

# 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association



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## The 2020 Reunion that Wasn't - But We Will Meet Again

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In 1939, songwriters Ross Parker and Hughie Charles, composed the music and wrote the lyrics for 'We'll Meet Again', which was recorded by Vera Lynn and provided a rallying call during hard times throughout World War II and since.

Our Association has been 'Meeting Again' at its Annual Reunion for over 30 years, and on Saturday 4 July, Members and guests were to have assembled at the Petwood House Hotel, for the Reunion Dinner.

For obvious reasons this was not to happen, but although we were not able to 'Meet Again' this year, the Association's Carmen Medway-Stephens very kindly wrote a powerful and moving poem titled 'Some Sunny Day' to mark the Reunion weekend.

The poem is reproduced in full towards the end of this Newsletter, and I strongly recommend that you listen to the audio recording of the superb performance by Ifan Huw Dafydd, which you can access via the link on the Association website <https://57-630sqnassoc.org/wp-content/uploads/Some-Sunny-Day.mp3>



Despite the valiant efforts of Mike Chatterton and our friends at East Kirkby, the planned Remembrance Service at EK was also cancelled as England entered the 2nd 'lockdown' of 2020. Things - as they say - can only get better, and we hope to put this year's frustrations behind us and to return to a full programme of Association activities in 2021.

This year's Newsletter contains stories from both World Wars and the Falklands Conflict, together with a number of updates on previous stories, and the annual report from Squadron Leader Mike Waring, the current OC 57 Squadron at RAF Cranwell.

Next year's Reunion will be on the weekend of Friday 2 July - Monday 5 July 2021. In his piece which follows, our Secretary Chris Morffew, provides further details and there is a booking form in the rear of the Newsletter. Remember to book your accommodation early to avoid disappointment!

Chris is also seeking your views, comments and suggestions about the format for future Reunions - do please let us have your views and comments.

July 2021						
Week	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa Su
26				1	2	3 4
27	5	6	7	8	9	10 11
28	12	13	14	15	16	17 18
29	19	20	21	22	23	24 25
30	26	27	28	29	30	31

## The President's Piece



*David Houghton*  
Association President

It will come as no surprise that I begin by mentioning (in passing, and if only to address the elephant in the room) that the Government-imposed coronavirus-related restrictions have unfortunately played havoc with the Association's recent plans to bring Members together. But, to plagiarise the now famous WWII propaganda poster and the words sung by the late Dame Vera Lynn, I know that we will all continue to 'keep calm and carry on' and that, hopefully soon, 'we'll meet again'.

The future can only be brighter, and we sincerely hope that Association Members and current Members of 57 Squadron will be able to come together again at our scheduled Reunion in July 2021 and, hopefully, at a Dining-In Night at RAF Cranwell sometime next year. If-or-when the latter event happens we will hopefully be hosted by Squadron Leader Gareth Cothill, who will take over as OC 57 Squadron from Squadron Leader Mike Waring in mid-December 2020 - more about that in OC 57 Squadron's Update elsewhere in this Newsletter.

If memory serves I think that, by the time he hands over to Gareth in December, Mike will have been in command of The Phoenix for over 6 years. We remain incredibly fortunate as an Association to have Mike's support. I know from first-hand experience that he does an extraordinary job of ensuring that the rich history of both 57 Squadron and 630 Squadron is inculcated within his young pilots as they set-out on their flying careers in the RAF – in their hands the history and ethos of the Service is secure and the future of the RAF is incredibly bright.

Naturally, one of the eras that the new pilots on today's 57 Squadron think and learn about is WWII, and that has been especially important during 2020 when we have marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of that 6-year conflict.

Inevitably, the passage of time means that we now have fewer-and-fewer veterans of the conflict with us in the Association to give us their first-hand accounts of the reality of flying and working with Bomber Command.

In the last year we have sadly lost, amongst others, Warrant Officer Tom Lockett GM, Flight Lieutenant Steve Stevens DFC AE\* and Flight Sergeant Len Manning LdH. I was fortunate enough to be able to call all 3 of those incredible men my friend and I will miss them now that they have departed for the crewroom in the sky. I hope, therefore, that you'll indulge me if I share a few personal memories of Tom, Stevie and Len.

Having met Tom at our annual reunions, I got to know him very well during our subsequent trips to Denmark, to

commemorate a 630 Squadron crew shot-down near Skarrild in 1944.

Tom and the other veterans from 630 Squadron who made those trips to Denmark to honour their fallen comrades were always treated like the heroes they were by the people of Skarrild. I will always remember visiting a Danish school with Tom, where he answered question after question from the children with humour and honesty – the pupils listened in rapt silence until Tom finished then erupted in spontaneous applause. After the war Tom continued in selfless public service, becoming a policeman. On duty one night in 1957 he was confronted by a gunman and chased him down, despite one shot only narrowly missing Tom. For that act of outstanding bravery Tom was awarded the George Medal.



*Tom holds court with the Pantons at East Kirkby, July 2019*

**The President's Piece (continued)**

My memories of Tom will always be of a quietly-spoken, good-humoured, self-effacing man.....who liked the occasional beer! A gentleman of the old-school.

I first got to know Stevie when I was still serving on 57 Squadron. He was a firecracker of a man, always ready to laugh even during difficult times. Over the years I had the pleasure of getting to know Stevie better at our Association Reunions, during Dining-In Nights with 57 Squadron, and when we would meet from time-to-time for lunch and a beer. Unfailingly modest, it always took some cajoling to persuade Stevie to talk about his experiences with Bomber Command, especially what led to him being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his valour and courage on operations.



*Stevie lost in thoughts, as he looks back through his RAF Flying Log Book*

After leaving the RAF Stevie continued to serve in the Reserves and became an incredibly well-respected teacher, loved by his pupils for his patience and knowledge. I will remember Stevie as ever-smiling, inquisitive and unfailingly modest. I will miss our chats.

Len was quite simply a gentleman who was always ready to help others. I got to know Len well at our Association Reunions, and will always remember his captivating after-dinner speech at the Dining-In Night with 57 Squadron at RAF Cranwell in 2018. In his usual calm manner, Len talked vividly about how he was shot down in flames over France on his third mission, and about how he evaded capture. Len's bravery was recognised by the Government of France who, in 2016, awarded Len the Legion d'Honneur.

After the war Len used much of his time to help his fellow veterans – he was incredibly active within the Royal British Legion (RBL) and Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA). The respect felt by those organisations and many, many other people was evident at Len's funeral, where the RBL and RAFA standards led Len's coffin to the crematorium. I will always recall Len as a softly-spoken, dapper and charming gentleman.



*Len pictured with Mike Waring after signing the Wall of Honour at RAF Cranwell, 2019*

While they were all wonderful individuals, Tom, Steve and Len shared many qualities. They were very modest men who never saw themselves as 'heroes' (but they were!), they were wonderful company and they had a zest for life – qualities that they share with all their Bomber Command comrades. I will miss all of them and I think that, when the last Bomber Command veteran has re-joined his crew in the wide blue yonder, we will have lost something really important.

But I also believe that, when we come together as an Association and with the current 57 Squadron, we can keep the memories of our departed comrades with us. So I truly hope that the elephant in the room I mentioned earlier will fade away and that we will meet again at our planned Association Annual Reunion in July 2021 to remember the past, celebrate our friends and to look to the future. Until then, my very best wishes to you all.

David Houghton  
December 2020

## From the Secretary



*Chris Morffew*  
Association Secretary

As I sit down to write my first input to the Association Newsletter, I find myself wondering where on earth to start? It is the end of September 2020 and nobody could have imagined for one moment how this year would unfold. I formerly took over as Association Secretary at the beginning of the year knowing full well that Gordon Lodge would be a hard act to follow. Fortunately, I have known our Vice-president, Tony Gunby, since his arrival on 57 Squadron in 1982 and he agreed to continue with the arrangements for this year's Reunion so I could shadow him. Enjoying the gentle start, my wife Nancy and I were both looking forward to the Squadron Guest Night at RAF Cranwell when along came COVID-19!

As you will all be aware this quickly led to the cancellation of the Guest Night and left us, your Committee, wondering what the effect might be on our Reunion. We initially hoped we could simply delay it for a few months but it was not long before we had to accept that this year's event would have to be cancelled. Since then I have been able to focus on the 2021 Reunion, which is planned for 2-5 July 2021.

The format of the 2021 Reunion will be same as previous years and details, including booking forms, are towards the end of this Newsletter. Please let me have your booking forms, by email or by post, by the end of April 2021.

It has been suggested that it might be time to consider some possible changes to the future format of the Reunion. At the end of this Newsletter we have set out some potential options. We would welcome your thoughts before we make any changes. You can complete the form and return to me, or provide your input online via the Survey link which was sent with notification of Newsletter publication. Or, failing any of these, by hand at the July Reunion.

As I finalise this input to the Newsletter it has just struck me that it is now almost exactly 40 years since I moved into my Married Quarter at RAF Marham. I was posted to 57 Sqn, as Navigator Leader, in 1980 having been promoted to Squadron Leader in the January. I had spent the previous three years in Germany and at that time the Victors were supposed to be moving to RAF Scampton during my upcoming tour. Having spent three flying tours on Vulcans before going to Germany we still had a house near Scampton so we decided to keep it; needless to say the Victor never did move to Scampton! I spent the end of September 1980, and the October,

doing a Navigator Refresher course at RAF Finningley before starting the Victor OCU at Marham.



*A 57 Sqn Victor K2 refuels Lightnings*

The OCU was interesting because most staff and students were died-in-the-wool Tanker aircrew; apart from fresh co-pilots, people like me were the exception. It made for an interesting time, particularly as I had an unfortunate tendency to ask what the rationale was for the things they taught us.

Having finished the OCU, I joined 57 Squadron in early 1981. The first year was fairly uneventful; we took fighters to the US and Cyprus and we were scrambled a few times in support of RAF air defence fighters who intercepted and shadowed the Soviets - usually Russian Bears. It all changed when Argentina invaded the Falklands on 2 Apr 1982; more about that next year?

Of course our 2022 Reunion, already booked for 1-4 July 2022, will coincide with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict in which 57 Squadron played a significant part. Against this background we will have to consider carefully whether the 2022 Reunion should mark the occasion in some way. If you have any ideas please don't hesitate to let me know. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the Petwood Hotel next July.

Chris Morffew  
December 2020

## From the Vice President

Well, what a year it has been! Despite being unable to gather in our customary way at Woodhall Spa, the Association has continued to field a steady stream of enquiries from relatives of former serving members of both 57 and 630 Squadrons. It seems that being 'confined to barracks' has given people the time and opportunity to clear out attics and old boxes, to unearth long-forgotten photos, and to tentatively begin asking who, where, when and why?



Tony Gunby  
Association Vice-President

The VE75 celebrations, although significantly scaled down, also brought the service and sacrifice of the many into sharp focus. I hope that you read and enjoyed the brief website tribute to VE75. For me the most moving national ceremony of the year was the VJ Day anniversary event held at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire. I sat alone in front of my TV, with tears in my eyes, as veterans and relatives recounted the horrors of war in the Far East.

Earlier this year, 'the management' decided to adjust some of the responsibilities of the Committee Members which has led to me taking on the membership records and our small shop. Both had been run smoothly for several years by Mike Bracken, and I want to put on record the Association's thanks for his efforts. Despite their plans to spend more time at the home in Greece, we look forward to seeing Mike and Debbie at our Reunions - and wish Mike well with his new venture in the wine trade!

We have also welcomed back to the UK, our President and hope that by our next Reunion he hasn't forgotten all of his Vietnamese. David and I speak regularly, and despite returning to 'civvie street', I know that he remains very enthusiastic about finding a reserve appointment which will keep him close to the RAF's front line. Good luck David!

On the same theme of welcome, we have welcomed two new Members to the Association this year:

Martin Allen, whose twin uncles both served on Lancasters during WWII. One - Arthur Foster - with 630 Sqn until losing his life on the Wesseling raid in June 1944;

Steve Drumm in Williamstown, Australia, whose grandfather John (Sean) Drumm was an Air Gunner on Jack Hoare's crew on 630 Sqn in 1944-45; and

Bob Van Wyk in Harley, Canada, whose Dad helped recover the remains of the crew of 57 Sqn Lancaster ED 761 after its crash over The Netherlands (read more on page 35).

As Wendy Rothery will reflect later in this Newsletter, the pace of requests for information has not let up this year, and researchers Michael Rainsberry and Al Blow share with us the results of their research in this edition. There are also stories from Canada - with a very personal connection, POW recollections, and on refueling trials in the early 80s.

Although we publish stories, the hunt for information and 'missing links' continues. In the past few weeks, we have been contacted by the great nephew of Flight Sergeant Clifford Challenger, the Rear Gunner of 57 Squadron Lancaster ED668 DX-Y, which was lost without trace on the Bochum raid of 12/13 June 1943.

The story of the aircraft's navigator, Sergeant Thomas Burgess (Great Uncle 'Monts'), was posted on the website in April 2017. Sometimes, connections simply take a long time, but now both great nephews are in touch.

You will have read already that Mike Waring relinquishes command of 57 Sqn shortly, to be succeeded by Gareth Cothill. I thought that I should also note that early in the New Year, Flt Lt Paul Tweddle is also due to move on to pastures new.

Many of you will have met Tweds, but for those who haven't, he has been a key player in the relationship between 57 Sqn and the Association through his role as the Squadron Standard Bearer. Since April 2016, Tweds has paraded the Standard at every 57 Sqn and 3FTS Dinners, two Association Annual Dinners, our Annual Memorial Service, a Remembrance Parade at Newark, and - the 'cherry on the cake' - the RAF's 100th Anniversary in London. When asked about Tweds, Mike Waring said:

*"[he] has been a great asset to 57 Sqn, taking on the role of Standard Bearer with incredible pride,*

## From the V-P (continued)



*Paul Tweddle and Standard Party take a break during the RAF100 celebrations*

*enthusiasm and professionalism. With very few SNCOs at RAFC Cranwell, and none on 57 Sqn, through his unbridled enthusiasm, Paul has developed a small core of SNCOs who escort the 57 Sqn Standard with pride, despite having no direct affiliation with the Squadron. I was so pleased that his dedication to the role was rewarded by the memorable parading of the*

### *57 Sqn Standard at the RAF 100 Parade on the Mall"*

I can only echo those words, Tweds has done a great job and has made many friends among the Association. We wish him well in his future endeavours - wherever they may take him.

Assembling the Newsletter each year, I am immensely grateful to those that agree to write or share a story. I would be delighted to hear from anyone that would like to contribute to future editions.

Despite 'nothing happening' in 2020, we have the biggest Newsletter in our history this year - with over xx pages! I hope that you enjoy the read.

I'll end with a request which is to please let us know should you change address, email or telephone number. Data protection legislation means that we cannot hold your personal data without good cause. So, unless we hear from you now and then, we are obliged to delete the data and remove you from our Membership list.

Thankfully in the past couple of months we have re-made contact with a couple of members that had 'fallen off our radar scope' - welcome back!

Tony Gunby  
December 2020

## Money Matters



*Clare Gillard  
Association Treasurer*

The Association does not charge a membership fee and therefore relies predominantly on the generosity of Members, their relatives, and friends, who make donations throughout the year.

In this highly unusual year these donations have totalled more than £820 for which the Association is extremely grateful. Income was supplemented by the refund of the loan made by the Association to fund the new design 57 Squadron tie, and through sales of memorabilia.

