



‘NIGHTJAR’

**NEWSLETTER
OF
No. 214(FMS) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION**

President:
Marshal of the Royal Air Force
Sir Michael Beetham GCB CBE DFC AFC FRAeS

Chairman:
Wing Commander A J Mawby OBE BSc RAF (Ret'd)

December 2008

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Committee	Roy Monk
Committee	Shaun P Broaders MBE MSM
Squadron Website	www.214squadron.org.uk

Should you have any queries on Association matters please feel free to contact, by telephone, letter or email, any member of the Committee.

The Nightjar has been compiled by Association Secretary - Peter Walker and Association Historian – Jock Whitehouse; it has then converted to a computerised form, proof read by members of the Committee, then printed, assembled and distributed by Association Treasurer – John Gulliver.

If you would like to receive your copy of Nightjar electronically, which would save us over £1 per copy; please e-mail the Treasurer.

DEDICATION OF 214 SQUADRON MEMORIAL AND ANNUAL REUNION 18 JULY 2009

As those who attended the Annual General Meeting in Norwich at the end of September will already be aware, planning for the unveiling and dedication of the memorial to the Squadron at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire is now well under way. The design of the memorial itself is now essentially complete. Following discussion in Committee prior to the Annual General Meeting, it has been agreed that the memorial will be hewn from dark grey granite. This has the advantage that the smooth surface of the panel into which the lettering will be cut will appear nearly black, and the letters themselves will be sharper cut and easier to read. It was also agreed that all of the lettering as well as the Squadron badge and the Flight Refuelling 'double speedbird' logo will be picked out in pale grey. A mock up of the memorial was on display at the Annual General Meeting and a reproduction is below.

It should be noted that, on the actual memorial, the rough-hewn granite will appear dark grey whilst the smooth panel containing the badge, logo and text will appear almost black, rather than the other way round as on the mock up. The cost of the memorial and its installation will be £2500 and the Arboretum has advised that a one-off payment of around £600 would be required to cover its long-term maintenance. We now have sufficient donations to the memorial fund to cover both the cost of the memorial and its long-term maintenance. However, there will be some additional costs associated with the unveiling and dedication ceremony.

It has been agreed that the unveiling and dedication of the memorial will take place at the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 18 July 2009, followed by the Annual General Meeting and Reunion Dinner at the Midland Hotel in Derby, twenty miles away by road. We hope that as many people as possible with a connection with the Squadron will attend the dedication, whether or not they are members of the Association. It is envisaged that the unveiling and dedication will take place at around midday and will be followed by a buffet lunch at the Arboretum.



A bid has been submitted for a flypast by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Lancaster, but whether the bid is successful will not be known for some time. It is planned to hold the Annual General Meeting at the Midland Hotel in the late afternoon, thus allowing those attending the dedication ceremony the opportunity to look around other areas of the Arboretum, including the imposing new Armed Forces Memorial, which was dedicated in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen in October last year. The Annual General Meeting will then be followed by the Reunion Dinner, also at the Midland Hotel.

The Midland Hotel at Derby is located opposite the railway station and is thus easily accessible by rail. There is also ample parking at the hotel. The cost of the hotel will be £70 per person per night for the Reunion Dinner, bed and breakfast on the Saturday night. For those wishing to stay in the hotel on the Friday and/or Sunday nights, the cost will be £64 per person per night for dinner, bed and breakfast. If there is sufficient demand, we plan to lay on a coach or coaches to convey those attending the dedication ceremony from the hotel to the Arboretum on the Saturday morning and to return to the hotel in time for the Annual General Meeting in the late afternoon; the cost of the coach would be around £10 per head. In particular, we hope that this would allow those who wish to travel by train to attend both the dedication ceremony and the Reunion Dinner. We are also investigating the possibility of obtaining lottery funding to defray some of the cost of the dedication event at the Arboretum. In the event that a bid for lottery funding is unsuccessful, we anticipate that we will be able to use Association funds to pay for some elements of the dedication event, but we would need to ask those attending to make a contribution to the cost of the buffet lunch and to the cost of the coach.

Booking forms for both the dedication ceremony and the Reunion Dinner will be available on the Squadron website and in 'Nightjar' early next year. In the meantime, for planning purposes we need to obtain an early indication of numbers attending each event and the numbers requiring the use of the coach. Members and non-members planning to attend are requested to complete the proforma enclosed with this 'Nightjar' and to return it **as soon as possible**. It is accepted that indicating your intention to attend one or both events at this early date does not represent a firm commitment, but some indication of numbers will help us enormously with our planning.

Finally, if you have yet to contribute to the memorial fund but would like to do so, please send your donation to the Association Treasurer, John Gulliver, at the address inside the front cover of 'Nightjar'. Cheques should be made payable to '214 (FMS) Squadron Association' and crossed 'A/C Payee'.

Treasurer's Topics

Many thanks to all of you that have sent me letters together with your subscriptions and donations, it is always good to hear your news. I am pleased to learn that many of you still enjoy receiving your copy of the Nightjar, and we are always happy to receive any letters, stories, or articles that you would like published.

I am sorry that some of you experienced difficulty with your standing orders earlier in the year, not our fault – it was the automation of the banks' systems.

I would like to thank all of you that have given so generously to the Memorial Appeal. The fund is doing well, but it is not too late to make a contribution should you wish.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous (in spite of the recession) New Year.

