



WHAT'S ON



VICKY HALL - PROGRAM SECRETARY

- 2 January 98'.....'Flying with the Red Arrows' - Dick Storer
- 6 February 98'...'50yrs of Bentwaters inc. F.I.D.O.' - Norman Rose
- 6 March 98'.....'Flying the P51 Mustang' - Howard Cook
- 3 April 98'.....A.G.M. & Photo/Slide Competition
- 1 May 98'.....'Decoy Site (Wartime Deception)' - Huby Fairhead

Newsletter Contributions

If you have an article or a story you would like to share with the other members of the Society then please send it to me....

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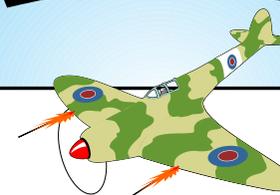
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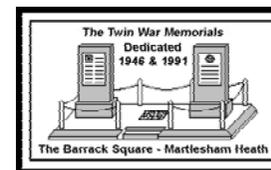
January 1998

Martlesham Heath Aviation Society

NEWSLETTER



RAF MARTLESHAM HEATH



MARTLESHAM HEATH AVIATION SOCIETY



356TH FIGHTER GROUP

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EDITORIAL

The first Newsletter of 1998 and I very much hope that members will enjoy reading it.

Seven of our members visited Savannah at the invitation of the 356th. Fighter Group. Bob Dunnett has kindly recorded their adventures for us to read and be envious of.

Gordon Kinsey has written an article explaining the activities of the recently formed, "Bawdsey Radar Research Group". Good to know that Gordon is the Chairman and that his team will help to preserve the important history of what went on at Bawdsey. The eight towers at Bawdsey were a welcome sight to many a pilot whose home base was Martlesham Heath. It was then a simple matter to follow the Deben up to Woodbridge and turn left along the route of the A12. Presumably another left turn at the Black Tiles and breath a sigh of relief!

We continue to enjoy good attendance's at our monthly meetings for the excellent speakers organised by Vicky. I have been asked to précis the content of the meetings, which I have attempted to do in the limited space available in the Newsletter.

Just to remind you that the "Charles (Holly) Hall" photo' Competition will be judged after the AGM in April. So I am repeating the rules in this Newsletter.

Ed.

356th FIGHTER GROUP - SAVANNAH REUNION HOLIDAY INN 2nd – 5th OCTOBER 1997

Once again our American friends made us welcome at their Reunion held in Savannah Georia. There were seven of us that were able to attend this year, Vicky Hall, Daphne Taylor, Hazel and Dick Harrison (Daphne's daughter and son-in-law), Leslie Bolton, Mike Rumsey and yours truly, Bob Dunnett.

We all arrived in Savannah via Gatwick and Atlanta on Monday

I too was a B-24 Aircraft Commander, also assigned to the 389th Bomb Group at Hethel. I was privileged to fly 3 missions with Col. Stewart as he led the entire Group as Formation Commander.

Jimmy Stewart was a fine pilot and an outstanding leader. He never had a bad mission under his command. A pretty fair piano player too!"

There is a photocopy of Jimmy Stewart at a piano with a group of colleagues at the Hethel Officers Club in 1944. Unfortunately the quality will not allow me to scan the picture in.**Ed.**

VISIT TO MARSHALS AIRPORT

Russell has arranged a visit to this private and busy airport on Saturday 25 April. The visit is for the morning only and is limited to 20 people and therefore only members will be considered.

If you are interested in this visit then Russell Bailey is the person to speak to, his telephone number is overleaf.

As on previous occasions where number's have been limited all the names of those wishing to participate will be placed in a hat. A draw will take place at a convenient society meeting prior to the visit to decide who has been lucky so, good luck.

The visit will be by coach and by the time that you read this Russell should be able to quote you the cost.

Ed.

involved the dropping of metal strips over Germany by Bomber Command the idea was to confuse the enemy radar. Another project was "Air Interception (AI) which was airborne radar and was carried by RAF night fighters. The first night victory using this device was by a Blenheim night fighter from No.28 Squadron, operating from Martlesham Heath, it destroyed a Heinkel 111 off the Dutch coast.

The group's first lecture at the Manor was held last year, when the speaker was our own Keith Wood, who captivated the audience with his memories.

Another such lecture will be given on Saturday 4th of April in the Great Hall at Bawdsey Manor at 7.30pm. The Bawdsey pioneer, Mr Colin Latham, co-author of "Radar a Wartime Miracle", will be the speaker. His subject will be "Ground Based Radar". Admission will be £1.50, including refreshments and all are invited.

