

102 (CEYLON) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



A Royal Navy Corvette keeps watch as HMS St Mary closes in to pick up the crew (see page 3)

NEWSLETTER December 2013

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Remembrance Day

Sunday 10th November 2013

Member of the Association and friends gathered at St Catherine's Church Barmby Moor on Sunday 10th November. Yorkshire was at its winter best with a clear blue sky and a very hard overnight frost.

We were welcomed by a very long standing friend of the Association Rev Val Hewitson who has come out of retirement until a replacement for Rev Gail Dalley is appointed. Amongst the full congregation we were joined by the Mayor of Pocklington Cllr Ann Cox and members of Barmby Moor Parish Council.

Following the church service a service was also held in the Military cemetery in the grounds of the church. Wreaths were laid by The Mayor, Cllr Graham Perry a Councillor from the Barmby Moor Parish Council, our own Chairman, Tom Sayer and Welfare Officer, Mike Cummings.



We were then accompanied to the airfield by the Mayor and Councillor Graham Perry who laid wreaths at the airfield memorial along with Tom Sayer and Mike Cummings. After the short service the Wolds Gliding Club offered regreshments to those present. Special thanks go to XXX and XXX who put this on at very short notice. Grateful thanks also go to Peter Dyson

who played the last post for us on all these occasions and of Rev Val Hewitson.

Pocklington gives so much support to the Association it was felt that we should attend their Remembrance Day parade. In the afternoon your Secretary and Chairman together with Jim Cadwallender and his family joined the people of Pocklington for their Remembrance Day Parade. There was a very impressive turnout for a small town and we paraded first to the WW2 memorial where a 102 Squadron wreath was laid. We then marched to the WW1 memorial, the names of the dead were read out at both memorials.

Reunion 2014

The 2014 Reunion information will be in the next newsletter as soon as a date can be arranged to fit in with St Catherine's Church timetable but is likely to be 27th July 2014

Sqn Ldr H Melvin (Dinghy) Young DFC & Bar

Squadron Leader Melvin Young acquired the nickname 'Dinghy' after ditching in the sea twice and surviving both times in an inflatable dinghy. It also seemed appropriate because he had helped Oxford to win the Boat Race in 1938. Young's first operational posting in June 1940 was to 102 Squadron, flying Whitleys. Some of their bombing operations took them as far as Turin in north Italy

The Squadron was transferred to Coastal Command in 1940 and the detachment, led by Sqn Ldr O.A. Morris, arrived at Prestwick on the west coast of Scotland on the 1st September and then followed an unexciting period of convoy escort duties, operating both out of Prestwick and Aldergrove in Northern Ireland. Little has been recorded about this period of the Squadron's life as each flight was without incident apart from one.

Sqn Ldr O.A. Morris in 1954/56 wrote about life on the squadron and about the Prestwick move as follows.. "and then we received orders for attachment to Coastal Command to take part in anti-U-Boat operations in the Western approaches. We moved the squadron to Prestwick on 1st September 1940 and set up our Flight Offices in tents and packing cases on the edge of the airfield. Two or three officers trained in maritime operations were attached to set up an Operations Room. We soon found we could not take off from Prestwick with the type of depth charge then used and a Flight at a time was sent over to Aldergrove."

"I went over there in charge of the detachment on 28th September to relieve Sqn Ldr Beare. Our Whitleys did not take to flying over the sea at low altitude very well and we had a lot of engine trouble. On 7th October Flying Officer Young was involved in his first ditching well out into the Atlantic as the result of engine failure. He and his crew were eventually picked up by one of the first U.S. Lease-Lend destroyers HMS St Mary crossing the Atlantic to the U.K. Young, an Oxford rowing Blue, had an



The Young Crew paddle towards their rescuers



'Nearly there'

This is one of the few photographs showing a member of the crew wearing a reflective skull cap. Young has his back to the camera.



Rescued & rescuer – HM Young and the Captain of the HMS St Mary

American mother and the destroyer happened to have on board a photographer from the U.S. magazine "Life". He took many excellent pictures of Young and his crew's rescue from their dinghy. A well-illustrated feature was published in "Life" as a result of this rescue. We also nearly lost Pilot Officer Cheshire at this time - the incident is recorded in the recent book of his exploits."