While cancellation of the Annual Reunion reduced opportunities for further fundraising, there were no associated expenses incurred. Rather, expenses during the past 12 months have totaled £746, being primarily the costs of new

stock of lapel badges, digital copies of Operational Record Books, subscription to Forces Air Record, and website maintenance.

Overall, the Association account, as at 1 September 2020, stood at £5996; an increase of around £550 on last year.

If you would like a copy of the full accounts please contact the Treasurer, Clare Gillard ([Treasurer@57-630sqnassoc.org](mailto:Treasurer@57-630sqnassoc.org)).

As a reminder, please make any cheques payable to '57/630 Squadrons Association'. If you prefer to make a BACS transfer please contact the Treasurer and she will provide the necessary account details.

You can also contact the Treasurer if you would like to discuss legacies.

## In Memoriam



Sadly, but inevitably, we continue to bid farewell to Members. While this is always a time for understandable grief and sorrow, it is also an opportunity to look back with affection to better times and at some of life's characters. Over the past 12 months we have said farewell to:

**Lionel 'Blue' Rackley DFC** - an Ozzie who served as a pilot with 630 Sqn and was awarded the DFC in 1944. During a raid on Munich on 24/25 April 1944, Blue's aircraft suffered a double engine failure as a result of flak, but flew on 2 engines for 4 hours over Switzerland before crash landing in Corsica. During the Wesseling raid of June 1944, Blue's aircraft was attacked by a fighter and forced to turn home before reaching the target. The damage to his controls was so bad that the crew was forced to bale out once back over England and on landing Blue's chute was tangled by the passing London Express ripping his harness off him!

**David Francis** - son of Ray Francis DFC who flew with 57 Squadron. David was immensely proud of his father's service and, although based in Switzerland, was an ever-present at our Reunions, alongside Helen and family members. The Ray Francis trophy was generously presented to 57 Squadron by David in 2010 and is awarded at the discretion of the Officer Commanding 57 Squadron to the person or group who, in the opinion of the OC, have made an outstanding contribution to the spirit, ethos or professionalism of 57 Squadron.

**Sydney 'Steve' Stevens** - served as a pilot with 57 Squadron and was awarded the DFC. Steve, and his beloved Maureen, were great supporters of the Association. Nobody that met Steve will ever forget that twinkle in the eye as he held his audience spellbound with his stories. Steve passed away in April 2020 aged 98.

**Ros Davis** - whose father was a tail gunner with 630 Squadron. Ros was another ever-present at our Reunions and a stalwart of the Saturday night raffle ticket selling team. Ros passed away in April 2020 after a short illness.

**Kenneth Law Sumner** - born in Saskatchewan, Canada, in 1923, Kenneth was just 18 years old when he joined the RAF. He served as a Bomb Aimer with 44 Sqn, 57 Sqn and 617 Sqn. Kenneth passed away in April 2020 aged 96.

**Len Manning** - a mid-upper Gunner who served on 57 Squadron. While on the raid against the Revigny railway yard on 18/19 July 1944, Len and his crew were shot down. With the help of the Resistance, Len, aged just 19 at the time, evaded capture and re-joined with Allied troops on 7 September. He was awarded the Legion d'Honneur in 2017 and was an ever-present at our Reunion memorial services. Len passed away peacefully in September 2020.

**Kate Benson** - wife of our Honorary Chaplain Richard Benson, Kate's smile and enthusiasm for our Reunions will be a great loss. Perhaps less well known, she had a very important role to play which was to make sure that Richard made it to the Sunday Service, no matter what time he left the bar on Saturday night/Sunday morning!

Whenever, we hear news of someone's passing we put a note on the website, and we will add funeral details if they become available. However, sometimes, we only hear the sad news well after the event, and sometimes we simply don't hear at all. However, whether we hear or not, and whatever the circumstances ...

***We will remember them***

## News from the Frontline



*Squadron Leader  
Mike Waring  
OC 57 Squadron*

Well, where to start on 2020? Regrettably, and for obvious reasons, 2020 has not been the most productive of years beyond our core business but as I look back, I believe we have taken every opportunity and it has still been a pleasingly busy year.

For those that are unfamiliar with what the current incarnation of 57 Sqn is responsible for, here is a brief summary. 57 Sqn operates the Grob 120TP 'Prefect' and is responsible for training students on a wide variety of flying related courses, as expanded below.



*Grob Prefect T1*

57 Sqn is one of 4 Elementary Flying Training (EFT) squadrons (3 Prefect and one Tutor) at No 3 Flying Training School (3FTS). 3FTS is responsible, along with our civilian partner Ascent, for



*Grob Tutor T1*

the training of students on the Tutor, Prefect and Embraer Phenom (45 Squadron) in order to prepare them for their next stage of training.



*Embraer PhenomT1*

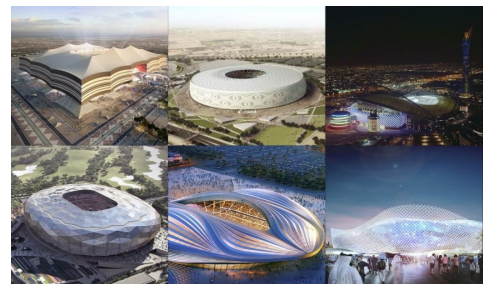
57 Sqn is specifically responsible for:

- Elementary Flying Training which concludes with the streaming of students to either Fast Jet, Rotary Wing or Multi-Engine Training;
- Multi-Engine Lead-In to continue to prepare students for the Multi-Engine training on the Phenom;
- Basic Fast Jet Lead-In to prepare students for the new Texan TR6;
- a Fixed-Wing refresher course for former Rotary pilots and fixed-wing pilots who have been out of the cockpit for extended periods; and,
- Weapon Systems Officers (WSOs, previously known as Navigators) 'training' to expose new WSOs to the airborne environment and develop their Airmanship.



*Beechcraft T6 Texan*

In addition to these tasks we were responsible for training Qatari's on the English Language Reinforcement & Orientation Course (ELROC), essentially a UK orientation and language training for Qatari qualified pilots who are working up to provide Combat Air Patrols for the 2022 World Cup.



*World Cup 2022 stadia, Doha, Qatar*



## News from the Frontline (continued)

This year, 57 Squadron has also developed a Prefect to Hawk Trial course, with the students flying additional hours on the Prefect and going straight to the Hawk rather than via the Texan.



*Flt Lt James Bell (L) and Sqn Ldr Chris Pearson (R) - graduates of the Prefect to Hawk Course*

The Prefect is a much more capable platform than the Tutor and close enough in performance to the Texan that we believe Basic Fast Jet Training can successfully be completed on the Prefect.

The course introduces 250ft low-level, tactical formation, combat manoeuvring and night flying, skills and techniques that had to be developed from scratch for the Prefect. On completion of the course the students were awarded their wings. The first trial was determined to be a success, although the students are yet to complete their training on the Hawk, and the next 2 students will be starting in the New Year to continue to validate the concept.

In the last year 57 Sqn have trained (previous period totals in brackets) a total of 95 (73) students made up of: 45(33) Elementary Flying Training; 2(0) Prefect to Hawk training; 7(7) Elementary Navigator Training; 17 (15) Multi-Engine Lead-In; 3(4) Fixed Wing Refresher; 21(6) Fast-Jet Lead-In; and 8(8) ELROC).



*57 Squadron Graduation with Air Cdre Peter Squires, Commandant RAF College Cranwell*

This is a 25% increase on the previous period despite the impact of COVID-19. The other Prefect Sqns (674 AAC and 703 NAS) trained 86 EFT students (they don't instruct the other courses) between them so in my opinion 57 Squadron has been by far the most productive of the 3 Prefect EFT sqns.

I am proud of the drive that the personnel of 57 Sqn have shown, how we have adapted to operating in the COVID environment and our ability to cope with the challenges of managing the wide variety of courses we are responsible for.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly had an impact on us this year with all flying ceasing for just over a month as we got to grips with the implications of the initial lockdown. We gradually returned to flying in May and swiftly adapted our procedures to enable us to operate at close to our planned output levels.

The second national lockdown has just hit, which, due to the way we have adapted, has had only a small impact on our output.

2020 will probably be remembered more for what we did not do, than what we did do. Solo parties, Graduations and Streaming Events sadly have been compromised due to the requirement to remain socially distanced. These events are important events to reinforce 57 Sqn spirit and ethos but also appropriately mark the achievements of our fine young student pilots.



*Graduation Ceremony COVID-style*

Other events which were not able to take place due to COVID included the 57 Squadron Annual Dinner which has sadly not taken place since 2018 for reasons outside our control, the 3FTS Dinner, the 2020 Commandants Cup (a monthly sporting competition between departments across RAFC Cranwell), a planned mixed formation of 2 Prefects with the BBMF Lancaster and the usual Force Development events which help to educate our students.

All of these extra-curricular events help to foster the spirit and ethos of 57 Sqn and I regrettably believe this is where COVID has had the biggest impact on us. Output has continued but without these important social and educational events our spirit has, all be it temporarily, had an unavoidable knock. However just like in WWI we will without any doubt rise from the ashes. I promise you that the Squadron cannot wait for the first non-socially distanced social event!

## News from the Frontline (continued)

So what have we achieved in addition to the core flying task?

57 Squadron won the 2019 Commandant's Cup which concluded prior to the COVID outbreak (but after my last newsletter); had personnel participate in the 3FTS Ski Expedition to France; and, had Air Officer Commanding Commendations awarded to three of our personnel. The success of the Squadron, as it has always been, is down to the people, so it was pleasing to see our people recognized in this way.

I am blessed to have the best team any Boss could wish for, made up of regular-service Qualified Flying Instructors (QFI), Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) QFIs who are former regular pilots, ranging from retired squadron leaders to retired air commodores, and high-quality Ascent civilian QFIs. They all work incredibly hard and are all hugely motivated to get the best out of the students.

This is my 6<sup>th</sup> and last Annual Report as OC 57 Squadron as I prepare to move on to pastures new. I handover to Sqn Ldr Gareth Cothill on 16 Dec 2020 after 6 years and 10 months of command, which is by some margin the longest serving OC of 57 Sqn!

In that time 57 Sqn has moved from RAF Wyton to new accommodation at RAFC Cranwell, celebrated 100 years of 57 Sqn, safely ceased operating the Tutor, moved into new accommodation at RAFC Cranwell, converted to the Prefect, developed and learnt to instruct four new flying training courses, trained countless students many of which are now operating on the Front Line and won the Sword (for best EFT Sqn) on 2 occasions.

Finally, I have greatly appreciated and enjoyed the relationship with the 57 & 630 Sqn Association throughout my time on the Squadron, and the numerous events that I have had the pleasure to attend. It has been an honour to meet you all, share in your stories and continue to remember those personnel that served and died for 57 & 630 Sqn.

As we were unable to meet for this year's 57 & 630 Sqn Annual Dinner I would like to raise one last 'virtual glass' to "the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association". **Sqn Ldr Waring.....OUT!**

*(We wish Mike and his family all the best for the future, and every success as the Boss of East Midlands University Air Squadron. We hope to see you at Reunions in the future Mike, but until then here are just a few photos of occasions on which we have enjoyed your company and that of 57 Squadron. Ed.)*



## Research Update



*Air Commodore  
Wendy Rothery  
Association Information  
Officer*

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This year has been memorable for so many reasons, amongst them some very dark moments as we have all had to come to terms with a new normal that places us at greater distance from our loved ones. However, the interest in 57 and 630 Squadron history has remained strong throughout the year, and I have taken great pleasure in responding to a record number of enquiries, many prompted by the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day.

I hope that the information provided offers comfort to the enquirers and helps fill a gap in the family archive. Highlights for me have included connecting two enquirers from Australia who both had relatives on the same crew; finding a rare and precious photograph amongst my archive records that I was able to pass on to a family member of the airman concerned; receiving letters and photographs from relatives of members of 57 and 630 Sqns which have been retained as part of the Association Archive; hearing from people around the world holding services to commemorate the loss of 57 and 630 Sqn aircraft; and welcoming new members to the Association who I look forward to meeting as soon as the opportunity presents.

Another, very special, moment for me towards the end of last year was calling Steve Stevens to wish him a happy 98<sup>th</sup> birthday; he sounded in fine fettle and I could hear him smiling down the telephone line. He is very sadly missed but fondly remembered by all who were fortunate enough to know him. So too Len Manning, whose recollection of evading capture in a French Farmhouse after his aircraft was shot down will remain with me always. I feel hugely privileged to have known them, and others who served alongside my Grandfather as part of RAF Bomber Command in WWII.



*Wendy with Steve Stevens*

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The connections made by carrying out research into enquiries are one of the most rewarding parts of being the Association's Information Officer. Last year I described some of the circumstances of the infamous raid on the synthetic oil plant at Wesseling, near Cologne, which inflicted such dreadful losses on the East Kirkby squadrons. During research into a separate enquiry, it transpired that one of the crews lost from 49 Sqn on the same raid was captained by OC 49 Sqn, Wg Cdr Malcolm Crocker DFC\*, an

American citizen serving with the RAF. A flight commander on 57 Sqn in November 1943, he took his aircraft and crews to form 630 Sqn and was its first OC until the arrival of Wg Cdr J D Rollinson DFC towards the end of the month. Leading from the front, Crocker was the first airborne on the first mission in 630 Sqn's proud operational history. Lost with him on the night of the Wesseling raid were 2 of his original 57 and 630 crew: his engineer, Flt Lt Albert E A Matthews DFC, and his WOp/AG, Fg Off James R Worthington DFC.

Two further very poignant contacts have led to articles in this year's Newsletter from Al Blow in Canada and Michael Rainsberry, and I would like to thank them both for the detailed insights they have provided and the time they have taken to write such comprehensive accounts of their Great Uncles' operational service on 57 Sqn, in WWI and WWII respectively.

I hope you enjoy the articles and that they inspire you to carry out some research of your own into your family history. Although I have a complete operational record of 630 Sqn to help with any enquiries, most of the 57 Sqn Operational Record Books I have had access to until now have been those from WWII. However, thanks to the ongoing sterling work Pete Sharpe to create a full narrative history of 57 Sqn, together with the opportunity to acquire free digital records from the National Archives while the Records Office at Kew has been closed, I now have access to a significantly increased database to support future enquiries.

## Research Update (continued)

One of the key anniversaries for the Association this year was the 75th anniversary of VE Day. As the nation marked the event with a Bank Holiday on Friday 8th May, and as we were unable to hold the annual reunion as usual in the first week of July, I thought you would be interested to know what 57 and 630 Sqns were doing on 8 May 1945.

Shifting from offensive operations, Operation EXODUS - the repatriation of POWs - had begun for 57 and 630 Squadrons on 2 May. While in some ways a joyous task, this must have been a laborious process with a maximum of just 24 POWs able to be carried in each aircraft.

On 8 May, when the VE Day celebrations were in full swing, eight 57 Squadron and seven 630 Squadron aircraft were tasked to fly to Juvincourt in the Aisne department of northern France, returning with a total of 355 POWs who were delivered to the reception centre at RAF Dunsfold.



*Dunsfold Aerodrome - Air Arrival Centre*

Dunsfold was designated an "Air Arrival Centre" where No. 2 Hangar was decorated with flowers to welcome the troops home and a medical inspection tent was set up. Between the 15 April 1945 and 25 June 1945, 47,529 ex POWs passed through

Dunsfold Aerodrome. On one day alone - 9 May - 160 aircraft delivered 3,953 personnel.

