

The 4T9er

LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET!

**The 49 Squadron Association Magazine
May 2009 Issue 14**



**The Nuclear Test Programme Monument at
The National Arboretum, Alrewas. 49 Squadron played the key role
in dropping Britain's first test nuclear devices.**

IN MEMORIAM

E. COWARD W. HARPER
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

WELCOME TO:

NEW MEMBER

Malcolm Price

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

John Fairbrother Greg Nolan Carol McQueen

NEW FRIENDS

Vic Lenton Donald Snaith

NEW HONORARY FRIENDS

Olicer Clutton-Brock F/L Mike Chatterton



EDITORIAL

I apologise for the late publication of this issue. As usual I start by thanking those of you who have made donations to the Association funds. I am also grateful to those who have provided letters and articles for The 4T9er as without them there would be no magazine. In this issue you can read part one of Bert Cole's story and also as a complete contrast to our usual articles there is a two part piece by ex Women's Land Army member, Bettie Baird. Bert has told his story to various organisations, Rotary Clubs etc. and has been amazed to receive a standing ovation each time. Bettie has appeared on television in connection with her story. It has however been a slow quarter for news, no visits etc. so for the first time for quite a while I have had to cut to 28 pages.

Thank you to all those who kindly sent Easter greetings to Barbara and me.

The Parish Church at Reepham was full to overflowing for the funeral of Geoff Stuffins. A Guard of Honour of 4T9ers, under the command of 49SA Hon. President, John Ward, was present as the coffin entered the church. In view of Geoff's love for the Association it was decided that donations in his memory be divided between the Nettleham Medical Practice, who had been so supportive through Geoff's illness, and 49 Squadron Association. We are most grateful to Mary and the family for the receipt of £360. In addition our appeal towards a memorial to Geoff, [The 4T9er, Issue 13] has raised £205.

Once again this year the reunion booked up in less than a week. We have been informed by F/Lt Jack Hawkins of the BBMF that the Lancaster is likely to overfly Petwood Hotel sometime after 1500hrs on Sunday 7th June. At 2000hrs that same evening, in the Petwood, F/Lt Mike Chatterton will give a presentation entitled 'A tale of two Lancasters'. Mike flew the BBMF

Front Cover;-

The inscription reads:-

**This commemorates all personnel of
The Combined Services Task Force
who served during the nuclear tests at**

**Monte Bello
Emufield
Maralinga
Christmas Island
Malden Island**

1952-1966

Lanc. from 1989—1997 and has taxied 'Just Jane' at East Kirkby since 1995. He and his late father (Who flew with 44 Squadron) are no doubt unique in both having flown Lancasters. Following the Airfield Memorial Service it is planned to dedicate the memorial to Geoff. On arrival at The Village Hall the new flag pole outside the scout hut will be dedicated. At the reunion two years ago Irene Winter made a most generous donation to the Association. It was so generous in fact that I felt that we could not possibly keep it all. I therefore spoke to the leaders of the Fiskerton Scout Troop and asked if there was anything they needed that we could supply that could be dedicated to Irene's late husband Jack who completed his tour as a pilot with 49 Squadron. It was suggested that a flagpole would be most appropriate and so the Association has donated towards it and organised the manufacture of a plaque in Jack Winter's memory. The scouts have arranged the base for the plaque and it's installation.

It is with regret that I record the passing in April of navigator Walter Harper who completed a tour before being posted to 49 Squadron from 1944-1946. Also Associate Member Eddie Coward whose brother, P/O Clifford Coward, was killed whilst flying with 49 Squadron. Eddy will be remembered for writing the poem 'Spirits in Flight' which is now part of The Fiskerton Airfield Memorial in addition to compiling the anthology 'The Poems We Wrote'.

On the other hand I am delighted to say that we are still being joined by former WWII squadron members. We welcome the latest of these, Malcolm Price who flew his tour between August 43 and March 44 as mid-upper gunner in P/O George's crew. This included eleven trips to 'The Big City', Berlin.

New Associate Member John Fairbrother's father was Hampden Wop/Ag Sgt. J.W. Fairbrother, Greg Nolan is the son of F/Sgt C. Nolan who was rear gunner in the crew of P/O W.C. Shackleton whose Manchester failed to return from a raid on Essen on June 2nd 1942. All were killed apart from the two gunners who became PoWs. Carol McQueen is the great niece of rear gunner Sgt. H Darbyshire who was lost on the Wurzburg raid on 16/17 March 45.

We have pleasure in welcoming F/L Mike Chatterton, who has already been introduced, and Oliver Clutton Brock, author of 'Massacre over the Marne' and 'Footprints in the Sands of Time' and as 'Honorary Friends'.

New 'Friend' Vic Lenton became interested in 49 Squadron when he met former navigator in Eric Jones' crew, Sgt D Blackham. Donald Snaith's father was a close friend and neighbour of 49 Squadron pilot F/O Cyril Beatson who was killed 6th October 1944. (See Reader's Letters.)

At the end of April Barbara and I accompanied Associate Graham Inns and his wife Chris, on a visit to the UK from Adelaide, on visits to a number of places in Lincolnshire including RAF Scampton. Here we were given an excellent tour by museum curator Mervyn Hallam. The impressive display of the relics

of 49 Squadron's Hampden P1206 is now open to the public. However, the official opening will not take place until July or August as it is intended to unveil three busts, one of each of Scampton's VC's, Rod Learoyd (49 Sqdn.), John Hannah (83 Sqdn.) & Guy Gibson (617 Sqdn.), at the same time. A beautiful stained glass window has been installed in the museum. I understand that RAF Scampton is to remain open 'for the foreseeable future'. The four main hangars, grade II listed buildings, are being repainted. No. 1 which houses the museum is virtually finished and very smart it looks too.

I was both saddened and disgusted to hear from Freda Styles that a large quantity of lead has been stolen from the roof of Fiskerton Church. Luckily it was spotted and the roof made water tight before any rain damage ensued. As the church is a Grade 1 Listed Building the lead, which had only been renewed in 2000, was of a high grade. Whilst on the subject of Fiskerton Church, I learn that Rev. Clive Todd, who has been the Vicar of Fiskerton for the past three years, has moved on to become Director of Ordinands. He has been succeeded for the time being by Rev. Peter Collins whom we have had the pleasure of meeting during the last year or so. We wish them both the very best in their new positions.

NB. No I didn't know what Ordinands are either. I misheard and thought that the Church was mobilising and that Clive said 'ordnance'! Apparently Ordinands are those who wish to train as priests, similar to the Aircrew Selection Board I guess.

