



102 (CEYLON) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2018

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In the last copy of the Newsletter I was honoured to print a piece about Stan Jeffrey under the title “A Humble Flight Mechanic”. Stan had the following piece of anonymous poetry handwritten in the back of one of his service notebooks.

Stan Jeffrey served the whole of his time during the war in Bomber Command Ground Crew with 102 (Ceylon) Squadron and was posted to Pocklington from Topcliffe finishing his service at Bassingbourne in Cambridgeshire.

**The Lords of the Air they call us
They speak of our glorious fame
On the front page of every newspaper Tell us of some pilot's name,
Connected with deeds of valour, performed in the azure blue
The usual, the Heinkel and Dornier, crashed to earth in two.**

**One chap who gets no medals
You never hear his name
He does not fly in the pale blue sky
Or pose for the news in a plane.**

**His jon cannot be called romantic so he's not in the public eye,
But your heroes can't do without him and I will tell you the reason why.
He's up at the break of dawn,
He's there when the twilight falls,
Pulling his weight to keep his crate
Ready for all that befalls.**

**So the next time you see a picture of a plane and a flying crew
Remember the guy who keeps it aloft.
Although he may only be an AC2**

**So the next time you praise a pilot,
As the enemy falls in a wreck
Just think of the guy you do not see.
Yours truly a humble Flight Mech.**

Anonymous

CATHERINE DODD - A SISTER'S MEMORY

Catherine Dodd was 9 years old when her brother, Sergeant Michael David Dolan, (19 years), an Air Gunner with 102 Squadron based at Driffield took off in a Whitley, N1380 DY-R, to try to stop the German advance through Northern France.

This is part of her story:

David, as he was known, who had joined the RAF as a regular in 1937, and during the so-called 'phoney war' in the spring of 1940 he, along with the other regulars in the RAF were hastily trained for aerial combat. They also flew over Poland and Germany dropping thousands of propaganda leaflets.

Aged 9, I lived with my mother and older sister, Eileen in Liverpool. This was all so exciting to me. I adored my brother who used to let me stomp around the house wearing his flying boots, helmet and goggles. I recall him, however, sobbing with my mother on his last leave when they thought I was asleep in bed. Looking back, I think they realised the average life expectancy of a rear gunner – also known as a Tail End Charlie- was short and his time may be running out.



David Dolan aged 18 years.

Then came Dunkirk!

In May 1940 the German Army had overrun most of France and Belgium. The BEF (British Expeditionary Force) and the remnants of the French and Belgian Armies were in disarray. Defeated, dejected and demoralised, they retreated towards the Channel Coast and the Dunkirk beaches. There, they awaited their fate; at best to be captured and become prisoners of war or at worst to be killed.

102 Squadron was stationed at Driffield in Yorkshire. The 20th May, 1940, dawned as a pleasant Spring-like day. The weary air and ground crew barely noticed this after 4 consecutive nights of bombing. They were more concerned with what the coming day and night held in store. Five, old, antiquated Whitley bombers were detailed to bomb bridges to derail the German progress over the French river Oise. One of those bombers was number N1380 (DY-R), crewed by:

