

# " THE NIGHTJAR "

NEWSLETTER

OF

No. 214 (FMS) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

President

Marshal of the Royal Air Force

Sir Michael Beetham GCB, CBE, DFC, AFC, FRAeS

Chairman

Squadron Leader G.W. Moffatt RAF (Ret'd)



SUMMER / AUTUMN 2006

### **Squadron Leader Jack Dixon DFC RAF (Retd)**

Many of you will have heard, but it is sad to have to record the passing of Jack Dixon in January this year. While his cremation was strictly a family occasion, a very well attended memorial service of thanksgiving was held for Jack on 26<sup>th</sup> January at the parish church of St Mary the Virgin in Horsham where Jack lived. 214 (FMS) Squadron Association was represented by our Chairman, Godfrey Moffatt, supported by Bob Davies, Pauline King and Vic Pheasant. Jack's only son, Peter Dixon (such a look alike to his father) gave an address recalling Jack's life, and read the most moving eulogies from Jack's two grand daughters aged 14 and 16, who live in Seattle where Peter is currently based.

As you will all know, Jack took over the reigns as Chairman of the Association after the untimely death of the Association founder – Harold Bidmead, holding the position for many years which he executed with robust chairmanship and leadership, laced with large quantities of humour. Ever the gentleman in his conduct, he always had a twinkle in his eye and a story to tell.

Jack was born in Marylebone where he claimed that on a good day the Bow Bells could be heard, which enabled him to call himself a 'cockney'. He was, however, brought up in Streatham in SE London. After a good education, at 16 Jack left school and joined Lever Bros (later becoming Unilever). His initial intention was to become a chemist but, after he had undertaken a stint of work experience in the insurance department, he decided that this was to be his calling. Apart from the wartime years, Jack was to remain with this department for the rest of his working life.

Just before the war, Jack had joined the Territorial Army, so when war was declared he was called up and joined a search light battery under the Royal Engineers. While he did not regard this as the most exciting of wartime activities, it was fortuitous as it was on searchlight battery detachment that he met Valerie who later became his wife. However, soon after Jack volunteered for the RAF, was selected for pilot training under the Arnold scheme, and gained his wings in the summer of 1942. He then returned to England, undertook some advanced flying training before joining the HBCU to convert on to Stirling bombers. He joined 214 Squadron in March 1943, and completed his 30 operation by November of that year. (Jack's crew and the crew of AVM Jack Furner were the only two crews to complete a 30 op tour in that year.) It was during this tour that he was awarded the DFC, his flying skills being recorded as exemplary. After a short stint at Tempsford, where he flew six supply dropping operations, Jack returned to the Stirling HCBU as an instructor. He finished the war detached to a unit in India. (Bob Davies, who was also on TA/RE searchlights before joining the RAF, recalls that he and Jack were among the few to be entitled to wear the TA Efficiency Medal – green with a yellow vertical strip at each end, alongside their other gongs.)

After the war, despite the attempts of Lord Trenchard himself no less to obtain a Permanent Commission for Jack in the RAF, he returned to Unilever. For 10 years he was working for the company in Africa, during which time his son Peter was born, but he finished his working life in London, where he was made a Freeman of the City. Much loved by his family, despite the distance between them, they were in regular contact.

Jack served 214 very well, both in war time years, and subsequently as our second Association Chairman. That his service of Thanksgiving was so well attended is testament to Jack's popularity. At the reception afterwards, we (the four of us) raised glasses to toast the memory of Jack, and it's just possible that we heard that familiar chuckle in the background.

Sqn.Ldr. Vic Pheasant

See Secretary's note on the next page.

Note to Vic Pheasant's eulogy of Sqn.Ldr. Jack Dixon DFC

During Jack's short stint at Tempsford he flew six operations dropping supplies to the French Resistance. These were no "milk runs" but very dangerous low level operations to find a tiny field, at night in moonlight.

Most were flown at between 50 and 300 feet and needed a good navigator as well as a first class pilot.

On Nov. 9th. 1943 Murray Peden flew as second pilot to Jack Dixon on a drop in the Le Mans area. Another Canadian pilot, Bob Mackett also took part in these operations from Tempsford.

Vic mentions that after completing his tour Jack went to the Stirling HCBU, this unit actually being No. 1653 HCU (Heavy Conversion Unit) at Chedburgh.

In March 1943 Jack received a Green Endorsement in his logbook for a very skilful bit of flying following a collision with another Stirling over Chedburgh. The rear turret and part of the tailplane were torn off but Jack managed to land the Stirling on the grass alongside the runway.

Apparently after he came to a stop, Jack stayed in his seat for a few minutes thinking how lucky he was, when he heard a shout from the Flight Engineer who was trying to put out a small fire, "for God's sake get out, there are still mines on board". Jack then departed?

On September 24th. 1943 Jack was awarded the DFC. In his logbook he has described this operation to Nuremburg "a shakey do".



Award promulgated in the London Gazette  
dated 24th September, 1943.

Distinguished Flying Cross

Acting Flight Lieutenant John Alfred DIXON (123105), Royal Air  
Force Volunteer Reserve, No.214 Squadron.

The citation relevant to this award is as follows:-

"One night in August, 1943, this officer piloted an aircraft which attacked Nuremburg. Whilst over the target, the aircraft was attacked by two enemy fighters simultaneously from ahead and astern. The bomber was repeatedly hit and, although much damage was sustained, Flight Lieutenant Dixon succeeded in flying clear. Then, two engines ceased to function and the bomber rapidly lost height. With consummate skill, Flight Lieutenant Dixon maintained height at 2000 feet until his efforts to re-start one of the defective engines were successful. The damaged bomber became difficult to control but Flight Lieutenant Dixon flew it to an airfield near the coast. His skill and tenacity set a commendable example."

## NEWS SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER

April 16th. 2006 It is with great sadness that we have to report the passing of our former Chairman, Sqn.Ldr. Jack Dixon. Jack had served as Chairman from 1989 to 2002, he will be sorely missed.

Four of our members attended his funeral , "Moff" Moffatt, Vic Pheasant, Bob Davies and Pauline King. Bill Wilkinson was hoping to attend but was laid low with a very heavy cold.

January 8/9th. 2006 Tom Tate made his thirteenth visit to Huchenfeld (Pforzheim ) for the presentation of the City of Pforzheim Civil Medal to Mrs. Renate Beck - Ehninger and her husband Prof. Gotthilf Ehninger. The award of a medal each to a husband and wife is rather unusual.

The award was made for their joint work in the reconciliation process that started in 1992 when a plaque in memory of five 214 Sqn. airmen murdered by Nazi thugs was placed on the wall of the village church in Huchenfeld.

The reconciliation is ongoing and now involves the cities of Pforzheim , Dresden, Coventry and Guernica in Spain (bombed in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War). The reconciliation also of course involves the small village of Llanbedr in North Wales and John and Pip Wynne who, in 1994 , presented Hoffnung the rocking horse to the kindergarten in Huchenfeld.

Tom Tate is now 88 and is now not very mobile. All he had to do to get to Germany was to sit in the front seat of his grandson's car and wait to be delivered to Germany , door to door. He has become something of a celebrity in Huchenfeld which is more than the "welcome" he received in March 1945.

The little booklet , Hoffnung the Rocking Horse , first produced by 214 Sqn. Association in 2003, has been updated and is available for £3..00 including postage. Please contact the Secretary if you would like a copy.

National Service airmen In the last Nightjar mention was made of two new members who had been National Service groundcrew in the 1950s.

Jim Ewing who lives in Combe Down near Bath informs me that he was a two year National Service Flight Engineer on 214 Sqn. Lincolns from late 1951 to late 1953.

It was not unusual in the 1950s to find National Service aircrew although I seem to remember that most were pilots or navigators and they had to serve a minimum of three years. Perhaps you can confirm this ?.

March 21st. 2006 Mrs. Billie Murray wife of Robin Murray . Until health problems prevented them, Robin and Billie were regular attenders at Reunions and were both at the first gathering at Chedburgh in 1988.

During the war Billie had served on the AA guns in the London area.

Robin was the only survivor of Wng.Cdr. MacFadden's crew ( Wellington ) lost on the "Channel Dash" , February 12th. 1942. He is now 90 and his health problems stem from frost bite suffered during his time in the dinghy.

