

EDITORIAL

I continue to receive interesting articles, poems and various snippets of information which, when put together in our newsletter, hopefully make for interesting reading. Thankfully the feedback that I receive is mostly complimentary!

Alan Smith is the archivist for our museum and has kindly written a progress report. It is our intention to have a regular update on the development of the museum and this will be a regular feature. Alan tells me that interesting stories relating to Martlesham keep coming to light when folk donate various artefacts and we will try to include some of these stories in "Runway 22". The first of these stories relates to the machine gun which is to be found in the museum.

We now have a "Letter Spot", so even if you haven't a complete tale to tell, we would like it if you would send us a letter for us to feature in the new slot.

Enjoy!

ED

MUSEUM NOTES

Our first full year after the official opening of the Control Tower Museum in September 2000 has proved the viability of our museum project and has justified all the hard work put in by so many members. More than 4000 people have been to see us and have expressed their surprise at the variety and interest of our displays.

We have had visits by a variety of groups including over 400 children from local junior schools who have the Second World War as a history topic in their curriculum. We seemed to be at the museum for these visits during most weeks during the year, either during the day or in the evening and we already have several group bookings for the season which has now started.

During the closed season we have been busy reorganizing the museum contents to make the displays more logical by grouping them according to their periods. World War One, Between the Wars, World War Two, and the Post War era. This has been made easier by the donations and loans we have received during the year. Their great variety and relevance to Martlesham and the surrounding area has proved of great interest to our visitors.

We continue to receive donations such as a clock from the Fiat BR.20 Italian bomber shot down by Martlesham fighters on 11 November 1940, which crashed in Rendlesham Forest. We have also recently received, thanks to his generosity, the complete USAAF Dress Uniform donated by Garner Engel.

Visitors have expressed their appreciation of the canteen (OK, the NAAFI!), which serves tea, coffee and biscuits. No charge is made for these but the donations made have helped in meeting our expenses.

As well as the porcelain mugs and the short "History of Martlesham" booklets that have proved to be most helpful sources of income, we now have tea towels which have been designed by our own member, Mike Gunnell. Another of our members is Geoff. Pleasance, whose wonderful designs now appear on notelets and postcards.

Could I finally appeal to members and their friends, if you have any items connected with Martlesham or stories about the station, or were stationed here. We would love to hear from you so please contact any of the Committee or me at the Friday meetings.

Alan Smith, (Archivist).

Our President, Gordon Kinsey has also sent me a piece relevant to the museum **(ED)**

Mr Ken Brown of the Suffolk Aircrew Association has recorded on video tape the wartime exploits of 20 of the Association members. These include training days and operational sorties and in some cases their demise over enemy territory and capture. All are genuine and give a wonderful insight into life during this period. Mr Brown has generously made copies of these tapes and handed them to me for the Museum where they will be available on loan. We are greatly indebted to Mr Brown for this very valuable addition to our Museum facilities.

Mr Ivan Potter, also of the same Association, has donated a collection of Aircraft Plates to supplement our present Dam Busters plates on display in the Museum. Once again thank you very much indeed Mr Potter for this wonderful gift.

AIRCRAFT CRASHES AT FELIXTOWE

The machine gun in the Control Tower Museum is known to have come from a Hampden which crashed as a result of hitting a Barrage Balloon cable. The following is the pilot's report of the accident in which he was the only survivor.

3/4th June, 1940 Hampden 1 P1340 44 Sqn based at Waddington.

Sgt Spencer reported, "I struck a Balloon Cable in the Harwich area. The starboard wing dropped and the aircraft swung violently to port. We dived steeply and I was unable to regain control of the aircraft which was diving at 260mph. I baled out at 1000ft and the parachute opened just before I hit the sea".

This associated report is from 18 Group Royal Observer Corp. log, dated June 4th 1940. "02.25 'plane reported flown into a balloon cable at Harwich. Dull thud, no more sound". Admiralty at Harwich reports "plane flew over Felixtowe and was heard to crash at Shotley Point". The pilot clung to a buoy

and was rescued. The bodies of the other three crew members were never recovered and their names are recorded on the Runnymede Memorial as having no known grave.

A second tragedy occurred in the month of June 1940 which also involved an aircraft hitting a barrage balloon cable and crashing at Felixtowe. The aircraft was another Hampden 1, P4345, this time from 144 Sqdn based at Helmswell. It crashed into the screen-room roof of Marriages Flour Mill at 02.35hrs on 13th June 1940. The crew of four were killed along with a civilian worker at the mill.

