

EDITORIAL

May I wish all of you a Happy New Year. Let us hope that the situation in Iraq is soon stabilised and the year is more peaceful than 2004.

It is rather a packed "Runway 22" this time and I make no apology for that.

Just three years ago I included an article about a Halifax that was shot down after raiding Augsburg. I was unaware at the time that the Wireless Op/Air Gunner on that ill-fated Halifax was none other than our own member, Alf Flexman. Sorry Alf, but you are so modest! The piece was written by the navigator and I have now added Alf's own story, together with some more research done by Alan Smith, our museum archivist. Alf was one of a party of POW's who were tragically attacked by RAF Typhoons when they were being marched to another camp.

Another of our loyal long-time members is Jim Ferguson MBE. Jim has very kindly sent me a book of poems compiled and edited by Eddy Coward. The book is entitled "The Poems We Wrote" and is an anthology of Air Force poems. I have included one and it is a classic! Undoubtedly you will be entertained by at least one of them in many "Runways" in the future. Copies of the book are available from Mr Eddy A Coward, 5, Brocksford Avenue, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 8RH. The price is £7.50 plus .95p postage and packing. I can recommend it!

The last issue of the newsletter featured "Operation Fortitude". The story of the extraordinarily successful deception plan designed to ensure that the enemy defences on the European coast were not concentrated where we were to land. Just why Operation Fortitude was so successful depended on our control of enemy spies. I have included a very much diluted story of "The Double Cross System" and you must agree that whilst Operation Fortitude was an almost total success, the way that we controlled enemy espionage was equally brilliant.

OK, I know that I often dig out our successes and perhaps ignore some of the failures but what the hell, I believe we are often much too modest!

ED

ANOTHER GREAT OPEN DAY

I would like to thank all those who helped to make September 12th such a marvellous day.

We were of course so lucky weather wise again which is so very important for an event such as ours. To be able to have Mark Murphy and Lesley Dolphin of Radio Suffolk to officially open the stairway to the roof and also throw open the underground bunker was an excellent start to our day, we thank them for coming to see us, before going to Portman Road and help Ipswich beat Millwall 2-0. It was lovely to be able to welcome Nancy Hough and her cousin Carol and Steve Richardson and his wife, representing the 356th Fighter Group. I was very pleased to also welcome Lieutenant Nichelle Brokering from RAF Lakenheath, pilot of one of the USAF refuelling tankers. A big job for such a young lady. Nichelle is the niece of the late Lt. Eldon Slanker who flew with

Don Strait in the 361st F.G. from Martlesham during 1943/45 and who unfortunately lost his life in a flying accident over Hintlesham in 1945.

We were pleased to have so many different stalls and side shows again this year, also Wally Mutimer looking after the Model Aircraft. Unfortunately the flying was restricted because of the high wind. The support of Geoff Pleasance is always appreciated and I was pleased to welcome Derek Vanstone with his aviation book stall for the first time. Unfortunately Ashley Gant with his historic stall regarding Lt Slanker's life in WW 2 was unable to be with us due to illness. The Chuck Wagon and Ice Cream stall were up to standard again and kept us happy with quality food and ice cream.

I must make a special mention of thanks to Allan Stimpson who owns Laser Sound and Lighting. He loaned us the P.A. system which was superb.

A very BIG thank you must go to all of our members who helped on the day and also those who worked so hard on the Control Tower and area around before the day. The wives, girl friends and family who support us is wonderful. A special thanks to Don Kitt who looked after our 'shop' in the Museum, Maggie and Alan Smith for doing what Museum archivists do best and of course, Ethel and Roy looking after the NAFFI !! Thanks to the Ipswich Marching Band, Felixtowe ATC cadets and not forgetting the GI dancers led by Jim and Angie Long!

There are many more people I could mention. They know how much we all appreciate their support. Congratulations to all who help to make our MHAS such a friendly and successful Society.

Maybe next year we will welcome the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and we are already working on this so, watch this space!

Bob Dunnnett, (Museum Co-ordinator).

ONE OF OUR AIRCRAFT IS MISSING.....

Halifax Mk IIII Serial no. LV794 Code letters EY-0. Target M.A.N. Diesel factory AUGSBURG Time/Date Midnight 24/25th February 1944.

