

# 102 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



## NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1997

*Hon. Sec. Tom Wingham, 12 Orchard St., Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 1EH*



## ANNUAL REUNION - YORK, 1997

With memories still fresh from our last Reunion it is very pleasant to realise that 1977 has dawned and it will not be long before we can again all look forward to meeting old friends and swapping yarns about things only they can really understand. The event will be held over the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, 5th/6th July and, as was pointed out in the November Newsletter, this year will be the 80th anniversary of the original formation of the squadron in 1917: so we want to see a good turnout. Subject to Service contingencies, our Guest of Honour will be Group Captain Richard M. Thomas, OBE.AFC.RAF, Station Commander of RAF Linton on Ouse, who looks forward to being with us again. A separate booking form is enclosed and the Secretary will be grateful if these can be returned as early as possible to facilitate the administration.

In view of the uncertainty last year, definite arrangements have been made for members who wish to have a meal in the College on Friday evening. This will be between 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. and, providing there are sufficient numbers, will be served for members only in Langwith College. Please give anticipated numbers where indicated on the booking form. The Bar in Langwith College will be open this year on Friday night to enable members to meet and enjoy a drink together.

With quite a number of members usually arriving early it is proposed to make arrangements for those members, who so wish, to visit the Memorial Room at RAF, Linton-on-Ouse on Saturday morning. This room holds memorabilia from all squadrons, including 102, who have been based there over the years. It is anticipated that the visit will commence at 10:30am on Saturday, members making their own way to Linton, and will be of about 1½ hours duration to enable members to have lunch and get back to the University in time for the "Assembly." A space has been provided on the booking form so that numbers can be assessed of those likely to visit.

Approval has also been sought from the YAM for members to climb aboard the reconstructed Halifax during the Sunday afternoon and an announcement about this will be made at the Dinner.

### REUNION PROGRAMME

#### SAT. 5TH. JULY

10:30 A.M

RAF Linton-on-Ouse

12:00-4:00 P.M.

Assembly-Langwith College Bar

(Sandwiches etc. will be served mid-afternoon)

6:00-7:00 P.M.

Reception, Langwith Bar

7:00 P.M.

Dinner - Dress, Lounge Suits



SUNDAY, 6TH. JULY

10:00a.m

Barmby Village Hall - Parade for the  
Active

10:30a.m

Service, Barmby Moor Parish Church

11:45a.m approx

Wreath-Laying, Airfield Memorial.

Following dispersal from the airfield Members may wish to visit the YAM, Elvington where lunches may be obtained in the "NAAFI" restaurant and the Halifax may be inspected.

### CAN YOU HELP?

P/O WALTER HUGHES On 22 Nov 1943 (Target Berlin) DY-K piloted by Walter Hughes collided with a 77 Squadron Halifax at 2345 hours. All the crew were killed. Any member having recollections of the night or of Walter Hughes and crew, please contact the Secretary.

SGT. ROY F.A. YALLOP 1356347 Rear Gunner with pilot A. Kenyon and on 102 from 5th October - 12th November 1944 when they were posted to 35 Squadron. Any member who knew Roy please contact the Secretary or Barry Yallop, 59 Bixley Road, Ipswich, IP3 8PQ, Tel 01473 721 57511

POCKLINGTON AIRFIELD. Personal recollections and photographs of the life of men and women who served on the Wartime Airfields of Yorkshire required for a book of that name to be published in the near future.

Contact the author:- *Patrick M. Otter, 3 Holbeck Place, Immingham, Grimsby, DN40 2BX. Tel; 01469 573486*

Vítek Formánek had grandparents living in Cambridge during WWII who regularly entertained the Czech pilots from 310 Sqn. As a result he now describes himself as a 33 year old RAF WWII 'nutter', having published a book on "Guinea Pigs", and writing regular articles for a leading aviation magazine in the Czech Republic. To assist in perpetuating the memory of the RAF in the Czech Republic, which was dropped from their history books between 1945 and 1989, he has written to request that any member who feels inclined should send him a slip of paper or card with name, signature, Squadron No., Number of Ops. A wartime photo or photocopy would be a bonus. I am assured that this is not for gain. His address is:

*Vítek Formánek, V Raji 320, 533 41 Bohdanec, Czech Republic*

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that 1997/8 Subscriptions are due on 1st May. The figure remains at £5:00 pa and is essential to cover the running costs of the Association.