Flight Lieutenant Bill Owen, aged 22 - Bill

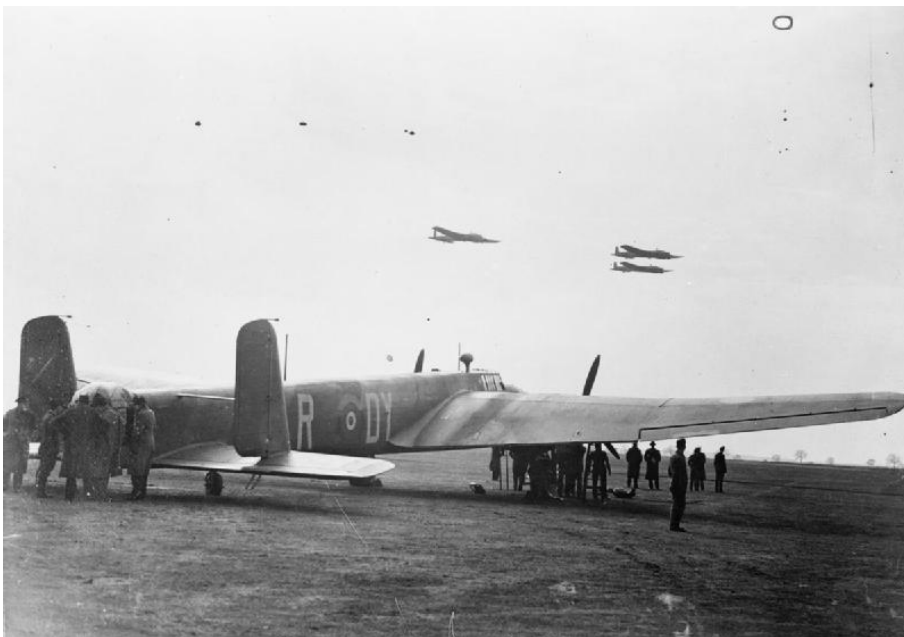
Pilot Officer Dennis Holbrook, aged 20 - Dennis

Sgt Duncan Barrett aged 20- Duncan

Leading Aircraftman Reg Newberry, aged 20 - Reg; and

Sgt David Dolan, aged 19 – my brother – David

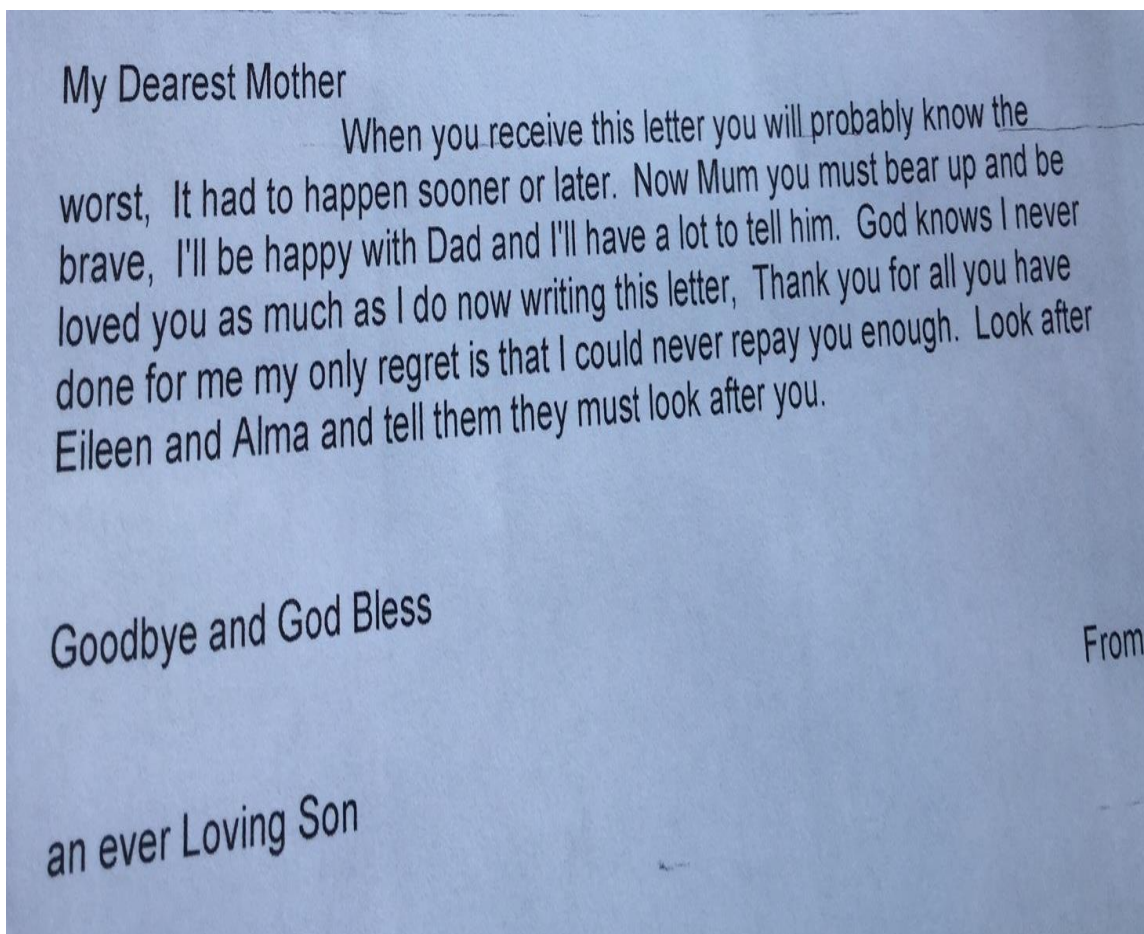
I will refer to them by their Christian names from here on.



