



WHAT'S ON



VICKY HALL - PROGRAM SECRETARY

- 3 September 99'.....'Flying in Oman' - George Paul
- 1 October 99'.....'The Story of The Zaukoenig' - Ian Girling
- 5 November 99'.....'Deck Landing' - John Mason
- 14 November 99'.....'Service of Remembrance' - Barrack Square
- 3 December 99'.....'Christmas Social' - Community Hall
- 7 January 99'.....Illustrated Talk on Aircraft - Linday Peacock

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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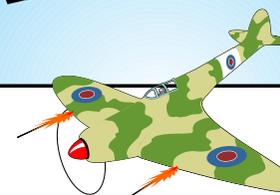
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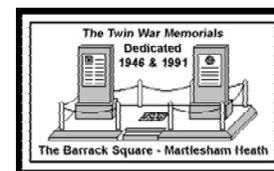
September 1999

Martlesham Heath Aviation Society

NEWSLETTER



RAF MARTLESHAM HEATH



MARTLESHAM HEATH AVIATION SOCIETY



356TH FIGHTER GROUP

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EDITORIAL.

Another packed “Runway 22” which I hope you will all enjoy reading.

I have included another Martlesham Memories piece. This time from long serving member, Ted Bridger from Felixstowe.

Thanks to Russell Bailey for not only organising our summer outings but also for being kind enough to send me a report on them. Thanks once again, Russell!

Our distinguished Vice President, Air Marshal Sir Ivor Broom was kind enough to talk to me of some of his wartime experiences when we met at the recent Martlesham Reunion Dinner and I include a précis of that part of his remarkable career. Thank you Sir Ivor!

An interesting American adventure by keen members Joe and Sally Cox. Oh! and much more.....

Ed

THE ANNUAL MADINGLEY REMEMBRANCE SERVICE.

Each year, on the occasion of the Annual Service of Remembrance at the United States Military Cemetery at Madingley, near Cambridge, the MHAS always send a representative to lay a wreath on behalf of the members of the 356th. Fighter Group. This year Ann and David Bloomfield attended for the Society. It is always a most impressive and moving occasion. David said that a carillon of bells was presented by the American Veterans Association. The intention is that it will be played each evening. About 1000 people were in attendance including Government representatives of the United States and Britain. Four F15’s from Lakenheath flew by in “missing man” formation.

Ed

CONTROL TOWER UPDATE.

Bob Dunnett tells me that he is pleased to announce that a three-year renewable lease was signed on August 1st on behalf of the Society for use of the upper floor of the Control Tower. It will be known as the Martlesham Heath Control Tower Museum. Bob has spoken to Dr. Schurr at the Surgery and explained that we very much wish to retain our presence there in order to display pictures and captions of the aviation history of the area. It will very much complement the new Museum and will, in fact, be an invaluable lead to the Museum. It is not envisaged that the new Museum will be open until next Spring and this will give us time to re-organise our display in the Surgery. More announcements will follow.

supper!

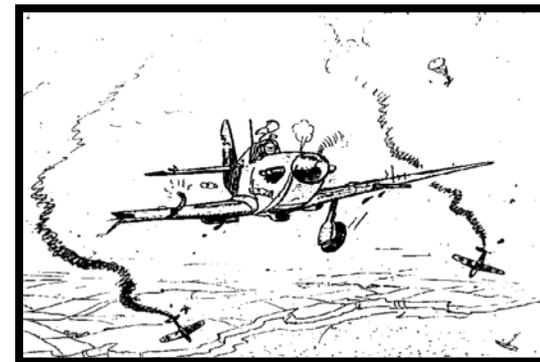
Ed

SOCIETY NEWS FROM THE CHAIR.

In our May newsletter I wrote about the possible changes that we may have to face with the new owners of the industrial site on which the barrack square and our beloved Memorials sit. Well, I’m pleased to say that the meeting which Gordon and I had with Martin Wellsman of Resolution Properties PLC and Bidwells the agents went very well, so well in fact that they had both Memorials cleaned along with the plinth itself. The chains and posts were painted white and the garden in between the Memorials and the round tubs marking the entrance were planted out with all types of shrubs, well done Resolution Properties.

With autumn drawing ever nearer a word about our Service of Remembrance on the Barrack Square which will be held at 3.00pm on Sunday the 14th November. Please try and attend and make this once again an occasion to remember.

December 3rd see’s our Christmas Social, which will once again feature music by Rhythm ‘N’ Reeds and for the first time the buffet will be supplied by Helena Jane Catering Ltd. Pat Winter, who for many years very successfully carried out our catering requirements has finally spread her last sandwich and has put her feet up to enjoy semi-retirement and we wish her and her husband Mick the very best for the future. Tickets will be available from Russell Bailey at our September meeting priced £9.00 each. To avoid disappointment purchase your tickets early this is a popular event.



