



NEWSLETTER

Last chance to book your Xmas Lunch Place now



“Happy Christmas from your Chairman and Committee and Happy Landings in 2014”
‘Dambusters Hamper Run’ by kind permission of Jo Laurie and available as a card from RAF Benevolent Fund



LOTTERY FUNDED

Christmas Lunch

**Greenacres Tavern
Weds 18 Dec 13
1200 Noon for 1230pm
£20 (£10 for widows)**

Tickets from **Gerry Sealey-Bell** by post. Please make cheque payable to ‘Chiltern ACA’ and **enclose a Stamped Addressed Envelope.**

Your ticket will include a free entry to our raffle

Jack Ball's Story - Part 7

Ed: *We join Jack in November 1944 as he continues 'Ops'*

Later we went to the refinery at Wanne Eikel in daylight, again being lead squadron. There was complete cloud cover and it felt lonely out front but I was pleased to notice Clem Koder in 'G for George' alongside on the bomb run. When we got through the target there was no one in sight, but this was normal as the tendency was to hightail for home.

On 11th November we went to the oil refinery at Dortmund and I had to take a new crew. The system had changed since I did my 'second dickie' trip. Instead of just the pilot, I had to take the whole crew apart from the navigator and rear gunner, so it was reassuring to have Gordon and Bob Job with me. I was not overjoyed at the prospect, as an operational tour then required each crew member completing thirty 'ops'. If somebody was not on the Battle Order, it behoved the crew to bring him up to scratch by doing extra trips. I don't think anybody liked flying with strangers; your ear got attuned to the comfort of familiar voices on the intercom. But the night went well.

One daylight operation was against Duren on the 16th, one of three towns holding up the advance of the American First Army. They were all destroyed. We were bombing from a medium level and I had the impression of an aircraft blowing up in front of us just as I received a blow on the head, leaving me momentarily dazed and disorientated. We were still on the bombing run with some loads falling past us, so as soon as we had 'bombs away', we took stock of the situation. The offending object was a bomb pistol that had shattered the thick plexiglass cockpit canopy and bounced off my helmeted head to land beside the engineer.

Fortunately, it was made of aluminium or it would have been the end. Such safety devices were fitted to a bomb to make it 'live' after it had fallen a set distance, a small propeller unwinding as the bomb fell. Either it had been dropped from well above or it may

have come from an exploding aircraft. In this respect, we had been told, and firmly believed, that the Germans fired 'Scarecrow' rockets to simulate an aircraft blowing up. We had all seen them and they were quite unnerving, but after the war the Germans denied using any such tactics. I had the bomb pistol until 2005 when I presented it to the War Heritage Museum at Mount Hope.

On the night of 18th November we were again attacking the refinery at Wanne Eickel and I had another inexperienced crew doing a 'second dickie'. The weather was bad, we bombed on a glimpse of the target indicators and then we were back into the thick cloud and turning for home. Suddenly a dazzling white light reflected by the surrounding cloud illuminated us. The Bomb Aimer was using the Aldis lamp to check for hang-ups. Not a good idea at that point and my oaths reflected my unease. The Wireless Operator then advised that we had been diverted but he didn't know to where. This was no problem whilst over Germany, but when we got over the North Sea it became more pressing and when I saw that we were gradually losing power, I decided to turn on the carburettor heat.

The Lancaster was a great aircraft with two things I didn't like. The escape hatch being too small was the important one. A minor problem was that the carburettor heat control was behind the pilot's seat adjacent to the similar fuel jettison control, which was wired shut. I picked the wrong one and the pungent smell of the high-octane petrol being dumped made me correct my mishandling at once!

By now the wireless operator had worked out that the diversion was to Knettishall in East Anglia, an American Flying Fortress base and an excellent choice. I knew from experience that they would give us clean bedding, a slap-up meal and the liquor would run free. I was not disappointed. There was a bonus too, of sorts. When we appeared at late breakfast, unshaven and shabby, we joined about a hundred good-looking English girls who were staying overnight for a Mess party. Kelstern was never like that: we were grateful there for a relieved welcome and a tot of rum.

At an American base there was always the danger that the pilots and navigators would be taken by coach through the fog for a couple of hours to where Intelligence Officers could comfortably hold the debriefing. It happened. Being diverted to another RAF base was worse. It would probably be suggested that you look in the huts for the bed of somebody on leave.

Anyway, the Knettishall Mess invited us to their party, but after watching a Bob Hope film, 'Thanks for the Memory', the expected recall to Kelstern came through. Particularly impressive to my eyes was that every man on this US Base had a fleeced-lined, leather Irving jacket. In the RAF such items were rare amongst bomber crews by this stage of the war

November 1944 closed with a 'gaggle' to Dortmund when the flak got our range and several were wounded, including Sandy Lane and Dave Mattingley, the quiet Australian.

