



WHAT'S ON



VICKY HALL - PROGRAMME SECRETARY

- 7 May 99'.....Mrs Monica Maxwell - Codes & Cyphers
- 15 May 99'.....Trip To Norwich Aviation Museum & Neatishead
- 20 May 99'.....Photo Competition At RAF Stradishall
- 4 June 99'.....Martin Bowman - Author & Photographer
- 26 June 99'.....Trip To Biggin Hill Airshow
- 2 July 99'.....Eric Adamson - Wartime Ferry Pilot
- 6 August 99'.Evening Trip To - Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum
- 1 September 99'.....Unconfirmed At This Time
- 5 September 99'.....Trip To Bletchley Park

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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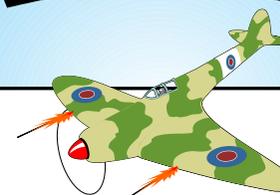
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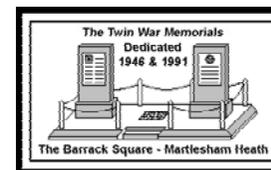


Martlesham Heath Aviation Society

NEWSLETTER



RAF MARTLESHAM HEATH



MARTLESHAM HEATH AVIATION SOCIETY



356TH FIGHTER GROUP

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EDITORIAL

I am sure that you will agree with me that the Society is very active with well attended monthly meetings and the prospect of some interesting outings for the summer months. The outing's itinerary, which is once again in the capable hands of Russell Bailey, is to be found in the newsletter.

The reunion of ex Martlesham Heath RAF personnel is on course and an update of the event is also included.

Frank Bright, who never misses a meeting, has sent me a delightful poem and a covering letter, which explains all.

More Martlesham memories, this time from James Proven, a long distance member who remembers Martlesham with some affection. James lives at Edinburgh and served at Martlesham in the early 50's. He also throws more light on the crash of a light aircraft, which was referred to in another "Martlesham Memories" piece by James Crisp in our last newsletter.

The article sent to me by Roy Brown entitled "Flight to Freedom" generated not a little interest. It has prompted Mike Richards to write of another interesting escapade of a similar nature.

Finally, I cannot resist writing what amounts to a review of a book by Philip Causer of the 356th. Fighter Group who was shot down over France when flying from Martlesham. Philip sent the Society a copy of the book some time ago and it is in our 'library' and available to members. I understand that we can welcome Philip Causer as a new member of our Society. Welcome Philip!

Grateful thanks to all those kind folk who have contributed towards what I hope will be an enjoyable 'read'.

Editor

Dear Alan,

Last Remembrance Sunday the USAF officer recited a poem. I recognised just five words: "High in the sunlit silence" because that is the title of a print of a painting of a Spitfire by Michael Rondot, which hangs in my den. This prompted me to ask my contact in Toronto, an architect for whom I worked there in the late 50s, G.E. Wilson, OBE, retired Squadron Leader Navigation, RCAF 1940/45, whether he could recognise it. This being a small world the poet turned out to have been an American serving in the RCAF and had been in his navigation class at No.2 SFTS Uplands. P/O J.G. Magee was killed in the UK when his Spit hit an Oxford.

It is a remarkable adventure in its own right regardless of the fact that it is a true story. Anybody want to borrow the book? Don't all rush!

Alan Powell.

WINDS OF CHANGE? - THE BARRACK SQUARE

On the 1st of April 1999 Bradford Property Trust the owners of virtually all of Martlesham Heath sold off the industrial site, which includes the Barrack Square on which sits our beloved Memorials. Concerned at what they intended to do with the Barrack Square, if anything I wrote to Martin Wellsman at Resolution Property PLC. The reply I received was encouraging at this stage. His opening Paragraph and I quote, "I was delighted to receive your letter of the 18 April; in fact the matter of your Society was raised at our very first meeting with our managing agents, Bidwells on 13 April". What the discussions were about is at present unknown.

In my letter I sought permission for the Reunion activities on the Barrack Square in June which includes a visit on Saturday 19th June and a short Service on Sunday 20th. I also sought permission to hold our Remembrance Day service in November. The reply to my request was and again I quote, "... we have no objections in principle to your services to be held in the Barrack Square on 20 June and 14 November".

In my last paragraph I asked to meet with the company along with Gordon our Society President. This was warmly received and a number of dates were suggested. By the time you read this Newsletter a date will have been arranged. I will of course keep you informed through our monthly meetings and our Newsletter the outcome of that meeting.