For information about the Group please contact Eric Gilson - Secretary, "Bawdsey Radar Research Group", 3, Rye Close, Ipswich, IP3 8PX. Please enclose an SAE. A Newsletter is also issued entitled, "The Beam", and is a quarterly publication, for which we ask an annual contribution of £2 to cover costs and postage.

Gordon Kinsey.

JAMES STEWART

Whilst on the subject of Hollywood stars I have been given a piece by Jim Empson sent to him by his friend, Col. Charles Peterson, who was in the same Bomb Group as Jimmy Stewart.

"The death of Jimmy Stewart brought back a personal memory of that wonderful guy. Most people know that he was assigned as a bomber pilot and a damned good one too. Stewart was a B-24 aircraft commander when he first arrived at the 389th Bomb Group at Hethel Air Base, Norwich, England. Soon he became a Squadron Commander, then promoted to Group Operations Officer. Shortly after, his combat missions were terminated. At 20 he was a valuable asset.

evening 30th September. Tuesday was a day to get to know the area. Mike and I were lucky in that Ed and Ann Malo, being busy, told us to "take the car and find your way around downtown Savannah" this we did with grateful thanks. The Holiday Inn was excellent, a delightful swimming pool just outside our hotel doors, temperature in the 80s, who could want for more?

Wednesday was another day of, morning in the pool, afternoon in Savannah and in the evening, 19 of us had dinner in an English pub called 'The Churchill', run by a couple from Manchester. Thursday was the first day of reunion events. I was invited to the directors meeting after lunch, this being the meeting when the serious business is done. Hal Ogden stood down to become 1st past President. The new President for the next two years is Robert (Bob) P Schmidt, with 1st Vice President being Herbert (Herb) Weber and Phil Tukey being 2nd Vice President. After the meeting, it was a quick change and off to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, to witness the dedication of the 356th Memorial Plaque, to honour the men of the Group who made the supreme sacrifice. The plaque was already in place on the Wall of Honour in the memorial Garden. There is a memorial area in the garden to a village in Norfolk, which was decimated when a B 24 Liberator crashed on take off. The B 24 crashed onto the village school killing all of the children and staff.

Following the dedication, we were then pleased to see Vicky Hall present one of Holly's cartoon pictures. The picture depicted American aircraft and portrayed Holly's special humour. Don Strait and DeWitt also made a presentation of a picture. This depicted B24's being escorted over Germany by P51 Mustang's. These presentations were fully covered by local television with Vicky handling stardom very well, we were all proud of her. Colonel Wayne Corbett Rtd; director of the Museum, accepted both paintings on behalf of the museum. He went on to explain the different aspects of the museum, many of the displays being very realistic. One such display took one on a bombing raid over Germany. It was so real one could feel the blast from the flack and the smell and real hell of being on one of those raids. When we had seen most of the museum, which included a temporary display of the 356th (a permanent display should be in place during 1998).

We then enjoyed dinner in the Grand Hall. Two more thank you speeches and we were on our way back to our hotel.

Friday, 3rd October was another lovely day. Gray Line Motor Coaches lined up outside the hotel at 9.30am to take us on a historic city tour of Savannah, the Old Cotton Town. We first were taken to see St. John the Baptists Cathedral and then on down to the Savannah water front, via the Old Cotton Exchange, the Colonial Park Cemetery and past the Trustees Gardens. At the waterfront we strolled along Factors Walk an area where the cotton trading was carried out and above the large cotton warehouses. These of course are now restaurants, antique shops, hotels etc. After testing some of the local brews we all met at the gangway of the Savannah River Queen for a cruise on the Savannah River. Once away from the lovely water front area we found the river very commercialised. The weather was still very hot which for many meant a few trips to the bar! After our cruise we were met by our coaches, a little more sight seeing and then back to the hotel. That evening our dinner party of 19 headed for the Red Lobster restaurant another fun evening to remember, as much for their staff as for us!

Saturday October 4th, still hot and sunny and yet another morning swim, although Mike and I just missed Vicky and Daphne in the pool, they must have got there very early, spoil sports. Today was the membership meeting. I was asked to report on the events that we at MHAS had enjoyed. They asked how the museum at the surgery was going and also there were questions regarding the Control Tower. Many of the 356th still hope that this may one day be a permanent piece of their history. It was a lengthy meeting, but interesting. In the evening we were able to enjoy the company of our hosts at the Reunion Banquet. A most enjoyable time to remember and it was at this point I was able to suggest the idea of a stained glass window in St. Michael's and All Saints church, as a permanent memorial to the 356th who were at Martlesham Heath during the 1943-45 period of war. Daphne had the pleasure of meeting Mike Yannell during the evening, I'm sure they had met before!

