



# NEWSLETTER

## Dam Buster's 70th Anniversary (Page 5)

### May Buffet Lunch

Rather a small gathering at Greenacres for the May Luncheon with many on sick parade and 'no shows' It was good to see Christine and Mavis and of course Jim Tomlinson who has not been around for many a long year. Jim has recently moved into a care home in Hemel and was joined by Alan Smith and a carer, Paul Bruch. Food was of the usual high standard and provided in industrial quantities with some very nice chips!

The Haddenham contingent arrived early and took up positions close to the buffet for a quick recce before 'chocks away'

When it came to 'puddings' chocolate eclairs were firm favourites as were many other delicacies with the 'doggy bag' fraternity. With the rather depleted numbers this proved beneficial to Jack Easter, who not only had a splendid doggy bag, but also won a bottle of Red in the Raffle which was well supported and oh yes, as usual, Tom Payne took first prize.

It was also noted that the Welfare Officer always seemed to be visiting a table which was next in line at the food counter.

To all those on sick parade, best wishes for a speedy recovery



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

### June Meeting

Our speaker at our 19 June meeting at Greenacres will be **Chris Sprent** talking about **Aviation Art**. As we know there are some fantastic wartime and peacetime paintings, so it will be interesting to hear the views of an expert.

### George Carter MBE

Sadly George passed away on 16 May in Luton & Dunstable Hospital. aged 89. He was a wartime Navigator and served on No 617 Squadron and Tiger Squadron.

Post war he was for a long time associated with Hospital Administration in our local area. He also gained much notoriety as an artist, notably of Floral Crosses for individuals, organisations abroad and Cathedrals.

His funeral was held on Thursday 30th May at Harpenden Methodist Church and the Chiltern ACA was represented. We send our deepest condolences to his sister Iris and to Gillian, Nigel, Sharon and the grandchildren.

### Aircrew Lunch

There will be another "Aircrew Lunch" at the Black Horse, Gozzards Ford, Abingdon on **Friday 27th September**.

Menu will be published at a later date but please make a note in your diaries. Note this lunch is open to all aircrew not just members of the ACA.

## Jack Ball DFC

**Ed:** *As promised here is Jack's story. It will be serialised over the next few months and I hope many of you will find parts that parallel your own stories*

### Early Life

I've wanted to fly since I was a boy. Living under the circuits of two famous aerodromes presumably had an influence on me and I went through all the usual stages, reading magazines, building models and visiting air shows, finally joining the Royal Air Force. Many good books have been written about the period covered and many survivors' tales have been told, so I will try to limit myself to the facts as seen through one pair of eyes and to convey the flavour and attitudes of the times. These are so important, yet difficult for succeeding generations to appreciate.

I was born in 1922 at 9 Goldsmith Lane, Roe Green Garden Village, Kingsbury, Middlesex. My brothers, Henry and Richard, were then ten and nine years old, my sister, Joan, was seven. A famous architect had designed the village in 1917 to house workers at Airco, who had been building aircraft for the Western Front, and it earns a mention in the RAF Museum at Hendon. The wing of a surplus airplane formed the roof of our chicken house, until it burned one Bonfire Night.

Home was near two famous aerodromes, Hendon and Stag Lane. The latter was De Havilland's base and most of the record-breaking flights of the time started from there. Hendon was the home of the annual RAF Pageant, a national event that drew huge crowds, packing any open spaces for a view, whilst traffic jams blocked the road for hours afterwards. The show was spectacular: it included the apparent shooting down of a WW1 observation balloon with the attendant observer descending by parachute, and the destruction of a fort, inhabited, it seemed, by blacked-up airmen dressed in bed-sheets. Rehearsals for the great show went

on for weeks above our house to my delight and my intentions for a career crystallized.

