



'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 2007

NEWS FROM THE EDITOR

As you will see from the booking forms in this newsletter the hotel prices for this year's Reunion Dinner have been increased by a considerable amount. The reason for this is that in a very competitive world the Maids Head Hotel are having to spend around £2 million to bring the hotel up to a modern standard. Much of this work involves refurbishing the guest rooms as well as other improvements throughout the hotel.

Last year the price was £55 per person per night for dinner, bed and breakfast.

When I was first informed of these increases I made enquiries at other hotels around the Norwich area and found that those of a similar standard able to accommodate us were quoting prices at about the same level as the Maids Head's new rates. Two larger prestigious hotels on the outskirts of Norwich quoted prices about 25/30% higher.

It is simply that as a rather tired old hotel the Maids Head have, over recent years, been charging us comparatively cheap rates.

The advantage of a hotel in the centre of Norwich is that most of our members, and especially the ladies, like the easy walking distance to what is probably one of the best shopping areas of any city in Britain. At least that is what I am told. A disadvantage of holding a Reunion in Norwich is the long distance that some of our members have to travel, although many treat it as a long weekend and come to enjoy the area as well as the Reunion.

The Committee have discussed the changing the venue for 2008 and hopefully may be able to announce somewhere different by the time of the next newsletter due out in February. However because of the Squadron's long connection with East Anglia it will probably continue within the area.

I would be interested to hear your views on the matter at this year's AGM on September 22nd.

Non 214 Sqn. stories in the Nightjar.

In the last edition I ran a story about Flt.Lt. James Edwards of 271 Sqn. (Jimmy Edwards of radio and TV fame). This seems to have been well received by our members and so I make no apologies for including ~~for~~ another non 214 Sqn.item.

Many of our members were still serving at the end of the war and those of us who were not were likely to have been at school but old enough to remember the VE Day celebrations. I for one was just old enough to remember bonfires and village parties but too young to be aware of the historical significance of what had been happening over the months from D-Day to VE-Day and the final surrender of Germany signed at Rheims on May 7th. 1945 and ratified in Berlin a few days later.

However on May 3/4th. 1945 Field Marshal Montgomery had taken the surrender, at Luneburg Heath, of all German forces in Holland, Denmark, Schleswig-Holstein, Friesland, Heligoland and North West Germany.

Monty's own story of this momentous occasion was published in War Illustrated, an excellent wartime newsletter, about a hundred copies of which I have just acquired. It must have been a great moment for Monty, in his ordinary army battledress, with an army blanket on the table and a tuppenny school pen with which the surrender documents were signed.

IN MEMORIUM

February 14th. 2007 Flt. Lt. W.A. (Johnny) JOHNSON-BIGGS DFC ,
age 96.

Johnny, with his wife, was a regular attender at Reunions until 2004 when age and ill health prevented him from coming.

His story, "How I became an air gunner" was published in the Winter/Spring 2006 edition of the Nightjar.

He joined the RAF in 1935 and trained as a medical orderly in the rank of AC1 and ended the war as a Flt.Lt. with a DFC . He flew a total of 67 ops as a rear gunner (a few as mid-upper) with 214 on Stirlings and 15, 97 and 619 Squadrons on Lancasters. He was also credited with shooting down two night fighters. He was awarded the DFC on June 30th. 1944.

At his funeral service on March 1st. Norman Storey , a 214 Sqn.Assn. member and a fellow air gunner read out a tribute to Johnny and said he was a very courageous man in both war and peace and always cheerful whatever adversity befell him.

At the beginning and end of the funeral service an organist played "Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines" and during part of the service the "Dambusters March" was played.

And so has passed away one of our two oldest members.

Also attending on behalf of 214 Sqn. Assn. Norman and Audrey Storey and Howie and Elizabeth Wing.

February 25th. 2007

JACK BENNETT of Biggleswade, Beds. Cpl. Engine Fitter on 214 Sqn. 1943,
age 86.

Jack wrote a book some years ago titled Jack's Wartime RAF Exploits. It was privately published by Jack and some of you may have a copy.

As I type this I have just found out that it was published in 1997 with No. ISBN-0-953 1988-0-4. I have a copy, it is a good read and the odd copy may occasionally turn up on the secondhand book market.

NEW MEMBERS

VERN SCANTLETON RAAF . Pilot on 214 Sqn. 1943 to 1945 Stirlings and Fortresses. Vern joined the Assn. last October but I forgot to include him as a new member in the last Nightjar. Sorry Vern!

February 2007. MRS. SHEILA ENGLESE (nee FOLEY) WAAF M.T. driver at Stradishall and Chedburgh 1941 to late 1943. Attached to 214 Sqn. Since joining the Assn. Sheila has sent me a very nice piece of embroidery with the RAF crest 214 Squadron underneath.

She completed the piece after the war and thought we would like to have it. Jock Whitehouse has since had it framed and it is now hanging in the museum at the Stradishall Memorial. Thank you Sheila, hope that one day you can come to Stradishall to see it.

NEW MEMBERS (cont'd)

FRANK LEE , Ryde, Isle of Wight. Pilot on 214 Sqn. Stirlings 1943

Shot down on a raid to Berlin on 31st. August 1943. Taken as a pow.
Has been put in touch with Bob Mackett, Toronto, who flew his first two ops as second pilot to Frank.

Until recently Bob was unaware whether Frank had survived or not, he only knew that the Stirling did not return from Berlin.

A few minutes after leaving the target area the Stirling was attacked by a night fighter. A fierce fire developed in the centre part of the fuselage and the order to abandon was given. Frank then engaged the autopilot and shortly afterwards left through the forward escape hatch.

Five of the crew lost their lives and Frank, his Navigator Ian Crichton and Flt.Sgt. Hartland , one of the gunners, survived to be taken as pows.

STORIES FROM 214 IN THE 1950s

A TAIL OF WOE (or nearly)

Cpl. Roy Monk Engine Fitter : Thursday Dec. 9th. 1954

214 Sqn. RAF Eastleigh, Nairobi , Kenya

Aircraft : Avro Lincoln RE355

I was duty crew and the C/Os aircraft had been on air test after a long spell in the hanger. Our tour was over and we were due to return to Blighty next day. When returning it had been parked on the peri track to be pulled into line with the other aircraft. There was only myself and one other so I got on the tractor with the other chap in the cockpit.

Tail wheel towing I pulled round on a right hand lock and saw that I was getting too near the other aircraft. I was putting on more lock when I heard a horrible crunching sound, I had ripped the port rudder off.

Looking in horror I thought my world had ended. Having no authorisation to drive the tractor off I went to 'phone the Flt.Sgt. who came down to take charge. Was my luck in, they had a Lincoln port rudder in the stores.

So the airframe lads got cracking and when the C/O, Sqn.Ldr. Bowhill came charging across the peri track , steaming like a rhino, the job was fixed.

After discussing the matter with the Flt.Sgt. the C/O said it would be sorted out when we all got back to Upwood.

The Squadron was returning next day, the 10th., I left in a Valletta arriving at Upwood on the 14th. By this time 214 Sqn. didn't exist - it was disbanded.

I was then posted to 49 Sqn. and in May 1955 we went out to Nairobi for a six month tour but by July the Lincolns were no longer needed and we then went to Aden until the that Squadron was also disbanded.

In September 1954 214 Sqn. broke the record for attacks against the Mau Mau.

2,000 x 500lb. bombs dropped

77,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition fired

over 160 day and night sorties

Stories from 214 Sqn. (cont.)

Cpl. Roy Monk, Engine Fitter

12th. Entry , Cosford

It was Tuesday August 19th. 1958 and 214 Sqn's Valiants were being prepared for the 1958 S.A.C. bombing competition at March Air Force Base in California, USA.

The Valiants were formed up in the far SE corner of Marham airfield.

I was on Valiant XD859 being de-fuelled due to a fuel tank leak.

