



Nightjar

Summer 2016

Chairman's Letter

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I am writing this letter as we approach the Service of Thanksgiving for the life and work of MRAF Sir Michael Beetham to be held in the RAF Church of St Clement Danes in London on 29 June. I imagine that there will be many of the 'great and good' there but also hopefully a reasonable number of people who served under Sir Michael including, of course, people who served under him on No 214 Squadron in the late 1950s. I know that several members of No 214 (FMS) Squadron Association have applied for tickets, including me, so I hope that the Association will be suitably represented on the day.

In my last Chairman's Letter, as a result of the lack of a quorum at the Annual General Meeting in October last year, I invited members who were not present to vote on the motions put before that Meeting. These motions were:

To approve the Minutes of the 2014 Annual General Meeting.

To approve the Accounts.

To re-elect the six existing members of the Committee for a further year.

I can report that the Secretary has received a further seven votes in favour of each of the motions and none against. This brings the number of votes in favour to sixteen for the first motion and seventeen for the second and third motions. The motions are therefore deemed to be carried.

In the last *Nightjar* I also raised the subject of the Squadron's centenary in 2017 and the possibility of holding an event at Derby and the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas along the lines of the memorial dedication in 2009, probably on the weekend of 7/8 October 2017. To aid our planning, I invited members to indicate their interest in such an event, either using the response slip provided or by e-mail to the Secretary. Although we had always expected numbers to be substantially reduced compared with 2009, to date we have received expressions of interest which would equate to an attendance of only around twenty-five people. This falls well short of the numbers we were hoping for to mark one hundred years since the Squadron was formed. We do not expect anyone to make a firm commitment at this stage so, if you are minded to attend if it is at all possible, please do let the Secretary know. Furthermore, attendance at such an event would not be limited to members of the Association. So if you are in contact with former members of No 214 Squadron who are not members of the Association, please encourage them to consider attending and ask them to register their interest with the Secretary.

In the meantime, details of this year's reunion in Norwich are set out elsewhere in this edition of *Nightjar*. Please do try to come if you are able. We need to keep the Association going at least until the centenary in 2017. So fill in the booking forms and put them in the post NOW!

Alan Mawby

In Memoriam

J Ewing: In December 2013. He was a National Service air gunner on Lincolns at Upwood.

Sqn Ldr Maurice Webster OBE aged 88 on 26th April. He was a navigator on Valiants when Sir Michael was CO, about 1957- 61 period. He lived in Harrogate. Peter was informed by an email from his daughter, a retired Wg Cdr M K Webster.

Tom Raine: 25 June. Tom joined 214 Sqn as a Crew Chief in 1970 and served at the same time as many members of our Association. He was a regular supporter of our annual reunions.

Our condolences go to the families of our former comrades.

A note from AVM Eric Macey to Peter Walker:

My earlier message omitted to mention that the In Memoriam section of the Feb 16 Nightjar records David Wright as being a 214 Sqn co-pilot. He was indeed co-pilot to (the then) Sqn Ldr John Wynne but returned to 214 as captain of his own crew.

Members of No 214 Squadron Association attend the Memorial Service for MRAF Sir Michael Beetham



A Service of Thanksgiving for the life and work of
Marshal of the Royal Air Force
Sir Michael James Beetham
GCB CBE DFC AFC DL



Wednesday 29th June 2016
11 am

Bob Tuxford

Lesley Gulliver

John Gulliver

Vic Pheasant

Alan Mawby



Tom Tate's logbook. Tom Tate died on January 19th. 2016 and his family donated his logbook to 214 Sqn Assn. It was sent to me for long term safe keeping and therefore I needed to find somewhere to place it. After seeking advice from some of our committee members it has been decided to place it in the archives of the Elvington Air museum in Yorkshire. This has been achieved by taking the advice of Vic Pheasant who advised that many members of The Aircrew Assn. had donated their logbooks to this Museum and more will in the future. To make sure that Tom's logbook will be in good hands Vic recommended that I send it to Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork; this has been done and Graham will make sure it is taken to Elvington next time he goes there. As most of you will be aware Tom was the Special wireless operator on John Wynne's Fortress on March 14th. 1945. What not many people knew was that Tom had completed 36 operations in 1941-42 with 75 (NZ) Sqn. After this he spent many months at 29 OTU at Bruntingthorpe on instructional duties until he joined John Wynn's crew on 214 Sqn, Oulton in early 1945.

Peter Walker

The Maid's Head Hotel - Norwich

The Costs:

Double / Twin - £75 per person per night
Single - £100

£38 per person

Starters

Roast carrot & pumpkin soup (v)
Cromer crab & prawn salad, basil crouton, cherry tomato, lime mayo
Salted beef & apple terrine, caper & celeriac remoulade, ciabatta bread (v)

Mains

Supreme of chicken breast, cocotte potatoes, sauté savoy cabbage, sage butter sauce
Seared fillet of sea trout, tomato & potato gnocchi with curly kale, white wine sauce (v)
Roast butternut squash, rice mushroom cake, pickled aubergine, harissa sauce

Desserts

Warm apple & plum, ginger ice cream
Banana & chocolate frozen terrine, chocolate crumb, glazed banana, passion fruit syrup
Lemon curd tart, honeycomb, Chantilly cream, orange & mint salad

Coffee & Petit Fours

Timings: 8th October 2014

Dinner: Saturday - 1900 for 1930 Oak Room

Sunday: We are looking to organize a local visit for the Sunday, probably to the Norwich Air Museum.

The Maid's Head Hotel is popular, **so book early to avoid disappointment.**
There are 2 booking forms included with your Nightjar. The first should be returned to the Maid's Head Hotel by 31st August if possible, **but no later than 24th September.**
(A credit card is required to confirm your reservation - no money will be taken at time of booking).

The second should be sent to the **Secretary** so that he can check that the hotel has received all the bookings, and to give us time to prepare place cards etc.

No 214 (FMS) SQUADRON – A ‘GIFT’ SQUADRON

Most of us are aware of the wartime ‘Spitfire Funds’ that raised money by public subscription to pay for the purchase of Spitfire aircraft for the RAF. This fundraising activity started in August 1940 and took place in factories and other organisations as well as in villages, towns and cities. And once the magic figure of £5000 had been raised and the monies paid into the Government coffers, a Spitfire would be named after the fund-raising body. In due course a photograph would appear in the local newspaper showing the aircraft fresh off the production line and suitably adorned with its name, such as ‘Wellingborough’, ‘Royal Tunbridge Wells’ or ‘County of Chester’. Fundraising was not restricted to the United Kingdom: many aircraft were purchased with funds raised in the British Dominions and colonies, as well as other countries throughout North and South America, Africa and the Far East. Although the Spitfire was the first type of aircraft to receive this treatment, as the war progressed an ever larger range of aircraft appeared, suitably named in honour of the relevant fundraising organisation.