John Gulliver

**Minutes of the 20th. AGM of 214 (FMS) Squadron Association
held at the
Maids Head Hotel, Norwich on Saturday 27th September 2008**

Committee present :	Wg Cdr Alan Mawby	Chairman
	John Gulliver	Treasurer
	Peter M. Walker	Secretary
	Jock Whitehouse	Historian
	John & Carol Edwards	214 Sqn Assn Website
	Roy Monk	
	Shaun Broaders	and 16 members

APOLOGIES: Iain Robertson, C.A. Renney (Kenya), Sqn Ldr Jim Newman, John, Gwen, & Maureen Gilpin, Shirley Whitlock, Geoff Hicks, Moff & Jennifer Moffatt, Graham & Mrs. Spaxman, Maurice & Cicely Webster, Paul & Peggy Henry, Wg Cdr John Brown, Don Walter, Vic & Sue Pheasant, Peter & Chris Frost, Gerhard & Sissie Heilig.

IN MEMORIAM : The following names of members and two non-members who had served on the Squadron and who had died since the 2007 Reunion, were then read out by the Secretary.

NORMAN HILL	BILL HOWARD	TED WALKER
BOB MOORBY	CHRIS HILL	WALTER ROWLEY
HAROLD FERGUSON RCAF (Canada)		Gp Capt JOHN SLESSOR
JOHN HERZOG (later HEREFORD)		Gp Capt CHARLES LILLEY
WILF DIXON MAX O'NEIL (Australia)		Mrs OLIVE LAX
FREDERICK C BLAIR		

Note : In the last newsletter we gave a brief outline of the career of the late Gp. Capt Charles Lilley and as a young officer he had flown as a Bomb Aimer on Fortresses in the crew of Jack Henderson RCAF. In this report we mentioned that Jack Henderson had died earlier this year. This was incorrect, and we were misinformed. He is no longer a member, but Jack is still very much alive and is living in Vancouver. We apologise for this error. We are also sad to report the recent death of Mrs Pat Furner, widow of AVM Jack Furner. (Ed.)

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME : The meeting commenced at 1500 hrs with the Chairman welcoming all members attending, including quite a few from the Valiant / Victor period who had not been since the Marham Reunions in 1997/98. An especial welcome to two new members, Patrick Dougherty who had flown Fortresses towards the end of the war, and David Garnham who had two spells with 214 Sqn 1959/66 and 1967/72, ending his career as a Warrant Officer. David was accompanied by his wife Irene. The Chairman was able to report that the financial affairs of the Association were healthy as was detailed by the Treasurer.

The main item this year is the raising of funds for the Association Memorial Stone, again this was reported upon in more depth by Treasurer.

The date of the dedication of the Stone at the National Memorial Arboretum will be Saturday 18 July 2009, a precise time has not yet been arranged, but is likely to be between around 12 noon. An AGM will be held at the Midland Hotel, Derby, in the afternoon, on return from the Stone dedication at Alrewas. The Reunion Dinner will be held in the evening.

The Chairman was also able to report that our members, and others, had donated most generously to the Memorial Stone Fund.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: The minutes were printed in the Winter/ Spring 2008 edition of the Nightjar newsletter, the members agreed that they be adopted. Proposed by Tom Raine, and seconded by David Garnham.

TREASURER'S REPORT: The closing balance of the Association's funds as at 31 Dec 07 was £2,419.32, a decrease of £146.32 from the beginning of the year. As a result of now producing the twice yearly Nightjar newsletter "in house" rather than being printed commercially, costs have been considerably reduced. The appeal for funds for the 214 Sqn Association Memorial Stone was opened at the 2007 Reunion when it was reported that if we could raise about £1500 from donations the Association were in a position to contribute £1000 towards the total cost of £2,500 for the Stone. As the Chairman had already mentioned, our members and others have been most generous and it was reported that the Association had received a total of £3,112.50, and that there is more in the pipeline. Thank you all. This very handsome amount meant that the fund could not only pay for the Stone, but could also pay the Arboretum a 'one off' amount of £600 for the upkeep of the Stone and its surrounds. Despite the small deficit in this year's accounts the Association's funds are in good shape and should be sufficient for some years to come. At the end of the report it was agreed that the accounts be adopted, this being proposed by Tom Raine and seconded by Geoff Barrell.

The accounts have not been reproduced in this newsletter, but if any member would like a copy, please contact the Treasurer.

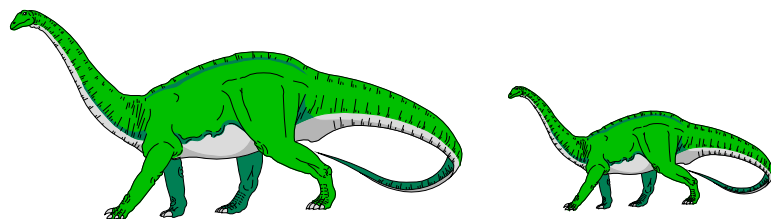
HISTORIAN'S REPORT: Jock Whitehouse read out his report on a variety of historical and interesting items and as usual it is produced in full in this Nightjar. However something that should be mentioned here is that our anonymous benefactor over many years had recently died, at the great age of around ninety. Her name can now be revealed as Mrs. Olive Lax who paid for the Association wreaths laid at the memorials at Stradishall and Chedburgh each year.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS REPORT : Roy Monk was able to report that despite placing notices in various publications and in Service Pals on TV the response has been poor. However from the few enquiries received we have found two new members and they are here today, Patrick Dougherty and David Garnham. Welcome to you both.

THE 214 SQN. MEMORIAL STONE: Jock Whitehouse was now asked to update the meeting on the Stone. He had put in many hours over recent months and had prepared a full size illustration of the wording to be etched on the front. It was very impressive and with only a small amount of fine tuning by the stonemason, will be much how it will look when erected at the NAIA at Alrewas, Staffs. Behind the scenes Moff, Alan Mawby, and Jock have been working hard visiting the Arboretum to discuss the very many problems to be solved, plus letters, e-mails and letters to answer very many questions.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: All the committee members had agreed to continue in office and were therefore re-elected en-bloc. This was proposed by Bertie Jukes and seconded by Geoff Barrell.

