

MHAS Guest Book Archive - 2007

Note: email addresses have been modified to reduce 'harvesting' by spammers.

Date: 17th December 2007

Name: Evelyn Beattie (Pryke)

Email: beattie2(at)supanet.com

Connection: Father based there in 1945-47 approx

Message: My father was in the RAF and based here for some time. He ended up tending the land/gardens and growing food crops, rearing ducks, chickens and rabbits for the consumption of the lads. He was called Arthur Pryke and was under Squadron Leader Tate. He also went shooting with a local farmer.

Can anyone remember him?

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 14th December 2007

Name: Chas Phillips

Email: chaselvis.phillips(at)gmail.com

Connection: Stationed at Martlesham Heath from May 1955 to July 1957

MH job: Cpl in Tech Control and Tech Records Section

Located now: Retired and living in Billingham

Message: I have attended a few MHAS meetings this year but I would like to thank you for the meeting featuring Charlie Haylock on Dec 7th. I enjoyed the evening very much and am still laughing.

Thanks again for some good programs.

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 07th December 2007

Name: Derek Steele

Email: tolleshunt(at)btinternet.com

Connection: My dad Sgt. Herbert Steele 1882707 at MH 7/9/59 to 27/1/61

MH job: His trade was Air Traffic Control (ex air gunner)

Located now:

Message: Is there any record of his service at Martlesham Heath or anyone who remembers him? At the age of 50+ he must have been one of the oldest on the station.

Date: 05th December 2007

Name: John Connell

Email: John.D.CConnell(at)btinternet.com

Connection: Schoolboy visits in the 60s when airfield disused

MH job:

Located now: Rtd Lt Cdr RN ex-Fleet Air Arm Pilot

Message: Excellent website with many poignant anecdotes. Good news to know you are keeping the memory live for youngsters especially.

INCLUDEPICTURE "http://mhas.org.uk/img/lay/separator.jpg" *

MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 07th November 2007

Name: Lt Col Mark ZER-0 Ciero

Email: meciero(at)yahoo.com

Connection: USAF Aviator Officer participating in 11 Nov 07 memorial
MH job: Lt Col, Dir of Ops, Eval/Instr WSO, 494 FS RAFL
Located now: RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk, UK

Date: 20th October 2007

Name: Bob Blunden

Email: roseann#at#ntlworld.com

Connection:

MH job: Eng. Mech. with BLEU 1955-1957

Located now: Farnborough, Hampshire (Retired)

Message:

I recently visited Martlesham. The museum was closed. Now that I know of it I will visit one of these days.

On my return home I went into MHAS.org.uk and came accross your memoirs. I, as SAC Bob Blunden, was with BLEU in the hangar behind the guardroom from Sept. 55 until the unit moved to Bedford in June 57.

I was amazed that both buildings are still standing, as are the barrack blocks.

I have memories of Ron Blake the dog handler whose dog left its fleas on the guardroom beds to the discomfort of the guards.

I also remember the Canberra crash at Crown Point. I was one of the duty crew sent to "guard the crash". My photo appeared in the local paper attempting to remove the aircraft tail cone for the boffins. I have many pleasant memories of those days.

Good luck

Bob Blunden

Date: 12th October 2007

Name: Rob Drake

Email: robdrake#at#tiscali.co.uk

Connection: Established and manage the Roll of Honour project

MH job:

Located now:

Message: Would just like to inform visitors to the roll of honour site that difficulties have been experienced. The site is a privately funded "premium" site and the sheer volume of visitors each month causes the site to crash. There are plans to seek funding for an upgrade so please be patient. Many thanks to you all for your continued support.

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 2nd October 2007

Name: John O'Donnell

Email: declanspub#at#comcast.net

Connection: Lived in a farmhouse northeast of field on Felixstowe Road

MH job:

Located now: North Stonington, Connecticut USA

Message: My father was stationed at Bentwaters AFB during the 1970s. We lived in a large farmhouse just to the North of the airfield. I was 6 to 8 years old at the time. I do remember riding my bike down there often to watch skydivers at the time who, if I remember correctly, may have been using the field. As an adult now I have a renewed interest in WWII aviation history and I'm happy to

see that Martlesham memories are being preserved for generations to come.