This was the first of a number of ditchings for Henry Young who ditched a second time in the English channel south of Plymouth who, for obvious reasons, was soon to become known throughout Bomber Command as 'Dinghy' Young."

Sqn Ldr Morris continues "We did not sight any U-Boats, but one of our crews did sight some Merchant Navy survivors in open boats. This interlude was not very popular as we were not trained in the maritime role and didn't know or receive any instruction in what we were supposed to be doing. Briefing was of the sketchiest nature and there was no attempt to instruct us in carrying out sweeps and patrols." "We returned to our old Group in Yorkshire on 10th October 1940. and recommenced bombing missions against Germany."

Dingy Young finished his tour of operations in February 1941, and was awarded the DFC.

In 1943 he was posted to No. 617 Squadron, where flying a modified Avro Lancaster ED877/G AJ-A (code-named *A-Apple*), he took part in Operation *Chastise*, the raid to attack German dams in the Ruhr Valley. Young led the second formation in Lancaster AJ-A, the other two being piloted by David Maltby and David Shannon *A-Apple* flew as part of the first wave which attacked the Möhne Dam. Young was second in command to Wg Cdr Guy Gibson flying *G-George*.

A-Apple was fourth to attack and hit the dam, causing a small breach. As this breach was not apparent, a fifth aircraft Maltby (*J-Johnny*) subsequently attacked the dam and achieved a hit, causing a larger breach.

On the Dams raid,. The first three aircraft to attack, Gibson(*G-George*) Hopgood (*M-Mother*) and Martin (*P-Popsie*), all missed the target. By the time Young's turn came, a certain amount of desperation must have been creeping in. Gibson's and Martin's mines had not been successful and Hopgood had been shot down. To distract the anti-aircraft defences as Young attacked, Gibson flew across the dam on the far side and Martin flew alongside AJ-A. Young made a perfect run, releasing the mine at the correct speed and distance, and it bounced three times, sank at the wall and exploded, sending up a huge column of water. But when the tumult died down there was no obvious breach, to the disappointment of the attackers circling overhead.

David Maltby was sent in and again made a perfect run. However, as he approached he could see that 'the crown of the wall was already crumbling' and that there was 'a breach in the centre of the dam'. He adjusted his line slightly so that his own mine would strike to the left of Young's and it too exploded causing a larger breach. Barnes Wallis had predicted that it might take two mines to cause the dam's collapse, and so it proved. Young was then instructed to go with Gibson to oversee the attack on the Eder Dam, ready to assume command if Gibson was lost. So he witnessed the attack by Les Knight which caused it also to collapse, and then this contingent set course for home.

Sadly, Young and his crew never made it back. A gun battery at Castricum-aan-Zee on the Dutch coast reported shooting down an aircraft on the night of May 16/17 at 0258, which was almost certainly AJ-A. His luck on water finally vanished as his Lancaster ditched in the North Sea, killing all on board. The seven bodies of the crew were all found on the shore during the following few weeks, and they are buried together in the General Cemetery of Bergen, the nearest small town.

Photos courtesy of the Yorkshire Air Museum Archive.

102 in Germany Part 2 (contd) by Jock Weir

The Canberras were still considered part of Bomber Command even though based in Germany, so all the training and exercises were to the requirements of Bomber Command and its Crew Classification Scheme. But being a light bomber and under the day to day control of 2 Group, who had operated bombers until 1946, some added tasks were imposed. As this was usually in the form of low flying and trips around the region there were few complaints. Flying was mostly practice bombing, either GeeH or visual with that other time filler, continuation training on other days. Being peacetime, the task required each month was measured in flying hours achieved, if there was nothing else to do, continuation training was ordered to make up the time. Circuits and bumps? Not likely! The Canberra did circuits and overshoots at Gutersloh. The important part of the training was not carried out because the runway wasn't long enough or something like that. It saved wear and tear on the brakes and tyres, I suppose, and kept the end of the runway nice and clean for Dudley! (By the way, that is where we had our parades - there wasn't a square as such on the base). Every week there was a Bomber Command Exercise (a "Bomex"). Maximum effort - about half the station aircraft would join the rest of Bomber Command so that the best part of two hundred Canberras would join up over the North Sea and attack a UK target, usually with a 25 pound practice bomb and usually on one of the major armament training areas - Theddlethorpe, the Wash, Chesil Bank or Luce Bay. Probably the same ones as used by the Squadron in its Halifax - or maybe even the Heyford - days. The strategy was the same as the Halifaxes used, a stream of bombers with various tactics to overwhelm the radar, we hoped. At 3000 feet we put out the nav lights and hoped no one could see us - the fighter defences, who also exercised on Bomex nights and who also put their lights out, so we seldom saw them anyway - a case of the unlit looking for the unlit! I don't recall any accidents because of this.