The long mid-winter nights were now upon us: more darkness meant more distant targets. I carried two bottles: one personal, the other full of de-icing fluid, in an attempt to maintain a peephole in the ice that covered the inside of the windscreen at altitude. Neither worked.

We set out to breach the Urft Dam near Heimbach on 3rd December, but cloud hid the target and we brought our bombs back. American troops waiting to advance were in peril if the enemy released the water while they were attacking. It was raided and damaged the next day, but the Germans kept control for some time. On the 15th we were sent to Mannheim-Ludwigshaven where IG.Farben had two important plants. Dusk had fallen by the time we were over the Netherlands, when a sudden flare on the ground caught my eye. In seconds it began to rise and rapidly accelerated past us trailing smoke or steam until it disappeared in the clear sky above. It was my first and only sight of the V2, the second terror weapon that Hitler had promised. They had been falling on London with great effect for some nights. The government did not explain until much

later what the huge explosions followed by the roar of the rocket, which I'd heard when on leave, meant. This added to the mystery.

Due to unexpected winds we got to the target early and I told the crew that we would do a circuit to come in at the correct minute and heading. This evoked a cry from the substitute rear gunner who suggested that we go home. I put out of my mind the three hundred or so other aircraft which might also be circling, but as we turned on to the correct bomb run, the TIs went down.

It was a very successful attack particularly on IG.Farben. Sadly, Pilot Officer Fletcher, who I'd taken to the Dortmund Refinery about a month before, was shot down and killed with all his crew. A quiet, married man who had just been promoted, he was twenty-eight with a crew of twenty year olds.

During a spell of leave I went to the Harrow Road to see the parents of Bernard Edinborough (ex-Mount Hope) who was flying obsolete Stirlings on operations. Unfortunately, my call coincided with the delivery of a telegram to say that he was missing. I found out later that he had been dropping guns and supplies at low level to the Maquis when he was hit and crash landed. He was hidden by them in a wine cellar for six weeks, then escorted by a flamboyant character in riding breeches and boots to Paris, and then down the line to the Pyrenees and Spain.

On the 21st, Bonn was the objective, from where we diverted to Sturgate. This airfield was still in Lincolnshire but had been fitted with FIDO, a fog dispersal system that used a line of oil burners either side of the runway to make a clear tunnel through the fog. This was a real lifesaver, the reflected glow of which could be seen from a great distance. It compensated partly for the withdrawal of the blind landing system.

Ed: *Jack's story will continue in the New Year. I suspect one or two of you also have stories of FIDO, if so I am sure others would like to hear them.*

A WWII veteran bestows his 'special' watch to the memory of his fallen comrades

On 30 May 1949, John Oliver 'Jo' Lancaster DFC made aviation history by becoming the first pilot to eject from an aircraft in an emergency situation using a Martin-Baker ejection seat - since then, Martin-Baker ejection seats have saved over 7,420 aircrew lives worldwide. To mark this momentous occasion Sir James Martin, founder of Martin-Baker Aircraft Co Ltd, presented Jo Lancaster with a gold Rolex watch, engraved with his name and date. This was the start of an intriguing story spanning over six decades and covering thousands of miles.

Sadly, the watch was stolen in 1975, unbeknown to Martin-Baker. Discovered in New York last year, the watch was purchased again by the Martin family.

Over the years Martin-Baker and Jo Lancaster had lost contact, but following a chance email from a group of air cadets, it was discovered that Jo was alive and well, giving talks to the cadets about his experiences during the war, particularly his 'ops' with Bomber Command and his famous ejection in 1949.

As far as the Martins were concerned it was clear that the watch had to be returned to its rightful owner and for the second time, the watch was presented to Jo, this time by Sir James Martin's twin sons and Joint Managing Directors, John and James - 64 years after it was presented for the first time.



As a former Bomber Command pilot, Jo Lancaster's wish is for the watch to be used to raise money towards the upkeep of the RAF Benevolent Fund's Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, London. So, on Jo's behalf, Martin-Baker has purchased the watch for the third time.

"This is such an exceptional story, involving a truly remarkable man", said Andrew Martin, grandson of Sir James Martin. "When Jo asked us to use the watch to raise funds for the memorial upkeep, we instantly decided to 'buy' it for the third time and donate the sum of £5,000 to the RAF Benevolent Fund on his behalf," he said.

Jo Lancaster, who is 94 and lives in Hassocks, said: "I was absolutely gobsmacked when I was presented with the watch for the second time. However having survived without it since it was sadly stolen in 1975, I thought it could be used to help the RAF Benevolent Fund preserve the memory of those in Bomber Command that weren't as lucky as we were. It's nice to know that the watch is back where the story began and will be remembered for years to come."

