



Nightjar

Summer 2012

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Contents:

- | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Chairman's Letter |
| 2 | Notices |
| 3 | Reunion & AGM |
| 4 | Historian's Report |
| 6 | President's Lunch |
| 7 | Bob McAlastair Furze
In Memoriam |
| 9 | Bob Mackett DFC RCAF |
| 10 | Kenya 1954 |
| 15 | Visits to RAF Marham |
| 16 | Committee |
| Enc | Reunion Booking Forms |

Time has flown: it is already over 12 months since our last reunion and it is now only two months until the next. Members will recall that we decided to delay this year's event until October in order not to clash with the dedication of the Bomber Command Memorial at the end of June and the Olympics in July and August. Like me, some of you will already have visited the new Memorial, and most impressive it is too. The attention to detail on the seven aircrew figures is staggering, and the overall design and construction fits in well with its location on the edge of Green Park, almost opposite the RAF Club. No 214 Squadron Association was present at the dedication in the person of our President, Sir Michael Beetham, who is also President of the Bomber Command Association and was thus very much involved in all of the work leading up to the creation of the Memorial. Committee members Peter Walker and Jock Whitehouse were also there on the day. When I visited two days after the dedication, there was a sizeable crowd thronging the area in and around the Memorial, and it is obvious that it has generated considerable interest in Bomber Command and those who served in it. If you are able to make it, I would strongly recommend a visit.

Elsewhere in this Nightjar you will find details of this year's reunion, to be held at the Maids Head Hotel in Norwich. You will also see that we have arranged to visit Blickling Hall on the Sunday morning to view the museum recording the history of RAF Oulton and the squadrons based there, which has recently moved to a larger room at Blickling. We also hope to visit the rooms in the Hall used as dormitories by No 214 Squadron aircrew, which we believe will be of interest to veterans and to the families of those who served on the Squadron at that time. All we ask is that those who can offer a lift to Blickling or who require a lift to Blickling please complete the relevant proforma and return it to John Gulliver, together with your choices from the menu for the meal on the Saturday night.

Finally, some of you may remember my request for those who served on the Squadron, whether during the war or in the post-war years, to put pen to paper and send their recollections of life on the Squadron to the Association, supported where possible by relevant photographs. Since last year's reunion, Jock Whitehouse has provided a comprehensive listing of both published and unpublished material relating to the Squadron. Also, 'Stoo' Waring has promised some photographs of his time on the Squadron in the late 1960s. And that is almost it! I can only assume that, like me, most of you are tied up with a variety of other pressing demands on your time, and that you are waiting for the long winter nights before embarking on recording your memories of No 214 Squadron. I can only encourage you to make the effort and write down your experiences so that we can collect them together as part of the No 214 Squadron archive. Do not worry that what you remember seems routine and unremarkable. When recording the history of the RAF and its squadrons, it is just as important to record day-to-day happenings as it is to record the major events. In the last Nightjar, I made some suggestions on possible topics related to the post-war era: What was it like to operate in Kenya against the Mau-Mau? What was it like to be on QRA? What was it like to service nuclear-armed aircraft? What was it like to tank Lightnings to Singapore? What was it like to service Victors or Valiants in the heat of the Persian Gulf? If you don't record these experiences, they will be lost to future generations. An excellent example of what we are looking for is contained in the article on No 214 Squadron in Kenya starting on Page 10. So don't delay – get writing.

214 Squadron Website

IMPORTANT NOTICE FROM THE WEBSITE ADMINISTRATORS

Due to circumstances beyond our control we are unable to continue to run this website for the foreseeable future.

Please do not send emails to the website as they will not be answered.

When we are able to resume administering the website, we will announce it here. If you have already sent an email, these will be retained and answered when we can.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

John and Carol Edwards

7 May 2012

I have talked to John, and he explained why he and Carol are unable to administer the website at the moment. They will be getting it up and running again as soon as they possibly can.

Treasurer's Topics

I have been looking at establishing a PayPal account for those of you who live overseas and find it difficult in paying your subs in sterling. I am not the world's expert on the subject so I have put this on hold until John and Carol can get back to the website and we can put the right link in place. In the meantime I thank all of you who have paid for this year, and remember that I am happy to send you a form to pay through a standing order should you wish.

The annual subscription is still £10 per year

John Gulliver



100 Group Association
Standard
Funded by
Peter Witts
Photo: John Stubbington



Bomber Command Memorial - London
Photo: Alan Mawby



214 Squadron Standard
Ely Cathedral
Photo: Shaun Broaders

No 214 (FMS) Squadron

Reunion

Saturday 6th October 2012

The Maid's Head Hotel - Norwich

The Costs:

Rooms: £45 per person, per night (£20 single occupancy supplement) inc. breakfast

Dinner: £30 per person

Dinner Menu:

To Start:	Tomato Soup, rosemary bread Warm game pie, pickled cabbage, and pear Salmon and crayfish salad
Main Course:	Honey and mustard glazed Ham hock, bubble and squeak rosti Grilled Lemon Sole, celeriac fondant, green salad Savoy cabbage, cheddar and potato torte
To Finish:	Plum crumble, frangipan, star anise ice cream Passion Fruit and orange set in elderflower jelly, ginger sorbet British cheeses, oatcakes and chutney

Timings:

AGM: Saturday - 1600 hrs
Dinner: Saturday - 1900 for 1930

Blickling Hall: Sunday morning - There will be a special tour of Blickling Hall for our Association visiting areas not available to the general public.