The naming of aircraft was not a new phenomenon: there are many photographs of aircraft flown by the Royal Naval Air Service, Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force in the First World War that bear the name of a location in the United Kingdom or a British colony, indicating that they had been purchased with funds raised in the named locality. And naming did not stop at single aircraft. Most notably, in August 1918 His Serene Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad presented the RAF with eighteen D.H.9A aircraft to equip No 110 Squadron. The Squadron adopted the title No 110 (Hyderabad) Squadron and each aircraft bore the inscription ‘*Presented by His Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad - Hyderabad No [x]*’ where ‘x’ was the aircraft’s number between 1 and 18. There is only one D.H.9A in existence and that is F1010 in the RAF Museum. This aircraft was one of the eighteen that equipped No 110 Squadron and, for understandable reasons, was numbered ‘*Hyderabad No 12A*’ rather than ‘*Hyderabad No 13*’!

The naming of squadrons continued in the Second World War. In the summer of 1940, as the number of larger donations for the purchase of aircraft grew, Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Aircraft Production, approached the Air Ministry about the possibility of having more ‘named’ or ‘gift’ squadrons. Following consultation with the Colonial Office, this was agreed and in August 1940, in response to the funds raised by the East India Fund for British War Services in Calcutta, No 65 Squadron became No 65 (East India) Squadron¹.

The size of the donation required for a ‘named’ squadron was as follows²:

Single-engine fighter squadron - £100,000 (ie 20 times the quoted £5000 cost of a single-engine fighter).

Twin-engine fighter squadron - £250,000

Medium bomber squadron (Blenheim etc) - £180,000

Heavy bomber squadron (Hampden, Whitley, Wellington) - £350,000

Heavy bomber squadron (Manchester, Stirling, Halifax) - £500,000

According to an extract from Hansard for 24 July 1940 quoted in the Colonial Office files in The National Archives, two funds were inaugurated in Malaya in June 1940: The Federated Malay States War Fund was inaugurated by the ‘Malay Mail’ newspaper in Kuala Lumpur and the Straits Settlements War Fund by the ‘Straits Times’ and ‘Straits Echo’ in Singapore, both funds being specifically for the purchase of aircraft³. As at 24 July 1940 the funds stood at £55,000 and £250,000 respectively. Money was coming in so rapidly that a Ministry of Aircraft Production bulletin, published in The Times, noted on 30 July 1940 that the two funds had reached a combined total of £469,287 in one month⁴. By 5 April 1941, the Colonial Office recorded that the Federated Malay States War Fund had increased to approximately £150,000 and the Straits Settlements War Fund to £500,000 and it was suggested that the two funds should be treated as one⁵. It is not clear from the files whether the funds were in fact merged, but in April 1941 No 97 Squadron equipped with Manchester aircraft became No 97 (Straits Settlements) Squadron, and



No 214 Squadron equipped with Wellington aircraft became No 214 (Federated Malay States) Squadron.

Following the naming of a squadron, the fundraiser was given the opportunity to provide names for emblazoning on individual squadron aircraft. The records are far from complete, but it is known that at least three Wellingtons of No 214 Squadron were named, these names being 'Sri Guroh' (Thunder), 'Kuala Lumpur' (Place Name) and 'Raja Langit' (Lord of the Sky). Publicity photographs were usually taken of the named

aircraft, although in the case of No 214 Squadron the individual symbols and lettering emblazoned on the aircraft in the photographs appear somewhat amateurish and temporary. Named squadrons were encouraged to establish links with the fundraising organisation. For No 214 Squadron, this was done through the British Malaya Association in London. The Honorary Secretary of the Association, Captain L D Gammans MP, visited the Squadron at Stradishall whilst the officers of the Squadron were invited to the Association's Cocktail Party at the Savoy Hotel on 25 September 1941.



With the fall of Malaya to the Japanese in early 1942, this particular source of funding for RAF aircraft dried up. In response to a Ministry of Information request in late 1945, the Ministry of Aircraft Production confirmed that the total amounts which had been contributed by the Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements up to 30 September 1945 were respectively £384,972 and £650,803⁶. Meanwhile, so far as No 214 Squadron is concerned, no records have been found of the Squadron's Stirling aircraft being named, but 'Gifts of War' records the names of five of the Squadron's Fortress aircraft: HB765 'Johore Bahru' (Place Name), HB772 'Pahang' (One of the States in the Federation), HB774 'Sri Guroh', HB780 'Raja Awan' (Lord of the Clouds), and HB795 'Alor Star' (Place Name)⁷. Although when the 'gift' scheme was introduced squadrons were expected to retain the 'gift' title in perpetuity, such designations were officially dropped in 1952. However, squadron associations like ours are not bound by such rules and so we still use the full title 'No 214 (Federated Malay States) Squadron Association'. If you would like to read more about all the 'gift' aircraft operated by the RAF, there is a comprehensive volume on the subject listing all of the known aircraft and, in the case of the Spitfires, their service histories: 'Gifts of War – Spitfires and Other Presentation Aircraft in Two World Wars' compiled by Henry Boot and Ray Sturtivant and published by Air-Britain (Historians) Ltd in 2005 - ISBN 0 85130 248 3.

Footnotes:

1. The National Archives AIR 2/6106.
2. The National Archives AIR 2/6105.
3. The National Archives CO 323/1810/6.
4. 'Gifts of War' Page 415.
5. The National Archives CO 323/1864/24.
6. The National Archives AVIA 15/3725.
7. 'Gifts of War' Page 383.

Alan Mawby

Sergeant ERIC HAROLD COOPER
Air Gunner

**Aircrew serving with
214 (FEDERATED MALAY STATES) SQUADRON RAF**

Dick Hallam has been working with Jock Whitehouse researching the last flight of Stirling W7567 which was shot down on 23/4 July 1942. The rear gunner was his uncle, Sgt Eric Cooper, who was killed on this operation just 15 months following his joining the RAF. I have reproduced his article in full, but I am sure that more information on this raid will come to light in the future.