## TALES FROM THE CREW ROOM

### ORDERS IS ORDERS

During 1941, when the Lease/Lend agreement was signed with the USA, the squadron received a consignment of small arms and we were told that there were sufficient to supply one to each crew. I was in 'A' Flt, flying as W/Op with the Flight Commander S/L J.G. Walker and he was issued with a .38 Smith & Wesson revolver with an 8" barrel. He said he didn't want any part of it and gave it to me to carry. I asked him where the rest of it was as I thought it should have come with at least a Stetson and a pair of cowboy boots.

A gang of us went to the range for small arms instruction and target practice where I soon learnt I was no Tom Mix and was lucky to hit the target. F/Lt Williams took a fancy to the .38 and I swapped him for his .45 Colt automatic and did a far better job on the target.

When we converted to Halifaxes we were given strict instructions that if we landed away from base we were not to let anyone in the aircraft because of the Gee, etc.

For the last trip of my tour, some 'kind person' elected to send me on a Nursery with a new crew, usually it was the Channel ports but, at briefing, we found out it was Vichy with a load of leaflets. Here we were, fighting a war, and they sent us with a load of 'bum-fodder', - but, maybe, the secret weapon was that the paper was glossy!

We took off from Topcliffe at 2230 in 'G' with Sgt Berry as pilot and, after being airborne for ten minutes, the IFF detonated. The skipper wanted to turn back but I said carry on and I would notify everyone on the way back. A short while after that he called me to say that the DR compass was on the blink, to which I replied, "So what, we only had the P4 on Whitleys!". The next thing was that the mid upper gunner thought he saw fuel running out of the starboard wing so I got my flashlight and from the astro dome could see fuel pouring out. Someone had not put the cap on properly, or forgotten it: anyway, I said that we should turn back now.

We landed back at Topcliffe at 2340 and went into Interrogation where W/C Bintley played hell with me but calmed down when he heard of the fuel situation. He said that we would go by ourselves the following night.

Tuesday night, July 14th was a beautiful night, a full moon and unlimited visibility. We took off at 2225, everything clear as a bell and most of my spare time was spent in the astro dome helping to keep a look out for fighters. Approaching the target, the Alps could be seen in the distance and it was the first town I had seen lit up by anything other than by fires. On the way back it was just the same except that the Pilot and Engineer decided that we did not have enough fuel to reach base so elected to land at Cottesmore, which we did at 0600. Sgt Berry reported in to the tower and I called the Orderly Officer for a guard to be put on the aircraft.

Four Regiment boys came out fully armed and I told them to keep everyone out of the aircraft and off we went to the Mess for breakfast. After eating, I found the NCO in charge of fuel and got him and Sgt Berry together, then left to relieve the Regiment boys so that they could go off to eat.

I grabbed the .45, stuck it into the top of my boot, sent the boys on their way, and then stood outside the aircraft door enjoying the summer morning, thinking how lucky I was to have



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completed a tour, being only the second in 'A' Flight since I joined in May '41. A car pulled up and out climbed a Group Captain. I came to attention and said "Good morning, Sir" and he said it was a good morning and he would like to look in the aircraft. I said I was sorry but had strict instructions that no one was allowed in but he replied that he was the Station Commander and proceeded to push past me and climb into the Halifax. I drew the .45 and jacked a round in the chamber: he heard the snick, looked back, saw the .45 pointing at him, turned white and retreated fast. He didn't even say goodbye! The boys eventually came back and we took off at 1005, arriving back at Topcliffe an hour later. As we entered the Interrogation Room. W/C Bintley roared, "Cooke, you're in trouble again. The G/Capt at Cottesmore called to say that one of the crew had threatened to shoot him and I knew it could only have been you". Then he laughed and said "Good Show!". Taking everything into account it wasn't too bad a way to end my tour!