Please let us know if you can offer transport to anybody without a car or if you require transport to the hall.

There are 2 booking forms included with your Nightjar. The first should be returned to the Maid's Head Hotel by 14th September. The second should be sent to the Treasurer so that we can cross-check bookings with the hotel, and arrange the visit to Blickling Hall

HISTORIAN'S REPORT

Sept Saulx. Margaret and John Deacon report that during a European touring holiday their grandson and his fiancée visited the Church at the above French village (you may recall from previous N/J articles, that Margaret is the sister of Sgt Dutton the air-bomber of No.214 Squadron 'Stirling' EF331 which crashed nearby in 1943) and saw that the seven headstones and their surrounds remain well cared for including a propeller blade which was from the aircraft and positioned behind the seven graves. John has also obtained a little more information about loss of the 'Stirling' which looks to have been the fourth victim of Oblt Kurt Fladrich flying the Bf 110 of 9/NJ54.

John Hoskin. My last report included a 'phone chat I had with John which in the event sadly proved to be our last. (See Obituaries) However, I have been pleasantly surprised to be contacted (via Peter) by Peter Nixey the son of Sqn Ldr Peter Nixey DSO one of John's favorite characters with whom he flew on many air tests, but who was killed in action in June 1942. Peter is very keen to hear more of his father's time with the squadron - so work to do! We already know that close relatives of Sgt. Buckley, one of the crew also killed, attended the Memorial unveiling in 2009.

Association wreath. Since 2009, a 'summer' wreath has been laid on our memorial at Alrewas but with Norwich replacing Derby as the reunion venue this year other arrangements had to be made. I had hoped to lay our wreath in early June, being at the Arboretum to join some old ex-RAVC 'dog men' associates to see a plaque which we had funded to mark our service days as dog handlers/trainers 'long ago in Singapore' after which we were to head for Melton Mowbray for our reunion. Unfortunately appalling weather in East Anglia early on in the day deterred me from making a long wet trip and although others more westwards managed the visit, I held off until lunchtime before leaving directly for Melton. However, Bob Froggart (Midlands based) has agreed that I can mail the wreath to him for it to be laid when better conditions prevail. Interestingly, our own small reunion included a visit to the Canine Training School (our old War Dog Training School) where we enjoyed a very informative afternoon being updated on the modern training methods and requirements of today's Military Working Dog. Very different to our ancient code of: 'Attack, bite/hold and ask questions afterwards'! The varied operational potential of military dogs is now quite staggering only achieved by long and dedicated training and we were quite surprised to see that a high percentage of the training staff, were members of the RAF Police. It is all about service co-operation and integration now. We left, highly impressed with the work and very appreciative of the huge budget lift necessary to provide improved facilities (e.g. a range of superb kennels) and we thought that for once 'those in charge of military spending' had got it right. Good dogs are desperately sought after but there is a huge waiting list to join this arm of the forces!

All being well, Association wreaths will be laid as usual in November at both Stradishall and Chedburgh.

RAF Stradishall. The 500 acres of the old flying area has now been 'bought back' by the farming family who once had to relinquish it for 'an airfield'. The purchaser's late father one of the patrons of the original RAF Stradishall Memorial Trust, was the brother of Sue Ryder who ran one of her famous homes in nearby Cavendish. Local opinion was that the land would simply return to farming but apparently not so, as we hear of more interesting proposals, including developing part of the land for public access. A local meeting is due to take place, and it may be that some historical aspect might feature. 'You can't keep an old airfield down'. Details to follow.

Old photographs. In a letter to me, Vic Pheasant mentioned that whilst visiting the well - known 'Flying Fortress' pub at Rougham near Bury St. Edmunds, actually built on one of the original technical sites of the old American 94th Bomb Group (B17s) he was surprised to see amongst the mainly American aviation memorabilia in the building, a photograph of No.214 Squadron in front of a B 17 at Oulton. I suspect that this was placed there some time ago either by Bill Doy or by locals, Jimmy and Hazel Southgate.

John Gurney. John an ex-214 co-pilot and dedicated 'steam-buff', wrote for any information relating to the incident in 1937 when a squadron 'Harrow', on its landing approach to Radlett, neatly removed the roof of the dining car of the 10.25 LMS St. Pancras - Manchester express. The squadron was converting to the type at the time and fortunately the ferry crew on board only suffered a few cuts and bruises from their unexpected forced landing. Other than shock, the train passengers suffered no harm but if the point of impact had been marginally lower there would probably have been a de-railment with certainly fatalities and the chance of such a collision happening would be very hard to calculate!

Local Interest. Over the years we have seen 'waves' of interest in aviation history probably influenced by family research, the 'Web', TV programmes (of various qualities) and such projects as the Bomber Command Memorial. One other aspect is the interest of people moving into localities close to ex-operational airfields. After many years of giving illustrated talks etc. I thought I could really 'hang up my projector': but there is no escape. Last year I prepared a small pictorial exhibition (RAF Stradishall) for a Stradishall village historical weekend which proved successful but instinct told me not to dismantle the material, and sure enough has come the request from Wickhambrook (also close to the old airfield) for a similar display on their historical weekend. Fortunately I needed only to alter a few headings. In September I have been asked to give a talk on RAF Chedburgh (for the newer arrivals who have no idea of wartime life in the village).