He was eventually rescued and became a PoW.

Our sincere sympathy goes out to Robin and his family.

Note: Robin would be delighted to meet up for a chat with any 214 members who live within reasonable distance of his home in Langley , Bucks.

His address is : 11, Parlaunt Road, Langley, Slough, Bucks. SL3 8BD

Tel. 01753 - 546706 .



Jack Dixon as we remember him. The 214 Sqn. Reunion at the Maids Head Hotel, Norwich ; September 1994.



This sign was photographed outside 39 Sqn. HQ at RAF Marham in 2006.

It refers to the elderly aircrew who fly the elderly Canberra PR9s.

Despite their age both the aircraft and crews are very capable but are due to be phased out at the end of 2006. (The aircraft that is) Canberras of various versions have served, off and on , at Marham since Feb. 1954.

## NEWS CONTINUED

Mid April VERN SCANTLETON RAAF flew Stirlings and Fortresses with 214 Sqn. during 1944/45. I am informed that he was visiting a daughter in Perth, Western Australia and also called on John and Cynthia Lyall who live in nearby Bull Creek. John was an Air gunner in Jeff Bray's crew and is a member of the Association.

Mid April Tom Tate has moved to Appt. 11, Blenheim Lodge, 39/41, Chesham Road, Amersham , Bucks. HP6 5HX . Tel. 01494 432887.

It was reported that GEOFF LILES died on March 4th. 2006. He was a pilot on Fortresses at Oulton in 1944/45, completing 30 ops. He was a member of 100 Group Association but not 214 Sqn. Assn.

The 100 Group Reunion/Dinner was held over the weekend of May 13/14th. and was well attended, including the usual sprinkling of 214 members. On the Saturday afternoon a visit was made to Oulton where the good people of Oulton village put on their wonderful fare of homemade cakes and beverages. Thanks are due to all the ladies and gentlemen for this annual spread. Afterwards we all walked to the memorial where poems were read, a minutes silence took place and a wreath laid. On the Saturday evening the Dinner was held at the Aylsham Hotel, followed on the Sunday morning by a church service at Horsham St. Faiths.

218 Sqn. Reunion at Chedburgh , weekend of June 30th./July 2nd.  
Contact Jock Whitehouse for details. Tel. 01440 - 786266

AVENGING IN THE SHADOWS , the history of 214 Sqn. has finally been reprinted , but this time in A4 size. Copies are available from the City of Norwich Aviation Museum ; Tel. 01603 - 893080 . Please telephone them to order. The cost is £15.50 plus packaging and postage. Only available from them.

On the back page of the last Nightjar we had a list of useful websites. However AVM Jack Furner has informed me that there were two important omissions:

[www.rafbombercommand.com](http://www.rafbombercommand.com)- produced by the Bomber Command Assn. under the guidance of our President ; and

[www.raf.mod.uk/history/rafhis.html/](http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/rafhis.html/) -covers the Air Historical Branch and the RAF Historical Society.

It is worth noting that , if you go to Google to search for RAF Bomber Command, the first one it comes up with is the first one above.

The website list in the last Nightjar has a "typo", the statement in brackets (Bob Balter's Bomber Command ) should be Bob Baxter.

This will be all double Dutch to some of us, including me. PMW.

Sqn.Ldr. Bill Doy DFC . By the time you receive this newsletter Bill will have celebrated his 90th. birthday . (on June 10th.) On behalf of all members I sent Bill a card of congratulations on reaching this great age. He was at the 100 Group Reunion and looked in good shape.

Stirling BF516 PX-E In the last edition of the Nightjar we reported that a new Associate Member, Mrs. Shirley Whitlock, had joined us. Her uncle, Sgt. Eric Smith lost his life on August 10th. 1943 when this Stirling came down in the sea off the Sussex coast.

The Wireless Operator, Bob Moorby, was one of five crew members to survive, but only just, he spent quite a few weeks in hospital. He came back to 214 to complete a couple of more Stirling ops. and then with George Mackie's crew on Fortresses when he flew almost another tour.

Bob has recently met up again with Shirley and her family and here is his report.

" Peter has already mentioned my introduction and meeting with Mrs. Shirley Whitlock, the niece of my first crew Navigator, Eric Smith, who lost his life when the old Stirling "E" Easy crashed in Pevensy Bay in August 1943.

I wanted the initial meeting with Shirley to discuss and settle arrangements for a get together with her family to give them details of that operation. The main meeting took place over the weekend of the 4th. and 5th. of March when we travelled up to Shirley's brother Ron's home at St. Neots, Cambs.

I gave the family the details of the flight and eventual crash so that the facts were correctly established. They had previously thought that the Stirling had been based at North Luffenham.

During the drive to St. Neots we visited the American Cemetery at Maddingly near Cambridge; very impressive with its layout and Memorial Chapel.

Later Ron took us to the old Tempsford airfield where all the "hush-hush" flights took off from to drop agents and supplies to the French Resistance.

214 Sqn. seconded several aircraft and crews to Tempsford and the old barn was still there where the agents received their final briefing before take off.

It was very pleasing to see so much memorabilia in the barn which proves it still receives many visitors, particularly at Remembrance Day time.

We also paid a visit to the Shuttleworth Collection Museum at Old Warden.

It was a very pleasant, satisfactory and extremely enjoyable weekend in a strong family atmosphere. Ron completed the arrangements by taking us out to dinner on the Sunday.

All of Shirley's family are interested in flying, her eldest son has a pilot's licence and has promised me a flight at some time in the future. Having made contact they are all now fans of 214 Sqn. and hope to attend the 100 Group Reunion in mid May.

I shall of course be keeping in touch with Shirley and her family.

Bob Moorby. March 2006

Secretary's note: This is what Associations are all about, keeping in touch with old friends and meeting and making new friends.

### OUR GUEST SPEAKER AT THIS YEAR'S REUNION DINNER

We are hoping that our speaker will be Grp. Capt. David Seward AFC. G/C Seward flew Lightnings from Coltishall in the early 1960s and later was CO OF 56 Sqn. flying the Mk. 6 Lightning at Wattisham.

During his Lightning period he refuelled from 214 Sqn.'s tankers on many sorties.

His talk, illustrated with slides, will involve bringing the Lightning into service at Coltishall and eventually commanding a Squadron of the very potent Mk.6.

Quite a few of his slides are of taking a "sip" from 214 tankers.

## SOME VERY LAST MINUTE NEWS FOR THOSE WITH WEBSITES

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**From:** "214 Squadron website" <raf214squadron@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "shaun p broaders"  
**Sent:** 30 May 2006 21:57  
**Subject:** Re: 214 Sqn Association

Hello Shaun

Thank you for your email. It is very good to hear from a member of the Squadron Association.

Kevin was unable to continue with the administration of the site as he is involved in a number of projects and the workload became too much for him. We willingly volunteered our help and offered to take over the responsibility of the site from him and we thank him for the huge amount of time and effort that he has put into the site. We have inherited rather a large backlog of information to be processed so could you and your members please be patient with us.

We would be very keen to receive copies of the Nightjar newsletter and any other information that you may have. To enable us to easily update the website is it possible to receive the information electronically via email? If not, we can scan the information and then upload it to the website.

Could you please advise the Association members that we are keen to keep the site regularly updated and we would welcome any information that they may wish to be included. Again, electronic information is easiest for us, but of course we would be happy to receive it in any format. We look forward to working with the Association with the aim to ensure that the history of the Squadron and the debt that we owe to the people that served in it are never forgotten.

We would be grateful if you could include our contact details in the next newsletter if you think that this is appropriate.

We hope that the Association is happy with the way that the website is presented and developed. However we also welcome any suggestions or comments for inclusion or improvement.

We have a family connection to the Squadron. John's mother's first husband (not John's father) served during WW2. He was Flt Lt Sidney Clayden Matthews DFC 142217, who was a crew member with Johnny Wynne on that fateful flight in March 1945, when he baled out with the crew and was murdered in the village of Huchenfeld in Germany.

We wondered if the Association historian has full details of all Sid's operations with 214 Squadron and would be very pleased to receive any details he may have.

We also would be interested in joining the Association, so could you please advise us how we can do this.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Carol & John Edwards

## HISTORIAN'S REPORT

This report consists mainly of items of general interest as no items of 'pure 214' have been received.