In 1938 the Munich crisis occurred when Neville Chamberlain 'sold' Czechoslovakia down the river to preserve peace and, incidentally, buy time to put our defences into a better state. There was a big flypast that year of eight hundred aircraft, mostly obsolete: Heyfords, Harts and Blenheims, to bolster morale. I remember seeing a large number of Avro Ansons included, a civilian passenger airplane, pressed into service with Coastal Command.

I had to finish at Kingsbury County School in 1938, as I was needed to contribute to the family finances (my siblings had been at work since they were fourteen and had continued their education at evening classes) and my father's health was bad. I had been planning to apply for a short-service commission - four years and £400 gratuity - as a pilot when I was eighteen, so in the meantime I replied to an advert in The Daily Telegraph and was interviewed at the Mayfair branch of the Motor Union Insurance Co. They needed a good half-back for their football team and I was engaged as a junior at a salary of five guineas per month.

### Joining the LDV

After Dunkirk and the surrender of France in 1940, I joined the Local Defence Volunteers (later the Home Guard). On fine evenings we would crawl around wasteland learning how to raid enemy trenches as it was done in 1918. We were issued with armbands to denote our combatant status and once we had a grand mustering of all local units. A fellow member was Charles Lofthouse who had been a year above me at school. He was soon able to join the RAF, and after a short and distinguished career, became a prisoner of war.

By summer 1940, there were daylight raids on London as the Germans switched from attacking the airfields. *continued on Page 3*

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Transport became unreliable so I cycled to work and checked out the damage. I remember standing in Piccadilly watching our fighters attacking some Heinkels and realising that I was next to Billy Bishop, the Canadian fighter ace from the previous war. He was muttering to himself, but whether imprecations or instructions, I know not. Then an Air Vice-Marshal, he looked too big around the middle to get into a cockpit.

At night, when the sirens sounded, our orders were to report across the fields to HQ at the British Legion Club, but when the Blitz started in September 1940, the futility of this became apparent. The gunfire and thump of bombs happened every night. The drinkers in the Club did not appreciate our presence and we could not sleep through their noise and smoke. A few bombs fell on our village with casualties.

### **Joining the RAF**

On my eighteenth birthday I went to the Drill Hall in Edgware for an aircrew selection board. Waiting with me was a pleasant public schoolboy who rejoiced in the name of Gerald Francis Barnett Newport-Teignley, if I remember correctly. He told me that he'd been recommended for a commission. I was pleased just to have been accepted. We both opted for immediate entry on ground-defence duties; the alternative was to wait at home for a training vacancy. I was called to RAF Uxbridge for a few days, where I passed the medical examination and returned home to await instructions.

On 25th November 1940 we arrived with other recruits at Blackpool for six weeks of training. I was billeted in a small, comfortable hotel in South Shore with a couple of older fellows, one smooth, one off the farm, and a number of Polish officers who had escaped through Romania and France. Later, prosperous families fleeing the Liverpool bombing joined us.

Food was meagre and it was clear our RAF rations were being diverted. Of the fourteen shillings due to me each week, I had allotted seven to my mother and the rest went on food. I fondly remember the different varieties of tripe available at the United Cattle Products restaurants.

Blackpool was a windy town and there was plenty to do if one had money. We drilled, marched hither and thither, learned to use a rifle. Twice a week we marched along the promenade to the Derby Baths for a shower and swim. I couldn't swim. It wasn't much of a Christmas either.

In January 1941, a hard winter with snow, fifty of us arrived at Kenley, a fighter airfield south of London, as the Main Gate guard. The airfield had taken damage and casualties in the Battle of Britain the previous summer and was very heavily defended by units of the Irish Guards and Essex Regiment among others.

A minor irritation was the total absence of light bulbs, bath plugs and toilet paper from the washrooms, which made evening toilet an adventure on those winter nights. Such items had to be commandeered from wherever.

There was a Bristol Beaufighter in one of the hangars. Still on the secret list, it became one of the great weapons against enemy shipping. I enjoyed climbing over it. The days were spent at ground classes on related military subjects.