Date: 30th September 2007

Name: Victor Skeet

Email: victorandeva59#at#tiscali.co.uk

Connection: December 1940--April 1941

MH job: A.C 2 instrument repairer station headquarters 605

Located now: RETIRED IPSWICH 50 DUNLIN ROAD

Note:

Vic can be seen in an interview with Felixstowe TV at the 2007 Anniversary Open Day talking about some of his memories of RAF Martlesham Heath. Vic appears in the second half of the video. See the video, here.

Date: 26th September 2007

Name: Peter Lewis

Email: plewis#at#leadershape.biz

Connection: My father Flt Lt G I Lewis flew his last fatal Op 12/8/1941

MH job: n/a

Located now: 17, Backchurch Lane, London E1 1LQ

Message: Interested to add my research re above.

My father was based at Wattisham with No.226 Squadron, Blenheim Mk4s. Flew as 1 of 2 navigators for the fighters providing cover for the returning Knapsack raiders. KIA over Flushing, crashed Philippine(Holland) buried in CWG Flushing. I have visited the crash site and hope to have a small monument erected in due course. Any additional info re MH will be fascinating.

NB There is now a v nice joint USAAF/RAF Memorial at Wattisham. Is there anything similar at MH or is anything planned?

My son lives just S of Colchester so I can get to MH in about 45 mins if I am staying with him. I very much want to visit MH as I had no idea it existed. I had assumed it had disappered to the developers/supermarkets etc!

Pls contact me with any relevant info but I will check the site for event details and try to get along asap.

Best wishes

Peter Lewis

Hi Peter

Thank you for your entry in our guestbook. I was interested in your story about your father.

Yes we do have a memorial here at Martlesham. In fact there are 2. one is dedicated to the RAF personnel and and the second is to the USAAF personnel who gave their lives.

Each year we have a moving remembrance service at Barrack Square and it is well supported. Our 2006 one can be seen at

<http://www.mhas.org.uk/news/nr20061112.html>

This year it will be held on the 11th November at 3-00 PM. If you would like to attend you would be very welcome. You might also like to visit our museum which is open on Sunday afternoons untill the last Sunday in October.

If you would like any further information please contact me here

Regards

MHAS Volunteer

Date: 24th September 2007

Name: Rob Drake

Email: robdrake#at#tiscali.co.uk

Connection: Manage the MH Roll of Honour project

MH job:

Located now:

Message: I'd like to thank to all those who have supported the Roll of Honour project. The site has recieved in excess of three hundred hits by 150 visitors over the first four months. I would still welcome any input regarding names, dates, places etc. Am especially interested to have any detail on our American cousins. If you have not yet visited the site...please do!

Many thanks to you all.

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 30th July 2007

Name: David William Tegge

Email: Ravenna24#at#aol.com

Connection: Uncle was First Sergeant Of the 361st Fighter Squadron

MH job: ED TEGGE of Pittsburgh Pa 1st Sgt of 361 st FS

Located now: North Carolina

Message: Anyone can contact me if they know of ED TEGGE from Pittsburgh PA who served at Martlesham Heath

Date: 30th July 2007

Name: Chris Pinn

Email: chris.pinn#at#web.de

Connection: My Dad flew Whirlwind helicopters there in the late 50's

MH job:

Located now:Germany

Message: My Dad, F/Sgt Ron Pinn, was based at Martlesham Heath the end of the 1950's flying 22 Sqn Whirlwind helicopters before the squadron moved to RAF Felixstowe. I believe there were only two Whirlwinds at MH, one in an unusual two tone grey & blue and the other in the more normal yellow. We lived in married quarters at Felixstowe and I biked a few times to Martlesham to look at the airfield as I was just as keen about aircraft then as I am now. I have a vague memory that the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight was temporarily based at MH as we often saw a Spitfire or two over Felixstowe in the summer months.

