



NEWSLETTER

First installment of Harry Purver's wartime memories Page 2

Leavesden to National Service

At our March meeting, a slightly depleted audience heard of the history of this local airfield from its early days right through to its current use as a part of the 'Harry Potter' story.

This month we hear about **National Service**, it made many, it broke some but what was it like to go through? We have heard Bill George's version, now it is the turn of **Wing Commander John Gearing**, we extend a warm welcome to him at Greenacres on **Wednesday 16th April** at 11am.

MH 370

As I write this on Friday 28th March I am hoping by the time that the Newsletter is published, the waiting will be over, the wreckage or its known position will have been located and the long wait for the relatives will be over. Closure of course and knowing exactly what happened is probably years away and of course with the depth of the Southern Indian Ocean, it may never be possible to recover the aircraft and its all important 'black boxes'.

I do not intend to posture any theories but in this modern world it is incredible that such a disappearance can occur. Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777-200, registration 9M-MRO performing flight MH-370 from Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) to Beijing (China) with 227 passengers and 12 crew, was en route at FL350 about 40 minutes into the flight about 90nm northeast of Kota Bharu (Malaysia) over the Gulf of Thailand in contact with Subang Center (Malaysia) just about to be handed off to Ho Chi Minh Air Traffic Control Center (Vietnam) when radar and radio contact was lost at about 01:22L (17:22Z Mar 7th). Subang Air Traffic Control Center officially told the airline at around 02:40L (18:40Z Mar 7th) that the aircraft was missing.

Since that time theory after theory has been put forward and the search now concentrated off Perth Australia has been frustrated by bad weather. One thing certainly seems to come into play is the reluctance of some countries to come forward with positive radar sightings. This may be partly political, in that they do not want to give away range information to neighbours. The other surprising thing has been the satellite information which has been forthcoming. For instance were you surprised like me to know that Thailand had satellites orbiting the earth?

Let us hope that we shortly have some positive news: it may not be what the relatives want to hear but only then can the search for the 'black box' can move forward apace. It must be found, however long it takes because whether it was equipment failure or human input, the aviation and airline world needs to know.

Our thoughts are with all concerned.



LOTTERY FUNDED

My Memories of WW 2 by Harold Purver

In 1939 I lost my first sweepstake as to where the first bomb would drop in London and was accosted to join the British Communist Party. Employed as a laboratory assistant for Arthur Guinness & Son at their brewery in Park Royal. In was entitled to a free lunch and one bottle of Guinness per day (spare ones could always be found up the drainpipes!

Eventually a long awaited apprenticeship arrived at the GPO Research Station, Dollis Hill and was a 'Reserved Occupation'. The training included climbing up poles and down holes, as well as learning the wire colouring of ROYGBIV, and the intricacies of Power and Telephone Electrical Engineering. During this time we also installed hidden STC microphones into ceiling roses and door stops to record prisoner's conversations in numerous POW camps, including Wormwood Scrubs, listening to German Aircrew who had been shot down over London that night. Another time we wired up the first six 'Acorn' valves in the country from the USA to make miniature radio transmitters for the use of the French Resistance across the channel, having a range of just 20 miles.

One Spring Saturday morning, all evening schools were closed at that time for ARP precautions, as I walked down towards Northampton Engineering College (now the city University), I would join the brave young men who were fighting and dying and winning the war in the Western Desert Campaign. After 3 days examination in Oxford University I was accepted into the RAFVR as "Aircrew (on Deferred Service)" and was to attend my local part-time RAF Cadet Squadron. After six months of 'Square Bashing' and invaluable practice of sending and receiving in Morse Code, I was ordered to report to **ACRC Lord's Cricket Ground** at 9am. Arriving early I had the last fifteen minutes of freedom with 'Kafe & Küchen' at a nearby cafe. During three weeks residence in luxury flats, changing our overalls for flying clothing, 'Square Bashing' around Regent's Park, numerous injections and FFI. Whilst

receiving these multiple injections through a single needle one keen type went to leave with said needle still attached to his arm; a nurse chased after him and whipped it out, whereupon he promptly dropped like a stone! Presumably he had read all the notices like 'Died Waiting', on the corridor walls! Further when being invited by the Doc to 'lift up your testicles for FFI' another bright cadet attempted to do so by straining his chin up, whereupon the Doc snarled, 'With your hand Fool!'

