



NEWSLETTER

Please book your Xmas Lunch Place now

October Events

A smaller than expected group of members met at Greenacres for a Member's Meeting on 16 October. We stood in memory of **John Bingham** whose passing was reported in the last Newsletter. After the committee reports we were treated to two members and their stories.

Bill George explained how he had met up with his Meteor instructor of 60 years ago and then showed us some photos from that era.



Bill George and Mike Hughes (or 'Sir' as he was known in Sept 53!)



Pranks with a Meteor, Bill at the front of the engine!

Rod Finn had, in August taken **Roy Briggs** to The Freedom of Huntingdonshire for RAF Wyton celebrations. Rod then showed us photos of the celebrations.

The Chiltern ACA was well represented, in addition to **Roy, Doug Hadland and Harold Kirby** also attended. **More photos on Page 7**



If you have the Freedom to march through Huntingdon-use it! Roy Briggs rolling back the years!

Christmas Lunch

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

Tickets from **Gerry Sealey-Bell** at Nov meeting or 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 6

Lincolnshire and the surrounding counties were a mass of airfields, some cheek by jowl. From most of these, other squadrons would be rising to join the bomber stream, whilst diversionary raids to mislead the enemy fighters would also be setting out. The intention was to overwhelm the defences by concentrating the attack with careful timing. Diversionary raids were mounted to 'light up' some of the defences en route. This guarded us from wandering into them and also gave a good navigational fix. Frankfurt was a case in point. It was frequently near our route and was very heavily defended by guns and searchlights, so a couple of squadrons of Mosquitos would attack it as we approached and we would alter course as the defences lit up. It was the overall plan of the night's operations that I think gave most of us the confidence that we were not just being sent 'over the top' without thought. Despite this we never referred to the C-in-C as 'Bomber' Harris as the newspapers did. He was always 'Butch' to us.

Personally, I never saw an enemy night fighter. Their presence was sometimes obvious from the lines of flares being dropped along the track of the bomber stream or the sudden bursting into flames of a neighbouring aircraft. Their tactic was to approach from the rear to the blind spot underneath the bomber, then open up with twin upward-firing cannon. They did not use tracer ammunition, so the method remained unknown to us for a long time. Defence relied on the vigilance of Bob Job who, on sighting a night fighter, would warn me and initiate the 'corkscrew' at the moment he judged the fighter was committed to the attack. This was a violent evasive manoeuvre designed to shake off the fighter and leave us ultimately on the same heading. It was a great strain on a loaded bomber and upsetting for the crew who had to be warned at each change of direction.

Collision was a real danger at night or in cloud. I remember setting out over Southend at dusk with an uneasy feeling about the proximity of others. Suddenly two aircraft ahead of us burst into flames and fell to earth. Immediately several hundred sets of

navigation lights were switched on to reveal how near they were.

October drew to a close with a trip to Essen and three trips to Cologne, one in daylight where we picked up some flak damage. November had some cold, clear nights and we were kept busy. On the 4th we went to Bochum, heavily defended by searchlights, flak and fighters. Seeing a Lancaster caught in a cone of searchlight beams is a terrible sight, matched by the numbers of aircraft falling in flames. It was here that my friend from Sandtoft, Taff Edwards, and his crew died. Claude Terriere, the navigator, was nineteen and had come from Mauritius to fight.

It is not easy to describe one's feelings as the target drew near. Foremost was anxiety that you were in the right place at the right time; the coloured TIs going down in front of you hopefully solved this. If you were late then you were greeted by the twinkling of the flak barrage ahead. It would be natural to have a moment of sympathy for those about to receive the bombardment, but the situation was too tense for such luxuries and the realities of Nazi rule for the occupied countries meant that we had to strive for the earliest end to the bloodshed and grief.



Jack (Rear left) and his crew

Ed: *I make no apologies for making this a long running series. Jack and his crew on 625 Squadron completed a full, operational tour, which says a great deal for their 'Skipper'. More next month*



Why Remembrance

'Please wear a poppy' the lady said
 And held one forth But I shook my head.
 Then I stopped and watched as she offered them there,
 And her face was old and lined with care;
 But beneath the scars the years had made
 There remained a smile that refused to fade

A boy came whistling down the street,
 Bouncing along on care free feet.
 His smile was full of joy and fun
 'Lady', said he, 'may I have one?'
 When she'd pinned it on he turned to say,
 'Why do we wear a poppy today?'