.....now for tea at Black Tiles.
Roland Davies. Circa 1942

had been re-formed in 1938 and was, in fact, a “front” to the Secret Service. Her work entailed sending and receiving morse code messages from our agents in France. As a very young woman Monica had enormous responsibilities. In her job she was in possession of such classified information as, for instance, having prior knowledge of the date of “D” Day. An absorbing evening of desperate and exciting times

June and we squeezed into the Richard’s Room to enjoy an illustrated talk by author and photographer Martin Bowman from Norfolk. There were many air to air shots of ‘planes both here and in the United States. I recall a particularly dramatic shot of five Spitfires of the “Battle of Britain Flight” which were photographed against a background of stormy skies. Martin was flown out to the Mediterranean to the huge USS John F Kennedy. Several impressive slides were shown of various American carrier ‘planes on the four and a half acres of the flight deck.

In reply to a vote of thanks by Gordon Kinsey, Martin said that he had enjoyed the evening in the company of such obvious enthusiasts.

Our July meeting featured Mr. Eric Adamson who gave an illustrated talk of his wartime experiences as a ferry pilot. Eric joined the RAF at age 18 and eventually boarded the liner Rangitiki en-route for Bulawayo and on to the Belvedere Training School near Salisbury, Rhodesia. This was one of 300 Flying Training Schools in the Empire Training Scheme. Eric Adamson was offered the chance to become a ferry pilot and was despatched to India where he flew aircraft to bases all over India for the RAF and the Indian Air Force.

In his vote of thanks, Gordon said that his enthusiasm was all the more because of his own wartime memories of India and the Far East.

No formal meeting in August. An evening visit to the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum at Flixton near Bungay instead. No less than 72 members enjoyed the visit. Most went by coach and the overspill made their way by car. Mr. Huby Fairhead, an old friend of the Society, who is now Curator of the Museum, greeted us.

The Museum incorporates an RAF Bomber Command Museum, A Royal Observer Corps. Museum and a 446th. Bomb Group Museum. (The now defunct airfield at Flixton was the wartime home of the USAAF 2nd Air Division 446th. Bomb Group. They flew Liberators). More than 25 historic aircraft are on view and the whole enterprise is run by a dedicated team of volunteers.

Afterwards we all retired to the “Buck” pub. for a well earned fish and chip

Bob also tells me that all are invited to a Coffee Morning on Saturday, 2nd October 10am till 12 noon. Venue is the Control Tower and the intention is to introduce as many folk as possible to our new venture. Free “char and wads” no less. Please bring your family and friends.

Ed

CALIFORNIA 99’.

On the 11th of July, we took off from Heathrow in Virgin Atlantic’s 747-400 Scarlet Lady for San Francisco. This was a first for me as I had long admired the 747 and was at last flying in one. Nine and a half hours later, having enjoyed the care and attention of the Virgin Atlantic cabin crew, we arrived in San Francisco at the start of our two week holiday. Our plan was to travel along the coast to Santa Monica, stopping off at various places.

A week later, in Paso Robles, we were taken, by Colonel Gary Stemper of the Confederate Air Force, to the small but very interesting “Estrella Warbirds Museum”. They are in the process of restoring several aircraft some for static display and some to flying condition. One which interested me greatly was an F86 which had been built in Japan by Mitsubishi. It had an extended wingspan for high altitude work, 50000 feet I was told. Evidence of how small the world is came when I was introduced to the Director of Operations, Warren D. Bailey. He spent several years at Lakenheath while with the USAF and was also well acquainted with Bentwaters. If you are ever in that area, do visit the museum. You will be made most welcome and you will see some very interesting aircraft.

We had occasion to stop for a night in the beautiful town of San Luis Obispo. While there, I chanced to be browsing through the Aviation section in a second-hand bookshop. Suddenly, before my very eyes, was a volume entitled “Flight over the Eastern Counties” by one Gordon Kinsey - another example of the small world we live in.

The tail end of our holiday saw us in Santa Monica and on the itinerary was a visit to the Santa Monica Museum of Flying. Built on three floors, this museum, whilst small, has never-the-less a superb display. Aircraft, all beautifully restored, included a Zero, Spitfires, a Hurricane, a Stearman, a Skyraider, a T33, a Bede BD-5J Microjet and many others. There were of course various Cockpit Displays, Models, Paintings, Photographs etc. This was accompanied by the sight and sound of aircraft taking off from and landing all the while. The museum occupies part of the Santa Monica Airport site. Not to be forgotten either were the guides, all seemed to be service veterans, who were only too ready to give you the benefit of their expert knowledge. Once again, if you are in Santa Monica, don’t miss it!