Mike Ling, our Associate Member Red Arrows pilot, is flying in the Red 7 position this year and is one of the synchro pair. Have a good season Mike!

Mary Stuffins kindly sent me a cutting from The Lincolnshire Echo which says that a series of events are being organised to raise funds for the new Bomber Command Memorial. These are being hosted by the BBMF based at Coningsby. The first event will be an art exhibition by David Shepherd running from June 29th to July 3rd. Many of the works have been commissioned by the RAF. Mr Shepherd's painting 'Elephants in front of Mount Kilimanjaro' will be donated as a raffle prize. Raffle tickets are £10 each and are available from 'BCMA Raffle', The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, RAF Coningsby, Lincoln LN4 4SY. Tickets for the art show will cost £10. A banquet on Friday July 3rd will be held at Petwood Hotel in Woodhall Spa. Tickets cost £100 and further information is available from Yvonne Masters at the BBMF (01526 347992). Enclose a sae in each case for return of tickets.

In February it looked most unlikely that Vulcan XH558 would ever fly again. The money was running out and notices of redundancy had been issued to the staff. Then the news got out and the general public got behind the project once again with the result that funding became available to launch XH558 into its second display season. In a very short time £956,835 of the target £1,000,000

had been pledged.

I have been speaking to 'Nobby' Unwin who is the webmaster of www.valiants-r-us.co.uk. Whilst this site is mainly dedicated to 138 Squadron Nobby promotes all things Valiant. He is attempting to establish a Valiant Museum at Thorpe Camp, Woodhall Spa and would welcome contact from any old air or ground crew who were involved with the Valiant. His telephone number is 01623 461580 or contact him via the website.

Were you based in the New Forest during the last war? If so you might like to know that John Levesley, Secretary of Friends of The New Forest Airfields, contacted me. If you wish to know more then John's telephone number is 01425 674516 and the 'Friends' website address is; www.winkton.net/fonfa.htm

I have previously mentioned that on occasions I and my colleagues, when researching, sometimes get the feeling that our actions are 'guided'. Last summer my brother and his wife were holidaying in Central Wales. I know that there is a 49er buried in Llandridod Wells Cemetery and that the grave had not been photographed for the website Roll of Honour. I asked them if they would photograph the grave of F/O John Bufton which they did and in the process Nikki laid some flowers there. The photographs were duly entered on the Roll of Honour and nothing more was thought of it. Several months later Nikki visited a spiritualist whom she had never met before. She gave some remarkably accurate detail about various deceased family members and then said, "The airman thanks you for the flowers." Nikki was puzzled by this then later remembered the grave in Wales..... Make of it what you will!

I have been reliably informed that former German wartime military personnel are no longer allowed to take part in signing sessions at The Imperial War Museum, Duxford. This I understand is the Museum's decision following a complaint by an ex Lancaster aircrew member which reached national media level and snowballed from there, it is not that of the individual art dealers and publishers. The museum have implemented the ban in order to avoid negative publicity. In The 4T9er in February I mentioned my meeting with former Luftwaffe Nachtjager, Peter Spoden, a totally charming man. Now he is not welcome to signing events at Duxford whilst they are quite happy to display V1's, Bf109's, FW 190's, panzer's etc. I can only express my total disgust.

During last summer I read 'Flying Through Fire' by Geoffrey Williams. It starts by describing the technical side of FIDO followed by a description of the system installed at each of the seventeen stations, including Fiskerton, so fitted. For those who aren't familiar with FIDO it stands for 'FOG INVESTIGATION AND DISPERSAL OPERATION'. The principle was simply to create sufficient heat along the runway to disperse the fog. Early experiments

involved baskets of burning coke placed along the length of the runway but the system finally consisted of pipes fitted with burners with vaporised petrol as the fuel. It is estimated that some three thousand aircraft took advantage of the system and thus it is possible that 15,000 lives were saved. The consumption of petrol was approximately 62,000 gallons per hour!

I mentioned the early experiments with coke and it is this that has caused me to refer to FIDO here. During one of these tests an event took place that must have been pure 'Dad's Army'. As the London Midland and Scottish Railway were interested in the potential of FIDO to disperse fog at marshalling yards an experiment was carried out at the railway works at Derby.

340 braziers, each 9ft 6ins long and 3ft 9ins wide were built enclosing an area 425 yards long by 150 yards wide. They were charged with 70 tons of wood shavings and 200 tons of coke. To speed up combustion it was considered advisable to spray the shavings with paraffin beforehand. Needless to say foggy days were immediately in short supply and it was not until 20th February 1943 that the first trial took place. The boffins were not very impressed as the fire created worse black smoke than the fog and due to the intense heat most of the wire mesh and angle iron frames were so distorted that they could not be reused. However, the great heat caused a marked change in local weather conditions. During the second test the heat created a breeze of its own which dispersed the fog but blew burning debris on to a local farmer's barn and haystacks and on to the railway's own wooden stores shed, destroying the lot!

One can see the funny side now but no doubt there were some very red faces at the time.

I would very much like to include an article on FIDO at Fiskerton in a future issue and would therefore greatly appreciate receiving anybody's recollections of the system and its operation.

I have always prided myself on being positive minded, considering this to be a virtue. However, an article by Ann Widdecombe MP rather took the wind out of my sails. She postulates that when one is ill a negative person can make one feel worse with their predictions of doom and gloom whereas a positive person lifts one with their thoughts that everything will turn out fine. OK so far but, whereas the positive person considers that all will be well therefore there is no need to visit, the negative person, fearing the worst, will visit regularly, helping out and generally trying to make life more comfortable. Em.....em.....Well at least I would save myself the time of all those non-essential visits!

The attention of aircrew veterans is drawn to the message at the bottom of page 26 from F/L Gary Mennell regarding free flights to Bruntingthorpe, Leicestershire.

'Til the next time.

BERT COLE'S STORY

At the ripe old age of fourteen I started my working career as an apprentice carpenter in 1936 at J. Robbins & Sons, old-fashioned family builders based at Weston-under-Penyard near Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.

On 3rd September 1939 the war started and all my friends enlisted or went to building sites to do war work. As I was in a reserved occupation I could only join the R.A.F. as a member of aircrew, so in May 1941 I signed up in Gloucester for a pilot's course.

In the immediate aftermath of this my employers wrote to the Air Ministry to try and prevent me joining up. However the Air Ministry said that they had no choice but to accept me because the category "air crew" allowed me to join. I was called up on 20th October 1941, intake 17/17, to the air crew Receiving Centre in Viceroy Close, St. John's Wood, London.