THE 214 SQN ASSOCIATION WEBSITE: Carol and John Edwards were able to report that they had made improvements to the website and over recent months had received a lot of enquiries from people wanting to trace family members etc. With Carol and John now on the Committee it takes the Association into the future, despite having a Historian and Secretary who do not use computers, e-mails or websites. (20th century men ?)



With no other business the meeting closed at 1650 hrs.

THE 2008 REUNION DINNER

The Reunion Dinner was held at the Maids Head Hotel, Norwich, on Saturday September 27th. 2008, attended by 31 members and guests who were welcomed by our Chairman, Wg Cdr Alan Mawby. Alan also welcomed our President Sir Michael Beetham and Lady Beetham, our guests, the new Station Commander at RAF Marham, Gp Capt Colin Basnett and Mrs Basnett, and our guest speaker Sqn Ldr Tony Iveson DFC.

This was our 20th. Reunion Dinner since the Association was formed in 1988 and sadly many of those founding members are no longer with us, or are now too frail to travel, although I know that they would have loved to have been with us. However quite a number of people from the Valiant / Victor period came, some not having seen each other for many years. The Maids Head has improved considerably, and it has recently been rated as a four star hotel. The meal was excellent and for the first time no one made a complaint. The wine flowed, as did the conversation, and the atmosphere was of warmth, friendship and times past. Then it was time for our guest speaker.



Tony Iveson talking with Mrs Diane Mawby



Sqn Ldr Tony Iveson DFC recently had his 89th birthday but could easily pass for 75. He flew Spitfires in the Battle of Britain (616 and 92 Sqs) and in 1944/45 he flew Lancasters with 617 Sqn. His talk was about the raid, on 12th November 1944, when thirty Lancasters of 617 and 9 Sqs flew from Lossiemouth to Tromso Fiord in Norway to attack, with 12,000 lb. Tallboy bombs, the German battleship Tirpitz. This was the third attempt in which Tony had taken part in trying to sink this large ship and this time they were successful, the Tirpitz turning turtle and taking nearly a thousand German sailors with it. Tony illustrated his talk with some photos and bomb plots of the raid. Also shown on screen was an

illustration of a famous painting by Gerald Coulson which hangs in the RAF College, Cranwell. This depicts the Lancaster ME554, KC - F of 617 Sqn that Tony Iveson flew on the raid. This was a fascinating talk and was well received. Thank you Tony.



Note :

On the Saturday morning before coming to the Reunion, Tony Iveson had driven to RAF Coningsby, Lincs. where he had a trip in the BBMF Lancaster, which was on a pre-arranged flypast. He told me that he took the controls for a short time but they felt a bit heavier that he remembers. I understand that he did not stay in the RAF after the war but became an airline pilot.

Peter McD Walker
Secretary

HISTORIAN'S REPORT

The major Memorial project will be covered elsewhere, but suffice to say we are in the midst of busy times.

Chedburgh: Invited to join in with No 218 Squadron Association for their summer reunion weekend I enjoyed meeting up with old friends at the Saturday garden party, enlivened by a spirited appearance of the BBMF Dakota (Lancaster on duty elsewhere) and on the Sunday for the short service of Remembrance at the Chedburgh memorial when I laid our Association wreath. After a good pub lunch at 'The Marquis', all departed with the usual: 'See you next year!'. Sadly, however, this was the last time when the wreath provided was via our regular anonymous donor, in fact Mrs Olive Lax, whose younger brother, Sgt. Norman Ventham, a 214 Squadron navigator lost his life at Chedburgh. Olive, a longtime supporter of the Association died recently after a long illness. Our Stradishall wreath to be laid in November represents part of Olive's last donation and perhaps the words she wrote for the first Chedburgh wreath are a fitting reminder of her generosity.

*"In proud memory of the brave young men who flew from Chedburgh airfield and sadly did not return.
'May angels bear you to your rest'.*



**Jock Whitehouse lays the 214 Squadron Association Wreath at Chedburgh
July 2008**

A wreath (donated by Mr Martin Cole in Tenerife) will also be laid at Stradishall in memory of two members of the WAAF, (one of whom, Martin's aunt, worked with 214 Sqn), who lost their lives in 1942.

Ian Hunt has concluded his mammoth task of recording all operational flights made by the Squadron during WW2 (and pre-war) and apart from being an interesting read, such detailed unit data will be a valued source of material for future researchers/students whilst complementing other highly regarded works, eg 'Bomber Command Losses' by Bill Chorley. (I have already referred to Ian's work - see later).

Ian may now think 'What next?' but I wonder after leaving home in the morning if Ian sometimes finds himself at the National Archives at Kew instead of at the office! Thank you Ian.

Vulcan: We should heartily congratulate the 'blood, toil, tears and sweat' efforts of those who have laboured so hard to get the mighty 'Delta Lady' (Vulcan XH558) back into the air, and although never a type flown by No. 214 Squadron, she is the sole remaining flying link relating back to the 'V-Force'. Long may she fly.

Harvey Ward has finally met up with Robin Murray who was on the squadron with Harvey's father Harry in Stradishall's Wellington days. Harry compiled a comprehensive record of his operational days including surviving the worst night in 214's history when on 1/2 April 1942 they lost 7/15 aircraft. Robin, now 93 retains his cheerfulness and good humour whilst considering himself to be 'very lucky', thoroughly enjoyed the get-together (engineered by Peter) and further meetings are planned.

No. 99 Squadron Memorial: On their reunion weekend of 13/14 September an additional plaque was dedicated at the memorial site adjacent to the gates of the July Course at Newmarket Race Course and I was delighted to receive (via friends) a message of greeting from Lucian Ercolani, a regular attender. After his Wellington days at Stradishall and Newmarket, Lucian flew Liberators with 99 Squadron in the Far East campaign. On a wall opposite, one may see a plaque commemorating the time spent by No. 75(NZ) Squadron at Newmarket Heath.