The flying side of our holiday was completed when we left Los Angeles for Heathrow in Virgin Atlantic's Ladybird, again a 747-400, and again with excellent service.

Joe & Sally Cox

VISIT TO THE NORWICH AVIATION MUSEUM AND THE AIR DEFENCE RADAR MUSEUM AT NEATISHEAD.

On 15th. May 28 members visited both museums. At Norwich we were most impressed by the developments since our last visit. In addition to the various aircraft on display outside, an extension has been built to house various displays of memorabilia. These included many artefacts. Engines, models, photographs etc, relating to aviation in Norfolk and especially RAF Horsham St. Faith, which is now Norwich City Airport and the current site for the Museum.

The Base was opened in June 1940 and was used for various RAF squadrons flying Spitfires, Hurricanes, Defiants, Blenheims, Mosquitoes etc. From February 1944 to July 1945 the base was the home of the 458th. Bomb Group of the USAAF, with B24 Liberators. During that period they carried out 240 missions and dropped more than 13000 tons of bombs and lost 47 aircraft. Post war the base was again used by the RAF with Hornets, Meteors, Vampires, Venoms, Javelins and Hunters etc, until closure in 1963. The site stood empty until March 1967, when it was purchased by the local authority.

A separate room in the Museum is dedicated to the activities of RAF 100 Group, which was based in Norfolk during World War Two. This Special Duties Group was formed in November, 1943 and their purpose was to confound the German air defence system using electronic jamming equipment and thus reduce RAF bomber losses. We were fortunate that our visit co-incided with the Annual Reunion for 100 Group members resulting in some interesting conversations with these veterans.

A highlight of the visit was to sit in the cockpit of the Vulcan and to be surprised how relatively small this was for such a large aircraft.

After refreshments we journeyed on to RAF Neatishead which is currently one of the few remaining operational Radar stations. Alongside is the Air Defence Radar Museum where our group was given a guided tour and explanation of all the various displays. These track the history and development of UK air defence from World War One, through World War Two and the "Cold War". We saw re-creations of a "Battle of Britain" Operations Room, a GCI Operations Room and the original "Cold War" Operations room exactly as it was when last used in 1993. The many other

(Sgt Jones) at Blind Landing Experimental Unit~ Martlesham Heath. I was sent to work in the Flight Office, in the big hangar, with the title of Clerk to the Chief Technical Officer, who happened to be a Felixstowe man, F/Lt H.C.Fry. I shared an office with Warrant Officer Hoskins and F/Sgt Squirell. The aircraft. at that time, were a Lancaster (possible Serial No. NN700), a Vickers Viking and a Miles Magister. The officers in the Crew Room were S/Ldr Davies, F/Lt Fishwick and F/Lt Thomas and others. The Ministry of Supply people that I can remember were Ken Wood, Brian White and Dick Vince, and two of the girls were Pat Nunn and Daphne Durrant. The C.O at the time was W/Cdr Clift.

On the other side of the airfield, were the beautiful Avro Lincoln's, belonging to the Bomb Ballistic Unit.

I was present when the brand new D.H Devon arrived, all fitted out with plush passenger seats, these soon "disappeared", to be replaced with the boffins bits and pieces. I was lucky, with three others to get a trip on a familiarisation flight which was piloted by a F/Lt Thomas. We flew over Ipswich, Nacton and Felixstowe and ended up flying the length of the Woodbridge airstrip at a height of around 50 feet. On arrival back at Martlesham, it was not quite certain if the undercarriage was locked down, so on landing we were accompanied down the runway by the fire truck and ambulance!

I later paid the price for this trip, having to work late typing out the (non-) Accident Report. This must have been appreciated as I was honoured with two stripes and a Corporalship. Anyone who has been a Corporal knows this didn't mean much, just a midway position between the Airmen's Mess and the Sergeants Mess. Then the time came, and my number came up (Group 70) and I had to leave Martlesham Heath with memories of good companions, good workmates and a smashing place to be posted.

Oh, yes, and a girlfriend from Nacton and evenings on Nacton shore. but that's definitely another story!

Ted Bridger

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP.

Our May meeting was another full house and the audience were privileged to hear a talk from a former S.O.E. member. Monica Maxwell had a fascinating story to tell of her wartime experiences as a member of the S.O.E. (Special Operations Executive).