We were in civilian clothes and fed at Regent's Park Zoo at seven o'clock in the morning, carrying an old-fashioned hurricane lamp each end of the column so that we did not get run over by motorists in the dark!

I spent about two weeks in London, and then went to Eight Initial Training Wing (8ITW) for elementary training. I had originally failed the maths exam run by Oxford Attestation Board and I was sent to Ross-on-Wye A.T.C. to gen up on this. Flight-Lieutenant Yorke, the local grammar school teacher, coached me at his home for two evenings a week after work, in my dirty overalls. He taught me maths as well as how to hold a knife and fork!

After two months he applied for me to the R.A.F. for the relevant maths papers, and one evening, as invigilating officer, he sat me opposite him in a corner of his room to do the exam. At the end he gave me a nod of approval and the papers went off to the R.A.F. I was so concerned about failing the exam that I had worked very hard and achieved 100%. As a result of passing the exam I went on to Newquay 8ITW in Cornwall in late October 1941, and found that my score was actually the highest of anyone on the course.

We were billeted at Beaconsfield Hotel, a most lovely building on the sea front. There was a curfew there and we had to be in by ten in the evening or face a charge, but we devised a system to climb over the roof, our friends pulled the blackout down and let us in. Unfortunately I was caught several times and punished accordingly.

We left Newquay in March 1942. Because I'd had all my teeth removed there, I had missed postings to South Africa, Canada and America. In the end I was given a full set of teeth in March 1942, courtesy of the R.A.F. and was posted to 7 EFTS (Elementary Flying Training School) Desford near Leicester, flying Tiger Moths.

We were to do fifteen hours. Unfortunately I landed very heavily on several occasions. It was decided that I was not quite fit to be in charge of very

expensive aircraft! From Desford I went for three weeks to Heaton Park in Manchester, a Distribution Centre. It rained for most of the time!

My first posting, on 10th August 1942, was to R.A.F. Bobbington, also in The Midlands, on a bomb aimer's course, flying Avro Ansons. On several occasions the Americans, who were stationed at Bobbington, tried to land their B17's on our little grass track, so it was decided to re-name the airfield Halfpenny Green, which it is still called today. It was at Bobbington that I first met my dear friend Len Bradfield. We were together in Bomber Command for the rest of the war, and also as P.o.W.'s in Germany.

We had a flight-sergeant, a nasty type, who had a down on us, and in particular on Corporal Ewing, who was an original R.A.F. ground-staff chap. The flight-sergeant went out every night to the local pub and did not return until midnight, so Ewing, I and some of the other bods moved the old barrels of flowers from the side of the road into the middle. The flight-sergeant came back the wrong side of midnight, half-drunk, ran into the barrels, and smashed his car up. We were confined to camp for two weeks; no-one would own up.

I left R.A.F. Bobbington on 27th October 1942. After leave I was posted to R.A.F. Upper Heyford Number 16, an Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.) in Oxfordshire for Wellingtons. I started flying there on 29th December 1942 and was crewed with: Pilot Flight-Sergeant Lawrence E. Watson ("Lol"), a surveyor from Rotherham, who died in 1996, Navigator Flight-Sergeant C.T. Green, Wireless Operator/Gunner McGarva, Rear-Gunner Flight-Sergeant Maurice E. Scarfe and myself, Bomb-Aimer Flight-Sergeant Bert Cole. Three of us were billeted at a lovely old hall, Fritwell Manor, owned by Mr. George T. Morton, who was still there in 1958. Our pilot and wireless operator, however, were billeted at Upper Heyford. Food in the 'Pupil' Sergeants' Mess was terrible.

On the first night of our crewing our pilot said that he was coming over to Fritwell with us, by R.A.F. transport. On arrival, he went straight into the little coach house, which had been converted into a canteen. What a sight! There were mountains of food, including trifles, and iced fruit cakes. We hadn't had food like this for years, so we piled in! As we finished the skipper said, "Oh my God!" A notice above the counter read, "This is the birthday of the canteen, everything is free tonight." We didn't know where to put ourselves.

The lady behind the counter, who turned out to be the lady of the manor, Mrs. Morton, said that she understood, and, to put us at our ease, told our fortunes. Mine was that I would survive several crashes but come through safely. *Everything that she said came true.*

I had a lucky first escape there. On operations we bomb-aimers went in initially in batches, to drop bombs and photo flashes over the bombing range. One particular night I was due to fly at 1030 but had gone out with two chums and we were never going to get back in time. I swapped with my dear friend,

Pilot Officer ‘Nobby’ Clark, who went up at 0330, and was killed. The Flight Office was closed but a corporal said to me, “Sergeant Cole, flying scrubbed, bad crash.” Next morning, arriving for breakfast, Len Bradfield said, “Nobby (which was my R.A.F. nickname), I thought you were dead!” That was the first of several escapes for me.

THANK YOU LADY FRITWELL

I left Upper Heyford O.T.U. on 28th February 1943, and joined 1654 Conversion Unit at Wigsley, a few miles west of Lincoln. This Unit had the job of familiarising Wellington bomber pilots and wireless operators to the newer Avro Manchester planes, and I was on the last trip, I believe, of Manchester L7280, which involved circuits and landings, mainly for pilots and wireless operators. We had done several hours and I told Watson, our pilot, that we had had enough and that we should pack it up. He said no, so we had a vote, resulting in three for and three against. I bribed the rear-gunner with the offer of a free meal of egg and chips at the Saxilby Bridge Hotel.

We landed, and waited about thirty minutes for the truck to pick us up from Dispersal. As we drove away from the aircraft, the skipper said that the wing was on fire. The engine manifolds had burnt through. If we’d gone up again we would have been goners.

THANK YOU LADY FRITWELL

The remainder was fairly uneventful, except that I went with a crew from Langar, Nottinghamshire on 13th April 1943 on a bombing operation to Spezia, Italy, taking ten hours. We got lost, the poor navigator and I nearly missing England! Our skipper said that we were almost out of juice. We called “Mayday” on the emergency frequency but there was no reply. Suddenly the runway lights at Perranporth, Cornwall (I think it was) came on, we went straight in and landed safely. As we turned to taxi, all the engines cut, out of fuel. Had we circled ‘round the curtain’ we would have crashed!

THANK YOU LADY FRITWELL

I was posted to 49 Squadron at Fiskerton, Lincolnshire on 28th April 1943, and on 22nd May we went on a “Wings for Victory” Lancaster bomber flight over Nottingham, lasting one hour fifteen minutes. The skipper had allowed a ground engineer to fly with us. No parachute. We made a terrible landing at Fiskerton. I remained in the nose, contrary to all procedures. When we bounced I shot through the engineer’s legs and he moaned, “You have ruined me!” We went down the runway on the bomb doors and undercarriage, finally coming to a standstill. We said, “Skipper, it’s on fire, quick, look at the smoke!” The practice smoke bombs had gone off, luckily no-one got hurt. We all got out smartish. Only seven of us should have crewed but there were eight because of an odd bod.