Kate Brettell continues working on the history of her uncle, Flt Lt R A Turtle DFC, a Stirling captain lost with all his crew from Stradishall in June 1942, and although most of the available facts are now on file, inevitably there are always 'niggling' gaps which seem to defy all efforts to fill, but one always hopes. When Arthur's body was washed ashore on the Dutch island of Schiermonnikoog amongst personal effects recovered (copies of the list made by the local German military do survive) was a piece of paper printed with the name: Sqn Ldr Groom and the number 106419. Local efforts to accurately translate the German: '1 Kleiderkarte fur S/L Groom' have caused problems with one suggestion even being that of 'cloth card' (cloakroom ticket) and it was not until the relevant RAF Lists were recently studied that the answer was revealed. Of several 'Grooms' was a Sqn Ldr W H Groom whose service number was given as 106419, but more interestingly, in addition to his seniority, given as 9/9/41 was his RAF position namely (Ch)! Further checks by Kate have confirmed that Sqn Ldr W H 'Bill' Groom had been a RAF (C of E) Chaplain at RAF Stradishall (1942-43), who after the war pursued his calling in several parishes within East Suffok. As to why Arthur was carrying his Chaplain's card at the time of his death relates to the private rather than official story, but that one small line of data was certainly the source of some fascinating facts.

August 6 1942. A No 214 Squadron Stirling returning early from operations (unable to climb above 9000 feet) left the runway and smashed into an army gun site tragically killing one gunner. (Stradishall records). The identity of the soldier was not recorded, and only recently, via the CWGC who provided the address of a remarkable army record Dept in Glasgow has this data come to light. The gunner was a 38 year-old Royal Artillery Territorial from Liverpool, married with six children, but no doubt keen to serve whilst probably believing that a remote Suffolk airfield in 1942 was potentially safe! The Stradishall Roll of Honour can now be updated and thanks to Ian Hunt's work, it is possible to judge that whilst the pilot in question had already made one or two abortive trips he did go on to complete several successful 'ops' whilst on 214.

It's that number again! Returning to Liverpool St Station from the Annual Exhibition of the Guild of Aviation Artists (two works remotely linked to 214: a pencil/gouache study of a Stirling being re-fuelled, and an oil of WW1 Handley-Page O/400's on a night raid) my No.23 bus pulled up very close to a parked No 214. Then a quick dash to a waiting Cambridge train luckily finding a window seat, I settled back, only to notice that the number of the compartment was 77214! There is more. On offer in a recent Bonham's auction was a pristine 1939 Vincent HRD 998cc 'A' Rapide motor-cycle, a model of which, Brian Walker informs me, there were only ever 80 built. It is almost certain that Bill Clarke (see last two NJs) undertook the production testing of this very model. Bidding was serious, but it was a well-known motor-cycle dealer who closed it with a bid of £214,000!

Coincidences: Reading the recent obituary of Sqn Ldr Larry Curtis DFC* (a good Midlands lad), the wireless operator in Micky Martin's later 617 Squadron crew, prompted me to re-read the account of the raids against the Antheor Viaduct in Italy in Paul Brickhill's 'Dambusters', and in doing so noticed mention of one of three new arrivals on 617, namely Ted Youseman (who talked of nothing else but flying). After a second raid, this time with the new Stabilising Automatic Bomb Sight weapon – 'SABS' which although working successfully failed to destroy the difficult target, the crews landed at Blida in North Africa. After loading up with 'exotic fayre' the Lancasters left for the UK routing via the Mediterranean and Biscay, but Ted Youseman's aircraft was lost without trace - a presumed victim of fighters. Flt Lt E E 'Ted' Youseman DFC had been a well liked and lively Stirling captain on No 214 Squadron at Chedburgh where he was photographed with Fg Off 'Dutch' Holland, the air-bomber in the crew of P/O F G Matthews(RAAF), shot down by a night-fighter on the Turin raid of 12/13 August 1943 crashing at La Bussiere sur Ouche in France. The loss of the seven men who lie together in the churchyard is a permanent reminder to the villagers of the price paid for freedom and as such, their memory is central to the annual victory service. Further plans are in hand to place a memorial window in the small local abbey and Vaughan Thomas, whose uncle Sgt H Ott was rear-gunner in the crew, has made a number of visits to the village, and has located more interesting information on the crew, which he is willing to provide for inclusion in a future 'Nightjar'. Just before drafting this report I attended the first 2008/09 meeting of my local Aviation Society which meets in Stirling House. The talk, given by Martin Cocker, was on the career of 'Aaron VC' who converted to the Stirling on 1657 HCU at Stradishall before joining No.218 Squadron at Downham Market. F/Sgt Arthur Aaron died from wounds, probably received as a result of friendly fire whilst over the Alps en route for Turin. The date was 12/13 August 1943, ie the same night and target which claimed the life of P/O Matthew's crew. I am compiling this report sitting outside on a gloriously hot September day: A deep blue sky, a few wisps of cloud, but certainly NO vapour trails!!

Jock M Whitehouse

Remembrance at Stradishall.

Sixteen people gathered at the RAF Stradishall memorial at 11.00am on 8th November for the annual wreath laying ceremony and, fortunately a brisk wind kept the showers at bay. Although most present were members of the local Aviation Society (which meets in Stirling House), No 214 Squadron was truly present.. Eddie Wheeler DFC (Wop/AG-1940) represented the Memorial Trust, Don Walter (Marham Valiants), our own Association, plus local man Ron Penhaligan ('engine-mechanic' at Stradishall and Chedburgh). Following the Aviation Society, I placed a 'WAAF' wreath for Mr Martin Cole (Tenerife) in remembrance of his aunt, a WAAF driver accidentally killed at Stradishall in August 1942 - most probably whilst attached to No 214 Squadron, and also for another young 'WAAF' who tragically lost her life later in the same year.