I have been able to provide Mrs Alys Smith with photographs of the resting place of the four members of her late husband's crew who died when their Fortress (HB763) was shot down on August 25/26 1944. The communal grave in Hotton War Cemetery, Belgium is the only one of No. 214 Squadron aircrew in that particular location. The photographs were taken a number of years back as part of a project initially aimed to record as many as possible of the burial places of 214 Squadron personnel, the majority of the work undertaken by Bob Davies and his 'world-wide' associates.

An interesting link with this loss and in the possession of Alys, is a 1946 letter from the Air Ministry sent to the family of one of airmen explaining the considerable time lapse prior to confirming the correct identities of the four men who when initially buried 'local' to the crash site were actually identified as 'unknown Americans', the confusion being that they were lost in a B17. (presumably unidentifiable as an RAF machine). The American post-war recovery teams realised the error, but it was some time before the true identities were known, a good example of the time and effort taken to get things right in a very demanding and delicate task.

A Roll of Honour for the Meteorological Service is being compiled: not easy as in the early days many staff were reserved occupation civilians, often ex-schoolteachers. One such man actually died at Stradishall in 1942 (motorcycle accident travelling to work from his lodgings). If anyone can recall any details of 'the Met. section' at Stradishall (where they were located and how they linked in with 214, etc.) I would be pleased to hear.

A further detailed recollection of the dramatic Marham American F.100 'Super Sabre' crash (previously mentioned) has arrived with me: perhaps a comprehensive write-up can appear in a future edition of 'Nightjar' (Editor willing!)

'Stirling House' at Stradishall continues to develop. The entrance hall has been re-decorated with other areas to follow. Memorabilia (mainly pictorial) is being placed in the building and 214 of course will be well represented. An example of genuine Wellington geodetic construction (via Brooklands) is on show and some of Peter's beautifully produced prints of selected squadron Wellingtons and Stirlings will soon appear as will a copy of a remarkable pencil drawing produced in 1941 by an obviously skilled artistic groundcrew member depicting a 214 Wellington diving onto a target. (another future 'Nightjar' inclusion).

Jock Whitehouse

### VERN SCANTLETON RAAF

Since mentioning news of this former 214 Sqn. Stirling / Fortress pilot I now have his address for anyone who knew him.

Mr. Vernon Scantleton ,  
Unit 8, 8, Brodribb Street,  
TOOWOOMBA , QUEENSLAND 4350  
AUSTRALIA

## FORTRESS PILOTS 1944/45

Ian Hunt, one of our Associate members, has, over the past two years, produced the records of all the names of the crew members who flew in the Fortresses, which skipper they flew with and a list of all the operations flown by each pilot.

This information has been gleaned from the 214 Sqn. Operations Record Book held at The National Archives at Kew. This has involved Ian in many hours of research and many more in feeding the information into his computer. This information has then been printed and placed in a bound file and a copy sent to me. It has proved extremely valuable in quickly looking up any crew member, who he flew with, when, and to where. This is especially useful when I receive an enquiry from someone seeking details of a family member who served on the Squadron at this period.

Of the 68 pilots listed as having flown Fortress operations there are 25 of whom Ian does not know their "known as" first names. Could you help!

The skippers are as follows ;

W/O J.W. Archibald ; Flt.Lt. G.J.Beardsall ; F/O K.J.Bettles ;  
W/C R.L.Bowes ; F/O B.G.Cameron ; F/O E.W.Carter ; P/O A.Dobson ;  
F/Lt. S.T. Farrington ; F/O J.B.Henderson RCAF; F/Lt. D.A.Ingham RNZAF ;  
F/Lt. E.H.Jones ; F/Lt. J.A.Lawson ; W/O J.R.Lee ; F/Lt. M.C.J. Mark ;  
W/O M.A.McDougall RCAF ; S/L E.V.Miller RCAF ; F/Lt. J.E.Morrison RAAF ;  
W/O F.Murray RAAF ; F/O R.A.Nelson ; W/O J. Price ; F/O H.E.Rawlin ;  
F/Lt. N.S.Rogers ; F/Lt. J.D.Telfer ; F/O E.W.Woodley ; F/Lt. K.Wyver.

Archibald, Morrison and Rawlin had previously flown Stirlings with 214 Sqn.

If you can help in tracing these names could you please send details to me at : -

Peter M. Walker,  
21, Beverley Road,  
Brundall, Norwich NR13 5QS .

Ian is currently working on the crews and operations records for the 214 Sqn. Stirling period and these should prove equally as useful as the Fortress file.

Note : The Fortress records have enabled me to produce a list of all the operations flown by three of our members who had lost or mislaid their log books.

### Do we have your correct details in our list of members ?

Could you please check that the name, address and postcode on the envelope that this newsletter came in is correct. A few of our 211 members have informed us that there have been a few minor errors which we hope have now been corrected.

Every time a new edition of the Nightjar is sent out one or two members later inform us that they did not get a copy, the reason usually being that they have not told us that they had moved house.

If there are any errors or omissions please let me know without delay.

## FAREWELL COLTISHALL. 3 MARCH 2006

Both your Secretary and Historian were fortunate to join a final private visit to Royal Air Force, Coltishall, the famous Norfolk Fighter Station destined to close later this year although flying will already now have ceased.

Our visit was hosted by the CRO, Mick Jennings MBE, recently retired as a Warrant Officer stationed at Coltishall, but our start was slightly delayed as Mick was still involved with an earlier visit by a number of high-ranking gentlemen, amongst whom Peter and I recognised as no less a person than our own President!

Our first port of call was the impressive history room, crammed full of material depicting Coltishall's busy and colourful history right from the station's opening in 1940 up to the present day but surprisingly (?) most of our mature group homed in to a Jaguar nose panel circa Gulf War One, the interest no doubt focussed on its superb piece of art work of 'Katrina Jane', an obviously nubile young lady very revealingly clad in an ultra-mini maid's outfit!

Then out into a bright but cold sunny afternoon for a 'Grand Tour' of the hangars and flightline where we could admire and photograph the few remaining Jaguars of No 6 Squadron soon to leave their ancestral home for good for their final home at Coningsby. One hangar contained a few airworthy Jaguars, with others destined for either scrapping or sale and with only a handful of groundstaff present, there was an overall atmosphere of derelection. However, a real piece of Coltishall/Jaguar history remains intact, depicted by two huge cartoons each covering the whole inside faces of both sets of the massive steel doors of No.4 hangar. These magnificent works of art of Jaguars in action during GW1 were created as a backdrop for the ultimate welcome home party and although they should certainly be preserved, moving and displaying them could present a real problem!

We then visited an 'Aladdin's cave' tucked away in a rather undistinguished looking building and housing Mick's on-going private collection of jet-fighter cockpits all beautifully rebuilt to pristine condition and while it may seem preferable to display complete airframes, 'front end only' is far more economical and equally as interesting. Types included were: Tornado, Lightning, Hunter, Phantom, Buccaneer, Hawk and of course Jaguar. Mick plans to ship at least two exhibits (unspecified) out to Australia when he moves there and hopefully the remainder will be given secure 'local' homes.

By chance when a single Jaguar appeared in circuit returning from exercise, we needed no second asking when offered the chance to line the taxi-track to undertake our own final Coltishall 'photo-shoot' but true to form when the approaching fighter suddenly changed direction to head staright for us, not an aviationist amongst us moved and when the unscheduled close up shots were safely recorded an amused S/Ldr Smith gave us the 'thumbs-up' as he straightened up his charge and drove off to dispersal.

Wandering back past those lovely old and well-known hangars, the control tower and the airfield in general, many thoughts went back to the flying displays of yesteryears when stunning '16 or 9-ship' Lightning formations were commonplace, the RAF were able to provide a glorious mix of types in service and when the now nearly empty flightlines were

packed with a mouthwatering selection of mainly NATO fighters, all there to prove the point.

Whilst always sad to witness the end of yet another piece of our history in this case it is due in some way to the success of these stations and their role in our defence strategy during very dangerous times that we now enjoy security and safety and the hard facts are that now we simply do not need so many such establishments whatever their glorious past. The future of Coltishall is as yet unclear (will it disappear?) but ironically, Marham, due to its expansive role is already using vacated family housing at Coltishall.