Bomber Command Memorial. Peter and I hope to be able to attend this important and long overdue function in some capacity but just to 'be there' on the day and have a chance to see the memorial and hopefully enjoy the fly-past will suffice.

Sqn Ldr Phil Lamason. DFC RNZAF. You may have read the recent obituary to Phil Lamason who not only had remarkable career as a bomber pilot flying with both Nos. 218 and 15 Squadrons but was later influential in saving a large number of Allied aircrew, including himself, illegally confined in the infamous Buchenwald Camp and destined for certain extermination. Although not of 214 Squadron, Phil served as a Flight Commander on No.1657 HCU at Stradishall and with other ex-operational men such as our own late Bob Hooke, provided vital training to aircrew prior to them joining their own squadrons including of course a number destined for 214. I was fortunate to have shared the hospitality of Phil and his wife Joan both here and in New Zealand and as a 'green' researcher listened in 'amused amazement' at the exploits of the 'Wild Colonials' at Stradishall.

214 Were There: In the recently produced booklet 'Salute Bomber Command' (Royal Air Force / Key Publishing Ltd, and an excellent read) No 214 Squadron, as might be expected by its years in Bomber Command, is well featured with mention of its time with Wellingtons at Feltwell in 1939, right up to its Valiant years at Marham in 1963. Pictures of Stirling BU-A (R9358) and Fortress BU-W also appear, but a fascinating inclusion is a plan of the complex airborne counter-measures on 5/6 June 1944 designed to deceive the enemy as to where the invasion would take place and in which the 'ABC' sorties of both 214 Sqn's Fortresses and 101 Sqn's Lancasters played a vital role. Little did the two squadrons realize that they would fly together again albeit in a very different role to their bombing days together at Stradishall in the summer of 1942.

Jock M Whitehouse

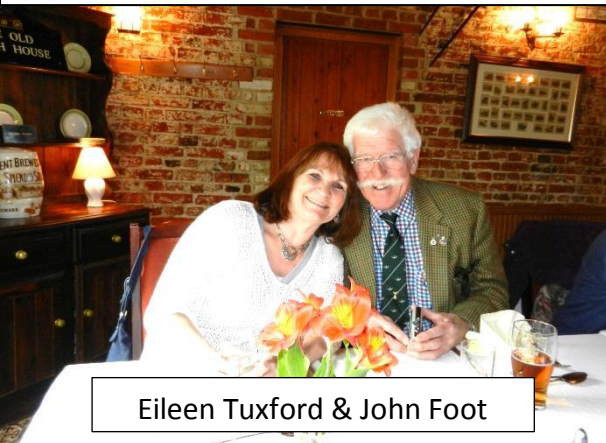
Lunch with our President

In April this year MRAF Sir Michael Beetham and Lady Beetham joined a number of our members and their wives for lunch at the Hare Arms, Stow Bardolph, in Norfolk. A similar lunch was held last year, but, at the last minute, Sir Michael, on doctor's orders, was unable to attend. Here are some photographs of the event courtesy of Bob Tuxford.

Bob Tuxford Alan Mawby Geoff Barrell 'Stoo' Waring Jock Whitehouse



Peter Walker Sir Michael Beetham John Foot



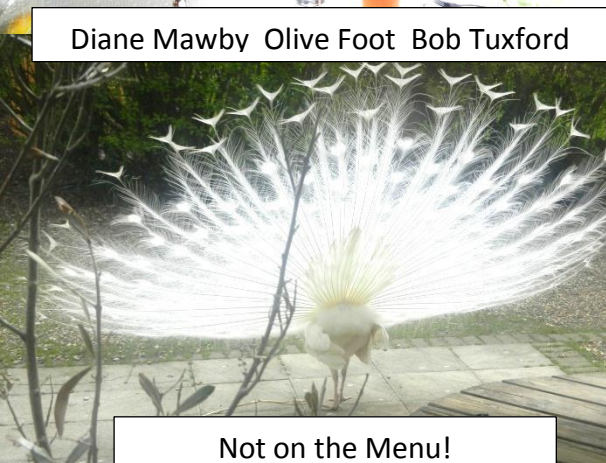
Eileen Tuxford & John Foot



Diane Mawby Olive Foot Bob Tuxford



Jock Whitehouse and Painting



Not on the Menu!



In Memoriam

From the Daily Telegraph

Wing Commander 'Mac' Furze

Wing Commander 'Mac' Furze, who has died aged 83, was a Cold War bomber pilot, competed in the London to Christchurch Air Race and was involved in trials of the British airborne nuclear weapon.



Furze's most dramatic mission came in 1954, when three RAF crews set off on an intelligence gathering flight over the Soviet Union. A similar mission had been successfully undertaken in 1952, under the command of Squadron Leader John Crampton, and Furze was selected to accompany Crampton as his co-pilot on the second spying sortie. Three aircraft took off late on the evening of April 28 and headed for the Kattegat, off Denmark, over which they refuelled from airborne tankers. Crampton, Furze and their navigator flew the longest of the three routes, penetrating 1,000 miles into southern Russia to gather radar and photographic intelligence on 30 targets. Unknown to the crews, however, Russia's air defence system had detected them and fighters were scrambled to intercept. As Crampton and Furze approached Kiev it was clear that accurate anti-aircraft fire was being directed at them and, after a near miss, they turned immediately to return. They took the shortest route, at maximum speed, out of Soviet airspace and so were unable to rendezvous with their airborne tanker. Very short of fuel, they landed at a US airfield in southern Germany.