The day was very stormy with rain, thunder and lightning.

When de-fuelling no power was needed but the ground generator was in place with its cables over the wheels of the port undercarriage.

I was going to and fro the cockpit checking the fuel gauges when suddenly there was an almighty bang and a smell like fairground dodgem cars.

I could hear screaming from the starboard side and then saw two crew chiefs and a RAF policeman sheltering under the undercarriage bay.

The policeman was making the noise and doing a war dance.

What had happened was the tail of the aircraft had been hit by lightning and had gone through the aircraft, had shot across the port undercarriage and then down the centre of the generator cables splitting them wide open.

The policeman had received a shock through his metal studded boots but was otherwise unhurt.

All I can say is that I was glad that I was defuelling and not re-fuelling.

About three weeks later some of the Valiants took off for the USA, the ground crew flying out (it took three days) in a Comet of RAF Transport Command.

Frank Lee, Pilot Stirlings, shot down and POW on raid to Berlin, 31/8/43

Frank was very interested in the Jimmy Edwards story in the last Nightjar because he knew Jimmy when they were both at 31 SFTS, Kingston, Ontario in 1941/42.

Jimmy flew the Lysander target tower and Frank was flying Harvards instructing Fleet Air Arm pilots doing the SFTS course. He hated the Harvard especially when flying from the back seat at night.

Frank says that " Jimmy and I together with three or four other pilots were banned from the RAF Yacht Club for getting the barman drunk and then serving ourselves." " We also abandoned our car after it had been driven into Lake Ontario, or was it Lake Gananogue ". For this behaviour we were given a series of extra duties, including Orderly Officer.

An extract from a letter sent by Alan Haworth of Colchester.

I am 86years old and volunteered for flying duties in 1940, went to South Africa for training as an Observer in 1941, was successful and on return to England in 1942 was promoted to Pilot Officer.

After further training I joined 214 Squadron in June 1942 at Stradishall and with them did 27 "ops" in Stirlings. After this tour I did a short period of teaching and then volunteered to join 105 (Pathfinder)Squadron flying Mosquitoes and with them, in 1943/44, did a further 73 "ops". Looking back I think I must have been lucky to survive.

But what has provoked me to write to you is the picture of the Stirling on the back page of the Nightjar with the statement "manoeuvrable enough to tackle any fighter". I can tell you that my skipper and crew in two 214 Stirlings showed that they could not only tackle fighters but they could also shoot them down.

The following entries from my log book show this.

July 29/30 1942 Stirling R9146 Pilot : F/Sgt. Johnson

Ops to Saarbrucken

ME110 destroyed by the rear and mid-upper gunner

15/16 Aug. 1942 Stirling R9146 Pilot : F/Sgt. Johnson

Ops to Dusseldorf

Attacked by JU88 which was damaged by the rear gunner but also gave us some damage on the port wing.

28/29 Aug.1942 Stirling W7577 Pilot : W/Off. Johnson

Ops to Nuremburg

Attacked and hit on port wing by ME110 over Liege on way to target. Enemy aircraft hit by rear and mid-upper gunners, it burst into flames and was seen to crash into the ground.

I remember that last one vividly because Jock McGowan, the rear gunner called over the inter-com for me to look out and see the fighter in flames and crash to the ground.

He was so cross because he had failed to see the fighter before it hit us that he kept on shouting whilst firing at it , " go down you bastard". When we saw it crash we continued our mission and successfully completed it.

Fortunately other members of the Squadron had seen what had been done and reported it. For this the whole of our crew were awarded DFMs and DFCs.

My DFC was presented to me by King George V1.

An error in the last Nightjar (sorry, my mistake Ed.)

Bill Phillips , a recent new member, points out that he was the rear gunner on Sqn.Ldr. Sturdy's crew on Stirlings and not Wellingtons as previously reported.

(Ed. Our Association founder, Harold Bidmead , flew as Flt. Eng. a few times with S/Ldr. Sturdy's crew until mid 1942 when he was transferred to the crew of the new C/O Wng. Cdr. Smythe.)

This report should have been in the last Nightjar but was inadvertently omitted.
(Sorry Jock, my fault. Ed)

HISTORIAN'S REPORT. September 2006.

A Squadron wreath was laid at Chedburgh on a scorching 2 July and although the weekend is organised by No.218 Squadron Association we are always invited.

For Bob Moorby, Clare Pollard and myself, the weekend started on the Friday evening with cooling drinks and 'eats' in the relaxing surrounds of the walled garden of the Regency Hotel in Bury St.Edmunds with the magnificent new cathedral tower as a backdrop. . For those interested, Martin Cocker gave an excellent illustrated talk on the career of Lewis Aaron VC who lost his life as a Stirling pilot on No.218 Squadron. Saturday was garden-party time at the home of Margery Griffiths (an ex-Chedburgh WAAF) the organiser. When possible, a highlight of the weekend is a flypast of the BBMF Lancaster and although Bob and Clare watched from the garden, due to 'other duties', I had to find a shady spot on the outskirts of Badwell Ash just for a brief few minutes but time enough to watch the 'old lady' make a number of very low passes over the village, a really lovely sight as she banked round behind the trees. At the short but well attended memorial service at Chedburgh on the Sunday, several wreaths were laid, Bob doing the honours for '214'. Then back to the pub for further refreshments, eats, and more talk to round off a weekend of enjoyable comradeship. (Note: Bob Moorby had an excellent article published in the October '06 ' Flypast')

Coloured prints of selected aircraft which operated from Stradishall will soon be seen in Stirling House. Also on show will be that of the Lancaster and Valiant flown by Sir Michael Beetham who served as a post-war Flight Commander on the Lancasters of No.35 Squadron at Stradishall and a further link with our President is that on a memorable day in May 1994, Sir Michael honoured us by unveiling the RAF Stradishall Memorial. The Squadron's history will continue to feature in various ways as Stirling House is developed.

Ian Hunt has now produced a complete list of 214 Stirling operations during 1943-1944 and it is hoped that future work will cover all remaining 214 operations including the pre-war period.

In response to a request made by a Mr. Calver for information relating to the award of the Air Force Medal to Sgt. Ruoff, a 214 Squadron Wellington pilot in 1940 (see previous 'Nightjar') I have been able with the help of Ian Hunt, to provide the required information for Mr. Calver. In spite of my explanation of the time often needed to uncover such information plus my long initial response to the request, I have received neither acknowledgement nor thanks for the work undertaken. One does wonder.

In complete contrast, however, I responded to a request from a Mr. Ralph Wooldridge seeking help for any details on the loss of Sgt.Richard Fairhurst, a relative of his mother who as a Stirling air-gunner died on 2/3 July 1942 when his aircraft piloted by W/Cdr. K Knocker, the Squadron C.O, was shot down over the Dutch coast returning from Bremen. All the crew were killed and are buried at Eenrum General Cemetery close to where they fell. I met Mr. Wooldridge at Stradishall Church where he saw Sgt. Fairhurst's name in the Book of Remembrance and heard about the Service of Dedication held in October 1993. (I have since been able to send him a copy of the video of that day plus a photograph of Sgt.Fairhurst's name in the book) We then visited Stradishall and Stirling House. Although Mr. Wooldridge had seen pictures of the crew's graves, he expressed the need to now make the trip to Holland to pay the family's respects. An emotional visit and a very grateful family.

I recently met Victor, the eldest son of F/Lt Keith Kaufmann, an Australian who served with the Royal Air Force and who flew Harrows at Feltwell pre-war with '214' in such exalted company as 'Shrub Sellick', 'Baggy' Sach and Percy Picard. Keith then converted onto the Wellington with 214 and flew a full tour from Stradishall winning the DFC. He finally commanded No.460 Squadron an Australian Lancaster unit. Copies of Victor's late father's log book were promised.

