

9-3-98

# 102 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



## NEWSLETTER

*History of Pocklington  
P. 7*

### MARCH 1998

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## ANNUAL REUNION - YORK, 1998

The 1998 Reunion will take place at The University of York over the weekend of Sat/Sun, 25/26 July and will follow the usual format.

Sat. 25th. July 12 - 4 p.m. Assembly & Get-Together in the Langwith Bar where Sandwiches and Refreshments will be available from 1:30 pm.

6:00 pm Reception in Langwith Bar.

7:00 pm. Dinner. It is hoped that the new Officer Commanding, RAF Linton On Ouse, G/Capt. G.H. Edge, OBE AFC, RAF, will be our Guest of Honour.

Sun. 26th. July 10:30 am Service at Barmby Moor Parish Church followed by a short Wreath-Laying ceremony at the Pocklington Airfield. Most members will be aware that lunch can be obtained at the NAAFI in the YAM at Elvington.

### PSALMS OF A FLYER

1. As the telephone operator who giveth wrong numbers, is he who extolleth his exploits in the air.
2. He shall enlarge upon the danger of his adventure, but in my sleeve shall be heard the tinkling of silvery laughter.
3. My son, obey the law and observe prudence. Spin thou not lower than 1,500 cubits nor stunt above thine own domicile. For the hand of the law is heavy, and reaches far and wide throughout the land.
4. Incur not the wrath of the commander by breaking the rules, for they who ignore the course shall be cast into outer darkness.
5. More praiseworthy is he who can touch his tail and wheels to the earth at one time than he who loopeth and rolleth till some damsel stares in amazement at his daring.
6. He who breaketh an undercarriage in a forced landing may in time be forgiven, but he who taxieth into another plane shall be despised forever.
7. Beware the man who taketh off without looking behind him, for there is no health in him. Verily I say unto you, his days are numbered.
8. Clever men take the reproofs of their instructors in the same wise, one like unto another, with witty jest, confirming their dumbness and regarding themselves with humour. Yet they try again, profiting by his wise counsel, and take not offence at aught that has been said.
9. As a postage stamp which lacketh glue, so are the words of caution to a fool; they stick not, going in one ear and out the other for there is nothing between to stop them.
10. My son, harken unto my teaching and forsake not the law.

Amen!

TEE EMM August 1943

### NOT FORGOTTEN

John Grist, who was already on borrowed time when he attended the Reunion last year, sadly, died on 12th. Nov. He had recently found new friends in Belgium who had assisted his crew when they baled out over that country in 1945. Our deepest sympathy to Mary and family in their loss.

Arthur Evans, one of the many Aussies who served with 102, died on 19th. Sept after a long illness. Arthur represented Australia in 1946 at the Victory parade in London. Our sympathy has been conveyed to his widow Gwen.

Mike Barton who served as a Bomb Aimer in Dennis Phillips crew died in April of last year.

### CAN YOU HELP?

F/Lt H. TAYLOR. Believed to be a Navigator with the squadron in 1943/44 who flew with both 77 & 102. Anyone who knew or remembers him please contact the Sec. or Mark Abbott (Ass. Mem)

Sgt. GORDON RICHMOND. Formerly a Gunner and B/A with 35 Sqdn before transferring to 102 as a B/A with W/O Towse from Aug '42 until screening in March '43. He was flying with W/C Bintley the night the C.O was killed at Holme. Information to Sec. or Mark Abbott. See Ass. Members' list.

Sgt. WILLIAM JOSEPH VERNON. Shot down on 23rd. August '43 while flying as Navigator with S/Ldr. Jackson and became a POW. Anyone who knew him on the Squadron and prior to that, or in a POW Camp, please contact the Secretary.

