembrance Sunday at The Cenotaph (continued)

Some final words from Bob Tuxford:

“A very busy WhatsApp group was put in place by Wendy Rothery, our Association Information Officer, which created a forum where all participants were able to catch up following the weekend. More stories, snippets and remarkable photographs from those participants whose relatives had played such important roles in the Association’s history were aired, and hopefully, friendships created which will last long into the future.”



Desmond Charles Burse Reynolds DFC - Letters Home

Promoted to Captain on 1st September 1944 at the age of 25, Desmond Reynolds completed 30 operational missions with 630 Squadron. A South African, Des had joined the army at the start of the War and later volunteered for service with the RAF. In November this year, his daughters, Jennifer Bayne and Di Thompson, joined the Association contingent for the Cenotaph Parade. Jennifer and Di have very kindly shared with us several extracts from letters written by their Dad. The first is from Des to his grandson Gregory Bayne:

"When war broke out I was twenty one and at once joined a regiment (The South African Irish, mainly, because my grandfather was an Irishman, and in fact was killed at Sterkstroom during the Boer War leading a charge). I saw action in East Africa, Abyssinia, Kenya, Egypt and the Western Desert - at about this time the 1st Division called for volunteers for the Air Force.



Des Reynolds (Photo: Jennifer Bayne)

Finally three hundred applicants faced an interview conducted by a group of older men and they finally selected thirty of us for training. We then went to Roberts Heights as it was then called (Voortrekkerhoogte, Pretoria) and were asked if we would like to volunteer to fly with the RAF.

Again we faced a selection board and I was successful plus many of my friends who came down from the Desert - one of whom was later to get the Victoria Cross, Edwin Swales. Then, finally, onto Lancasters - the queen of the skies at the time - gentle aircraft with capability of a heavy bomb load and with no vicious habits, with four Rolls Royce Merlin engines - at the time we believed the finest aircraft engines ever built."

Roll forward several months, and Des found himself at RAF East Kirkby with 630 Squadron, nearing completion of his operational tour. The following extracts from his letters home to his wife, give some sense of life on (and off) the Squadron in early 1945.

1st January, 1945

Tomorrow I leave for my 3 week course - I could not get out of it. I tried everything in my power to get out of it but to no avail. I shall spend a few weeks learning how to conduct courts martial, how to prosecute, defend, and everything else. Seems a bit stupid doing this during one's tour.



Des Reynolds (Photo: Jennifer Bayne)

4th January 1945

I am writing this letter from the RAF College, Cranwell. My impressions of the place - on arrival here I was almost frightened by the imposing magnificence of the place - and subsequently hate it. It's cold, frigid and almost unfriendly. We start at 08:30 hours and sometimes finish at 21:00 hours - all this on administration. It seems strange that after including all this I shall go back straight onto ops. Fortunately, I have been able to get my crew away on their nine days leave while I tried to get air publications and what not into my thick skull.

7th January, 1945

There is extremely little news other than that we are still dallying away at our course.

I hate being away from the Squadron. I find myself wondering all the time how everyone is getting on, what the Squadron is doing and how my crew are faring. I can well imagine them all rushing wildly away today. I do hope they enjoy themselves they certainly deserve it. Frankly I consider that they are the best crew on the Station and I do know that I am not the only one of this opinion. Each of them is right on top of his particular job - they are simply grand. When we finish our tour I shall have a photograph of them in full "war" kit standing alongside F-Freddie.

I am the second South African to go through this college - the other being a major who was here some six or seven months ago - I understand he was recalled home before completing the course - they tell us he was absolutely furious.

Desmond Charles Bursley Reynolds DFC - Letters Home (continued)

10th January, 1945

While writing to you I can look out of my window and see a mass of whiteness - the snow is lying about 6 inches deep everywhere. We are still working away at top speed - concentrating all day. It is indeed a very long day and believe me I shall be pleased to get back to the Squadron.