At that time, Churchill's orders to Bomber Command were to fly at low level in daylight to hit their targets. On completing their mission N1380 turned for home but was shot down by enemy anti-aircraft fire, near to Brissey in Northern France.

I remember our postman crying when he gave my mother the awful telegram – Missing Presumed Killed. I have been told that I could not be found for hours after this until someone found me in my mother's room – sitting in the dark.

A few days later we received a letter from David's friend, inside of which was what they call a suicide letter. A suicide letter is one that is to be sent to the next of kin in the event of their death. His friend explained that a crew-member, Bill Jacobs, of N1380 was ill that day and names had been drawn out of a hat for his replacement on the mission. David's name was drawn out.



My Dearest Mother

When you receive this letter you will probably know the worst, It had to happen sooner or later. Now Mum you must bear up and be brave, I'll be happy with Dad and I'll have a lot to tell him. God knows I never loved you as much as I do now writing this letter, Thank you for all you have done for me my only regret is that I could never repay you enough. Look after Eileen and Alma and tell them they must look after you.

Goodbye and God Bless

From

an ever Loving Son

(Typed out from the original by Catherine's husband.)

It was not until December 1944 that we received official notification of David's death and burial place. Up until then my mother had clung to the

hope that David was alive and maybe a prisoner somewhere. She died 7 months later.

1975

In 1975 I went with my son, Keith, aged 15, to visit friends in Germany. We took a detour via Paris to Brisseley to visit David's grave. We arrived unannounced and found the graves to be beautifully tended and there were fresh flowers on them. I called into a local shop in the village and struggled to explain why we were there. The shopkeeper told us to wait and returned, a few minutes later, with a gentleman we were introduced to as the Mayor.

The Mayor greeted us warmly and invited us to lunch with his family. We accepted and, during the lunch, he told us the following story.

My brother's plane had broken up on being hit. David, in the tail, fell in a farmer's field. The others fell in nearby woods.

The Germans gave permission for David to be buried in the village churchyard but the others were buried in the woods. Later, as the tide turned and the Germans were retreating, permission was granted for the villagers to exhume the boys buried in the woods and to bury them alongside David. To do this they had first to move an existing family vault, making way for the crew to be buried side by side.

After the war ended the War Graves Commission provided headstones. My mother's chosen words were inscribed on David's.

"Only a boy but he played a man's part"



(The Secretary and John Williams of the 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association attended the memorial service in Brisseley – Hamegicourt in June 2018)

THE CRASH OF A HALIFAX IN ARDLEIGH , ESSEX

During the evening of 25th February 1943 eleven Mk2 Halifax bombers of 102 (Ceylon) Squadron took off from RAF Pocklington as part of a raid on Nuremberg. They experienced severe weather conditions and two aircraft returned to Pocklington because of icing. An hour after its take off, at 8.24pm, a third aircraft, DY-P crashed in Ardleigh. The aircraft came down in the fields of Home Farm, now Peake Fruit, heading towards Badliss Hall Farm. The aircraft exploded on impact creating a crater about 30 yards in diameter and 8 feet deep and all the crew were killed. About 30 minutes after the crash the 1000 pound bomb which they were carrying in the aircraft exploded. The crash badly damaged Badliss Hall Farm and destroyed some of their outbuildings. There were numerous small fires, two straw stacks were badly damaged and it took the Fire Brigades of Manningtree and Colchester two hours to get the fires under control. The RAF Accident Report said that the cause of the crash was not established but it was probably loss of control in bad weather conditions.