Ed

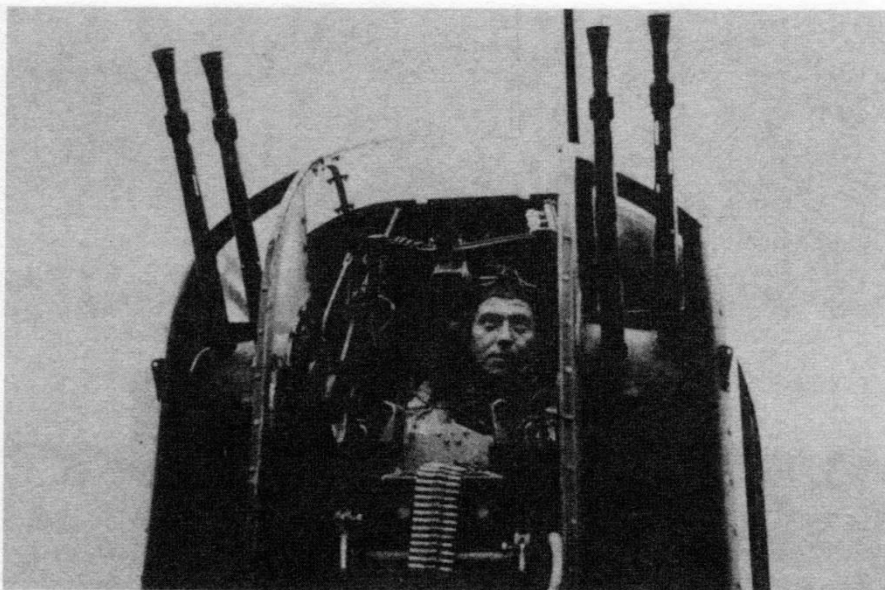
Sergeant Cooper volunteered for the RAF on the 7th April 1941. After having been on various unknown courses in Bournemouth, Chipping (Warden?), Evanton, Hawarden in Chester, Oakington, Cambridge, we know he was already at Stradishall in April 1942.

Sergeant Cooper was an Air Gunner on Stirling Heavy bombers of 214 (FMS) Squadron based at RAF Stradishall in Suffolk, East Anglia – a squadron within Bomber Command. His mother and sisters were told by Sgt Cooper that he was the ‘rear gunner’ at the very back of his bomber.



Three Stirling Aircraft on a training flight

1223659 Sgt E H Cooper RAF VR



11. The tail gunner in a Stirling with his four 0.303-inch machine guns, the standard defensive weapons of the wartime bombers. Just visible above the gunner's head are three spare bulbs for the reflector gun-sight. In a Stirling, the tail gunner was nearly eighty feet behind the pilot!





Sergeant Cooper, Air Gunner, was one of seven men flying W7567 on the night of 23/24 July 1942. The remainder of the crew were Pilot Officer Jack Dempsey Peel who we believe to be the 'Sandy Haired Texan' who I am sure we will learn more about in due course from further research. Sergeant Denis Frank Dobson was the Flight Engineer and Flight Sergeant Peter John Withers was the Observer. Sergeant John Brown Fleming (Canadian) and Sergeant Frederick William Thorne were two more Air Gunners. Sgt Cyril Fairhall was the seventh man on board that night.

The target that night was once again Duisberg, Germany on the east bank of the River Rhine. There were 215 aircraft that were taking part in that raid on Duisberg that night and 214 Sqn launched seven aircraft including W7567. Little is known (at this time) how de-confliction with routes 'in' and 'out' to the target along with de-confliction overhead target. We can only imagine the congestion and the various choke points the nearer to target that those 215 aircraft were confronted with while avoiding known German threats - flak and surveillance areas. We do know that 214 Sqn launched their aircraft at staggered times presumably to create tactical spacing on route 'in' and 'out' and to mitigate fratricide overhead the target.

The surviving 214 Squadron aircraft timings are illustrated below.

DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT						SECRET	PAGE No.				
By No. 214 (F.M.S.) Squadron.											
FOR THE MONTH OF July, 1942.											
DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES				
				Up	Down						
/24.7.42	Stirling W.7577	P/O. Smith, J.G.	Attack on Duisburg.	01.05	04.35	Attacked Duisburg at 02.35 hours from 16,500 ft. dropping					
		P/O. Hill, E.G.				4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. Identification was made by Navigational					
		P/O. Osborne, D.N.				aid and also a bend in the river S.W. of Duisburg was seen. It					
		Sgt. Meredith, E.				is thought that the bombs may have fallen N. of the centre					
		Sgt. Watt, W.E.				of the city. No bursts were seen.					
		Sgt. Stewart, I.M.R.									
		F/Sgt. Johnston, C.K.									
		Sgt. Davidson, G.									
		W.7650				Sgt. Hooke, E.E.	" "	01.15	04.55	Attacked Duisburg at 02.38 hours from 17,000 ft. dropping	
						Sgt. Jarvis, R.L.	4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. The river Rhine was clearly seen and				
Sgt. Davidson, J.E.	bombs are thought to have fallen in the S.W. portion of the										
Sgt. Corcoran, T.K.	city. Two bursts were seen. Fires were burning as the A/c										
Sgt. Green, E.S.	arrived.										
Sgt. Gibbs, J.R.											
Sgt. Southern, R.											
W.7575	F/Lt. Simich, G.R.	" "	01.10	04.00	Attacked Duisburg at 02.40 hours from 14,500 ft. dropping						
	F/Sgt. Attwood, D.W.	4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. On run in flares was clearly seen by									
	Sgt. Knibbs, D.L.	light of flares and a glimpse of the river was also obtained.									
	F/Sgt. Galloway, R.G.	Bombs fell on the N. edge of the city area. 2 good fires									
	Sgt. de Wittes, C.	were seen as the A/c arrived definitely to the N.W. of the									
	Sgt. Jackson, A.T.	town.									
	P/O. Sheppard, B.M.										