The following is an account by the navigator of the Halifax.

We were en-route to the target at 24,000 ft. when a J.U.88 night fighter attacked us. According to the rear gunner this first strike was fatal, the whole of the port main-plane was ablaze and as the inter-com was dead he put his turret on the beam and tried to get out. One of his boots was stuck between the guns, so he pulled his parachute ripcord whilst still in the aircraft. This extricated him and he eventually came to earth safely. The only injury he sustained was a badly bruised face and a thick split lip where the parachute 'D' ring attachments hit him in the face. Meanwhile in the nose section of the aircraft I (the navigator) Wireless operator and Bomb Aimer put on our parachutes. According to the Bomb Aimer (who never lost consciousness) the aircraft exploded and the nose section was "blown off" from the main aircraft. He landed reasonably near the

aircraft - holed up for a couple of days, got away from the scene but was captured days later.

I regained consciousness whilst dropping through the air with my parachute still packed above my head. Although I had a complicated compound fracture of the left 'Tib. and Fib.) and a 9-mm. gunshot wound in the left elbow, I didn't feel any pain at the time. I was able with my right arm to reach up and pull the ripcord and I thought for a second or two the world was wonderful! It was literally a few seconds later I was in the tops of fir trees. Fortunately for my damaged leg I dangled about three feet above the ground. I was able to cling to the tree trunk, press my quick release box and slide to the ground. I Took off my Mae West and slid it under my backside as there was slight snow on the ground. Just completed that when a figure came through the woods and knowing I wasn't going anywhere I shouted HELP! It was Alf. We sat talking things over for about 5 minutes until we heard someone coming through the woods. We froze; thinking they were Germans when 10 yards in front of us the unmistakable form of Bernie was passing us. We called him and I think it almost startled him to death! You cut a splint for my leg and made me as comfortable as you could when a clock in the distance struck one o'clock. We decided that I would be left on the edge of the village and then you would try to make your escape.

I lay there until first light when I started blowing on my whistle. Shortly afterward two ancient members of the 'Landwacht' (Home Guard) presented a pistol at my head and tried to get me up. I learnt my first bit of German - it was 'Bien Gebroken' and I was able to answer, 'Ja!' They got a wheelbarrow with a plank in it and wheeled me to the schoolhouse and the local Catholic Sister, cum teacher, cum first-aid worker splinted my leg properly. I managed to see you and Bernie next day briefly. You went to Dulagluft and I went to the local hospital at Dahn for 2 months until I was able to travel.

The story is then taken over by our own MHAS member, Alf Flexman, who was the Wireless Op/Air gunner in that ill-fated Halifax.

Arthur, who submitted his own story, was the navigator. Bernie was our Australian rear gunner, Ted was a New Zealander and our bomb aimer. Sadly our pilot, Flt. Lt Maurice Carruthers, Ian the Flight engineer and Clive, our mid-upper gunner all lost their lives. Apart from minor injuries I was OK.

My first POW camp was Stalag Luft V1 at Heydekrug, which was in what is now Lithuania. Then we were moved to Stalag XXA at Thorn in Poland. Finally we were moved to Stalag X1b at Falingbostel in Germany.

During February of 1945 we were grouped assembled into groups of about 500 and were ordered by the Germans to march west, away from the advancing Russians.

We marched during the day and tried to find some shelter in farm barns at night. We bartered for food with farmers along the route using cigarettes, coffee and chocolate from red cross parcels which we had been given before setting out. Whilst on the march one day the group ahead of us, who had just crossed a bridge, were attacked by six RAF Typhoons. Many POW's were killed and hundreds injured by the Typhoons that had mistaken them for an enemy column.

Eventually we encountered a Canadian army advance unit and instructed by them to make our way to Luneberg Heath, a distance of about 25 kilometres. We had finished up only a few kilometres from where we had set out, at Falingbostel. We were then mustered into small groups and I was eventually flown back to England in a Dakota in May, 1945.

ALF FLEXMAN – MHAS member number 165!

Alan Smith, our museum archivist came up with this additional information about the march of allied POW's away from the advancing Russian army. ED.