Sunday 5th. October. Most people were leaving very early for many

Based at the present time at Bawdsey Manor, which is situated at the mouth of the river Deben opposite Old Felixstowe in Suffolk. The group is extremely fortunate in that the owners of the Manor, Mr & Mrs Neils Toettcher and Mr John Toettcher have been most co-operative. The "R", (Receiving Block), and the "T", (Transmitter Block), which were the first buildings in the world to be used for this purpose, have been loaned to the group.

The "R" Block houses a small museum of artefacts and pre-war photographs of some of the activities. The "T" Block stands at the base of the remaining original 355ft steel transmitter tower. There were originally four of these in a line along the cliff top and were completed during 1937.

To enter these two buildings through the maze of blast walls and to note their solid construction is indeed an experience. This is where it all began and the modern miracle of Radar was born.

'Radio Direction Finding' was originally conceived at Orfordness, just up the coast, by a small group of scientists. It was later renamed 'Radio Location' but was changed again to 'Radar' after the USA entered WW2.

Because of difficulties with the terrain at Orfordness, it was almost below sea level, which is not conducive to high voltage electricity, should the sea penetrate the defences, it was decided that the project should be re-sited. Bawdsey Manor was chosen and was purchased from Sir Cuthbert Quilter by the Royal Air Force for £24,500. Work went on apace, culminating in the pre-war, "Chain Home", detector stations. Protecting the East and South coasts of the UK. Bawdsey was the world's first detector station, the second being at Great Bromley in Essex and then westward to the Isle of Wight. To the north of Bawdsey the next detector station was in Darsham High Street with the next station some considerable distance away at Kings Lynn.

The chain played a major part in the "Battle of Britain", giving our all-to-few fighter force vital early warning of enemy approach. Bawdsey was also responsible for the project called "Window" which

Donald J Strait was born in East Orange, New Jersey on April 28th 1918. He enlisted in the 119th Observation Squadron Army Air Corp. in January 1940. Don Qualified for pilot training in March 1942 and received his wings and Commission as a 2nd Lt. in January 1943. He completed P-47 transition in March 1943 and was assigned to the 361st Fighter Squadron of the 356th Fighter Group at Westover Air Base.

After completing operational training in the States the 356th FG was deployed to Martlesham Heath in England in August 1943 as part of the 8th Air Force, participating in long-range bomber escort missions and air to ground support of the allied forces. He completed 2 combat tours and 122 missions and flew both the P-47 and later the P-51. He became an Ace of the 356th Fighter Group with 13.5 victories. He rose to the rank of Major and was given command of the 361st Fighter Squadron.

In October 1946 he joined the New Jersey Air National Guard and served as the Squadron Group and Wing Commander of the 108th Tactical Fighter Wing during the Korean conflict and Berlin crisis.

Military decorations include the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, DFC (2 Oak Leaf Clusters), Air Medal (14 Oak Leaf Clusters), Presidential Unit Citation (Airborne invasion of Holland), Victory Medal, European Theatre Ribbon (4 Battle Stars), American Defence Ribbon, USAF Exceptional Service Civilian Service Award, Republic of Vietnam - Gallantry Cross with Palm. Major General Donald Strait retired from the USAF in 1978.

Married to Louise in 1945, they have 3 children and 6 grandchildren

BAWDSEY RADAR RESEARCH GROUP

A Society bearing the above name has recently been formed in order to research, record and preserve as much information as possible regarding the origin, development and operational service of radio location, later to be known as Radar.

different parts of the U.S.A. Mike and I were in for a treat today, one of the highlights of the visit. Herb Weber had invited us to fly in his 4 seater Mooney with him. We took off from Savannah giving some of the International hardware a wide berth. With clear blue sky we had a most enjoyable 2 hours in the air. We flew over Savannah and the surrounding country side including the Hilton Head Islands, a mecca for the very rich, with many golf courses, marinas and very large comfortable hotels. The beaches were white sand, fantastic.