The lady smiled in her wistful way
 And answered, 'This is Remembrance Day
 And the poppy there is the symbol for
 The gallant men who died in the war.
 And because they did, you and I are free,
 That's why we wear a poppy, you see'.

'I had a boy about your size,
 With golden hair and big blue eyes.
 He loved to play and jump and shout,
 Free as a bird he would race about,
 As the years went by he learned and grew
 And became a man - as you will too.

He was fine and strong, with a boyish smile,
 But he'd seemed with us such a little while
 When war broke out and he went away.

I still remember his face that day
 When he smiled at me and said 'Goodbye,
 I'll be back soon, Mum, so please don't cry'

'But the war went on and he had to stay,
 And all I could do was wait and pray.
 His letters told of the awful fight,
 (I can see it still in my dreams at night).
 With the tanks and guns and cruel barbed wire,
 And the mines and bullets, the bombs and fire.

'Till at last, at last, the war was won -
 And that's why we wear a poppy, son'
 The small boy turned as if to go,
 Then said 'Thanks, lady, I'm glad to know.
 That sure did sound like an awful fight,
 But your son - did he come back all right?'

A tear rolled down each faded cheek,
 She shook her head, but didn't speak.
 I slunk away in a sort of shame
 And if you were with me you'd have done the same;
 For our thanks, in giving, is oft delayed,
 Though our freedom was bought - and thousands paid!

And so when we see a poppy worn,
 Let us reflect on the burden borne
 By those who gave their very all
 When asked to answer their country's call.
 That we at home in peace might live,
 Then wear a poppy! Remember - and Give

Anon

Ed: *My thanks to Gerry Sealy-Bell for this one.*



*Let us also remember those who over the years have
 stood just where that lady was. They too grow old
 but their memories never fade - just ask George and
 Florrie Biggs!*

Culinary Events

We do seem to have had a rush of ‘Eating and Drinking’ over recent weeks. Our Buffet Lunch on 18 September was hotly followed by ‘The Aircrew Lunch’ on 27 September at The Black Horse, Abingdon



Hugh Parry and Reg Croot (Oxford) in discussion with our own Dick Haven at Abingdon

Last month saw us visit The Haddenham Mafia on their home ground at The Rose and Thistle for a Flying Breakfast on 18 October. Again members from Oxford and Chiltern joined up for an excellent social occasion.



George Meredith & Sandy Lowe listen to Guy Buckingham (could it have been cars and Australia?)



L to R, Ian Mason, Jo Laurie, Pam Barnard, Judy Mason and Eric Barnard



L to R Ron Doble, David Lindsay, Roy Briggs and Rod Finn

Ed: *Our thanks to those of you who supported our recent ventures away from Hemel Hempstead, your efforts were much appreciated.*

It is amazing who you meet, Oxford member Reg Croot happened to sit opposite Roy Briggs at Haddenham and low and behold they found out they had joined the same squadron within a month of each other (small world or what!)

Now make some dates in next years diary:

Aircrew Lunch at Abingdon Friday 28 Sep 14 and the Flying Breakfast at Haddenham on Friday 17 October 2014. How’s that for advanced warning!

The Doolittle Raiders

Ed: *My thanks to Roger Miller for forwarding this story. As he says what do we do, there must be many stories in this country that are similar. What about the first crews to bomb Berlin which was so heavily defended. Wherever they come from WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.*

It was the cup of brandy that no one wanted to drink. On April 17, 2013 in Fort Walton Beach , Florida , the surviving Doolittle Raiders gathered publicly for the last time.



They once were among the most universally admired and revered men in the United States. There were 80 of the Raiders in April 1942, when they carried out one of the most courageous and heart-stirring military operations in this nation's history. The mere mention of their unit's name, in those years, would bring tears to the eyes of grateful Americans. Now only four survive.