After the bright new wreaths had been secured in place and the visitors' book duly signed, we departed, but only after enjoying a rare glimpse of bright sunshine. An ethereal 'Thank-You' perhaps?

Liquid food for thought.

Whilst looking through some local history recently I found that the telephone number of the 'Rose and Crown' one of several watering holes in my village in the early 1940's was Hundon 214! A wise choice by the telephone Company no doubt! The R&C survives as the only pub within the main village area.

Jock M Whitehouse

FROM THE 214 SQN ASSOCIATION ARCHIVES

(Written, we believe, by Harold Bidmead)

Flt Lt George Wright was the Adjutant of 214 Sqn from 1942 to 1945. An ex-Charterhouse schoolboy, he attended school reunions, even in war time. George had been a rubber planter in Malaya after the 1914-18 war, in which he served, and later as a pig farmer in Devon. His age was about 40 to 45. He was the father of the Squadron and a real gentleman. His sister became Lady Patience Guinness by marriage in 1944.

My first social meeting with George was in a sports hanger at Stradishall, which housed a Badminton court. He volunteered to give me a game. I was rather embarrassed to play a person 20 or so years older than myself, I thought I would win. He thrashed me, I came off the court like a wet rag, while he still had on a pullover, and no sweat. We became very good friends.



George Wright

I recall one particular occasion when George was the centre of an official enquiry to investigate the over issue of petrol coupons to aircrew going on leave (in lieu of railway warrants.)

At about 1030hrs one morning, two visitors arrived at George's office, from Air House (Ministry) Accounting Branch. One was a Wing Commander (a non flying type), the other a civil servant. They introduced themselves and the reason for the visit. George's reply was, with gesticulation, "I am sorry, I am unable to give you any of my time". "The Squadron was operating last night and we have three crews which have not returned". "I have to notify 3 Group HQ by 1100hrs of the service numbers, rank, names and addresses etc. of the missing crew members". "Also as Chairman of the Committee of Adjustment, I have to ensure that all their personal belongings are collected, checked, recorded and placed in store". "The task has to be completed by midday, as the preparations for tonight's operations have already started". Fortunately, or unfortunately, I was in the office at the time. George turned and asked me to entertain the two gentlemen, showing them how an operational Squadron worked, and he would endeavor to try to see them later. Off I went with the two visitors, first to the Officers' Mess to arrange accommodation and a cup of coffee, then a walk around the Flights.

We arrived back at the mess in time for a drink. Obtaining three armchairs we sat down to listen to the BBC 1 o'clock news; the report of the previous night's raids and the latest war news. After lunch our two visitors were soon having forty winks, they had walked about two miles around the Flights in the open air, something they were not used to. They were woken at about 3.30pm with a cup of tea. There was an aircrew briefing at 4 o'clock for the raid that night. I had arranged clearance for the visitors to attend. After the briefing, which was quite a new experience for them, it was back to the Mess and their quarters for a wash and brush up, in preparation for the evening meal. During their meal they spoke of the briefing, how impressed they were with the professional way it was conducted, and the atmosphere of about 100 aircrew members making ready for war. The civil servant made a remark that I will never forget. 'It was like a news reel in advance of something that was going to happen, the pictures on the screen of the target, enemy defences and the weather chart'.

I had previously ascertained that neither had been on an operational station before. The meal over, the next 'Star' show was the operational take off, which we watched from the control tower. A very impressive sight to see hear and feel fourteen laden Stirlings, engines running, passing the control tower in line to the end of the runway, and then with the engines running faster and faster, and with a loud roar, each one in turn, race down the runway to the far end, and then airborne, circling round the 'drome to gain height, and then set course for target, three or four hours away, and the unexpected. Take off completed it was back to the Mess and await the return of the aircraft and crews, which was about midnight. The sound of the returning aircraft sent us all to the intelligence block for the de-briefing, which was helped along with a cup of coffee laced with rum, (a tradition on 214 Sqn). Four aircraft had not returned by the time we left for bed. We hoped that they had landed at another 'drome.

Our guests arrived at the Mess for breakfast about 10 am. We had instructed the batwoman to let them sleep as long as possible. They got to George's office about 10.30, where he informed them that the situation was the same as yesterday. The four aircraft that were missing last night, had not reported in, so had to be presumed missing. They accepted the situation and joined me for another tour. As we were on operations again that evening I took them to the bomb dump (a temporary depot of munitions) and saw the trolleys being loaded for the next raid. Then came the tractors towing long rows of trolleys around the perimeter track to the aircraft. Our guests were intrigued with the bombs being winched into the bomb bays and the armourers reloading the gun turret's ammunition boxes with fresh belts of shining cartridges. They saw the big petrol bowsers arrive, making their delivery of two to three thousand gallons to each aircraft. I thought of poor George. The place was a hive of industry with engine and airframe fitters, electricians, instrument repairers, wireless mechanics, plus the NAAFI wagon. After seeing all this activity they expressed a wish for a trip, so I arranged with one of the Flight Commanders for them to go on an air test that afternoon and after a good lunch and a few drinks, we reported to the Flight Office. We were lucky, our trip was with the Flight CO, Sqn Ldr Rice. They were both apprehensive as they had never flown before. The finale of the trip was a demonstration of fighter affiliation (defence against fighter attack), corkscrewing with turns to port and starboard, and climbing and descending turns to combat attacks from the quarters. So ended our 30 minute flight. Our two visitors had had enough, they could not alight from the Stirling quick enough, and, with a very ashen appearance, quickly and discreetly escaped to the nearest toilet, and then to their quarters. We didn't see them again until about three hours later in the Officers Mess, just in time for the evening meal.