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 01st July 2007

Name: Laurence Garey

Email: l.garey#at#freesurf.ch

Connection:

MH job:

Located now:CH-1166 Perroy, Switzerland

Message: I just found your web site and it brought back memories of my visits to Martlesham in July 1952. I was just 11 years old, and already obsessed with aviation. I spent a few days that Summer with my grandparents in Deben Avenue which was right next to the airfield. By going down to the end of the avenue I could get through a field and onto the airfield where I settled in most

days between the 20th and 26th July with my binoculars. I was finally chased off by some RAF

police in a Landrover. I wonder if anyone remembers the comings and goings around that time. I saw 3 Mosquitos, 2 early Canberras, 4 Martinets, an Oxford, a Dakota, a Devon, a Viking, a Meteor NF11, and 2 Cadet Mark 3 gliders plus a Grunau Baby and a Sedburgh.

Some of you might be interested to know a little more about the actual aircraft I saw.

They were, in alphabetical order of types:

20 July 1952 WT910 Cadet TX3

Built 1952. Delivered to ATC May 1952, so very new when I saw it. Became BGA3953, and now rebuilt by North Wales Gliding Club as WT910.

20 July 1952 WT911 Cadet TX3

This one was mentioned by Peter Bower on the MH site on 17/8/06. Allocated G-BODG for a motor conversion project, but exported to USA instead.

21 July 1952 WD947 Canberra B2

Delivered November 1951. Was at Farnborough in 1957.

23 July 1952 KJ836 Dakota IV

KJ836 ex C47B 43-48359. Became G-APML in 1958. Owned by Martin-Baker, then to Air Atlantique and broken up at Baginton. Still there in 1997. Nose cut off and sent to Kuwait for a restaurant!

23 July 1952 VP979 Devon C1

ETPS in 1959. Struck off 1968.

20 July 1952 VT921 Grunau Baby II

21 July 1952 EM503 Martinet I

21 July 1952 EM700 Martinet I

21 July 1952 MS781 Martinet TTI

21 July 1952 PX165 Martinet TTI

20 July 1952 PF564 Mosquito BXVI

Delivered 1944 or 5. Served at Woodbridge, ATEU and Bomb Ballistics Unit. Said to have been given MU serial 6997M in 1950, but I saw in at MH in 1952 as PF564.

23 July 1952 RK949 Mosquito NF30

Delivered 1945. CS (A). Disposed of 1954.

20 July 1952 VX861 Mosquito NF38

Belonged to the makers. Delivered 1950, and disposed of in 1954.

24 July 1952 WD782 NF11

Delivered 1952. Sold to Fairy Aviation.

21 July 1952 T1214 Oxford II

26 July 1952 WB927 T21B Sedburgh TX1

Delivered 1949. Written off 1983.

23 July 1952 VX141 Viking 1A

The 3rd prototype Viking, ex G-AGOM.

Incidentally, on 12 April 1959 I noted WE993 T30 Prefect TX1 Delivered 1951, written off 1963.

Maybe you can add more details, for which I would be most grateful, such as the units with which they were serving at MH in 1952. For instance, I saw in Peter

Bower's Guest Book entry that the Grunau Baby (was it a 1B or a 2?) belonged to an officer, but what happened to it?

<http://l.garey.googlepages.com/home>

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 10th June 2007

Name: Frank Roberts

Email: frank.roberts4#at#btinternet.com

Connection: Served National Service 1951/52

MH job: Batman, Officers Mess, Rank LAC

Located now: Retired, 7 Mill Lane, Skipsea, Nr Driffield, East Yorkshire Message:
[no message left]

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 03rd June 2007

Name: Andy Mays in Maine

Email: b17lostairmen#at#yahoo.com

Message: **I just read my earlier post (below, 1st June) and need to make an important clarification**

From the list of 360th FS pilots that flew the day my Great Uncle's B-17 ditched (2Lt Fletcher Johnson-pilot) I was fortunate to be able to speak with two, Hunter Parker (USAF Retired) and Bert Ellingson (USAF Retired). **They were NOT the pilots who misidentified and fired upon the British Air/Sea Rescue boat.**

Date: 01st June 2007

Name: Andy Mays in Maine

Email: b17lostairmen#at#yahoo.com

Connection: Friend of 360th pilots

Located now: Maine, USA

Message:

I saw entries in the guestbook about Albert Niemi. I tried to email his son Gary and also Linda Tukey but their addresses are no longer valid. I'm posting here in hopes they read it.