On a somewhat lighter tone, I recently wrote to Max Bygraves who it was suggested, may have served at Martlesham Heath whilst in the RAF. On his return from Australia he very kindly replied to my letter in which I suggested that if the stories were true he might like to join in our Reunion. He confirmed that he was at Martlesham Heath when the USAAF were there (356th FG). He said and I quote, "My memories are vivid as the U.S. rations were much more than the British troops received, plus the P.X. was like Christmas every day". Sadly he is on tour during June but wished us well and sent his best wishes.

Martyn – Chairman.

December 1940 when he made his way to Canada with the intention of joining the Royal Canadian Air Force. Only to be informed that the U.S. had taken a new position in an effort to insure strict neutrality and as an American citizen he could no longer enlist into the RCAF. However, he was able to apply through the Canadian Aviation Bureau in New York! Philip describes a harrowing test flight at Flushing airport with a view to being selected for the "Eagle Squadron". The Royal Air Force were forming "Eagle Squadrons" from American volunteers and they did valuable work during the "Battle of Britain" and beyond. Not only were these American volunteers fighting the enemy of Great Britain but they were also an invaluable propaganda weapon in the campaign being waged by the British government to encourage the United States into the war.

Most of the early part of the book describes Philip's impressions of England when he was in the USAAF. There are various excellent sketches made by himself of places of historic interest in East Anglia. As a member of 360th Squadron he was housed at Playford Hall. His description of the Hall is quite humorous. "An old English castle which had been a real going affair with towers and parapets from which they poured molten whatever they had on hand for callers that showed up at the drawbridge without a formal invitation"!! He describes Playford Hall as a castle resembling a large English Manor house. I suppose more correctly it is, an English Manor house resembling a castle. The inclusion of a moat around a house built in the sixteenth century, apart from being a deterrent to burglars, would have been a status symbol rather than a means of defence. Nice thought though!

Philip Causer was shot down over France on 12th August 1944. It was his second mission of the day. The target was marshalling yards and "anything else they could shoot up on the way". After a hectic time he found himself in sight of the Eiffel Tower and over Orly Airport. He managed to shoot up two Focke Wulf's on the ground but the intense ack ack fire damaged him and he miraculously crash-landed without much injury, not far from the airfield. Philip found himself in the hands of the Free French, the Marquis, who were in British battle dress.

Philip then goes on to describe his adventures with the French Resistance which for the most part would appear to have taken place in the area north of the Dordogne in western France. I wonder what happened to the delectable Nicole? Or the 'larger than life' English Major Crown who could be found at the secret Marquis headquarters and who seemingly directed operations? Philip Causer was finally flown out of occupied France by RAF Dakota at night in the best tradition of the S.O.E. With the aid of a flarepath of hand held flaming torches.

Maybe you can use it in your next Newsletter, on its own merit or because it had been recited on the Barracks Square. Regards,

Frank Bright

HIGH FLIGHT

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth, and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings. Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth of sun-split clouds - and done a hundred things you have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung high in sunlit silence, hov'ring there I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung my eager craft through footless halls of air. Up, up the long delirious burning blue I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace where never lark nor eagle flew. And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod the high untrespassed sanctity of space Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

P/O J.G. Magee, Jr.

STAINED GLASS WINDOW PROJECT

This important project is progressing. Geoff Pleasance has helped to outline some ideas for the content and the provisional design is in the hands of a Norwich stained glass window designer and manufacturer who has recently produced a window which will be in the USAAF Eighth Air Force room in the new Norwich library. As soon as sketches are available these will be shown at the first available monthly meeting.

MARTLESHAM HEATH - 1950-51

I was interested to read James Crisp's article in the January 1999 Runway 22 Newsletter as I too was stationed at AIEU Martlesham Heath from late July 1950 until just before Christmas 1951 when I was posted to RAF West Freugh BTU to complete my National Service in March 1952.

I recall my stay at Martlesham as being the happiest part of my National Service. The station was an excellent one and the camaraderie that existed between service and civilian personnel working there is good to remember.

I was one of four RT/DF operators who, after training at the Wireless School RAF Cranwell, were posted to Martlesham. The other three, I remember were Len Havers from Bradford, Ray Shaw from Retford, and Ken Helens from London. Our duties were either in the Control Tower or manning the D/F Homer - a wooden structure not unlike a small lighthouse - which was situated to the south east of the airfield, south of Waldringfield Road.