Ed Cooke

### "GUS" WALKER AND THE AUSTRALIAN

In 1943 F/O Allan Gay, an R.A.A.F. pilot, was operating from Elvington with 77 Squadron and had completed 13 Operations when he was sent to Naburn Military Hospital with Bronchitis. During his stay he developed an appendicitis which later turned to peritonitis. The Medical Officer failed to diagnose this and accused Allan of malingering. Fortunately, the M.O. went on leave and his replacement took immediate action. Unfortunately, the abscess had burst which resulted in an extremely serious subphrenic abscess. This meant two major operations in a week and it was freely rumoured that Allan would not recover. After three months on the "seriously ill" list he began to recover and was then posted to the convalescent section of Harewood House. After a further period of convalescence at Loughborough he arrived at 102 Squadron, Pocklington on 14th. February 1944.

Although, upon arrival, Gus Walker had him declared medically unfit for active service, he nevertheless, gave him the unrestricted use of his own Oxford aircraft. In mid-July the Royal Australian Air Force 'butted their frame in' and posted Allan to 466 RAAF Squadron at Driffield. "Gus" did his best to stop the posting but the RAAF authorities insisted on Allan's move and on arrival there he found himself 'inheriting a deadbeat crew' who had lost their skipper on a 'second dickey' trip. During his familiarization flights he 'did things that no sane man would do' with the result that his crew approached their C.O. with a no confidence motion and they were all posted to the Heavy Conversion Unit at Marston Moor to start again. Allan immediately contacted that "marvellous man 'Gus'" who intervened and had him returned to 102 Squadron. As a Sqdn/Ldr Kercher was being screened from the squadron he arranged for Allan Gay to have his crew, all of whom were experienced airmen of the highest calibre. In Allan's words, "From then on Ops became almost like a Sunday afternoon picnic."

After he had finished his tour Allan returned to Australia. In 1973 he wrote to Gus and received a reply, the original of which is now with the YAM Elvington. Members will be able to find a copy on display in the room housing the Gus Walker memorabilia. Even after thirty years Gus had not forgotten him or his illness!



The November "Can You Help" request on the crash at Catfoss brought some interesting responses, particularly as it seems that the RAAF had its share of Diarists, all in one crew too, and it was interesting to read three different views, written at the time, of the same event.

Extract from Diary of pilot, Bill Rabbitt, RAAF N-Nan

"9th. June. Ops on tonight & I have never had such a terrible trip in all my life. We went out in filthy weather to a place called Alencon. We managed to bomb through the cloud & came back to this country to find it entirely covered in bad weather. I flew all night in cloud and only saw the ground once in six hours. Got back to base but nobody could land there. They diverted us to Catfoss but we were unable to get in there. I was absolutely at the end of my tether and so was everybody else. Some planes crashed, others baled out & it became very grim. All my equipment packed up, eventually I got down to 200 ft. and took the risk of hitting hills which were 800/900 ft. high. I managed to see the coast & I went down just above the ground. I saw a light & went to it; it was an aerodrome. I did a terrific turn on the deck & came round hoping to land. We lost sight of it almost immediately but kept turning until we were almost over it, then I put the A/c down, cut the motors and put my trust in the Lord, we were nearly on the ground when up loomed a row of planes on the ground. I gave the engines everything & we just jumped over them. I again cut everything and landed in a field on the drome. Even though I do say it, the effort was quite a commendable one. We were all absolutely stonkered."

"10th. June Found out that the place we were at was Lissett. Flew back to 102 this morning. Landing quite OK, terribly tired."