Hello Gary,

This week I spoke with two pilots who flew with your father. They are Hunter Parker and Bert Ellingson. Your father was in Hunter Parker's Flight (unit smaller than a squadron). I am doing a research project on my great uncle who killed March 23, 1944. His B-17 ditched in the North Sea. Two pilots from your father's squadron mistakenly destroyed the British patrol boat that was going to rescue the B-17 crew. I received a list of the pilots who flew that day and was able to locate those two. I read them all of the other pilot's names and they both remembered your dad.

Hunter Parker will be 90 this fall. His memory is fantastic. He lives with his son Robert and still drives (during the day).

Bert Ellingson spends the winter in TX and rest of the year in South Dakota.

Best Wishes,

Andy Mays in Maine

Read my story;

http://www.mdislander.com/archive/2005/09-01-05/mdi_news6_09-01-05.html

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 01st June 2007

Name: Ron Blake

Email: spjblake#at#hotmail.com

Connection: R.A.F. Police Dog Handler 1956

MH job:

Located now:Retired - Sydney, Australia

Message: I was stationed at RAF Martlesham Heath for part of 1956. I was able to see the AVRO 707a being tested. I was also there when the Canberra crashed at Crown Point. I was an RAF Police Dog Handler. I was sent with one other handler to guard the crash site because reporters were becoming a nuisance.

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 23rd May 2007

Name: Erik Bjorklund

Email: erik-bjorklund#at#hotmail.com

Connection: My grandfather was a radio operator in the 360th

MH job: n/a

Located now:New Jersey

Message: My grandfather, Frank Hauser, was a radio operator with the 360th. He was in Europe for nearly 2 years and I assume he was stationed at MH... don't know much after that. He didn't really talk about the war, but now that I am older and he has passed, I would like to know if anybody has heard of him, or has any info.

Thank you and I welcome all replies.

Date: 19th May 2007

Name: Gavin Hamilton

Email: gavin.hamilton#at#tiscali.co.uk

Connection: Member of MHAS

MH job: N/A

Located now:Care/Support worker with young adults with learning difficulties

Message: Looks like you have more than just the one ghost at Martlesham Heath, I came across this site the other day after a pal gave me the this link For all you budding ghost hunters out there.

Regards, Gavin

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MERGEFORMATINET

From: <kikambala#at#tiscali.co.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, May 09, 2007 5:54 PM

Subject: AV gas sign

I have attached a picture of the sign from the av gas tanks in the woods we are trying to find out what the missing words are on the sign, I wonder if you could asked around the MHAS group or put it on your web site?

Best wishes

Duncan

Click on the image to see a larger version

INCLUDEPICTURE "http://mhas.org.uk/img/lay/separator.jpg" *

MERGEFORMATINET

Date: Mon, 7 May 2007 19:10:44 +0100

From: V M Gunnell

Subject: Re - Yorkshire Air Museum Query and Aviation Paintings

Can Anyone Shine a Light on Yorkshire Air Museum Museum's New Exhibit?

A curious new artefact that has gone on display is causing some consternation as, although it is a genuine WWII artefact, few people seem to have seen one before! It is, we believe, an RAF Lamplighters bicycle, used by the person who went around the base lighting oil burning 'Tilly' lamps. The bicycle was manufactured by BSA, who manufactured a variety of 'military' cycles, including a folding 'Airborne' bicycle. None of our current veteran volunteers can recall seeing a Lamplighters bicycle and we would like to confirm that this is indeed what it is. It is indeed a strange contraption with cages at either end, presumably for holding the lamps as it was ridden around the base. Not that it would have been easy to ride! It is fair to say that it is a rather cumbersome machine.

The bicycle was donated to the museum by Philip Jenkinson of North Devon, who was a mid-upper gunner on Halifax bombers of No.10 Squadron, based near York at Melbourne, during WWII. Philip developed a keen interest in bicycles and has been a collector for over 20 years. He has taken the lamplighters bicycle to a number of shows around the country, where it has always generated curious looks. However, he has never seen another one like it, giving an indication of the rarity of the bicycle. Philip is now scaling down his collection and decided that the Yorkshire Air Museum should be the new home for the bike, given his connection to the area. We were delighted to receive the artefact but we would like to know more about it! So, if readers have any recollection of using such a machine, we would be pleased to hear from you and get your story!