Homeward bound, a final fleeting glimpse of the small military cemetery just 'off-base' but in line with the main runway and a resting place for both Allied and German airmen reminded us not only of the price paid on our behalf, but how times have changed and indeed continue to do so. A memorable visit.

Peter Walker and Jock Whitehouse



**ROYAL AIR FORCE STATION COLTISHALL**

**1940 - 2006**

## The Konigsberg Raid

Aug. 26/27th.1944

Konigsberg ,now known as Kaliningrad, is today a Baltic port city in the Russian enclave region of the same name. It is bordered by Lithuania to the north and east and Poland to the south.

In 1944 the city of Konigsberg was the capital of the German province of East Prussia and a vital supply port for the German forces facing the advancing Red Army on the Eastern Front.

By the late summer of 1944 the retreating German forces had fallen back into East Prussia in order to regroup and re-arm ready to face the advancing Russians.

At the request of the Russians RAF Bomber Command was instructed to carry out an attack on the port and city area of Konigsberg. A force of 174 Lancasters of 5 Group was sent , supported by two Fortresses of 214 Sqn. 100 Group , the latter using the JOSTLE jamming equipment.

This raid was one of the longest flown by 214s Fortresses (980 miles) and took a total of 10 hrs. 10 mins. from Oulton to Honinley , Warwicks where they were diverted due to fog at base.( T/o 20.45 landed at 06.55 )

The track out was Oulton over the North Sea to the Danish coast near Ringkobing (56N), turn due east to cross Denmark, southern Sweden with strict orders of no WINDOW to be used over the latter country. Off the east coast of Sweden the bomber force turned south east across the southern Baltic to the target area. The force had been instructed to fly at 150 knots at 10,000 feet in order to conserve fuel for the long journey. The weather over the North Sea was 5/10ths strato-cumulus, but for the rest of the trip it was generally clear.

Over the target area moderate light and heavy flak , in barrage form at 8/10,000 ft., was reported .

The two 214 Sqn. Fortresses , using JOSTLE , jammed from 23.40hrs to 02.50 , on a wavemeter setting of 8145. At 02.50 the H/T went u/s on HB780 "C". Type MB WINDOW was dropped at I per minute.

The return journey followed a similar route to the outward track but over Denmark some electric storms were encountered. Some crews, including those in the 214 Sqn. aircraft, reported that they could see the flashes from German and Russian artillery firing at each other.

Four Lancasters were lost on this night.

Four other 214 Fortresses were up this night , two supporting a raid to Kiel , (using JOSTLE ), and two providing a MANDREL screen. ( area not recorded )

After the attack the RAF flew a reconnaissance sortie (s) in order to assess the damage and the records show that the port and eastern part of the city had suffered severe damage.

Months later, as the Russian armies overran the area , some of the worst atrocities of WW11 were perpetrated by Russian soldiers on the many thousands of German refugees trying to flee the onslaught.

Considering how the German soldiers had treated the Russian in 1941/42

it was perhaps no surprise many of the Soviet soldiers behaved like animals. Both nations were controlled by two fanatical leaders of regimes who valued much of human life as slaves when they were no longer of use.

The two Fortresses and crews supporting the raid were :

Fortress HB780 BU-C

P/O George Wright  
F/Sgt. F. Mullenger  
F/Sgt. John Bates  
W/O J.R. Sherbourne RCAF  
W/O D.F. Robson  
F/Sgt. E.J.Barrett  
Sgt. R. Williams  
Sgt. Stan Bayliss  
F/Sgt. R.E. Williams  
F/Sgt. Jimmy Southgate

Pilot  
Navagator  
W/op.  
B/A  
W/Gunner  
W/Gunner  
Flt. Eng.  
Sp. W/Op.  
Top Gunner  
Rear Gunner

Fortress HB765 BU-R

F/O H.E. Rawlin  
F/O J. Owen  
Sgt. P. Bonnet  
F/Sgt. J.E.Andrews  
W/O C.A.Stewart DFM  
W/O G.W. Heath  
F/Sgt. D. Pottle  
Sgt. P.R.Stevens  
Sgt. H.Ward RCAF  
F/Sgt. S.Fothergill

Of the above crew John Bates and D.F. Robson are members , Jimmy Southgate and Stan Bayliss were well known members until they died.

I was inspired to write this item by some copies of the navigation charts of this raid sent to me by Hazel Southgate whose late husband, James, had obtained them from the navigator , Fred Mullenger, some years previously.

Mentioning navigation does any member know if the navigation logs, not the charts, carried and completed by Bomber Command navigators in flight, still exist in an archive or somewhere similar. Were they destroyed after the war? I have tried the National Archives at Kew but cannot get a simple answer from them. All I asked them was "Do you know if they still exist and if so where are they held ". They charged £10 each time I have enquired and came back with a load of useless waffle.

Peter M. Walker , Secretary

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

MR. & MRS. R.D.ROBERTS, Eaton Ford , St. Neots , Cambs.

Mr. Ron Roberts is the nephew of Sgt. Eric Smith , Navigator on Stirling BF516 which came down in Pevensey Bay, Sussex on Aug. 10th. 1943. Of the seven crew, two , including Sgt. Smith, lost their lives.

Bob Moorby was one of the survivors of this loss and he has written a note on this in the "News continued" section of this Nightjar.

MR. BEN WYNNE , Wokingham, Berks. Son of Wng. Cdr. John Wynne of Llanbedr, Gwynedd. Ben came to the 100 Group Renunion on May 13th. and was able to meet with some 214 veterans as well as to pay a visit to Oulton and Blickling Hall.



The pilot of one of our Wellington bombers has ornamented the side of his plane with this clever sketch.

This illustration was designed by "Zec" the Daily Mirror cartoonist . It was then painted , in black and white, onto a square of canvas which was then doped onto the fabric on the nose of Wellington Mk.1c bomber T2709 BU-D of 214 Sqn. RAF Stradishall, Suffolk. October 1940.

Crew :

Sgt. Geoff Cole	Pilot
Sgt. Paramore	Co-Pilot
P/O Keith Falconer	Navigator/Obs.
Sgt. Hunter	Wireless Op.
Sgt. Platt	Front Gunner
Sgt. Thompson	Rear Gunner

This was possibly the first "nose art" to be carried on an RAF bomber. When his "tour" had been completed, ~~the~~ Geoff Cole, the pilot , removed the canvas , later had it framed and still has it at his home near Cambridge.

Peter M. Walker  
214 Sqn. Association  
February 2006

## DEEP PENETRATION

### SECRET RAF/USAF RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS FROM SCULTHORPE DURING THE COLD WAR

At the end of the Second World War in 1945 the United States was the only nuclear power but by 1949 the Soviet Union had exploded their first test weapon. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) had also been formed in 1949, its purpose being to provide mutual defence against possible Soviet aggression. From 1950 to 1953 the Korean war was raging in the Far East.

By 1950 Western Intelligence knew or suspected that the Soviets were well advanced in the development of medium to long range missiles that could, in the next few years, carry nuclear warheads that would pose a threat to targets in Britain and Western Europe and in the longer term, to the USA.

Britain exploded its first atomic bomb in 1952 but it was not until the late 1950s that it had the modern means to deliver these weapons.

The West's nuclear deterrent was in the hands of Strategic Air Command (SAC) of the United States Air Force (USAF), many of whose aircraft were on standby or in the air 24 hours a day, some being based in Britain.

The "Cold War" with the Soviets had started in 1946/47 and had been heightened by the Russian blockade of Berlin in the period 1948/49.

Against this background our story commences :

In 1948 General Curtis LeMay was appointed as head of Strategic Air Command and by 1951 had built it up to a force likely to make the Soviets consider the outcome should they launch an attack against Western Europe.

However if the Soviets ever attacked, it was vital that SAC, in order to retaliate successfully, would have to fly at night, in all weathers, and at very high altitude. In these conditions it would be almost impossible for visual identification of targets. Navigation beacons, based in Western Europe, would not penetrate far into Russia, the only means of target identification was by radar images.

This would prove extremely difficult over such a vast country as Russia and the only way to be fairly certain of a target was to obtain radar pictures of factories and missile sites in order to provide SAC navigators and bomb aimers with photographs of the radar images.