George and I dined with them in the dining hall, which was nearly empty, due to operations being on. After coffee and brandy, they brought up the subject of their visit. 'Why was he over issued to the tune of 500 gallons of petrol coupons?' and asked George to explain how, and to what standard did he make his issue of coupons in lieu of railway warrants. George first stated that he had never seen any official document on the subject and had worked out his own system. He apologised for not having any knowledge of the automobile as he was not a car owner.

He then revealed his formula:



Ray Glass, George Wright, Doctor (Name unknown)

The consumption figure he acquired indirectly from the Station Adjutant, who informed him that the Group Captain's car did 20 miles to the gallon. So this is what he used. The distance in miles between towns he got from the RAC handbook and using Cambridge as the nearest base town he allowed a further 20 miles each way. So when an aircrew member applied for petrol coupons for leave, George would first establish where he was going. Brighton; this is 105 miles from Cambridge plus 20 miles to Chedburgh. So for a return trip it would be 250 miles. This he would then divide by the consumption figure of 20, which gave him 12.5 coupons, this he would top up with extra coupons to cover petrol for sight seeing and running about on leave, the total is 15 coupons. As you can see and with the fact that we had seven days leave every 5 weeks, the figure would mount up.

To justify his action he said that all aircrew were doing a hard and dangerous job and it might be their last leave. 'Silence reigned', then the two audit officials excused themselves and left the room.

After a few minutes they returned and said that they would accept George's explanation and taking the pressure that he was working under and also his sentiments. They agreed to write off the discrepancy, and would be sending him an official list of all makes and types of cars, horse power, manufacturer's consumption figures and all the formula to arrive at the correct number of coupons to be issued. It was then drinks all round and before they retired to their quarters thanked us for our hospitality and said that they had learned more about the war and the RAF in the last two days than ever before, something they would never forget. They left the next day after breakfast, with six new laid eggs each. George had a very big smile that day. Another episode in the life of the best Squadron Adjutant in the RAF, as I remember him.

Note : George Wright was obviously a very popular and much respected man as many of our WWII members will remember. But what happened to him after the war? Does anybody know? If you do, please let me know.

Peter M Walker



Photograph of a tray presented by George Wright to 214 Squadron in June 1943
Thought to have originated in Malaya, it is held by Jock Whitehouse as part of the Squadron Memorabilia

FROM THE 214 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION ARCHIVES

"THE CHANNEL DASH"

Robin Murray celebrated his 93rd birthday on 13th September 2008, but in 1942 to 1945 things were all so different, he was a POW in Stalag VIII B. On 12th February 1942 Robin was front gunner on a 214 Sqn Wellington, one of ten aircraft from the Sqn detailed to search for, and attack, the three German ships and their escorts making what became known as the Channel Dash from Brest to Wilhelmshaven. The three ships were the two battle cruisers, Gneisenau and Schamhorst and the light cruiser, the Prince Eugen.

Take-off from Stradishall was at 1510hrs, Wellington Mk1c, Z1081 BU-K. The crew was:

Wg Cdr R D B MacFadden DFC
Plt Off J Wood
Flt Lt P R Hughes DFC
Sgt A P Everett
Sgt R Murray
Sgt G I Taylor
Sqn Ldr M T Stephens DFC

Pilot & OC 214 Sqn
2nd Pilot
Navigator & Stn Nav Leader
Wireless Operator
Front Gunner
Rear Gunner
Fire Control Officer & OC 3 Group Gunnery Flight

It was unusual for a Wellington to carry seven crew members but the CO, Wg Cdr MacFadden had elected to fly and took along the Station Nav Leader and the CO of 3 Group Gunnery Flight as Fire Control Officer. The regular skipper of this aircraft acted as 2nd pilot. The Wellington carried 4 x 500 lb AP bombs.

We will now let Robin tell his story.



**Wg Cdr R D B MacFadden DFC
OC 214 Sqn Sep 41 – Feb 42**

(As first published in Max Arthur's book 'There shall be Wings').

Sgt Robin Murray 214 Sqn RAF

It was a cold day on the 12th February 1942 - overcast, 10/10ths cloud - and from 9000 feet down to about 900 feet was solid cloud, snow cloud. We took off in our Wellington and flew out on course - but we didn't see a thing because of the cloud. Then we iced up very badly. The port engine packed up, and after about twenty minutes, part of the propeller broke away - came through

the side of the aircraft and damaged the hydraulics. We eventually came down in the sea at about a quarter to five in the evening. When we hit, the perspex area behind the front turret broke and the wave took me right back up against the main spar. I came-to underwater, pulled myself along on the geodetics and came up by the pilot's controls. There were four of them already in the dinghy, which was still attached to the wing. I was the last one in. We'd lost Flt Lt Hughes and George Taylor. We paddled around with our hands looking for them, and Andy Everett swam round to the turret which was under water, because the plane had broken its back just behind the main spar - but it was no good. I had swallowed a lot of salt water and was very sick.

We were all sopping wet. We made ourselves as comfortable as we could. There were five of us in the dinghy - MacFadden, Stephens, Wood, Everett and myself.

For the first few hours there was nothing around - just the sea. It was quite choppy, and that was uncomfortable. Unfortunately, whoever had put the rations in the dinghy had forgotten the tin opener, so we couldn't open the tins. Then the knife fell overboard, so we hadn't that either. So all we had was Horlicks malted milk tablets. It was cold - the coldest winter for nearly a century.

We were hoping someone would come out and pick us up, because the wireless operator had sent out a Mayday signal - but what none of us realised was that Navigator had got his co-ordinates wrong. We had done a 180 degree turn and were heading out to sea again, so we landed off the Frisian Islands instead of, as we thought, 20 miles off Orford Ness.