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 07th May 2007

Name: George (13)

Email: pgtipsmonkeywitte#at#hotmail.co.uk

Connection: Live near it

MH job: Army Cadets

Located now:

Message: I find the local history of airfields Suffolk has lots of good American airbase examples like Martlesham Heath Rougham Boxted Wormingford Leiston Halesworth in Norfolk Steeple Morden in Cambridgeshire. One of my favourite fighter groups is the 56th fighter group based in Boxted. I can't get my head around the thought of p51s and p47s flying around the area it is FANTASTIC!

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 22nd April 2007

Name: Rob Drake

Email: robdrake#at#tiscali.co.uk

Connection: Live there

Message: Over the past year I have been researching the names of all those killed at, over or from RAF Martlesham Heath between 1917 and 1962 with a view to establishing a roll of Honour. Those brave men of the 356th FG are well documented however there is currently no established list for the names of the British, Commonwealth, Dominion and other allied servicemen who gave their lives operating there.

I have at least seventy names so far and intend to continue until all have been

accounted for. My aim is to hand this completed list to the society so that they really shall never be forgotten.

Can anybody help?

Do you know of anybody who may be included in this list?

I shall be publishing a website very soon with the Roll of Honour as it currently stands, address to follow, and would appreciate any help or assistance anybody could offer.

Many thanks.

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 03rd March 2007

Name: Ryan (age 12)

Email: rjb49#at#btinternet.com

Message: Thanks for a great talk evening on Voodoos with Group Captain Nigel Walpole (rtd).

Hi Ryan

Thank you very much for your entry in our guest book. I am so pleased that enjoyed the evening. it was good, as are most of our evenings.

It would be nice to see you again and perhaps you would have many more interesting evenings. For our August meeting we have a visit out to some where interesting. If you look at this page you can see what we get up to.

Once again thank you, and if need any help or information please don't hesitate to ask.

MHAS Volunteer

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 15th February 2007

Name: john cornish

Email: john.marjorie.cornish#at#talktalk.net

Located now:retired

Message: General interest in aviation

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MERGEFORMATINET

Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007

From: Linda Tukey

Email: ltukey#at#pivot.net

Subject: RE: MHAS guestbook update

Just wanted you to know that I have gotten Gary Niemi in touch with Ray Withers who flew with his Dad - Albert - at Martelsham Heath. Have had great e-mails back and forth, and it has been a great experience helping a son be able to put some of his father's greatest achievements as well as his demons in focus. His Dad has been dead for 30 years so Gary really needed to get some info into line.

Thanks for your help as always.

Linda Tukey

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MERGEFORMATINET

Date: Sunday, January 21, 2007

Name: David Wills

Email: dctwills#at#earthlink.net

Hi

How would I find details of a famous hotshot 1940's pilot, name of Peter Wyndam? He flew Spitfires in the Mediterranean, was stationed at Boscombe Down, amongst other places. Won a number of medals.

David

San franciscoco

INCLUDEPICTURE "http://mhas.org.uk/img/lay/separator.jpg" *

MERGEFORMATINET

Date: 20th January 2007

Name: Gary Niemi

Email: dklniemi#at#comcast.net

Connection: My Dad flew 97 P-47 missions with the 360th in WW2

Message: If anyone has info on my Dad, Albert V. Niemi, who flew a P-47 Thunderbolt called "Cape Codder" in WW2 please reply.

Date: 02nd January 2007

Name: Joe Wommack

Email: enfrwommack#at#aol.com

Connection: Just a guy who has fond memories of England(Bentwaters)

Located now:Lakeland Fla.aircraft maint.(retired)2330 Peterson Rd 33813

Message: England will always be in our hearts and mind

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MERGEFORMATINET

My Days at 612 Gliding School Martlesham Heath

Researched and compiled by Peter C Bower

With much appreciated help from Sqd Ldr Ronald Page MBE RAFVR (T) Ret.

Who was CFI at 612 Gliding School RAF Martlesham Heath.