After arriving back at East Kirkby on 8 May, the Station Commander, Group Captain B A Casey, called a parade for 1430 hours so that at 1500 hours personnel could listen to the broadcast by Winston Churchill. This was followed by a short service led by the Chaplain, Squadron Leader the Reverend George Dunbar.

The Squadrons were to get their holiday the following day - 9 May - which the Operational Record Books note 'VE Day - no flying'. Over the period 2-15 May 1945, 57 and 630 Squadrons together repatriated a total of 2,110 POWs to the UK.

Later that year, while the Nation celebrated VJ Day (15 August 1945) the event passed unremarked in the 57 Sqn operational record; 630 Sqn had disbanded on 18 July. Instead, the Sqn Cdr (Wg Cdr H Y Humphries, who had resumed command on 18 June) recorded the arrival of the first three Lincoln aircraft, which were delivered towards the end of the month.



*Avro Lincoln*

22<sup>nd</sup> August Notification was received of three Lincoln aircraft being delivered to the Squadron for service trials; the aircraft to be flown in accordance with the following instructions:

- Eight crews to be specially selected from the squadron and these crews only are to fly the Lincoln aircraft.
- The maximum number of flying hours is to be required from the Lincoln aircraft.
- As many as possible of the flights undertaken are to be cross-country flights at varying heights, including flights at above 20,000 feet, throughout.
- No night flying is to be carried out until the captain has completed a minimum of 10 hours by day on the type.

23<sup>rd</sup> August Lincoln aircraft L.385 arrived on the squadron.

29<sup>th</sup> August Lincoln aircraft L.386 and L.387 arrived at the squadron.

No Lincoln aircraft trials were carried out this month owing to the unserviceable state of the aircraft.

*Extract from AIR27-540-15 (Aug 1945)*

## Research Update (continued)

Whilst it was clearly not an auspicious start, 57 Sqn was the first unit in Bomber Command to begin to re-equip with the Lincoln, which had been designed as an up-rated Lancaster for operations in the Far East. VJ day occurred before any Lincolns were properly in service.

As the war drew to a close, both squadrons sadly continued to suffer casualties. In the first 3 weeks of March, 57 Sqn lost 5 crews (pilots Fg Off R J Ancomb, Fg Off C W Baush, Fg Off C D Pauline RAAF, Fg Off C A Cobern RAAF, Flt Lt A R Palling). The loss of Flt Lt Palling's very experienced crew on the 20/21 March raid against Halle was the last combat loss of the war for the Sqn.

630 Sqn suffered four combat losses between 16 March and 10/11 April (WO D I Plumb, Fg Off C R M Richardson RAAF, Fg Off A V Cameron RAAF and Fg Off R J Sassoon). Fg Off Cameron's crew survived as POWs with the exception of Sgt J R

Dicken, the Mid-upper Gunner, whose parachute caught fire as he abandoned the aircraft. After VE Day, Fg Off B Hall and crew were killed in a training accident near Wolverhampton on 17 May; 630 Sqn's final casualties were Fg Off G H Cowan's crew, who failed to return from a daylight sortie over the North Sea to dispose of incendiary bombs.

As a fitting reminder that risks were also borne by personnel on the ground, an accident while preparing PB360 for ops against Cham on 17 April led to a fire and a sequence of explosions that cost the lives of Sgt R E Davies, Cpls T S Dixon and G W Johnson, and LAC A Price, injured 5 men, destroyed 6 aircraft and damaged 14, and seriously damaged No 3 Hangar. The fire-fighting efforts continued into the next day. Fg Off Grebby and Fg Off Gott were both awarded the George Medal and 3 of the injured airmen were awarded the BEM.

Wendy Rothery  
December 2020

## RAF Scampton Memorial Window

In last year's Newsletter, we reported on the project to install a stained glass window at Scampton Church to mark 100 years' relationship between RAF Scampton and Scampton Church (1918 – 2018), thereby creating a lasting memory to all who served in squadrons at the base during this period.

The Association's donation of £100 to this project has secured one of the pieces of stained glass and the Association's contribution will be recognised in the official Commemoration Book.

Production of the window was stalled earlier in the year due to COVID-19, but we are pleased to hear that it is once more underway and that it is hoped that the window will be installed early in 2021 with a dedication ceremony to held the following summer.

There are still opportunities to contribute to this project; more details and how to donate can be found at <https://scamptonchurch.org/raf-stained-glass-window/>

**RAF Scampton Window Sponsor a Glass Panel October 2020**

Sponsorship of panels:  
Suggested minimum donation £100 for any numbered piece of glass

109 - '57 & 630' Squadrons

103 John Simpson and Family

104 Sandra & Ken Allen

105 Joe Myers

106 FR Sgt William Kay

107 Joe Barthrop

108

109 - '57 & 630' Squadrons

110

111 Stuart Hogg Family

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## A Boy called Egg

Michael Rainsberry's late father was a Chaplain in Bomber Command at RAF Moreton-in-Marsh. The following article tells the story of Michael's uncle, Pilot Officer Faber Weldon, who served as a navigator with 57 Squadron at RAF Scampton and the Operation to Kiel on the night of 4/5th April 1943.

It happened virtually everyday and in all weathers. Of all the games they played, this was the best and the most exciting. The squadron queued ready for take-off, their full-throated roars growing ever louder. One-by-one the brakes were released and the Lancs thundered down the tarmac, arms outstretched, flashing past the swings, over the hopscotch court and scattering squealing children in all directions.

Aged nearly 5, Ian Weldon had become an 'officer' and a leader amongst his peer group. He had his own squadron of Lancasters at Monksdown Primary School, Norris Green, Liverpool.

Ian was affectionately dubbed "Egg" by his parents. He was a much-loved only son who worshipped his father, Pilot Officer Faber Weldon. Like all children of serving officers in RAF Bomber Command, especially in Liverpool in 1943, young Ian was accorded an unspoken respect at his school, both amongst his friends and within his neighbourhood.



*5-year-old Squadron Leader 'Egg'*

Most people had experienced the city taking a hammering at the hands of the Luftwaffe between April 1940 and January 1942. Pilot Officer Faber Weldon, 57 Squadron RAF was personally repaying Nazi Germany for what they had been doing to Liverpool.

Ian's father was a Navigator in 57 Squadron, flying in Lancasters out of RAF Scampton, Lincolnshire, a station they briefly shared with 617 Squadron, which was preparing and training for Operation Chastise. He would have seen the top-secret comings and goings of Lancasters with their Mid-Upper turrets removed and unusual modifications under the fuselage.

One of the last streets to be hit by the Germans during the Liverpool Blitz took place on 10th January 1942, when the house of Alois Hitler Jr. in Upper Stanhope Street, Liverpool 8, was destroyed. Alois was the half-brother of Adolf Hitler. His house was a mere 3 miles from number 4 Forest Lawn, West Derby, Liverpool 12, home to Faber Ernest Frederick Weldon and his wife Bertha, originally from Brittas Bridge, Co. Wicklow, Ireland. Alois Hitler had also met and married an Irish woman, Bridget Dowling, and settled in Liverpool, but there the coincidences ended.

Bertha and Faber had married in 1938. He was a former policeman, and it was whilst Bertha was expecting their longed for child that their baby was simply referred to as "Egg".

Faber Weldon, aged 31 in 1943, was a giant of a man standing at over 6' 3". He may at one time have been the



*Pilot Officer Weldon (left), but is this Sergeant Alan Haddow? (right)*

## A Boy called Egg (continued)

tallest policeman in Liverpool and was even more imposing as he stood atop his podium directing traffic at a busy Liverpool crossroads.

He was the sort who would never have been able to squeeze with ease through an escape tunnel from a German prison camp, or pass himself off in disguise, if he ever got out.

Working at his station in the Lancaster meant he sat close to his friend, 22-year-old Wireless Operator, Sergeant Alan Haddow. It's possible that the previous photograph, taken in the back garden of Faber's house at 4 Forest Lawn, West Derby, Liverpool shows Alan, a single man, a Scot from Glasgow and son to Margaret C.L. Haddow of Thornliebank, Renfrewshire.

Just one parent listed in the Runnymede Memorial next of kin records for Alan suggests that his mother Margaret may have been a widow. Perhaps the giant, much older Faber had become a father figure to Alan.

The following photograph shows a smiling family visit with Faber, Bertha, and Egg, here bursting with pride, happiness and excitement.



*The Weldon Family - Bertha, Egg and Faber*

I am especially grateful to Air Commodore Wendy Rothery, Information Officer for the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association, whose grandfather was also a navigator on Lancs in 57 Squadron.

Wendy has kindly provided certain details in the following narrative about the last few moments of Faber Weldon and his crew flying the Lancaster Mk I, W.4252, call sign X-Ray on the night of 4/5th April 1943.

X-Ray was one of 15 Lancasters from 57 Squadron, which took off at 21.07 from Scampton to attack the German port of Kiel on that spring night in 1943.

The 4th April saw RAF Bomber Command dispatching a force of 577 aircraft comprising 203 Lancasters, 116 Halifaxes, 90 Stirlings and 168 Wellingtons. Twelve aircraft, representing 2.08% of the total force failed to return from the raid, the losses comprising 5 Lancasters, 4 Halifaxes, 2 Stirlings, and one Wellington, that's 83 men killed, injured or taken POW.

Some fell to night fighters, some to ground or ship-based flak. As the 57 Squadron ORB report states, the weather was poor and there was 10/10ths cloud cover rendering the target completely obscured. The bombing effort had to be done by ETA and fire glow seen through cloud.

Even the Pathfinders arriving shortly before the main force ran into thick cloud and strong winds over the target. Decoy fires set by the Germans were also reported, all of which added to the accuracy problems. As the 57 Squadron ORB bluntly states, "*it was a thoroughly disappointing raid*".

At some point during the Operation and shortly after midnight, X-Ray was hit and suffered damage after releasing its payload, one 4,000 lb bomb and 96 high capacity 30 lb incendiaries.

We can only speculate about what happened. Was it shrapnel from Anti-Aircraft fire, or had X-Ray flown into the grid square of a Luftwaffe Wilde Sau (*Wild Boar*) night fighter, which then pounced on its prey silhouetted against the backlit clouds below?



*A Luftwaffe nightfighter stalks a Lancaster - based on the original painting 'Dangerous Moonlight' by Nicolas Trudgian*

## A Boy called Egg (continued)

We do know that Wireless Operator Alan Haddow sent four signals on the return journey to Scampton, the second, at 00.40 reported that the Bomb Aimer, 20-year-old Sergeant Benjamin Spicer had been wounded and one port engine was u/s.

For the next hour, the Pilot, Squadron Leader Stanley Wallage would have been working through the rapidly diminishing options with his Pilot Engineer, Sergeant George Harbottle. There were major problems with X-Ray, far more serious than merely one Merlin engine out. Both men were aged 25, both were married and both were running out of time and altitude.

At 01.43, Alan Haddow signalled Scampton they were preparing to ditch. His friend Faber would have passed him the slip of paper on which was written their position - 50°20' North 04°25' East.



*For the crew of X-Ray, their only chance was to stick with the aircraft - they were running out of options, time and altitude - based on an original painting 'Limping Home' by Robert Taylor.*

The crew would have been preparing for the violent event that was about to happen. Tail Gunner Sergeant Alan Wood would have made his way forward from his position, together with the Mid-Upper Gunner Sergeant Albert Evans; a 34-year-old married man from Stockport, Cheshire.

They would have been joined by Bomb Aimer Benjamin Spicer, his injuries permitting. Perhaps Sergeant Spicer had already been extracted from his position in the nose and was receiving treatment on the Rest Bed located behind the Radio Operator? He would certainly no longer be lying prone in the nose for a ditching at sea.

Alan Haddow would have grabbed his carrier pigeon, almost certainly named by Alan, and which was still standard issue in RAF Bomber Command at that time. He would have placed the tiny message in the bird's leg canister with the last position of X-Ray.

The crew would have adopted the bracing position, bunched up tightly together on the fuselage floor as if in a canoe. The man behind gripped the neck of the man in front. Even if Stan Wallage could get X-Ray down perfectly, the impact with the cold North Sea would be at a neck-snapping, spine-crushing, minimum speed of 100 mph.

The strong winds would have made a crucial difference to the outcome of Squadron Leader Wallage's attempt to ditch the aircraft. The sea state - the height of the waves, would have been much increased. Although winds at the surface are always lighter than at altitude - typically 30% less than at 2,000 feet - they would still have been strong enough to whip up the waves which at this speed, might as well have been a walls of solid concrete.

All Pilots and crews trained in ditching drills, but their only real experience would have been acquired the first time they did it for real.



## A Boy called Egg (continued)

Ditching at night multiplied the risks exponentially. X-Rays' landing lights under the port wing would have illuminated the hostile white caps of the dark green waves flashing past below. Ditching along the swell at the lowest speed and rate of descent, with reduced power, and with handling difficulties, made a tough task well nigh impossible.



*Last known position of Lancaster X-Ray. The starting point of the ASR search after calculating drift factors such as wind, weather and currents.*

Alan Haddow sent a final signal at 01:48; impact would have been a matter of minutes later. He, Faber and Flight Engineer George Harbottle would have been the last of the crew to assume their brace positions. In one last act, Harbottle would have tightened the seat harness of the Pilot Stanley Wallage on whom their lives now depended.

Their ditching location was 54°20' North 04°25' East, which put them about 172 miles from the Lincolnshire coast and 69 miles north of the coast of enemy occupied Holland. Air Sea Rescue (ASR) would calculate wind drift and currents as their position would change markedly in the hours ahead.

Nothing more was heard from X-Ray.

Bomber Command's superbly resourced and well-led Flying Control Organization (FCO) managed ASR for all allied aircraft. They would have been placed on alert, immediately swinging into action and were probably already airborne as the ditching signal for X-Ray was sent. The FCO was one of the outstanding visionary achievements of Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, and was responsible for rescuing thousands of allied airmen and guiding lost aircraft to safety during WWII. If the X-Ray life raft could be found, ASR would find it.

X-Ray's carrier pigeon would have been released had they made it into the life raft, but it never did arrive back at the Scampton pigeon loft. As Air Commodore Wendy Rothery states - "the impact was clearly beyond human tolerance".