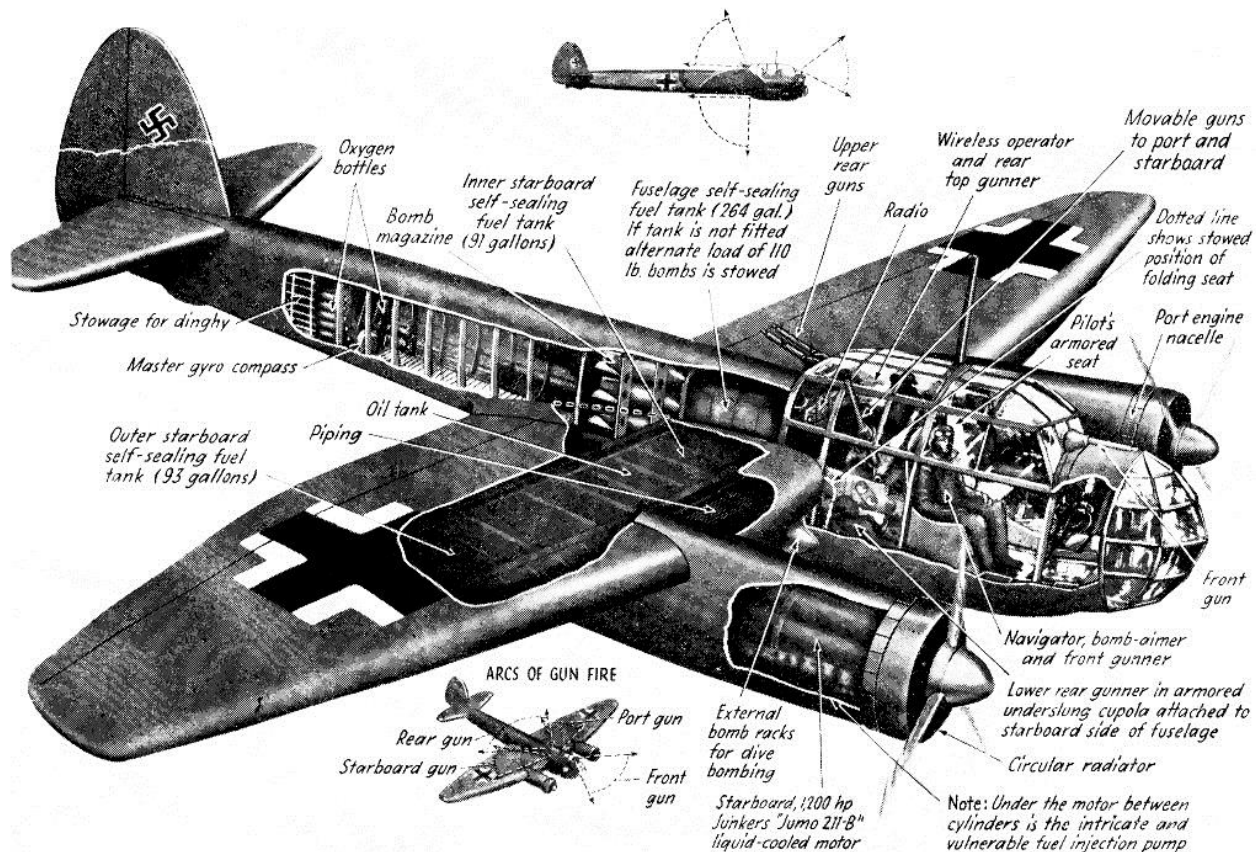
DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES
				Up	Down		
23/24.7.42	Stirling R.9355	P/O. Ince, C.D.	Attack on Duisburg.	01.00	04.45	Attacked Duisburg at 02.21 hours from 17,000 ft. dropping 1890 x 4 lb. incendiaries. Bombed by means of T.B.1335 and by the help of flares. It is believed that bombs fell in the town area, but no results were seen. The glow of fires could be seen beneath clouds.	
		Sgt. Hamlin, A.R.					
		Sgt. Fray, E.C.					
		Sgt. Stokes, C.J.					
		Sgt. Dempster, W.J.					
		P/O. Arnold, A.F.					
	R.9356	Sgt. Johnson-Biggs, W.					
		Sgt. Hodge, G.R.	" "	00.55	04.20	Attacked Duisburg at 02.26 hours from 13,500 ft. dropping 192 x 30 lb. incendiaries. The river and docks were clearly seen, and bombs fell in the centre of built up area. Numerous scattered fires were seen on arrival and for about ten minutes after leaving.	
		P/O. Williamson, N.A.					
		Sgt. Newcomb, S.					
		Sgt. King, J.					
		P/Sgt. Coleman, R.A.					
		Sgt. Bushell, W.J.					
	R.9141	Sgt. Gray, R.E.					
		Sgt. Lyle, A.					
		Sgt. Woods, G.W.	" "	01.05	04.45	Attacked Duisburg at 02.33 hours from 14,000 ft. dropping 4 x 2000 and 1 x 500. The road bridge opposite Duisburg was clearly seen by the captain in the light of flares. Bombs fell in what was believed to be the S.W. portion of Duisburg. One burst was seen but no results were observed. Fires were burning on arrival.	
		Sgt. Handbury, J.					
		Sgt. Beaumont, E.					
		Sgt. O'Neill, J.M.					
		Sgt. Wilson, E.L.					
		Sgt. Callister, J.K.					
		Sgt. Thompson, W.					

Aircraft	Up	ATTACK	Attack alt	Down
R9356	00:55	02:26	13,500 ft	04:20
R9355	01:00	02:21	17,000 ft	04:45
W7577	01:05	02:35	16,500 ft	04:35
R9141	01:06	02:33	14,000 ft	04:46
W7575	01:10	02:40	14,500 ft	04:00
W7650	01:15	02:38	17,000 ft	04:55

We can only assume (dangerous to assume, but as yet no evidence!) that de-confliction was by time, altitude and specific part of the target and even that would be tight to get 215 aircraft to release weapons during that short summer night. Bombing altitudes were probably different to confuse the Flak gunners applying fuse settings to the shells.

A German night fighter - a JU-88c - piloted by Hauptman Herbert Bonsch of Stab III. / NJG2 based at Gilze Rijen west of Tilburg engaged W7567 at an altitude of about 9,000 feet and 5 Km south west of Oss in Holland. It is reported that at 02:21 W7567 crashed on to a polder (reclaimed land) near Werkendam in Holland.

GERMAN AIRCRAFT JU-88c



The JU 88 three-place bomber has up to six guns as follows: one or two 7.9 mm. machine guns or one 20 mm. cannon forward in the fuselage; two 7.9 mm. guns at top rear; a 7.9 mm. firing to the left; and one or two 7.9's which fire to the right.

The German night fighter type that attacked W7567

23-24 July 1942

215 aircraft were dispatched for another major raid against Duisburg. Seven aircraft were lost, plus two out of eight intruder Blenheim that supported the Main Force raid, four of which fell foul of Nachtjäger.

Lt. Hans-Joachim Witzleb: 1	I./NJG3	Blenheim	Goldenstedt, N.E. Vechta	01.46	18 Sqn Blenheim Z7428
Hptm. Herbert Bönsch: 11	Stab III./NJG2	Stirling	5 km. S.W. Oss: 3.000 m.	02.21	214 Sqn Stirling W7567
Oblt. Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein: 13	9./NJG2	Lancaster	North Sea 30 km. W. Scheveningen	03.10	207 Sqn Lancaster R5632
Uffz. Heinz Oloff: 1	3./NJG1	B-17/Stirli	13 km. N.E. 's-Hertogenbosch (5B)	03.25	149 Sqn Stirling W7580

Extract taken from
Nachtjagd War Diaries vol1 by Dr. Theo Boiten

It is difficult to decipher accurately from the German diary (above) because different German night fighter squadrons reported their claims in different ways. With regards to W7567 claim (in the German diary) I have interpreted it as the German attack began (and probably ended) at an altitude of 3,000 metres (9,000 feet) in the air 5 km south west of Oss.



Map showing key places of interest for the final minutes of W7567 night of 23/24 July 1942

Hypothetically:-

1. Given the attack times of the surviving aircraft from 214 Squadron it is easy to understand that W7567 was most probably attacked on the way 'in' to target.
2. It is considered likely that as a result of the German attack that the aircraft was damaged enough to cause Jack Peel to turn 180 degrees and head for home.
3. It would make some sense perhaps that Jack Peel would want to lose some height in order to make any Germans subsequent attack come from a direction that the Stirling gunners might be able to engage their enemy.
3. It is unlikely (?) that the German would have followed the crippled bomber until it finally 'stopped flying' – there is no moon and it is dark.
4. It is likely that there would be a part of the aircraft on fire but not perhaps a raging inferno.