I find myself wondering what is happening to the lads and quite often I have to restrain myself from the impulse of going to the phone and phoning the Mess to get some news. So far I am doing quite well on the course, still remaining near the top as far as results are concerned - this happy state will not persist for very long.

I am simply dying to get back to the Squadron and believe me I shall worry them to let me go on every operation - they will become so sick of me they must give way. I shall have quite a deal of difficulty as the CO is determined to keep me as long as possible. I do want to finish now and to come racing back - that time can't be too quick in coming.

28th January, 1945

Now what news I have - the crew. Noel seems absolutely in the pink. Bill is expecting his commission any day; Brent and Steve should have theirs through within the next three weeks. Paddy is still the same happy, reliable little person. Alan is happy, loves his work and will do anything. In fact they are all fine, and I am very proud of them.



Back Row, L-R: Flight Engineer F/Sgt Allan Desmond Ellis, Mid-Upper P/O Stephen Geoffrey Bowyer (possibly South Rhodesian), Navigator - F/O Noel Frank Coster (New Zealand), Wireless Op - P/O Edward Cecil Burnand

Front Row, L-R: Rear Gunner - F/Sgt Frank James (Paddy) Walsh, Des Reynolds SAAF, Bomb Aimer - P/O William Beresford Brentnall

(Photo: Jennifer Bayne)

They keep on talking about the Far East and want to go, saying that they will not go with any other crew. I would like to go with them and I shouldn't go with any other. But, I am afraid they have had it! Going to Burma would mean that I would be away from you for another two years and that would be unbearable - in fact unthinkable.

31st January, 1945

Now for news of the moment - I am going on another "blasted" course and this time for three weeks - a flight commanders' course. At this rate I shall never complete my tour of operations. I am trying all I know to get out of it even though I may throw away the possibility of my gaining my majority. It seems though, that I shall have to go as it is a group posting.

14th February, 1945

Last night I enjoyed a fairly exciting time but not from enemy action. Briefly, one of my pipelines had come unstuck causing me to lose about a 150 gallons of petrol. As our trips are very long (10 hours or more) and planned to get us home and just home. Well! to cut a long boring story short I landed with less than 50 gallons for the 4 engines - not enough to allow me to go round again in case of a bad landing or obstruction on the runway. Anyway we got down alright - it was a bit of a gamble but it came off, but that is all that matters.

17th February, 1945

I have one spot of bad news - one of the South African laddies Gordon Lacy, on the Squadron, went missing the other night. Everyone is deeply sorry as he was well liked by everyone.

18th February, 1945

The news of first importance is the fact that Steve and Brent have gained their commissions and for them the world is a grand place - I am pleased as they have definitely earned them. I shall watch them very carefully in the next few weeks. Paddy, Alan, Noel, Bill are all pretty well and looking forward to their leave. The ground crew, "Jack", Howard and "Jab?ie" are as bright as ever and still the same hard working trio. Altogether they are a grand bunch of lads and more than that they are interested in each other.

21st February, 1945

The jolly old escape hatch blew off just before the target and for the remainder of the trip I had part of the slip stream blowing in my eyes - I went to bed at 10am and waking at 3pm they were an awful red colour - I received quite a shock and went along to

Desmond Charles Burse Reynolds DFC - Letters Home (continued)

the MO to get some lotion that soon put them right- they are still rather sensitive but this is probably due to watching the instrument panel for 10 hours and more - to say that we are now part of the Russian tactical force is to say the least - and we simply curse our fate.

This is just a line on the eve of going on leave - I have everything packed and all my kit polished. In fact, I shall present a maze of colour what with red tabs and shining buttons.



Desmond Reynolds SAAF (Photo: Di Thompson)

Brent and Steve have already gone - I managed to get them away to get their new uniforms. You should see my three newly commissioned officers, Bill, Brent, and Steve - I am very proud of them. Brent will shoot ahead now that he is commissioned - he is an absolute master at his job and I feel sure that in a short while he will become squadron bombing leader. He has it in him and will now have the chance to put it into practice.