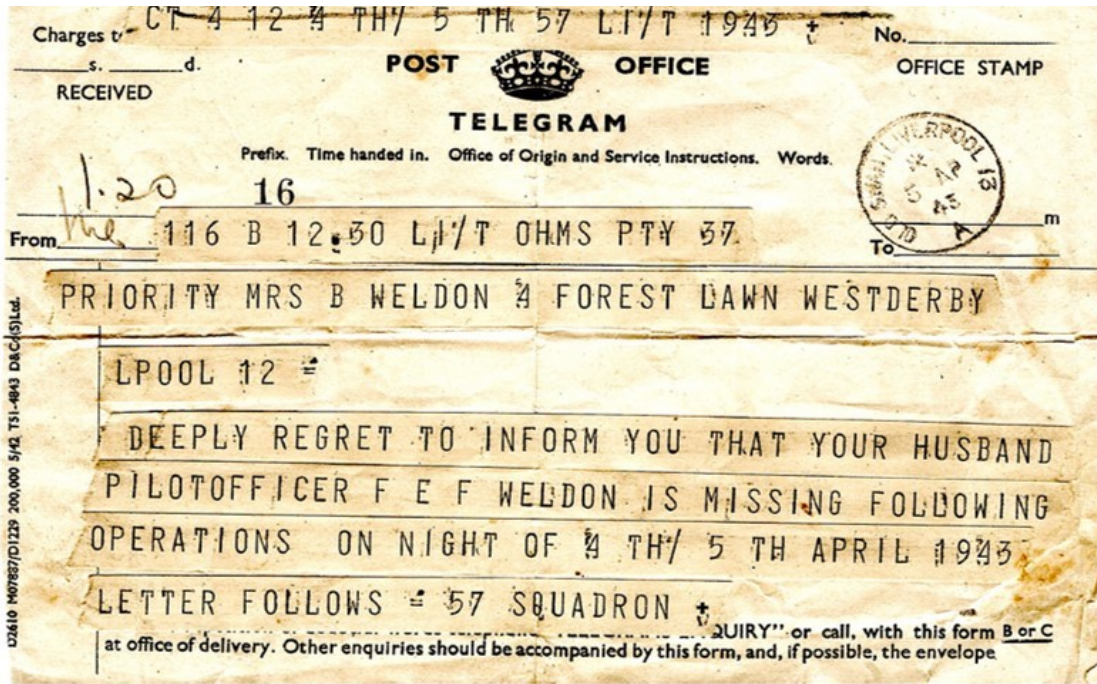
Air Sea Rescue flew 35 sorties in relays throughout the night and the approaching dawn in the search for X-Ray. No trace was ever found of the crew or the Lancaster W.4252. By April 1943, X-Ray had racked up 248 flying hours having been manufactured by A.V. Roe & Co. Ltd, in December 1942.

The absence of any bodies or wreckage, either found floating, or washed up on beaches in the following months suggests that the seven men went down together, holding each other, inside their Lancaster X-Ray.

### A Boy called Egg (continued)

The neighbours saw the Post Office messenger bicycle ride up to number 4 Forest Lawn in West Derby, Liverpool 8. Bertha came to the door. Trembling, she wiped her hands on her apron and signed for the envelope. She was already descending into shock. The telegram boy briskly mounted his bike and peddled quickly away.

In the days that followed, Bertha received the letter that had been lying in the desk of Faber's Squadron C/O ever since he started on Ops. Six other final letters with similar sentiments were also winging their dreaded way to the addresses of families throughout the country.



*Bertha received her telegram at lunchtime on Monday 5th April. She would be collecting Egg from school later that day.*

Faber's final letter to his wife - a *love letter* - has never been published before. It's reproduced here in full, transcribed from his original handwriting.

## A Boy called Egg (continued)

*My darling wife*

*Would the ill fated day ever arise that you should get this letter, remember to look upon the parting that it conveys in the same light that we have both agreed is the only sensible decision – that I have had my lease of life and unfortunately it was not destined to be the traditional three score years and ten.*

*I will always remain with you – spiritually, and watch over you both, and if the day comes that you feel you see me in some other personality, through some slight peculiarity which you have seen in me, remember that there is more in the spiritual self than the average human being yet realises. It may be that it provides a means to reliving on this earth the paradise that we have known for this brief five years of bliss that we have been married.*

*Fate may even have decreed that Ian was a boy, born when he was, for the particular reason of looking after you and taking my place dear, which he can do partly.*

*Can't you see now why he was not a girl dear, although we both so much wanted a daughter. Could a daughter's company replace my absence as well as Ian can dear?*

*I am sure that in time he will be as big a credit and pleasure to you as you have been to me love. By what little consolation it is, I can say that I have died not only happy but satisfied.*

*Throughout my life I have, as you know, worked hard at different jobs and never achieved the goal that I am sure that I deserved.*

*In each case it has just been denied me, although I am sure that I deserved it, having through sheer hard work got my brevet I can honestly say that I have never in my life felt that I have been so much doing a 100% job of work, which is taking my whole effort.*

*Or which after all is a job which only a small percentage of men could do, so I feel that my every effort is justified and being made the most possible use of, especially at a time of such grave emergency when I feel it an honour to live and die amongst those who are acknowledged to be the pick of the country.*

*By making the same grade as them I feel that I have achieved something higher than I ever hoped to do. Should I get posted as missing do not give up hope until you get definite news that I am dead. Should this occur I don't think you will have any difficulty in getting rid of the house for £900, but insist on the buyer paying the legal fees and conveyance, which, when the Leek and Moorland is settled, should give you a clear £450. £300 from the Police Assurance Co. £110 from the Police Benevolent fund and £30 from the funeral society. With this £890 you will have any money you have saved.*

*Unless you decide to stay in a town teaching it would be best of you to go and live in the country. Invest the money in two small houses, live in one and rent the other, the rent together with the government allowances would comfortably keep you both.*

*The investing in a small business is of course entirely a matter for you to decide. Egg will by that time be big enough to help you in any undertaking you may decide on.*

*Sell the bike for £8 - £10 and the tandem for £20 when fitted up with the parts off it that are in the hut.*

*John will buy any clothes of mine. These three things will collectively pay for any removal expenses incurred.*

*Egg's education will be attended to by the government who will provide it.*

*I must say that thank God with all my heart for giving me five years with the finest wife, mother and son that it possible to have, and the fact of marrying you and having Egg I regard as the two finest and most creditable things I ever did.*

*God bless and look after you both dearest. Remember I will always be with you and looking after you both somehow.*

*Ever your loving husband*

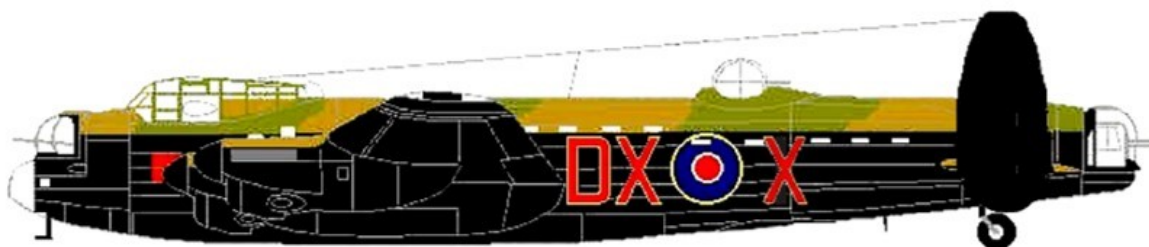
*Fabe XXXXXXXX*

## A Boy called Egg (continued)

The boy called Egg never recovered from what his mother told him at school 'going home time' on Monday 5th April 1943. The trauma haunted Ian for the rest of his life. His mother never did find anyone else like her Fabe, as he had hoped and prompted. Bertha remained a widow until her death, perhaps content with the philosophical motto of Faber's 57 Squadron - 'I change my body not my spirit'.

With no known grave for his father, Ian - the boy called Egg - imagined for the rest of the war that his father might be in a POW camp somewhere in Germany. Ian believed that one day, his father would come striding back up the cul-de-sac of Forest Lawn, his RAF kit bag slung over his shoulder - a kit bag so capacious that his father would sometimes carry Egg inside.

Egg no longer led his own squadron tearing down the playground runway at school. Ian could never talk about his father. He never married and never had children. Egg died in late 2013 with a heart that was probably broken beyond repair in 1943.



*Lancaster X-Ray W.4252 - 57 Squadron, must now lie on the bed of the North Sea and be the final resting place of Benjamin, Albert, Faber, George, Stanley and the two Alan's (Haddow & Wood).*

Egg experienced a profound loss in common with so many children with fathers in RAF Bomber Command. Statistically there must be many 80+ year-olds still out there who suffered the same trauma as young Ian Weldon.

This article is not only written for these children of loss, but also in the hope that some light might be cast on the friendships amongst the crew of X-Ray.

The lost crew of X-Ray were:

**Squadron Leader Stanley Norman Tuttell Wallage**, Pilot. Service Number **33350**, 57 Squadron Royal Air Force. Died 5th April 1943 aged 25.

Son of Flight Lieutenant S. H. S. Wallage, M.C., and L. E. Wallage and husband to Joan D. Wallage.

**Sergeant George Raymond Harbottle**, Flight Engineer. Service Number **538409**, 57 Squadron Royal Air Force. Died 5th April 1943 aged 25.

He was the son of George and Florence Harbottle and husband to Dora Winifred Harbottle, of Peterborough, Northamptonshire.

**Pilot Officer Faber Ernest Frederick Weldon**, Navigator. Service Number **130519**, 57 Squadron Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Died 5th April 1943, aged 31.

He was the son of Ernest A. and Maud Weldon and husband of Bertha Weldon, of Brittas Bridge, Co. Wicklow, Republic of Ireland. He was the father of the boy called Egg.

**Sergeant Alan Haddow**, Wireless Operator. Service Number **1365803**, 57 Squadron Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Died 5th April 1943, aged 22.

## A Boy called Egg (continued)

**Sergeant Benjamin Ernest Spicer**, Bomb Aimer. Service Number **1393578**, 57 Squadron Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Died 5th April 1943, aged 20.

He was the son of Ernest and Frances Isabella Spicer of Hornsey, Middlesex.

**Sergeant Albert Rowland Evans**, Mid-Upper Gunner. Service Number **1492250**, 57 Squadron Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Died 5th April 1943, aged 34.

He was son of James Rowland Evans and Mabel Evans, of Stockport and husband to Hilda Mary Evans, also of Stockport, Cheshire.

**Sergeant Alan Richard Wood**, Tail Gunner. Service Number **1230388**, 57 Squadron Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Died 5th April 1943, age unknown.

Alan was somebody's son.

We, the remaining family of Faber Weldon, would be most keen to find any living descendants of the crew of *X-Ray*, three of whom were married and who may have had children. The boy called Egg might not have been the only child who was bereaved and made so bereft by the loss of Lancaster *X-Ray*. Perhaps they too wonder what happened to their fathers? We could help them to fill in gaps in their family history or share and exchange information about what happened on the night of 4/5th April 1943. We would especially like to put faces to the names of the crew of *X-Ray*. There must be photographs out there of Benjamin, Albert, George, Stanley and the two Alan's (Haddow & Wood).

The earlier photograph of Alan Haddow is purely an educated and inspired guess from Air Commodore Wendy Rothery, as to the identity of Alan. It's difficult to make out if that is a 'WO' or an 'AG' notation on his brevet. Wendy points out that Lancaster Navigators and Wireless Operators worked side-by-side, were often friends and relied and helped each other. Faber and Alan look relaxed and happy in each other's company, for what might have been the last photograph taken of them alive.

On the other hand, this photograph *might* portray Sergeant Albert Evans, the Mid-Upper Gunner on *X-Ray* who lived in Stockport near Liverpool. He was married and at 34 years old, was the eldest of the crew. Was Albert a family man? Did he and Faber travel together to Liverpool and Stockport to visit their wives and children?

Our information about the rest of the crew of *X-Ray* is drawn from the Runnymede Memorial records and although we have their service numbers, we would have no right to access the records of these lost men. The Tail Gunner Alan Wood, for example, would appear to have no family and his age is not listed. Might he have been from Australia, New Zealand or Canada? This is a mystery we'd like to solve.

The 57 Squadron Association would be the place to which the families and descendants of the crew of *X-Ray* might gravitate. If you are out there, we'd like to find you.

If any members of the Association, or readers of this article have any information about the crew of *X-Ray*, or the operation of 4/5th April 1943, the family of Pilot Officer Faber Weldon would be glad to hear from you. Michael can be reached by email at [michaelrainsberry812fortress@gmail.com](mailto:michaelrainsberry812fortress@gmail.com)

Grateful acknowledgment to aviation artist Nicolas Trudgian ([www.nicolastrudgian.com](http://www.nicolastrudgian.com)) for the use of *Dangerous Moonlight*, and to Craig Smith of the Military Gallery ([www.militarygallery.com](http://www.militarygallery.com)) for the use of *Limping Home* by Robert Taylor.

Thanks are also due to the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association, to Air Commodore Wendy Rothery for her contribution to this story and especially for decoding the call sign for Lancaster W.4252, *X-Ray*, and to Tony Gunby for help during the editorial process.

Michael Rainsberry  
December 2020

## Last flight .....

Early this year, the Association was contacted by Al Blow in Cranbrook, British Columbia, Canada. Al shared with us some archive material relating to the service of his Great Uncle, Leslie Harvey Eyres who served with 57 Squadron on the Western Front in 1918, before being shot down and taken POW on 29 October 1918. Like the majority of archives from this period, there are gaps in information and the process of piecing together a more complete record continues. This is Les' story - so far - Last Flight...

On October 29, 1918 two men, from a world apart but united by 57 Squadron, climbed into the two cockpits of an Airco DH.4 on an allied airstrip in France, heading out for what they surely hoped would be another somewhat routine mission. It would turn out to be nothing of the kind.

One of those men was my Great Uncle, Leslie Harvey Eyres.

Earlier this year I was contacted by a fellow member of Ancestry.ca; a WW1 history buff, he offered me a collection of files he had put together regarding the husband of an aunt of mine. I gladly accepted, noting that my great uncle also was involved in the Great War, and giving his name. A day later Jim Busby surprised me with a wealth of information he had researched, including the name of the pilot of the observation plane with whom Les had been partnered, Captain Claud Harry Stokes. I was truly amazed.



Captain Claud Harry Stokes RFC

Shortly after, it occurred to me that perhaps Captain Stokes might show up in a family tree on Ancestry. A search quickly confirmed my hunch and I immediately reached out to the owner of the family tree. The next day I received a reply from South Africa informing me

that, while not a close relative, my inquiry would be forwarded to someone closely connected to Claud's family. A day later I was contacted by Della Marcal, in England, who graciously provided a treasure of some of the photos and letters included in this article.

Della writes:

*"Claud was born in Lewisham, South London 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1884. His father, Henry Stokes, was a barrister, and had seven children, four boys and three girls. Only three, I think, survived the war; one sister, Millicent, his brother, Geoffrey, and his sister,*



*Claud Stokes (centre) flanked by an unknown officer (left) and his father, Henry (right)*

*Cecil, the last two of whom went to live in Africa. My Gran, Philippa, also returned to Africa with my mum. Claud Harry Stokes was 6' 4" and Gran was 5' 4". He was known as Tich. Originally, he went to Africa, where he met my Gran in Pietermaritzburg; they then went to Southern Rhodesia, where Tich became a mine captain. When War broke out he immediately took his family back to England so that he could join up, which he did with the RFC, later to become RAF. They stayed with the parents in Lewisham, throughout the War."*

## Last flight ..... (continued)

Claud was the son of Henry Stokes and Harriet Sewell, and married Philippa Riddel Foster Smith at Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa on June 7, 1911. Their daughter and Della's mother, Margaret, was born December 1913 in Rhodesia.

From Wikipedia:

*"[Claud] was commissioned as a second lieutenant (on probation) in the Royal Flying Corps on 3 June 1916. He was granted his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate and appointed a flying officer on 24 August, and was confirmed in his rank on 19 September. Stokes was posted to No. 41 Squadron RFC on 15 October 1916, but was injured after only five days in action and returned to England. After his recovery he served as an instructor, being appointed a Wing Instructor in Gunnery, graded as a flight commander with the acting rank of captain on 3 February 1917. He was appointed an Instructor in Gunnery, graded as an Equipment Officer 1st Class, on 5 June.*

*Stokes was promoted to lieutenant on 3 December 1917, and on 2 January 1918 was appointed a flight commander with the acting rank of captain to serve in No. 57 Squadron RFC. He was credited with five victories while flying an Airco DH.4 light bomber; firstly a Pfalz D.III on 19 June 1918, and then a Fokker D.VII on 23 June, two more on 16 September, and finally another D.VII on 21 September 1918."*

Claud had earned himself the title of "Ace" with five confirmed downed aircraft.