“The camp from which the POWs left was Stalag 357 Oerbke though referred to as Stalag 357, Falingbostel. They included POWs from Stalag 357 Thorn and were evacuated by the march as the Russians were advancing. There were 12,000 prisoners and by bribing the stationmaster at Lubeck. Flt Sgt. James 'Dixie' Dean, who had travelled with 3,000 POWs from Stalag Luft VI to Falingbostel, was able to arrange for two wagons of Red Cross food parcels to be attached to a passenger train and delivered to Stalag 357 and 6,000 parcels, enough for half a parcel per man to be issued when they arrived on 30 March 1945. The prisoners, who had kept up with the news on their secret radio, were told that they were to be marched to the so-called 'Northern Redoubt' in Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark. Although the prisoners delayed this as much as possible the first column of 1,500 left at about 5.0 pm on 6 April. The rest of the camp followed on the next day. In columns of 1,500 or so, each divided into groups of 500, the rest of the 12,000 PoWs left the badly overcrowded camp in a north-easterly direction with the issue of a loaf of bread and a kilogram of margarine.

One column of 1.500 were returned to Falingbostel as they were said to be interfering with the German lines of supply. The rest carried on to the north-west until east of Lubeck where the columns split, one went more northerly and the other more easterly. It was one of the north-easterly columns which were attacked by the Typhoons. After the attack ceased, some of the men moved from the ditches where they were sheltering into a field and saw another Typhoon approaching. Instead of running they stood their ground and waved towels or shirts and shouted. The pilot turned away and joined his colleagues. There were many fatalities and other casualties.

Following this tragedy the need to identify themselves during daylight was realised and they made large letters in straw in a field when they stopped - RAF POW.”

Alan Smith.

Flt Sgt “Dixie” Dean commanded great respect both from the POW’s and the German authorities. His is a remarkable story in its own right and I hope to include it in the next “Runway”. ED

THE LAST MAN IN THE AIR FORCE

I’m the last man left in the Air Force
In the office inside M.O.D.
I’ve a copy of Queens Regulations
Applicable only to me
I can post myself off to Mawgan
Detach from there to Kinloss
Or send me on courses to Cosford
Then cancel the lot, I’m the boss

I’m the last man left in the Air Force
I suppose you imagine its great
To be master of all you survey
But I tell you its difficult, mate
I inspected three stations last Tuesday
As C in C (acting, of Strike)
Then cleaned out the bogs at Brize Norton
And repaired Saxa Vord’s station bike

I’m the last man in the Air Force
My wife says I’m never at home
When I’m not flying kites I’m at Manston
Laying gallons and gallons of foam
Or I’m in my marine craft off Plymouth
Shooting flares at the crowds on The Hoe
Or I’m an Orderly Sergeant at Valley
Its an interesting life – but all go

I’m the last man left in the Air Force
When I’m not ADC to the Queen
I’m the Red Arrows leader at Scampton
I’m the QCS silent drill team
Tomorrow I’m painting the guardroom

And air testing several ‘planes
The day after that I’m in London
Where I’m chaplain at St Clement Danes

I’m the last man in the Air Force
But I’m pensioned off before long
There’s been no thought of my replacement
And I can justify signing on
I hope to enjoy my retirement
I’ve put up a fairly good show
But I won’t cut myself off entirely
There are always reunions you know!
W/O Harry Heywood

THE DOUBLE CROSS SYSTEM

MI5 could be described as the British equivalent of the American FBI. It controls internal security matters and therefore was responsible for tracking down the German spies who were infiltrating this country during the early years of WW2.

One of the principal names connected with British counter-espionage was John Masterson. He was a Cambridge Don and useful cricket and tennis player. He had been interned in Germany during the Great War and spoke the language fluently. Because of this he joined the Security Service Counter-espionage division which was based for a time at Blenheim Palace, no less!

During the post-war era MI5 was being shown in a bad light in cases like the Profumo Affair and Russian defectors such as Kim Philby.

Partly driven by a desire to put his old employer in a more favourable light with the British public and partly, no doubt, because of a burning desire to “spill the beans” about the wartime achievements of MI5, he sought permission in 1971 to publish a book which he had originally written just post-war entitled, “The Double Cross System”. The British Government refused permission to allow its publication. Undeterred by this Masterman sent copies of the manuscript to the Yale University Press in America. They agreed to publish it and the British Government decided that instead of prosecuting him for breaches of the Official Secrets Act, their best course was to have certain sensitive passages deleted.