I have spoken to their section leaders (of Bill, Brent and Steve) and they are placed first without exception. Nevertheless, they will still need watching and careful guiding - this must make you think I am becoming a sage old man.

~ o ~

The 'Red Oath' or 'Service Oath' was taken by all volunteers joining the South African Union Defence Force (UDF) from 1939, it was a Service Oath to legally enable the Union to send soldiers outside the borders of South Africa (soldiers in the UDF were

only legally obliged to protect South Africa itself if it were invaded). The oath read:

"That I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George VI and his heirs and successors according to law ... That I will perform to the best of my ability the duties assigned to me as a volunteer member of the Union Defence Forces ... That I will serve anywhere for the duration of the present war and for a period of six months thereafter unless otherwise legally discharged."

This manifested itself in 'red epaulettes' issued to all service personnel who 'volunteered' to serve in the armed forces during the war and took the 'Red Oath'.



Africa Service Medal

Of interest is the 'Africa Service Medal' awarded to all who served in South African Forces during the Second World War, the 'red tab' in this medal's ribbon is symbolic of the The Red Oath taken and the tabs worn.

~ o ~

5th March, 1945

You will smile when I tell you that Douglas returned with the Africa Service Ribbon - I don't know when I shall put it up but I suppose I shall in the end and suffer the odd spot of leg pulling from the fellows here.

Yes, while I was away on leave the ground crew painted Popeye on the side of the aircraft and also, our names are stenciled alongside the approximate position of our places in the aircraft.



'F' Freddy embellished with Popeye (Photo: Jennifer Bayne)

Desmond Charles Burse Reynolds DFC - Letters Home (continued)

7th March, 1945

I understand that Paddy, Bill and Alan have gone to a village about 9 miles away - a spree will do them the world of good - they are grand lads and I do like to hear of them enjoying themselves.

Incidentally did I tell you that Steve is probably getting married in September sometime, I would like to be there and one day I want you to meet him. You will like him. After the war, I want him to come and visit us as soon as we have settled down. His future wife has lived in Rhodesia before, so he need have no fears for the future. He is a grand fellow and a gentleman in every sense of the word.

15th March, 1945

Alan has an attack of flu and will be out of communication for some few days so perhaps it is fortunate that I have become adjutant. By the time I've finished these duties he should be fit to operate again. He has just been put up for his Commission and I do hope he is successful. At the moment we have more commissioned officers in my crew than any other on the Station and should Alan get his we shall almost become unbeatable. I do like to see them get on and if they show response there is nothing I would not do for them.

17th March, 1945

I find my new job as squadron adjutant an interesting one. It's hardly the kind of work I should like to do for the duration of the war, and yet I didn't mind the experience as I do get to know the administration side a bit better. The annoying part is that I can't fly and even more important that I can't fly operations while I'm doing this work. The sooner I can operate the sooner I can get home again. When I do hand this job back again I shall make every endeavour to get on every battle order.

22nd March, 1945

I'm still doing the work of adjutant but it ceases tomorrow. Incidentally notwithstanding the present duties I was able to arrange one long night trip, pleading with the CO, stating that it was out of office hours. I have now completed 28 sorties and have another eight to do, which I want to rush as quickly as possible this will complete my first tour. I think I am becoming a sage old man.

25th March, 1945

I have received further news of Edwin. He has been definitely killed, all his crew escaped with their lives. Evidently he had two engines shot away and lost his instruments. It was one of those typical wintery

nights with cloud and no means to gauge the exact altitude in relation to the earth. Edwin thereupon gave his crew the option to bail out or stay with him - they elected to stay overall and on the return things must have gone from bad to worse and Edwin was forced to order his crew to bail out - by the time they were out he was too low to get himself out - well he crashed into a tree.

Poor old Edwin, a grand fellow with more than his sense of courage. I've asked Pat Anderson and a couple of other lads to our Mess party tomorrow evening, can you picture us at about 11:00 PM a Zulu war-chant - it's a long time since I last did anything like that.