57 Squadron in France. Claud Stokes is sitting 5th from left on the front row

Born August 3, 1892 in MacGregor, Manitoba, Harvey Donald Leslie Eyres was the last child of Charles Eyres and Emily Turner. Charles, a Master Tailor, was born in June 23, 1835 at Dilton Marsh, Westbury, Wiltshire. He had three children by his first wife, Charlotte Mattock (d. 1864), six children by his second wife, Louisa Chard (d. 1881), and five more by Emily Turner (d.1894).

Shortly after the birth of my grandmother, Winnifred, at Westbury Leigh in 1883, Charles and all but a son (d.1864) and two daughters from his first marriage, immigrated to Scarborough, York County, Ontario, and eventually settled in MacGregor, Manitoba, where he passed away April 6, 1906. Despite Les' efforts to track down his two sisters while he was stationed in England, he never did meet Emma and Harriet.



Les Eyres

Les enlisted Dec 11, 1914 at Winnipeg, Manitoba. On April 22, 1916 he sailed with the 4<sup>th</sup> RD Lord Strathcona Horse (Royal Canadians) aboard the SS Metagama from St. John, New Brunswick to Liverpool, following which he was posted to Shorncliffe near Cheriton, Kent.

In a letter home dated August 3, 1916 Les wrote:

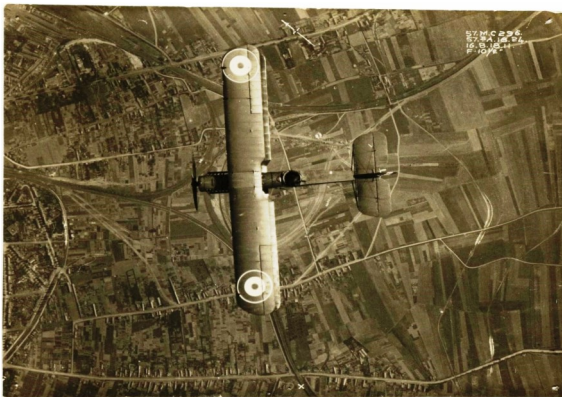
*"We are soldiering in earnest this week. In the mornings we ride out into the country and have Regimental and Squadron drill. We rush over hills and valleys, jumping over ditches, fences, etc. Sometimes a couple of airplanes come along and float around in the air just over our heads."*

### Last flight ..... (continued)

October 4, 1916 Les was posted to the Lord Strathcona's Horse, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, 2nd Indian Cavalry Division and proceeded to Le Mesge, France. On November 1, 1916 the 2nd Indian Cavalry Division was redesignated as the 5th British Cavalry Division. Les saw action at Guyencourt, France on March 27, 1917. After a brief illness he re-joined the Lord Strathcona's Horse at Verguies on July 12, 1917 and was promoted to Lance Corporal August 27.

March 2, 1918 Les transferred to England for aircrew training with the RAF, posted to Canadian Corps Railhead Depot, Shorncliffe, and reporting to RAF Farnborough. On 2 September, Les was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant (Observer) with the RAF, and posted to 57 Squadron, by then based at Le Quesnoy in France.

This period was to be known by the RAF as Black September. With the push on the French/American Front at St Mihiel on 12 September and then along the Meuse-Argonne Front from the 26th, once more



A 57 Sqn Airco DH.4 photographed by another 57 Sqn DH.4

masses of men and aircraft were put into the air.

A formidable German fighter force was able to inflict a significant toll on British, French and American aircraft, making this the worst month for the Allied flyers during the whole of World War I.

On 24 September, now based at Vert Galant near

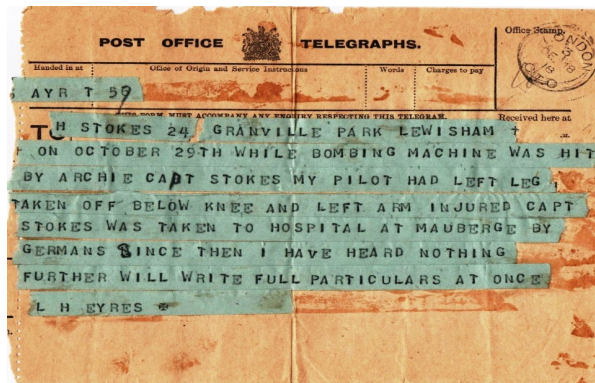


57 Sqn's base at Vert Galant Airfield, north of Amien

Amiens, 2nd Lieutenant F. deM Hyde and 2nd Lieutenant Eyres were credited with the downing of a Fokker DV11 during a morning photo/bombing operation over Beauvais aerodrome.

Three days later, the squadron was tasked to bomb German infantry positions in the Rumilly sector and the German Headquarters north of Cambrai. Taking off in the late afternoon, in DH4 serial number A8086 Hyde and Eyres suffered serious gun shot damage but managed to return to base.

Shortly thereafter Les replaced Lieutenant Robert D. Bovill as an observer with Captain Claud Stokes. On a bombing/observation mission October 29, 1918, behind enemy lines over Maubeuge, anti-aircraft fire (or "Archie" as it was called) struck their DH.4 serial number D8398. Despite damage to the plane and a horrific life threatening wound, Captain Claud Stokes was able to land the plane safely - behind enemy lines. The crew were reported as Missing in Action, and it was to be several weeks before further details emerged.



Telegram from Les Eyres to Claude's father

In a telegram to Claud's father, Henry Stokes, Les provided brief details of the action and its consequences.

Desperate for further news of Claud, it was to be December before the Stokes' family heard more, when Claud's wife received a letter dated 5 December 1918 from Captain Hawkins on 57 Squadron telling her that:

*"When the machine was going down the observer was seen waving his hand to the other machines, which makes us hopeful that all is well. He was a very good observer. I do hope you will get good news soon."*

Meanwhile Les had been taken POW, but nothing was heard of him until early December when the Red Cross in Geneva reported him as unwounded and a POW in Karlsruhe, Germany.



## Last flight ..... (continued)

While Les was repatriated to England on December 8, it was not to be for Captain Claud Harry Stokes. He died of his injuries on 7 November 1918...just four days before the armistice was signed. He was interred at Erquelinnes, Hainaut, Belgium and, on 1 January 1919, he was posthumously award the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Subsequently, in a letter to Henry Stokes dated December 12, 1918, Les wrote:

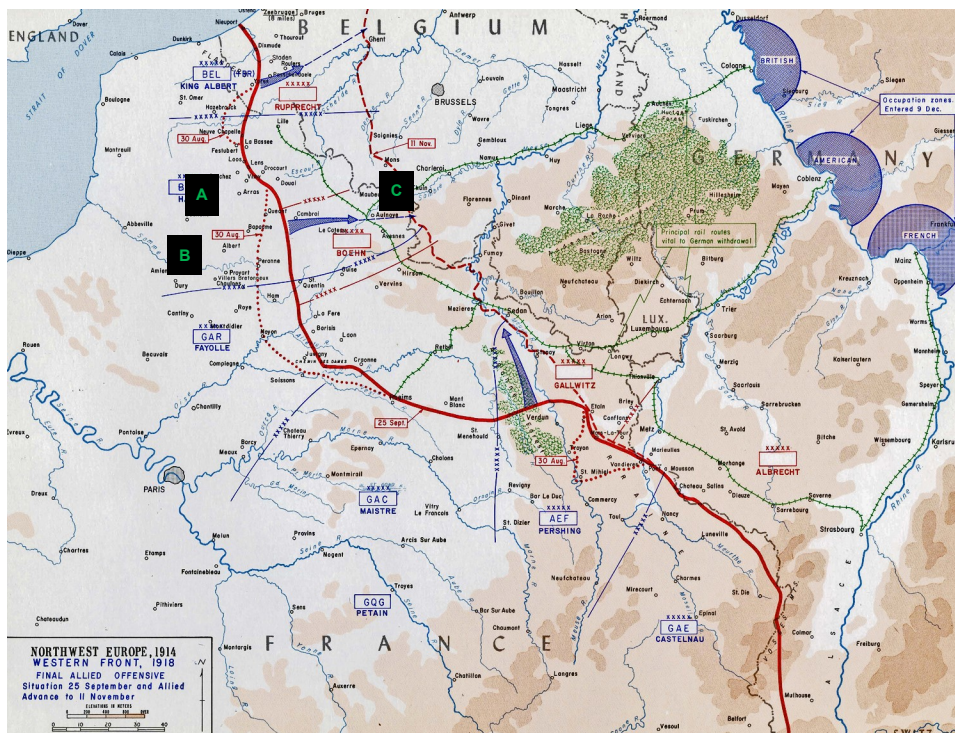
*"We were shot down on Oct. 29<sup>th</sup> by 'Archie'. The shell passed through the pilot's cockpit taking your son's left leg off just below the knee, and also injuring his left arm at the elbow. The engine was also damaged, so were forced to come down on enemy side of the line. The landing was fairly good, but when I climbed over to your son he was unconscious, but regained consciousness when we were taking him out of the machine. The Germans did their best to make him as comfortable as possible until a motor car was fetched, when they took him away.*

*I got into the car and wanted to go also, but they would not let me. A German that could speak English told me that he would be taken to hospital at Mauberge (town almost straight east of Cambrai).*

*Capt. Stokes was simply wonderful and in spite of the dreadful pain he must have felt he talked cheerfully to me and joked. I feel sure he would be strong enough to pull through if cared for properly at the hospital."*



The Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) was first established by King George V on 3 June 1918 and is awarded for an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty while flying in active operations against the enemy, to personnel of the Royal Air Force and other services.



The Western Front, September 1918. The Squadron moved base frequently to maximise its endurance over the battlefield while safeguarding the base from enemy attack.

A - Le Quesnoy, B - Vert Galant, C - Mauberge (Stokes and Eyres crash)

## Last flight ..... (continued)

Les Eyres, with no disability arising from service, was discharged by the Medical Board of London on 31 December, and departed on 15 January 1919 from Liverpool aboard the SS Scotian to St. John, New Brunswick.

One hundred and two years later, it is hard for me to imagine a more remarkable and determined act of courage as did Captain Stokes perform in landing his aircraft on that day, ultimately saving the life of our Uncle Les Eyres. It has been said that, given a second chance at life, one should make the very best of it.

On July 26, 1922 Les married Ann Adelia (Ted) Sanford at Virden, Manitoba, and raised two daughters; Jean (1923 – 2012) and Roberta Joy, who turned 94 this year. He and Aunt Ted moved to Chilliwack, British Columbia, where Les served as an alderman on city council for thirteen years. Les was first elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Chilliwack in British Columbia's provincial government in 1937, and won re-election in 1941, 1945, and 1949, ultimately to be defeated in 1952.

Re-enlisting in WW2, he served as a recruiting officer in Vancouver, British Columbia, for three years. In 1942, Les was to have a an amazing reunion with Lieutenant Robert Bovill who he had replaced as Claud Stokes' observer for the ill-fated sortie in October 1918.



*Les Eyres (right) pictured talking with Sergeant Robert Bovill in 1942. Photo from The Province dated 9 July 1942.*

I remember Uncle Les and Aunt Ted well from my visits as a youngster along with my parents to their retirement cottage on Cultus Lake near Chilliwack back in the '60s; cheerful, gracious, considerate, thoughtful intellect, are words that immediately come to mind.

Uncle Les passed away February 26, 1983 in Victoria, British Columbia, as did Aunt Ted on April 7, 1993 in Chilliwack.

Al Blow  
December 2020

## The Story of DX-P continues

57 Squadron Lancaster W4234 *DX-P* was shot down by a German night fighter on 21 December 1942, over East Flanders, Belgium, while outbound from RAF Scampton to raid Munich.

The operation involved 137 aircraft; 119 Lancasters, 9 Stirlings and 9 Wellingtons. Twelve aircraft were lost, 8 of them Lancasters, including *DX-P*. One hundred and ten of the aircraft that night claimed to have bombed Munich and started fires, but perhaps most tragically photographs showed that most of the bombs fell in open country, possibly attracted by a decoy site.

The crew of *DX-P* were:

Flying Officer	Ronald Bowles RAF	Pilot
Flying Officer	Alexander Eric Mulholland RAF	Navigator
Sergeant	Maurice Charles Pearman RAF	Bomb Aimer
Sergeant	Arthur Leslie Abraham RAF	Wireless Operator
Sergeant	John Arthur Drain RAF	Mid Upper Gunner
Sergeant	Cecil Raymond Stubbs RAAF	Flight Engineer
Sergeant	Roden Pickford RNZAF	Rear Gunner



*The Crew of DX-P, 57 Squadron 1942. (Sergeant John Drain is believed to have taken the photo)*

Six of the seven crew of *DX-P* were killed, but Sgt Roden Pickford RNZAF, managed to bale out and was taken POW in Stalag Luft III. The crew are buried in the nearby Geraardsbergen Communal Cemetery. Roden survived his time as POW and subsequently died in his native New Zealand in 1986.

The loss of the crew of *DX-P* is marked by a memorial near the crash site. David Houghton was a member of the 57 Squadron party led by Wg Cdr 'Kiwi' O'Meehan at the ceremony 20 years ago to inaugurate the memorial and 8 years ago, I represented the Association at a ceremony to remember the crew.

Throughout the past 20 years, a group of enthusiastic and dedicated Belgians, led by Dirk de Quick, have continued to research the background to the crash, to work on identifying various items of wreckage from the site, and to support frequent visits made by relatives and friends of the crew.

Each Remembrance Sunday, the crew are remembered in Belgium and every year, irrespective of the weather, the local community of Lierde congregate at the Memorial on the nearest Sunday night to 21 December, at the precise time of the crash, to hold a candlelit vigil.

## The Story of DX-P continues (Continued)



*Snow surrounds the Memorial to DX-P, Lierde, Belgium*

On the Association website, under the *News* tab, you will find a couple of articles about the crash, the crew and the on-going research by our Belgian friends. Just a few weeks ago, a new breakthrough occurred when they were able to identify an especially badly-damaged item of equipment recovered from the DX-P crash site.



*The badly-damaged instrument wreckage from DX-P*

Examination of photos by electronics experts has determined that the damaged instrument is a Gee Mk1, Indicator Type 60.



*Gee Mk1, Indicator Type 60*

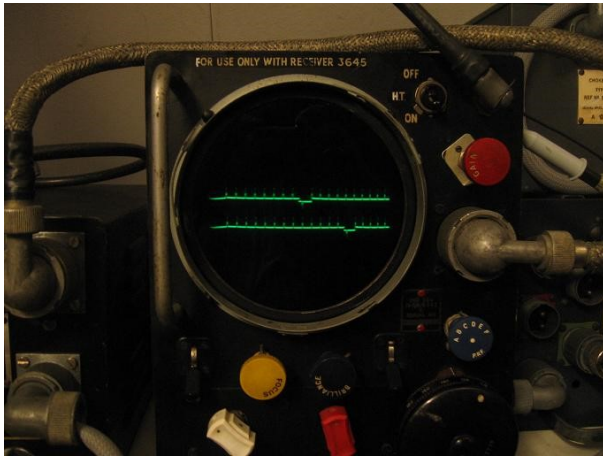
Gee was a radio navigation system, originally devised as a short-range blind landing system, which entered into service with Bomber Command in 1942. It was found to have a far better range than expected, and was developed into a long-range, general navigation system. For large, fixed targets, such as the cities that were attacked at night, Gee eventually offered enough accuracy to be used as an aiming reference without the need to use a bombsight or other external references.