But in the days before spy satellites were in orbit the only way to obtain such photo images was to fly over and take them yourself, the Soviets were not likely to oblige.

Curtis LeMay badly wanted those photographs so that his crews, in the event of war, could more accurately identify and hit their targets in western part of the Soviet Union. If he requested permission to send his reconnaissance aircraft over Russia it was likely that President Truman would not authorise such flights.

In 1951 LeMay thought up a "cunning plan", he would approach the British who he thought would welcome an opportunity to become involved, the only real stumbling block was Attlee, the Prime Minister who, like President Truman would not likely approve.

However, following a general election, Churchill once again became Prime Minister and he would almost certainly give his blessings to the plan.

The plan was that SAC would supply the aircraft if the RAF would supply the aircrews. The RAF and the USAF would then share the radar images, the British to use theirs for the forthcoming nuclear V-bomber force.

The project was so very highly secret that only a few top ranking politicians and RAF top brass knew about it.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Ralph Cochrane, Vice Chief of the Air Staff was put in charge and briefed to select a Commanding Officer for the Special Duties Flight as it was to be called.

He sent for Sqn.Ldr. "Mickey" Martin, an Australian born former "Dambuster" pilot of great experience in special operations during WW11.

Martin was given the task of selecting the crews and the first person he sent for was Flt.Lt. Rex Sanders, a very skilled navigator who at that time was in a desk job at the Air Ministry. Sanders was delighted to be offered the opportunity to return to flying, although he was not told what his task would be.

At this stage all that they were told was that they would be forming a very special, but highly secret Flight to fly the North American RB45c Tornado, 4-jet reconnaissance aircraft.

On July 12th. 1951 Martin and Sanders were sent to the USAF base at Sculthorpe in Norfolk to see the RB45s of the 91st. Strategic Reconnaissance Wing.

These aircraft carried a crew of three, a pilot, co-pilot and navigator.

Before they could commence, both Martin and Sanders had to be checked out for high altitude, pressurised flying. Unfortunately Martin's lungs were not up to it so a new Commanding Officer had to be found.

The man chosen was Sqn.Ldr. John Crampton C/O of 97 Sqn., then flying piston engined Lincolns at Hemswell, Lincs. He also had jet experience and was, in the coming months, to command 101, the first RAF Squadron to fly Canberras.

John Crampton and eight other selected aircrew went to Sculthorpe in early August 1951 and on the 3rd. departed in a C97 Stratofreighter for Barksdale AFB, Louisiana. Here they spent ten days learning the techniques of handling the B45 and then moved on to Langley AFB, Virginia for technical and ground handling of the RB45c.

On September 2nd. the group were flown to Lockbourne AFB near Columbus, Ohio, home of the 91st. Strategic Reconnaissance Wing. This Wing operated the only three squadrons of the RB45c in the USAF, one squadron being based at Lockbourne, one in Japan and one at Sculthorpe.

Only 35 RB45cs were built, so they were quite a rare beast.

At Lockbourne the RAF crews received a thorough and excellent conversion course but not all went well for one of the pilots. In the second month of

flying training he made a very heavy night landing damaging the aircraft beyond repair. General LeMay did not like people who wrecked his precious aircraft and sent for the unfortunate pilot who was apparently given a severe lecture and promptly sent back to England.

He was replaced by an RAF pilot already flying B45s on secondment to the USAF, Flt.Lt. Gordon Cremer.

All the rest of the RAF crews passed the training successfully and returned to Sculthorpe to form the Special Duties Flight, but still not knowing what was planned for them.

There was much speculation about their role, from carrying out flying boom trials pending the RAF adopting this system, to the RAF taking the RB45c into service as a specialised reconnaissance aircraft.

It also raised a few eyebrows among the Sculthorpe personnel, "what the hell are these RAF guys up to, flying an elite USAF aircraft painted in RAF markings."

John Crampton and his crews were soon to find out when he and Rex Sanders were summoned to Bomber Command HQ at High Wycombe and told of their role.

They were taken to the maproom, the charts were rolled out, and there before their eyes was the answer to all the speculation.

The charts showed three separate tracks from Sculthorpe, one to the Soviet Baltic States, a second to the Moscow area and a third to Central Southern Russia. The three routes were to be flown simultaneously from Sculthorpe, take off in rapid succession, then to rendezvous with the tankers to the north of Copenhagen, Denmark.

After a maximum fuel top-up the instructions were to climb at maximum continuous power at about Mach 0.68 to the highest altitude that the night temperature would allow.

The targets were to be ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile) sites and other strategically important areas. The navigators were to take 35mm photos of the aircraft's radar display when the targets were located and identified.

Timing was critical because Western Intelligence agencies would be listening for Soviet reaction to the deep penetration of their airspace, and had arranged for certain diversionary exercises for keeping them clear of the three routes. The RB45s were to fly without navigation lights and to maintain R/T silence throughout except for a very desperate emergency. In this case they would have a OMG (Oh my God) frequency which was the job of the co-pilot to transmit.

The two senior officers returned to Sculthorpe to brief their fellow crew members, who were somewhat amazed and a little concerned, after all they were not volunteers.

One of the pilots, for his own reasons, did not wish to continue and returned to his previous squadron. There was always a risk that in such circumstances a disgruntled airman, if indeed he was disgruntled, but perhaps even scared that he may not return, would spill the beans and jeopardise the whole plan. Fortunately this did not happen and the secret remained intact.

Further training now took place , missions were flown over Britain and Western Europe, practising air to air refueling by day and night , carrying out live radar and camera techniques and other tasks that required bringing their skills to perfection.

The day before the live sorties over Russia one aircraft, flown by the C/O , Sqn.Ldr. John Crampton , took off to fly a gentle probe of the Soviet Zone of Eastern Germany by cruising, at high altitude , up and down the Berlin air corridor for about half an hour or so.

This was to allow the Intelligence to monitor Soviet radio and radar activity. Nothing was noted and so the path was clear for the big day ,or rather night.

Four RB45s painted only in RAF roundels and fin flashes were wheeled out, one being a spare. In the event of one or more of the aircraft coming down in Russia the United States would point out that all their military machines only carried the stars and bars, so it could not be one of theirs.

The RAF would say " sorry old boy , we dont have RB45s on our inventory, not one of ours ".

How well this improbable tale would go down with the Russians was, fortunately, never put to the test. The crews apparently issued with false charts to back up their claim that they were lost, but this was considered as a gross professional insult to the crews, but an acceptable yarn in dire circumstances.

The truth is likely that if they had been brought down there would have been a major international incident and the crew would, at the worst , have been shot as spies and at best would have languished in a Russian Gulag for many years.

On a fine late afternoon in April 1952 the three RB45s took off from Sculthorpe and headed towards the Skagarrak. They picked up their tankers and took on as much fuel as they could. They then broke away, doused all lights and headed off into the dark night.

The three crews and their routes were as follows :

To Central Southern Russia :

Sqn.Ldr.Crampton, Flt.Lt. Sanders, Sgt.Lindsay.

To the south of Moscow :

Flt.Lt.Cremer, Flt.Sgt.Anstee, Sgt.Greenslade.

To the Soviet Baltic States :

Flt.Lt.Blair, Flt.Lt.Hill ,Flt.Sgt. Acklam.

Bob Anstee , the co-pilot on the Moscow route, told me just a few weeks before he died , that for many years they were subject to the Official Secrets Act and were forbidden to even mention the flights.

After a well known aviation journal published, in 1994, an article about the flights Bob still felt uncomfortable in talking about it.

However in his latter years so many people were aware of this story that in September 2003 he agreed to come to the 214 Sqn.Association dinner to give our members a talk on his experiences .

Sadly Bob was taken ill a few days before his talk and died on Oct.8th.

From the notes that Bob had prepared for the talk he mentioned what he had seen once they had entered Russian airspace.

We climbed to about 37,000 feet at Mach 0.68 and all we could see was wilderness, no lights on the ground, no sign of human habitation, unlike Western Europe which was a mass of lights.

However once we came up to the south of Moscow we could see a huge area of lights and a good reference point.

We covered our targets and the navigator obtained most of the required radar images. Our task completed we turned for home, picked up our refueling tanker over West Germany and headed for Sculthorpe.