I recollect being immediately impressed by the very high standard of cleanliness and the quality of the food supplied in the Airmen's Mess. The camp at that time held the "Jolliff" Trophy for the best cookhouse in Britain. The "pin-ups" that adorned the walls of the cookhouse, no doubt painted by some American airman, also made dining a pleasure!

I recall the heavy influx of Auxiliary Air Force units attending Summer Camps at Martlesham - in particular Units from Belfast, Birmingham and Edinburgh.

Operations carried out by the armaments side of the station consisted mainly of bombing and rocket firing tests conducted at Orfordness. Aircraft engaged in these operations took off from Martlesham Heath. Soon after becoming airborne they changed over to a frequency operated by scientific staff monitoring the target areas, only re-entering Martlesham control shortly prior to returning to their parent airfield to land.

Other very important work, mainly blind landing and rapid landing experiments, was carried out by the Instrument Experimental Section. The aircraft involved in this work were the De Havilland Devon, the Avro Lancaster, the Vickers Viking, the Mark 7 Gloster Meteor, the Douglas Dakota and the De Havilland Mosquito. This last type - of which there were four were the workhorses of the rapid landing experiments. These aircraft, too, after taking off from Martlesham would usually change frequency to be under the control of civilian scientists who carried out experiments at Martlesham Heath, Sutton Heath and Woodbridge air strips.

RT/DF operators working in the Control Tower or Homer, were required to fly frequently in order to be made aware of and appreciate the aircrews' point of view so that all personnel, both aircrew and ground staff, would be vigilant at all times in carrying out their duties. I'll never forget the small huts where civilians [rather "Pete & Dud"-like types!] were responsible for closing the barriers on the main roads when aircraft took off landed or carried out "touch and go's". The main runway, 12/30 where it crossed the Felixstowe Road, saw more than its fair share of near misses!

The Air Traffic Control Officer during my stay at Martlesham was Flight Lieutenant Michael J Bailey, an ex fighter pilot who lived in Married Quarters. Squadron Leader A L Law, who I think was South African, normally flew the Meteor and was in charge of the Instrument Experimental Section. The Station Commander was Wing Commander W G Oldbury, DFC. During the Rugby playing season the Station fifteen had many enjoyable trips to neighbouring airfields where "Oldbury's Warriors" did battle. Two such encounters with the Reserve Fleet at HMS Ganges' ground

equivalent in height of a six-story building and shots of a pair of Sukhoi fighter-bombers flying straight at the camera were quite dramatic! Many aircraft featured were from countries which until relatively recently are not always generally recognised as having an aviation construction industry. 'Planes from Brazil, Argentina, Poland and Spain. Wherever they came from or however little known they were, Paul Jackson knew the details of all of them. A vote of thanks was given by Gordon Kinsey.

The **April** meeting is the occasion of our AGM. Membership has increased by 25 during the year. The membership total is currently 216, which includes 31 members of the 356th. Fighter Group Association. A further 10 new members will be included in the new Society year which will bring the membership total to 226. After the break our annual Charles "Holly" Hall photographic competition was held. Stuart Mallindine took the cup for the cup for the image with the most votes. This was an outstanding slide of a Tornado taking off. The best photograph was by Graham Lovell for a well caught shot of the hair raising Red Arrows manoeuvre when two individual aircraft fly towards each other and cross paths with what looks like inches to spare.

ED.

SUMMER OUTINGS

Saturday, 15th. May. Visit to the Norwich Aviation Museum and then on to the Radar museum at Neatishead. Saturday, 26th. June. Visit to the Biggin Hill Air Show. Hoping to have a tour of the American Air Base at Lakenheath one evening in August. Not yet finalised. Sunday, 5th. September. A visit to Station X Bletchley Park. Also on the site is the Buckinghamshire Aircraft Recovery Group. Please speak to Russell Bailey for tickets.

MISSING IN ACTION

Some time ago one of our American friends of the 356th. Fighter Group sent the Society a book entitled "M.I.A", ("Missing In Action"). Philip Causer was a member of the 360th Squadron of the 356th Fighter Group and had been shot down over France. The book, which was written by Philip in England after his return from France, details his impressions of England and subsequent adventures with the Marquis in France. I recently wrote to Philip Causer to ask him if he had ever renewed his acquaintance with his former friends of the French underground fighters. Philip replied that he and his wife had been to the area but had not been able to contact any of them.

Philip Causer was determined to "get a piece of the action" as long ago as

and All Angels followed by a wreath laying at the Twin Memorials.

