

FROM THE SECRETARY

As one gets older the years just appear to pass that much more quickly and it is such a short time since I sat down to write about last year's Reunion that I can almost remember every word I wrote. If it doesn't sound too repetitive then, may I, this being the first contact of 1996, again take this opportunity to wish all members an enjoyable and healthy New Year, particularly the latter.

As you will appreciate from the November Newsletter the move to York for the Reunion on 27/28 July this year is not without its administrative problems, in particular, the allocation of accommodation. The response to the survey carried out regarding the demand for rooms indicated that there just could not be enough en-suite rooms to satisfy all members. I have been in touch with the University who have been good enough to allocate a further four double en-suite rooms, but even so the number available is still less than half that requested. It will, therefore, be necessary to allocate the en-suite rooms on the basis of need (disablement, length of stay, etc) and 'first come, first served'. To avoid having to return cheques will Members requiring en-suite facilities please only send amount required for Standard room. Those being allocated an en-suite room will be notified in due course and can then send balance cheque. I regret having to act as arbitrator in this matter but under the circumstances I have no choice and, as is normally the case, the umpire's decision will have to be final.

The Programme for the Reunion will be as follows.

Saturday, 27th. July

12:00p.m. - 4:00p.m ASSEMBLY - A get-together in the Bar of
Langwith College

Sandwiches, Coffee & Tea will be available

6:00p.m. for 7:00p.m. DINNER - Reception in the Bar

Sunday, 28th. July

10:30a.m. Barmby Moor Parish Church

Morning Service - Followed by Laying of Wreath
at Airfield Memorial

It is anticipated that the T2 Hangar at Elvington will be completed by this date and Members are reminded that Lunch or other Refreshments may be obtained in the "NAAFI" there.

After the Reunion we will have to decide whether to continue future meetings at York or whether to revert to Hull. Obviously, York has the advantage of being nearer to Pocklington and Elvington but it would help if members attending this year would let me have their views on the facilities generally and their choice for the future.

CAN YOU HELP?

Sgt. Idris Davies, (Eng.)

On the 21 Jan.1944 (Target-Magdeburg) one of the missing aircraft was piloted by F/Sgt.J.W.Gregory with Sgt Idris Davies(KIA)asEngineer. There were four survivors, F/Sgt.Gregory, F/O.D.C.E.Bradshaw,Nav., Sgt.D.Bellamy,AG and F/Sgt.R.J.Irvine B/A

Any recollections of,or information about the whereabouts of the four POW survivors is sought by the nephew of Idris Davies, Mr.Vaughan Davies,10 United Rd., Darharrock, Redruth, Cornwall,TR16 5QT . Contact Mr.Davies or Hon.Sec.

F/O N.S. "Twitch" MILNE

Anyone having recollections of or knowing what happened to the above are invited to contact Associate Member, Mark Abbott, 76 Ryburn Rd.,Ormskirk,Lancs. L39 4SD

Sgt. J.V.FINNEY,W/Op

Jack Finney was with the Squadron from January 1944 until he was shot down and killed with all the crew whilst flying with F/Lt.P.E.Young against Ruesselheim on the night of 13 Aug.'44 Anyone who knew Jack or have memories of him please contact Associate Member,Mrs.Shirley Lumb

AIR COMMODORE S.J.MARCHBANK,OBE,DFC,RAF(Retd)

It was with regret that we learnt of the death of Stanley Marchbank on 8th.January this year. Many members will remember him as Commanding Officer from September 1943 until July 1944. This was a difficult time for the Squadron having to face hazardous conditions and long trips through the winter of 1943/4 with the Halifax II's,culminating in those two dreadful nights of 20th and 21st January 1944 when 102 lost nearly half its strength. Stanley steered the squadron through this disaster and led it through the successful campaign against the French and Belgium railway network prior to D-Day,before,probably with much relief,getting the Squadron converted to Halifax III's in May 1944. He continued in command during the initial stages of D-Day until the completion of his tour in July.

Stanley last attended a Reunion in 1992 and had intended to be at Hull in 1993 but had to cancel due to heart surgery a short time before the Reunion. Since then he has been unable to get to Hull because of the long journey and suffered continuing ill-health which culminated in his death. Our sympathy goes out to his widow while we salute a gallant officer and mourn his passing.

The following Press Release has been received from "FlyPast" which will, no doubt, be of interest to some members.

CANBERRA REUNION 1996

RAF MARHAM is hosting a Canberra Reunion between June 21-23 1996. This may well be the last opportunity to gather a reasonable collection of aircraft together, including a number that will participate in a Canberra flying display. The last great Canberra Party?