The weather that night has apparently conflicting reports – but everyone knows how changeable weather can be. R9355 reports that at 02:21 when he attacked the target it was cloudy and the target is roughly 15 minutes flying time from Oss. Bomber Command also records that for the lead aircraft missions that “*there was much cloud over target*”.

Minor Operations: 8 Blenheim Intruders to St-Trond, Venlo and Vechta airfields, 9 aircraft minelaying off Texel and in the Frisians, 6 aircraft on leaflet flights to France. 1 Intruder lost.

22 July 1942

8 Bostons in pairs attacked various targets. 2 aircraft bombed Sluiskil power-station and then machine-gunned barges near Ghent and 2 aircraft bombed Langenbrugge power-station. 1 Wellington was sent to Essen and 1 Mosquito to Münster but these aircraft turned back because of lack of cloud. No aircraft lost.

23 July 1942

4 Mosquitoes on cloud-cover raids to Germany. 3 turned back but 1 aircraft bombed a factory in the area south of Grevenbroich. No aircraft lost.

23/24 July 1942

DUISBURG

215 aircraft – 93 Wellingtons, 45 Lancasters, 39 Stirlings, 38 Halifaxes. 7 aircraft – 3 Wellingtons, 2 Lancasters, 2 Stirlings – lost.

Much cloud was present over the target and the flares dropped by the leading aircraft were scattered. Those bombs which did fall in Duisburg again caused some housing damage and 65 people were killed.

Minor Operations: 8 Blenheim Intruders, 13 aircraft minelaying. 2 Intruders lost.

25 July 1942

12 Bostons were dispatched in low-level pairs but only 2 aircraft bombed Sluiskil power-station. Later in the day, 12 further Bostons were sent out in an attempt to bomb an open air 'Quisling meeting' at Lunteren in Holland but they had to turn back because of lack of cloud cover. 2 Mosquitoes were dispatched and both reached and bombed their targets, Frankfurt and Mannheim. No aircraft lost.

25/26 July 1942

DUISBURG

313 aircraft – 177 Wellingtons, 48 Stirlings, 41 Halifaxes, 33 Lancasters, 14 Hampdens. 12 aircraft – 7 Wellingtons, 2 Halifaxes, 2 Lancasters, 1 Stirling – lost.

Thick cloud covered the target area. Duisburg again reports property damage, though not as heavy as on the last two raids. 6 people were killed.

Minor Operations: 21 Blenheim Intruders, 8 aircraft minelaying, 3 Halifaxes on leaflet flights. 3 Intruders and 1 Lancaster minelaying.

Total effort for the night: 349 sorties, 16 aircraft (4.9 p.p.s.)

Taken from:
[The Bomber Command War Diaries](#)
[An Operational Reference Book 1939 - 1945](#)
 Authors: Martin Middlebrook
 Chris Everitt
 Penguin Books 1990

In all

*probability there would be no moonlight to aid
German acquisition of W7567
Although Nautical twilight at 9,000 feet might well have been an issue*

Below is a report of 6 B 1942 and below that the map of all crash sites near Werkendam, Holland. The icon 6B, 1942 relates to W7567.

--O--

The Dutch version-:

6) 24 juni 1942- Short Stirling. W7567, 214 squ

Crash op de polder van landbouwer Salomon Glerum. In de nacht van 23 op 24 juli 1942, om 02.00 uur stortte een Brits vliegtuig neer nabij de boerderij van Sal Glerum nabij de polder Kroon en Zalm. Alleen de gewonde marconist Chyriel Fairhall overleefde de crash en kreeg medische hulp van dokter Schols in Werkendam. Daarna werd hij gevangen genomen door de Duitsers. De piloot zat verkoold in het wrak. E.H. Cooper (1223659) werd 5 augustus 1942 door Maarten van Elzelingen, die aan de Loze Stoep woonde, gevonden. Drie weken later vond Maarten het volgende, onbekende stoffelijk overschot. Bij het lichaam werd alleen een sigarettenkoker met de inscriptie F.A.W.T. gevonden. Als onbekende Engelse militair werd het stoffelijk overschot begraven op 29 augustus. Gezien de initialen F.A.W. T. Thorne, was men toch vrijwel zeker dat het hier ging om een Stirling bemanningslid. 25 februari 1943 werd opnieuw een stoffelijk overschot gevonden door Salomon Glerum. Het was J.B. Flemings (1123282). Op 25 maart 1943 werd het laatste bemanningslid bij het riet snijden gevonden. De 'Dog tag' wordt op het stoffelijk overschot van '924720 C.E.P.J. Withers RAF gevonden. Zij zijn begraven in rij 8/2 tot en met 8/7 op de algemene begraafplaats Werkendam.

My translated version-:

Crash on the polders (fields) of farmer called Salomon Glerum. During the night of the 23rd to the 24th of July 1942 at 2 AM (about 2.23 AM) a British aircraft crashed near the farm of Saloman Glerum near the polder Kroon and Zalm (crown and salmon).

Only the injured wireless operator Cyril Fairhall survived the crash and received medical attention from Doctor Schols in Werkendam. Afterwards he was taken prisoner by the Germans.

The charred remains of the pilot (Jack Dempsey Peel) were in the wreck. E.H Cooper (1223659) was found on the 5th August 1942 by a man called Maarten van Elzelingen, who lived at the Loze Stoep.

Three weeks later, Maarten found the next, unknown body. The only thing found with the body was a cigarette case with the inscription F.A.W.T. The remains were buried as an unknown English airman on the 29th August. Given the initials F.A.W.T they were relatively certain that the body was that of Thorne (possibly the Navigator), a Stirling crew member.

On the 25th February 1943 another body was found by Salomon Glerum. It was J.B. Fleming (Air Gunner – Canadian) (1123282). On March 25th, 1943 the last crew member was found during the cutting of the reeds. The dog tag was found on the remains of '924720 C.E.P.J. Withers (Observer / Bomb Aimer) RAF.

They were buried in row 8/2 to and including 8/7 on the general cemetery of Werkendam.

--O--

In the translated report above there is no mention of Sergeant Dobson. It might have been an oversight or at the time the report was 'finalised' his remains had not been found. It is, regrettably, easy to understand that the Dutch would not know how many people were on board and how many may have jumped out. However, Sergeant Dobson occupies the first grave in the row and I would hazard the graves would have been created in the chronological order that the bodies were recovered - read on.