Peter and I continually liaise on any potential squadron/family contacts a typical example being recently when Peter had an enquiry concerning F/O Shorttle. Recalling a previous family contact whose name I was able to find, I was able to pass this name onto the interested party. We never know who may be at the end of the 'phone!

Recommended reading: 'Vulcan 607' by Rowland White. An excellent coverage of the conception and undertaking of 'Black Buck One'-the dropping of 'iron bombs' on the runway of Stanley Airport during the Falklands war. A professional thriller writer could not have bettered this amazing story and it is a case of 'not to be put down until finished'. As CAS at the time, Sir Michael Beetham was heavily involved in the planning which drew deeply on his previous tanker experiences and who was firmly convinced that even with an ageing and reducing 'V' bomber/tanker fleet, the job could be done. S/Ldr. Bob Tuxford's involvement as a lead Victor tanker captain features prominently in the story (remember his talk to us on the subject two years ago?) How it all finally worked out is little short of miraculous.

On a personal note, I was particularly saddened to hear of the loss of Ray Glass. Ray and Betty were founder members and great supporters of the Association, but prior to that, Ray had been a fountain of knowledge for our researches on Stradishall and Chedburgh. One most pleasing aspect of this work was enabling Ray to meet up again with Doug Handbury (his navigator on several Chedburgh trips) and I recall the sheer pleasure when I called at Ray's home after attending a No.75(NZ) Squadron reunion at Coventry (Doug's second tour was with 75) to inform him that 'someone at the hotel wanted to see him'. 'I hope it is Doug Handbury' said Ray rushing away without bothering to change from his gardening attire! Their new family friendship continued for a number of years including some happy times at Norwich. Surely a perfect example of what our Association is all about.

Respecting her wish to remain anonymous, we remain sincerely grateful to our regular donor who once again has made money available for squadron wreaths to be laid at Stradishall and Chedburgh in remembrance of those who lost their lives including her younger brother -a navigator on 214. After writing to thank this lovely lady she telephoned me to wish us well wishing she could manage to be with us as she had so enjoyed her previous attendances.

Saturday 11 November 2006. On a gloriously warm and sunny morning, a number of friends gathered at the RAF Stradishall memorial to pay their due respects. As its Chairman, Eddie Wheeler laid the wreath for the Memorial Trust with Don Walter and Jock Whitehouse doing the honours for No.214(FMS) Squadron Association and Haverhill Aviation Society respectively. Also present was Ron Pearson, a local man (ex-Stradishall) who over many years has acted as standard bearer for such prestigious organisations such as the Royal Air Forces Association together with those of the Pathfinders and Bomber Command and it was the latter's standard which was paraded on this occasion, reflecting RAF Stradishall's traditional bomber role during which No.214 Squadron suffered such heavy losses. For the first time, HMP Prison Service chose to lay their own wreath at the memorial. The Management of Stirling House had organised excellent poppy collections both from its staff and residential students and remains dedicated to preserving the aviation heritage of the site.

Although one might have seen the old favourite 'Way to the Stars' more than a few times, there is often something which has previously escaped notice. During a recent showing my attention focussed on the RAF vehicle being used to carry posted personnel off the fictitious base. Surprise indeed, for on the front mudguard was painted :RAF 214/101! The film is listed as being made in 1942 (in summertime according to the outside shots) precisely when Nos. 214 and 101 Squadrons shared Stradishall! and although 214 converted to the Stirling in the May, 101 continued operating their Wellingtons until leaving in August. I am unaware of evidence that any filming was carried out at Stradishall and it is likely that the vehicle was simply made available use but it is nice to think that this early tangible link between the two squadrons could actually be preserved for prosperity. Look for it when the film is next shown-- as it most certainly will be!

Jock Whitehouse

FURTHER NEWS

Booked to come to the Reunion on September 22nd.

Our President, MRAF Sir Michael Beetham

From Australia : Sylvia and Maurice Harding who last came in 2004. Sylvia was a WAAF at Chedburgh and Oulton in 1944/45. Maurice served in the RAF but not on 214 Sqn.

From Austria : Gerhard and Sissie Heilig

Our Guest Speaker at the Reunion :

Group Captain Phil Osbourn OBE , ADC , RAF, O/C RAF ~~Marston~~

HISTORIAN'S REPORT

Jack Bennett.

I have written to Jack's daughter, Stella, on hearing of her father's death. Jack was a delightful man who served as groundcrew on Wellingtons and Stirlings of No.214 Squadron at Stradishall and Chedburgh respectively and always enjoyed recalling those days, so much so that he published his memoirs in the aptly named 'Jack's Wartime RAF Exploits - a lovely read. Although professional authors may detail the wider subject by accessing official records etc. these valuable personal stories serve to tell what life was really like 'warts 'n all'. When Jack asked if he could use one of my Stradishall pictures (painted for Robin Murray and showing 214 Wellingtons) for the front cover of his book I was more than happy to agree. Jack was also an enthusiastic supporter for the Blenheim project.

Mrs Sheila Engelse.

We have been most fortunate to make contact with Mrs Sheila Engelse, who as **Sheila Foley** was a young WAAF MT driver serving on No.214 Squadron both at Stradishall and Chedburgh. As Sheila can still recall various squadron personnel : the delightful Adjutant George Wright, F/Lt. Ted Youseman, P/O A Carruthers (an American from NY but serving in the RCAF and lost from Chedburgh in March 1942) S/L Bilton, W/Cdr Smythe and Phil Milton the navigator in Ray Hartwell's crew, I have sent her a selection of photographs and information. Also arriving with me is a photograph taken at an event in 1997 ('The Edwardians' at Polesden Lacey) showing a very smart red Rover 75? --registration **214-S** : an ex-squadron member? if so, **WHO** ?. Plus, after a very long time hidden away and forgotten an item of genuine 214 Squadron memorabilia (1940) has been donated to the Association by Sheila in the hope that it may eventually be displayed in Stirling House (which it will). Now restored to display condition it will be on show at the September Reunion (so why not come and see it?) and will feature in a future 'Nightjar'.

Toys for Boys

For those amongst us who may still get a little excited by 'models' calling to mind curves, shapely bodies and trim undercarriages whilst being difficult and tricky to handle, sorry but I am actually talking 'plastic kits'. Knowing that a 'Vickers Valiant' kit has eluded enthusiasts for many years I was more than surprised to spot such an item whilst actually purchasing a high quality Wellington kit. Although its French manufacturer has a somewhat dubious reputation for precision, 'beggars cannot be choosers' and **THREE** of our members (anon) now possess a VV kit--shall we see at least one at the Reunion? Sad but harmless! Still on the Valiant. A recent speaker at my local Aviation Society happened to be the historian of the ROC and as I have information that at an ROC Open day at Stradishall in 1956/7/8/ one of the static aircraft was a Valiant from No.214 Squadron, I am hoping that via his membership this gentleman might come up with the identity of that rare visitor.

Simon Read

Some of you may recall meeting Simon at a reunion a while back, and as he expressed a lot of enthusiasm for the Association it was hoped that he might become an active member. However, Simon, a professional journalist and author has returned to live in California but has just published '**The Killing Skies**', a new look at the life of Bomber Command in WW2., which looks to be a well balanced, nicely written and informative work. (Published by Spellmount ISBN 1-86227-329-4, £20.00) Simon dedicates his work to his grandfather, the late Michael 'Jinx' Elelman, (air-gunner Nos. 214 and 7 Squadrons) and expresses gratitude

for help when preparing the book provided by our old friend, the late Bill Johnson-Biggs. Well worth a read.

Mrs Joyce Birch.