Originally submitted 17 August 2006, revised 13 August 2007, re-written 21 November 2007

It all started one Sunday morning in 1958 when a friend who was an air cadet told me that the gliding school would possibly let me help them. So I cycled over one early Sunday morning and waited near the glider hanger. I have to say at this early stage in my memoirs that most of my recollections are from a rather faded memory so if I have made any mistakes, I apologise now.

Very soon two officer looking gentlemen in flying suits walked down from the wooden hut which was situated amongst the trees behind the control tower. I said could I help them. I was only 14 at the time but this did not seem to worry the two officers. Yes they said, you can help us pull these gliders out to the launch area. These two officers I later learnt were Ron Page and Arthur Pryke who both said I should join the air cadets if I wished to carry on helping. I dually joined the Ipswich ATC at 14 and helped out at the GS at weekends doing odd jobs such as retrieving gliders and operating the 'Aldis' lamp.

At the age of 16 I became a staff cadet and was shown how to drive the Bedford 15 hundred weight trucks and later the 'Wild' winches which were used to launch the gliders. The two Wild winches were originally parked when not in use in an old open ended 'Nissen' hut which was on the perimeter road along side the A-12 not far from where the Suffolk County Police HQ is now.. Due to increasing vandalism by local kids they were eventually parked in the glider hanger under lock and key.

Both Wild winches were replaced around 1960 with a purpose built Bedford twin

drum winch. For those interested, the Wild winch was built by the firm Wild and Co for barrage balloon operations during the war. They were powered by a Ford Mercury Flat head V-8 engine which were built by Ford UK under licence from Ford USA.

This same engine became surplus after the war so Ford UK decided to make the Ford Pilot car to use up the engines. It is now a very collectable classic car.

The CO at 612 gliding school at the time I was there was Arthur Pryke and the CFI was Ron Page who was an absolute Harry Secombe character. There were other instructors but their names now escape me.

612 gliding school had 3 Kirby Cadet Mk 3's, WT910, WT911 and XE786, One Slingsby T-21 Sedberg WB927, and one Grunau Baby 2b VT921. The 3 Cadets were later fitted with 'spoilers'.

The Grunau Baby spent most of its time dismantled in the hanger as by the late 50's the glue joints had become brittle and it was grounded for safety reasons. Ron Page informed me that he obtained his 'Silver' C certificate some time in the 50's flying the Grunau Baby from Martlesham Heath up to the Norfolk coast where he landed. The Grunau Baby was basically war 'booty' and it became part of the RAF's glider inventory and assigned to the air cadets where it was loaned out to various gliding schools in East Anglia for periods of time. I flew all the gliders mentioned with the exception of the Grunau while I was at 612.

Over my 4 year stint at 612 I logged over 275 flights, all dual, but gained my solo wings [when I was 16] after an add hock end of day training flight each weekend. My main duties as a staff cadet were winch launching the gliders and driving the trucks to retrieve the cables and gliders.

Quite often during Sunday afternoons while manning the winches especially at the Foxhall Road end of the air field, the local ice cream vendor on his 3 wheel tricycle would stop and shout at us from the public road. One of us would run over and buy the ice creams. It was Nielson's ice cream and I always had their Velvet Lady, the best ice cream I have ever tasted. I eventually was deemed ready for my solo flight and Ron Page gave me the thumbs up, I was still 16 years old. After releasing the cable on my 3rd solo at about 1200 Ft I hit a strong thermal and circled in it to about 2000 Ft. There seemed to be panic on the ground as I could see the 'Aldis' lamp being flashed at me from the launch area. I took this to mean get down so I did with a huge telling off from Ron Page, but I had thermalled for over 15 minutes from release so was granted an 'A' 'B' and 'C' certificate. From there on I was given one or two of 'solo' flights each weekend, usually at the end of the day and the last one quite often being the hanger flight. Later when I moved to London I joined the Essex Gliding Club at North Weald but with marriage and work now more important plus the costs I had to give gliding up.

I now occasionally fly radio controlled sail planes but this is pretty expensive too. I still have friends in the gliding world who I see now and again.