THANK YOU LADY FRITWELL

By co-incidence, sixty years or so later, at a Fiskerton 49 Squadron Reunion Dinner, a chap sitting opposite to me said, "I wish I could meet that bomb-aimer who nearly ruined me!" I burst out laughing and said that it was me. Small world!

Now a few facts and figures. One of the world's first aircraft manufacturers, A.V. Roe and Company, known as Avro, was well known for planes such as the Avro Lancaster which served in World War II and which were made at Woodford Aerodrome in Cheshire. 7,377 Lancaster bombers were made in the war. They each carried a crew of seven. The full load of petrol was 2,154 gallons. Depending on the speed of the aircraft, the take-off runway had to be between 1,200 and 1,500 yards long. Cruising speed was about 200 m.p.h at a height of 15,000 feet; landing speed was 90 m.p.h. Maximum bomb load (petrol load adjusted) was 22,000 pounds and the Lancaster range was 1,550 miles with maximum bomb load.

And on to the serious stuff!

Our eleven operations as a crew were as follows:-

7th May 1943	Essen	6 hours 5 minutes
29th May 1943	Wuppertal, Ruhr	6 hours 30 minutes
11th June 1943	Dusseldorf	5 hours 15 minutes
22nd June 1943	Mulheim	5 hours 35 minutes
24th June 1943	Wuppertal, Ruhr	5 hours 40 minutes
28th June 1943	Cologne	5 hours 35 minutes
9th July 1943	Gelsenkirchen	6 hours 50 minutes
12th July 1943	Turin	10 hours 15 minutes
29th July 1943	Hamburg	5 hours
2nd August 1943	Hamburg	5 hours 25 minutes
9th/10th August 1943	Mannheim	Shot down in Lancaster ED719 over Kaiserslautern, Rhineland

Bert's story will be concluded in the next issue.

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A DODGY ‘DODGE’

By Jim Bridger

It was April 1945 when Admiral Raeder signed Germany’s unconditional surrender and suddenly the ‘European’ war was over! One of the mass of problems now facing the RAF was how to keep the bomber crews usefully together whilst they pondered which units would be prepared for ‘Tiger Force’ to sort the Japanese out. First there was ‘Operation Manna’ - dropping food to the starving folk in Holland, next it was bringing home the freed P.O.W’s; and then someone had the brilliant idea of sending us to Italy to bring home the wonderful 8th and 1st Army men so that they could have some well earned leave. So these men were gathered at a massive airstrip near Bari on Italy’s Adriatic coast and that became our ‘target’ on operation ‘Dodge’. We of Jimmy Robson’s crew did our first trip on 13th September ‘45. Briefing was quite informal and no stress! I well remember the senior officer saying to pilots “nice landings please, the Americans are i/c the airstrip and their planes do very ‘pretty’ landings—the Bomber Command maxim that ‘if you can walk away from it, it was a good landing’, simply will not do!’ To navigators, as you travel down France remember you will be flying very low, so keep far from the border with Spain—we don’t want anyone bumping into a Pyrenees!” What a wonderful experience it all proved to be. We returned on 15th. My three great memories were:

(1) Looking down into Vesuvius.

(2) A long line of Lancasters parked four abreast—when the first four started up it ‘lost’ all the rest in a sand storm! Only when it settled could the next four begin to load up and so on (probably a blessing back at Tibenham in the U.K. as they didn’t get too many arrivals at once).

(3) The unspoken concern on the faces of the ‘passengers’ at being flown by immature looking youngsters!

We did our second trip on 17th October, returning on the 21st. Soon after we were listed for a third, but we never got airborne so I can’t remember the date, as of course it isn’t listed in my flying Log Book.

Therein is a story, as follows:-

At briefing’s conclusion we were told, “There’s some extra info for navigators and wireless ops. so you two groups sit tight, the rest of you get out to dispersals and get started up”. So ‘Ginger’ Dodds, our navigator and I made our notes and then set off to join the others. As we jumped from the lorry all four ‘props’ were happily spinning, but before we could get in the port outer coughed, spluttered and stopped—followed by port inner, starboard inner and then starboard outer. We waited, puzzled, and despite the best efforts of our engineer Bill Claydon the four Rolls Royce Merlins refused to restart, so Jim

called the Control Tower. It happened that our Flight Leader, F/Lt Wright, was there, "I'll go and get Robby out of trouble." he announced, and in minutes the staff car arrived. But he couldn't work miracles and still the Merlins refused to start. I was standing below the port wing talking with one of the ground staff. This chap spotted some of the fuel dripping down from where the engines were being heavily 'primed'. He caught some in the palm of his hand, smelt it, then dipped a finger of the other hand in it and tasted it on his tongue! Then he called up to the cockpit "Mr Wright, I think it's water, sir". "WATER!" shouted the astonished C.O. and he came running out to see for himself. And it was!

How did it happen? Well that morning 12 crews of 'old lags' had been sent off to Berlin to witness by day what a mess they had made of the city whilst most of the rest of us were prepared for Bari—so the fuel bowsers were nearly all emptied for the first time for several months and condensation had collected. One bowser emptied into our reserve tanks. It was said that few engineers bothered to check the flow from the reserves whilst still on the ground, but thanks be to God, Bill did everything 'by the book' and so as soon as he switched to reserve tanks, the water came through! Back in the hut Bill and 'Ginger' got together to calculate where we would have likely been on the flight when Bill would have switched to reserve—answer was the Alps area. In a plane known to have the gliding angle of a brick, it would have been most unpleasant! Months later I saw V-Victor still in a hanger—I would guess it never flew again.

WILLIAM FARR C of E COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Lincoln Road, Welton, Lincolnshire LN2 3JB

Unveiling of a Memorial Window to Bomber Command, RAF Dunholm
Lodge

Sunday 12 July 2009 at 12-30pm

The window will incorporate the badges of Bomber Command, the four Squadrons and Commonwealth Air Forces that operated from Dunholm Lodge during WWII.

A buffet lunch will be available from 1 to 2pm, followed by a formal ceremony to conclude by 3-30pm.

Fly-overs by the BBMF and the Red Arrows are under negotiation.

Members of 44, 170 and 619 Squadron Associations have been invited as well as ourselves together with representatives from RAF and Commonwealth Air Forces.