Robert McAlastair Furze was born at Bishop's Stortford on November 9 1928 and educated at Pangbourne College before gaining a cadetship to the RAF College, Cranwell . After graduating in 1949 he flew Lincoln bombers with No 617 Squadron, and in 1951 he joined the RAF's first jet bomber squadron, No 101, flying the Canberra. In 1953 he was selected as a reserve pilot for the London to Christchurch Air- Race. Just 24 hours before the off, a pilot was declared unfit and Furze took his place to fly a Canberra PR 3 aircraft. Five Canberras were among the entrants and they took off at five-minute intervals from Heathrow Airport during the late afternoon of October 8 Furze routed via Basra, Iraq, and Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where a main wheel had to be changed. From there he aimed for the Cocos Islands and then on to Perth, where the aircraft was on the ground for just 11 minutes. Furze and his navigator landed in New Zealand after completing the 12,300 mile journey in 24 hours 35 minutes — 44 minutes longer than the winner.

After his overflight of the Soviet Union, Furze spent some months at Weybridge with the aircraft manufacturers Vickers Armstrong, becoming one of the first RAF pilots to fly the Valiant . In February 1955 he helped establish 1321 Flight Trials Unit for the introduction of the Valiant into RAF service and for integrating the Blue Danube nuclear weapon. The trials successfully determined the parameters used for the live nuclear tests carried out at Maralinga (Australia) in 1956 and at Christmas Island a year later. In the meantime, 1321 Flight had been disbanded, and Furze left to join No 214 Squadron as a flight commander. In addition to operating in the strategic bomber role, the Valiants of No 214 pioneered air-to-air refuelling with trials that culminated in a non-stop flight to Cape Town. Furze flew a Valiant tanker to support this record-breaking flight.

In July 1966 he assumed command of No 14 Squadron, based at Wildenrath in Germany. His Canberra bombers operated at low level, with one maintained at 15-minute readiness armed with a tactical nuclear weapon. One of his officers commented: "On 14 Squadron we had a real gentleman for a CO and his manner made for a happy squadron."

During the 1970s Furze filled staff appointments at HQ 1 (Bomber) Group, the MoD and the Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre before retiring in 1983.

A tall, handsome man, Furze had a quiet and gentle nature. He restored antique furniture and had a particular interest in old clocks. He was very active in his village at Much Hadham in Hertfordshire, where he organised a Neighbourhood Watch scheme; was treasurer for the village fete; and served as a church warden for many years.

Mac Furze married his wife Marna in 1955. She died in 1995, and he is survived by their daughter and his partner Gillian.

Wing Commander Robert "Mac" Furze, born November 9 1928, died December 4 2011

→→→→→→→→→

George Leete	12 Oct 11	Aged 86	Nav/Obs	Lancaster - Upwood - 1946
Wg Cdr Robert Furze	4 Dec 11	Aged 83	Pilot	Valiant - Marham - 1956 - 61
Bill Philips	2 Dec 11	Aged 94	Rear Gunner	Stirling - Stradishall - 1942/3 (Sqdn Ldr Sturdy's Crew)
Bob Mackett	22 Feb 12	Aged 90	Pilot	Stirling - Chedburgh - 1943/4
Peter Simmonds	6 May 12	Aged 75	Nav	Victor K1 - Marham 1966-69
Mary Jukes	May 12	Wife of Sqdn Ldr Bertie Jukes		
Bob Butler	16 Jul 12	Aged 88	Eng Fitter (2E)	Stirling & Fortress - 1943-45

Flt Lt R E Mackett DFC RCAF

I was born and educated in Windsor, Ontario, and in June, 1941, enlisted, age 20 years, as a pilot/observer candidate in the Royal Canadian Air Force. After flying training in Fleet, Yale and Harvard aircraft, I was awarded pilot's Wings in April, 1942. The next six months were spent flying Fairey Battles and Avro Ansons at a Bombing and Gunnery School in Western Canada.

In December, 1942, I was posted to England and flew Oxford and Wellington I's and III's, and in June, 1943, I converted to Stirlings at Waterbeach. In July I was posted to 214 (FMS) Sqn, 3 Group, at Chedburgh, Suffolk.

At this time Bomber Command was just finishing heavy bombing of Ruhr targets and then moving on to pulverize Hamburg. My first 'second dickey' trip was to Remscheid and then on to the third major raid on Hamburg (which was a night of violent thunderstorms).

In early October, 1943, after a number of bombing and mining sorties, I was posted on detachment to 161 Sqn at Tempsford to engage in supply dropping to the Maquis and other underground groups operating in France and Belgium. These operations only took place in the moon period.

While other clandestine activities were flown from Tempsford, we were charged to fly singly and to deliver three to six containers, each weighing about 300 lbs packed with arms, ammunition, explosives, wireless equipment, food, etc., and anything to hamper the enemy. These containers had to be delivered to a small reception committee waiting in a farmer's field (or woods) somewhere in France or Belgium and dropped by parachute from a height of 450-1000 feet. The major challenge was to locate this small group of patriots who identified themselves on the ground with three red hand torches and one white torch flashing a coded signal. My navigator and I selected our route to the drop area and to avoid detection and plotting by the enemy we flew about 500 feet above the ground. Over the continent, flying at 180 mph, the principal navigation was by map reading from a 1/4" map handled by the bomb aimer in the front turret with a running patter to the navigator. On foggy or hazy nights flying 'up moon' the pinpoints were reported by the rear gunner looking 'down moon'. Locating the reception committee was sometimes very difficult since they were attempting to conceal themselves from searching Germans. Often they placed themselves on the side of a hill or in a small clearing in the forest. The drop itself was done at 450-500 feet at 125 mph. For the safety of the reception committee, it was important to discover the drop area, place the load on the site and leave quickly to avoid drawing any attention to the operation. Such operations took alert flying and very accurate navigation. During the dark period when 161 Sqn stood down, we went back to 214 Sqn at Chedburgh resuming conventional bombing and mining trips.