ED.

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

Our **January** meeting consisted of a talk by one of our own members, Vic Wilkinson. Always a regular visitor to the monthly meeting but I am sure that few of us knew of the most interesting career that Vic Enjoyed. After briefly being employed by BX Plastics at Manningtree Vic was successful in obtaining a post as Scientific Assistant at Orfordness Research Station. The type of work that he was to continue with for the next 42 years. National Service beckoned in 1949 and he trained as an Air Wireless Mechanic. Vic applied for an overseas posting and found himself at Stradishall! Such were the ways of the RAF in those days. After National Service Vic returned to the Telemetry Lab. at Orfordness. Came the floods of 1953 and that was virtually the finish of Orfordness as a research station. On then to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough where Vic spent the next 38 interesting years. . Vic related his experiences with different programmes including air burst fragmentation bombs and proximity fuses for air to air missiles, TV sensors and seekers, Laser technology and forward looking infra-red systems among others.

Vic has flown in several different aircraft types during his career, including Martlesham based Avro Lincolns when he was at Orfordness. Gordon Kinsey gave a vote of thanks.

Our **February** meeting was another very well attended gathering to hear our President, Gordon Kinsey. Several folks have, no doubt, enjoyed Gordon's illustrated lecture of Martlesham Heath before. Nevertheless he has an ability to entertain an audience and you might be sure that you have not heard it told that way before. It's the way that he tells 'em! Gordon traced the aviation history of Martlesham from the winter of 1916 till the aerodrome finally closed to flying in 1979. Many incidents, both humorous and tragic were told with the aid of slides and it was, of course, another fascinating evening. A vote of thanks was given by Ralph Rutherford.

March and another visit from our old friend Paul Jackson, editor of "Jane's All the World's Aircraft". Paul is also a freelance aviation photographic journalist. The aircraft featured in the slide show were mainly from different air shows. Farnborough, of course and the Paris air show. The Berlin air show and some shots of 'planes at a Moscow air show. All the slides were accompanied by a commentary by Paul, which revealed an impressive knowledge of his subject. The control tower at the Moscow air show is the

near Harwich will always be remembered.

The crash that Mr Crisp refers to involved an Avro Athena T Mark II. This was an aircraft, (originally intended to be a turboprop), powered by a Merlin engine which was designed as a Harvard replacement, but few were built and the Air Ministry contract, I understand, was cancelled. I had flown in this same plane, then piloted by Flt/Lt Bailey, on a familiarisation flight some days before the crash.

I was actually on duty in the control tower on the day of the incident Mr Crisp recalled. The pilot was Flying Officer Cork and he was accompanied on the fatal flight by Warrant Officer Walsh who had stood in as a last minute replacement for another navigator whose wife was in hospital.

By the time I left Martlesham, runway lighting had been installed - a great difference from the oil-filled "goose neck" flares which I had seen used twice - and the arrival of jet aircraft, apart from the sole Meteor Mk 7, was eagerly awaited. West Freugh BTU was a totally different posting!

Other names that spring to mind from my stay at Martlesham are Cpl Glasgow (SP) from Edinburgh, LAC/Cpl Jack Reid (Crash Crew ambulance driver), Flt/Sgt D (Dixie) Dale (Pilot), and W/O Howard (Catering Officer). J. Proven, Edinburgh

My own researches show that a limited number of Athena's were brought into service and used as gunnery trainers. The main contract to supply advanced trainers was won by the Boulton and Paul Balliol which had a very similar specification.

ED.

ANOTHER 'FLIGHT TO FREEDOM'

Only six weeks before the escape to Britain of the two Belgians in the Stampe, another 'Flight to Freedom' occurred. The Fokker aircraft factory in Holland had received an order from Finland for 26 Fokker G-1B fighter-bombers. These were large twin boom aeroplanes of partly wooden construction, which were fitted with two Pratt and Whitney Twin Wasp engines. This was 1940 and the Dutch government had placed an embargo on the sale and arrangements were in hand to take these aircraft into the Dutch Army Air Corps. The final contract for this was signed on April 17th. 1940 and twelve unarmed Fokkers were sent to various bases. Following the German invasion of May 10th 1940 three aircraft were sent to Schipol where they were hurriedly fitted with improvised armament of four machine guns. Two Dutch Air Force squadrons were equipped with Fokker GI-B's.

They fought well but all were lost.