If you wish to attend please contact the Editor as soon as possible.

Bettie Baird volunteered to join The Women's Land Army in 1942 at the age of 17 but was not accepted until the following year when she turned 18. After the war she married Bill Baird who was a Hampden pilot with 49 Squadron and shot down on....He thus became a PoW for....years. After the war he became a dentist and his passing was recorded in Issue 14 of The 4T9er. Warning, Bettie's story is not for the squeamish!

A LANDGIRL'S TALE

By Bettie Baird

Tattie picking

Picking potatoes is a very back-breaking job. There were usually quite a few of us on this job. The man with the tractor and digger would drive down the drill leaving a layer of potatoes to be picked up. If you were quick you could have a little rest before the tractor came up and left another layer of potatoes to be picked up. It's no fun after a few hours bent double and working in a crab-like position, picking and putting the potatoes into a bucket and when full emptying them into another trailer pulled by a tractor or sometimes by a horse and cart. We all grumbled about the speed of the digger, but there was always the lunch break to look forward to. Once the potatoes were lifted they were put into clamps, earthed up with plenty of straw, in a triangular shape. This kept the potatoes in good condition until such time as they would be sorted and riddled and any bad ones thrown out.

Turnip singling competition, 1944

The Cumberland War Agricultural Committee organized a turnip singling competition, which took place on Monday night on the farm of Mr Hewson Parton, Wigton. It took the form of the finals for the various WLA Hostels and an individual competition open to any member of the WLA in Cumberland not in the team finals. The crawlers wore sacks tied round their knees. We crawled along the ground singling the turnips every nine inches, so we left one turnip, the rest we pulled out. I finished third in the Individual Competition for best work done.

Picking stones in the Lake District

While on field work we were sent up into the fells to a farm to gather stones. In the Lake District, especially on the fell sides, there are lots of stones and it is difficult for the farmer to plough his land. We gathered the stones up in buckets and brought them down and piled them up against the dry stone wall. At lunchtime after a back-breaking morning we went down to the farm to collect our can of tea. We asked if we could use the toilet, which was quite some distance from the house. We were very amused to find the toilet built over a stream, not only that, it had twin seats. You looked down and saw the

gently flowing stream: I only hope they didn't make our tea from the same water. Another strange sight at this farm was when we looked through a downstairs window and saw an old lady sitting in bed, all in white with a lace cap on her white hair. She looked very comfortable. Phyllis and I decided she was very, very old. She didn't look towards the window and so she never knew about the two teenagers peering at her.

Harvest time

When the corn was ready to be cut the farmer would send to the Land Army hostel for a number of girls to help. It was always hard work and a big task in hot weather. The binder would go round and round the field spreading out the sheaves of corn. The area of corn soon disappeared and you would see rabbits and mice running from side to side to escape from the monster which was disturbing their homes. The Land Girls would lift a sheaf of corn in each hand and place them, heads of corn uppermost, and the bases apart, so that they stood up. Usually three sheaves made a stook. Barley was always very floppy and sometimes it splayed out too far. After the corn dried out the sheaves would be loaded on to a cart by the girls. The farmer or farm hand, who was an expert, would bind each sheaf together to stop it slipping off the cart. In the stack yard or a field the sheaves were built into a stack, either in a round or oblong shape. In the winter, threshing would begin, which was a dirty hard job. The stack by this time was always infested with rats. A mesh was put round the stack and the rats couldn't get out. We speared them with pitchforks.

I volunteer to be a rat and mole catcher

At Bolton Hall, Gosforth, volunteers were asked for to be rat and mole catchers. Phyllis Jordan and I decided we would like to volunteer. We were given six months' training by our boss, who was called Bill Singleton. He was a big kind man. He called me a caution. He always wore a navy serge jacket and once I wrote on his back in chalk 'Kick me hard!' The farm boys found it amusing but didn't follow the instructions, luckily for me. I managed to rub it off before he saw it. We all liked him. He was a very good teacher and we all became proficient rat and mole catchers.

There are more rats in Britain than there are people. Every inhabitant of these islands could adopt one specimen as a pet, if so minded, and there would still be a few million left over. Rats must eat to live, and so must we, unfortunately rats like eating the same things we do. They appreciate the corn which we turn into bread for our own use. One rat will eat one hundredweight of food in a year. The rat is very cunning to deal with and he knows how to camouflage himself by hiding behind his own shadow. The glint of his eyes is the only thing which betrays him. If a rat runs up a pipe, he will always get on the side nearest the wall, so if you try to catch him you will hit the pipe first. Then, rats won't go near any piece of electrical equipment; rats also know not to eat another rat which has been poisoned. To be a rat-catcher one has to learn to

distinguish the rats' tail-trail from a rabbit's. The rat's is long, stringy, and will wear the runway smoother. The rat-catcher has to be a detective - we would look for different clues, for example the empty husks, the tunnels in ricks, the tail-trails across heaped up grain, the droppings (old and fresh), anything which would give a clue to his recent visit.

We baited the rats for poisoning:

1st day: bait - the rat takes no notice

2nd day: bait - the rat becomes interested

3rd day: zinc phosphide is added to the bait

It was essential that we were careful with the poison, as it would have been so easy to have poisoned the farm animals. After one job was done we had to make sure we lifted up any poison that was left, and also collect the dead rats which were taken away or dug deep into a midden. On some farms about fifty rats would be running along the beams in the barn, and also crawling in the bin where the oats were kept. I was never attacked and never afraid.

Mole catching

When started off trapping moles I hadn't much success at first as we found out I used too much cream on my hands (moles can smell anything unusual and will then not go near the trap). To cure this I always rubbed my hands in soil before I set the traps, which were barrel-shaped and made of wood. Then I became successful and learnt how to skin a mole, We took the skins back to the hostel and nailed them on a board to dry out. They would then be sold to make mole skin coats.

Betty Smith was a great girl and always made me laugh. When she arrived at Bolton Hall from Newcastle, she said she was frightened of cows. Evidently when she had to join up at nineteen she was only given the choice of going into a factory or the Land Army. She had chosen the latter, but I think she would have preferred one of the Services. After doing field work for some time, Betty decided to volunteer to be a rat and mole catcher along with the rest of us.

Trapping the mole

We carried about half a dozen traps each to set on one farm. Usually the two girls would be dropped off at a particular farm which was having trouble with moles. The spade was quite small and the width of the trap. We were able to cut out a lump of turf so that the trap fitted nearly into the run. The following day after setting the trap we would return to the farm to collect the mole and skin it with a very sharp knife which we always carried. To skin the mole you ran the knife round the tops of the legs and round the neck. The skin came off quite easily. The only thing I didn't like too much was the smell, moles smell quite different to a skinned rabbit.