After Japan 's sneak attack on Pearl Harbor , with the United States reeling and wounded, something

dramatic was needed to turn the war effort around. Even though there were no friendly airfields close enough to Japan for the United States to launch a retaliation, a daring plan was devised. Sixteen B-25s were modified so that they could take off from the deck of an aircraft carrier. This had never before been tried -- sending such big, heavy bombers from a carrier.

The 16 five-man crews, under the command of Lt. Col. James Doolittle, who himself flew the lead plane off the USS Hornet, knew that they would not be able to return to the carrier. They would have to hit Japan and then hope to make it to China for a safe landing.

But on the day of the raid, the Japanese military caught wind of the plan. The Raiders were told that they would have to take off from much farther out in the Pacific Ocean than they had counted on. They were told that because of this they would not have enough fuel to make it to safety. And those men went anyway.

They bombed Tokyo , and then flew as far as they could. Four planes crash-landed; 11 more crews bailed out, and three of the Raiders died. Eight more were captured; three were executed. Another died of starvation in a Japanese prison camp. One crew made it to Russia.

Of the 80 Raiders, 62 survived the war. They were celebrated as national heroes, models of bravery. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced a motion picture based on the raid; "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo," starring Spencer Tracy and Van Johnson, was a patriotic and emotional box-office hit.

Beginning in 1946, the surviving Raiders have held a reunion each April, to commemorate the mission. The reunion is in a different city each year. In 1959, the city of Tucson , Arizona , as a gesture of respect and gratitude, presented the Doolittle Raiders with a set of 80 silver goblets. Each goblet was engraved with the name of a Raider. Every year, a wooden display case bearing



transported to the reunion city. Each time a Raider passes away, his goblet is turned upside down in the case at the next reunion, as his old friends bear solemn witness.

Also in the wooden case is a bottle of 1896 Hennessy Very Special cognac. The year is not happenstance: 1896 was when Jimmy Doolittle was born.

There has always been a plan: When there are only two surviving Raiders, they would open the bottle, at last drink from it, and toast their comrades who preceded them in death. As 2013 began, there were five living Raiders; then, in February, Tom Griffin passed away at age 96.

So now, out of the original 80, only four Raiders remain: Dick Cole (Doolittle's co-pilot on the Tokyo raid), Robert Hite, Edward Saylor and David Thatcher. All are in their 90s. They have decided that there are too few of them for the public reunions to continue.

The events in Fort Walton Beach marked the end. It has come full circle; Florida's nearby Eglin Field was where the Raiders trained in secrecy for the Tokyo mission. The town planned to do all it can to honor the men: a six-day celebration of their valor, including luncheons, a dinner and a parade. Do the men ever wonder if those of us for whom they helped save the country have tended to it in a way that is worthy of

their sacrifice? They don't talk about that, at least not around other people. But if you find yourself near any of the Raiders, you might want to offer them a word of thanks. They appreciate hearing that they are remembered.



The men have decided that after this final public reunion they will wait until a later date -- some time this year -- to get together once more, informally and in absolute privacy. That is when they will open the bottle of brandy. The years are flowing by too swiftly now; they are not going to wait until there are only two of them. They will fill the four remaining upturned goblets. And raise them in a toast to those who are gone.

A WAAF Remembers

I shivered at the sight of what had been
an active airfield in my younger days,
where men, no more than boys, were to be seen
boarding their planes at dusk where sheep now
graze.

I still recall that evening long ago
when a young sergeant caught my passing glance.
He came towards me bashfully and slow,
and shyly asked me if I cared to dance.
I did, and then in the ensuing days
we grew to know each other better, and
love blossomed fiercer than a wind-fueled blaze;
long did we talk, our life together planned.
Then one black night above the Ruhr his plane
was lost; I never saw my love again

We will remember them

Pathfinders and RAF Wyton Freedom of Huntingdonshire

The Chiltern ACA was represented by Roy Briggs, Doug Hadland and Harold Kirby, all war-time Pathfinders at the celebrations. Photos courtesy of RAF Wyton. Thanks also to Roy and Rod Finn for their fine presentation at our October meeting.