The crew were :

Flt Sgt Charles Henry Bray RAF, Pilot, aged 27, buried at St Catherine, Ringshall, Suffolk. One of eight sons born to Joseph and Ada Bray, Charles was born and brought up in South Croydon. After school Charles joined the RAF and served in Palestine before converting to the Halifax. He had married Rowena Angus in 1940 and left two daughters. After the war Rowena re-married and the family emigrated to New Zealand.

Flt Sgt Cyril James Drane Smith RAFVR, Wireless Operator, aged 23, buried at Patna Old Cemetery. Son of Denis Drane Smith and Gladys Matilda Smith; husband of Mary Blane Smith of Carnshalloch, Patna, East Ayrshire. He had considerable experience and had flown over 50 missions , mainly in Hampdens, with 49 Squadron. He had married Mary Blane Watt in 1942 and left a daughter , born three months after the crash.

Sgt Thomas Bertram Barfoot RAFVR (Tommy), Bomb Aimer , aged 19 , buried at St Leonard's Birdingbury. Son of Charles and Constance Barfoot of Birdingbury, Warwickshire. Thomas won a scholarship to Lawrence Sheriff School in Rugby and then did his RAF training in the USA and Canada. He was a last minute replacement for one of the regular crew.

Sgt John Dudley RAFVR, Air Gunner, aged 20, buried at St. James, Titsey, Kent. Son of George William and Grace Dudley. He was educated at Limsfield

Curch School and after leaving school he became a gamekeeper on the Titsey Estate seat of the Levenson-Gower Family. He was a last minute replacement for one of the regular crew.

Sgt Leonard Victor William Herbert RAFVR, Navigator/ Observer, aged 22, buried at the Eltham Cemetery Woolwich. He was the son of William and Louise Herbert of Welling Kent and husband of Evelyn R Herbert who he had married in 1942. His mother had died in 1936 and he is buried in the same grave. Evelyn re-married in 1947.

Sgt Irving Louis Sanitsky RCAF, Air Gunner , aged 22, buried in Norwich Cemetery. Son of Simon and Ida Sanitsky of Fall River , Massachusetts, USA. He was President of his High School class and later studied aviation mechanics at the NYA school at Quoddy, Maine. He joined the RCAF in April 1941 and arrived in England a year later.

Sgt Edward Leslie Widgery RAF, Flight Engineer , aged 35, buried at Oystermouth Cemetery, Swansea. He was the son of Albert and Ann Widgery of Ammanford, Carmarthenshire and was educated at Taunton School and Swansea Grammar School. In 1938 he married Iris Mary Jones and the couple who lived in Sketty, Swansea had two sons.

On Sunday the 30th September Elaine Kularatne, Holly Usher, Dermot Allen and Harry Bartlett represented the Association following an invitation by the Ardleigh Parish Council to attend the dedication and unveiling of a Memorial Plaque which included the loss of the crew of Halifax DY-P on the 25th of February 1943. A 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association wreath was laid after the dedication and unveiling of the memorial.

Harry Bartlett reported that, “ the turn out was most impressive with over one hundred and fifty people there. The Chairman of Essex County Council . The Mayor , Parish Chairs , a very smart unit of Air Cadets and representatives of the regular RAF made for a memorable service and dedication. There was a significant display in the Village Hall nearby and about a quarter of it was dedicated to our lost crew, including copies of the Police reports, eye witness accounts and biographies of the crew. This was a very moving and rewarding day for us “.