By interpreting the signals received from ground radio stations, the navigator was able to plot the aircraft's position on a special chart with 'Gee lanes' marked.



*The Reims GEE Chain chart - 1948*

## The Story of DX-P continues (Continued)



*A Gee oscilloscope indicator*

The first operational mission using Gee took place on the night of 8/9 March 1942, when a force of about 200 aircraft attacked Essen. In total, 33% of the aircraft reached the target area, an enormous advance over earlier results. Against Cologne on 13/14 March, the leading crews successfully illuminated the target with flares and incendiaries and the bombing was generally accurate.

Bomber Command calculated that this attack was five times more effective than the earlier raid on the city.

Gee proved itself to be easy to use and more than accurate enough for its tasks. A total of 60,000 Gee sets were manufactured during World War II and used by the RAF, Royal Navy and US Air Force.

Our friends in Belgium plan to have a replica of the Gee set made for display alongside the many other artefacts that have been recovered from DX-P. Following a recent decision to establish a new museum in Lierde, it is anticipated that the displays and story of DX-P will at last find a permanent home. Visitors to the area will hear about the crash and crew from local tourist guides, and while on local cycle routes which now also include a visit to the DX-P memorial.

It seems clear that the crew of DX-P will not be forgotten, and plans are afoot for a ceremony in 2022 in Belgium marking the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crash.

Tony Gunby  
December 2020

## A Wartime Log - WO George Henry Lloyd - Kriege



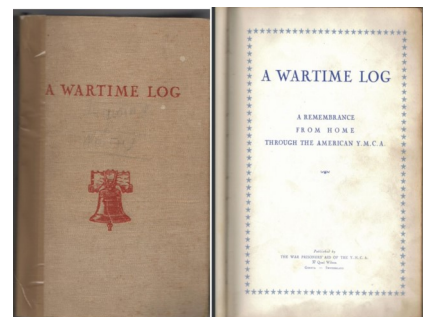
*George Lloyd (front) - 57 Sqn*

Earlier this year, the Association's Badger Brooks, was gifted a collection of aviation books by the widow of a former friend - Group Captain Tom Rogerson, formerly OC RAF Hospital Ely. Amongst the collection was 'A Wartime Log' owned by WO George Henry Lloyd. Here, Badger explains what is known about George and the log.

As far as I know, there was no direct connection between George and my old friend Tom. Tom's widow, Madeline, knew of none. It's not an Aircrew Flying Log but more a diary, of his day-to-day life behind the wire as a Kriege.

It is not clear when George acquired his wartime log but it demonstrates his ability as a cartoonist, artist, avid bridge player, collector of cigarette packets, librarian (with a complete list of available books), poet and consummate humourist. It also contains many drawings, cartoons, stories, lists, family photographs and other artefacts.

The log in question has the 'Liberty Bell' on the front cover and was published by the American YMCA, 37 Quai Wilson, Geneva, Switzerland. Its inner cover notes the owner as WO G H Lloyd, Service number 932944 and POW number 24783. These reference points, and the fact that George had been serving on 57 Sqn when he was taken POW, has led me to begin unearthing George's story. There is still a long way to go but this is what we know so far.



*A Wartime Log - provided to POWs by the American YMCA*

## A Wartime Log - WO George Henry Lloyd - Kriege (continued)

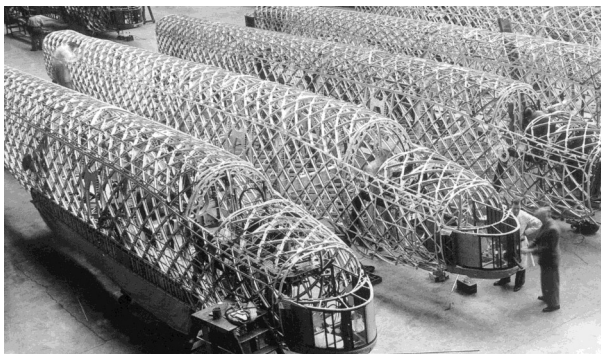
George Lloyd was born on 2 June 1920 in Deptford, London and in August 1941, George married Gladys Florence Irene Green (born 22 November 1921) at St Mary's Church, Henley on Thames – a romance that probably started while George was training on No 12 Operational Training Unit based at RAF Benson, Oxfordshire. They had a daughter named Ann in 1942.



*George and Gladys marry, August 1941*

George first gets a mention in the 57 Sqn records with his arrival on 4 November 1941 as a "1<sup>st</sup> W/T" [wireless operator]. At this time, the Sqn was based at RAF Feltwell near Thetford, flying the Vickers Wellington BMk1c in the night bomber role.

The Wellington was cutting edge technology of its day, with its geodesic airframe structure developed by Vickers' chief structures designer, Barnes Wallis. Over 10,700 Wellington's were built; more than any other British-built bomber and the only British bomber to be produced throughout WWII.



*Wellington BMk1s under construction at Brooklands*

Life on 57 Sqn must have been brutal in November 1941; aircraft and crew losses were significant as Bomber Command took the offensive to Germany. The ORB records a constant inward flow of new crews from training and experience levels must have

been under constant threat. There was some respite in January and February 1942 as the Sqn re-equipped with the heavier, more powerful, and better-armed, Wellington MkIII, but the tempo of operations picked up once more from March onwards.



*A Vickers Wellington BMkIII, powered by Bristol Hercules engines and with a four-gun tail turret*

Curiously, George Lloyd doesn't seem to have flown much in his first 5 months on the Sqn – he is listed just twice in the ORB - once in November and once in December 1941, with a different crew on each occasion. His third, and final, 'op' was to come on the night of 1/2 April 1942.

Tasked to bomb Hanau, around 25 km east of Frankfurt, George is listed as 2<sup>nd</sup> W/T on Wellington MkIII X3748 'D' which took off second in a stream of 11 aircraft from 57 Sqn that night; 5 were not to return, 2 were forced to jettisoned their bombs before the target, and just 4 attacked the target as planned.

A total of 49 aircraft took part in the raid, 36 Wellington's and 14 Hampdens. The Hampdens attacked first, from around 750 feet, and the Wellington's from 57, 75 and 214 Squadrons bombed around an hour later. Under a full moon, the attackers were vulnerable to German night fighters that were to claim a total of 12 aircraft from the bombing force that night.

This was the first 'op' flown by this crew, although some of them had flown with each other on various other crews since arriving (all in late 1941) on the Sqn:

Flt Sgt	R E Knoblock	Pilot	RNZAF
Flt Sgt	H W Lundy	2 <sup>nd</sup> Pilot	RCAF
Sgt	E G Ratcliffe	Observer	
Sgt	R A Flood	1 <sup>st</sup> W/T	
Sgt	G H Lloyd	2 <sup>nd</sup> W/T	
Sgt	R O Thomas	Air Gunner	

## A Wartime Log - WO George Henry Lloyd - Kriege (continued)

Another, as yet unanswered, curiosity is that the Observer, Sgt Ted Ratcliffe, had arrived on the Sqn in November listed as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot but only appears as Observer in the ORB. Similarly, Sgt Flood was listed as an Observer on arrival but only as a W/T [wireless operator] in the ORB.

The National Archives indicate that X3748 crashed at Pfaffen-Schwabheim, south west of Frankfurt. The exact circumstances of the aircraft crash remain unknown - did the aircraft crash before its reached the target on its way home? However, both pilots, Flt Sgt's Knoblock and Lundy were killed, while the remainder of the crew bailed out and were taken POW.

Those aircraft reaching the target - the marshalling yards at Hanau (an important logistics hub on the Main-Spessart Railway) - did so after about 3 hours flying and dropped their nine 500lb bombs from heights of between 4,500 and 10,000 feet. The return flights lasted for anything between 3.5 and 6 hours - the variation probably due to the route flown, en-route enemy attack, and/or aircraft problems. One aircraft sustained flak damage and landed at RAF Manston on its return.

One of the many artefacts in George's War Log records his movement between POW camps. First, to Dulag Luft at Oberursel, near Frankfurt, a transit camp; next to Stalag Luft VIII B near Lamsdorf; and then, in July 1943, to Stalag Luft III at Sagan.



One of George's cartoons which appears to depict his own departure from X3748



POW huts at Stalag Luft III

south-east of Berlin. The site was selected because its sandy soil made it difficult for POWs to escape by tunnelling. Even so, following the first escape in October 1943 (3 escapees evading recapture and making it back to Britain), it was subsequently to become famous for the second breakout - the so-called Great Escape - of March 1944.

It is possible that the Wartime Log was given to POWs at Stalag Luft III by Swedish lawyer Henry Söderberg who was the representative of the International YMCA for the region of Germany in which Stalag Luft III was located, and who made frequent visits to report on the welfare of prisoners.



Henry Söderberg

While the conditions in POW camps varied enormously, all must have been bleak places, with the constant threat of hunger, cold and punishment. Perhaps not surprisingly, George Lloyd's jottings about life as a Kriege focused more on humorous episodes and thoughts of returning home. [POWs called themselves *Krieges* which was short for *Kriegesgefangenen*, the German word for prisoner of war. Ed].

Stalag Luft III was a Luftwaffe-run POW camp, established March 1942 in Lower Silesia near the town of Sagan (now Żagań, Poland), 100 miles

## A Wartime Log - WO George Henry Lloyd - Kriege (continued)



*Appel! A German guard conducts a roll-call*

George eventually documented all the names and addresses of the inmates of Hut 1812. He recounts the forced and sudden retreat from the camp (interrupting a game of bridge!) caused by the approach of Soviet Forces and includes a detailed map of the long winter march west.

Some uncertainty emerges about George's location in the coming months of his captivity. In papers contained within his log, he appears to have moved from Sagan to Stalag Luft IV near Gross Tychow in January 1944, but online records indicate that this camp did not open until May 1944.

Rather, another of George's cartoons, and his log, suggest that George may have been one of the 10,000 POWs that were forced on the Long March from Sagan when it was evacuated ahead of advancing Soviet troops on 27 January 1945.



*The Mess - could that be George playing cards?*



*A POW preparing to leave Stalag Luft III (Sagan)*

George's log also includes many 'discussions' that took place on many topics (real, or imaginary) - they mainly concerned food!

In one entry, George invites fellow Hut 1812 prisoners to detail their 'perfect day'! [Fg Off] Basil Kennedy's [57 Sqn Lancaster Flight Engineer taken POW on 29 July 1943] perfect day, included:

- 9am call with glass of orange juice and 2 petit beurre biscuits and The Times.
- 11pm Game of Chance - Poker small stakes
- 12 mid Dance at hotel with best band
- 2am Bacon & eggs & lager
- 3am Bed for 12 hours."

An entry for Christmas 1944 reads:

"... sixteen bods to dinner [all listed] and the American Red X did us proud, 22 items including 60 fags..."

Accounts of the Long March talk of marching in freezing temperatures and 6" of snow, with 2,000 prisoners assigned to clear the road ahead of the main group. And that, after a 34 mile march, the POWs arrived in Bad Muskau where they rested for 30 hours, before marching the remaining 16 miles to Spremberg - around 75 miles from Luckenwalde.

Was George among the POWs that arrived at Luckenwalde (Stalag Luft IIIA) on around 4 February? A further cartoon depicting 'Cooking at Luckenwalde' and dated April 1945, seems to support this idea, but we cannot be certain.

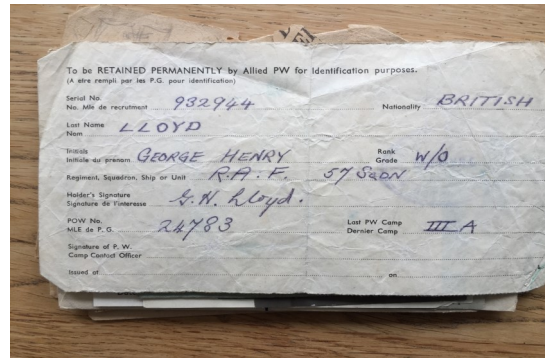


## A Wartime Log - WO George Henry Lloyd - Kriege (continued)



'Cooking at Luckenwalde' - April 1945

The POW identity paper pictured below indicates that George had last been at Luckenwalde (Camp IIIA), but frustratingly the paper does not have a place of issue or a date. Perhaps it had been issued as he left Luckenwalde with the destination unknown at that time.



George's POW identity paper

On 9 April, 3000 POWs left Luckenwalde for Tarmstedt and by 15 April, they had reached the banks of the River Elbe at Cranz near Hamburg. The march eventually ended near the port of Lubeck on 1 May 1945 but, as yet, we do not know if George was among the POW column.

The next clue to George's whereabouts comes with a set of Camp orders for No 1 Canadian Transit Camp, which handled the repatriation of ex-POWs by air to the UK. This camp was somewhere in The Netherlands; the exact location unknown at this point.

The final checkpoint on George's travels in this period, comes with a RAF route chit issued at RAF Sunninghall Park, near Ascot on 3 September 1945, with a final destination of RAF Brindley Heath - a Technical Training School on Cannock Chase.



George Lloyd's possible movements as a POW across Germany and Poland: 2 April 1942 - September 1945

## A Wartime Log - WO George Henry Lloyd - Kriege (continued)

So, what became of George and the other crew members of X3748?

After some dead ends, we discovered that the correct spelling of the aircraft captain's name is Knobloch and not Knoblock as stated in the ORB. This led us to find that Reginald is buried, alongside 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot Flt Sgt Lundy RCAF, in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery - the largest Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery in Germany; final resting place for over 7,500 other Allied dead (mostly air force and paratroopers).



Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Germany

The 2nd Pilot, Harvey Lundy, aged 22, came from St Catharine's, Ontario, Canada. Harvey's parents, were Frank Orland Lundy (1882 - 1952) and Jennet Lundy (nee Marshall) (1882-1956), and that Harvey had an elder sister, Margaret Mable Lundy (King) who died in 1956 - the same year as their mother.

**Hearts Are Sore and Heavy, But Parents of Flier Killed Express Pride in His Courage**

Though their "hearts are sore and heavy," the family of Flight Sergeant Harvey Lundy of St. Catharines expressed the feelings today of many hundreds of Canadian mothers and fathers when they said: "We are proud he had the courage he had and, hard as it is, we would rather he is gone than to have to be ashamed of his lack of courage."

Sergeant Lundy has just been reported killed during a raid over Germany April 2. He had previously been posted missing.

"It is the last thing we can do now for him," Mrs. Lundy wrote in *The Globe and Mail* with a request that her son's picture be published. "There seems such a callous indifference to the heartache and suffering due to war, and you see streets filled with indifferent young men who ought to be in uniform, but who prefer to leave it to George, that it makes one wonder what sort of calibre they will leave in the coming generation."

"The best and finest went willingly and few, I fear, will live to come home, and the poor-spirited, separate left here will father—what?"

"We gave our only son willingly, and our hearts are sore and heavy; but we are proud he had the courage he had."