Early in October I arrived for a month's toughening up camp at **Ludlow**, where we dug ditches around bell tents, sawed up trees for firewood, shaved only in hot tea and built breeze block walls for said bell tents. Later in the month we were posted to **ITW Babbacombe** and I enjoyed my first fresh fish and chips of Torbay Whiting and introduction to my first RAF Flight Sergeant PTI! Our relations didn't improve when some weeks later I inadvertently danced with his Student Teacher girlfriend and that resulted in me having haircuts on two consecutive days!

Promoted to LAC after 4 months we arrived at **No 11 SOTT (School of Technical Training) Hereford**, where along with instructions to operate Lewis and Browning guns and turrets, we climbed into our first aircraft, an ancient grounded Hampden Bomber! Having loaded hundreds of 303 bullets into the drums of the Lewis gun, I remarked, 'How clever these Chinese are', I was curtly reminded that 'these guns were not made in China'!

One evening we were quietly having a pint of cider in the 'Green Man', Hereford when we befriended a couple of ATS Sergeants attracted by the virgin white flashes in our RAF 'fore and afts' no doubt! A pleasant evening was curtailed when we found they were a couple of MT drivers of 30 Ton trucks, delivering ammunition to numerous AA sites, throughout the night, admitting how difficult it was to stay awake and becoming mesmerized by the white painted differential, bobbing about on the truck in front, when traveling in convoy.

Our next posting to **ACD Wing** accommodated in bell tents at **Heaton Park, Manchester**, (*cont'd*

(cont'd from P2) along with hundreds of cadets waiting for postings to Canada or America or South Africa under the Empire Air Training Scheme. Unfortunately shipping was required for the offensive against Rommel in the Western Desert, North Africa and training continued with a period of cook house duties; I particularly remember the eight trays of hand fried eggs being tipped away for pigs, looking like in-laid linoleum!

Another toughening up period followed back at Ludlow Camp and then in April to **EANS, Bridgnorth** for 'Square Bashing' and the elements of Air Navigation. Then followed four months of highly interesting study. All I remember clearly was bruising my right heel bone at netball, between classes, and being allowed to wear shoes all day, instead of service boots. The discipline training I then undertook was being checked by every NCO and having to show the MO certificate to 'Scuse Boots'! The rest of the time, it was cleaning buttons and other necessary hygiene, until in August, those who had passed the final examination were posted to **7 AOS RAF Bishopscourt**, Northern Ireland.

After 7 days leave at home, enduring the first few V2 Rockets aimed at London, initially reported as Gas-Mains explosions, I was ordered to pick up a Travel Warrant from the Military Police at King's Cross Station by 10pm. Here the 'Red Cap' enjoyed escorting me to a platform with a train for Larne waiting, already 'full to the gunnels', including corridors and toilets. Another aircrew cadet complete with white flash on our 'fore and aft' hats and two kitbags each was eventually squeezed into the Guards Van to join a couple of smashing WAAF's, numerous soldiers and several sailors, all with appropriate kit! Shortly the station filled with smoke and we chuffed out, starting our overnight journey with all sexes keeping an eye on each other and sleeping intermittently!

After many fits and starts, rocking speeds, jolting, shunting and essential visits down to a toilet, dawn found us away 'oop North' stationary in a countryside halt with a number of milk churns to be col-

lected. Several of the King's men bravely jumped out and filled their standard service mugs with fresh milk. By chance, in sympathy for the farmer, only the Guards Van and a couple of carriages were within reach! What a shambles when the train restarted hesitatingly, being overloaded: not many went AWOL!