I had learned when a Boy Scout how you mustn't go into a deep sleep when you're cold, because you can get hypothermia, and that's it - you die. So I always had two people awake so we didn't all go right off into a deep sleep - and that's what we tried to do.

Everyone survived the first night. We thought that any moment somebody was going to pick us up. We saw quite a few aircraft flying very high - unrecognisable of course. There were flares on the dinghy, but we didn't see any aircraft that was low enough to have seen us. Once we thought we saw a ship - that was on the second day. We set off a flare, but nothing happened, so we tried to set off another - but it wouldn't work, it was damp. None of the flares worked at all after that. We saw quite a few aircraft that evening, just before dusk, flying very high. We came to the conclusion they were probably German. We hadn't got a paddle on board - we were just sitting there. It was very strange, because people just went into a coma. They just sort of lost themselves.

Stephens went first, on the second day at four o'clock. That second night was very cold. We just talked about various things. There was no despondency - we never thought that we weren't going to be picked up. At dawn that morning, Wing Commander MacFadden died. There were no visible signs of injury. He was firmly under the impression in his last hours that he was in his car, driving from the hangars back to the mess. He was the only one who got delirious in that way. People sort of went into a coma. They would talk quite normally - and then gradually drowse off. You would shake them to try to keep them awake, but they'd gone. You could feel they were going. But it was peaceful - there was no suffering at all. They weren't in pain - they just quietly died.

Pilot Officer Wood died about three hours after MacFadden. He was very quiet. Finally, Sgt Everett died at dawn. I was disappointed that he had gone so quickly. He went while he was talking - just drifted off. I kept them all on the dinghy, and I was able to keep my legs out of the water by resting them on the bodies. It sounds terrible, but by this time they were beyond help. The final morning was the worst time, because we drifted in towards land. The water was now as calm as a millpond, and the cliffs were about 150 yards away, with a gun emplacement on the top. It was about eleven o'clock, I suppose, by the time I drifted towards the shore. I got a tin lid and caught the sun - and somebody came out of the gun emplacement.

Then the tide started to go out, I was starting to drift out to sea. That was a bad moment. Then a German Marine Police boat with a Red Cross came out and they hauled me aboard. I was able to stand up, and they got me onto the deck. They tied the dinghy on the back with the bodies of my crew and came slowly back. They took me into Flushing dock. (Vlissingen, Holland). I'll never forget that moment - the deck of the boat was above the quay, and they put a ramp down, and as I walked down the ramp to the ambulance, there were five or six German sailors there, and they all came to attention and saluted me.

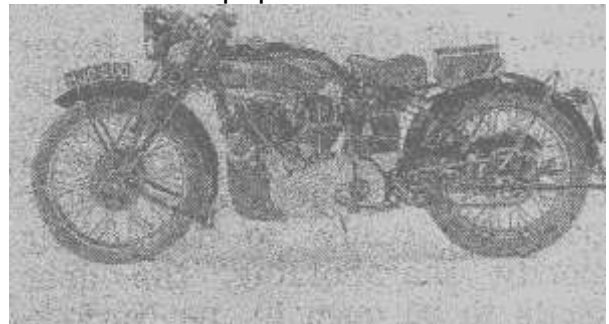
From 214 Sqn Association files.

Robin was later told that his four crew members had been buried by the Luftwaffe in Holland and with full military honours. (The four are buried in the Northern Cemetery at Vlissingen. Flt Lt Hughes and Sgt Taylor are commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.)

Robin Murray was suffering from frostbite to his feet and hands but reported from Germany that he had received excellent treatment and every consideration from the German medical people and was now once again in good health. He wrote a letter from Stalag VIII B on 16th March 1942 (We believe this was sent via the Red Cross) making a report on what happened and how he had been well treated. A copy of this letter is in the Squadron Operations book records at Kew. Robin finished the war as a Warrant Officer and was made a member of the Goldfish Club.

Robin lives in Langley, Bucks and if any members would like to visit him his telephone number is 01753 - 546706.

From the Newspapers:



RAPIDE SETS RECORD

A vintage motorbike dating from the 1930s set a new British record when it sold for more than £200,000 at auction. The classic 1939 Vincent-HRD 998cc Series-A Rapide, above, was snapped up for £214,800 at the Bonhams sale in London. The new record was set only hours after the previous British record was also smashed when an ex-Roland Martin, Brooklands, 1927 Zenith JAP 8/4hp Championship motorcycle combination sold for £177,500 at the same auction.

Further to our story in the previous two Nightjars about Sqn Ldr Bill Clarke and Vincent motorcycles, we report a recent sale of a 1939 Vincent-11RD "Rapide" motorcycle for the amazing price of £214,800.



**Sgt Robin Murray RAFVR
214 Squadron**

That magic number 214 again!

Brian Walker of the Vincent Owners Club informs us that Bill Clarke would almost certainly have tested this machine before it left the factory.

THE BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL APPEAL

On Tuesday 28th October 2008 the Daily Telegraph launched an appeal to raise £2 million to build a memorial to RAF Bomber Command. This is being run in association with the Bomber Command Association. It is intended that the memorial will be erected in one of the London Parks, either St. James, Green Park, or Regents Park, but this will depend on a decision by local authorities. Some newspapers have reported that the money has already been raised and that the memorial will be erected in Regents Park in 2009. This is incorrect, the funds have not yet been raised, the site has not yet been decided, and the memorial will not likely be dedicated until 2010 or 2011. However the appeal is underway, and if you would like to know more please contact as follows:

Online : www.telegraph.co.uk/bomber_command

By post: Make cheques payable to Bomber Command Memorial Fund and send to 'Bomber Command Association', RAF Museum, Grahame Park Way, Hendon, London NW9 5LL.