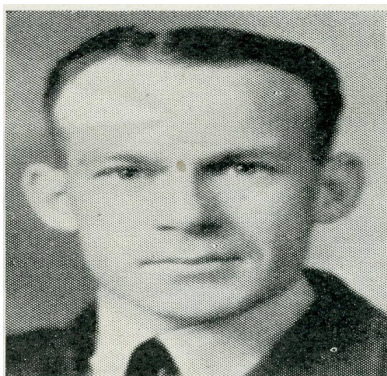
"... We are and have always been admirers and subscribers of *The Globe*. My early memories of my home life were of the Bible and *The Globe*, beside my father's chair. We were brought up on the teachings in both and my son and daughter have been, to a certain extent, also, though I admit I haven't done as well as my father before me."

Flight Sergeant Lundy entered the R.C.A.F. Manning Depot in Toronto on Labor Day, 1940. He trained at the Eglington school, at London, and at Camp Borden, where he received his wings June 6. He went overseas last August and was attached to a Royal Air Force bomber squadron, flying a Wellington on several raids over enemy territory. The latest report of his death was relayed to the Air Council by the International Red Cross.

Flight Sergeant Lundy.

The loss of Harvey Lundy is reported in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, Canada

Reginald Knobloch, aged 29, came from the Hawke's Bay area in New Zealand. His brother, Douglas was also tragically killed while piloting a Lancaster of 35 Sqn in August 1944. Their younger brother, Jack, served in the Pacific theatre of operations and survived the War, and was awarded the DFC in July 1945.



Flight-Sergeant R. E. Knobloch, of Waipukurau, missing on operations.

The loss of Reginald Knobloch is reported in the *New Zealand press*

By amazing coincidence Tony Gunby has a good friend, an ex-Canadian Army officer, now living in St Catharine's who is attempting to track down any relatives of Harvey Lundy - the name still prominent in the area.

All that we know about George Lloyd post-War is that he died in May 2001 in Cambridge; his wife, Gladys having passed away in Fenland in November 1998. The post-POW lives of Sergeants Ratcliffe, Flood and Thomas also remain a mystery.

So, this is only the first episode of our research, and it provides only a small part of the story of George and his crew mates. We hope to be able to fill in the gaps in the months ahead.

We would be very pleased make contact with relatives of the crew members, and especially with George's family so that we can pass his Wartime Log to them.

If there is anyone out there who can help with our search, do please get in touch with me or Tony.

Badger Brooks & Tony Gunby  
December 2020

In the past few weeks, we have established contact with one of Jack's sons - Reginald's nephew.

## ED761 DX-Z 29/30 March 1943 - Berlin

On the evening of March 29, 1943, fourteen Avro Lancaster's of 57 Squadron lifted off from Scampton to join 148 bombers bound for Berlin. A further 165 Bomber Command aircraft were tasked with bombing German targets in Bochum and Dortmund, and with laying mines in the Frisian Islands off the coast of The Netherlands.

One of 57's own, Lancaster ED761 (DX-Z), would not return home. Through the determined efforts of my late friend, Chris van der Linden, the story of her lost crew did not end in the farm field where ED761 crashed in The Netherlands, but would be revived and remembered for future generations via a special memorial that he championed.

ED761's pilot that night was 25-year-old Pilot Officer Alfred E Fisher. With one exception, he had his usual crew aboard with him for this, their 18<sup>th</sup> op :

Sgt Roy H G Taylor Bomb Aimer 23 yrs  
 Sgt Harry Richardson Navigator 22 yrs  
 Sgt Jack Westerdale WOp/Air Gunner 28 yrs  
 Sgt Donald J Simmons Mid-Upper Gunner 21 yrs  
 Sgt Aleck G Deane Rear Gunner 36 yrs

However, Fisher's regular Flight Engineer, Sgt W Griffiths, did not make this trip for unknown reasons. Taking Griffiths's place for this, his first op, was a 21-year-old Scotsman, Sgt Frank A Bandeen.

Fisher took off from Scampton at 21:49 hrs. and headed for the rendezvous point where they would join the others in formation for the flight to Berlin. The flying conditions had been forecast to be difficult for this op, and indeed, based on reports received from returning aircraft, the weather conditions over the North Sea were appalling. Spring thunderstorms and very severe icing ultimately sent 142 bombers back to their bases (two from 57 Sqn). Laden with their heavy bomb loads, many of the remaining bombers found it impossible to climb through the overcast.

The icing conditions continued en-route, but the forecasted winds proved to be inaccurate and this had a profound affect on the overall success of the mission. Route-marker flares that were supposed to



*Night falls as Bomber Squadrons  
 ready for their next Op*

be dropped over the datum point of Müggelsee (the largest of several lakes south-east of Berlin) fell too far south, and the winds caused the main force of aircraft to either arrive late or bomb well short of the markers. Some aircraft didn't even bother attempting to go to the datum point for their briefed run into the target. The result saw most bombs falling in open country 6 miles south-east of Berlin.

The long trip home now faced them. Over Holland, the enemy fighters and flak were waiting to pounce. At 03:30 hours, a Messerschmitt Bf110 night fighter took off from its airbase at Deelen near Arnhem and was guided towards the returning ED761 which was flying south of Amsterdam. The bomber was hit and started to catch fire as it began to lose altitude.

Precise details of what happened next are elusive. Perhaps the pilot and members of his crew were mortally wounded. Perhaps the aircraft controls were shot away, or parts of the aircraft disintegrated, or both.

In any event, the killing blow had been swift as none of the crew was able to bail out as ED761 fell burning from the sky at 04:11hrs.

Dad's neighbour, Jan Treur, was in his barn feeding cows when he heard the Lancaster scream overhead, the explode and slam into the soft damp



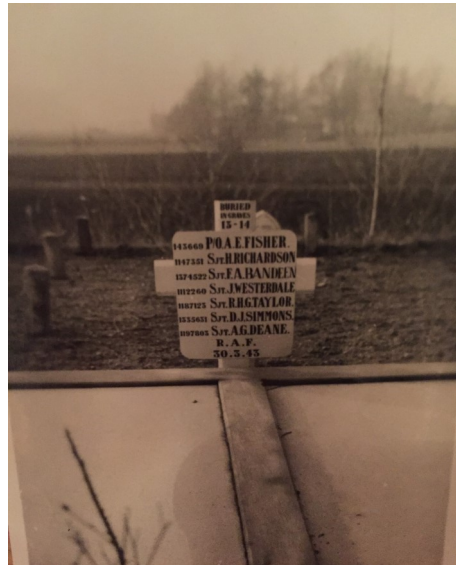
*The crew of ED761 DX-Z: (L-R) Plt Off Alfred Fisher, Sgt Frank Bandeen, Sgt Harry Richardson, Sgt Roy Taylor, Sgt Jack Westerdale, Sgt Aleck Deane, Sgt Donald Simmons*

## ED761 DX-Z 29/30 March 1943 - Berlin (continued)

earth of a field behind the barn, approximately six hours and twenty-two minutes after it had lifted off from Scampton. It was one of 39 aircraft of the total bomber force that never returned home from this op.

As dawn broke, the scene that greeted the farmers tasked with recovery efforts was horrific. There was little left of ED761 that was recognizable. The grim task of retrieving the remains of the all-UK-born crew began. Ted, my later father and aged 19 at the time, together with his older brother, Cor, recalled that it was utterly disheartening to pick through the wreckage. They and some neighbours helped gather what they could find of the crew's remains and placed them into two wooden coffins.

The coffins were then placed in the back of a three-wheeled horse-drawn cart, and Dad drove the cart to the Waverveen church for burial, escorted by several German soldiers marching behind.



*The grave at Waverveen was later 'upgraded' once the identities of the crew were known*



*The first grave in Waverveen, 1943; the inscription reads, "Unknown Aviators RAF Killed 30 March 1943"*

Following the funeral ceremony, the crew were buried in the church cemetery, accompanied by a gun salute from the German soldiers.

Their identities not known until after the War, these seven young men joined 191 other airmen that had died on that miserable night.



*The people of Waverveen pay their respects to the crew of DX-Z during the Remembrance Service, 4 May 1946*

After the war, the crew of ED761 was moved to the Canadian War Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom, The Netherlands.

The overall story of ED761 came to me in fits and starts, beginning in early 2004 via an email from a member of the Dutch Study Group Air War 1939-1945. Then, in summer 2012, I received a letter in the post from an amateur historian in The Netherlands, Chris van der Linden. That was the start of our 7-year friendship and researching journey to find out more about ED761 and her crew.

## ED761 DX-Z 29/30 March 1943 - Berlin (continued)

Chris was the real driver, and he was relentless in his research, ultimately setting the lofty goal of finding at least one living family contact for each member of the crew. He succeeded by finding contacts for five of the crew before sadly dying of cancer in Aug 2019 at the far-too-young age of 46 years. Chris's legacy of remembrance for ED761's crew includes a permanent roadside memorial erected in November 2018 near the crash site.



Chris van der Linden (L) and Bob Van Wyk (R) and stand alongside the memorial to DX-Z, near the site of the crash, Waverveen, The Netherlands

I was inspired by a friend to commission a photo art print of ED761 since no photo for her exists that I currently know of, nor of her crew in a group setting. The result by the photo artist, Jeff Stephenson, speaks for itself!



The photo art print of ED761, commissioned by Bob Van Wyk and created by Jeff Stephenson

My goal for Remembrance Day 2020 was to finish Chris's efforts by finding a living family contact for the last two crew members.

With some luck, I succeeded! An email to the creator of a family tree on the Ancestry.com website helped me find family for Sgt Deane. An article about my quest published in the Aberdeen Press & Journal was read by a family member of Sgt Bandedeen. Thus, we are now a complete little family for the entire crew!

Truly, this has been a humbling journey for me of remembrance for just one crew of so many in 57 Squadron that did not survive the war. We shall not forget them! As the caption states on my photo art print

*"They gave the greatest gift of all, their own unfinished lives - duty nobly done".*

One day maybe we will discover why Sgt Griffiths did not fly on this fateful op. One line of enquiry has suggested that he was sick, but I have been unable to confirm this, nor trace him subsequent to his last flight with the Fisher crew the previous night - also to Berlin.

If anyone reading this story can help us solve this riddle, it would be great to hear from you. You can contact me at [bvw719@hotmail.com](mailto:bvw719@hotmail.com)

More information about the crash, the crew and the photo art print can be found at:

Chris van der Linden's webpage for ED761: <https://luchtoorlogww2.wixsite.com/waverveen/30-03-1943-1>

Memorial of the Crash of ED761: <https://www.tracesofwar.com/sights/112934/Memorial-Crash-Lancaster-ED761.htm>

Purchase information for photo art print of ED761 (and more): <https://jeffstephensonphotography.ca/>

Bob Van Wyk  
Harley, Ontario, Canada  
December 2020



Bob, and his father Ted, pictured in September 2015 in front of a Bristol Bolingbroke under restoration at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum

## Refueling the 'Mighty Hunter'

One of the first RAF aircraft to deploy to the South Atlantic following the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands was the Nimrod MR2 Maritime Patrol Aircraft - the 'Mighty Hunter'. Arriving on Ascension Island on 5 April 1982, it was first used to fly local patrols around Ascension to guard against potential Argentine attacks, and to escort the British Task Force as it sailed south towards the Falklands.

The first Victors from 55 and 57 Squadrons, deployed on 18 April and by the end of the month there were 14 on Ascension, from a total force of 23 aircraft. On 20 April, a Victor piloted by Squadron Leader John Elliott of 55 Squadron, took off from Ascension to complete a radar reconnaissance of the region surrounding South Georgia Island. Four supporting tankers supplied fuel for the outbound journey, with another flight of 4 tankers doing the same for the return journey. With a cine camera mounted over the radar screen, the Victors were able to generate a rudimentary maritime reconnaissance picture, and 2 more reconnaissance missions to the South Georgia area were carried out on 22/23 April and 24/25 April in support of Operation Paraquet, the recapture of South Georgia from Argentine military control.



*Victors and Nimrods fill the aircraft apron at Wideawake Airfield - Ascension Island, April 1982*

Back in the UK, frantic efforts were underway to equip a range of aircraft with the ability to in-flight refuel, including Hercules, Vulcans and the Nimrods. At the same time, the Victor squadrons were busy qualifying their pilots in the art of air-to-air refuelling by day and by night. While the Hercules and Vulcans had previously conducted in-flight refuelling trials and had been equipped with refuelling probes, developing the same capability for the Nimrod was completed largely from scratch.

On 28 April 1982, Squadron Leader Robin Tydeman of 57 Squadron, with yours truly as his navigator, took off from RAF Marham for the North Sea, to be met by a Nimrod MR2. With a refuelling probe fitted, but no internal pipework to receive fuel, the Nimrod spent some time manoeuvring astern the Victor to simulate the refuelling position, before both aircraft landed at the British Aerospace airfield at Woodford, near Stockport. Once owned by the A V Roe company, Woodford was the birthplace of many iconic British aircraft including the Lancaster, Shackleton, Vulcan and Nimrod.

On the ground, the Victor and Nimrod were positioned at 90° to each other, and the Victor's centreline refuelling hose was run out and up a set of

aircraft steps, to enable us to position the refuelling basket on the Nimrod's refuelling probe.



*57 Squadron's XL 231 at Woodford 28 April 1982*

After some further checks by the trials engineers, we refueled the Victor and then attempted to pass 40,000 lbs of fuel to the Nimrod.

## Refueling the 'Mighty Hunter' (continued)



*Positioning the Victor's refueling basket onto the Nimrod's probe*

But nothing, initially, happened, until it was realised that an engine would need to be running on the Victor to drive the fuel pumps.

Looking upwards through the Nimrod's flight deck roof it was possible to see clear blue sky and the refueling hose ran along the cabin floor to the rear of the aircraft, passing the galley and various crew stations. Outside, the Nimrod had been fitted with a new fin under the rear ventral cone to provide extra stability when air-to-air refueling. Ground trials successfully completed, the Victor crew retired to the bar for a well-earned beer (or was it two?).



*Extra ventral fin on the Nimrod to improve stability*

The next day, the Victor and Nimrod took off from Woodford (the hole in the roof of the Nimrod had been filled overnight) and conducted the first ever in-flight refueling of a Nimrod. More trials and Nimrod crew conversion to refueling were to follow throughout May.

As the Task Force neared what would become the combat theatre and the threat from Argentine submarines rose, in-flight refuelling of Nimrods by Ascension-based Victors allowed very long-range maritime operations to be carried out in the vicinity

of the Falklands. On 15 May, a 19hour 15 minute patrol passed within 60 miles of the Argentine coast to confirm that Argentine surface vessels were not at sea. Another long-range flight was carried out by an MR2 on the night of 20/21 May, covering a total of 8,453 miles - the longest distance flight carried out during the Falklands War.



*A Victor refuels a Nimrod over the South Atlantic, 1982*

The Nimrods based on Ascension were subsequently used to provide search and rescue as well as communications relay support for the Vulcan bombing raids, while the Victors refueled the Vulcans on their Black Buck missions.



*XL231 - Lusty Linda*

The Victor in this story, XL 231, can still be seen today at the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington. Nowadays she sports a different camouflage scheme and the nickname 'Lusty Linda', having been deployed to Bahrain for the 1991 Gulf War.

I flew in her last on 7 October 1993, on a circuit training sortie at RAF Marham.