The arrival at Stranraer by midday, feeding, embarking on the ferry and disembarking at Larne Docks I have no recollection of. Unking people have hinted at an 'alcoholic haze' but the 'King's Shilling'm ensured that I was at least standing! I do remember asking an officer, 'Who are the men in flat black caps and uniform with a gun at their waist?' I was horrified to find out they were policemen! However, we arrived safely, complete with the additional aircrew kitbag at RAF Bishopscourt in time for an evening meal. After finding a bed I spent a pleasant August evening exploring the seaside village. Being a 'towney' I was amused to see chickens running in and out of the front door of a cottage.



No 7 AOS RAF Bishopscourt

From now on we were definitely u/t at No 7 Air Observer School and according to my 'Navigators, Bomb Aimers and Air Gunners Flying Log Book', I took my first ever flight for 2 hrs 15 mins in Anson EG 354, to gain 'Air Experience'. There followed some 60 hours flying, 3 hour trips, 2 or 3 trips a day around Loch Neigh with Staff Pilots, taking turns as 1st Navigator doing DR (Dead Reckoning) work for the pilot, or 2nd Navigator who map read for pin-points and took drift measurements for the 1st Navigator.

'We will Remember Them'

We celebrated last years the 70th Anniversary of the Dam Busters raid on the dams of Germany. These celebrations remembered the men who flew that evening. All remember the name of Guy Gibson but what of those who did not return.

Of 19 Lancaster bombers, 8 aircraft were shot down,

53 aircrew killed and 3 aircrew taken prisoner. The flights were over the evening of 16/17 May 1943. The 8 aircraft that were lost were as follows:

ED934 (A.J.K) PIC Sgt Byers

Hit by flak on outbound leg

Crashed Marsdiep, Holland

Only Rear Gunner's body recovered, Sgt James McDowell. Buried Harlingen General Cemetery, Holland.

ED 937 (A.J.Z) PIC Sqn Ldr Maudsley

Bombed, Hit by Eder. Shot on Return

Crashed Klein Netterden, Germany

PIC buried Reichswald Forest War Cemetery

ED 927 (A.J.E) PIC Flt Lt Barlow

Hit High Tension cables/Flak on Outb Leg

Crashed Haldren, Germany

PIC buried Reichswald Forest War Cemetery

ED 925 (A.J.M) PIC Flt Lt Hopgood

Hit by Flak on bomb run

Crashed Mohne Dam, Germany

PIC Buried Rheinberg War Cemetery

ED 910 (A.J.C) PIC Plt Off Ottely

Hit by Flak, exploded

Crashed at Hamm, Germany

PIC buried Reichswald Forest War Cemetery

ED 887 (A.J.A) PIC Sqn Ldr Young

Bombed Mohne, crashed on return

Crashed Castricum Beach, Holland

PIC Buried Bergen General Cemetery, Holland.

ED 865 PIC Plt Off Burpee

Hit by Flak on Outb Leg

Crashed Gilze-Rijen, Holland

PIC Buried Bergen Op Zoom War Cemetery

ED 864 (A.J.B) PIC Flt Lt Astell

Flak, Hit High Tension cables on Outb Leg

Crashed Marbeck, Dorsten, Germany

PIC buried Reichswald Forest War Cemetery

The majority of crews were buried at the same cemetery as their Captain. One other name from Operation Chastise is the one buried in UK. He died just before the raid took place and was buried at RAF Scampton by Chiefy Powell and Sgt Jim Heveron outside the crewroom as his owner Guy Gibson flew on the raid. His name was of course the code name for the dams being breached.



In the new film being produced the name of the dog has been changed to 'Digger' as the 'N word' is no longer acceptable. This may well be the case but if you want to see the real name, of the real dog, visit his grave outside the crewroom at RAF Scampton

Ed: My thanks to **Ron Doble** for his help compiling these records.

Cricket at Lords



It may be ACRC to many but to others it is just the home of cricket. Well now, thanks to collaboration between Middlesex County Cricket Club and The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund a new reduced rate Membership package has been arranged for serving and ex serving members of the Royal Air Force

You can enjoy an entire summer of cricket as a Middlesex CCC member for just £125 for the entire 2014 season, saving an incredible £70 on full membership! As well as this fantastic £70 saving, for every full membership purchased, Middlesex CCC will donate £25 to the RAF Benevolent Fund!