1st April, 1945

Don't be too astounded when I tell you that I have been best man at a wedding in Blackpool. The base adjutant Teddy Ackerman asked me to perform and I simply had to accept. I dashed off on Friday arriving there at 7:30pm. Then I shot up to the bride's house - called "The Grange" and it was beautiful.

I stayed with the Ackermans that evening trying to give Teddy some moral courage - and at the same time trying to think of a speech of some sort. Incidentally we spent a very pleasant evening and I found the Ackermans charming people. I have been given an open invitation to their home.

The great day arrived and the ceremony was to take place at 11:30 am. We arrived there some 20 minutes early - the path to the church for about 70 yards was covered with a lovely red carpet - guests were already there in a magnificent array of beautiful dresses and top hats.

By then we had both of us snuck 2 stiff whiskies. The service was a beautiful one and after the vestry, the photography, we rushed to the reception.



*The wedding of Teddy Ackerman with Kay Manning
(Photo: Jennifer Bayne)*

Desmond Charles Burse Reynolds DFC - Letters Home (continued)

The bridesmaid was very pretty but being an old married man I had to contain myself.

By the time the speech making time arrived I had had sufficient drinks to banish all shyness and they did present a rather distinguished company. What I had to say seemed to meet with approval and they were kind enough to congratulate me afterwards. After the official reception we then adjourned to the bride's home - where Teddy and Kay later took their leave to proceed on their honeymoon.

That evening I went out with Mr and Mrs Jack Manning (and the bridesmaid) but 10:30 pm found me back with the Ackermans. This morning the Group Captain sent his Oxford to fetch me. It was undoubtedly a lovely wedding but not one I should like myself - I should choose again a quiet little church in a family gathering, rather than this magnificent showy affair.

4th April, 1945

Under normal circumstances I should have completed my tour officially today. News of the crew is that they're all very fit and well and looking forward to their leave on Saturday when they will be indulging in a terrific party in celebration in different parts of the country.

(According to Des' logbook he flew his 4th April mission on three engines, this is documented on Pete Sharpe's website. We have no idea why his tour was not officially completed as this was his final operation.)

14th April, 1945

In fact just before I left the Squadron rumour had it that the tour had been reduced to its original figure and in that case I'm expecting to be told, when I get back, I'm now tour expired.

18th April, 1945

At last I have finished my tour and should be going on 14 days of leave tomorrow. My first reaction was one of startled happiness but then this was tinged with some sadness of the thought that finally we have to break up. We have been an extremely happy team and all hate the thought that at last we had to break up. To all intents and purposes we are now out of the War.

This evening we are taking the ground crew on a spree - I have ordered 2 taxis and I'm afraid that in the end I shall be absolutely stinking. I don't altogether relish it but it's only fair that we express our gratitude to the ground crew in some form or other. It will develop into a wild singing affair.

20th April, 1945

Received a poor crew photo.

25th April, 1945

What wonderful news - that Edwin has won the VC. It is not altogether surprising as he deserved it - the only pity being that he is not alive to learn of it.

8th May, 1945

Today is VE Day and I'm writing from one of my old training stations - Steve, Brent and Bill have been posted here and this evening we intend celebrating old times. They are so pleased to see me again and I only wish we were able to gather the rest of the crew.

I left the Squadron this morning after quite a hectic night of celebration. We went to one of the local pubs and sang songs and were generally merry. They had a pigsty in the backyard and George, our squadron ? threw my cap to the pig which showed its appreciation (I believe) by chewing it up. Today I am minus a cap and had to chase after Ronnie this morning to borrow one of his. George is an absolutely grand feller but such a silly chap once he gets drunk. The Group Captain ordered George out of the Mess last night - we returned there after the party - we thought it damned funny.