The reunion will follow a similar format to that held at RAF Wyton in 1989. All personnel who have any connection with this great aircraft - either as aircrew, ground crew or in other associated activities - are invited to write to:

Canberra Reunion, PO Box 100, Stamford, Lincs., PE9 1XQ for further information. NB Please send a large sae.

An Enthusiasts' Photo Day will be held on Sunday June 23. The static aircraft park will include not only virtually all surviving Canberras (including civil registered aircraft) but also a range of RAF and international participants with Canberra connections. Aircraft will be positioned to provide best photo views and there will be no barriers.

(Tickets will be strictly limited - apply to *Canberra Enthusiasts, PO Box 100, Stamford, Lincs., PE9 1XQ*: send cheque for £10:00 payable to Canberra Enthusiasts together with sae.

(To avoid any confusion, I have checked with FlyPast and have been told that the £10:00 only applies to the Sunday Photo Day. Hon.Sec.)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that the above are due on the 1st May. In previous years we have relied on making a good profit from the Annual Reunion to carry on the work of the Association, but this income has been considerably reduced as we have absorbed increased costs without increasing the charges correspondingly to members. Printing and postage have also increased considerably as we have tried to improve communication by the use of more Newsletters. To maintain this contact, therefore, Subscriptions become the lifeblood of the Association and members are asked to pay special attention to this matter, particularly those who are unable to attend the Reunion since often the receipt of a subscription is the only means of knowing that we are still reaching you.

ELVINGTON - ADVANCE NOTICE

Friday, 6th. September. MOSQUITO "Roll Out"

The fully assembled Tony Agar Mosquito will, if plans materialise be unveiled by ACM Sir Ivor Broome who will then, on the same evening, present a talk on "The Wooden Wonder - The Legendary Mosquito". Details will be announced later by the Museum.

FRIDAY, 13TH. SEPTEMBER

It is hoped that the Canadian Memorial T.2. Hangar will be officially opened by the Hon. Royce Frith, Q.C., High Commissioner for Canada when it is anticipated that many Canadian friends will be present, including former members of 6 Group, RCAF. On that day a commemorative wall will also be unveiled and it is hoped that this will be carried out by a representative of the French Embassy in London.

Later that same day the almost complete HALIFAX, "Friday the 13th" will be "rolled out" at the command of ACM Sir Michael Knight in the presence of many ex-Halifax Squadron Veterans, with a strong contingent from 4 Group Bomber Command Association.

SATURDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER

To raise money for the Halifax and Hangar Fund a Ball is to be held in the new T.2. Hangar with music provided by the "String of Pearls Orchestra" led by Chris Smith, one of the UK's leading Trombonists who played for Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland, Perry Como, Barbra Streisand and others. It is hoped that this event will attract a large gathering in the T2 which will act as a celebration for the previous day's events.

Any Enquiries on the above, please contact:

Ian Robinson, - Peter Douthwaite, - Margaret Dunham Tel: 01904 608595

CONTRIBUTIONS WILL BE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED

It is certain that many members have anecdotes of their Service life (amusing or otherwise) which would make for fascinating reading. Why not share those experiences with other members by sparing a few minutes to jot down a few lines to put in the post to the Secretary. It will ease his problem of having to fill all the pages at the moment.

DUEL IN DE WOLKEN

The following translation is taken from the above book, (*Duel in the Clouds*), published in Holland in 1994 which lists all the aircraft, RAF, American and German, some 372 in all, which were brought down in the triangle formed by Roermond, Léige and Aachen. Of the total, 166 were German, many downed by the USAF on 1st. January 1945. On that day, in this small area, some 82 aircraft were destroyed, some on the ground, and are recorded as 59-FW190, 15-Messerschmitt 109, 2-JU88, 1 Unidentified German Fighter, 2-P51 Mustang, 1-B17, 1-Lancaster and 1-Typhoon. It must have seemed as though it was raining aircraft that day. There was only one 102 Squadron aircraft listed in the book, that flown by Sgt G.H. Amos, and members may be interested in reading this extract. The book is to be translated and published in English in the near future.

"In the night of 13/14 July (1943), 374 RAF aircraft attacked Aachen. Twenty of the attacking force failed to return. I/514 (First Battery of Heavy Flak Abteilung 514) at Eilendorf, Aachen received two direct hits from two 4000lbs "cookies" killing two Luftwaffe-aides and two men from the Battery personnel. At Imstenrade castle (Heelen), home of the Sisters of Medische Missie, incendiaries were dropped around two o'clock. Not far from there, in the Kookerstraat, Heerlerbaan, 12 premises were heavily damaged by exploding bombs.