Your membership will include:

Free entry to watch every Middlesex CCC home match this season in all three competition formats; LV= County Championship (four day matches), Royal London One-Day Cup (50 over matches) and NatWest T20 Blast (Twenty20 matches). Free entry into Lord's to watch the one day Tourists' match against the Indians (50 over, non-List A match). Access to all members facilities at Lord's including the world famous Lord's Pavilion and Long Room. Priority access to international match tickets at Lord's in the 2015 season.

You can also purchase membership for a partner for £93 and membership for young family members (0-17 years old) for £25. Other member benefits can be found at:

www.middlesexccc.com/membership.

With Middlesex Country Cricket Club celebrating their 150th anniversary in 2014, there's never been a better time to become a member.

Your Editor has already taken up the offer and plans to spend a good deal of time at Lords, Uxbridge, Merchant Taylor's School (Moor Park) and

Richmond CC where Middlesex games will be played this year. Give me a ring if I can help or contact Julie Blakesley on 020 7289 1300 at Middlesex CCC.

70th Anniversary of D-Day Celebrations (D-DAY70) – Normandy2014

2014 marks the 70th anniversary of the Normandy Landings during the Second World War. The Royal British Legion and the Ministry of Defence have the privilege of leading the nation in paying its respects to all those who fought and died in the battle through a series of events over 5- 6 June, known as "D-Day 70".

The Legion and MOD are be working towards the commemorations, which include Memorial Services at Bayeux Cathedral and Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery amongst others. In order to plan effectively we're aiming to establish how many veterans will be travelling to Normandy in June, and we're asking all veterans and their families to get in touch and let us know. Due to the high profile nature of D-Day 70 there will be security restrictions in place in Normandy and accreditation is required for many of the events during the anniversary period, therefore we do ask them to contact us by 30th April in order for us to send you the paperwork required to enter the sites they may wish to visit.

Please contact the Royal British Legion by email at: dday70@britishlegion.org.uk or in writing via 'D-Day 70', Haig House, 199 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1AA. Funding support for their veterans' trip may be secured through the Big Lottery Fund's Heroes Return 2 scheme; an application form is available on the website, www.biglotteryfund.org.uk, or call 0845 00 00 121 (textphone 0845 602 1659 for those with hearing impairment).

The date for submissions has just passed but if you are planning to attend it will be well worthwhile contacting the Legion for advice and who knows a late application to Heroes Return 2 might work!

Programme

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

16 Apr National Service, Wg Cdr John Gearing

21 May Guest's Lunch

18 June 'Malcolm's War', Malcolm Clouett

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Membership

With this issue, full and associate members should receive their

2014 membership list. Please check your personal entry and if you find a mistake, please let me know ASAP.

I am pleased to report we have recruited a new member:

266 CLEWS M (Mike) 46 Castle Hill, Maidenhead, Berks
SL6 4LW 01628 631974 GL

We welcome Mike a former BA Captain to our ranks and I know he is keen to put something into the Association.

To all of you may I thank you for your assistance in paying your dues promptly, it really does help.

Gerry

Treasurer

I am pleased to report that our annual accounts have now been 'signed off' and are in good order. Your assistance in donating raffle prizes and of course buying tickets does help greatly to boost the coffers and also help us to maintain our £10 subscription

Rod

Secretary

Sorry I was unable to be at the last meeting. Luckily it was only a 48 hour bout of flu and I was soon back on my feet. Thank you to those who sent messages, much appreciated.

We hope to be able to announce a date of a reip to White Waltham shortly, as guests of the 'Joystick Club'. This is thanks to our new member Mike Clews. so watch out next month for full details of the visit which will be limited to about 12 people. Travel will be by car and we will take lunch in the excellent 'crewroom restaurant' at the airfield.

Graham