GEOFFREY BEECROFT is looking for information on any of his former crew members, F/Lt W.G. Boyle (Pilot), F/Sgt G. Jodrell, B/A, F/Sgt. R. Rooke, Nav, F/Sgt. J. Bolton, F/E, F/Sgt. Wood, W/Op, and F/Sgt. J. Parr, A/G. After several months with 102 they were posted to 77 Sqdn. when Full Sutton was opened. Information to Sec. or direct to Geoffrey Beecroft. 3

### PRUNERY

THE MOST HIGHLY DEROGATORY ORDER OF THE IRREMOVABLE FINGER (Patron: Pilot Officer Prune) is this month awarded to Pilot Officer ----- for Stupendous Blind Faith in his Instruments. In the course of carrying out certain flying duties this fully operational pilot took his Mustang through some high tension cables with a 120,000 volt load. After removing three insulators, 200 yards of 1-inch cable and 120 yards of telephone wire complete with pole, he flew back and landed the remains of his aircraft (Cat. C) at base, where he was told he must have been flying at less than 50 feet height. To which he replied: "Oh but, Sir, that is not true; my altimeter showed 500 feet, so I must have been 500 feet up."

The same Order has also been awarded to Pupil Observer ----- for Abnormal Ability to Detect Wind.

When engaged in a bombing exercise, he busied himself for half an hour with getting a three-course wind on the Course Setting Bomb Sight and at the end of his calculations announced that he had just got the wind and it was "no miles an hour from 352 degrees."

## 102 SQUADRON TIES

The Secretary has a few Squadron Ties available. These are in navy blue with the squadron crest enclosed within two thin blue and red stripes, above and below. Price £8:00 each.

### LETTERS

Certainly I shall never forget my time at Pocklington - late November '43 until July '44. My tour started Berlin, Berlin, Leipzig, which was a hot start for a new crew but the scene soon changed to laying mines up near Sweden and some easier French railway yards. The Ruhr was well populated with shells - and Coblenz still stays in my memory!!

We did very well as a crew - all survived, managing some good AP photos which brought the BA a merited DFM. Instruction then for me at various HCU's, Blyton, Sandtoft, Finningley and Cottesmore, some being pre-war stations with really good living quarters.

After leaving the RAF, I went on to civil flying with BEA and BA, finishing up with about 20,000 flying hours at the age of 55. Since then - domestic bliss! Yes, truly!

Most of my crew are since deceased, B/A Bryn Davies, two Gunners, Ken Johnson & Stan Jeremial and Nav. Syd Brighton leaving Geof Bishop and myself wallowing in nostalgia.

Gus Walker interviewed me for my Commission.

Wingco Marchant was the Squadron C.O. with S/Ldr Millson as my Flight Commander.

I was always known as "Jerry" but now for many years as Peter. Am quite fit except for Parkinson's Disease, which I cannot recommend. If anybody reads this and remembers, please write. You'll find my address in the list of members.

Peter Geraghty

When I was a young lad, 12 Or 13, our family circle included two World War I veterans. On return to Canada they had continued their comradeship. They also became avid duck hunters. This fascinated me and I bugged them so much that they, with my parents' permission, included me as their apprentice hunter, teaching me the tricks of the trade including the safe handling of guns. We hunted most weekends in the autumn for a number of years. On these occasions, whether we were in the boat or camping, they were always discussing their time in the trenches, Vimy Ridge, Verdun mud and fleas, shrapnel, tossing grenades into tanks, bayonet attacks, lost buddies, and on and on.

This, of course interested me and I soaked it all in. However, although I learned a lot, I didn't really grasp the bond that they and other WWI veterans treasured. Now, after 65 years and having been part of Bomber Command, - I think I know!!

PS I still do a little duck hunting.

Jim Weaver, Port Rowan, Ontario

I very much enjoyed the article '*Memories of 102, Cheshire, and Other Matters*' by John Grimstone in the November 1997 Newsletter, but for me, and perhaps only for me, he left a rather large gap between his paragraph "There must have been a lot of guardian angels around but we had to move from Driffield to allow the Station to be repaired" and "While the Squadron was flying from Linton...".

My arrival at 102 coincided with the arrival of the JU 88's and, as a result, I spent a great deal of time in the shelters, and, as John said, we had to move and, with very few Whitleys left, those that were serviceable were flown by their crews to Prestwich in Scotland, the rest of us following in lorries. I do not recall much of the journey, I was still shell-shocked!