On the night of September 27th during a raid on Hanover, we encountered very strong searchlight activity at 18,000 feet coupled with heavy and accurate flak.

With outstanding navigation we were able to drop a load of incendiaries over the target within seconds of the 'drop time', and still faced such a strength of enemy searchlights that it took violent evasive action to avoid. Gunners and engineer kept a running patter of groping searchlights but we were caught with the odd 'Blue Master Beam' that would immediately snap on to us.

We dropped down to 8,000 feet before outrunning the searchlight belt. During these manoeuvres flak tore a hole through the windscreen, and glass and wind temporarily blinded me. Returning over the Zuider Zee the rear gunner reported seeing the glow of Hanover fires 90 miles to the rear. This was outstanding crew co-operation.

In January, 1944, when 214 Sqn was assigned to 100 Group, I was transferred with my crew to 149 Sqn at Lakenheath. However, we continued special assignments with 161 Sqn at Tempsford. My 32nd and final operation was completed on March 31, 1944, and almost half of these operations were on Special Duties with 161 Sqn.

After being screened, I completed the Flying Instructor's Course at 3 FIS at Lulsgate Bottom, and was posted in June, 1944, to 1653 HCU at Chedburgh as instructor on Stirlings. The unit converted to Lancasters and moved to North Luffenham where I continued to instruct until repatriation to Canada in March, 1945, and in April, 1945, I resigned my commission in the RCAF.

Since the war I have been involved in the marketing of sporting goods throughout Canada and continue to be active in tennis, curling and swimming.



Early January, 1944, saw us on our way for a 'drop' in Northern France. It was a clear night with some ground haze and on locating the 'reception committee' we circled for a normal run.

It was only when we saw the furrows in the field that we discovered the people on the ground were posted on the side of a hill and we were flying head on into the hill. I climbed to 450-500 feet and the load was dropped. However, the last couple of containers hit power lines that short circuited and set up some unexpected pyrotechnics.

Returning across France toward the Channel our route took us on a path between the town of Frevent on the north and woods two miles to the south of Frevent. At a height of 500 feet a searchlight came up from the woods on the port side along with a barrage of flak. It appeared that red tennis balls were passing between the port inner engine and the cockpit. I moved the aircraft down to where we could clearly see the fence posts. Both mid-upper and rear gunners immediately opened fire on the searchlight and it went out. The rear gunner reported the turret on fire but quickly discovered it to be the reflection on the turret perspex of four red hot Browning gun barrels!

We learned from underground reports within 48 hours that in spite of the 'high tension wire fireworks' the underground had received the shipment intact.



In late 1942 and early 1943 this squadron had taken heavy losses and one had the feeling that the unit was regarded by senior staff as an underdog. We realised this and were determined to survive, to make a maximum effort and thus the Squadron improved to become an efficient unit and one of high morale. This was a rewarding experience.

As a Captain of my Crew, I considered it a recognition of some sort that we were posted to 161 Squadron for Special Duties during 'moon periods' from the beginning of October, 1943, to the end of March, 1944. During this time we had the honour of being presented to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

I flew the Short Stirling on operations and there is no doubt that this aircraft was somewhat of a challenge to get airborne and great numbers were written off during take-off since its principal characteristic was a violent swing to starboard.

The Stirling took care, gentle persuasion, coaxing and stroking to lift it off the runway, but of all the heavy aircraft, once airborne, it was most sensitive and responsive, smooth and graceful on the controls and it was an absolute delight to fly.

I am indebted to my crew for their bravery and dedication and Alan H. Deadman, DFC, W. (Bill) Wilkinson, W/C (Ret'd) and Bert Waugh (RAAF) have remained close friends to this day.



DFC



Robert Edward Mackett

Robert Edward Mackett

My Six Months in Kenya with 214 (FMS) Squadron - 1954

I had been on 214 squadron for nearly four years, I had done a couple of Sunray detachments to Shalufa Egypt in 1951 and again in 1953. I received the GSM with the Canal Zone Bar in 2004, a long wait. My other campaign medal was the African General Service with the Kenya Bar which I received shortly after I was demobbed in 1955. The squadron was happy being at Upwood with the Cross Keys pub just across the road from our dispersal at the far end of the airfield, and for a night out there was always Ramsey with many good pubs and the Copper Kettle Cafe to finish the night off with a cup of coffee. Then, one day in May 1954, we were told that the Squadron was being sent to Kenya, we would replace 61 Squadron for a six month tour. The reason the Air force was in Kenya was that there was an uprising by the Kikuyu Terrorists against the British rule and the Kenyan Government had requested help to calm the situation. The next few weeks we worked hard to get the aircraft and equipment ready, issued with our KD uniforms and to the sick bay to update our jabs, and we were ready.