Alan Powell

MID AIR ACCIDENT, WOODBRIDGE, APRIL 26TH 1944

The September, 2001 edition of "Runway 22" contains an article entitled "Lest We Forget". It states that a plaque on Woodbridge Golf Course commemorates the spot where a P47 of the 356th FG crashed in April 1944. I have contacted Richard Rann, who was the pilot of the other P47 also involved in the fatal accident. This is the story of that tragedy. **ED**

Some memories fade with time, but not this one. It seems like it happened just last week. I don't mean to infer that I lay awake nights, I have never had bad dreams about those days, and only fond recollections of my stay in England. But I certainly recall the events of 26 April 1944.

The following is taken from the official record for the 359th sq. that day: "The squadron took off at 0733 and incidentally flew as a separate group, 356th B, while the other two squadrons were supporting another air task force. Landfall in was made in the vicinity of Ijmuiden at 0826 at 22,000 feet. The bombers were met north of Zwolle and were escorted around the target area. It is not believed that they bombed due to 10/10 overcast as several were seen to jettison their bombs in the channel. Landfall out was made at 1004. The bombers were left about 20 miles off shore at 1015. No E/A were seen and no bombers were seen in trouble. AA fire was reported highly inaccurate against both bombers and fighters. The only unfortunate accident occurred just after crossing the English coast and cost the life of Lt Richard Warren. While crossing below and to the right of Lt Rann in a crossover turn, Lt Warren hit the right wing of the aircraft of Lt Rann, probably with his canopy, it is believed that the impact stunned him, his aircraft spinning into the ground out of control on to the golf course east of Woodbridge. Lt Rann managed to land his plane at the bomber strip safely. Probably the sun was as much the cause of the accident as any."

This is the way I recall that mission. I was the flight leader of Green flight, which was the last flight in the squadron. Two members of the flight had

aborted early in the mission leaving Lt Warren and myself flying as a two ship element. We had had an uneventful time and, as was the custom, while letting down from altitude, we each removed our oxygen mask and lit a cigarette. As we approached our home field, but still above pattern altitude, I signalled Lt Warren, who was flying on my left wing, to move to my right wing in preparation for entering the landing pattern. This procedure required him to drop below me and slide to my right wing. During this time, I was following the preceding flights and was looking out the left side of my canopy. Lt Warren was an excellent pilot. He always flew tight formation and was predictable in his actions, so I did not visually follow him during this change over. The first indication of a problem was a sudden jolt that caused my airplane to roll to the left. I jerked my head around in time to catch a glimpse of Warren's ship as it disappeared below my right wing. I became busy trying to get control of my plane, which required some experimenting with the controls. It took a few seconds before I took the time to try to contact Warren, but there was no response. About this same time, his ship hit the ground. I then reported to the squadron leader there had been a midair collision.

My plane had about two feet of the right wing bent up several degrees, plus the right aileron was jammed. The plane was flyable, but I was not sure how it would act when I had to slow down to land. I decided to use the emergency strip at Woodbridge where I had a longer runway and could land at a higher speed. I managed to land without further damage.

I must add this, I had heard of people who were so frightened that their knees were weak. I wasn't scared while I was in the air, but after I landed and stepped out of the plane onto the ground, I held onto the plane for support for a minute or two, as my knees failed me.

I hope this information is helpful to your purpose. Lt Warren was a very likable young man as well as a capable pilot. He didn't deserve the end he met. From a note in my flying log, I am reminded he had been married only four months before he left for England.

One other thing, when I was in England five years ago, Leslie Boulton took my wife and me to an old bomber strip that had a small museum so I could see what was left of the engine from Lt Warren's airplane (it was on display on the 1st floor). I don't recall which museum it was, but I am sure Leslie would remember, if you are interested in pursuing it.

Richard A Rann, Charlotte, Michigan.

Poem printed in the menu and spoken in church at the Last Reunion at RAF Swinderby, Lincolnshire.

NO WEEPING NOW

I went back to the lonely Wolds,
The Fens and the empty sky.
I saw the tall gaunt elms,
Heard the calling rooks,
How time had passed me by.
Grass had grown on the runways,
In the hangars stood rusting ploughs.
The dispersal points were empty,
Just starlings and grazing cows.
The Watch Office stood deserted,
Or maybe the ghosts of men
Stood and watched as I walked, remembering.
For I'd said I'd come back again.
The windsock hung in tatters,
Forlorn in the cold damp air.
Then I thought "What does it matter?
There is nobody here to care."
The crew huts were but ruins,
Rotting timbers and sagging floors.
Not a voice to break the silence,
Just the wind and the creaking doors.
Then I recalled that once these were billets,
Full of life and the noise of men.
With the crackling roar of the Merlins
Or the whispering scratch of the pen.
So I stood quite still listening,
Was there a message there for me?
In the shadows would they remember.
Had they left me a sign to see?
If they had it was too elusive,
Made dim by the veil of years.
And I recalled all the purpose and courage
Till my eyes were blurred with tears.
I turned away, downhearted,
For this was not the field I had known.
Not the brave bold home of my memories.
Fool I was, for the years had flown. **J.R. Walsh.**