After a month, about ten of us were detached to Redhill, a satellite airfield used by the Hurricanes to re-arm and re-fuel. It had been a flying club and facilities were limited. We seemed to be the only defence, having two sets of stripped twin Lewis guns, 1917 pattern on AA mountings, gratefully sold by the USA. Patrolling at night was nerve-racking: the hangars were full of interesting old aircraft but were unlit, whilst out on the airfield there were desultory shots from airmen potting rabbits for the local butcher. We did have an Armadillo for tackling enemy paratroops.

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This consisted of a flatbed lorry with a loop-holed, single brick enclosure on the back.

I opted for duty on the crash tender which, because of limited aircraft visits, gave me a chance to acquire some valuable time on the Link Trainer, where the instructor was grateful to have some interest shown. This was the counterpart of a modern simulator. Its purpose was to brush up your instrument flying and to teach associated procedures such as radio range and blind landings. You sat in the cockpit with a hood over, whilst the instructor introduced rough air, cross-winds and other difficulties. Your course was reproduced on a glass-topped table by a crab-like copier. I found it fascinating and always got as much time on the Link as possible.

Time passed slowly, we wondered if we would ever get to fly, and then the magic posting came through. In April 1941 we went to Stratford-on-Avon as aircrew cadets with a white flash in our caps and a spring in our step.

**Ed:** *Next month we will move on to flying training*

### **New BBC Two series takes inside look at Heathrow, one of the world's busiest airports**



Covering five square miles and processing nearly 200,000 passengers each day, Heathrow is one of the world's busiest airports. In a new live event

broadcast over four nights, Dan Snow will spend time at Heathrow's heart – the air traffic control tower. Dallas Campbell and Anita Rani will also be airside, granted unparalleled access to get to grips with the extraordinary science, engineering and logistics that make air travel possible.

From air traffic control to airport hangars, the series will follow aircraft from the moment they enter Heathrow's airspace to the moment they depart. With unprecedented access to the people and processes that make air travel possible, Airport Live will follow the airport as it works against the clock to keep planes on time, passengers moving and manage the impact of constantly changing weather conditions.

Dan Snow says: "Air travel has become an everyday luxury that we take for granted, but behind the scenes it's a fascinating web of processes all precisely managed to maintain equilibrium.

"Over four nights we'll get the chance to see how it all works. We'll take a look at the complex choreography of air traffic control, learn to fly the world's largest passenger jet, the A380, and discover how weather plays a crucial role in keeping the whole operation running smoothly. Airport Live will be a thrilling journey through the skies and a definitive account of modern air travel."

Airport Live will mark the most complete exploration of Heathrow's grounds and skies and will feature a mix of live and pre-recorded footage that will explain how an airport works. BBC Two will go behind the scenes airside; into the heart of the air traffic control tower; onto the tarmac as a plane is turned around for departure; and into the hub of engineering to watch a service on a plane. Everything and everyone is on a deadline and BBC Two will be there to watch this daily race first hand.

**Ed:** *Not sure of transmission date yet but will keep you advised*

### The Dam Busters

Having just watched the BBC coverage from RAF Scampton of the 70th anniversary of the Dam Busters raid, the sheer enormity of their task has been brought home again.

Hundreds of onlookers gathered as a Lancaster bomber flew over Derwent reservoir - one of the practice sites used ahead of the top-secret mission. More than a third of the men never returned from the raids, when they had to fly just 60ft above ground.



*Lancaster over Derwent Reservoir*

The RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and 617 Squadron flew over the dam in Derbyshire's Hope Valley on Thursday lunchtime. RAF Scampton later hosted a sunset service.

Only three of the original 133-strong squadron are still alive. Two of them, 94-year-old John "Les" Munro and 91-year-old George "Johnny" Johnson

attended the Scampton service in the evening. Squadron Leader Munro had travelled from New Zealand for the event. He said he made the 12,000-mile trip "just to renew old acquaintances".