I was able recently to enjoy mid-morning coffee on a lovely sunny day in the courtyard of the 'Bull Hotel at Long Melford in the company of Joyce and John Birch who were over from the Midlands visiting locations linked with the flying career of Joyce's cousin (F/O W G Cooper). Bill, just starting his second tour, was captain of the Stirling which collided with that flown by Jack Dixon, as both aircraft returned to Chedburgh from operations in March 1943. Although Bill kept his badly damaged aircraft airborne long enough for his crew to bale out safely, he was unable to get out and sadly was killed when the Stirling came down near Hadleigh in Suffolk. Joyce had some interesting documents to see and spoke of her contact with the widow of the late Tom Boosma (injured crew survivor) who emigrated to Canada after the war and later published a detailed description of the incident. (Recently serialised in 'Stirling Remembered') .

Mrs Shirley Dickerson

I have received a nice letter of thanks from Shirley whom I met by chance at Stradishall (see previous 'Nightjar') for the information I had forwarded relating to her father's (not brother as I incorrectly reported in my previous coverage) service career and his loss on operations from Chedburgh. Shirley is hopeful that further important information may be available from RAF Innsworth. F./Sgt Hugh Felce was lost in March 1943.

Jock Whitehouse

MORE LATE NEWS

THE 100 GROUP REUNION was held over the weekend of May 11-13th. based on the City of Norwich Aviation Museum.

Those members who arrived on the Friday paid a visit to Swanton Morley, now an Army base. Here they were well received and shown around the old airfield and hanger.

On the Saturday the Museum laid on, as in past years, a great welcome and a buffet lunch followed by members making their way to the old airfields, ie Oulton, Swannington, North Creake, Foulsham etc.

In mid afternoon it had been arranged that all would meet at Oulton village, where, as in past years, the people of Oulton had laid on a wonderful spread of cakes, refreshments and other goodies, the event this year being held in a marquee in a lovely garden.

Having been well looked after the visitors and villagers walked to the 100 Group Memorial where poems were read, prayers were said and Bill Doy laid a wreath. On the Saturday evening about seventy members and guests enjoyed an excellent dinner at the Aylsham Lodge Hotel.

On the Sunday morning the village church at Horsham St. Faith was packed for an all denominations service.

Altogether a very good weekend to meet old friends.

Among the 214 Sqn. members attending were Bill Doy, Hazel Southgate, John and Gwen Gilpin with their daughter Maureen, Gerhard and Sissie Heilig, Bill Foskett, Bob Moorby, Shirley Whitlock , Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, Chris Lambert, Peter Witts, Paul and Mrs. Henry.

Peter M. Walker

Our new member, Frank Lee as a
Flt. Lt. in 1943, and below with his
214 Sqn. crew at Chedburgh.



The crew , left to right are :-
F/Off.M.I.Crichton , Navigator
Sgt.Davies, Mid upper gunner
Sgt. Gale, Rear gunner
Flt.Lt. Frank Lee, Pilot
Sgt.King, W/Operator
P/Off. Mounsey , Bomb Aimer
Sgt. Butler, Flight Engineer

Shot down over Berlin on the
night of 31/8/43 four of the crew,
Sgts. Gale, Butler, King and P/Off
Mounsey lost their lives, three
survived to become pows.
Sgt. Davies was not on this trip.

Ian Crichton, the Navigator died
in May 2006 age 92. A reading at
Reading University in 1995 titled
"A Wartime Log" is reproduced in
this newsletter.

Dr. Ian Crichton was not a
member of 214 Sqn.Assn., he
probably never knew of us.

Details kindly supplied by
Frank Lee.



A Wartime Log

by Dr M Ian Crichton



came to Reading in January 1938 as a young assistant lecturer in Zoology, after spending a year as a temporary lecturer in the University of Cape Town. Before that my undergraduate course had been in the University of Edinburgh. My training and experience were mainly in marine zoology. I settled happily into our tiny department under Professor F J Cole, with Dr Nellie B Eales as lecturer and W E Stoneman as museum curator. I was pleased to become a resident in St Patrick's Hall.

When war came in September 1939 life at Reading carried on much as before, except that we had fire-watching duties and were allotted places in air-raid shelters under the cloisters. I became one of a small team equipped for detecting poison gases, and took lessons in first-aid. That period of the twilight war ended dramatically in May 1940 with the German Blitzkrieg. I remember having afternoon tea in the residents' garden at St Patrick's Hall with Robert Gibbings, who was then writing *Sweet Thames Run Softly*, at the time of Dunkirk, watching Hurricanes and Spitfires flying to our front-line airfields. I realised that our whole way of life was now threatened and I decided to take an active part in the war by joining the Royal Air Force. Professor C H O'Donoghue, who had succeeded Professor Cole as Head of Department, did not stand in my way; his elder son was already a pilot in the RAF.

As soon as the term was over I walked along to the recruiting office in an old school in London Road and volunteered for flying duties. On 12 August 1940 I became AC2 M I Crichton, No 1177509, at RAF Cardington. My pay was 2s 0d a day (£36.10s a year); the University agreed to make up the difference between this amount and my salary of £275, up to the end of September 1941.

Because of the numbers of men volunteering for aircrew it was March 1941 before I started initial training at Aberystwyth. I was one of a group of trainee navigators shipped to Canada in June, and then on by train to Miami for a course in navigation on Pan-American flying boats over the Florida coast and the Bahama Islands. We had a thorough grounding in navigation, based on dead reckoning and the triangle of velocities, with map-reading and the use of sextants, and we also had a course in meteorology. It was all a wonderful experience. The United States was not yet in the war, so we travelled as civilians, in identical grey flannel suits supplied by the Fifty-shilling Tailors, but wore RAF tropical khaki when on duty. We were even kitted out with topees, but never wore them!

We returned to Britain in November to complete our training with bombing and gunnery at Millom and Manby. Shortly before the end of my course, in January 1942, I went flying with a cold in a draughty Hampden over Lincolnshire and

Dr Ian Crichton took a Reading PhD in 1958 and retired as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Zoology in 1979. After his brilliant talk to The Friends of the University we invited him to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War with this biographical account which ends in the year 1945.



F/Lt M I Crichton, No 133576, at RAF Cosford on 10 May 1945. Identity card photograph rejected on return from leave, after a haircut.

developed meningitis. I had a long spell in hospital, and it was October before I was fit enough to resume flying. I completed my course and received my commission at the end of November. Thus I had 2¼ years in the ranks, first as AC2 and then as LAC at 5s 6d a day. It was good experience, but I was glad to have the extra comfort, and the pay, of an officer! There was now more flying in Wellingtons and finally the conversion course to 4-engined Stirlings and the completion of our crew of seven men.

In May 1943 I joined 214 Squadron at Chedburgh in Suffolk for operations over

Europe as navigator in a Stirling of Bomber Command. We did a lot of flying through that summer: our operations were all at night, mine-laying in enemy waters and bombing the Ruhr cities, Hamburg and Berlin. It was demanding work, but we had wonderful support from the ground. Our flight commander came on several ops with us, at first to give us confidence, and then because he liked flying with us.

It was on our second trip to Berlin, in the early hours of 1 September that we were raked by cannon shell from a night fighter and set on fire, soon after leaving the target area. I was one of three of our crew of seven who survived. I broke my left leg on landing. After burying my parachute I set off on a compass course southwards through woodland. After crossing an Autobahn and skirting a village it was starting to get light, so I crawled into a hedge and lay there undetected all day although people were walking close by on their way to work in the fields. When I set off in the evening my leg was more swollen and walking much more difficult. I decided there was no future in trying to reach the Czech frontier nearly 200 miles away, so I buried the maps and money from my escape kit and walked back to the village I had passed the night before and gave myself up. I had further to walk that night to another village where there was an army post, but my guards were considerate. Next day I was escorted into Berlin to a barracks where I met other captured aircrew. The following day we were all taken by train to Dulag Luft in Frankfurt am Main, where all captured aircrew were interrogated. After three days in hospital I went with other wounded prisoners to a small hospital in a village in Thuringen, where my leg was X-rayed and set in plaster, on 9 September, by our own RAMC doctors. I was discharged with a small group of prisoners after two weeks and we were taken away east of Berlin to our final destination, Stalag Luft III in Sagan, in what was then Nieder Schlesien.