SIR BERNARD JENKIN MP UNVEILS THE MEMORIAL PLAQUE



THE SQUADRON ASSOCIATION WREATH IS LAID



THE RELATIVES OF THE CREW WHO ATTENDED THE SERVICE

TO THE SKIES



IN MEMORY OF DONALD EUGENE LESLIE (1921 – 2017)

In June , earlier this year, our Secretary received an announcement of the passing of Donald Eugene Leslie who can aptly be described as one of our true war heroes. The information was supplied by Alex Brzeski who I quote

“Donald was born in Vancouver, Canada on September 2nd 1921, the youngest

of five children, to James and Lucie Leslie.

His parents passed away when he was eleven years old after which he lived with his aunt Agnes.

From a young age Don was eager to learn to fly. In 1938 he joined the RCAF after leaving British Columbia for England. Don trained as a Flight Engineer on the Handley Page Halifax in England and Canada.

On the night of the 28/29 June on the night of Handley Page Halifax LW 143 DY-O took off as part of other 102 Squadron aircraft from Pocklington Airfield. Their target was railway sidings at the town of Blainville sur Orne in France. During the flight they were engaged in a fight with German fighter ace Paul Semrau. The crew of LW143 lost the fight. The plane crashed a couple of kilometers outside of Lyons La Foret, a hamlet called Gaupilliers, killing three of his crewmates. Don was later cared for by heroine of the local Resistance Madame Huguette Verhague who called him and his crewmates his blue birds because of the colour of their RAF and RCAF uniforms.

The crew were later collected by a resistant driving a red cross ambulance. This was a trap laid on by the Gestapo with the help of Jacques Desoubre a Belgian imposter posing as a resistant. After spending time in Buchenwald Concentration Camp, at the conclusion of the war Don returned to his beloved Canada where he married his sweetheart Blossom in 1946. At the time he worked for the BOAC airline and they then moved to the United States where they became American citizens. He later flew as an aircraft engineer with TWA (Trans World Airlines) retiring after thirty one years of service.

Don and Blossom moved to Squim in Washington State where he spent his time playing his favourite sport golf which he played from the age of ten years. He also developed a love of carpentry, travelling, baseball and skiing. Blossom passed away in 2015 after sixty nine years of marriage. On the same day two years later Don injured himself after falling. He spent time recuperating in a rehabilitation care centre. During his time there staff are said to have told his family that he was so popular that he had received more visitors than anyone else there. On December 31 2017 Don took his final flight and passed away after heart problems at the age of ninety six. He left behind two children, a son and a daughter, and several grandchildren.

This year the ceremony at Mortemer, Lisors where we remember Madame Verhague fell on what would have been Don's ninety seventh birthday on Sunday 2 September.

MADAME HUGUETTE VERHAGUE



It is remarkable that both the stories of Don Leslie and of Huguette Verhague should be available to us for print in the same Newsletter. It is a story that has been related in the following terms.

“ On the night of 29 June 1944 a young lady by the name of Janine Colzy was sitting on the roof of her father's shop in Lyons-La-Forêt when they spotted an aircraft hurtling towards the ground. The plane was Halifax LW143 DY-O. This plane was crewed by members of 102 Squadron Nigel Douglas Campbell, Donald Leslie, Douglas Eagle, Jack Wilson, Noel Pardon, Ron Leverington and Reginald William Joyce.

The plane crashed about two kilometres away from the village killing Jack Wilson, Noel Pardon and Nigel Campbell. Ron Leverington parachuted just before the plane exploded on the way down landing not far from the crash site. He was helped by members of the local resistance and taken to a cave in the nearby forest where he met with Don Leslie, Douglas Eagle and Reginald Joyce. After a short but stressful time hiding in the cave a friendly face appeared shouting “Cooeey, it's me Huguette”. Madame Verhague took the crew under her wing and hid them in the attic to her chicken house which looked on to the

grand Abbaye Mortemer de Lisors deep in the centre of the forest of Lyons.

During their stay with her she risked everything to make sure that they had clothing and food. A clever alarm system was set up whereby she had a washing line attached to a wire that ran up the outside wall of the henhouse, entered through a hole and was then attached to a small tin filled with stones. Anytime she saw the enemy advancing towards her house she would hang her washing on the line which shook the tin thereby alerting the crew to the danger.