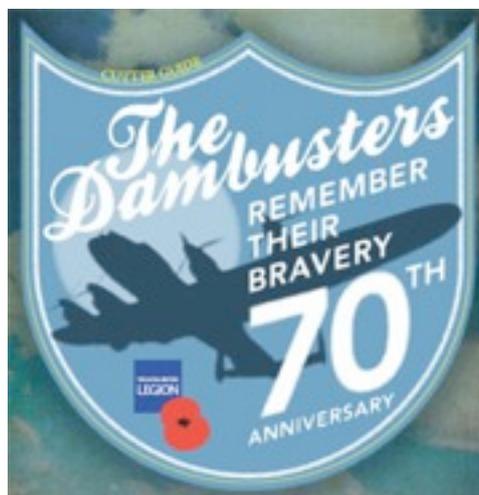
More than 1,300 people were killed in the Dambuster raids when bombs were dropped on German dams and flooded the Ruhr valley. Of the original aircrew, three were captured and 53 were killed

There were a number of events taking place around the country on Thursday to mark the raids of 16-17 May 1943.



*10,500 crests planted*

At the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire, more than 10,500 crests with messages of support were planted at the site's Armed Forces Memorial. Two thousand people turned up to the temporary tribute.



*The crest*

## 146 News

**Unloading fuel barrels causes fire**

A Nusantara Air Charter British Aerospace BAe 146-200, registration PK-JKC performing a daily freight flight from Jayapura to Wamena (Indonesia) carrying fuel supplies for Wamena, had safely landed at Wamena, had reached its parking position, was shut down and being unloaded at around 11:50L (02:50Z), when one of the fuel drums caught fire and set the airplane ablaze. No injuries occurred, however, the aircraft burned down beyond repair.

A fuel drum fell from the aircraft spilling its contents onto the hot brakes of the aircraft and ignited resulting in a blaze that set the aircraft on fire, too.



*A sad end for a 146!*

**New/old 146's for the RAF**

Two new short-medium range transport aircraft which have been recently added to the RAF fleet and are already involved in cargo and passenger operations in Afghanistan.

The BAe 146 Mk 3 aircraft have joined 32 (The Royal) Squadron, The Squadron already operates two BAe 146 Mk 2 aircraft but the Mk3's are around 8 feet longer and include a cargo door on the side. Known as "QC" or "Quick Change" aircraft, they can quickly be configured to carry passengers or freight, or a combination of both. Both of the new BAe 146's are already in service in Afghanistan.



Crews can fly both versions after minimal conversion training, The aircraft can be quickly converted from a cargo role for over 10 tonnes of freight to an airliner for nearly 100 passengers. The aircraft can also operate from short runways, making them very flexible and adaptable for RAF support to current operations. Wing Commander Jon Beck, Officer Commanding 32 (The Royal) Squadron, said: "I am delighted that these two very capable aircraft have been added to the Squadron's inventory. They will provide a welcome boost to our existing capability to support operations in Afghanistan and ensure that vital equipment and personnel get where they need to be, quickly and safely".

**Ed:** *These two aircraft went to Afghanistan but sadly one of them, after a week in theatre was caught in a large hail storm. The airframe sustained considerable damage and after some basic repairs will have to return to UK for BAe to complete the repairs, estimated to take 6 months.*

## Wanted



Next time you fly check you are not being flown by this chap!

A man who forged pilot's qualifications to get a job as a commercial airline pilot is believed to be on the run after failing to turn up at court. Michael Fay,

59, faked papers to get a job with Libyan firm Afriqiyah Airways, flying passengers into Gatwick.

Hampshire police said Fay, a US national, did not attend Winchester Crown Court on 3 May when he was due to be sentenced for fraud. He was handed three years imprisonment in his absence. The former US Air Force Pilot, who had settled in Alton, was arrested in February 2011 after raising the suspicions of another pilot on an internet forum.