Extract from Diary of Don McLean, RAAF, Bomb Aimer, N-Nan

"Fri 9th June 1944. What a trip! The 'op' was a piece of cake and we stuck to track all the way, also through cloud. When we arrived back at base we were diverted to Catfoss as it had clamped in at base. Then the fun began. We homed to Catfoss on G & Y and found it to be a 'drome with a Drem system but no flare path. It was impossible to get in at Catfoss as the cloud base was down at about 200' and we didn't have any R/T(u/s). We were down to about 300' but we made an approach but overshot. There were kites everywhere and in the end we followed the coast with the intention of landing at Carnaby and we came across Lissett. Bill did a sharp turn and we fired off a red and came in (without flaps) at the side of the runway and did a good landing. We had a meal and about 2 hours sleep and brought the kite back to base about midday. W/O Jekyll and his crew were all killed near Catfoss and P/O Samball T-Tare baled his crew out safely. Some experience!"

Diary entry Harry Brabin RAAF W/Op N-Nan

"5th. Trip 8.6.44 Alencon near Caen, 6hr.10min. 6,500lbs Night The target was the railway marshalling yards on the main line from Brittany to Caen. The Wing Commander briefed us prior to this trip - 'Now don't waste your bombs-they are expensive. People work through the night to make them, so make everyone a winner. Near enough is not good enough. No panic-just careful placement.' We were careful!"

"Sandy had a nose bleed on this trip and had trouble getting his oxygen mask off to wipe the blood away because of the four pairs



of gloves he was wearing, -one silk, one cotton, one woollen and one leather."

"Arriving back we found our aerodrome covered by low cloud so we were diverted to Catfoss. There was cloud there also and too many aircraft milling around so we headed out to sea and we gradually lowered altitude, all hands keeping a sharp look out, until at 20' we could see the water below us. We were skimming along just above the water like a speedboat(only three times faster) and leaving a wake behind us. Then we turned around and headed back to the coast. Bill said, 'Keep an eye out for the cliffs'. We saw them about 100 yds away and Bill managed to pull up over them. Then we saw Lissett aerodrome over to the left and Bill did a sharp turn. Don fired a Red Verrey flare and we landed on the grass with very little fuel to spare as the tanks showed empty."

One can only comment on the last entry on the adaptability of aircrew in being able to switch quickly from air to nautical terminology and still manage to throw in a 'line shoot' for good measure. From the same raid, Peter Bailey writes that, while down on the deck looking for somewhere to land, his rear gunner reported that "we have just crossed a farmyard and if the gate had been closed we would have hit it."

### ELVINGTON CHAPEL

Members who are in touch with the YAM at Elvington will be aware that with the completion of the Memorial Chapel on site an appeal has been made for contributions towards the cost of kneelers for the chapel. These are to be made in a uniform size and style by a skilled lady who does work at the York Minster, and, it is hoped, will enable all Squadrons who flew from Yorkshire to be commemorated. The approximate cost for three kneelers incorporating the 102 Squadron crest will be £180, to be met by this Association, and members wishing to make a contribution should send it to the Secretary who will make the arrangements with the YAM

### BOMBER COMMAND FILM - PART II

A preview copy of "Reaping The Whirlwind" Part I is now available to members of the Bomber Command Association only at a cost of £16:00 from the BCA Hendon. It will be on general release later. Much material for Part II has already been recorded but before it is assembled there is some balance finance available for further work to be incorporated and decisions have to be taken on this.

Members living in Canada will be pleased to know that the video will be available later in the North American format in order to counter up to 125,000 copies of "Death By Moonlight" distributed in Canadian and American schools by the Canadian Government sponsored producers for teaching history.

### "It's Suicide But It's Fun"

Members are reminded that copies of the above book about the Squadron may still be obtained from the Secretary at the dicounted price of £18:00, post & packaging free. (Overseas £5)2



Pages 10 to 12 redacted  
as they contain personal information