Today the watch is displayed proudly in the Martin-Baker museum, together with the original letter from Sir James Martin to Jo Lancaster.

On receiving the cheque from Andrew Martin, Paul Hewson, Regional Director at the RAF Benevolent Fund said: "Since taking over the guardianship of the Memorial last year the RAF Benevolent Fund has heard some incredible stories about the heroic veterans of Bomber Command and is extremely grateful for the generous donations it has received towards the upkeep of the Memorial. "It is absolutely delighted that Jo has decided to donate the elusive Rolex towards that cause, honouring the brave young men of Bomber Command who lost their lives during the Second World War.



Paul Hewson, Jo Lancaster and Andrew Martin

"It is also fitting that the new owners of the watch should be Martin-Baker who initiated the remarkable story of the watch in 1949. Its place in their museum will allow visitors to both enjoy the story and celebrate the wonderful generosity of both Jo and Martin-Baker Aircraft Co Ltd – sincere thanks to them both."

As the guardian of the Bomber Command Memorial, the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund is committed to preserving the Memorial for future generations, so that the noble sacrifice of the young men who lost their lives while serving in Bomber Command will always be remembered.

Ed: *With thanks to the RAFBF www.rafbf.org*

Edna Francis

15th August 1923 - 30th October 2013



You will be sad to hear that Edna passed away at the end of October. David was supported at her funeral on 12 Nov by family, many friends from the various organisations Edna had worked with and of course the Chiltern ACA in the form of Gerry Sealy-Bell, Derek Gurney, Mr and Mrs Alan Dicker, Tom Payne and Jo and Graham Laurie.

Edna left school at 14 and during the war worked in the Land Army and they were well represented at Garston. Edna and 130 members of the Land Army, marched to the Cenotaph for their final Memorial Service on 13 Oct 12.

She worked for 17 years with the deaf and was very highly thought of in the area. The other organisation that she was heavily involved in, was Abbots Langley RAFA and at the beginning of this year Edna was awarded an area Presidential Certificate for outstanding and devoted service to RAFA.

The chapel was full upstairs and downstairs with many standing, a fine tribute to a wonderful lady who spent so much of her time helping others. She had been married for 68 years. We send David and the family our condolences but, in the spirit of Edna's wishes, we feel sure the wonderful memories will help them in this time of loss.

Graham

**Andy Hardy (Chiltern ACA)
flies to Australia**

Ed: *Well there is nothing too spectacular about that statement, particularly as Andy is Australian!. It is the the manner in which he went that is incredible.*

Andy was introduced to Chiltern ACA by Stan Colley having flown Stan and others on Project Propeller.

I have deliberately not said anything about this journey before, as we must get him to ‘Greenacres’ to tell us all about what must have been an epic journey.



The planned route to Sydney

Andy Hardy (Chiltern ACA member) and Sam Kidd left London in September on a 10,500 nautical mile journey called the ‘Cherokee Challenge Flight’, that ended in Sydney on Tuesday 19 November.

Now they could have chosen to travel in more comfortable and much faster fashion, aboard the Boeing 747s and Airbus A380s that operate regular passenger flights from the UK. But Andy says he prefers to travel this way, despite the limited room and lack of a toilet aboard the single engine Cherokee. It flies closer to the ground, and you stop every few hours, affording a

stronger sense of connection with the nations and communities along the route.

Andy left Australia 24 years ago, and he’s long dreamed of flying himself home in this way. And he’s raising money for charity along the way. He started out with a goal of raising at least one pound for each nautical mile flown, giving the proceeds to Oxfam. He’s already well ahead of that target.

The stop-over at Atherton (N Queensland) gave Andy time to explore some very old connections. He had never been there before, but his family has a long history there, going back about 150 years. He spent a few days immersing himself in the family story, including a visit to a local museum where he was able to see his great grandmother’s tea set.

If you would like to support Andy with a donation to his nominated charity Oxfam (at the moment as you realise they need all the money they can get) please donate through: Oxfam UK quoting Andy Hardy’s Cherokee Challenge. or via this website

<https://cherokeechallenge2013.everydayhero.com/uk/andy-sam>



*Andy and Sam with their trusted G-ATYS,
what an epic journey!*

October Meeting

We returned to a normal attendance for AVM Merriman’s fascinating lecture on the English Electric Lightning. From the early days of the Fairey Delta 2 and DH 110 we were taken on a ride through the development from the original P1 via the various upgrades and roles undertaken by this fast and furious machine



The P1 Lightning

It was particularly good to welcome Des Richard back to our ranks to listen to his old boss from Boscombe Down talk to us.