Des being presented with his DFC (it is believed) by Gideon Brand van Zyl, UK High Commissioner to South Africa from 1946 to 1951 (Photo: Jennifer Bayne)

DX-P W4234 57 Squadron

The story of DX-P, it's loss on the night of 21 December 1942 and the work of our friends in Belgium to recover wreckage and to trace relatives of those crew members lost has been covered several times in Newsletters over the past 15 years.

Each year, on the Sunday closest to 21 December, the community of Lierde hold a candlelight vigil by the memorial they erected in the village, not far from the crash site. This year, will be the 25th such vigil.

The crash remains deeply embedded in the collective memory of the local community. Our good friend Dirk de Quick who has been at the centre of this work and commemoration from the outset and he recently told us of a new art installation which was unveiled this Summer in honour of the 6 crewmembers which lost their lives in the crash.



Unveiling Ceremony - 28 July 2025

The artwork consists of three carefully crafted panels in corten steel and was designed by illustrator Ingrid De Vuyst, before being realized by metalworker Stefaan De Backer, whose craftsmanship make the installation a powerful, lasting tribute.



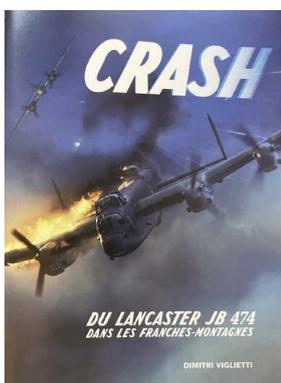
In memory of the crew of W4234 DX-P - Lierde, Belgium

The left panel shows the faces of the six crew members who died. The centre panel features the Lancaster's silhouette with flames and the date of the crash. The right panel depicts the parachute jump of the only survivor, Roden Pickford. His side is opposed to the sparks of fire.

CRASH - The Loss of 57 Squadron Lancaster JB474

Swiss author Dimitri Viglietti, spent three years researching and retracing the story of the Lancaster crew of 57 Squadron who came down in Switzerland's Jura Mountains on the night of 15 March 1944. Only one crew member survived the crash, with the other six laid to rest with military honours in the Swiss town of Vevey.

Viglietti presented his book "Crash du Lancaster JB 747 dans les Franches-Montagnes" at the Royal Air Force Club in London, discussing his research and the stories he heard from people in Switzerland who, even after more than 80 years, vividly remembered the events.



JB474 had left RAF East Kirkby in the early evening with a crew of 7 on a bombing mission to Stuttgart. The aircraft successively flew over Normandy, Vosges and Belfort when the crew lost his orientation by night and in poor weather conditions.

Instead of flying to the east for Stuttgart, the pilot continued to the south towards Switzerland. When it arrived at the border between France and Germany, the bomber was attacked by the pilot of a German fighter Messerschmitt Me.110G.

The aircraft caught fire but the crew was able to continue for a few minutes before the aircraft lost control and crashed in a prairie located in Le Chaumont, southeast of Saignelégier, Jura, Switzerland.



Aerial photograph taken by the Swiss Air Force the day after the crash

Six airmen lost their lives:

Pilot - Plt Off S C Atcheson DFC
 Flt Eng - Sgt B H M Thomas
 Navigator - Plt Off A P McCall
 Bomb Aimer - FS J Greenhalgh
 Wireless Operator - Sergeant F S Weaver
 Mid Upper Gunner - FS K A Reece (survived)
 Rear Gunner - Sgt J W Naylor



Dimitri Viglietti presents his book 'Crash'

If anyone reading this article has any information about any of the crew, we would be pleased to put you in contact with Dimitri.

Spirits in Flight



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.

I recently came across this poem by Walt which I had not read before, with its theme of 'Remembrance'.

Spirits in Flight

I saw them return, seven spirits in flight.
Engines fired by the sparks of the night.
Lumbering, throbbing like a battered ghost.
So thankful for a friendly coast.

Glowing and gliding, it roars without sound.
The rubber screams, as it kisses the ground.
Perfect touch down, on a deserted plain.
Now a corn field, a field with no name.