Doug Hadland, Harold Kirby and extreme right Roy Briggs watch the parade



The Lancaster brings back the memories



The Freedom Scroll



PATHFINDERS DINNER
Royal Air Force Wyton Officers' Mess
16th August 2013

Roy Briggs (back row centre)

A wonderful weekend and the 'Freedom' is richly deserved, to those who flew with the 'Pathfinder Force' all those years ago.

Ron Doble



After all the normal (and sometimes abnormal) bits of selection, signing on, initial training etc., Ron found himself at Dalcross Gunnery School on the Wellington X and after graduating went on to Moreton in

the Marsh (21 OTU) where he was again on his favourite aircraft the "Welly".

His first trip was a memorable six hour cross country at 18,000 feet. Now this was Ron's first trip on oxygen and also he had never deployed his own drogue before or used the winch in the fuselage. So he got out of the rear turret, hanging on to an enormous oxygen bottle, attached the drogue to the cable and winch and then released it. Unfortunately his 'Biggles' type scarf and intercom became entangled with the cable - big panic. He managed to unwind himself only to find that his oxygen had become disconnected. He then saw that the drogue was still in its wrapped condition and flailing around the tail of the Welly in a huge arc - more panic. The drogue was also tangled round his oxygen bottle but he managed to recover it only to find that it was empty and quickly began to suffer the effects of lack of oxygen - guess what - even more panic. However he staggered up the fuselage where a watchful navigator plugged him in to a fresh oxygen point. Unfortunately the saga had not ended because when he had returned to the turret there were suddenly clouds of smoke from an electrical fire. He left hurriedly having informed Skipper, tripped over a spar and stuck his flying boot into an unstrapped Elsan. At least the fire went out and Ron spent the rest of the trip

up front with the Skipper. It is not recorded whether or not he had to remove his boot! As Ron said -

'What a way to start OTU!'

After his operational training he was posted to 97 Squadron where he flew in Wellingtons, Lancasters and eventually Lincolns.

One exciting experience on Lincolns was when there was a sales drive on to sell these aircraft to the Shah of Persia and other Arab countries. The demonstration exercise was a six hour trip over the North Sea and France and finally to drop 14 x 1000lb bombs on a target on Salisbury Plain, in view of (but not too near!!) the visiting Shah and other dignitaries, making the approach to the target ON ONE ENGINE ONLY! The whole crew were praying that the other three would unfeather and restart as they disappeared from view of the big-wigs. All went well and the trip was pronounced a great success.

At the beginning of the war Ron had been working with Rootes in Acton, London who were then producing Blenheims. In 1948 he was back with them now producing Talbot cars. He remained in the car manufacturing industry until retirement and even then carried on working part time on cars for many years. His great interest is the history of Bomber Command and he is a fount of knowledge on the subject.

(It should not go unnoticed that Ron has contributed a huge amount to the functioning of the Aircrew Association. He is always busy keeping in touch and visiting Members. So never be surprised if you get a call starting 'Hello, it's Ron from Aircrew'. A heartfelt thank you to the Boss of the Haddenham Mafia).

Ed: *Thanks to Bill Hyland for getting this together. Would have made a wonderful episode on 'Some Mothers do Have 'em, with Ron played by Michael Crawford!*

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Programme

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

20 Nov The Lightning - Alan Merriman

18 Dec Christmas Lunch* 1200 Noon

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Welfare

As some of you know I have been getting some of my own medicine with 9 days in Wycombe Hospital. An operation and now it is the start of the recovery phase. I am confined to light duties but that will not stop me getting on the phone!

Bill

Membership Secretary

Please get your orders for the Christmas Lunch into me as soon as possible. We have thanks to Greenacres been able to keep the price of tickets at the same as last year.

One change of address for you:

Ian Nelson 20-22 East Street, Horsham, RH12 1HL

Telephone No to follow

Gerry

Treasurer

We have been in regular contact with HSBC to ensure our new cheque book reflect the name of 'Chiltern ACA', so please ensure your cheques are made out correctly.

If you have any raffle prizes we could use at the Christmas Lunch please bring them to the November meeting or give me a call, so that I know what is coming on the day 01438 350115.



LOTTERY FUNDED