At the time of writing these notes (3rd Nov), I understand that donations have reached £50,000 in the first few days.

PRESS RELEASE: New Book.

3 GROUP BOMBER COMMAND An Operational Record by Chris Ward & Steve Smith

Publication date: 6th November 2008

ISBN 9781844157962 Price £25 Hardback - 324 pages - Illustrated

Pen & Sword Books Ltd. Tel. 01226 734222 /734555 e-mail: enquiries@pen-and-sword.co.uk

Although the press release for this book does not mention it I suspect that it covers the period to the end of the war and not postwar. If you would like a copy please let me know because if I am able to place an order direct with the publishers for two or more copies, a discount of £5 can be obtained from the normal retail price of £25.00. P & P is included.

Peter Walker

Bill Chorley's series on RAF Bomber Command Losses of WW2 now has on-line update support

Bill Chorley's final book in his nine-volume series on *RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War* from Ian Allan Publishing was fittingly the RAF Bomber Command Roll of Honour. Each book provided updates to the preceding ones so to be fully up to date you needed the whole series and considerable dedication. But with the series ended how would the continuing input of amendments and additions from Bomber Command veterans, researchers, squadron and family historians and others see the light of day? A neat solution has been provided by 207 Squadron Royal Air Force Association's Frank Haslam working with Bill (who is an Honorary Member):

- all the published updates have been consolidated.
- updates for the whole series that have come in since the last book are being continually added.
- this valuable single-source resource is in the form of a website, enabling worldwide access via the Internet. Its aims are approved by the series publisher, Ian Allan Publishing.

The web is ever more present in the home or available via family, friends, neighbours, libraries etc., in principle enabling many of those not personally on-line to have access to the website. Bill and Frank expect that the website will generate yet more updates as users of the books realise that their contributions, once verified, can be made public. The website even offers e-mail notification of further changes. It is a must visit site for all who have an interest in Bomber Command losses, or who use any of the books in the series.

Please visit <http://www.rafinfo.org.uk/BCWW2Losses/>

continued....

Notes:

1. The website is NOT 'the series on-line': it is a convenient, ongoing, single point of reference for **updates**.
2. Whilst Ian Allan Publishing approve the aims of the website they do not source it.
3. Bill Chorley: 01725 552776
4. Frank Haslam 07983 560 106

Frank is a Friend member of 207 Sqn RAF Association. He is their Membership/Reunion Secretary and Newsletter/Website Editor - see www.rafinfo.org.uk

NB THERE IS ALSO LINK TO THIS ON THE 214 SQUADRON WEBSITE

V-FORCE REUNION WEEKEND

24/25TH APRIL 2010

NEWARK AIR MUSEUM

Newark Air Museum is pleased to announce that due to continued requests they are planning to host another V-Force Reunion Event. This event is expected to closely follow the style of the 2004 gathering which was enjoyed by so many. The same team have agreed to be involved with this event, so Mike Pearson, Alan McLoughlin and Don Chadwick will once again reform the team of former V-Force personnel that made 2004 so successful. Invitations to display at the event will, in due course, be sent out to all of the groups that today support live V-Force aircraft. These, along with others, will be invited to add to the displays during the weekend. These activities will be co-ordinated by Newark's Bill O'Sullivan, and will provide added interest to those attending that were not part of the V-Force.

The prime day of the reunion is likely to be the Saturday. But for those who may wish to attend on both days a specially priced ticket will be available. It is also likely that an evening "gathering" at another site, will be organised in due course, as this proved very popular with those lucky enough to book tickets for it last time.

This Reunion Event is open to all who served with aircraft of the V-Force as air or ground crew, those involved in the manufacture and servicing of the types are also included. More details will be added to the Museum webpage as event updates become available. Please pass this information along to anybody who may wish to know, as word of mouth is likely to reach many who may not otherwise be aware of this reunion opportunity. Those who left contact information with the above personnel are likely to be contacted by NAM in 2009 with details of this event.

Bill O'Sullivan
Event Co-ordinator
Newark Air Museum
bill.osullivannam@hotmail.co.uk
01522 560541

Other points of contact:

Mike Pearson
120 Poynders Hill
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
HP2 4PN
01442 264552
vulcanaeo@btinternet.com

Al MacLoughlin
almacmedal@aol.com

No 214 (FEDERATED MALAY STATES) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

DEDICATION OF MEMORIAL AND ANNUAL REUNION - 18 JULY 2009

Name

Address:

.....

..... Postcode

Telephone No

Number in party

Please tick those boxes that apply:

I/We plan to attend the dedication ceremony at the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 18 July 2009.

I/We plan to attend the buffet lunch at the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 18 July 2009. I/We understand that there may be a charge for this.

I/We plan to use the coach to travel between the Midland Hotel, Derby and the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 18 July 2009. I/We understand that there may be a charge for this.

A member of my party will need to use a rigid wheelchair on the coach between the Midland Hotel, Derby and the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 18 July 2009.

A member of my party will need to use a folding wheelchair on the coach between the Midland Hotel, Derby and the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 18 July 2009.

I/We plan to attend the Reunion Dinner at the Midland Hotel, Derby on Saturday 18 July 2009.

NB: The information provided above is for event planning purposes only and does not constitute a firm booking.

Booking forms for the dedication ceremony and buffet lunch at the Arboretum and for the Reunion Dinner at the Midland Hotel will be available on the Squadron website (www.214squadron.org.uk) and in 'Nightjar' early next year. If you would like the booking forms posting to you as soon as they are available, please tick the box to the left.

When completed, please return this proforma as soon as possible to the Association Treasurer:

John Gulliver
Chucky's
Swains Lane
BEMBRIDGE
Isle of Wight
PO35 5ST