The Great Escape, and its tragic sequel in the murder of 50 officers, was from our compound in March 1944. I was not yet fit enough to take part in the escape organization, so I turned my mind back to zoology. We had a useful library and I

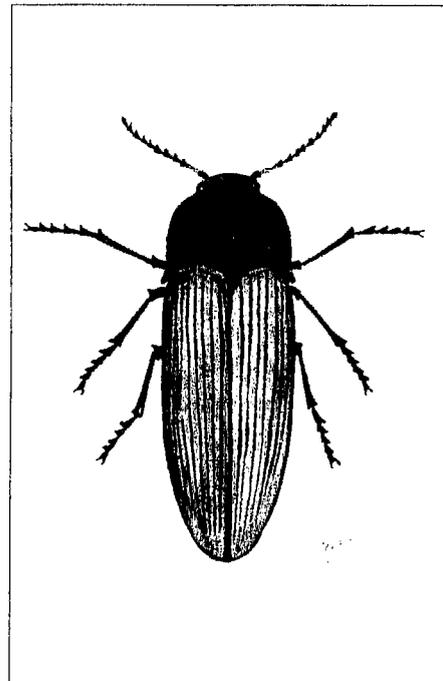
had books sent from home. There was no opportunity for marine zoology, but we had plenty of insects around, some not so welcome! Thus I became interested in entomology and built up a small collection of insects. I gave a course of 32 lectures on agricultural zoology and a further 11 lectures on evolution and animal breeding to men who were studying for the National Diploma in Agriculture.

The RAF has always generated its own jargon; as prisoners of war we were Kriegsgefangener – we called ourselves Kriegies, and the Germans were Goons. Kriegie life would have been very grim without the wonderful Red Cross parcels of food, while all kinds of other supplies came from the War Prisoners' Aid of the YMCA in Geneva. This latter organization provided each Kriegie with the imaginative gift of a little book for recording our writings or drawings. I received the British edition of 113 numbered pages, 17 x 12 cm, with some thicker card pages for mounting photographs or other things. It was bound in green cloth and entitled *A Wartime Log*; this is the central theme of my narrative. For my teaching work I obtained from Geneva water colours, paint brushes, pencils, entomological pins, cork, and even dissecting instruments. My request for a hand lens and pens and ink was turned down because they could have been used for forging documents for escaping. Thus I could prepare drawings for my lectures. I found myself being asked by a number of friends to make drawings of insects in their *Wartime Logs*.

I had forgotten about these drawings until June of last year when I received a letter from a Kriegie friend, Jim Maddock, * DFC, I had last seen in January 1945 when we were marched out of Sagan in deep snow. He told me he still had in his *Wartime Log* the drawing I had made of a click beetle. This was appropriate for him as a farmer because the larvae of these beetles, known as wireworms, were important pests of cereals in newly-ploughed grassland. He had been pilot of a Pathfinder Halifax which was attacked by a night-fighter on the run-up to the target in Berlin on that same night of 1 September 1943. He got his crew out, and was turning his blazing aircraft over

so that he could drop out of the hatch above him. The next thing he remembered was floating down on his parachute; the aircraft must have blown up at that moment. He was one of the first of our airmen I met in Berlin.

Recently, Jim Maddock had been going by taxi from Hoylake to Liverpool on his way to a squadron re-union. In conversation, the owner of the taxi said he had been a lecturer in the University of Reading and had known me! This was Nigel Jenkins who had taken early retirement from the Department of Physiology & Biochemistry. Through this happy chance we made contact after nearly 50 years, and met at his home in Cheshire last July, and had much to talk about. I came away with his *Wartime Log* which had come to pieces, and Geoffrey Gardner in our University Bindery repaired it most skilfully. Jim was delighted to have it back, but it was only just in time, because sadly he died on 30 December. His *Wartime Log* is now treasured by his daughter, Carol, and her family.



This then is a copy of my watercolour drawing of a click beetle which I had bred out from a wireworm I had found in my garden outside our hut. The technique of keeping larvae in a Klim (dried milk) tin under my bunk was one I used for other larvae. My former research student, Peter Barnard of the Natural History

Museum, has had the drawing identified as a species of *Ampedus*, of which there are several in northern Europe, whose larvæ are associated with the roots of pine trees. The camp at Stalag Luft III was built in a cleared area of pine forest on light sandy soil. One of the problems in digging the tunnel for the Great Escape was disposing of this bright yellow sand. At least the larva was close enough in appearance to the wireworms of British agriculture to merit a place in my teaching collection!

In the last months of the war, many camps were evacuated and the prisoners made to march because the Germans wished to keep us as hostages. Thus many hard decisions had to be made on how much to carry in home-made backpacks. Priority had to be given to food and clothing. Many *Wartime Logs* had to be jettisoned, but I kept mine, together with all the letters from my wife, Ruth; we had been married for less than five months when I was shot down. I also brought back my *Oxford Book of English Verse* and a tiny volume of Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*.

During my second winter as a Kriegie a group of us set up a Lecture Society which met on Friday evenings, following the pattern of Captain Scott in the winter of 1911 at Hut Point in the Antarctic. I recorded eleven lectures in my *Wartime Log* on such diverse topics as gangsterdom in America, ranching in Argentina, Cuba, an Air Attaché in China, the publishing house of Faber, scale-reading in salmon (by myself), unusual cases in Law (by Christopher Cheshire, the younger brother of Leonard Cheshire, VC).

An outstanding *Wartime Log* by B Arct, a Polish fighter pilot, was published in facsimile in 1988 by Webb & Bower as *Prisoner of War: My Secret Journal*. It is a moving and also entertaining account, copiously illustrated, of his experiences from baling out from his burning Mustang over Holland in September 1944 to release in Stalag Luft I at Barth on the Baltic coast.

On 28 January 1945 we were force-marched out of Sagan, ahead of the advancing Russian army, in deep snow. It was a tough march for we covered 60 miles in three days, and were then packed in cattle trucks for two days and nights across Germany to a camp near Bremen.

On 10 April, we were again marched out back eastwards nearly to Lübeck, ahead of the advancing British Army. We covered 120 miles in three weeks, sleeping out in fields. It was fun, in good weather, with frequent rest days. My march was transformed on the fourth day out when I bought an old black pram from a German woman for a tin of Nescafé and two knobs of chocolate; she was delighted and so was I! Thereafter my friend, John Dudley, and I took turns in pushing and trading with the friendly country people. They were pleased to have some of our Red Cross food, soap and cigarettes, and we needed their bread, potatoes and eggs. We fed well, cooking

over camp-fires at the end of the day, while being careful to burn them out before dark because of the danger of attack from our own aircraft.

Wednesday 2 May was our liberation day, when the British Army finally caught up with us in the village of Trenthorst not far from Lübeck. It was a bright sunny day and John Dudley and I had just finished lunch at our camp-fire by the lake in the village. We were having our coffee when we heard shouting and joined a crowd of Kriegies around a small armoured car with its driver and a young 1st lieutenant. He called for quiet while he called his base on R/T to report that we were '...1,540 officers, 190 other ranks; they have rations for about 7 days; they seem to be quite comfortable here'. The German commanding officer lined up his men and handed over formally to our senior British officer who was now in charge of the village and its inhabitants. We were told we could each write one letter home, on a single sheet of paper, to be collected by 1715 hours. Ruth received this in Edinburgh a few days before I returned; it was her first news from me since a letter I had written on 20 December 1944, before we started our travels.