The farmer naturally like to see how many moles we had caught so the body of the mole was always stuck on the fence of the field. The War

Agricultural Board collected the mole skins after we had dried them out.

In 1944 people still wore mole skin coats, and it was said farmers liked moleskin trousers for warmth. I never saw anyone wearing trousers of moleskin, but I do remember my mother having a moleskin coat. The skin was beautifully soft and had a lovely sheen on it.

In the Spring when the ploughing started we would be taken by Mr Singleton to different farms and get permission to go behind the tractors as they were ploughing to pick worms. As a child at the tender age of four years old I was to be seen in the garden collecting worms. I suppose I thought they were pets. This of course stood me in great stead, as I never had the slightest qualms about picking them up and cleaning them. The most amusing episode which I remember about Betty was seeing her picking up worms with eyebrow tweezers. She seemed to have mastered the art quite well.

When we got a can full of worms we would clean them and then set off to a farm that required the Land Girls to poison the moles. We cleaned them by holding them up and running our fingers down them to clean off the soil. Mr Singleton always carried the strychnine, and he would put a pinch in the can of worms. They wriggled a little for a second, and then bang they were dead. We had a stick which we poked around in the ground to find the run of the mole (which is not in the heap of soil). The run can be quite deep down, once you have found it the stick just slips down easily. Then you put the worms in.

There were six rat and mole catchers at Bolton Hall: Alice Donlan, Pauline Messinger the Forewoman, Phyllis Jordan, Mary [???], Betty Smith and myself. We all went around in a little khaki-coloured van with a canvas roof.

Mole catching was a skilled profession. The mole spends its life underground and is rarely seen above ground. The mole is about six inches long, and its front limbs are very strong and look like hands, just right for burrowing.

It has a small pointed head and snout. The eyes are so small you can hardly see them, as they are hidden by fur and are of little value. The ears are just openings in the head. It has velvety soft fur and it lies smoothly. The mole is able to travel backwards and forwards along the tunnels. It eats about fifty worms and grubs a day: it has an enormous appetite. If the mole doesn't get any food for twelve hours it will die.

In March the mole will make a nest of dried grass, and after six weeks four to six young moles are born. They are quite naked and look a little like pink rats, which I often saw when I was threshing corn from a stack.

Moles don't like whey and buttermilk poured into their run. Mix the two together and leave in a warm room. After three days it will smell. Pour one teacupful down the run and the moles will leave your field or garden and probably go to your neighbour's!

To be concluded in the next issue.

Former Luftwaffe night fighter pilot, Peter Spoden, shot down 22 Allied aircraft during WWII. He bailed out on a number of occasions and finished the war as Gruppenkommandeur of 1/NJG 6 with the rank of Hauptmann. After the war he became an airline captain flying Boeing 747's with Lufthansa. He has written of his wartime experiences in his book 'Enemy in the Dark' which was originally published in German before being translated into English by former RAF navigator, the late Peter Hinchcliffe. Peter has kindly given permission for us to publish extracts from the book which we will be doing in this and future issues.

“The longest training was that of the night fighters, taking in as it did night flying, blind flying and radar. In many cases the time that a night fighter took to qualify amounted to a total of thirty months, an immense investment in time and money, and not infrequently the young pilot failed to return from his first operational flight.

“At the C-School ['C' stood for heavy and twin-engined and four engined aircraft] at Putnitz in West Pomerania we did our training on the Junkers 86, the Dornier 17 and the Heinkel 111, all obsolescent twin-engined aircraft that had operated in the first theatres of war and examples of which can sometimes be seen in museums today. The Daimler Benz and BMW engines seldom reached the 1000 horse-power performance on take-off. Take-off in a fully laden aircraft of this type was critical; if you lost an engine there was very little hope of continuing to climb.

“If you were coming in to land on one engine and with the undercarriage down you were committed to a landing. Overshooting on one motor and with the undercarriage and flaps lowered was impossible, and caused many pilots who attempted it despite warnings to the contrary to come to earth in a fatal crash usually on the airfield itself. The most famous night-fighter pilot at that time, Oberst Lent, who had 110 victories to his name, crashed when trying to land on one engine.

“It is a noteworthy fact that in Goring's Luftwaffe there were no checklists for take-off and landing. It was not until after the war that the Allies demonstrated such things to the 'routine-minded' Germans. Today take-off and landing checklists are firmly attached to the instrument panel even in gliders. Trying to complete the necessary actions for take-off in their correct sequence from memory alone can very often lead to mistakes. In 1935 a Luftwaffe general forgot to check the movement of the rudder before take-off and soon afterwards he lay dead on the ground together with his He 70, the Heinkel Blitz, because the rudder lock was still in position. Today there are no precise figures of Luftwaffe losses in the last world war, but it can be accepted with certainty that the losses from pilot error, technical faults and bad weather were far greater than those that were caused by enemy action.”



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READER'S LETTERS

As an example of the value of our website this email is included. It came from Martin Snaith when first approaching us prior to joining as a new Friend;

".....Cyril [Beatson] was a friend and neighbour of my father's. Cyril died 6/7th October '44. He was just 21 and I am trying to find any information on him to pass on to my father.

I have found the picture of his grave stone which is absolutely brilliant.....something we thought we'd never see. My dad has only one photo to remember him by.....

It must be said that this type of letter is not untypical. Take a bow Malcolm! Ed.

Air Commodore 'Spike' Milligan sent the following e-mail;

"I don't normally get involved in chain emails and apologies if you don't approve, however I strongly support the issue in the email below. I consider it an utter insult to the 2 soldiers, their families and past and present members of the Armed Forces and their families, irrespective of any political sensitivities of the day in the way these repatriations have been conducted. If you agree this should never have happened and would like to add your support to attempt to make sure it never happens again then please visit the petition site via the link below. It only takes a couple of seconds, just follow the instructions. The bodies of the soldiers Murdered in Northern Ireland were flown home without ceremony. This has angered members of HM Forces:

" 'British troops have spoken of their anger following the disclosure that the bodies of the two soldiers murdered by dissident republicans were shipped back to the UK as freight.

'We have been informed that the soldiers were not allowed to have a ramp service because of political reasons. We were told the Government didn't want anything that would look like the 'Troubles' had restarted. 'As far as we are concerned these soldiers were shot dead in uniform by terrorists and they should be treated in exactly the same way as if they were killed in Afghanistan. To send their bodies back to the UK as freight is outrageous.'