Night after night, mission after mission.
Helmets, visors, masks and ammunition.
The Seven Sky Warriors from long past.
All knowing tonight, could be their last.

I hear the fields, alive with noise,
Filled with brave men, some are just boys,
I see them walk, in their suits of leather.
Slowly and proudly, they walked together.

Where their planes rose, to meet the foe.
Now the larks rise, from their nests below.
Down the runway, only peace is heard.
Save for the wind, and the song of a bird.

Time passes - January to December.
From Spring to Winter, the years drift on.
Every April, every Easter - I will remember.
Cliff, Al, Pete and John - Nick, Stan and Skipper Don.

Walt Scott

One of Walt's 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.



2026 Association Reunion

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

The 2026 Association Reunion will be held over the weekend of 3-5 July. The Memorial Service will be held at East Kirkby on Saturday 4 July and will begin at 2.15 pm. The 'new' NAAFI will be open for refreshments and attendees will be able to watch 'Just Jane' doing her Taxy Run at 4.00pm. The Reunion Dinner will be at The Petwood at 7.00pm for 7.30pm.

We look forward to welcoming members of 57 Squadron including the Squadron Standard Party to the Memorial Service, and to our Dinner where OC 57 Squadron will be our guest speaker.

Our AGM will be at The Petwood on Sunday at 10:30am and will be followed by an optional visit to the International Bomber Command Centre where we will have a free guided tour at 12:30pm. Afterwards there will be an optional lunch at the

IBCC; the lunch format will depend on the number of attendees.

Travel to/from the IBCC will be by car share. Car Parking at the IBCC is £3 per vehicle and for those that are interested, entrance to the Exhibition is £10/11 <https://internationalbcc.co.uk/>

A Reunion Booking form is available at the back of this Newsletter and also on the Association website. 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 and the surrounding area, 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 3 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 4 July East Kirkby/Petwood House Hotel

2.15pm Memorial Service in Hangar - medals may be worn
57 Squadron Standard Party
Memorial - Last Post & Laying of Wreaths
7.00pm for 7.30pm Dinner - dress, lounge suits/blazers (Petwood Suite)

Sunday 5 July Petwood House Hotel/IBCC

10:30am AGM
12:30pm Guided Tour of IBCC, followed by lunch
3.00pm BBMF Flypast (To be confirmed)
7.00pm for 7.30pm Informal Dinner in Squadron Bar

Accommodation and Function Rates

Petwood House Hotel Residents

3 Nights B&B, one restaurant dinner, 2 function dinners (Sat & Sun) £368pp
2 Nights B&B (Fri & Sat), one restaurant dinner, one function dinner £258pp
2 Nights B&B (Sat & Sun), 2 function dinners £258pp
1 Night B&B (Sat) and one function dinner £148pp

Non Residents

£48.50pp 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 (Retd) 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://57-630sqnassoc.org/wp-content/uploads/57-and-630-Squadrons-Association-Constitution_1-July-2023.pdf



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2026

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 (Friday 3 July)	
Dinner (Saturday 4 July)	
Dinner (Sunday 5 July)	

If you are NOT staying at The Petwood, please enclose a cheque, payable to 57/630 Squadrons' Association, when you submit this form

Function	Cost pp	Number Attending	Total Cost
Dinner (Saturday 4 July)	£48.50		
Dinner (Sunday 5 July)	£48.50		
Sub Total			
Donation to Association Funds			
Total Enclosed			

	Number in your party attending
Memorial Service - Saturday 4 July	
Guided Tour at IBCC - Sunday 5 July	
Lunch at IBCC - Sunday 5 July	



57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2026

Special Requirements	
Names of party - First Name, Surname and any allergies or intolerances	
Number of vegetarian meals required for party	
We/I wish to sit with	
We require additional facilities (e.g. wheelchair)	
Any other remarks	

Signature

If you wish to attend the 2026 Reunion please return this form to the Secretary, Chris Morffew, **NO LATER THAN 31 MAY 2026**

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. 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