It might be of interest to the Halifax/Whitley/Heyford members to know a little about the Canberra. At once very different from the Halifax aircraft, but also with much that a Halifax man they would recognise. The pilot sat under the bubble of perspex with an instrument panel which was very little changed from the one in the Halifax. The turn and slip was a bit smaller and the DRC repeater was replaced by the G4B repeater, but this didn't look too different. A mach meter was placed to the left of the airspeed indicator. The rest of the flying panel was identical. Instead of a PI 2 stand-by compass the Canberra had the E2A - the sort of thing you sometimes see on a car anorak's windscreen. About an inch and a half in diameter it looked as if it came from a Christmas cracker. The two navigators sat together, as in the Halifax, but behind the pilot instead of in front, and with the escape hatch in the roof above their heads instead of below their feet. Halifax navs, however, would be at home. The G4B compass master indicator would be a stranger but the airspeed indicator, the altimeter and the outside air temperature gauges would be old friends. The Air Position Indicator would be identical with that in the Halifax (only the True Airspeed Unit needed modification to cope with the Canberra's higher speed). The Rebecca was the same one as fitted in the Halifax. To the left, the navigator had the Gee Receiver unit and Aerial Loading unit, again no different to wartime. The

second navigator had control of the Gee, which on earlier aircraft was placed squarely in front of his seat and made for ease of working although you had to crawl under it to get in or out of the navigators' compartment, Later aircraft had the Gee equally between the two navigators and equally inconvenient for both! Perhaps the GEE box (sorry "Universal Indicator Mark 2") might be familiar too. It bore the legend 'Tropic Proofed - Nov 44', so were probably built with something other than the Canberra in mind. That was the lot for navigation, the H2S designed for the Canberra never materialised. No radio direction finding and no facility for astro. So navigation was strictly Gee or the Mark One eyeball. Bombing was GeeH or visual. The visual bombsight, down in the nose, would be an old friend too. We called it the T2 but it was nothing more than the Mk14 with the computer modified for greater heights and speeds.

The Canberra took off at speeds between 100 and 120 knots - safety speed was 140 knots - seem familiar? But acceleration was rapid, and climb speed, usually attained while still within the airfield area was 330 knots. Cruise was at mach 0.72 or 0.74 roughly 420 to 435 knots (500 to 520 mph) so although limited to about three hours in the air, the Canberra could cover a lot of ground. And sometimes we did. The carrot on the Bomber Command crew classification scheme, which mainly tested proficiency in navigation and bombing, was a thing called a Lone Ranger - a flight to some exotic location. Each step on the classification ladder would be rewarded, in theory, by a trip for the crew to an increasingly desirable foreign airfield. More often than not it turned out to be Gibraltar! Even so it was a break away from the routine of Bomber Command and free of immediate supervision. One crew managed to roam away to Nairobi, others to Cyprus. Our crew, we went to Abu Sueir in the Canal Zone. Can't win them all. Back at Gutersloh, another side benefit of being in the tactical air force was that we had to be mobile. This was achieved by allocating to each squadron some dedicated transport - we had three 3 ton trucks - which had to be exercised from time to time. A convoy run was held about once a month. A good day out for the drivers and relief drivers and as many as cared to come along for the ride. The destination would not be too far, didn't want too tiring a day (no power steering) and usually was a two or three hour drive to Winterberg, a leave centre in the Harz Mountains, or to the Mohne dam. This was always popular, especially when the film (the Dam Busters) came out in 1955. The tourist shops proudly sold postcards showing the dam breached as if the Germans had done the job themselves.