Masterman himself was an important member of the counter-espionage team and in 1940 he interviewed a Catalonian Spaniard whose name was Dusko Popov and whose code name was to be GARBO. The Spaniard was considered by *Abwehr*, (The German Intelligence Service), to be one of their star agents. However, Popov had approached the Germans and was trained by them as a spy with the intention all along of betraying his masters, (whom in reality he hated).

Thus when he arrived in England he gave himself up and offered his services as a double agent.

Thanks partly to our ability to read German Enigma messages we were already in possession of intelligence regarding the arrival in this country of enemy agents. The value in developing counter intelligence was realised early on and MI5 created a committee known as the XX (or Twenty Committee), which was chaired by JC Masterman and was responsible for supervising double agents and deciding just what they should and shouldn't send to their German "masters".

Thus began the formation of the "double cross" system. German agents were picked up as soon as they arrived in this country. If they were considered suitable they were given a choice. Either to work for us as a double agent or face a short walk to the gallows. Self preservation is a powerful incentive!

Churchill had privately expressed surprise that although four spies had been captured on the south coast in September 1940, that none had been shot. So when Karel Richter was parachuted into Hertfordshire in 1941 Churchill insisted that he be tried and executed. MI5 were against this because it was known that he should have contacted another agent who had already been pressed into service as a double agent and it was feared that the safety of the double agent would be compromised. However, Churchill got his way and the unfortunate Richter was tried at the Old Bailey and hanged.

As time went on we not only had the advantage of the Ultra (Enigma), traffic but also we were in possession of what was known as a "double loop". In other words we knew what the Germans were up to when they replied to their "agents" and very often the reply contained the information that another agent would be arriving and contact should therefore be made.

As each agent was recruited into the service of the British, that agent had to be supplied with a case officer who would record everything and notionally put himself into the mindset of that agent. A safe house had to be provided and two guards to cover the 24 hour period of every day. A housekeeper was recruited to cook and clean.

Astonishing though it is, we actively controlled the German intelligence system in this country from the time of the fall of France, when the UK was effectively cut off from mainland Europe until after "D" Day, when once again two way accessibility was restored.

Of course there is no way that we knew this to be the case and we had to assume that other agents were at work, about which we knew nothing. The greater part of the war went by before we realised to what extent the Germans relied upon the forty or so agents which, in reality, were under our control. From 1942 onwards no further German agents were despatched to the UK. They had complete faith in Garbo and his ring of "agents".

The Twenty Committee had a most difficult task to decide just what information should and should not be relayed to the Germans. For example, a

certain agent may have technical aeronautical knowledge and be asked to provide certain information about a particular aircraft. He had to be given information which was believable or his own credibility would be destroyed. It was a fine balance to provide enough information to preserve that agent's standing in the eyes of the Germans – without passing on vital secrets. All in all an exercise for only the most brilliant minds.

Came 1942 and the Americans had entered the war. The double agents must have been aware that it was now only a matter of time before Germany was defeated. It was now in their interests to continue to work for us and they knew it!

So, the war continued and of course there were disasters but such was the inefficiency of the *Abwehr* that they continued to be deceived.

Thus we come to the biggest deception of all – the run up to "D" Day and Operation Fortitude. If the Germans did have independent agents in this country they surely would have discovered the elaborate deceptions, which included the wholesale manufacture of dummy aircraft and landing craft.

A map was captured during the Italy campaign and it shows just how completely the Germans had been hoodwinked into believing that they had been correct in keeping the bulk of their army in quite the wrong place – the Pas de Calais area. Together with all the other deceptions much of the credit for this must go to the fact that we controlled the German espionage system.

Garbo, in the eyes of the Germans, led the team of agents. The reality was that he did indeed lead the team – but they were a team of double agents!

Three days after "D" Day he sent an urgent message to the German High Command informing them that 75 Divisions were assembled in the south east of England ready to land in the Pas De Calais. He pointed out that no FUSAG, (a fictitious American "First US Army Group"), had not taken part in the Normandy landings. When no new landings took place they assumed that he had been wrong simply because the allies had changed their minds when the Normandy landings succeeded.