After a few days we were taken by army trucks across Germany to an airfield at Rheine, near the Dutch frontier. From here we were flown on 9 May in Lancasters, each one packed tightly with 24 Kriegies in the narrow fuselage. We landed at Dunsfold in Surrey to be met by a group of smiling WAAF who directed us to a large tent, where each man had to lie on a table and have DDT powder blown up his trouser legs and sleeves! From here it was a few steps to a hanger, gaily decorated with flags and with long tables laid out with tea. Each man was welcomed back to England in noble fashion by a whole battery of senior Red Cross, St John Ambulance, WVS and other ladies. It was a truly wonderful homecoming. That evening we set off by train to RAF Cosford to a welcome supper in the small hours. The next day we were piloted round the camp for necessary documentation, new clothes, railway warrants and ration cards; everything was superbly organized. On 11 May we went our various ways on leave, free men once again.



Top: On the march, 23 April; my pram is on the left. Middle: Sign for the British Army outside Trenthorst, 1 May. Bottom Ready to leave Trenthorst in British Army trucks, 4 May.

Photographs taken by S/Ldr John Mahoney, RCAF, with a Zeiss camera he bought on the march for 1lb butter, a can of meat, a can of fish, a can of jam, a carton of raisins and 300 cigarettes!



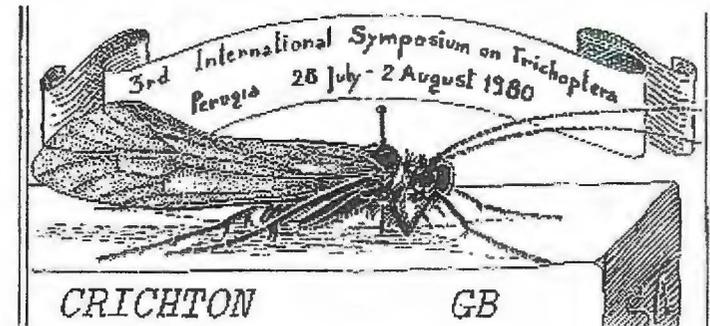
*Michael Ian & Ruth Mary Crichton
Cramond, June 1943*

On behalf of the family, we would like to thank you for attending Ian's Thanksgiving Service and for your many kind messages and letters.

*The proceeds of the retiring collection will be divided between
The British Red Cross and the RAF Benevolent Fund.*

There will also be a collection for St. Mary's Church

**ST MARY'S CHURCH
MORTIMER**



**A Service of Thanksgiving
for the life of**

Dr. Michael Ian Crichton

24th October 1913
5th May 2006

Wednesday 24th May 2006
11.30am



W/Off. John R.Lee

214 Sqn. RAF Oulton, Norfolk.
Pilot of Fortress (B17G) HB763 BU-T,
shot down over Belgium on Aug.25/26th.
1944.

John Lee and five of his crew were taken
as pows, four were killed.

Photo taken at Blackpool in Feb. 1946.

Does anyone remember him or know of
what happened to him after the war ?

Photo sent by one of our members,
Alys Smith whose late husband,
A.C.(Clive) Smith was the W/Op. in
this crew ; thankfully Clive was one
of the survivors.

The National Arboretum in Staffordshire

At our Committee meeting in London on March 22nd. the Chairman put forward the suggestion that as an Association we should look into the possibility of having a 214 Sqn. memorial and a tree placed at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

The Arboretum was started in 1997 and is now under the wing of the Royal British Legion . In recent years the project has received a grant of £1.6 million from National Lottery funds.

The committee discussed the type of memorial that would prove suitable, ie marble, slate, metal etc, or whether the NMA would require a standard type or allow a choice of both the memorial and tree.

It is possible that the cost of this project may exceed our funds in which case we may have to appeal for donations from our members.

It was finally agreed that Jock Whitehouse would write to the NMA to obtain more details and costs. Depending on this information it is hoped that an announcement can be made at the next AGM in September.

For those unable to attend the AGM please contact Jock Whitehouse or Peter Walker from October if you would like to know the outcome.

Otherwise the information will be in the Nightjar due out in February 2008.



This is an interesting and unusual photo probably taken at No.22 OTU Wellesbourne Mountford , Warwicks. in 1941/42. The officer on the left is Sqn.Ldr. R.G. Barrell who as a Wng.Cdr. lost his life on 24/25th. June 1943 flying a Lancaster of 7 Sqn. Bob Barrell was the holder of the DSO, DFC & Bar. Does anyone know who the other two men are ?

The items on the table are presumably aircrew rations, including Kit-Kat bars and what looks like tubes of Smarties (chocolate beans). Perhaps some of our wartime members will recognise these goodies and let me know what they are and if taken on the aircraft how and where were they stored.

The photo is from Bob Barrell's brother Richard who himself was a pilot with 76 Sqn., shot down in a Halifax on a daylight raid to Mainz on Feb. 27th. 1945 and survived as a pow.

Peter M. Walker
Secretary

I WAS THERE! Eye Witness

Stories of the War

Montgomery's Own Story of the Great Surrender

An hour before the signing of the capitulation at Luneburg Heath in N.W. Germany, Field-Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery told war correspondents, in his own inimitable style, of German moves leading up to the surrender. How this was made later is also described here.

THERE is a German general called Blumentritt who, as far as I know, commands all forces between the Baltic and the Weser river. On Wednesday he sent in and said he wanted to come in on Thursday and surrender what they call the army group Blumentritt. It is not an Army group as we know it—but a sort of brigade group. He wanted to surrender it so that it was done to the British 2nd Army. He was told, "You can come in. That's O.K. We are delighted."

Now the next thing that happened was yesterday morning (Thursday). Blumentritt did not come. He said, "As far as I know there is something going on just above my level and therefore I am not coming in." He did not come in. But instead there arrived here to see me four German people—

flank from Wismar to Domitz on the Elbe, on which flank we are now in closest contact with the Russians. This is the Russians' business. A Russian peace, therefore you surrender to the Russians. Now the subject is closed." I then said to them, "Are you prepared to surrender to me the German forces on my western and northern flanks—that is to say, all the German forces between Luebeck and Holland, and all those forces that they have in support of them? These forces include the German army in Denmark—will you surrender those?"

They said, "No." So far it had been a very good discussion. Then they said, "We are most anxious about the condition of civilians in the areas of Luebeck and on the northern flank—we are very anxious about them and we would like to come to some agreement with you by which these civilians can be saved slaughter in battle. We thought



READING THE SURRENDER TERMS to the German delegation on May 4, 1945, Field-Marshal Montgomery—who tells his own story in this page—was stern and implacable. Round the table, left to right: Major Friede, Rear-Admiral Wagner, Admiral Von Friedeburg, Field-Marshal Montgomery, General Kinzel and Col. Polleck. On May 23 Friedeburg committed suicide at Flensburg. See also pages 79-81. Photo, British Official

Gen.-Adml. Friedeburg, who is commander-in-chief of the German navy (I think Dönitz was commander-in-chief German navy until he became Fuehrer); Gen. Kinzel, chief of staff to Field-Marshal Busch (he is here in camp now); Rear-Adml. Wagner, staff officer to Friedeburg; and Major Friede, who is staff officer to Kinzel, so the party really was just two chaps—Friedeburg and Kinzel.

Now this is extremely interesting. They lined up above my caravan and I said, "What do you want?"—I am telling you the whole story because it is very interesting. They said, "We've come here from Field-Marshal Busch to ask you to accept the surrender of the three German armies that are now withdrawing in front of the Russians in Mecklenburg between Rostock and Berlin. They are the 3rd Panzer, the 12th and 21st Armies." They said, "We want you to accept the surrender of these armies. We are very anxious about the condition of the civilians who are driven along as these armies flee from the advancing Russians and we want you to accept their surrender."

I said "No, certainly not. These armies are fighting the Russians and therefore if they surrender to anybody it must be to the Russians—it has nothing to do with me and I am not going to have any dealings with anything on my eastern

perhaps you would make some plan with us whereby you would advance slowly and we would withdraw slowly and all the civilians would be all right." So far we had not got very far.