So life was good on 102 in Canberra days. We thought we were the best squadron in the wing, we had some results that proved this, we seemed to have more fun than the others and even Dudley Lewis seemed to like us. I can remember one day, after UK-parade and inspection, when he was in our boss's office I could hear them laughing together! He never laughed with anyone else! We thought it would go on for years, but the four engined jet bombers, the V Force, were coming into service in Bomber Command and the Canberra force must be run down. The Squadrons in Germany were the first to go. In July 1956, after only twenty months with the Canberra, 102 Squadron disbanded once more.

What Did You Do In The War Daddy?

By Bryan Purser (Part 1)

Imagine the scene - 1943 - just after dawn on a Bomber Command airfield in Yorkshire. Two Navigators, friends from the time they trained together in Canada a year before, are waking up.

What will the day hold for them? Where will they be that night? Shot down by a German night fighter: blasted from the sky by anti-aircraft fire (flak): or maybe adrift in the North Sea after a successful ditching in the dark - or more optimistically - safely back at Base after another 'Op'. One more 'Op' completed towards the total of 30 which 'The Powers that be have decreed as a Bomber Tour, and which results in a posting for six months to a Non-Operational Training Unit. No one knows.

With luck the weather will be poor and there will be no operations. Look out of the window. Perhaps it's foggy. No such luck: it is a lovely sunny morning. So reluctantly the friends sleepily leave their beds, wash and shave in portable tin bowls, dress, and stroll over to the Mess for breakfast. The prospects of Ops that night are discussed with those already at breakfast. Details of the crews that have gone missing from last night's operation, filter through. All those at breakfast know some or all of the crews from the three missing aircraft. Twenty one aircrew are missing: fate unknown. No - its twenty two as the most experienced crew was carrying a new Captain just finishing his training at the nearby Heavy Conversion Unit. He had gone along to get operational experience, before being posted to the Squadron with his crew.

The nervous laughter betrays the hidden fears of them all. They will soon know if they will be operating tonight. Around 10am the secure linked telephone rings, confirming that the Squadron has to put up 22 aircraft. The Names of the Captains are written up on the blackboard. Both the friends see that they are both on. They leave to go to their respective aircraft to check over their navigation equipment. The Gunners are already there, checking over their turrets, their guns, and their ammunition tracking. The Flight Engineer has already checked over his instrument panel, and is now in deep conversation with the Ground crew. The Wireless Operator/ and the Bomb Aimer are checking all their specialised equipment. The Captain arrives, checks with each crew Member that they are happy with their equipment, and then decrees that the crew will carry out a Dinghy Drill to ensure every crew Member knows how to clear the aircraft in double quick time should it ever be necessary to put the aircraft down in the North Sea. The crew regularly carry out this drill - fully aware that a matter of seconds could mean the difference between living and drowning.

Around the Station there is frantic activity. The RAF Police have stepped up security, the MT Section, the Petrol Bowsers, the Armoury, The Bomb Dump and the girls (WAAFs) in the Parachute Section are all working flat out to ensure tonight will be a great success. All incoming telephone calls are blocked. No outgoing calls are allowed. The Public Call Boxes have been immobilised.

And so to lunch. The tension can be felt. What will be the target? Will the route be as safe as possible? How many aircraft will the Command put up? What time is take-off? The Navigators briefing will be at 2pm, so the Friends make their way there as soon as they have finished their meal. They get the chart covering Occupied Europe and Germany. The target is revealed. Berlin (The Big City). One of the heaviest defended targets and involving some 8 hours over hostile territory. The Navigators plot the route, with its many changes of heading to (hopefully) confuse the German Fighter Controllers. They make their calculations on their Navigation Logs, showing forecast winds, speeds, turning point times, and ultimately time on target. They are in the second wave so the defences will be well warned and there will be no element of surprise.

The Captains arrive and discuss the route, the German defences on and near the route, the speeds and heights to be flown, and the size of the Bomber Force. There are to be 680 Bombers, Lancasters, Halifaxes and the poor old Stirlings which fly lower and slower than the other four engine Bombers - making them more vulnerable. The 22 aircraft put up by the Squadron are to take off at one minute intervals between 7.15pm and 7.37. One a minute. The route will be over The North Sea from Flamborough Head, across Denmark in to The Baltic, and then SE avoiding Keil, Lubeck, and Rostock (all heavily defended areas) - on to Berlin - and returning South of Magdeburg, Hanover and Osnabruck and on to The English Channel far ahead.