The DH Vampire Incident

Back to my school days, I was cycling down 'B' Flight road one weekday on Martlesham Heath airfield where I had to stop at the traffic light controlled runway threshold crossing. On finals was a DH Vampire. He seemed very low yet still some way off the runway. He actually touched down on 'B' Flight road first, bounced up and touched down on the runway rather hard only to lose his nose

wheel; the vampire came to rest down the runway with fire engines racing out to meet him. The canopy flew up and out jumped two pilots with one beating the other round the head with what looked like a log book. It was so funny to see and thankfully no one was hurt.

The F-84 Thunderstreak incident.

In the late 50's, the USAF were flying F-84 Thunderstreaks out of nearby RAF Bentwaters. One such aircraft had to make an emergency landing at the Heath as he apparently had engine trouble. He landed but the engine had died so he was towed off the runway and parked on the apron near the small hangers. The F-84 sat there for nearly a week before there was any sign of USAF ground crew to fix it. Rumour has it that the RAF issued an ultimatum to USAF Bentwaters that if they didn't come a fix it and fly it out, it would become part of the RAF's inventory. It was repaired a couple of days later and flown out.

The F-100 Super Sabre Incident.

This incident can probably be better described by Dennis Smith who is a member of the MHAS, but here are my observations. One Saturday morning Dennis and his friend John Riches [of Riches garage Kesgrave] were kicking a football around on the RAF's football pitch which was adjacent to the A-12 when an F-100 flew low over them towards the village of Kesgrave. They both noticed it had no canopy and the engine was very quiet. Dennis said jokingly to John, that's on your house. Seconds later there was a huge explosion some ¼ mile down the road and with that they raced down the road to Riches garage only to find it flattened, on fire with the houses each side on fire as well.

I was lying in bed late that Saturday morning when I heard the explosion, it was more of a thump that you felt through your body. I looked out of my bedroom window to see a huge plume of smoke only about 20 houses away. I was dressed and on my bike and there at the scene within 2 minutes. The local Bobby was there on his own trying to keep the local villagers back.

The engine of the F-100 had ploughed a furrow across several gardens and there were Calor gas bottles exploding in the now flattened Riches garage. Very quickly the Foam tender from RAF MH arrived and put all the fires out including the houses. 45 minutes later a USAF fire engine arrived from Bentwaters but it was all out by the time he got there. Sadly, a woman working in the petrol forecourt office was killed but Mrs Riches had just gone up the garden to feed her chickens and had escaped the impact, how lucky is that.

Mr Riches apparently received compensation from the USAF for the loss of his business and house but I have no details. The pilot had ejected some where over Crown Point Martlesham and had floated down into Bealings woods. The USAF was there for weeks after searching and retrieving all the parts that were left of the F-100 Super Sabre.

The WAAF Ghost

Several of the gliding school staff had mentioned this phenomena and at least two who I can't remember their names claimed they had seen her. I never did.

Apparently, a WAAF in WW-2 uniform is sometimes seen walking always at dusk across the airfield from the direction of the old mess which was not far away and behind the control tower in the direction of the smaller hangers opposite the tower. She apparently was always at least a hundred yards away and vanished from view when she reached the other side of the airfield.

I'm told that no WAAFs were stationed at the Heath during the war which I find hard to believe. The old mess was knocked down in the 60's because of an asbestos hazard and a school now stands on its old site.

The Glider crash incident or more to the point, the glider that landed in the trees. I was on winch duty that Sunday up at the Foxhall road end of the airfield and had launched a cadet on his first solo. We never knew at the winch end if cadets were on solo or not. It was just another launch to us winch drivers. I recon I got him to at least 1100 ft and he started his down wind leg but he seemed a tad high. A few seconds later I noticed him some where over the control tower but a lot lower then he turned away from the airfield towards the A-12 road and just disappeared. I then noticed every body either running or driving away from the launch area towards the A-12 road. The long a short of it was he tried to lose height [when he didn't need to] by starting a 360 degree turn or at least an 'S' manoeuvre but made the fatal mistake of turning away from the airfield too low. He came to rest in the tops of some Silver Birch trees inside the airfield and at the back of the houses in Deben Avenue. Ron Page was one of the first to arrive at the crash site to find the cadet standing on a compost heap crying his eyes out with the glider still perched in the trees. He obviously had climbed out and was not at all injured apart from a few bruises.