"When a person joins any branch of HM Forces they are effectively on duty 24/7/365. Please sign up to help prevent it happening again, click the link below. If you agree this should never have happened and would like to add your support to attempt to make sure it never happens again then please visit the petition site via the link below. It only takes a

couple of seconds, just follow the instructions. “

<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/Soldiers-on-Duty/#detail>

Thank you

I too was incensed to read of the incident and felt obliged to add my name to the petition. Ed.

Whilst I obviously know the number of copies of The 4T9er initially issued I would love to know what the actual reader numbers are. The following e-mail illustrates the ‘ongoing circulation’;

“Although not a 4T9er, my friend Andy Anderson, one of your members and an ex POW, passes copies of your Association Magazine to me. I think the content and presentation are first class and justify reading, and re-reading, from cover to cover. Why do I find it so interesting. Well I was just up the road from Scampton, at Hemswell, and flew with 144 and 61 Squadrons, on Hampdens, completing my somewhat battered tour in 1941. Many were the tussles we had with your lot in the Saracens Head in Lincoln, but together we helped to fix the real opposition when we had to, didn't we. Keep up this good work please, it proves so interesting and nostalgic to we linked and wrinkled oldies. Good wishes.. Timber Woods. One time Navigator.

Thanks Timber, so glad that you enjoy it. Maybe you would like to write us a page or so on your experiences, not just in the Saracens Head. Ed.

I am always pleased to hear that ‘outsiders’ get to read The 4T9er. The following was received by e-mail;

“...Although not a 4T9er, my friend Andy Anderson, one of your members and an ex POW, passes copies of your Association Magazine to me. I think the content and presentation are first class and justify reading, and re-reading, from cover to cover. Why do I find it so interesting. Well I was just up the road from Scampton, at Hemswell, and flew with 144 and 61 Squadrons, on Hampdens, completing my somewhat battered tour in 1941. Many were the tussles we had with your lot in the Saracens Head in Lincoln, but together we helped to fix the real opposition when we had to, didn't we? Keep up this good work please, it proves so interesting and nostalgic to we linked and wrinkled oldies. Good wishes.. Timber Woods. One time Navigator.”

When replying to Timber I suggested that he might like to write a few words about life ‘on the other side’. This was his reply;

“Alan has asked me to pen a few thoughts about the early 5 Group days although I am not a 4T9er. In my time 49, together with 83, were at Scampton, whilst in 1940//41 I was up the road, flying Hampdens with 61 and 144 Squadrons at Hemswell whilst 44 completed the team at Waddington.

“There was much friendly rivalry between the Squadrons in those days which usually broke out during stand down times when we met up in the Saracens Head in Lincoln. The Scampton ‘mob’ claimed two VCs as proof of their

superiority, in the persons of 'Babe' Learoyde and Hannah and I well remember the celebration for Hannah's award in the pub. Most of the inter squadron rivalry tended to surface in the pub because on ops it was usually a joint venture where we shared each other successes or mourned each others failures and losses. Some of the antics in the Saracens Head were almost unbelievable but then 'there was a war on'.

"When I think back on those days, I just wish that a like spirit could prevail today. We are the lucky ones who made it through albeit a little "bent" in the end. I realise that things got harder when the Lanc came along but we all did our bit to the best of our ability didn't we?"

"Have you got any old lags amongst the 4T9ers who remember the bomb dump incident? I vaguely remember that it part blew up over the Lincoln road and we swore that the Scampton mob did it to avoid ops. However come operations, they were usually joint ventures and it was then 'all pull together'.

"I well remember that after completing a NFT we used to fly south and low along the valley below Hemswell and finish up with a beat up approaching your lot. Later on there would be a visit from the local constabulary to register a complaint but the answer was invariably 'not us, you had best nip down to Scampton, it must be them'.

"If any of you aged 'boys' are still around, it would be lovely to hear if you can recall those days, even if, like me, just a bit hazily. So this is just a brief memory flash back for your magazine and all success to your production team, it is a quality read."

What a tragedy that The Saracens Head was demolished. What a wonderful theme pub it would have made but would it have been allowed to keep that name in this painfully P.C. age? Ed.

On page 16 of the February issue there appeared a photograph of the DeHavilland Devon VP981 which is now based at Coventry. I received an e-mail from Stuart Keay to say that this aircraft appears just once in his logbook when he flew an air test in it on June 10th 1965 with F/L Jim Owen. F/L Mike Chatterton tells me that he flew this Devon on many occasions when it and he were with the BBMF.

49 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION TIES AND SCARVES

IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE IT WAS PROPOSED THAT WE INTRODUCE ASSOCIATION TIES AND SCARVES, SHOULD THERE BE SUFFICIENT INTEREST SHOWN. THE RESPONSE HAS BEEN JUST OVER A DOZEN WHICH IS LESS THAN THE MINIMUM VIABLE QUANTITY. I BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD LIKE TO PURCHASE THESE ITEMS BUT HAVE NOT BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ED NORMAN. UNLESS NUMBERS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THIS MATTER IS DEAD. SO, IF YOU WANT ONE TELL ED. - CONTACT DETAILS ON THE BACK COVER

CAN YOU HELP?

This e-mail was received from Associate Member, Richard Bartlett May;

“I am the son of Sgt Stan Bartlett who tragically lost his life in the crash of SX984 on February 19th 1955. My wife and I are planning our first ever trip to Kenya this summer to visit my father’s grave and the crash site.

“I am well aware of the findings of the Board of Inquiry regarding the unauthorized low flying which led up to the event. I am curious however regarding the aftermath following the initial collision. My father survived the accident only to die a few hours later from his injuries. I have heard recently that he was found still inside the rear turret a considerable distance (half a mile was mentioned) from the main wreckage and that he was pulled from the wreckage by a Pete Pierson who was a 49 Squadron member visiting the police station at Githunguri that day.

“The report from the RAF Historical Branch said a substantial part of the tail departed the aircraft in the initial collision with the police stations perimeter fence. I am surmising that there maybe a strong possibility that the rear turret could have departed the plane prior to the second and final impact at the crash site. My father’s death certificate said he died from multiply injuries and burns to his arms, legs and face. If the turret was indeed found a considerable distance from the main wreckage what could have caused the burns?

“Now living in San Diego California I am a little handicapped research wise but fortunately the internet is a wonderful thing and I am hoping to have as much information as I can possibly get before we depart for what will be a once in a lifetime trip. I would be most grateful to any 49 SA member who served in Kenya during this time frame who may be able to add anything to enable me to connect all the dots.”

Richard’s e-mail address is; Richard@jcimetalproducts.com

Or contact him via the Editor.

