

MHAS Guest Book Archive - 2008

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

Date: 20th November 2008

Name: Nigel Ramsay

Email: nskywrite(at)aol.com

Connection: My Father, F/Lt Harry (Sailor) Ramsay served here in 1952/3

MH job: 5 yr old son of Meteor Pilot! (1952)

Located now:

Message: I have the fondest memories of RAF Martlesham Heath. My Father served here from around 1952 and we lived in Warnford House, then officers married qtrs. I went to St Annes School in Woodbridge. The C/O then was Johnny Johnstone (I think that's the spelling) and lived next door. My Father and Mother enjoyed a good social life, Pearl and 'Sailor' Harry Ramsay, if anyone remembers them after all this time it would be great to hear from them.

I have some photos taken then and I will endeavour to scan them and send them to the society.

I particularly remember playing in an old Anson which the C/O left for the kids to enjoy, and ghost stories about Dobbs the highwayman. Warnford was mean't to be haunted too!



Date: 11th October 2008

Name: Cliff Collins

Email: codd(s)at)tiscali.co.uk

Connection: Served with BLEU 1955 as aircraft electrician

MH job: air electrician, 4165108 sac, 1955/56

Located now: Retired, now living at Guildford

Message: This was my first posting after training. I enjoyed my work on the different planes; Devon, Varsity, Canberra, (crashed on approach while I was there.) Avro 707 the 3rd scale model of the Vulcan. Was then moved to BLEU at Bedford. Then to Christmas Island for one year. Then RAF Lyneham. Then demob.



Date: 15th August 2008

Name: Brian Spurway

Email: bspur(at)lindenlea81.fsnet.co.uk

Connection: My father was a Flt Sgt in the MT Section from 1949 to 1952.

Located now: Retired and living in Malmesbury, Wiltshire.

Message:

We lived in Airmens' Married Quarters and both my brother Ian and I attended Martlesham Primary School. I passed the 11 Plus in 1950 and went to Woodbridge School, initially as a day-boy and then later, when my father was posted to Thornaby, as a boarder. My brother failed his 11 Plus and went to Kesgrave School.

I have memories of life at RAF Martlesham, some a bit dimmer than others, but could certainly recall a few if anyone is interested. After leaving school I became an RAF Aircraft Apprentice Airframe Fitter at RAF Halton. After training I was awarded my Cpl tapes and went off to RAF Chivenor to start my love affair with the Hawker Hunter, my last flight being in one being in 2000 and even just a couple of days ago I had two of my grandchildren posing in the cockpit of Hunter T7 WV318 at nearby RAF Kemble. I remained a fitter until 1965, having served and become a married man in Singapore, and then converted to aircrew.

For the rest of my RAF career I flew various types of aircraft, most of my 10,000+ hours being on transport aircraft with the odd dabble into fast jets and training aircraft.

I left the RAF in 1989 as a Sqn Ldr and went on to complete another five years flying for BA on their Tristar fleet.

Now a father of two daughters and grandfather of two teenagers and a young tearaway of eight I am

fully retired living with my wife of 48 years in the delightful (just off the Cotswolds) town of Malmesbury.

Planning to attend an Old Woodbridgian function at the school in September, I looked up their website to see who goes to such affairs and found Bobby Lightfoot's name. I am more his brother Ken's age but remember him from both Martlesham and Woodbridge School... only ever came across him once when he was OC Valley and I was there with a pal to display a Piston Provost he had restored at an Open Day. I found this website by Googling Bobby's name.

After an stroll down Chivenor's memory lane with the website administrator (who spent an ATC summer camp there), Brian added the following:

Chivenor had Hunters for some years, if I'm not mistaken from about 1955 to 1974, but always as a training unit... 229 OCU. I was only there for a year, from '58 to '59' when I was posted to Christmas Island (1325 Dakota Flight); ended up doing nearly three years at Changi. I first flew in a Hunter in 1958, a brand new Mk7 just delivered, after a bit of "fettling" on its complicated (then) canopy system little knowing I would be flying in the same type some forty plus years later.

My first ever flight was at Martlesham when my dad scrounged me a launch in one of the T21 Sedburghs... went on later to get my gliding licence when at RAF Halton, also in a Sedburgh.

During the time we lived at Martlesham the two main units there were the BBEU and the BLEU (I think that's correct, Bomb Ballistic Experimental Unit and Blind Landing Experimental Unit). I remember Lancasters, Lincolns, Lancastrians and Lincolnians with all sorts of engine combinations, Mosquitoes, Devons, Varsities, Meteors, Canberras, and many others... it was quite a busy place in those days.