From Prestwich, 'A' Flight flew to Aldergrove, Northern Ireland, leaving one aircraft behind for 'B' Flight to do 'Circuits and Bumps'. I was in 'A' Flight which became involved in convoy escort duties, having taken over from 502 Squadron who were converting from Ansons to Whitleys. My particular aircraft managed three convoy escort duties about 200 miles out in the Atlantic before returning to Prestwich for 'Circuits and Bumps' while 'B' Flight went to take over at Aldergrove.

'B' Flight's time on convoy escort duties was a little more adventurous as F/O Young had to 'ditch' in front of a number of U.S. Lend/Lease destroyers coming to Britain who carried a group of journalists from 'LIFE' magazine, who, when discovering that Young's mother was American, made quite a splash in 'LIFE'. F/O Young, a double Oxford Rowing Blue, then became known as "Dinghy" Young and, as you will be aware, later became a Squadron Leader and was killed with 617 Squadron.

After almost six weeks at Aldergrove and Prestwich, the Squadron returned to Yorkshire, first to Leeming, then to Linton-on-Ouse and, in November 1940, to Topcliffe. I left 102 in February 1941 having become a member of both the Caterpillar and Goldfish Clubs, but met up again with 102 at Pocklington while carrying out a refresher course on Halifaxes with 1475 Flight.

Well that's the Gap mentioned earlier which I felt needed to be filled in John Grimstone's account. Incidentally, I also was at Linton when P/O Cheshire landed, having been on the same raid in which my aircraft returned with 150 holes!

Just some final statistics. Since those early days I ceased to be a stranger to Whitleys, having flown 144 different ones from Mark II's to XII's and the same applied to Halifaxes where my log book shows that I flew in 157 different aircraft from I's to VIII's.

From Jim Chapman

### A TRIBUTE TO "GUS"

A book telling the story of our much-loved and respected wartime Base Commander has just been published by the YAM. It is in A-4 format with a semi-stiff laminated cover and 168 pages. There is a text of 48,500 words and over 100 photos, with many personal recollections and humorous reminiscences of Sir Gus. The book is entitled,

OUR TRIBUTE TO AIR CHIEF MARSHALL  
SIR AUGUSTUS WALKER GCB CBE DSO DFC AFC MA  
O Legion d'Honneur, Croire de Guerre  
(1912-86)

The book may be obtained from Mrs.E.Harris, Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington, York, YO4 5AU (cheques payable to YAM), or from Pickering's Bookshop, 42 The Shambles, York, YO1 2LX. In both cases the price is £10:00 plus £1:50 P&P. (Australia £3:36, Canada £2:93, Europe £1:53)

## A PERSONAL MEMORY OF N - NAN

By DOUGLAS MOURTON

I did not operate again until the 21st. December (1940), when I took over as W/Op, still with Sgt. Rix as Captain. I have no recollection of what the target was, but one engine failed after we were 30 miles over the Dutch coast, so we turned around to return. Later on in the war we would have jettisoned our bombs into the sea, but in 1940 they were a precious commodity and were duly brought back home. We steadily lost height all the way back and Sergeant Rix was just able to pull the plane over the hedge of our airfield.

Unfortunately, on the other side there was a parked Whitley. We went right through the middle of it. We cut it in two. Our wheels and undercarriage were ripped off and we plunged into the ground. We could not get out of the usual exit so had to use the emergency exit on top of the plane. Although we were expecting that the bombs might go off at any minute, there was no panic and everyone got out in an orderly fashion. But as soon as we were all out we ran like mad for a couple of hundred yards. Then we sank to the ground, tired and out of breath. Then we started laughing uncontrollably, most likely it was the reaction setting in. Sgt. Rix had completed 27 operations without any serious trouble until I joined him. Then the last three had all ended in near catastrophe. His last remark to me was, "Mourton, you're a bloody jinx."

G/C Len Cheshire describes this crash in his book "Bomber Pilot" as follows.

"Jimmy and I went outside, an aircraft was approaching from the east. The aircraft came overhead and started to circle. It was a Whitley - Rix. He came through on RT asking permission to land. One engine was dead, the other was running well. He still had bombs with him. Control told him there were hostile raiders in the vicinity and to come in quickly."