After signing the Official Secrets Act Monica wore the uniform of the F.A.N.Y'S. (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry). This First World War organisation

.Then on May 8th 1945, the war in Europe ceased. The Camp seemed to go berserk, and it seemed as though the entire stock of coloured signal flares was used up in one day, being fired criss-cross over the airfield. My memories of the 356th? Well, it was the general demeanour of the personnel. The way every man stopped in his tracks when the Stars and Stripes was hauled down at the end of the day, the delicious Coca-Cola, which in those days seemed to be made from a syrup, topped up with ice-cold water, nothing like the wind-inducing mixture that is sold these days, and also the sound of Bing Crosby singing "Don't Fence Me In" coming from the Canteen.

The bad days were over and the Camp was more relaxed. The thought of going home to the States seemed to be on all their minds. We knew that many of our friends were not going to make that journey. My civilian days at Martlesham ended in September 1945, when a little buff envelope arrived at home. It was from the Air Ministry, politely requesting the pleasure of my company at R.A.F Recruit Centre, Padgate. To cut a long story short, on January 21st, 1946, after being deemed fully qualified clerks, we crossed the Channel and began the long train journey across Europe to Italy, known as one of the MEDLOC routes. A journey shared by my old friend Don Kitt ! What followed is another story.

On returning home in 1947, looking forward to disembarkation leave, I was asked by a kindly looking R.A.F officer, where I would like to be posted. "Well, Sir, if it pleases you. Sir, Felixstowe, Bawdsey or Martlesham, Sir, thank you Sir!" My servile approach obviously didn't impress him at all, and I was posted to the Central Bomber Establishment Marham. It was purgatory! Colour Hoisting every morning, best blues, Station brass band. all held on a Parade Ground that seemed to stretch for acres. All overseen by the most 'orrible Station Warrant Officer that you would never want to meet! I was sent to work in the Station Orderly Room, and one of my jobs was to collate and issue Daily Routine Orders. This included publishing airmen's requests for Exchange Postings (same rank, same trade). One morning, in the mail, was a request from a LAC/Clerk/GD who came from Swaffham and wanted to come to Marham, and who was at the time stationed at Martlesham Heath. By some small oversight on my part, his request never reached the Notice Board. Consequentially, the next few days saw me trekking round the Camp clutching a Clearance Chit. Having convinced the NCO i/c Parachute Store that I had never seen a parachute, let alone own one, and the same at the Armoury swearing to the NCO i/c that I hadn't got a weapon up my regulation jumper!

A few days later, I escaped, and reported to the Guard Room at Martlesham.

visits included a Royal Observer Corps. Field Post with their instruments. Aerial photographic equipment and a marvellous collection of 1/48" scale model aircraft and, of course, displays of Radar and telecommunications technology. Housed in a separate room was a most impressive display of the original Unit and Station badges as submitted for royal approval and signed accordingly.

All in all a fascinating Museum and a visit thoroughly to be recommended.

Russell Bailey

VISIT TO THE BIGGIN HILL INTERNATIONAL AIR FAIR - 26TH JUNE.

Biggin Hill is, of course, well known as perhaps the most famous "Battle of Britain" airfield. The RAF have long since left their former administration buildings and the barrack blocks remain empty. However, the memorial Chapel, with its replica Hurricane and Spitfire at the entrance serve as a reminder of those earlier days.

Enjoying perfect weather, our party of 40 plus were able to wander around the many exhibits and trade stands before and during the six hour flying programme. This was a non-stop display and featured a wide range of aircraft. These included Tornado, Jaguar, Nimrod, Hercules, Hunter, Yak Aerostar, Stearman "Wing Walkers", and a Swordfish. Also a formation of Spitfires, ME109, Mustang, Corsair, Jordanian Display Team and the Falcon parachutists. An individual aerobatic display was given by an Extra 300 and we were also treated to a fly-past by a DC10 and B707 owned by civil operator Dan Air.

As it was the 30th anniversary of the Harrier entering service a special performance was given by this aircraft. Another anniversary was the 35th display season by the Red Arrows. To commemorate this they flew by with a black Hunter to represent their glamorous predecessor, the Black Arrows.

Perhaps the highlight of the whole show was the performance by the two Russian SU-27's with their synchronised manoeuvres and the famous "tail slide".

Russell Bailey

AIR MARSHALL SIR IVOR BROOM KCB, CBE, DSO, DFC, AFC.

At the recent reunion of ex Martlesham Heath personnel we were pleased to enjoy the company of our distinguished Vice-President, Air Marshall Sir Ivor Broom.