Map showing all the crash sites around Werkendam



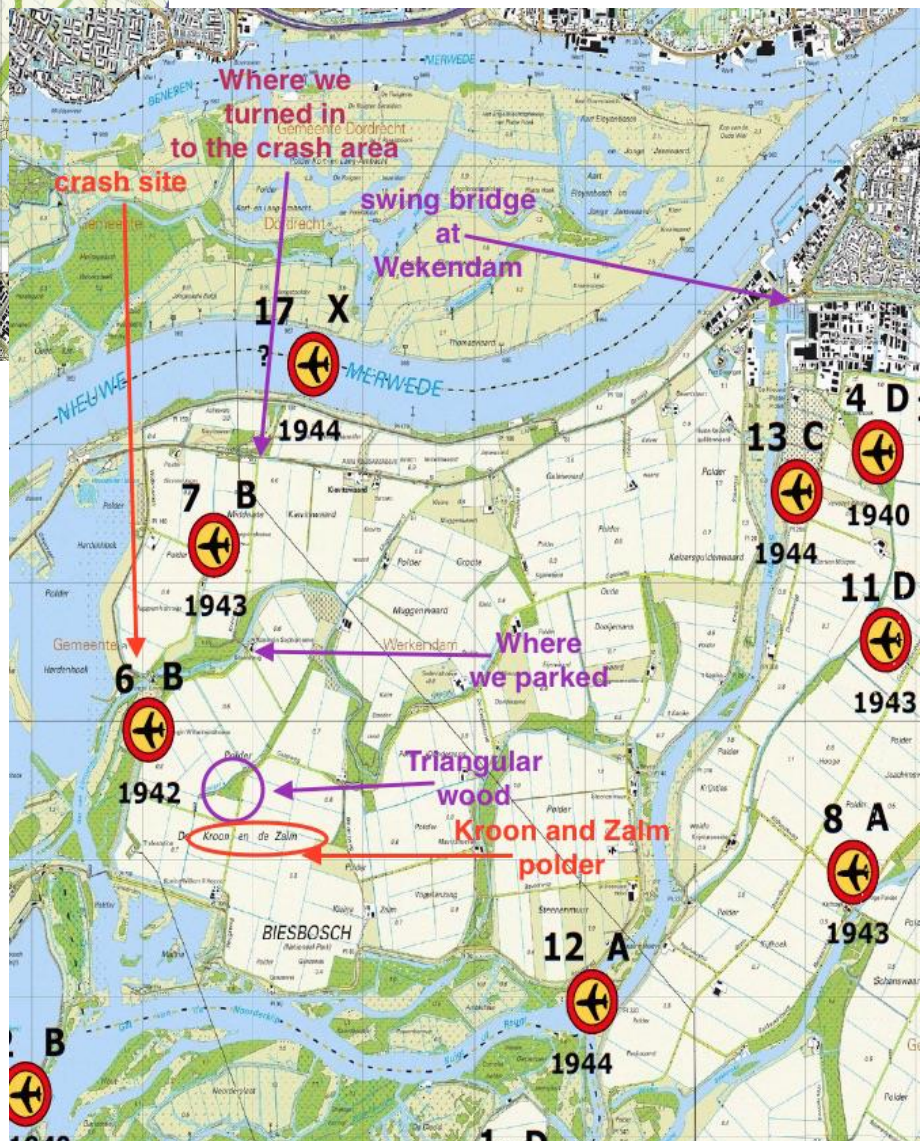
3rd June 2015

Visit to the final resting places of the aircrew from W7567

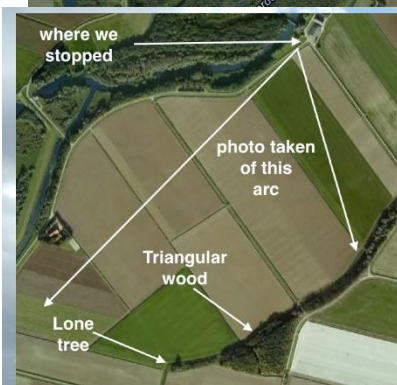
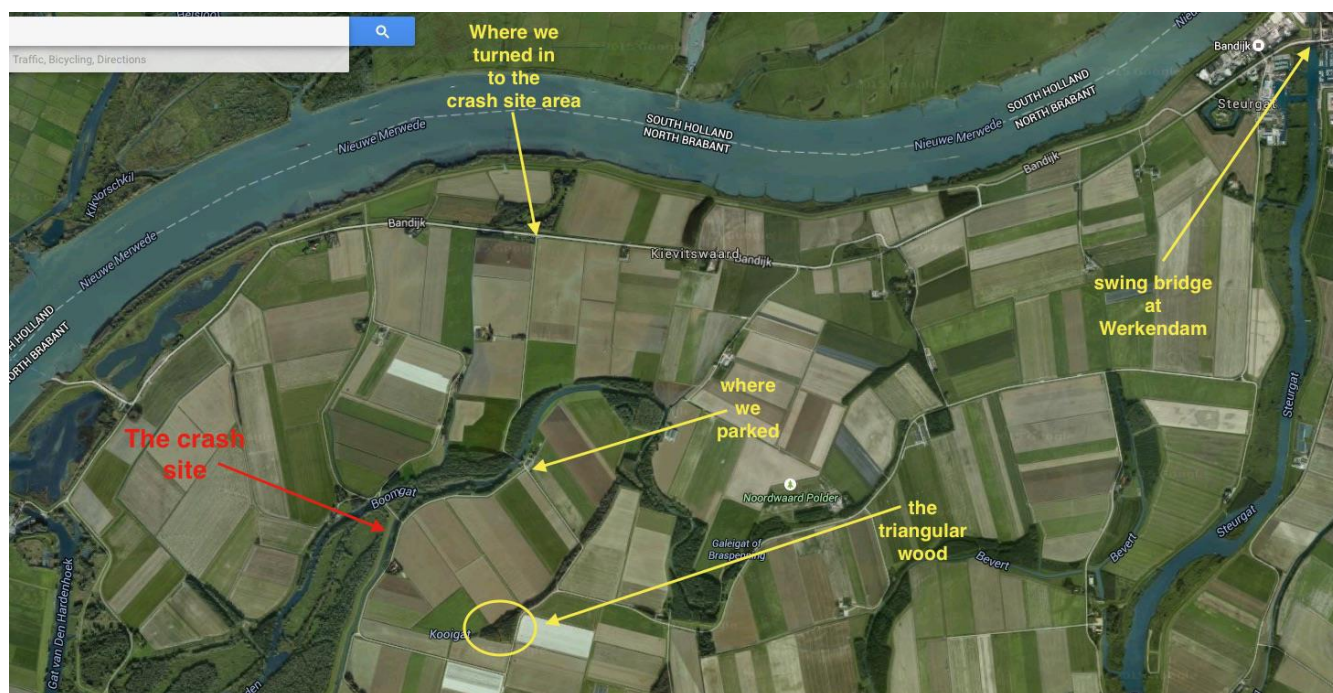
Having paid respects and placed wooden crosses of Remembrance on each of the 6 graves I was asked if I knew where the aircraft finally stopped. From memory we set off to where W7567 came to a tragic halt.

When we drove out to the crash site I can now say we ended up about 400 - 450 meters from the position shown on the Dutch map.