As a postscript to this whole extraordinary story Garbo was awarded an MBE in 1944 by the British and the grateful Germans awarded him an Iron Cross (second class)!

I have taken much of this article from JC Masterman's book "The Double Cross System". It is all proven fact but I cannot help sitting here thinking to myself, "who is going to believe that we actually controlled the whole German espionage system during WW2?".....

Alan Powell

Letter Spot

WATER, NOT JET FUEL!

Saturday 6 September 1952 and for my sins I was duty driver at R.A.F. Martlesham Heath and looking forward to a trouble free weekend.

This was not to be, for a Vampire NF10 had landed nearby R.A.F. Bentwaters, low on fuel. Bentwaters was a R.A.F. station by name only and its residents, the USAF, had requested a refuelling crew be sent to get their visitor on its way. So the duty engine fitter and myself complete with a Bedford QL refueller (bowser) set off on the 8 mile trip to Bentwaters.

We found the NF10 looking rather lonely on a huge concrete apron which it shared with a visiting C47 and a C1 19 Boxcar.

These two transports were being refuelled by a very large GMC articulated tanker, the tractor unit on its own being larger than our QL. Many R.A.F. vehicles in the early fifties were of wartime vintage, our QL being no exception. Fuel transferred from tanker to aircraft was moved by a pump powered by a stationary engine mounted on its own compartment positioned at the rear of the tank on the left hand side. Stationary engines fitted to all R.A.F. tankers were temperamental to say the least. These engines demanded a great deal of respect when you were attempting to start them. You had to remember the golden rule, never wrap your hand around the starting handle, for if the engine backfired, a common occurrence, it could break your finger or at worst your wrist. On this occasion the engine was not helpful, both the engine fitter and myself worked up a sweat trying to start it.

During this embarrassing procedure there was an almighty bang as it backfired with the starting handle flying down the apron breaking into two as it struck the concrete. The fitter and I looked at each other in red faced silence which was only broken by the deep rumble of the GMC monster as it neared the end of its task of refuelling the two transport aircraft. Sat in a jeep watching our predicament evolve was an American Sergeant who came over and kindly offered his help, saying that the unit workshops were always open and he would take our two-piece starting handle to see if it could be repaired. After some 40 minutes our friendly Sergeant returned with the handle beautifully repaired, fortunately the engine started with little or no bother.

Whilst the NF10 was finally being refuelled our newly found American friend calmly commented that 'back in the States they used these types of engines to pump water out of wells', then said his farewell and sped off in his jeep. So on this pleasant September afternoon the US Air Force had performed well. It had refuelled two large transport aircraft whilst we had endeavoured to get a stationary engine fit for pumping well water started. Secondly it had come to the aid of two desperate R.A.F. bods using WW2 equipment to refuel just one example of the R.A.F.'s frontline night fighter force!

Submitted by Mr Mick Merrills of Retford.

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

Our **September** meeting featured a talk by Mr John Cooper, who lives at Kesgrave. His talk was entitled "Splashdown on the Equator" and he related

his traumatic experiences when he was a passenger aboard an RAF Handley Page Hastings aircraft that crashed into the sea whilst trying to land at RAF Gann, one of the Maldivian islands. This happened on 1st March 1960 when John, together with a few other National Servicemen were being repatriated back to England. After taking off from another RAF station in Ceylon, (now Sri Lanka), the Hastings ran into severe turbulence due to tropical storms in the vicinity. The subsequent accident report stated that the aircraft made a long low approach in marginal weather conditions. Torrential rain was beating down and bouncing off the runway, making it difficult to distinguish from the surrounding sea. Also at a critical moment there was a brilliant flash of lightning which caused the pilot to lose clear vision. Suddenly there was an almighty crash as the aircraft hit the sea. The undercarriage was torn off and three of the four engines. It bounced three times before coming to rest and fortunately all aboard were able to get into life rafts. A Shackleton aircraft was scrambled from Gann and an RAF pinnacle was eventually guided by the Shackleton to the position of the passengers and crew.

October and our monthly meeting featured an illustrated talk by a representative from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Ian Small had come from their headquarters at Maidenhead in Berkshire to talk about the work of the CWGC.