I said, "No. There is nothing doing. I am not going to discuss any conditions at all as to what I am going to do. I wonder whether you officers know what is the battle situation on the Western Front? In case you don't I will show it to you." I produced a map which showed the battle situation. That situation was a great shock to them. They were quite amazed and very upset. I was perfectly frank and held back no secrets. They were in a condition—and in a very good, ripe condition—to receive a further blow, which they got. I said to them, "You must clearly understand three points.

"One. You must surrender to me unconditionally all the German forces in Holland, in Friesland, including the Frisian Islands, Heligoland, and all other islands, in Schleswig-Holstein and in Denmark.

"Two. Once you have done that I am then prepared to discuss with you the implications of the surrender—that is to say I am prepared to say to you how we will dispose of the German forces, how we will occupy the area concerned, how we will deal with the civilians and so on. Once you have done Point Number One I will dis-

cuss Point Number Two. (You see, they wanted me to do Point Number Two first.)

"Three. If you don't agree to Point Number One I shall go on with the war and will be delighted to do so and am ready. All your soldiers will be killed. These are the three points—there is no alternative—one, two, three, finished!"

They then said to me, "We came here entirely for the purpose of asking you to accept surrender of these German armies on your eastern flank and we have been given powers to agree to that subject only. We have no power to agree to what you now want. That is a new one on us. But two of us will now go back again to where we came from, get agreement and come back again. Two will stay here with you."

So yesterday afternoon between 3.30 and 4 o'clock the Gen.-Admiral, accompanied by Major Friede, went back. We sent them through our lines into Hamburg and I sent with them my personal assistant, Col. Warren. He took them right up the road until they met the Germans—they had a special flag. The other two stayed in my camp all night. The arrangement was that the Gen.-Admiral would be back here tonight at five o'clock and here he is back.

He was to come back here with the doings. He was to get agreement to my Point Number One; after that, I would agree to Point Number Two and Point Number Three. That is the story that is going to unfold itself in the next business. Now they have arrived—they are up top somewhere, and my present intention is that they will sign what I have prepared. This piece of paper is really the Instrument of Surrender of the forces in accordance with my demands. I am dealing with the commander of the forces facing me and that is why I am doing it alone like this. I am demanding from him the tactical surrender of the forces fighting me and any ones in close support like the ones in Denmark.

Very Tricky Problems Involved

I have absolutely excluded anything which would be an Allied thing and would require the presence of our Allied Russians and Americans and so on. The forces which surrender will total over 1,000,000—that is their own statement. It will involve some very tricky problems getting them from these places—from West Holland and Denmark. We know there are in Schleswig-Holstein 2,000,000 civilians over and above the normal population. They came into it as the battle surged from Eastern Germany right across Germany and up into Schleswig-Holstein. I have given you absolutely the whole story. The next scene will be up top in the tent.

The narrative is continued by R. W. Thompson, special correspondent of The Sunday Times.

He left us, and for a short time we waited, and then, just before six, we walked up to where above the small cluster of caravans that is Monty's headquarters the Union Jack fluttered in the still cold breeze. A square table with a plain grey army blanket showed under the rainflaps of a tent, around it six brown hard chairs. In this tent we knew this "piece of paper" would be signed.

Presently Monty walked down the steps of his caravan, the "piece of paper" in one hand, the other hand stuffed deep into his battle-dress pocket. And then they came through the woodland. Two British staff officers walked with Friedeburg and behind them followed in pairs Kinzel and Wagner, Friede and a new arrival, Col. Polleck. Von Friedeburg climbed the steps of the Field-Marshal's caravan alone and entered. It was 6.20 when he emerged from the caravan and the small cavalcade led by two British staff officers walked across to the tent with the simple table. There they stood each at his chair, waiting. Two minutes later Field-

Marshal Montgomery followed. The five German officers saluted stiffly and seated themselves after the Field-Marshal.

Montgomery, who wore his tortoiseshell spectacles, read clearly the text of the "piece of paper." "The German Command agree to surrender all German forces to the C.-in-C., 21st Army Group. All hostilities to cease at 8 a.m. British double summer time, May 5, 1945. The decision of the Allied Powers final." Then Montgomery said, "The German delegation will now sign. They will sign in order of seniority. Gen.-Adm. Von Friedeburg first."

The admiral rose, walked to the place, and with the simple army issue pen signed. Then Kinzel, then the others as the Field-Marshal called their names. Only Montgomery's voice rose above the sibilant click of the cameras, and then he said: "Now I will sign on behalf of the Supreme Commander, Gen. Eisenhower." As he finished signing he sighed faintly, sat back, removed his tortoiseshell rims, completely master of himself and his enemies in this great moment. "That concludes the formal surrender." The tent flaps were let down as details were discussed and we walked away.

Keitel Was Furious As He Signed in Berlin

How the final act of surrender was signed on Germany's behalf by the chiefs of her Army, Navy and Air Force, in Berlin, is told by Clifford Webb of the Daily Herald. Present at the ceremony, he describes it as "probably the most uproarious surrender scene in history." See also p. 85.

We met our first Russians at Stendal airfield, close to the Elbe, where the planes carrying the official British party under Air Chief Marshal Tedder, General Eisenhower's Deputy, touched down by arrangement. There we had to await the arrival first of a plane from Flensburg, bringing Field-Marshal Keitel, the chief German signatory, and then an escort of Russian fighters to escort us to the Tempelhof aerodrome in Berlin. Eventually we became airborne again and flew on with a swarm of fighters, circling, zooming and diving all around in the most exuberant fashion.

At Tempelhof Sir Arthur Tedder's party was warmly welcomed by high-ranking Russian officers and all but mobbed by uniformed Russian Press photographers. Then the British party inspected the guard of honour of young, smart-looking Red troops, and took up position for a march past.

This was a grand spectacle. The Russians held their bayoneted rifles in the forward lunge position, each point only inches from the neck of the man in front. They marched stiffly and with wonderful precision to martial music in a manner that would have "brought the house down" in any part of the world.

Hustled into waiting cars, we were driven at breakneck speed through the ruins of Berlin. We came to Karlshorst and were shown into neat, typically suburban villas, for rest and refreshment. Wine, vodka, cognac, red and black caviare, fish, ham and cheese, were brought in by trim Russian waitresses. At 7 p.m. we went to the school. Interpreters and secretaries were deep in the throes of their struggles to convey precisely the same meaning to technical paragraphs in Russian, English and German. Cases of beer were brought to the building.

Meanwhile, Sir Arthur Tedder, puffing away at his pipe, roamed around obviously enjoying the informality as much as anybody.



Air Chief Marshal SIR ARTHUR TEDDER, as Deputy Allied Supreme Commander was a signatory of the surrender document in the German capital. Photo, U.S. Official

It was 11.1 p.m. British time when all was finally ready, and we filed into the large, lofty conference-room, whose main adornment was the Russian, British, United States and French flags on the wall above the table reserved for Marshal Zhukov, Sir Arthur Tedder and the other Allied signatories.

Zhukov, shortish, broad, hair slightly thinning in front, gave an immediate impression of immense power and obvious intelligence. His eyes are steely, blue, deep set and unwavering. His jaw juts, but his mouth is that of the good-humoured man. He was in Russian Marshal-of-Arms uniform, white stars on his epaulettes.

THERE was a buzz of conversation, which was hushed as through the wide open doors the three German delegates, Keitel, Stumpff and Friedeburg appeared. Keitel strode to his seat, looked towards the top table, clicked his heels and raised his Field-Marshal's baton in his right hand in salute. The other two bowed stiffly and were seated. Keitel, a typically arrogant-looking Prussian Junker, thin-lipped, grey moustached, and pink-faced, screwed a monocle into his left eye to read papers set in front of him.