There has been a substantial amount of land reclaimed since the Dutch map was printed and the Google image was taken. None the less the navigation error was mine we were just a few hundred meters from the indicated crash site.



Present day birds eye view



The water course running east to west immediately (10 meters) north of the crash site is actually today (and probably was that night) quite a wide channel with tall reeds growing on both banks. The banks themselves were elevated by probably several feet above the surrounding field elevation making the banks a formidable flood protection and a huge hazard to a damaged fast moving aircraft.

After a family enquiry about the fate of W7567 a Dutch lady called Corine replied in July 2015 and sent this shortened response-;

Six of the seven air crew members died when the Short Stirling. W7567 crashed into the field of farmer Salomon Glerum. The polder is called 'Kroon en Zalm' ('Crown and Salmon'). The crash was so close to the

farm, hundreds of roof tiles of the barn and many windows were destroyed. Even on the other side of the water 'Lijnoorden' windows were destroyed.

Pilot Dobson was found in the cockpit of the plane, his body carbonized. Mr. Maarten van Elzelingen found sergeant Cooper on the 5th of August. Three weeks later gunner Thorne was found. The others, gunner Flemings, observer Withers and pilot Peel, were found between February 25th and March 23rd, 1943. All of them are buried together in the church cemetery, which is also a Commonwealth Cemetery. I have attached a picture of the grave stone of your uncle.

Only the wounded wireless operator (C. Fairhall) survived, but he got caught later by the Germans. He did survive the war but could not shake the war trauma's of crashing and the prisoner of war camp, and lived in the USA in a psychiatric hospital.

Please know that on May 4th, our Remembrance Day, we have two commemorations in Werkendam. The big one is at the same time as the national one, with a two minute silence throughout the Netherlands. Everything and everybody stops. However, in Werkendam, we also have a smaller, more intimate commemoration in the morning. Flowers and wreaths are placed on the graves of the local resistance and also on the 23 graves of the soldiers of the Allied Forces. School kids participate in this (like they do in the evening as well).

I hope this helps at least a little bit! Please let me know if I can be of more assistance.

Kind regards,

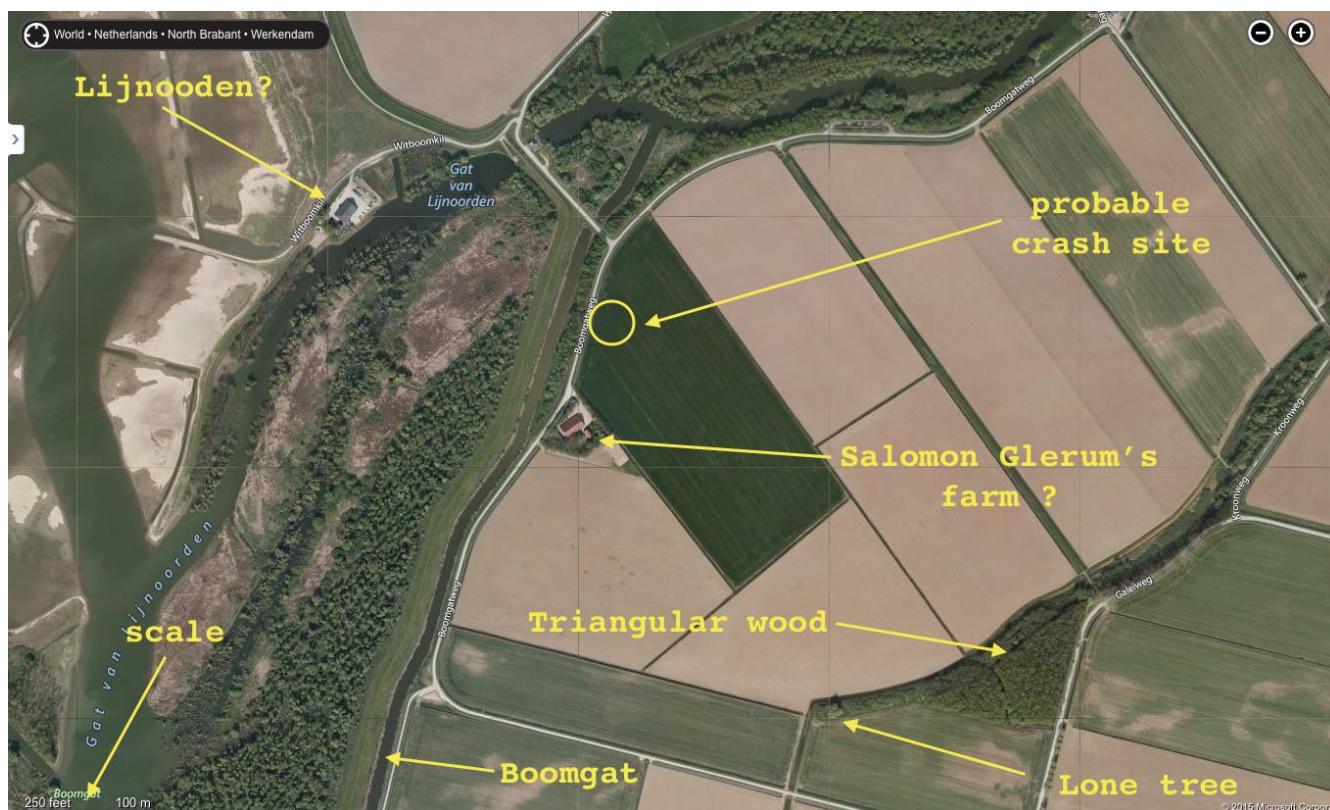
Corine

Corine Koek-Maasdam

secretaris Historische Vereniging Werkendam en De Werken c.a.

freelance correspondent and photographer"

Corine's report (above) fits in with the chronology of burials in Werkendam. It may just be a coincidence that the first report from all the crash sites around Werkendam suggests that the 'charred remains of the pilot were in the wreck' when in fact it was the remains of Sgt Dobson the Flight Engineer. It is remarkable that he too was not thrown out of the wreck as it hit the bank of the Boomgat Dyke. Sgt Dobson may have been strapped in? It is interesting too that Corine mentions that '*The crash was so close to the farm, hundreds of roof tiles of the barn and many windows were destroyed. Even on the other side of the water 'Lijnoorden' windows were destroyed*'. Lijnoorden I believe is the farm directly across the two water drainage courses.



Hypothetically

Given that everything afore mentioned is reasonable. I conclude the following from the final flight of W7567.

1. W7567 was damaged but not destroyed by the German night fighter 5 km from Oss.
2. W7567 continued to be piloted by Jack Peel in a probable attempt to return home after sustaining damage from the German attack.
3. I suspect that the weapons were jettisoned before the crash to lighten the aircraft and remove the possibility of sympathetic detonation in the event of a hard landing.
4. No one in the crew bailed out after the attack, this could be that they were too low or they believed that Jack could get them home.
5. I suspect Jack tried to crash land W7567 on that polder when he assessed that the damaged aircraft would not make it all the way to UK.
6. Cyril Fairhall was pulled badly injured from the crashed aircraft and after medical treatment was formally taken prisoner by the occupying German forces.