LETTER SPOT

Hi Alan,

I wonder if you would be kind enough to incorporate the following in the next issue:

On behalf of 356 Squadron (Felixstowe) Air Training Corps, I would like to thank all of you who bought draw tickets from us. MHAS had 3 prize winners, Martyn Cook, J Garratt and John Hemmings. We raised just over £400 in total which will be of great help to the Squadron.

Joe Cox

Dear Alan,

I was most interested to read the letter from Brian Cane, ("Runway 22" January, 2002), when he mentioned enjoying the company of visiting auxiliary airwomen! I well remember visiting RAF Martlesham in the summer of 1951. At that time I was the only regular RAF NCO stationed at 3509 Fighter Control Unit, RAF Trentham. I was sent with a detachment from that unit for their annual summer camp to Martlesham.

The main road into the Station crossed the runway and I remember the bell clanging to clear the runway every time my flight of airwomen was crossing. Funny how that bell always rang at that time! The men in the tower must have had a good laugh. I never did see a 'plane come into land after we crossed!

At that time the boffins were carrying out various experiments at Martlesham and I managed to get several flights – some more exciting than others. "Circuits and bumps" in a Dakota was pretty ordinary and boring after a while. But my most exciting flight was in a Mosquito firing rockets over Orfordness. I never did know how my part in the flight was explained to the powers that be – if indeed it ever was!

Happy Days!

Yours sincerely, **Bette Jarman.**

Mr James Simpson from Newcastle Upon Tyne who was stationed here in the 50's sent me a letter some time ago. Thank you for that James and I apologise that it appears only now! He has sent information regarding the Blind Landing Experimental Unit. He has also sent diagrams of the layout of RAF Sutton Heath (now RAF Woodbridge) and Martlesham Heath when the BLEU experiments were being conducted at both aerodromes. James also recalls incidents that happened during his time at Martlesham from 1952-53.

A wireless mechanic was testing the bombing transmitter fitted to a Mosquito and released a huge bomb which dented the hangar floor! Another incident

involving a De Havilland Mosquito occurred when its brakes failed and it shot off the end of the N-S runway and through the hedge. Damage was slight. A Vampire landed with an emergency flame-out. It was repaired, took off and the down force from the engine badly damaged the tarmac of the E-W runway. A Canberra landed with the nose wheel not properly down. It landed on the N-S runway and finished up on the grass with its tail in the air!

ED

REUNION 2002

All is going well regarding the Reunion in September. We welcome our 356th friends from the USA on the morning of 20th September at Gatwick and our R.A.F. friends during the afternoon/evening of the same day at the Novotel Ipswich. Unless it proves to be too difficult, I hope as usual to have a coach to meet our Americans friends at Gatwick. I am in touch with Eddie Malo and he will inform me of numbers coming and the times of arrival. Ed informs me that the latest number of guests stand at 28 people. With regard to the R.A.F. guests, please let Julie Hall know if you require a hotel room as soon as possible. (Julie's 'phone No. 01473-728343) We have a few B&B addresses that Julie will give you on request. This is great as we have a full but gentle programme, one day of which will be free and another of course, to the American Cemetery at Maddingley and then on to Duxford. I will try to get a VIP arrangement which means we can take the coach on to the Museum area, maybe to the American Museum? The Banquet will be at the "Black Tiles Restaurant" on Sunday 23rd September, the day after our 2nd RAF/356th Museum Anniversary Day, there are many surprises for you all on this day! The banquet is Sunday 23rd so that our RAF members can join us before going home. Should any RAF friends wish to stay the week, just let us know, a.s.a.p. Please, again contact Julie.

All of us at Martlesham Heath Aviation Society have a great welcome ready for all of you joining our reunion.

Bob Dunnett (Vice Chairman MHAS)

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

Despite a miserable evening on the occasion of our January meeting another good crowd turned up to hear Bob Collis and Lester Curtis give a talk entitled, "Fallen Eagles 1939/45"

They are both members of the Norfolk and Suffolk Air Museum at Flixton but gave their talk as members of the society responsible for aircraft recovery and archaeology. Bob told us that in Suffolk only 40 enemy aircraft have been recorded as being shot down over the County during the period of WW2. The

first recorded was on 16th October 1939 when a Junkers JU88 bomber was downed at Ipswich. Another early victim was a Heinkel 115 seaplane. A vote of thanks was given by Alan Smith.