Ever keen to find interesting material for inclusion in the Newsletter, I tackled Sir Ivor after the celebration dinner. He kindly agreed to talk a little

of his wartime RAF career and experiences whilst flying Bristol Blenheims and De Havilland Mosquitoes.

In September 1941, after flying Blenheims operationally for all of two months Sergeant Pilot Broom was selected to lead a flight of six Blenheims to Singapore. After refuelling at Gibraltar and then landing at Malta he was detailed to stay there. The other five Blenheims flew on to Singapore. Sir Ivor recalls that this changed the course of his life. After all, if he had flown on to Singapore he would have arrived just in time to be made a POW of the Japanese.

Blenheims were used to attack shipping which was supplying Rommel's North African desert campaign. If no shipping was found the brief was to attack coastal installations before returning to base. Losses were high and after a few weeks every officer in the squadron had been lost. Sgt Pilot Broom was told to assume the rank of Pilot Officer. The paper work to be sorted out at a later date! This, Sir Ivor said, was how he gained his commission!

After four months in Malta it was back to a home posting. A chance to get married and a brief to instruct on low level bombing in Blenheims which lasted for one year. Sir Ivor then became one of the first instructors on the De Havilland Mosquito. "A quantum leap forward" was how he describes the Mosquito. Here was an aircraft which would comfortably fly on one engine. Sir Ivor admits to "showing off" the "Mossie" by diving down to tree level with one engine feathered and then climbing away again, still with one engine feathered. No comparison with the Blenheim which was, after all, designed in the mid 1930's and was, by common consent, dangerously vulnerable. So many brave lives were lost that may have survived if the Mosquito had been flying at the outset of the war. But there, it doesn't do to speculate on the "what if's"!

Sir Ivor told me that he flew 103 operational sorties. 45 in Blenheims and 58 in Mosquitoes. 23 of the ops. in Mosquitoes were to Berlin. Other raids flown in the Mosquito were diversionary to the main heavy bomber force. Operational height was 25000ft. The cabins were pressurised but normally the two-man crew would use their oxygen masks. There was a very real fear of the consequences of an explosive decompression in the event of being hit by flak. The typical Berlin bomb load was a 4000 pound HE bomb. So here was an unarmed aircraft capable of delivering a 4000 pounder to Berlin at night at 25000ft with a two-man crew in comparative safety. One cannot help be reminded of the attrition suffered by the "heavies" of the RAF and the USAAF and to speculate that the fast, unarmed bomber held a more

economical solution But it doesn't do to speculate on the "if only's" either, does it?

At the end of the war Sir Ivor was 24 years old, an acting Wing Commander and officer commanding a Mosquito squadron of the Pathfinder Force

We are honoured to have Sir Ivor Broom as a Vice President and delighted that he and his wife, Jess were able to attend the reunion.

Alan Powell

MEMORIES OF MARTLESHAM.

My earliest recollection of Martlesham Heath, was during the late 1930's. I lived in Leiston then and the high spot of the year was the Sunday school outing to Felixstowe. This meant passing through the Camp, and we all eagerly anticipated the sighting of an aircraft. An added joy was if the bus had to stop at the runway crossing to allow an aircraft to take off. Sheer excitement, and something to talk about in the school playground for weeks after. One of the most memorable occasions was in May 1939, when I cycled from Leiston with my father to attend the last Empire Air Day and the scenes and events were exactly as Gordon Kinsey describes in his book. That was the day that I saw my first Spitfire! We all know what followed in the months to come, and we were to witness the dark days of the 1940's. Very sad for me as I lost my father in early 1940 and the family moved to Felixstowe.

The days and years passed, and in early 1945, I found myself working at Martlesham Heath, doing maintenance work for a local contractor. The 356th F.G were still very active then, and on arrival by lorry quite early in the morning, we were welcomed, weather permitting, to the sound of the P47's and P51's preparing for the day's sorties. As soon as the lorry stopped my pal and I, then both very keen A.T.C cadets, made for our own special observation position. This was in a valley in the twin roofs of the N.A.A.F.I building and it overlooked Runway 30. From there we watched the aircraft taking off, while overhead the "big boys" were gathering for the day's work. Suddenly, they were gone, heading out over the North Sea.

The personnel carried on with their daily duties, and apart from the odd aircraft running up on test, the Camp was reasonably quiet. We found the Americans very friendly, humorous, generous and very hospitable. One particular friend was a Master Sergeant Lionel Ratte, who came from Rhode Island, and was a Crew Chief on a P51. Later in the day, the squadrons began to return home, the ground crews anxiously waiting for sight of their own particular aircraft. Sadly, some of them never returned. We witnessed these scenes almost daily.