Sqn.Ldr.Crampton flew the longest route, flying about 1000 miles into Russia then turning south before turning west where they met up with their tanker over West Germany. They eventually arrived back at Sculthorpe about ten and a half hours after they had left.

All the three aircraft arrived back without incident.

Their film was flown, in a Canberra, from RAF Wyton to the Central Reconnaissance Establishment for processing and analysis.

Each crew member was decorated, the officers receiving the AFC (Air Force Cross) and the NCOs the AFM (Air Force Medal).

The operation had been a success and a few days later the crews flew their aircraft across the Atlantic to Lockbourne AFB, Ohio. The following day they travelled to Omaha, Nebraska where they were greeted by General Curtis LeMay who offered his congratulations to all the crews.

After a couple of weeks in Washington they were flown back to England and returned to their squadrons.

However, Sqn.Ldr. John Crampton did not return to his previous squadron, he was appointed as Commanding Officer of 101 Sqn., the first RAF bomber squadron to operate the Canberra.

In October 1952 the crews were summoned back to Bomber Command to be informed that the Special Duties Flight was to be reformed and a few days later they were back at Sculthorpe to be welcomed by Colonel "Hak" Mixson the USAF liaison officer. There were two crew changes, Flt.Lt. McAlister-Furze (known as "McFurze") replacing Sgt. Bill Lindsay who had been injured in a B29 accident. McFurze was a Flight Commander on 101 Sqn. and later was to serve on 214 Sqn. on Valiants. (He is a member of 214 Sqn. Association)

Bill Blair had also been replaced by Flt.Lt. Harry Currell, who, in the period 1962/65 commanded 617 Sqn. (Vulcans).

The reformed SDF trained hard for the next two months to reach a high standard for the next trip over the Soviet Union, when suddenly the whole show was cancelled and the crews were sent back to their units.

Apparently there was a risk that the Russians had got wind of what was going on and the political implications were just too great to carry out the operation.

In early 1954 John Crampton was again summoned to High Wycombe and told that the SDF was yet again to be reformed and asked if he would take it on once more. Of course he would, in fact he had begun to think of the project as his own and would have been most upset if it had been offered to anyone else.

We will let John Crampton tell the story . So, in March 1954, it was back to Sculthorpe once again , "Hak" Mixson , the big stretched Cadillacs , the American flying clothing and the American language plus the raised eyebrows. I was concerned that our cover might well have been blown because so many people knew that we were up to something, even if they were not sure what.

The super efficient flight line procedures under which the crew chiefs would call stores or any other department at Sculthorpe using walkie-talkies, to discuss our aircraft problems and movements in uncoded language, was also a worry.

The least competent Soviet spy or sympathizer in the locality with a small radio tuned to the American's frequency could have written a manual on the events at Sculthorpe.

Anyway, after a months hard work during which the four assigned RB45s were once again painted in RAF colours, I went to Bomber Command HQ accompanied by the faithful Rex Sanders , to collect the flight plans which again showed three routes , north, central and this time a much longer southern route which would require in flight refuelling outbound as well as inbound. This was the one I chose.

The Intelligence people briefed us carefully : there might be some surface to air missiles (SAMs) but no radar equipped night fighters, although there was a ground control radar reporting system which would enable them to track us and position a fighter within visual range, but this was not thought to be likely.

The one comforting thought was that we should be too high and too fast for any anti-aircraft fire. No flak ! Good news! We were to keep radio silence unless attacked, in which case the OMG (Oh my God) frequency was to be used to give Sitrep to the chaps back at the ranch.

In late April 1954 everything was go, including the spare aircraft ( which we never used). Once again the three RB45s staggered into the air and headed for the north of Denmark where our faithful tankers topped us up.

After a smart salute to the tanker's boom operator , all lights were doused, and then came the long slow climb into the inky blackness east-south east. We cleared some stratus at 30,000 ft., got a good view of the stars, and were greatly encouraged by Rex's confidence-inspiring report that the ground mapping radar was working like a breeze. He gave me new courses from time to time and asked for straight and level flight as we ran on to our various target sites which he reported as being no problem to photograph .

Occasionally I saw, relected on the cloud cover, flashes from the ground, similar to lightning or an active bombing range at night. It was causing us no harm - just puzzling- thats all. Having taken nearly all our photos, we were heading south towards Kiev at 36,000 ft. and Mach 0.7 when the electric storm or bombing range flashes seemed to be getting more frequent, and always directly beneath us, which was odd for a random phenomenon.

Had it not been for the absolute certainty with which the briefing people had dismissed the possibilty of flak, I would have been a shade suspicious because it all closely resembled the German variety I had seen a lot of in WW11.

No one else was bothered ; Rex, who couldn't see out anyway, was devilling away at his photography, and Mac in the back was reporting all systems normal, leaving

me to ponder on this curious departure from the script.

My reverie was rudely interrupted by the sudden heart stopping appearance of a veritable flare path of exploding gold anti-aircraft fire. There was no doubt about it ; it was very well predicted flak , dead ahead and at the same height as we were. My reaction was instinctive, throttles wide open and haul the aircraft around on it's starboard wingtip until the gyro compass pointed west.

I began a gentle 100 ft. per minute descent because that made us seem to go a bit faster, although it didn't because we started juddering in the limiting Mach number buffet. So I eased the power off a bit, but kept up the descent on the " it seems faster " principle and since we had been predicted I thought it best to to change height as well as speed and direction, thus giving the gunners down below three new problems.

Poor old Rex piped up, "Hey, what about my photos ". I replied succinctly, explained that clearly we had been tracked very accurately, told him about the flak burst, and requested a course to steer to Furstenfeldbruck, our refuelling rendezvous and a declared alternative in an emergency.

We had about a thousand miles to go and I urged "Mac" to keep his eyes peeled for fighters which might pick us up outside the flak pattern. Much later we did learn that there were fighters about with orders to ram us on sight. Maximum speed was essential, I flew the aircraft on the right side of the buffet, it sort of trembled affectionately. I had time to reflect that the earlier flashes we had seen below us had been ground fire and that our stately progress as ordered by Rex had given even the dimmest battery commanders the time to track us and fire.

The early attempts had all misjudged our height - and thank God , the Kiev defences had misjudged our speed, they had chucked everything up a few hundred yards ahead of us.

I thought for a moment of jettisoning our now empty 1,200 gallon wing tip tanks. Their absence might have added a few more knots to our speed but, once found, their makers name and address would have revealed that they came from America, and there would have been one devil of a row. Anyway the thought of them bouncing down the High Street of Kiev West at two o'clock in the morning disturbing the ladies and frightening the children did not appeal. We were not flying over Russia to do that. Moreover, General Le May would not have been best pleased at my scattering expensive bits of his aeroplane over Russia. So we kept the tanks on and finally, after what seemed an eternity, met up with our tankers but, for the first time, the refuelling boom refused to stay in our aircraft. Fearing our refuelling system had been damaged over Kiev I thought it wiser to land at Furstenfeldbruck and refuel in the conventional way. This we did and then flew home without further incident. It was good to see the other two aircraft back at Sculthorpe and to hear that their crews had had successful , incident free flights.

Peter McD. Walker  
Secretary, 214 Sqn. Assn.  
April 2004

See notes overleaf -----

Notes :

These notes were prepared after consulting the papers left by Sqn.Ldr. Bob Anstee AFM,AFC . Permission was given by his family after he died in October 2003.

The notes on the 1954 flight as told by Sqn.Ldr. John Crampton AFC , DFC were taken from his talk given at a symposium at Bracknell to the Royal Air Force Historical Society in 1996.

After consulting John Crampton by telephone he saw no reason why I should not use these notes for non commercial purposes.

Likewise I telephoned Wng. Cdr. Bob McAlistair-Furze AFC who was quite happy for me to use his name in these notes.

Bob Anstee was a member of 214 Sqn. Association until he died in Oct. 2003. He had flown with 214 Sqn. in 1944/45 , as a Sgt. Flight/ Eng. on Fortresses from Oulton, Norfolk.

Bob McAlistair-Furze , known to all as "McFurze" , had flown as a pilot with 214 Sqn. in the early 1960's when the Squadron flew Valiants from Marham. He is a member of 214 Sqn. Assn.