The Commission was established by Royal Charter in 1917. Its duties are to mark and maintain the graves of the members of the forces of the Commonwealth who were killed in the two World Wars, to build memorials to those who have no known grave and to keep records and registers, including, after the Second World War, a record of the Civilian War Dead. Each of the dead should be commemorated individually by name on headstone or memorial; headstones and memorials should be permanent; headstones should be uniform; there should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed.

1.7 million died in the course of the two World Wars and they are remembered in no less than 23000 locations. The Commission has an annual budget of £32 million and this equates to approximately £10 per head.

Ian Small invited members of the audience to give him names to access on his laptop computer. Invariably he was able to find the names offered by several members. The power of the modern computer! How different from the laborious time consuming and labour intensive systems that were used in the past.

Our November meeting featured a speaker who had been booked for a previous month but due to family problems, had been unable to speak on that occasion.

Our **November** meeting featured an illustrated talk by Mr Terry Gates-Grimwood. The title of the talk was "The R101 – Suffolk Connection". Terry should have delivered this talk a few months ago but his wife was taken ill and he was obliged to postpone it.

All who read this will surely be aware of the Holy Family and St Michael Roman Catholic Church along the main road at Kesgrave. This church was built as a memorial to Squadron Leader FM Rope, who lived at Kesgrave and was a member of the crew of the ill-fated R101 Airship.

As a result of the lead given by Germany in the development of their successful Zeppelins the British Government of the day considered it essential that we should have our own airships. The "Imperial Airship Scheme" was formed in the early 20's and two airships were built. The R100 was a private enterprise development and was reasonably successful. However, the R101 was to incorporate new and untried features and was funded by the public purse and built at the Royal Airship works at Cardington. The two vast airship sheds that were built for the two airships can still be seen from the A45 dominating the skyline.

The enormous superstructure was built by Boulton and Paul of Norwich and was of high tensile steel. The engines were six Canadian built marine diesel engines. The length of the R101 was 735ft but this was to be increased to 773ft when it was realised that more lift was required.

The government decided that the maiden flight of the R101 was to be to Karachi in India to convey the new Viceroy of India to a British Empire conference scheduled to be held there on 20th October 1930. This highly prestigious maiden flight was due almost predictably to end in disaster. The R101 crashed at Beauvais just north of Paris on October 5th 1930. Only six of the forty eight on board were to survive. Neither Squadron Leader Rope or the new Viceroy of India were not among the survivors.

We had a bumper turn out of more than 165 for our special aviation meeting on Thursday 18th November.

A packed Church of St Michael's and All Angels were present on a particularly cold and rainy night to hear Mr Robert Gilliland give a talk about the legendary SR-71a Blackbird.

Robert was a test pilot for Lockheed in America which were the designers of the Blackbird and was able to give us first hand information about an aeroplane which was – and still is, the fastest 'plane in the world. Built largely of titanium the SR71 can fly at Mach 3.2 (more than 2000 mph or 3.100ft per second), at altitudes in excess of 80000ft. (15 miles high). By comparison the muzzle velocity of a bullet from a rifle is about 3000ft per second!

Robert Gilliland met one of our members at Duxford some time ago. Robert Dunnett, who is never backward in coming forward, told him about our society and Robert Gilliland agreed there and then to come and give us a talk when he was next in England.

A vote of thanks was given by our President, Gordon Kinsey.

December and in place of our usual Christmas party we were entertained by our own member, Stan Ward. A very good gathering were present to hear Stan at his best, with a talk entitled "Humour in Aviation".

An idea of Stan's lifelong obsession with flying was revealed when Stan described how, in 1934 he and some friends cycled overnight to Mildenhall in time to see the DH Comets take off for the Mildenhall to Melbourne Air race. His story of flying from the time that he joined the RAF as a boy entrant, pilot training in Oklahoma, when he was very lucky to survive a crash in a Stearman, his time as a flight instructor in the RAF and his post-war flying both at Marshalls airfield at Cambridge and at Ipswich airfield was all told with a terrific sense of humour.

He hardly touched on his experiences as a display pilot and the audience would happily stayed until midnight to listen to more and laugh with Stan. He clocked up approximately 13500 hours flying during his eventful career. 9500 of those hours was with the RAF. His log book reveals that he flew 211 different Tiger Moths.

A great evening. Thanks Stan!