Police said he operated Airbus A320 aircraft for eight months after forging his licence and medical certificates and had flown passengers into Gatwick Airport on eight occasions. Officers believe Fay has left the UK and may be seeking work as a pilot or flying instructor. The force is working with the Civil Aviation Authority and overseas law enforcers to bring him back to serve his sentence. Det Con Chris Thorne, of Hampshire Constabulary, said: "Michael Fay is a clever and resourceful man who clearly shows no concern for public safety if he's willing to work without the correct licences and medical certification.

"He targeted Libyan aviation at a time when the country's political and economic standing was vulnerable and volatile. "Had it not been for the quick thinking of a genuine pilot on the internet forum, Fay may have continued to put the public at risk in this manner unnoticed." Afriqiyah Airways said it believed Fay had been employed through a third-party broker that had recommended him has a contractor. It said all flight deck crews had since been assessed for competence in

the UK, Germany and other EU states. An airline spokesman said: "As a major national carrier, we place great emphasis on the safety and integrity of our crews and aircraft, and we will treat the investigation of this matter with the utmost seriousness it deserves."

**Ed:** *Looks like another one that has slipped through our border controls....now what a surprise!*

## More New/Old RAF Aircraft

Aircraft ZZ664 is seen here outside the hangar at L-3's facilities in Greenville, Texas following its roll-out in April. The RC-135, which will be named Airseeker in RAF service,.

The RAF has three RC-135s on order, making the U.K. the first export customer for the RC-135V/W Sigint jets. The aircraft are being converted from a trio of 1964-vintage Boeing KC-135 Stratotankers.



*Photo USAF*

According to officials from RAF Waddington, the future home of the aircraft in the U.K., the first Airseeker will enter service with 51 Squadron by the end of 2013.

Personnel from the squadron are undertaking Conversion Training at Offutt Air Force Base Nebraska. Qualified UK personnel already fly alongside their US counterparts on Rivet Joint operational missions.

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## Programme

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

<b>19 Jun</b>	<b>Aeronautical Artist - Chris Sprent</b>
17 Jul	Air Traffic Control - Peter Marks
21 Aug	S.O.E. - Hugh Davies
18 Sep	Guest's Lunch* 1200 Noon
27 Sep	Aircrew Lunch* Abingdon 1200 Noon
16 Oct	Member's Meeting
20 Nov	The Lightening - Alan Merriman
18 Dec	Christmas Lunch* 1200 Noon

## Your Committee

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## Welfare

Rather a small gathering at Greenacres for the May Luncheon but nonetheless it was very enjoyable. Food was very good and provided in industrial quantities.

Harry Purver was admitted to Stoke Mandeville a couple of weeks ago and said the actual treatment he was getting was superb but there was a certain lack of TLC due to the high workload. Where have we heard that before? Harry was on a isolation sideward as he had been in contact with the dreaded norovirus. He had been pleased with a visit from the Manager of his Abbeyfield home in Halton. Ann and I had to dress up in aprons, gloves, etc but I'm given to wonder how that really helps when there are lots of other bits left unprotected.

As I said in the last Newsletter I would produce a short note on the Members who are fairly regular attendees to keep the rest of you up to date.

First victim was **Eric Barnard**, now 90 and living in Aston Clinton. He was a rear gunner on Halifaxes and did a full tour of operations with 10 Squadron in 4 Group during 1944-1945. His interests now are many and various and include gardening, classical music, reading, U3A and Probus Clubs, Theatre-going and lunching out. Quite the 'young man about town'.

Thanks for that Eric - now, who's next?

**Bill**

## Membership

Nothing to report short of the sad passing of George Carter. Away for a week's sun on the coast (in hope) but back in good time for the next meeting.

**Gerry**

## Treasurer

Not sure whether I should be saying this but I think we have beaten HSBC into submission and we now have the correct people as 'signatures' on our bank account, only taken since last November!

**Rod**