The Crew of W7567

We know quite a lot about the life and death of Eric Harold Cooper – but at this time we know so little about the men he flew with.

Dennis Dobson we know his mother was in touch with the mother or Eric Cooper.

Mrs Rooth the mother of Dennis Dobson on the left visiting Julia Cooper the mother of Eric Cooper on the right

at Elston Notts

The pilot, Jack Peel is almost certainly the "Sandy haired Texan" and I am hopeful we can learn more about this courageous pilot.

The rest of the crew remain an enigma with the exception of Thorne – he was just married (1942) and I think his wife remained a widow until her death.

As for the Wireless Operator – Corine from Werkendam earlier in this document tells us the terrible plight of Cyril Fairhall. MIA

Charges to pay
RECEIVED
POST OFFICE
TELEGRAM
No. 48
Office Stamp
Prefix 1137
Time handed in. BMT
Office of Origin and Service Instructions.
Words. 48
From Notts
To
Mrs J. Cooper
East Stoke Newark Notts
Deeply regret to inform you your son Sgt E.H. Cooper is missing as the result of air operation on the night of 23/24 of July 1942 latter follows any further information will be forwarded by you immediately
O.C. Unit
For free repetition of doubtful words telephone "TELEGRAMS ENQUIRY" or call, with this form B or C at office of delivery. Other enquiries should be accompanied by this form and if possible, the envelope.

Notice of burial

In memory we see him
just the same
As long as we live we'll
treasure his name

GERRARD 9234
TELEPHONE: Extn.
AIR MINISTRY
(Casualty Branch),
73-77, OXFORD STREET,
W.1
Any communications on the subject of this letter should be addressed to:—
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE,
and the following number quoted:— P.371309/42.P.L.B.3.
Your Ref. 174 August, 1943.
Madam,
I am directed to inform you that a report has now been received from the International Red Cross Committee, Geneva, which states that your son, 1223659 Sergeant Eric Harold Cooper, has been buried in the Communal Cemetery at Werkendam, 9 miles east of Dordrecht, Holland, in grave No. 8/3.
The other members of the crew, who also lost their lives in the same operation, are buried in adjoining graves.
I am, Madam,
Your obedient Servant,
J. A. Shrew
for Director of Personal Services.
Mrs. J. Cooper,
East Stoke,
Newark,
Nottinghamshire.

Written on the back of The Notice of Burial



The Evolution of the Graves

Gives the date as the 23rd July



Graves

In 1949

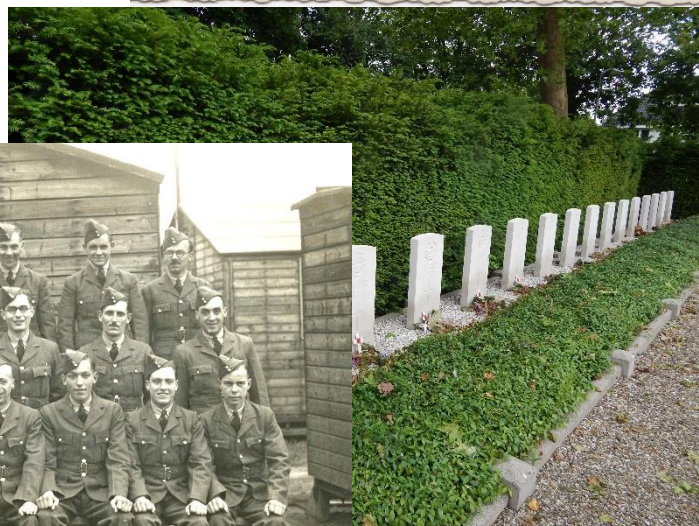
Still the date is wrong



*In
2015
the
dates
are*

Left to right from edge of photo

Sgt Dobson, Sgt Cooper, Sgt Thorn, Sgt



correct

*Fleming, F/Sgt
Withers and
Pilot Officer
Peel
Marked with a
little wooden
cross of
Remembrance*

Eric (carrying

respirator) 3rd from left centre row.

Eric – middle back row



Eric and two more Air Gunners



An e-mail from Anne

My thanks to Dick for this article, and I hope you enjoyed reading it. I do need items for the next edition however, so if you have a story to tell or some interesting photographs, then please get in touch. Electronic copy is best, but I am able to scan text and photos if required. Contributions big or small will be much appreciated.

John

no214fms@btinternet.com

Cheung:

'With regards to Nightjar itself, my Mum (Winifred Elizabeth Tomlinson) and Dad (Ronald Seeley) were both in 214 Squadron, and my Mum was an MT driver with Hazel Southgate, whose obituary was in the latest Nightjar. I can't thank you enough for this copy of Nightjar, my Mum was a good friend of Hazel's, they were in the same billet together. We have been trying for nearly two years now to find out where she was and what was happening with her. It was very sad news, but also a relief to finally know about Hazel.

I have two or three photographs that might be of interest to you. One is a photo of the MT drivers (my Mum and Hazel are both on there); one is a photo of a Signals Department (with my Mum seated at the front) at Oulton; and one is a photo of the actress Patricia Roc, surrounded by several RAF personnel, including my Mum. I have added as much information as my Mum can remember as regards names. The Signals photo had all the signatures on the back of it, I have attached that as well.

Thanking you once again for Nightjar, full of interest for my Mum!

Kind Regards

Anne Cheung (nee Seeley)'

214 Squadron, MT Section, Blickling Hall, Oulton



Back Row L>R:

6-Walter (Curly) Houghton, 8-Cpl Barlow, 9-'Sparks', 15-Corporal Sidery, 16-Doreen Roebottom

Middle Row of Two:

2-Corporal Scholes
Front Row: 1-Corporal, 2-Dorothy (Dot) Butler, 3-Hazel Robbins (m Southgate), 4-Connie (from Fakenham), 5-Corporal Somerset, 6-'Paddy' Stevenson, from Ballymena (m Smith, London), 7-Nan or Nen Mainwaring, 8-Winifred Elizabeth Tomlinson (m Seeley), 9-Olga Miller, 10- Elsie Shultz, 11-Janet Hodges (m Moyse, Wigston nr Liverpool).

Seated: 1-Sergeant, 2-Warrant Officer, 3- Fg Off Salew

Not on Photo: Nellie Dawson, always with Doreen Roebottom, they were very good pals.

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

The Nightjar has been compiled, and proof-read by your committee. It has been converted to a computerised format, printed, assembled, and distributed by the Association Treasurer - John Gulliver.

If you would like to receive your copy of Nightjar electronically, which will save us over £1:50 per copy; please e-mail the Treasurer.