The cadet told Ron he was very upset about the damaged glider. The RAF's fire tender and a field ambulance turned up and the cadet was taken off to the sick bay to be checked over. I believe he was never considered again for flying training. The glider was fairly damaged and was removed from the tree tops by RAF maintenance.

The Woman on Horse incident

One Sunday morning we were waiting for a low cloud base to rise, we had all the gliders out on the launch area but it was taking its time to lift. I was manning one of the winches along with a pal in the other winch at the Foxhall road end of the airfield. We could hardly see the launch area due to the poor visibility. We just sat there waiting.

Now I'm not sure who decided to fly and if I knew I wouldn't tell you, all I know is that it was an instructor and a cadet. The Aldis lamp started to flash take up slack for my winch. So, I launched a glider which was a cadet Mk 3. It went out of sight at about 600 Ft but I continued the launch until I felt him release. Its pretty weird launching a glider you cannot see but that's what I did.

Ironically, there was no signal given for the other winch to launch a glider so we sat once again waiting. Soon the cloud lifted but down at the launch area, they were missing one glider. I guess about 45 minutes later a woman on horse back came galloping over to the launch area to say in a very posh voice " I say have you lost a glider, its in my field in Brightwell". Landing 'out' is forbidden by cadet gliding schools not to mention flying in low cloud. A retrieval crew went out to this field in Brightwell which was about half a mile away, and wheeled the glider back by hand down the country lanes to the airfield. Both cadet and instructor were OK. I'm not at all sure what the consequences were for those concerned but I guess some one got a rocket.

The Horizontal Joggers Beat up

I was up in the T-21 with Ron Page and were around 1000 Ft altitude when Ron nudged my arm and said look there's a couple 'at it' in the middle of that corn field.

The field was part of Jolly's farm and up at the Foxhall road end of the airfield. With that Ron put the T-21 into a dive and we swooped at very low level, about 20 feet over this couple who were still horizontal. Now a glider at speed whistles like mad and this had the desired effect because as we pulled up from our swoop into a stall turn we could see two people sit up half naked shaking their fists at us. To add insult to injury, Ron let out one of his famous Harry Secombe laughs which they no doubt heard.

In the early 60's the grass alongside the runway on the control tower side was dug up to make a dirt landing strip for the HS 748 [Andover] rough landing trials.

The gliding school had to abandon its hanger and squadron hut and move to the other side of the runway where the RAF had provided one of its smaller hangers for our use.

In 1961 I moved to London with my parents and in 1962 Ron's civilian job had moved him near RAF Henlow Bedfordshire where he joined 616 GS Henlow as an instructor. Just under a year later Ron's job moved him back to the Ipswich area but by this time 612 Gliding School had closed and the gliders, winches etc. returned to the RAF's inventory. Over time the RAF started selling off a lot of the older gliders to private buyers. This was due to a modernisation program where the air cadets were equipped with more up to date gliders which included the new self launching gliders.

One such private sale was WT-911 which ended up in East Lothian and was last heard of in 2004 waiting to be converted to a motorised glider with the registration G-BODG.

My latest information is that it went out to the USA sometime after 2004 but I'm not sure where or if it was converted or not before it went.

By September 1963 Ron had been given promotion as CO in charge of 611 gliding school at RAF Swanton Morley where he served as CO for over 25 years. During Ron's time at Swanton Morley he was visited by Douglas Bader one weekend and Ron gave Bader 3 training flights in a glider and then sent him solo.

You won't believe this but Ron was given a good sorting out by the 'brass' for letting a civilian fly in an RAF aircraft. When Ron retired he was the longest serving VTR Officer in the UK having gained his commission in 1946. He was awarded the MBE and now lives in retirement in Woodbridge Suffolk.

When RAF Swanton Morley closed 611 moved to RAF Watton in Norfolk [now army] and are still active today flying the 'Viking' gliders. Some time later, I'm not sure of the time span, the old 612 gliding school was re established at RAF Abingdon Oxfordshire where they fly the 'Vigilant' T.1 motorised [self launching] gliders.

If there is anybody that can recall their days with 612 gliding school Martlesham Heath, please get in touch with me via the MHAS.