Following the Dutch capitulation on 14th May 1940 the Germans found some unarmed Fokker GI-B's and a production line at the Fokker factory. They ordered production to continue and after completion the 'planes were test flown and transferred to Germany where the Luftwaffe used them as trainers and glider/target tugs.

Following manufacture all test flights were made by Dutch test pilots and they were given only sufficient fuel for thirty minutes flight! They were also escorted by Luftwaffe aircraft. By May 5th. 1941 only two Fokker GI-B's of the original batch remained.

T.J. Leegstra and P.C.J. Vos were senior Fokker test pilots. T.J. Leegstra was the current holder of the Dutch altitude record of 37250ft. in a Fokker DXXI Fighter. After some persuasion in a bar over a few drinks the two Dutchmen convinced the German supervisor that the aircraft required a further test flight. They took off and climbed slowly eastwards over the sea. After some sharp manoeuvres they disappeared into cloud and succeeded in shaking off the German escort. The ground crew had managed to put extra fuel in and the Dutchmen set course for England.

Our Radar shield was doing its job and about five miles off the English coast three Hurricanes appeared. The escapee's aircraft had Luftwaffe markings on the Fuselage and tail but Dutch markings on the wings. They lowered the undercarriage and convinced the Hurricanes that this particular 'enemy' aircraft was not to be shot down!

After landing in a field at Eastern Bavents north of Southwold the 'plane was dismantled and taken to Farnborough for examination. It was subsequently given to aircraft manufacturers Phillips and Powis at Reading, for research into wooden construction. It was then left in a field and was still in good condition when it was broken up at the end of the war.

Unfortunately I do not know what happened to the two Dutchmen. Perhaps they flew with the Free Dutch Air Force. There is a rumour that two more Dutchmen escaped to England in an Arado AR196 twin floatplane, which Fokker were building for the Luftwaffe. However, this is unconfirmed. Can anyone out there throw more light on these questions?

Mike Richards.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE PREVIOUS "FLIGHT TO FREEDOM" ARTICLE BY ROY BROWN.

Mike Donnet, one of the two Belgians who escaped to England subsequently had a very distinguished aviation career. Therefore I have taken the space

to relate his history because I believe it is of interest. Lieutenant General Aviateur Baron Michel (Mike) Donnet, CVO, DFC, FRAES was born in Richmond, Surrey on 1st. April 1917. He joined the Belgian Air Force in 1938 as an Officer Cadet and qualified as a pilot in March, 1939. Mike Donet's first squadron consisted of a mixture of Potez, Avro 626 and Sv5 types. The Sv5 was a biplane trainer and the Avro 626 Prefect was at Martlesham in 1932 for C of A trials. Their sole armament was two machine guns, one forward facing and one facing rearward. The front one was not even synchronised!! Hardly adequate opposition when the skies were full of ME 109's!

After making good his escape to England with Leon Duvoy he served in Fighter Command. He successively became a pilot, Flight Commander and finally Squadron Commander of No.64 (F) Squadron, RAF. In 1944 he took over No, 350 Belgian Squadron and later that year was appointed Wing Commander Flying at Hawkinge, then in 1945 of Bentwaters.

Since 1946 he has served in the Belgian Ministry of Defence, has commanded the Belgian Air Force, was SASO of 83 Anglo-Belgian Group, Deputy Co-ordinator (Air Defence), Central Europe, Chief of Air Staff Allied Tactical Air Force, Deputy to the Chief of Belgian Defence Staff and Chairman of the NADGE Policy Board of NATO.

After two and a half years as Belgian Army, Navy and Air Attaché in London, he joined the NATO Military Committee as the Belgian Military Representative.

ED.

RAF REUNION

Daphne Taylor tells me that there will probably be in the region of 40-50 folk present. The hotel is the Courtyard by Marriot, which is on the Ransomes Park. The dates given in the last newsletter are incorrect. The correct dates are: June 18th – 19th – 20th. Blame the hotel!

The guests will arrive some time on Friday, 18th. June and Gordon Kinsey will entertain them during the evening with an illustrated talk about the aviation history of Martlesham. On Saturday a tour of places of interest, including the control tower and the museum. A light lunch may be taken at the 'Douglas Bader' pub. In the evening a celebration dinner will be attended by Air Vice Marshall Sir Ivor Broome and Lady Broome. We would welcome Society members to attend the dinner. Details and prices can be obtained from Daphne Taylor and Bob Dunnett. On Sunday a service at St. Michael's