Briefing for all crews will be in the Main Briefing Room at 4.45pm: just time for the crews to get their pre-flight meals of bacon and egg (a rare treat in severely rationed Britain), before the main briefing. A buzz of voices greets more and more crew Members as they meet up: all have had their own specialist briefing. This briefing will inform them of all planned tactics for the whole of Bomber Command, including the diversions aimed at drawing off the German night fighters, the defences, the forecast winds and weather expected along the route.

Then personal security. Every aircrew member has to empty pockets of all personal possessions, and put them in a small canvass bag for safe keeping. Nothing must be found on the individual if shot down and sent to Dulag Luft - the German Aircrew Interrogation Centre just outside of Frankfurt. Even the smallest thing - a rail or bus ticket: a cinema ticket: a girl friends' photograph would all help the highly professional, (English speaking), Interrogators obtain more intelligence from this new, and apprehensive, POW.

Enter the Station Commander. All rise. "Sit down Gentlemen please" he orders. The Squadron Commander climbs on to the dias, pulls back the curtain to reveal for the first time - to all but the Captains and Navigators - the target, (Berlin) - the route, the German defences, the most likely places along the route where German night fighters may be expected, (which appears to be almost all the way). He goes on to emphasise that there will be TOTAL R/T silence: all actions will be at set times from engine start to

take-off. All Specialist Leaders and the Met Man follow in turn to inform all crews of the work expected from the individual crew members, and of the overall details. The Intelligence Officer completes the briefing with the latest intelligence about the target, the German counter measures that can be expected, the Pathfinder 'input' to the attack and to the diversions aimed at drawing off the night fighters. He ends, as always, by warning that if shot down and captured the only information to be given to the Interrogator is Service Number, Rank, and Name. NOTHING ELSE. He warned of the use of false Red Cross Forms asking for Squadron and personal details, and NOT TO SPEAK to any other prisoner - he could well be a German. Remember - if you are in Dulag Luft more than 4 or 5 days you will have told them something they didn't know.

All watches are synchronised so that all crews will ensure the same engine start up times and the notified taxi-ing times.

Briefing complete, the crews make their way to the Aircrew Locker Room.
(To be continued)

† 'NOT FORGOTTEN' †

Edward M. Cooke

In Loving Memory

Our father, Ed died peacefully on November 10,2013. Dad served in the [Royal Air](#) Force during the second World War, first as a sergeant WOP/AG in 102 Squadron of Bomber Command, and then, trained as a pilot in Canada in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. He has archived his memories of that time on many websites and contributed to several books. Through this, he made friends all over the world, spending hours on Skype and helping families get a better knowledge of lost loved ones. Many are toasting our Dad.

He emigrated with his small family to Hamilton, Ontario in 1948. After several starts, a self-built home and three more children, he settled into glazing, especially stained glass. He and Elsie moved again with the three younger children in 1964 to San Diego then Los Angeles where he was able to show his artistic abilities in stained glass in many churches and pubs. Finally, the family moved to Seattle; it was just like England. Dad joined Belknap Glass in Seattle to supervise many glass installations in the new buildings in the city. Mum and Dad kept their ties with England by organizing [charter flights](#) for hundreds of people to the 'old country'. Dad had an active and full life that went many years after retirement. He will be missed.



Thank you

At the end of my first full year as your Secretary I thought it appropriate to thank those who have helped me.

First of course is Tom Wingham our past Secretary, a difficult man to follow, he really is the best. I will be seeing him before Christmas.

Tom Sayer (Chairman) and Mike Cummings (Welfare Officer) have supported me with excellent advice and correction over the past year, I could not have done the job without them.

A big thank you goes to all of you, dear members, whose support in your letters and telephone calls has been very encouraging..

We could not organise the events without the help and support of the following organisations and people:

- Pocklington Town Council – The Mayor and Clerk (Richard Wood);
- St Catherine's Church - Rev Gail Dalley and Rev Val Hewitson;
- The Wolds Gliding Club - The Committee and members;
- Peter Dyson who plays the last post for us at the reunion and Remembrance Days;

Any errors or omissions in this newsletter are entirely mine, corrections are welcomed. Simon Kularatne

Happy Christmas
and a healthy and prosperous New Year
to all the members of
102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association



*'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 its 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 II 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 Peace