On Monday morning we Brits went our separate ways. Les Bolton went to Cincinnati to see his daughter, getting a puncture and hurting his back on the way. Daphne, Dick and Hazel headed for the Great Smokey Mountains and Cherokee, Vicky went with Sid and Doris Hewitt and Mike and I also headed for the Great Smokey's and Virginia. We travelled for about two days along the Parkway ridge, up into Virginia then took off through Lynchburg to Hampton to stay with friends of mine that lived in Grundisburgh for a while. Two days later we took the coast road to Kitty Hawk, to see where all this flying began. To see the short strip the Wright Brothers used and to see the sheds they lived and worked in (chicken sheds to some) was both interesting and exciting. After a visit to the Wright's museum we travelled through Raleigh to North Carolina, to stay with our good friends Don and Louise Strait who live in Foxfire Village near Pinehurst. According to Don and I now believe him, the capital of American golf. We left Pinehurst and drove down to Charleston, a lovely place. The buildings had a very strong French influence, even though Charleston was the brainchild of an Englishman by the name of Charles Cooper. After three days we were back in Savannah. One last visit to the Mighty Eighth Museum, one last meal at the Red Lobster, then pack for home. At our last breakfast we had just sat down when we heard, "Rob, Mike, Mike, Bob", then, "Oh my God", we wondered what was going on. It transpired that it was Albert Scott from the East Essex Aviation Society back in England who was on a visit to the Savannah Museum with Veterans from Raydon and Wattisham. They have a museum at Point Clear in Essex, what a great surprise to see him.

From then on it was 'goodbye' Albert, au revoir, Savannah USA, hello Gatwick UK. A great reunion and holiday.

One task that our committee asked me to carry out on behalf of the society was to offer an invitation to the 356th to visit us in 1998. Unfortunately Ken and Brita Male will be on holiday themselves and therefore are unable to come but we are very hopeful following the show of hands in Savannah and we await their reply.

Bob Dunnett, Vice Chairman

MONTHLY MEETING ROUND UP

Our meeting in September was given by one of our own members, Geoff Pleasance. Born in Old Newton in 1942 Geoff was always an aviation enthusiast. However, he becoming a Lab Assistant at Fisons of Levington but his love of aviation drew him to apply for a job at the Imperial War Museum. He was successful in his application and was placed in charge of aviation records at the museum. Geoff sold his first picture in 1969 and had his first exhibition at the Deben Art Galleries in 1972. This led him to realise that a living could be made from his artistic talents and so decided to give working for himself a chance. He works in gouache, pen and ink, acrylic and pencil. His brilliant pictures of local scenes as well as aircraft can be obtained from Orwell Fine Arts.

October saw another memorable evening when Jim Double gave us a talk, entitled "Never a Doodle". This is the title of his book, which is being sold for charity. The proceeds of the book go to the St.Elizabeth Hospice. Jim is another local lad who has a passion for aviation. This time triggered by the sight of Blenheims at Wattisham in 1939. As a RAF pilot he flew the American P47 Thunderbolt, mostly in the Far East. Thank you Jim!

November and a talk by an old friend of the Society, Brad King BA, who gave a talk entitled, "100 million Feet of Film"! His role as Public Services Officer for the film and video archive at the Imperial War Museum provided plenty of scope for a fascinating evening. Brad is known to many of the society members through the Ipswich Film Nights and supplies the films from the Imperial War Museum archives. Brad and his sparring partner, Gordon, always help to make those

evenings a great success and the evening is in aid of the Ipswich Holiday Help for Children Charity, which is organised largely by our own Don Kitt.

December already and the occasion of our Christmas Social. The hall was nicely full to hear and dance to the music of "Rhythm 'N' Reeds", from Southwold. They managed to produce a sound almost in the Big Band tradition. Catering was by Pat Winter and a good spread it was!

Just time before we "go to press" to record our January meeting! What a good meeting it was. Wg.Cdr. Dick Storrer gave a fascinating account of his eventful 32 years in the RAF, from learning to fly in the University Air Squadron and then the RAF. Then, to what in his words he considered to be the most enjoyable period, flying Hunters and Vampires. This was followed by a posting to Bomber Command to pilot Vulcan Bombers where on one occasion he was given a dressing down following the 'rolling' of his Vulcan which, although capable of according to Dick, was frowned upon by the top brass. Dick went on to lead and to manage the 1965 "Red Arrows" team. His final eight years in aviation where spent at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, brilliant.

CHARLES (HOLLY) HALL PHOTO, COMPETITION

Each competitor may enter 2 prints and/or 2 slides. The prints can be any size and either mounted or unmounted. Entries will be judged after the AGM and there will be one plaque to be won in each category. No restriction on when the picture was taken but they must be the work of the contestants.

PROFILE

MAJOR GENERAL, DONALD STRAIT USAF, (Retd.)

We like to record the life and times of some of those who have served at Martlesham. Don has become a true friend and a Vice President of the Society.