In response to our appeal for information regarding the relatives of the crew of P/O Smiley, The 4T9er, issue 13, our Hon. Padre, Tony Buckler wrote as follows;

“Further to the request for details of families on page 31 of The 4T9er, I clearly remember the following; When aged 9 in 1944 my mother told me that Mrs Rainbow, who lived opposite us in Victoria Avenue, Worcester, had lost her husband. Although he may not even have been a flyer, the name struck one and appeared in Bomber Command Losses for that year. This revived my memory.

1. Was my Mr Rainbow your Sgt. Rainbow?
2. The latter was born in the Watford District, Did he marry a Worcester girl and does the destination of the telegram to young Mrs Rainbow confirm this or otherwise?

“On the one hand all this may only be a red herring. On the other hand it could

be a remarkable coincidence. Please do let me know what you find because, if our Rainbows are one and the same, it would be nice for me to drop them a line of condolence together with the above story.

“A friend from Scunthorpe has just telephoned to say that on the Commonwealth War Graves website there is only one Rainbow – definitely yours and that his mother was a Miss Horn.....So good hunting and happy landings.”

I have checked the CWGC website and only two ‘Rainbows’ were killed whilst serving with the RAF in WWII. One was an Australian Squadron Leader, buried in Sydney, and the other was a Wop/Ag serving with 49 Squadron, killed 9th June 1944. It seems pretty conclusive that it is indeed a remarkable coincidence. Ed.

In the Issue 13 Cyril Hunter wrote describing his visit, as an ATC cadet, to Fiskerton. He asked if anyone has a photograph of the Edy crew. John Crabb wrote him the following letter;

“Further to your article and request in The 4T9er magazine I am enclosing the only photograph of Vic Edy’s crew that I have, unfortunately only three members.



L to R;
Sgt MacDonald RCAF - Rear gunner
F/Sgt S Mason RAAF - Mid upper
F/Sgt J Crabb - Navigator

“The history is such, I had completed 14 operations with my original crew (P/O Millar AFM), when unfortunately they were killed on their next operation (I was grounded by the M.O., having a severe cold). Vic and his crew arrived on squadron from OTU minus a navigator, so myself being spare I was assigned to their crew. Their first operation with me as navigator was Hamburg on 24/7/43, Lancaster LM337. The NFT you refer to was the one prior to this flight. I cannot remember the cadets coming on board for the flight, but I must have been with you.

“I flew a further 17 ops with Vic, the last was my 30th trip on 2/10/43 to Munich (took 8 hours 40 minutes). This completed my tour and I left to become an instructor.

“At the end of my spell as an instructor, I had the choice of doing a further tour of 20 trips on Lancasters, or a further 50 on Mosquitoes, I chose Mosquitoes, I thought I would have a greater chance of surviving. I completed 43 ops, taking part on the last operation of the war on Kiel, 2/5/45 (it took 3 hours 45 minutes).

“We were supposed to go and fight the Japs but that war finished and the squadron, 162 of 8 Group, were transferred to transport command and I finished my RAF career as a Flight Lieutenant with a DFC and a DFM.

“I hope the photo will be of interest to you, I believe, in fact I am sure, the gunners together, shot down two enemy fighters.

“Hoping my ‘history’ has not bored you.”

This is the second time that John has come up trumps. In Issue 3, November 2006, we published the photograph of John’s first crew as it contained Sgt Leslie Phillips, the half brother, of Associate Member, Valerie Seal whom she had never met. Ed.

When sending me a copy of John’s letter Cyril enclosed the following note;

“Many thanks for The 4T9er magazine. By now you will have found the copy of the letter and photograph of the three 49 Squadron aircrew members John Crabb sent me.....I cannot find words to say how chuffed I am, that 65 years on, a photo of Norman Buchanan and the rest of the Lancaster crew of JA691 led me to being in contact with you, and then having my story printed in The 4T9er magazine.

“Looking back to Fiskerton 1943, whilst flying with Vic Edy I also flew to Wainfleet Sands, Lincolnshire with them for a practice bombing. The Bomb Aimer Sgt. Les Taylor scored a bullseye.

“Eventually called up into the RAF for my 2 years 4 months I met some of the best mates one could ever wish to meet.

“And to all the aircrew guys “Bravest of the Brave”, my Heroes of WWII.”

Non-Member Peter Rollins e-mailed;

“I am the son of the late James L. Rollins who was a member of the RAAF and who flew with 49 Squadron as a rear gunner. He was killed over Germany in April 1943. (3 weeks before I was born.)” If there is anyone still living who remembers him, I would love to hear from them. *Contact via the editor.*

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This rather intriguing photograph was taken from the photograph album of my uncle, Sgt Bob Slaughter. In the sixties Flight International magazine carried a letter asking for information on 'Pick-a-back Ansons' at Carberry, Canada. As this shot was taken there in 1942 I sent the photo in and it was published. Did anyone else train at Carberry and if so do you remember these wayward Ansons? Ed.

A question mainly for pilots and flight engineers; When standing on your dispersal waiting to taxi on to the perimeter track, how did you know when it was your turn to join the queue? Did some kind soul stop and wave you in as sometimes happens on the road or was there a specific pre-planned order of take off? - 'Ah! There goes G—George, we're next.' If you waited until the back of the queue you would have some very hot engines as I understand that everyone started engines more or less together! Ed.

Nobby Unwin, 138 Squadron, recalls the Valiant days and asks if anyone knows the whereabouts of the following 49ers who drank at the George, Stamford; Drew Spence, Woody Bennington and Jim Fairburn.

As mentioned in The Editorial F/L Garry Mennell e-mailed the following: I've found an event that 4T9ers might be very interested in attending. Project Propeller aims to fly WWII aircrew at no expense to a meeting at Bruntingthorpe. I've volunteered to fly one of the aircraft, so on 27th June 2009 I'll be flying from Waddington to Bruntingthorpe. If any 4T9ers would like to attend, they need to register at the following website: <http://www.projectpropeller.co.uk>

If anybody specifically wants to fly with me I'll be in a PA-28 (Registration G-ZANG) and they can mention that in their application.



In the February issue we featured 'A letter from Fulbeck' which was written by W/O Ralph Bairnsfather RAAF just hours before he was killed. That was sent in by his nephew, Graham Bairnsfather, who also sent in this photograph of himself with his daughter;

"Just a quick email to let you know that Ralph & the Squadron is 'alive' in Australia. ANZAC day was celebrated last Saturday & Jane marched in Bowral with her school. She wore Ralph's medals with pride, the first time they have ever had a public outing. A very emotional & proud time for us all. I wore the 49 Squadron badge with pride also."