These notes and photos are privately produced and should not be published in this format.

Peter McD. Walker  
214 Sqn. Association , April 2004

### LAST MINUTE NEWS

#### New Members :

Bill Phillips , Tilney St. Lawrence, Kings Lynn, Norfolk. Age 89  
Rear Gunner on 214 Sqn. at Stradishall and Chedburgh.  
Flew in crew of Sqn.Ldr. Sturdy RCAF . Harold Bidmead was Flt.Engineer

Cyril Swindells, St. Helens, Merseyside. Age 85 .  
Airfield Defence Gunner , RAF Regiment , Stradishall 1940/41 . Attached to 214 Sqn. Had a couple of flights in Wellingtons during his attachment to the Squadron.

We welcome both Bill and Cyril as members.



THE CREWS WHO FLEW THE SPECIAL RECONNAISSANCE  
FLIGHTS OVER THE SOVIET UNION IN APRIL 1952

Left to right , back row :

Two USAF ground personel ,

Sgt. Don Greenslade (Navigator)

Flt.Lt. Rex Sanders ( Navigator)

Flt.Lt. John Hill (Navigator)

Flt.Lt. Gordon Cremer (Pilot)

Col. Mixon (non flying USAF officer )

Sqn.Ldr. John Crampton ( Pilot and C/O)

Flt.Sgt. Joe Acklam (Flight Engineer & co-pilot)

Flt.Sgt. Bob Anstee (Flight Engineer & co-pilot)

Sgt. Bill Lindsay ( Flight Engineer & co-pilot)

USAF technical officer.

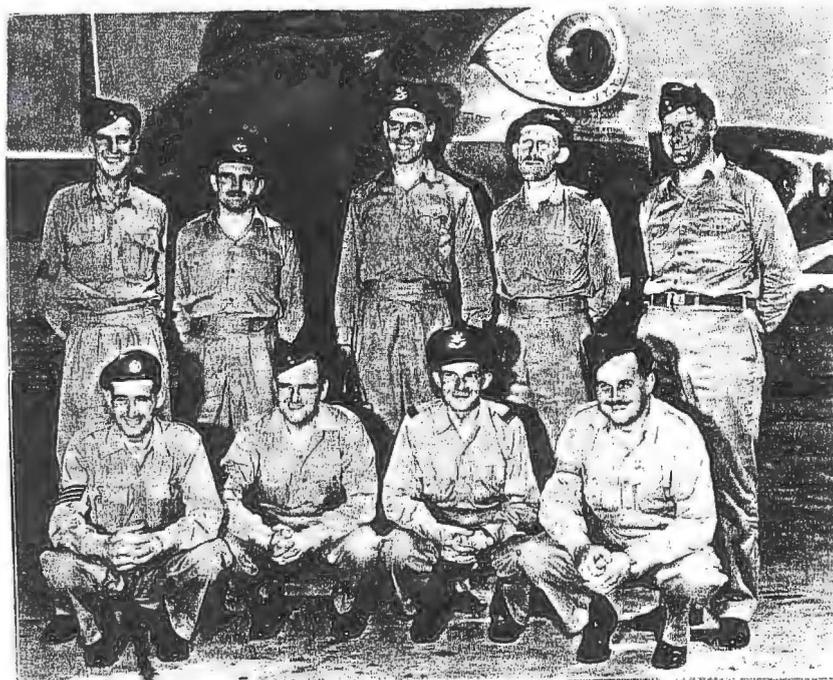
Missing from this photo was Flt.Lt. Bill Blair a pilot who had joined the crew but was not available on that day.

For the flight in April 1954 , Sgt. Lindsay,who had been injured in a B29 Washington accident, was replaced by Flt.Lt. McAlistair-Furze. Bill Blair was also replaced by Flt.Lt. Harry Currell.

Two of these crew members had flown with 214 Sqn. Bob Anstee on Stirlings and Fortresses in 1943/44 and Bob McAlistair-Furze on Valiants.



NORTH AMERICAN RB45c TORNADOES NEWLY  
PAINTED IN RAF ROUNDELS AND FIN STRIPES,  
SCULTHORPE, NORFOLK . APRIL 1952 .



AIRCREW OF THE SPECIAL DUTIES FLIGHT UNDER  
TRAINING IN THE USA, DECEMBER 1951.

Back row, left to right :

Sgt. Don Greenslade ; Flt. Lt. Rex Sanders ; Sqn. Ldr. John Crampton ;  
Flt. Lt. Slade ; Flt. Lt. John Hill .

Front row , left to right :

Sgt. Bill Lindsay ; Flt. Sgt. Joe Acklam ; Flt. Lt. Cafferata ; Flt. Sgt. Bob Anstee

Note the "eye" painted on the RB45c nose cone.



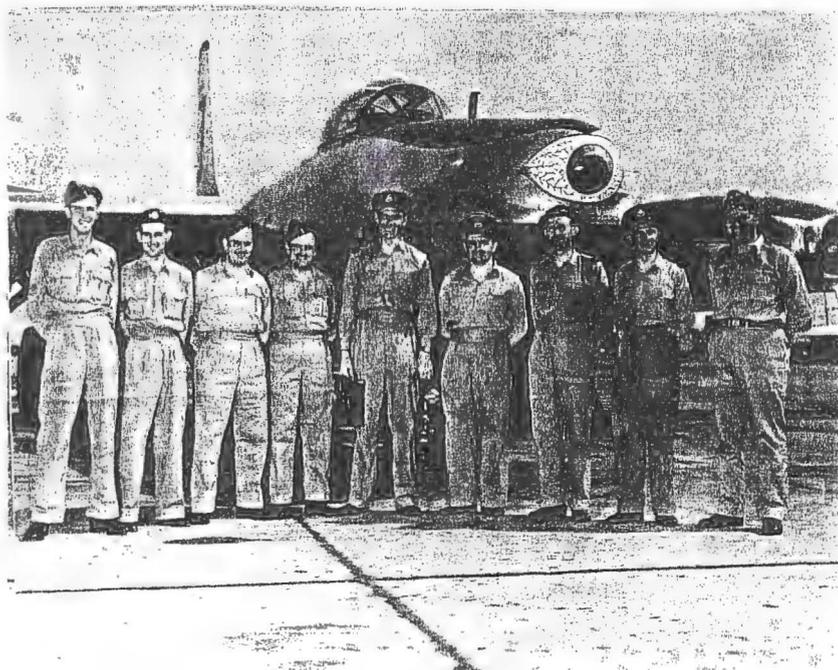
FLT. LT. GORDON CREMER WITH  
USAF GROUND CREW, SCULTHORPE,  
NORFOLK , DECEMBER 1952.

Gordon Cremer was not one of the original  
pilots but replaced either Slade or Cafferata.