"The tempo of his engine quickened as he put his exacter into fine pitch. Then as he crossed the boundary marker, dead silence, he was holding off. 'Good, he's made it, said Cheshire, he'll be sent on rest now, deserves it too.' Then an awful rending crash and suddenly dead silence. 'That's the end of Rix,' said Cheshire."

"On the aerodrome there was confused shouting and the sweep of headlights. Somewhere in the middle was a dark shapeless mass. In the dark it was impossible to make out anyone or anything. 'Put those lights out, you bloody fools, there's a German overhead,' said Cheshire, 'can't you hear him? And hurry with those extinguishers.' Then Cheshire bumped into someone. It was Rix. 'Good God, man I thought you were dead.' 'Thanks. No, I'm alright, said Rix'."

"'What happened?'

'There's an obstruction just by the boundary,' said Rix.

'That's no obstruction, it's N, my N, the N. They brought it back today after putting a new fuselage on it,' said Cheshire.

'Well, it's N no more,' said Rix. 'I hit it. I came in low on purpose because I knew we wouldn't be able to go round again on one engine. I must have misjudged it a little.'"

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

*Just a Reminder!*

*Subscriptions for 1998 are due by 1st. May. They remain as previously at £5:00 pa. Please do not overlook this matter and thus save the embarrassment of the Secretary in checking whether you are still alive!*

POCKLINGTON NOTES

By L.DENNIS

Pocklington in Anglo-Saxon times was a royal manor, valued at £56 per year. The Normans devastated it to such an extent that the value of the village was reduced to £8. Christianity came to Pocklington in 627 A.D. at which time it was known as Pocklington. The church was originally a wooden structure, but in 1070 a stone building was erected. Some remnants of the stonework still remain. The style of the present building is perpendicular. There are five bells in the tower. The first bell weighs 860lb and cost £50. The curfew was still rung in the parish in 1901. On the 1st December a man was paid 1/- for one hour's ringing. Legend has it that the cost was left by an unknown man who lost his way from Stamford Fair. He wandered about the moors for hours, finally getting his bearings by hearing the bells of Pocklington church. The local feast day has not been observed for years. A charter(1299/1300) granted by Edward I to Henry, Lord Percy empowered him to hold a market every Saturday in the Manor of Pocklington, and two fairs (feasts) on the eves of St.Margaret (19th July) and All Saints (21st October). Pocklington Church is still called "All Saints". A later charter granted to Henry's son in 1324 gave leave for two more fairs. It must be a long time since a fair was held in modern Pocklington. The inhabitants are very proud that once they had the dignity of being an Urban District Council, (it is now a Rural District)\*. Local patriotism is much also, that one must never speak of going into the *village*. "We are a town", an irate citizen informed a member of staff.

\*Not that since 1974

SQUADRON NOTES

INSTRUMENT SECTION.- The chaps in the section would like to know if a certain erk has really been struck by Cupid's dart, or whether it is just an excuse for getting a decent Sunday dinner. There are mysterious rumours wafting through the billet in the early hours of the morning,- such as, "I was playing cards with her father all \*\*!! night and lost into the bargain." Or "We had a hell of a row", "I thought it was all off. All because I was playing football." The section would like to know who the person is who tried to take off on George from the dispersal point so that they can recommend him for the "Order of the Irremovable Finger."

EQUIPMENT.- Absence of airmen at the Club dances is being noticed by W.A.A.F. who turn up in their thousands in response to a previous appeal in *Pokkagen*. Come on, chaps, play the white man. We don't mind holding the wall up but it becomes rather tiring after the first two hours. Suggestion is put forward that the 'locals' should close at 9 p.m. on dance nights. Might(?) improve matters. Who were the "naughty" W.A.A.F.'s who were kept in after "school" to write 50 lines? (Advice free- 5 pens fixed together make this much easier). Which Equipment N.C.O. has resorted to wearing a large walrus moustache? Must be owing to the shortage of razor blades in the N.A.A.F.I. It is thought that he might be induced to remove same if the ration was increased to one blade per week.

Pages 8 to 12 redacted  
as they contain personal information