Tony Gunby  
November 2020

**Some Sunny Day** by Carmen Medway-Stephens

Back in June this year, as it became increasingly apparent that we would be unable to hold our Annual Reunion, the funeral for Forces Sweetheart, Dame Vera Lynn, had just been held, and our TV and radio stations all seemed to be playing her recording 'We'll Meet Again'. Inspired by these events, the Association's Carmen Medway-Stephens offered to write a poem that might capture some sense of the camaraderie that we so enjoy at our Reunions. This is Carmen's poem, entitled 'Some Sunny Day'.

We are still. Birds fly high. The sky is blue  
 We see the little boy's kite dip and corkscrew  
 He made it himself from brown paper and cord  
 He dreams of flying every night  
 The great plane with wings like angels  
 His father tells him of his Great Grandfather  
 He flew in the Lanc  
 She kept him safe  
 Up there in the air.  
 His Great Grandfather  
 The Crew  
 The men and women of then  
 Made from other stuff.

Engines swirl loud  
 We hear that sound in our memory  
 And we are there with them  
 Mortal silence marked  
 Broken by a friendly voice  
 'Hello Skipper'  
 Soon the sky before us  
 We will join the clouds and be with the Gods  
 There is a story that wants to be told  
 It's time to go back  
 For now the clock has stopped  
 Time is aplenty  
 Listen tentatively  
 They're calling you to remember.

Yes. We remember.

To sit with the album  
 Run gentle over youth  
 Sit with our thoughts  
 Look back at a time  
 A life ago  
 'Look'  
 'Look at their faces'  
 'See their smiles'  
 Justice. Fortitude. Wisdom. Courage.  
 You feel a glow but wonder  
 How was there a smile for everyone?  
 You study closely  
 You are in awe  
 Back in time for tea and a medal  
 Our Fathers.



**Some Sunny Day (continued)**

And now here we are  
It's our turn  
Smiling for the photograph too  
To document this time  
We smile for our family to come, those to be born  
Who will one day look back at us and say  
'They look so happy'

We call to our neighbours  
From the threshold of our doorstep  
'Hello, Skipper here'  
We wait for the go ahead  
To taxi across  
But the wind isn't quite right  
So we must wait  
Patiently  
Until it is safe  
'Sit tight'  
Wait for Green light.  
Remembering  
From the safety of our homes  
We are remembering  
Together in starless dayless abiding

The story plays in colour now  
Not faded at the edges  
It's like yesterday  
We're at the gates  
The hangar doors are open  
Her nose peaks out  
Busy crew run from here to there  
Chatter drifts across  
There's not an ounce of worry  
Only room for laughter  
No talk of what may  
Only time for this moment  
The radio plays big band  
Men and women in oily overalls, spanner in hand  
There's a smell of good cooking  
Tinkle of teacups  
'Two sugars in mine. Over'  
Small flutterings  
Each dance, each kiss  
By the piano  
Keep smiling through like we always do  
Throw caution to the wind  
Stand and sing!

**Some Sunny Day (continued)**

Hello Skipper  
 'We're here. Over'  
 Hushed waiting  
 The clearance for take off  
 Flight engineer  
 Check  
 V1 rotate  
 No enemy yet on our gunners tail  
 We're with our own thoughts in the cockpit  
 Green light  
 Go  
 We roar  
 Four Rolls Royce Merlins  
 O for Oboe glorious  
 Gathering speed  
 We melt into the air  
 Gaining height  
 And we fly  
 The little boy is on the mountain again with his kite  
 'Let the blue skies drive those dark clouds away'  
 'We'll do a cheeky flyover on the return'  
 Our sweethearts waving  
 Dip the wings  
 'Steady. Steady.'  
 'Keep your eyes peeled'  
 We dance through the search lights  
 Avoid flack on starboard side  
 The end goal in sight!

Finding our way home  
 We fly over church spires  
 Our beacon to show the way  
 We will not get lost in the darkness  
 They're waiting for us in the NAAFI  
 Hot tea  
 Bacon and Eggs  
 It's been a long time since we've all been together  
 But we'll hold hands again  
 She'll be waiting in her splendour  
 Dazzling in the sunshine  
 For our homecoming  
 Hearts in mouth  
 You've made it this far  
 The ends in sight  
 Stay safe, stay, hold, hold

Every night we dream that we are flying  
 Like the little boy with his kite  
 Swoop, dive, soar high  
 Our time together, years and years  
 Clink of glass  
 A toast to heroes  
 Words spill  
 'Strike hard strike sure'

**Some Sunny Day (continued)**

Hello Skipper  
 Hello Navigator  
 Steady Steady  
 Flarepath ready  
 Clearance to land  
 Down and Locked  
 Bring her in slowly  
 Hold on tight, ground approaching fast  
 And, and,  
 Touchdown  
 We've made it  
 Home again at Silksheen

See the poppies blowing  
 Shoulder to shoulder  
 Ghosts of giants  
 They're waiting  
 Tell our friends we won't be long  
 The dark clouds are gone  
 We'll get to tell our stories again  
 Some sunny day

© Carmen Medway-Stephens 2020

Carmen's grandfather, Sergeant Rhys Thomas, was a Flight Engineer who flew with 57 Squadron from East Kirkby. She has joined us at our Reunion for the past two years as continues her research to bring to the stage the story of her grandfather.

Some Sunny Day has also been recorded by the Welsh actor Ifan Huw Dafydd. You can listen to Ifan's powerful performance via this link <https://57-630sqnassoc.org/wp-content/uploads/Some-Sunny-Day.mp3>

Both the words and the recording are reproduced by kind permission of Carmen and Ifan.

**A new Boss for 57 Squadron**

*Squadron Leader Gareth Cothill*

Squadron Leader Gareth Cothill was born into an Army family, attended Barnard Castle School, and graduated with an Honours degree in Human Biology from Loughborough University. After completing flying training at RAF Cranwell, Gareth was posted to 201 Sqn, RAF Kinloss where he flew the Nimrod MR2. After completing his captain's tour, Gareth returned to RAF Cranwell as a Multi Engine flying instructor, flying the Kingair B200.

In 2007, Gareth moved overseas to Creech AFB, Nevada and operated the Predator Remotely Piloted Air System (RPAS) embedded within the 15<sup>th</sup> Recce Squadron, USAF. When the UK elected to establish its own RPAS capability, Gareth returned in the US and was appointed as the Flight Commander Training on the newly re-formed 39 Squadron operating the Reaper.

After spending 5 years overseas, Gareth returned to the UK to undertake a staff tour in London, before moving to RAF Waddington to take up the position of Flight Commander Operations on 14 Squadron, flying the Shadow R1. After back to back tours on 14 Squadron, Gareth joined 56 Squadron - the Air Warfare Centre – in a test and evaluation role where he has played an integral role in the development of the Protector RPAS to replace Reaper.

Gareth returned to flying in June 2020 and will assume command of 57 Squadron in December 2020. He currently lives with his family in Lincolnshire. His passions are Rugby and skiing when he is not injured.

*(Congratulations Gareth on your appointment and we look forward to meeting you as soon as we are able once more. Ed.)*

## 2021 Association Reunion

July 2021 							
Week	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
26				1	2	3	4
27	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
28	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
29	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
30	26	27	28	29	30	31	

The 2021 Association Reunion will be held over the weekend of Saturday 3 July and Sunday 4 July. Prices have once again been frozen at 2018 levels and outline details are below.

A Reunion Booking form is available at the back of this Newsletter and also on the Association website.

We look forward to welcoming a contingent from 57 Squadron, led by OC 57 Squadron who will be our guest speaker during the Saturday Dinner, and the

Squadron Standard Party at our Sunday Memorial Service.

It would be good to see more Members attend the Sunday evening Dinner/Dance when the excellent Cleo Ridgeway will be entertaining us once again.

Please note the deadline for returns. Rooms are always at a premium at the Petwood Hotel, so do remember to book early.

For those of you that like to plan ahead, the dates for the 2022 Reunion are 1-4 July!

### Friday 2 July - Petwood House Hotel

As reqd Informal Dinner for hotel residents with reserved tables in the hotel restaurant

### Saturday 3 July - Petwood House Hotel

3.00pm Afternoon tea (Petwood Suite)

7.00pm for 7.30pm Dinner – dress lounge suits/blazers (Woodland Suite)

### Sunday 4 July - East Kirkby/Petwood House Hotel

11.45am Memorial Service in Hangar – medals may be worn

57 Squadron Standard Party

Memorial - Last Post & Laying of Wreaths

3.00pm BBMF Flypast (To be confirmed)

7.00pm for 7.30pm Informal Dinner Dance (Petwood Suite)

### Accommodation and Function Rates

#### Petwood House Hotel Residents

##### 4 Nights

B&B, 2 restaurant dinners, 2 function dinners (Sat & Sun) £410 pp

##### 3 Nights

B&B, one restaurant dinners, 2 function dinners (Sat & Sun) £315 pp

##### 2 Nights

B&B (Fri & Sat), one restaurant dinner, and one function dinner £210 pp

B&B (Sat & Sun), 2 function dinners £215 pp

##### 1 Night

B&B and function dinner £115 pp

#### Non Residents

£45 pp for each function dinner

## Association Memorabilia

A few years back, the Committee took the decision not to replenish the Association's stock of memorabilia as this would inevitably tie up significant chunks of our assets. However, in more recent times, the Association and 57 Squadron have jointly invested to spread this burden and keep unit prices down.

At present, the following items of 57/630 Squadron memorabilia are available (prices include UK P&P):

### 57 Squadron



Print of the 57 Squadron 100th Anniversary painting\* £21.00

57 Squadron enamel lapel badge £2.50

57 Squadron tie\* £20.00

### 630 Squadron



Embroidered blazer badges £16.00 (very limited stock)

630 Squadron tie £6.50

630 Squadron/Association enamel lapel badge £2.50 (very limited stock)

Items marked\* can be bought directly from the Squadron - please contact the Squadron Adjutant on [3FTS-57Sqn-Adj@mod.gov.uk](mailto:3FTS-57Sqn-Adj@mod.gov.uk) or by telephone 01400 227154

Other items can be bought through the Association website Store at <https://57-630sqnassoc.org/store/> or by contacting Tony Gunby directly at [vicepresident@57-630sqnassoc.org](mailto:vicepresident@57-630sqnassoc.org)

## 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association



### **57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Committee Members**

**President:**

Group Captain (Retd) David Houghton

**Vice-President/Membership/Memorabilia/Webmaster:**

Group Captain (Retd) Tony Gunby

**Secretary:**

Wing Commander (Retd) Chris Morffew

**Treasurer:**

Clare Gillard

**Information Officer:**

Air Commodore Wendy Rothery

Following a discussion between interested parties at RAF Scampton in 1977, the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association was formed in the late 1970s, and on 7 October 1979 the memorial to 57 and 630 Squadrons was dedicated on the former site of the RAF East Kirkby guardroom.

The Association provides former members of these two historic squadrons, their families and friends, with a forum through which to honour and remember those that have served with one of the squadrons. It also maintains the link between the two squadrons and their wartime airfield base at RAF East Kirkby which, since 1988, has been home to the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre.

The Association is fortunate to remain closely linked with today's 57 Squadron based at RAF College Cranwell, where it is responsible for pilot training for today's RAF. The Association holds a Reunion in early July each year, in Woodhall Spa/East Kirkby, Lincolnshire.



## 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2021

<b>Surname</b>		<b>First Name (s)</b>	
<b>Address</b>		<b>Telephone Number</b>	
		<b>Email</b>	
<b>Squadron Number</b>			

**If staying at the Petwood Hotel function costs will be included and charged to your room. However, any donations would be appreciated either prior to, or during, the Reunion**

Function	Number Attending
Dinner (Saturday 3 July)	
Informal Dinner (Sunday 4 July)	

**If staying elsewhere please enclose a cheque, payable to '57/630 Squadrons' Association', when you submit this form**

Function	Cost pp	Number Attending	Total Cost
Dinner (Saturday 3 July)	£45		
Informal Dinner (Sunday 4 July)	£45		
Sub Total			
Donation to Association Funds			
Total Enclosed			

Memorial Service – Sunday 4 July	Number in your party attending



## 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association - Reunion 2021

<b>Special Requirements</b>	
Names of party – First Name and Surname	
Any dietary requirements	
We/I wish to sit with	
We require additional facilities (e.g. wheelchair)	
Any other remarks	

Signature .....

### **Payment**

Those staying at the Petwood Hotel will have functions included in the price of their rooms. Those staying elsewhere should send cheques, with this form, to the Secretary, Chris Morffew, **NO LATER THAN 30 APRIL 2021.**

All cheques should be made payable to '**57/630 Squadrons' Association'**

Donations to the Association, in addition to function costs, are always gratefully received.

Chris Morffew  
 Cedar Tree  
 135B Shelford Road  
 Radcliffe-on-Trent  
 Notts  
 NG12 1AZ

Email: [secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org](mailto:secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org)



## Reunion Format Options Survey

The format of our Annual Reunion at the Petwood Hotel in Woodhall Spa has remained unchanged for many years:

### Friday

Informal Dinner (Petwood House Hotel - restaurant)

### Saturday

Afternoon Tea (Petwood House Hotel - private function room)

Annual Dinner (Petwood House Hotel - private function room)

### Sunday

Memorial Service at East Kirkby

Informal Dinner/Dance (Petwood House Hotel - private function room)

Some elements of the weekend are subsidised from Association funds and include, wine on the table for the Annual Dinner, fees for musical entertainers, audio-visual support for the weekend, the band at East Kirkby and, the cost of any Association guests. While these costs are manageable in the short term, falling income from donations and raffles, and falling attendance at the Sunday Dinner/Dance, has led the Committee to consider whether the current Reunion format should change.

Consequently, the Committee has drawn up some potential options for the future and we would welcome your views before making any changes.

You can provide your comments, by completing the short survey below and returning it to me via email or post, or by completing the same survey online via this link <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZKYW35G>

Question 1	In a 'normal' year, how likely is it that you will attend some, or all, of the Annual Reunion weekend?	Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very unlikely

Question 2	If do not routinely attend the Annual Reunion weekend, why is this?	Date not convenient	Too far to travel	Too expensive	Other (please specify)

Question 3	Which Reunion weekend function do you enjoy most? Please rank functions in order of your preference.  1= most preferred 4= least preferred	Friday evening informal Dinner	
		Saturday Afternoon Tea	
		Saturday evening formal Dinner	
		Sunday evening informal Dinner/Dance	

Question 4	The Committee is considering 4 options for future Reunions. Please rank the following 4 options for the Reunion format.  1= most preferred 4= least preferred	No changes to current format	
		No entertainment on Sunday evening; informal dinner only	
		No Sunday evening function	
		No Sunday evening function and move Friday informal dinner to a private room	

## Reunion Format Options Survey (continued)

Question 5	Do you have any comments about Option 1 - No changes to current format?	
Question 6	Do you have any comments about Option 2 - No entertainment on Sunday evening; informal dinner only?	
Question 7	Do you have any comments about Option 3 - No Sunday evening function?	
Question 8	Do you have any comments about Option 4 - No Sunday evening function and move Friday informal dinner to a private room?	
Question 9	We would welcome any other comments that you may have about the current Reunion format or suggestions for the future.	

Thank you for your feedback! Please send your responses to the Secretary:

Chris Morffew  
 Cedar Tree  
 135B Shelford Road  
 Radcliffe-on-Trent  
 NG12 1AZ

Email: [secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org](mailto:secretary@57-630sqnassoc.org)

Or complete the survey online via this link <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZKYW35G>