FLT. LT. GORDON CREMER WITH  
USAF CREW CHIEF, SCULTHORPE,  
NORFOLK. DECEMBER 1952

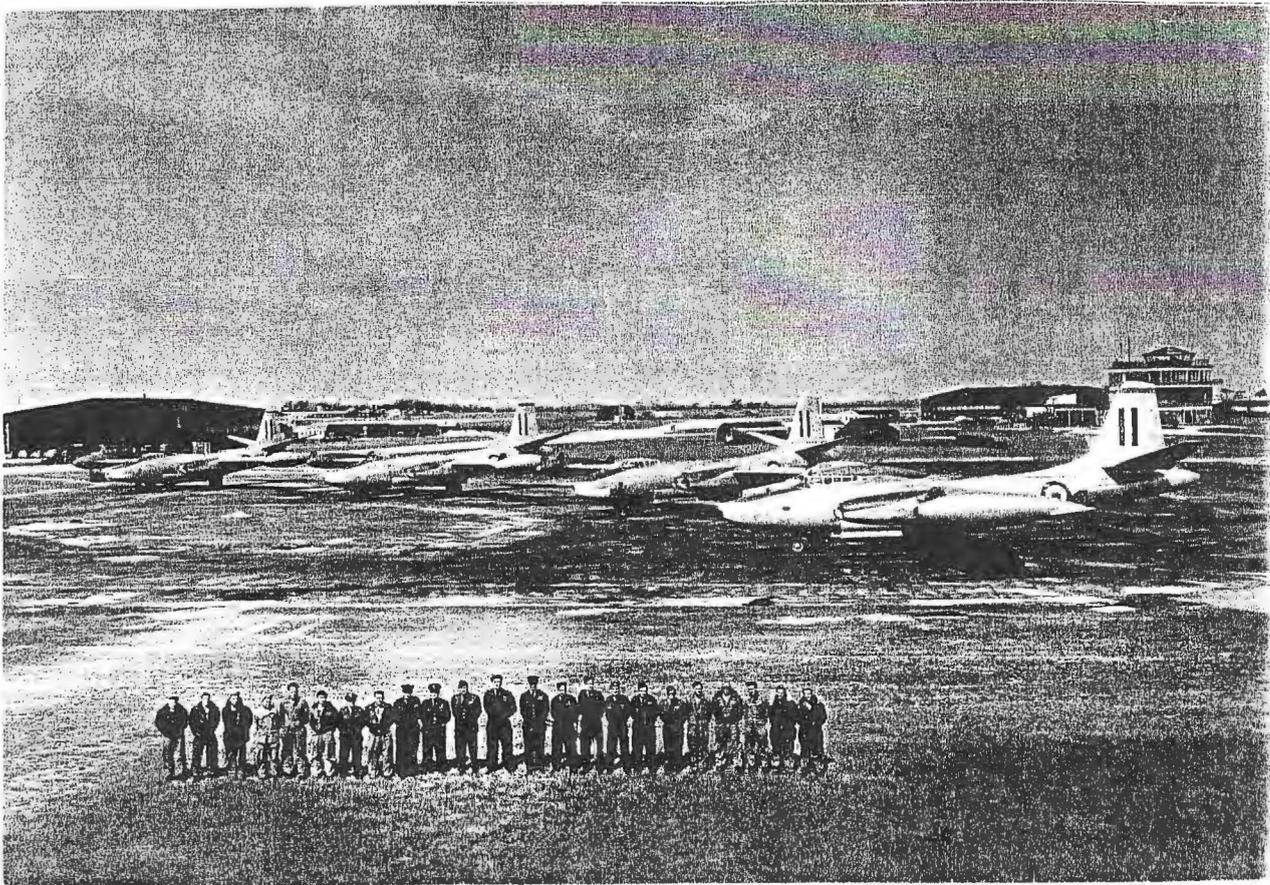
Note the "eye" on the nose cone of the  
RB45c Tornado.



THE ORIGINAL AIRCREW IN THE USA  
DECEMBER 1951

Left to right ; Don Greenslade, Bill Lindsay, Bob Anstee,  
Joe Acklam, John Crampton (C/O), Rex Sanders , Slade,  
Cafferata, John Hill.

Slade and Cafferata were replaced by Gordon Cremer  
and Bill Blair.



THE SPECIAL DUTIES FLIGHT AT SCULTHORPE ,  
NORFOLK IN APRIL 1952

Four newly painted RB45c Tornados with RAF aircrews and USAF groundcrews prior to their highly secret reconnaissance flights over the Soviet Union in April 1952.

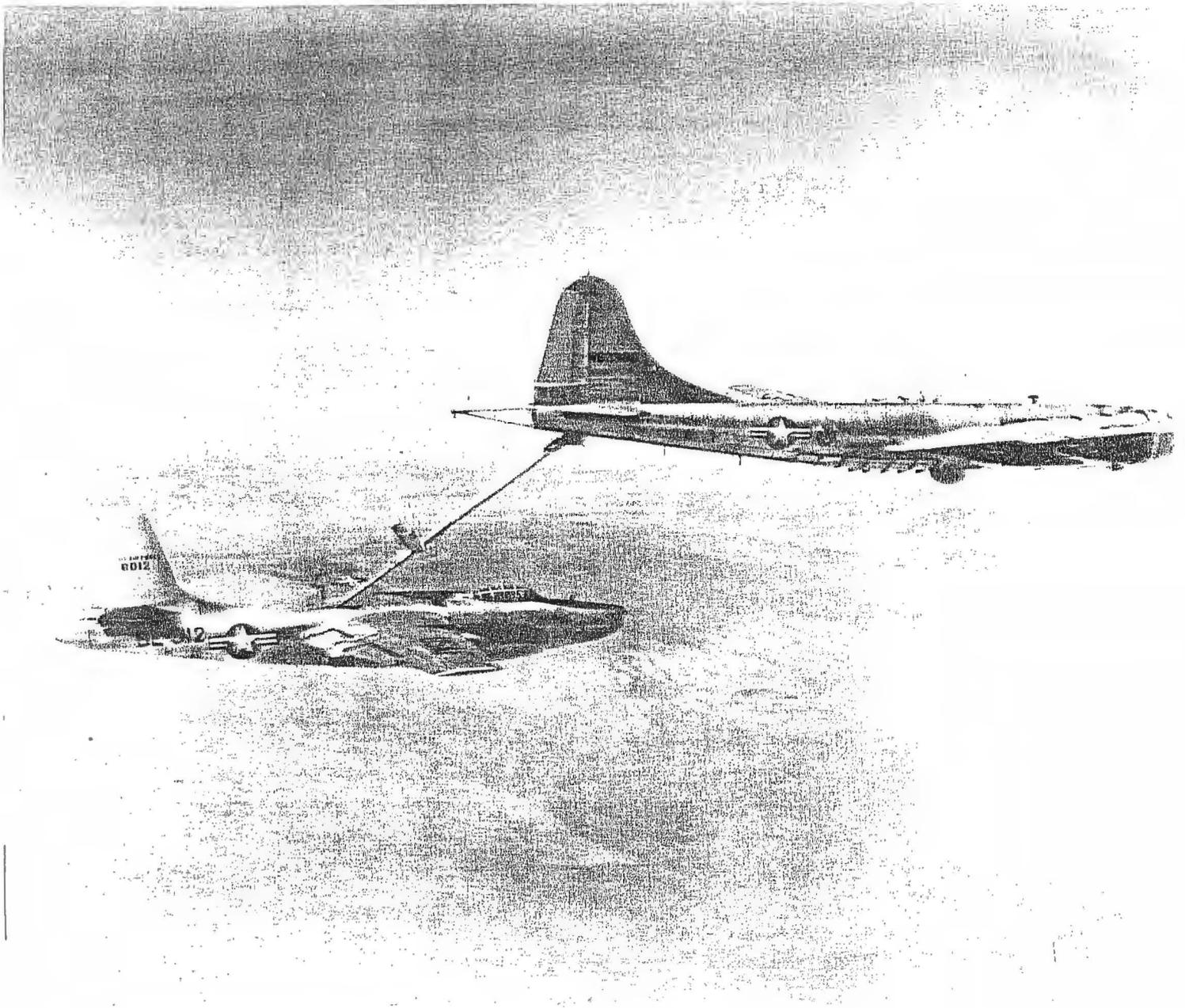
The aircraft only carried roundels and tail markings , no codes or serial numbers were applied.

The aircraft in the foreground appears to be painted silver overall but the other three appear as having polished bare metal with possibly duller painted silver undersides. (Look closely at the other photos in this booklet ).

The area in front of the cockpit and the tops of the engine cowlings was painted a non reflective khaki green, common on many USAF aircraft at that period.

Three aircraft took part in the flights in April 1952 and again in April 1954. The fourth aircraft was a spare in case of unserviceability of one of the others.

The crews had been called together at the end of 1952 to carry out another special flight in 1953 but following intelligence reports it was called off.



BOEING KB29 SUPERFORTRESS TANKER REFUELLING  
A NORTH AMERICAN RB45c TORNADO.

THIS WAS THE TYPE OF TANKER USED TO REFUEL  
THE RB45s OF THE SPECIAL DUTIES FLIGHT DURING  
THEIR OPERATIONS IN THE PERIOD 1952 TO 1954.

NOTE THE BOEING FLYING BOOM SYSTEM IN USE.  
THE NOZZLE ON THE END OF THE BOOM WAS FLOWN  
INTO THE ORIFICE IN THE RECEIVING AIRCRAFT BY  
THE BOOM OPERATOR WHO WAS POSITIONED IN THE  
TAIL OF THE KB29.

THE USAF STILL USE THIS SYSTEM TODAY, WELL  
PROVEN OVER MORE THAN 50 YEARS.