Skyways Avro York



Within a day or so most of the ground crew found themselves on board a Skyways Avro York, heading for our new home, RAF Eastleigh, a few miles from Nairobi. After a night stop in the Sudan "Khartoum," we arrived in Eastleigh, now for a meal and a good night's sleep, but that wasn't to be. Due to the emergency the Station was busting at the seams and there was no

accommodation ready for us ground crew. After we drew our bedding we were told to try and find somewhere in the permanent staff billets, that wasn't easy, just going into a billet and asking for any spare beds, most of us just bedded down on the floor in the centre of the billet, not the best of starts for our stay. The next morning we were told to bring our bedding to the old sports hangar where there was already an overflow of personnel being billeted, the Royal Signals, the Harvard ground crew, some RAF Regiment men and now, 214 Squadron ground crew. When we first saw the hangar it was a real untidy mess with little groups of beds everywhere more like a shanty town than an RAF large billet. It didn't take our 'Chiefie' long to have us sorted out, bed and duck boards (no bed side mats here) all lined up using a length of string and the 'mosi' nets tied up straight and level, the Grenadier Guards would have been proud of the outcome, and that was the way it stayed for our time there.



The billet for 214 squadron ground crew at RAF Eastleigh

We had not been at Eastleigh long when we realised that the food being served up in our cook house was of a very low standard, and not much of it. The camp was well over-crowded, so that was most likely the reason. That didn't help us, most of the time we went to the NAAFI for a top-up. The AOC's inspection was coming up, and some took the opportunity to do something about the situation, wise or not I don't know, the word went round the camp that we should boycott the mess hall for the midday meal on the day of the inspection.

On the morning of the AOC's visit there appeared written in large back letters right across the mess hall "We Want Food Fit To Eat" with a drawing of the Saint at the end. The general feeling through Eastleigh was that it was done by someone on detachment which included 214, I am sure it wasn't any of us, we were far too busy to get up to such things. I well remember one night we were working late and walking back from the cook house after night flying; we were stopped by two RAF police and grilled for well over an hour as to why we had done the writing on the wall. No one was found and the incident was slowly forgotten . Did the food improve? Well maybe just a little, a larger chunk of bread and a bit more banana and custard.



The mess hall at RAF Eastleigh 1954

During my time at Eastleigh I did two weeks farm guard ,this is how it came about. We were having a tea break in the crew room and in walked our CO, "At ease men" he said "I am looking for two volunteers". Now as we all know don't volunteer for anything, but this sounded a bit different. He wanted two of us to spend two weeks guarding a farm while the farmer and his oldest

daughter spent two weeks in Nairobi, leaving the wife and the younger daughter at the farm, sounded good to me so I stepped forward along with a radar mechanic. The next morning we went to the station armoury and drew out a Lee Enfield 303 rifle and a bandoleer of 303 ammunition; next stop was 1340 Flight, the Harvard squadron. A Pratt and Whitney 1340 was the engine that powered the Harvard aircraft, hence 1340 Flight. The aircraft was parked on the ramp already for a strike against the Mau-Mau; this was to be our transport to the farm, but first it had to carry out its main task so, on the way to Nanyuki, they carried out the strike (that in its self was an experience). We then landed at the Nanyuki grass strip, waiting there was the farmer and his family, the farmer and daughter climbed aboard the two Harvards and off they went.

1340 Flight Harvard

On our way to Nanyuki for farm guard duties.

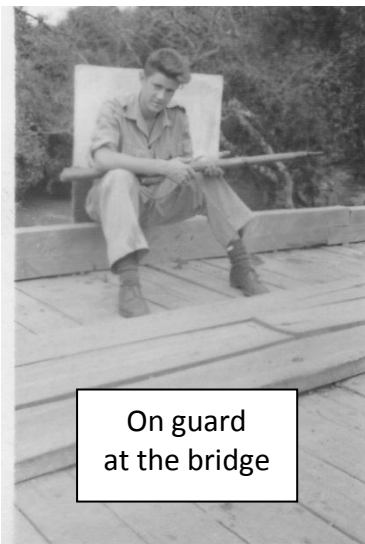


After the Harvard disappeared into the blue there we were with the wife and small daughter to guard for the next two weeks, I must say at this stage, the farmer's wife was a great woman and didn't need much guarding. We settled down to life on the farm an experience I thought I would never

have, and enjoyed it immensely. We had managed to get a few spare rounds of ammunition when we drew our rifles, so we could now roam the plains as game hunters. (I have to say we were not that successful and didn't bag anything at all). The two weeks rolled by and soon it was back to the squadron and the sports hangar with all the noise ,and some guy had a wind up gramophone with one record, Kay Star singing "Half a Photograph," one song I will never forget.



With the farm dogs



On guard
at the bridge

Towards the end of our guard duty a calf was found dead just outside the workers' compound and the wife ordered the African workers to burn it, they were very reluctant to do that, but she insisted they carry out her orders, which they duly did. I said to her "would it have hurt to let them have the calf for their pot?" Her reply was that if she had allowed that, very soon another calf would be found dead. She knew far more than me on how to handle her workers. The Harvards returned with the farmer and daughter, and very soon it was back to normal, and waiting for our six months tour to come to an end. The first part of the detachment consisted of four aircraft which was shortly followed by two more. Before the arrival of the last two aircraft it was decided to lay on a rag type of welcome for them. It was great fun and a surprise for the new crews.

I think it is best described in pictures so here they are:



I am so pleased to see you all.