At 0204 hours yet another victim of I/514 was seen to go down. It was a four-engined Handley-Page Halifax from No. 102 Squadron carrying the codes DY-X and serial number JB 894. The aircraft, which had taken off from Pocklington, crashed on the Dutch-German border between the villages of Brunssum and Scherpenseel. A report from the "coalmine" police, (it crashed on coalmine property), accurately describes the events."

"In the night of Wednesday 13 and Thursday 14 July at approximately 0133 hours the air raid sirens sounded at the State Coalmine Hendrik; the alert lasted until 0237 hours. At approximately 0203 hrs. a combat took place above the grounds of the coalmine, (apparently a nightfighter also attacked JB 894), and part of the aircraft, viz, the tail assembly fell in the grounds of the mine, locally called "Dennenlust". The coalmine police immediately took the necessary action."

"In the tail turret the remains of a crew member were found. Immediately a Roman Catholic priest and a medic were called. The remaining part of the aircraft and the four engines had fallen 500 metres further away on German soil. German

Customs had taken the site under protection and Dutchmen were not allowed to cross the border. These men from Customs told us that there were four dead crew members in the wreckage. German soldiers searched the area since they assumed that the plane had a seven-man crew. Dutch police and staff from the coalmine also searched the area but without success. Therefore they concluded that the aircraft had carried a five-man crew. The coalmine police were ordered to guard the tail turret and the remains of the dead gunner. A German officer visited the site and instructed the policeman that no one was allowed to touch the body or steal any parts of the wreckage"

"On Saturday 16 July, at approximately 1700 hours a couple of officers and enlisted men from Venlo nightfighter base arrived and removed several instruments from the aircraft carrying the following codes DY-X JB894, E.E.P 46527. Despite instructions not to touch anything we have done our very best to identify the dead crew member. On his left ring-finger he wore a golden monogram ring carrying the initials W.R.: this ring will be sent to the next of kin of the dead man. He also carried a picture of himself as well as two small photographs of girls dressed in uniform."

"Statistics were very clear about the average life-expectancy of RAF Bomber aircrew; there was only a very slight chance to survive a tour of ops. Superstition played an important role in many a flyer's life. Rear gunner John Raw obviously had a special bond with a talisman: in his pockets the coalmine police found an ornamental horseshoe and a rabbit's foot. On Sunday, 17 July, John Raw's remains were brought to Calverienberg Hospital at Maastricht. Today he rests at the military section of the civilian cemetery at Tongerweg, Maastricht. All other crew members except WOP/AG Sgt. D.H. Brown rest at the British Cemetery at Rheinberg, Germany"

N.B. If any member has any knowledge of the sole survivor, Sgt. D.H. Brown, A/G who became a POW please contact the Secretary

BOMBER COMMAND FILM

Members will be pleased to learn that the main work on the film has now been completed including most of the editing. The main problem now is to get the production booked on television and "showings" are now taking place with that in mind. It is hoped to recover some of the costs by its sale, not just in this country but overseas where there will probably be more interest.

THE HALIFAX REMEMBERED, 'DOWN-UNDER'

A number of former Halifax aircrew have been arranging a display in the Royal Australian Air Force Association's Bull Creek Aviation Museum, Western Australia, to show the versatility of the Halifax in the 1939-45 period. The principal item in the Museum is, - yes, you've guessed it!, - a Lancaster, with a Spitfire next to it with yet another Spitfire mounted at the street entrance. Apparently, a Halifax did go to Australia and was offered to the RAAF and then to the Canberra War Museum. Both refused it! The War Museum had a Lancaster which had received much publicity on its arrival and its place has guaranteed its reputation as *the* aircraft which all Australians flew over Europe.

Now the ex-Halifax stalwarts are seeking to correct this impression with their display. The museum is a project place for many schools and is a stopping place for many of the bus tours around Perth. The group have a large printed sign backing up the display and are producing a three metre light-box with a Halifax Mark III transparency suspended from the front. Inside will be featured the Hali's roles in all the Commands in which it served.

As part of the Bomber Command history they are hoping to display the crests of all the squadrons which flew the Halifax. Members will be pleased to hear that a 102 Squadron crest has been presented by the Association for this purpose.

Rest of this page and pages 9 to 12
redacted as they contain personal
data