The February meeting was given by one of our own members, Mike Gunnell. Mike has recently married Vicky Hall and has moved down from Yorkshire. His talk was entitled, "Avionics to Aviation Art".

Mike has always been interested in art and we were shown examples of his early drawings from the age of ten and how they developed through his teenage years.

After three years in the Royal Air Force working on ground Radar, Mike joined the Blackburn Aircraft Company working on electronics at Brough in East Yorkshire. By this time Blackburn was part of the Hawker Siddeley Group and they were helping to manufacture English Electric Canberra bombers.

Mike Gunnell then moved on to talk about his artwork. How, using an unfinished painting of a Buccaneer, he demonstrated the technique of adding colour to show shadow and sunlight effects. We also saw examples of cartoon work and also some of his paintings of various aircraft.

After the interval we listened to a rare tape recording, with a commentary by Douglas Bader, of various aircraft engines from WW1 to jets. While the recording was on Mike Gunnell showed pictures of various aircraft.

Gordon Kinsey gave a vote of thanks and the meeting finished at 10.15pm.

In March we had another good attendance to hear from Mr Ron Palmer, who is a member of Suffolk Aircrew Association. Ron had a hectic war initially as a Flight Mechanic and then as a Flight Engineer, mostly in Short Stirlings. Among his many postings was Iceland, which he remembers as a "gruelling experience". Several memorable operations including the ill-fated Arnhem drop when many of his friends were lost. Dropping supplies to the French Resistance movement was another operation he was involved with. Bombing trips with special navigation equipment – A bad weather sorties to Norway – dropping troops at the time of the Rhine crossing – the list goes on! Ron received his commission in September 1945 and was for many years after the war a hotel manager at the White Hart at Wickham Market. A vote of thanks was given by Gordon Kinsey.

After the break one of our own members, Cliff Caley gave a most interesting "off the cuff" talk of his own experiences as a flight engineer in Lancasters. Cliff survived 31 operational sorties over enemy territory and many of them were either long distance or heavily defended targets, or both! Places such as

Stettin on the Baltic coast, Essen and Stuttgart. Cliff was demobbed in December 1946. A vote of thanks was again given by Gordon.

Our April meeting was, of course, our AGM. Martyn Cook was able to report another successful year. The first full year of the opening of the Control Tower Museum. Bob Dunnett reported that approximately 4000 people have visited the museum since it was opened. About 400 schoolchildren in organised groups have been to the museum.

Membership is slightly down on the previous year but attendance remains very buoyant with frequently around 130 members attending our monthly meetings. After the break came the Annual Charles "Holly" Hall Photographic Competition organised by Don Kitt. This was won by Alan Powell with a photograph of a WWI Sopwith Triplane. Alan Smith was the runner-up.

ED

THE LAWN CHAIR MAN (True story).

Larry Walters went to the local army-surplus store and purchased 45 weather balloons and several tanks of helium. He securely strapped the balloons to his sturdy lawn chair and anchored the chair to the bumper of his Jeep and inflated the balloons with the helium. Larry packed several sandwiches and a six pack of Miller Lite and loaded his pellet gun, figuring he could pop a few balloons when it was time to descend. Larry's plan was to lazily float up to a height of about 30ft and come back down in a few hours. Things didn't quite work out for Larry. The cord anchoring the lawn chair to his Jeep severed and he streaked into the LA sky as if shot from a cannon. He didn't level off at 30ft but 16000ft. At that height he couldn't risk shooting any of the balloons. So he stayed there, drifting cold and frightened for more than 14 hours until he found himself in the primary approach corridor of LAX. A Pan Am pilot first spotted Larry. He radioed the Tower and described passing a guy in a lawn chair...with a gun! Radar confirmed the existence of an object floating 16000ft above the airport. LAX emergency procedures swung into full alert and a helicopter was despatched to investigate. The offshore breeze began to blow and carried Larry out to sea. Right on Larry's heels was the rescue helicopter. The helicopter ascended to a position several hundred feet above Larry and lowered a rescue line. Larry snagged the line with which he was hauled back to shore. As soon as Larry was brought to earth he was arrested by waiting members of the LAPD for violating LAX airspace!

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MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

I have been asked to remind our American members that MHAS membership subs are due! 25 dollars covers the period 1st. April 2002 to 31st. March, 2003. Please make cheques out to 356th. Fighter Group (MHAS Account) and send to Ken Male with a note explaining that it is for the Annual MHAS subscription.

Thanks folks. **ED**