The welcoming parade



Sorry sir, I nearly forgot the tea



Party over - now back to work

Who was this man? He appeared on the ramp one morning armed to the teeth with rifle and pistol and weighed down with ammunition. He was taken on a strike in one of our Lincolns, we were told he was going to map out the area where the Mau Mau had been seen, and that he was a mercenary working for the Kenyan government, (maybe some on a higher pay scale than an SAC would know the whole story). When the aircraft returned to the ramp, after the strike he said farewell and off he went, we never saw him again .

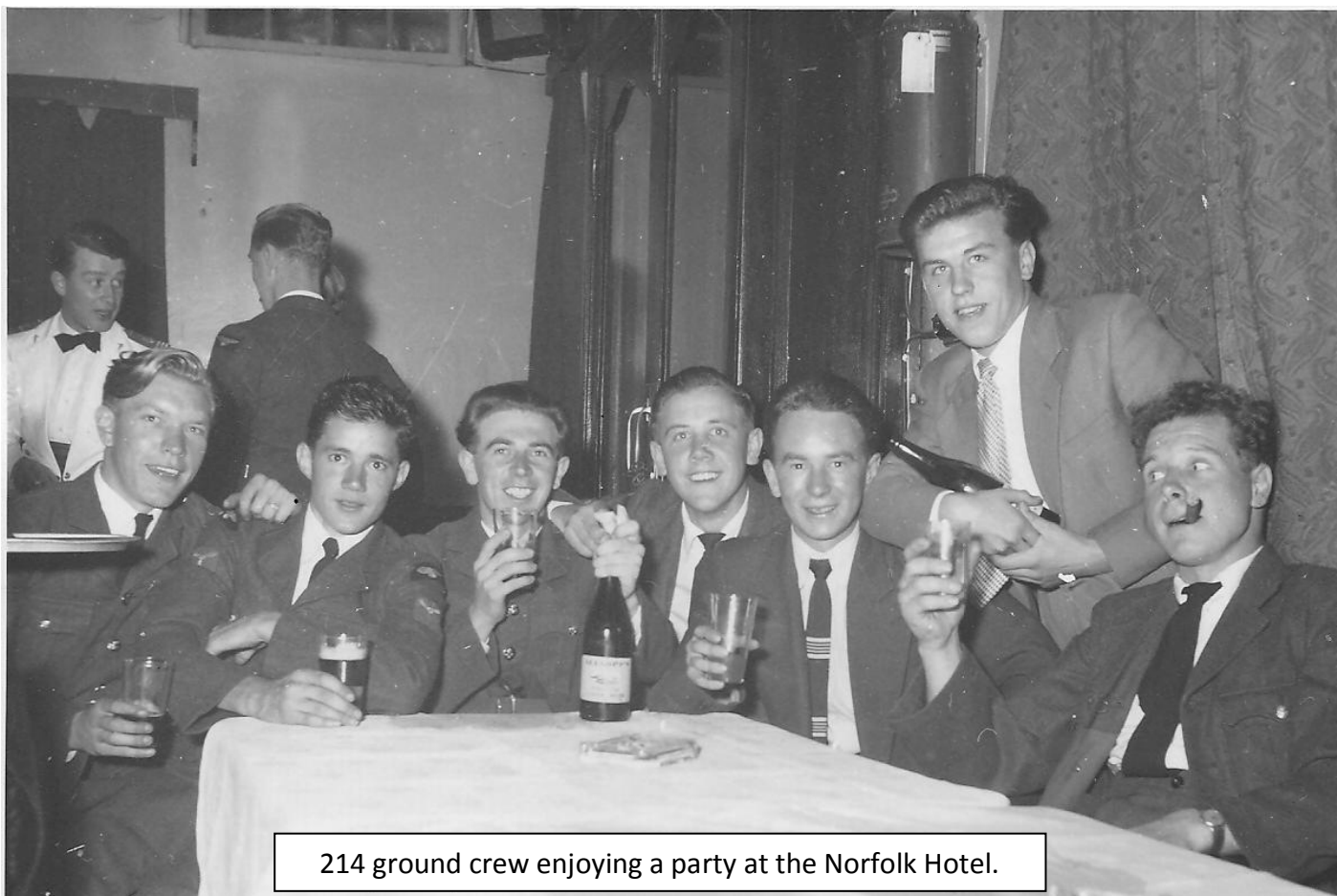


He was quick on the draw!



Air crew & ground crew and the man with the gun

Whilst the operation was going along well we had two incidents, one started fine and ended up being a tragedy, but the other was the very black day for the squadron. A squadron party had been organized to be held in the Norfolk Hotel down in Nairobi, and a very enjoyable evening we all had. A lorry had been laid on to take us there, and after the party had come to an end all we had to do was to catch the lorry



214 ground crew enjoying a party at the Norfolk Hotel.