Thumbnail - Tom Payne

Ed: *Bill Hyland has persuaded Tom Payne (a regular correspondent) to contribute again!*

Important Dates in my RAF Career

I attended interview and had an Aircrew Medical at Euston and passed for Pilot/Observer, W/Op/AG and Obs (Radio). Original was handed in at ACRC St. John’s Wood when called up. I also received RAF Form 2150 which quoted my service number 1398674 listing my Service Trade as ACH/PILOT(Pe). A week later I received a message of welcome from The Secretary of State for Air (Archibald Sinclair). Later I discovered my service number was looked upon as a dinosaur, it jumped to 1600000 series in 1942. I also received an RAFVR lapel badge which I still have, it wasn’t collected when I joined up, the receipt was eventually in my medical files.

Service Trade *ACH/PILOT(Pe)*
 R.A.F. Form 2150
ROYAL AIR FORCE VOLUNTEER RESERVE
 ENLISTMENT FOR DURATION OF THE PRESENT EMERGENCY
 POSTPONEMENT OF CALLING UP FOR SERVICE
 To **1398674**
 No..... Name... *PAYNE T.P.*
 Address ... *219 MARLOWES*
 ... *HEMEL HEMPSTEAD HERTS*
 Nearest Rly. Stn. ... *BOXMOOR - LMS*
 In connection with your enlistment in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve for service during the present emergency, you will be required to report for permanent service in accordance with the instructions contained in a notice to be issued to you by the Air Officer in Charge Records, Royal Air Force.
 In the meantime you will remain on the Reserve and no pay or allowances will be issuable to you for the period during which you are not called up for permanent service. It is important therefore that you should not leave your present civil employment until you are required to report for service. Where practicable you will be notified at least ten days before the date on which you will be required to report.
 The Air Officer in Charge Records, Royal Air Force, Wantage Hall, Reading, Berks, must be informed of any change of address and any correspondence must quote your R.A.F. No. rank and name.
 Station... **EUSTON**
 Date... *8 NOV 1941* **C. B. McWheen** **FLT**
(Sgt.)
 For Air Officer i/c Records,
 Royal Air Force.
 6/41 (55825) (56527) Wt. 22803/1091 200M 3/41 Hw. G.371

A condition of being on deferred service was I had to report to my local ATC Squadron, the CO of 1187 Hemel Hempstead was my old Headmaster (R T Barnard) a Flt Lt in the Training Reserve. I visited the school where they held their parades, entered his office where he greeted me like a long lost comrade, very pleased that I was joining them. I said it was on a part-time basis and handed him the forms supplied by RAF Euston. After reading them he said ‘Tommy you are not old enough’, to which I replied ‘Sir, you know that and I know that, but they don’t’! At that point he stood up and shook my hand saying ‘Congratulations, all the best’. I was a month short of my 16th birthday.

I had to wait until April 1942 before I was called up to ACRC St. John’s Wood, that will form another episode.

Ed: *What is ACH/Pilot (Pe)? My research finished with ACH= Aircraft Hand but Pe?*

Programme

All events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless advised (*)

- 18 Dec** **Christmas Lunch* 1200 Noon**
 15 Jan AGM
 19 Feb History of Leavesden, Derek Sayell
 19 Mar TBA
 16 Apr National Service, Wg Cdr John Gearing
 21 May Guest's Lunch

Your Committee

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Welfare

With lots of to-ing and fro-ing for me, this month seems to have passed me by! It had been my intention to have a concerted phone round while I was not quite so mobile but some how I lost my argument. The phone has not been quiet though, as in addition to those few I've contacted, I've had many calls from Members enquiring about my progress. Thank you all for that and I'm pleased to say I'm well on the mend and will be at the Christmas Lunch. Well -- can't miss out on food!

Bill

Membership Secretary

Please get your **orders for the Christmas Lunch into me by 10 Dec at the latest**. We have to give in numbers with a week to go.

One more change of address for you:

**Alan Chappell - Lewin House Care Home,
 61 Belgrave Road, Aylesbury, HP19 9HP 01296 435090**

Not wishing to ruin your Xmas but please note I will be asking for your 2014 subscription of £10 wef 1st January 2014! Pay by post (with SAE) or at AGM

Gerry

Treasurer

Just a quick reminder that all cheques must be made payable to 'Chiltern Aircrew Association'. This applies to those applying for Christmas Lunch tickets and of course next year's subscriptions

Rod

Editor

Just a 'big thank you' for all those who have contributed to this years Newsletter. Many are regular subscribers, Tom Payne and Ron Doble come to mind. The series of Jack Ball's wartime exploits of course came courtesy of his daughter Stephanie.

No 'thank you' is big enough for Stuart McKay for all his hard work, printing, posting and labeling our Newsletters -where would we be without him!

Graham