Marshal Zhukov put on steel-rimmed spectacles and looked sternly in front of him. Sir Arthur Tedder, composed and absolutely at ease, was probably the most unmoved person in the whole room. Keitel was directed to the top table to sign Germany's final surrender. And then an astonishing thing happened. The eager crowd of Russian photographers could contain their enthusiasm no longer.

They surged forward until they all but engulfed the top table, pushing and struggling among themselves to thrust their cameras within inches of Keitel's furious face while he signed. Reporters stood on chairs until other reporters pushed them off. It was



Field-Marshal KEITEL, Wehrmacht C.-in-C., arrogantly raised his baton before signing the unconditional surrender terms in Berlin. Story in this page. Photo, U.S. Official

probably the most uproarious surrender scene in history and yet the top table somehow managed to retain a calm dignity and the signings proceeded as arranged.

Keitel returned to his former seat and began expostulating to interpreters about some detail in the surrender terms with which he did not agree. It was a small point and, anyway, he had already signed. After a while he tried to cover his humiliation with some light conversation to his aides. The signings complete, the documents were carefully stored away in blue folders, and everybody repaired to the largest ante-room for conversation and beer, Marshal Zhukov among them.

Meanwhile, a small crowd of waitresses descended on the conference-room, whipped away pens, pencils, papers, and all the paraphernalia of surrender, and swiftly transformed the room into a banqueting-hall. And then a full five hours of eating, drinking, toasting and music. Marshal Zhukov became more and more smilingly expansive as the night wore on, and the top table quickly became the scene of much back-slapping, hand shaking, and general good humour, with all the other tables following suit. Sir Arthur Tedder scored a great personal triumph with just the right note in his speeches and with his informal easy-going manner. He did a grand job.

I Was in Germany's Dead Capital on May 9

Touring Berlin in company with Air Chief Marshal Tedder and the Russian Military Commander of the capital, Gen. Berzarin, on the day capitulation was announced there, Reuters correspondent Harold King saw grimly contrasting scenes in a metropolis which "had simply ceased to exist."

I HAVE seen Stalingrad, I have lived through the entire London blitz, I have seen a dozen badly damaged major Russian towns. But the scene of utter destruction, desolation and death which meets the eye in Berlin as far as the eye can rove in all directions is something that almost baffles description. Dozens of well-known thoroughfares, including the entire Unter den Linden from one end to the other, are utterly wrecked. The town is literally unrecognizable.

The Alexanderplatz, in the East End, where the Gestapo headquarters were, is a weird desert of rubble and gaping smoke-blackened walls. From the Brandenburg Gate everything within a radius of from two

to five miles is destroyed. There does not appear to be one house in a hundred which is even useful as shelter. Among hundreds of well-known landmarks which have disappeared or been irreparably damaged are the former Kaiser's palace, the Opera House, the French, British, American and Japanese Embassies, Goering's Air Ministry, Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, the Bristol and Adlon hotels. Hitler's Chancellery in the Wilhelmstrasse is like some vast, abandoned ancient tomb of the dead. It has had several direct hits, and it is impossible yet to tell who lies buried beneath the rubble—perhaps Hitler himself.

"If you want to know what war means, come to Berlin!" was Air Chief Marshal

The Great Surrender



photo, British Official

To Field-Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, at his headquarters at Luneburg Heath, near Hamburg, came on May 3, 1945, representatives of Admiral Dönitz and Field-Marshal Keitel to ask for surrender terms for all the German forces in Holland, N.W. Germany and Denmark. The delegates were Admiral Von Friedeburg, C-in-C. German Navy (nearest the Union Jack), Gen. Kinzel, Chief of Staff to Field-Marshal Busch, Rear-Admiral Wagner, and a S.S. staff officer. How they attempted to discuss conditions, were told "Nothing doing!" and were brought to heel by a stern ultimatum, is described by Montgomery in his own story in page 83. Other pictures, of the actual signing on the following day, and of the historic Instrument of Surrender, are in pages 80-81.

THE LAST WORD

Since taking over as Secretary this edition will be my twelfth Nightjar, and hopefully it has improved since the first edition. ?

However it is getting more difficult to find a good spread of interesting stories and photos, for that reason I have included :an item by Field Marshal Montgomery, and in the last edition a copy of an operational report by Jimmy Edwards.

Stories and photos are required from members in order to top up the news items. So please search your memories,files, documents and photos etc. All items sent will be laser photocopied and returned. Thank you.

IN MEMORIUM , March 2007. NORMAN BRADLEY.

Norman was not a member of the Association but we had been in touch with him. He was one of the waist gunners in John Wynne's crew in Fortress HB799 BU-K, who bailed out when the aircraft was hit and an engine caught fire.

Two of the crew were injured and taken to hospital, seven were captured and ended up in the hands of Nazi Thugs. Three, including Norman ran away. Sadly one of these three, James Vinall was recaptured by the thugs and with four crew members was murdered. Norman and Tom Tate were fortunately recaptured by German military and taken as pows.

John Wynne eventually, with extreme difficulty, flew the Fortress back to England, landing at Bassingbourn, Cambs.

The story of this terrible murder of 214 Sqn. crew and what has happened since was produced in booklet form in 2003, titled Hoffnung the Rocking Horse and the Reconciliation between Llanbedr and Huchenfeld. A few copies are still available and if anyone would like a copy please let me know. £2 incl. postage.

Norman was a very experienced gunner on his second tour and holder of the DFM, and they are less common than DFCs.

New Books

VULCAN 607, by Rowland White, now in paperback at £6...99

This is the story of the Vulcan that, flying from Ascension Island, bombed the runway at Stanley on the Falkland Islands in 1982.

The lone Vulcan was supported by a team of Marham's Victor tankers.

It is a gripping story and a book difficult to put down. Highly recommended.

Bomber Boys (Fighting Back 1940-45) by Patrick Bishop. Hardback £20
ISBN 978 0 00 718986 1.

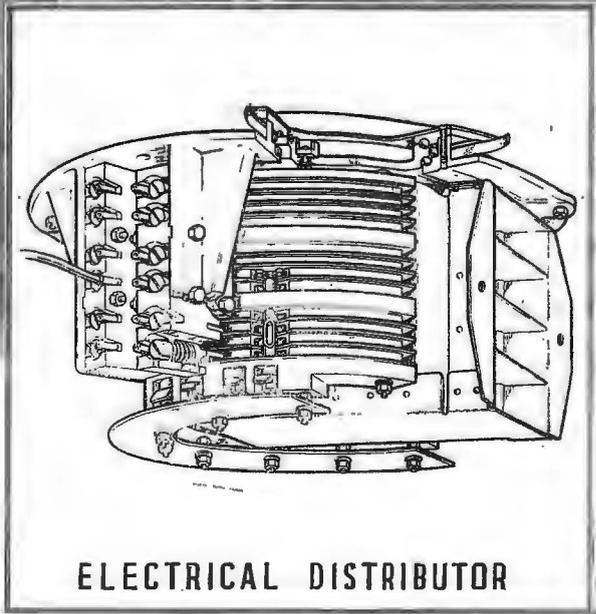
A well researched and thoroughly interesting insight into how bomber crews trained, fought and died and yet at the end those who survived got no official recognition and only the Aircrew Europe Star and no special campaign medal.

I have read both books and can thoroughly recommend them.

Peter M.Walker



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VERY LATE NEWS

IN MEMORIUM June 3rd. 2007 SQN. LDR. BOB DAVIES AFC , age 86. Bob was one of our members who could be described as a "character", being especially known, a few years ago, for his large American cars. He served, as a pilot from 1941 to 1963.

Bob was, until this year, a regular attender at Reunions for 214 Sqn., 578 Sqn., 100 Group and the Arnold scheme.

Bob's funeral will not be held until after you have received this newsletter so a more in depth report on his life and career will be in the next Nightjar.

In the meantime our condolences to his wife, Eunice.