Huguette's house was raided on a couple of occasions but remarkably no one was found. On August 23rd seven days before the liberation of the area the crew were collected by what appeared to be a Red Cross truck driven by a “resistant”. The driver was in fact a Belgian working for the Gestapo. The crew spent the rest of the war behind barbed wire until they were liberated by the Russians.

After the war Reginald Joyce returned to the village in 1949 for a very good reason that being his marriage to Janine Colzy the young woman who had witnessed the crash of the Halifax whilst sitting on the roof.

Since the 1960's a ceremony has been held almost every year to commemorate the memory of Huguette who died in 1961 blind and penniless. The ceremony is also for the memory of many members of the Resistance who were tortured and then executed about one hundred metres away from Huguette's house a couple of days after her “bluebirds” were taken away.



The Floral tributes at Huguette's Farm



A wreath is laid at the Croix Vaubois on behalf of 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association at the Annual Memorial Ceremony at L'Abbaye Mortemer

Harry Bartlett attended the Memorial Ceremony at L'Abbaye Mortemer on behalf of 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association . Escorted by flag bearers of French Veterans Organisations he joined the guests groups to pay respects to the memory of Huguette Verhague.

Harry also visited the Marissel French National Cemetery at beauvais where crosses and a wreath were laid on the graves of the three members of the crew (Noel Pardon , Jack Wilson and Nigel Campbell) who died when DY-O crashed. The opportunity was also taken to lay crosses on the graves of James Duell RAAF and Dennis Smith RAF who died on the same night and operation when DY-S crashed.



It is also sad to report that since the production of the last copy of the Newsletter we have lost two further veterans.

SQUADRON LEADER TOM MADDOCK (NAVIGATOR)



Dr Sue Maddock wrote to the Association informing that her father died on the 2nd May 2018. He was ninety six and died quickly of a heart attack.

Tom had flown both Halifax and Lancaster aircraft and had flown on operations for 102 Squadron between 1942-44 being awarded for bravery. After the war he brought back prisoners from Asia and later served in the Berlin Airlift. On leaving the RAF he was promoted to become Head of West Midlands ATS. He moved to Newport in Shropshire with his family on retiring in 1965 where he became active in Rotary and international development.

Tom is survived by three daughters, six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

FLT LT. JAMES VICTOR SAMPSON DFC (PILOT)

The Association received a letter from Joy Sampson whose husband Flt Sgt James (Jim) Sampson flew with 102 (Ceylon) Squadron between 1942 and 1943. He died following a heart attack on the 1 May 2018

REMEMBRANCE WEEKEND 11th NOVEMBER 2018

Saturday – 10 November

1100 hours – Wreath laying at G – George memorial at the Becksid Memorial Medical Centre, West Green , Pocklington (Assemble at the Medical Centre at **10.40 hours**).

Sunday – 11 November

1030 hours – St. Catherine's Church, Barmby Moor. Church Service followed by wreath laying at the Commonwealth War Grave Memorial.

1200 hours – Memorial Service at the airfield adjacent to the Wolds Gliding Club (This will be followed by tea and biscuits in the Gliding Club and an informal Association Meeting for members).

1345 hours – Wreath layers from the Association join the parade in Pocklington Town starting at the Pocklington School to lay a wreath on the World War Two war memorial.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL OCCASION OF THIS YEARS CENTENARY OF THE ARMISTICE THE ABOVE TIMINGS MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.



“ And when you come to 102

And think that you will get through

There's many a fool who thought like you

It' s suicide but it's fun”



Anonymous 102 Squadron member 1941
ROYAL AIR FORCE
POCKLINGTON AIRFIELD

The home of 102 (Ceylon) Squadron raf and 405(Vancouver) Squadron RCAF, No 4 Group Bomber Command during World War Two from where so many gave their lives in the cause of freedom. This memorial was raised by Old Comrades in gratitude to all those men and women who served in both squadrons in War and in Peace.

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