back to camp. One snag here was the lorry could only take so many, and an RAF policeman (SNOP) was counting how many were climbing on board. When all the seats had been taken he shut the door at the back and off it went leaving at least two more journeys to make before we were all back at Eastleigh, and that would take some time. The idea was to make sure you were at the front of the queue for the next run, but somehow when the lorry returned I found myself at the end of the queue once again. Now the Bedford QL troop carrier had a row of seats along each side, plus a double row of seats running up the middle, it also had two doors, the main one at the back and another on the left hand side just behind the drivers cab. When I saw what was going on I said to my mate "we are not going to make this one either, let's get in using the front door", and that is what we did. Once aboard, and I don't think we were the only two to get in that way, when we left, it was well loaded with many standing. We were on our way, with everyone still happy and singing all the old songs, but very soon our happy night turned into a disaster. As I have said we were singing and feeling on top of the world, when all of a sudden there was a terrific noise and the next thing we all knew was the lorry was on its side and sliding at great speed along the road with the engine revving like mad. It seemed to go on for ever, sliding along. At last it came to a stop and then it was everyone for himself. It was a madhouse with people stamping all over each other trying to get out. What had happened was that the lorry had collided with a car travelling the other way, sad to say that the



people in the car didn't survive the accident. We had crashed in an out of bounds area between Nairobi and camp, and the next thing I remember was lying on the grass verge with people rushing about trying to help. Some of us finished up in Nairobi hospital, others in the Station sick bay. No-one was seriously injured, and very soon we were all back on the Squadron, and life carried on.

The saddest day for the squadron during

our tour of duty in Kenya was the loss of Flight Engineer Lou Pinn. It happened when three aircraft were called out for a strike against a body of Mau Mau terrorists that had been sighted in the Nyeri area. Three aircraft were launched, RE322, RE229 and SX976. Flight Engineer Lou Pinn was in Flt Lt Stan Crockford's crew flying SX976, and during the bombing run it is believed that pieces of shrapnel from a chain reaction entered the aircraft, went through the bomb bay floor and hit Lou, (they were bombing at low level with bombs that were fused for instantaneous impact) and the shock waves set off the bombs that were still in the air.

Much has been recorded on this tragic incident so I will leave it there.

4047596 SAC P E Brown

There will be another story from Peter Brown in the next edition of Nightjar.

VISIT TO RAF MARHAM

On Friday May 11th I was invited to attend the parade and presentation of a new Standard to 2 Sqn on the occasion of their centenary celebrations. I had no connection with the squadron but my friend had served with them at Jever in Germany when they flew Swifts. They now fly the Tornado in a reconnaissance role. The parade commenced with the new Standard being marched on cases, ready for presentation by ACM The Lord Stirrup. Following the inspection of the parade the old Standard was marched off, later to be laid up in Ely Cathedral on the following Sunday. The new Standard was then presented and blessed by the RAF Chaplain - in - Chief before being paraded and marched off. The young officers, airmen and woman looked very smart in their modern uniforms unlike in my day when airmen's uniforms were of a coarse material and not very well made. (I still have my 1950s uniform). All the guests and visitors were seated on the edge of the parade ground, the weather was chilly but the rain held off. My friend, who had invited me, reminded me that it is almost 60 years since we completed square bashing together in 1953. All in all, a very enjoyable occasion and the chance to see the modern RAF close up.

Note: No. 2 Sqn. is today written as No. 11 (AC) Sqn.

Peter M Walker

AN ANTIQUE VISIT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE MARHAM

After Peter's official visit to Marham, I anticipated that mine, made just two weeks later would be fairly low-key assuming that a day with the 'Antiques Roadshow' would offer nothing too unusual. WRONG!

An early start was made in the hope of getting somewhere near the front of the traditionally horrific 'Roadshow' queue, and by using the back roads we arrived right at Crash Gate 5, the designated entrance, in good time. We successfully infiltrated the head of the massive line of traffic arriving from Swaffham and Downham Market and had literally just entered the Station when the car stalled and would NOT restart. Panic! After explaining to an armed soldier that we were unable to move he very quickly pushed us up alongside the wire fence. The RAF Sergeant in charge was quite understanding but emphasised that: 'nice that we looked' we were NOT to leave the car unattended; I gathered that if I did I would have had a very difficult time explaining to my insurance people that my car was minutely spread all over Norfolk. However, the AA finally sorted the problem, but only after we had sat and watched thousands of people drive in thus defeating our 'front of the queue plan'. On suggesting that his day was at least something different, the young armed soldier who stood by us replied 'Indeed so, I was supposed to be playing golf!'

Finally parked and carrying the 'valuables' we joined a very, very slow moving queue and well into the afternoon approached the reception area, unwrapped the goods and received tickets for the appropriate valuation desks with their own lengthening queues! A number of regular Roadshow' characters were recognized, including of course Fiona Bruce. At this point Peter's visit and mine overlapped for the 'AR' show was located where Peter had attended the No.2 Squadron celebrations and was scattered amongst two Tornados including the one with a superbly painted BE2 on its tail. Then came the announcement warning people that as aircraft would be taking off 'it would be rather noisy'!(somewhat of an understatement) The take-off point was beyond some trees and not too far away and as WE know, the sound of a pair of Tornados taking off is FELT rather than heard, and even aircrew enjoying an afternoon off to act as stewards had their fingers in their ears. A very impressionable part of the afternoon repeated several times and with some nice flying thrown in. Compensation maybe, for after a few chats with the experts including Eric Knowles, who quickly picked up my Dudley accent, I gave up any idea of booking a world cruise! However, you quickly realise that it is all a 'numbers game' as by looking at thousands of items and valuing them all in a friendly and pleasant manner it is almost certain that a few 'specials' will be identified for staged lengthy interviews and filming, and this is what we all watch on the resulting programme. The aim of the BBC is very simply to produce a one hour-long programme. An interesting and eventful day out, but next time (if there is one) I shall go simply to walk round and take in what is going on. No more queues of any sort thank you.

Jock Whitehouse

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