We used to play behind the BBEU hangars in a dump full of scrapped Mossies, loads of spare balsa wood for our model aircraft. At the Waldringfield end of the main drag there was another aircraft dump used by the fire service; we watched them over a period burn many aircraft, acts of vandalism that today would make every enthusiast in the aircraft restoration world (I was one of them with Deltajets at Kemble for five years) seeth with rage!!!



Date: 05th August 2008

Name: Peter J Hutton

Email: peterjohnhutton@aol.com

Connection: NONE

MH job: NONE

Located now: Chippenham Wilts

Message:

I have just finished my holiday down the rhine and have had the pleasure of meeting alan and gill powell, who have been telling me of your aviation museum, as an avid war buff i can not wait to see your collection and history of the raf in your area, i hope to visit you before the end of the year.



Date: 30th July 2008

Name: David Jeffries

Email: dwjeff(at)charter.net

Connection: My father served in the Air Force WWII

MH job: Communication, Master Sargent, 361st FS, 1943-45

Located now: Witcha Falls, TX

Message: Thank you to all who served.

My father can be reached here.
firechapjj(at)yahoo.com



Date: 19th July 2008

Name: Roderick E. Lowe (Johnson)

Email: relsll(at)aol.com

Connection: My father flew from there during WW2

MH job: Son of former P-47 pilot Lt. Wm. E. Johnson Jr.

Located now: 5417 Amanda Drive, Laurys Station. Pa. 18059 USA

Message: My father was shot down by a B-24 gunner while in pursuit of a German fighter flying through a bomber formation on April 10, 1944 over France. Since I was born on March 22, I never had the pleasure of knowing him. He was with the 356th at that time. I am very proud of him and his contribution to freedom in this world.



Date: 08th July 2008

Name: Linda Tukey

Email: ltukey(at)pivot.net

Connection: My Father was Philip Tukey, Commander of the 356th

Message: My Dad would be very happy with the continued interest in Martesham Heath. He was very proud of the 356th contribution to protect both the English and the Americans working to preserve our freedom.

Thanks to all that remember.

Linda Tukey



Date: 07th July 2008

Name: Laurence Garey

Email: l.garey(at)sunrise.ch

Connection: interested schoolboy

MH job:

Located now:

Message: Wynne Evans asked about the Avon Lincoln. It was probably RA716, which was the only Lincoln Avon testbed to my knowledge. You may see a [photo on this web page](#) but I do not know its final fate.

As an ATC cadet I had lots of Lincoln hours at Upwood.

Sheer delight!



Date: 27th June 2008

Name: David Penrose

Email: dandy.penrose(at)tiscali.co.uk

Connection: None, but wish to send a "hello" to Gordon Kinsey.

Located now: Retired and living near Sudbury

Message: Hello Crump

I came across your name by accident on the internet. I wonder whether you remember a spotty youth who sat opposite you in Ransomes Publicity Department? As I remember it, we had a lot of laughs and did precious little work!

Happy days!

All the very best

David



Date: 27th June 2008

Name: Jim "Swede" Malmstrom.com

Email: Jim(at)SwedeMalmstrom.com

Connection: My father, Col E. A. Malmstrom was the 356 Group CO

MH job: Dad Nov 1943 to April 1944-Moved to Stalug Luft 1

Located now: Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

Message: Dad liked your hospitality and disliked much of your typical weather. His history is at <http://www.malmstrom.af.mil/library/history/col.einarmalmstrom.asp> After returning from a German POW Camp, Stalug Luft 1, he remained in the USAF until August 21, 1954 when he was killed in a jet crash. Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls, Montana, USA is named after Dad.



Date: 06th May 2008

Name: Larry Joy

Email: ljoy(a)maineaviation.com

Connection:

MH job:

Located now: Brunswick Maine USA Aircraft Mechanic & 8th AF fan.

Message: Thank You for remembering our airmen.



Date: 06th May 2008

Name: Wynne Evans (Taff)

Email: gw3wwn(a)talktalk.net

Connection: During 1954 served for 6 months

MH job: Ground Radio Mech, in tower and ancillaries.

Located now: Retired

Message: A Sea Otter was rolled out one day, out of moth balls I believe, and took off for the coast for filming for the film, "The Sea shall not have Them", a tale of the Air Sea rescue service. Where is this aircraft now?

Also at Martlesham a Lincoln fitted with outboard Avons as used on the Canberra. This stopped the whole station when it took off, I being in the control tower, had a bird's eye view of this very interesting aircraft.

One evening, we guys were called out on duty, at 7pm, to see off this Lincoln bound for Woomera, Australia.

What finally happened to this aircraft?



Date: 08th April 2008

Name: Bob Crump

Email: bob.crump(a)comcast.net

Connection: My father, Bill Crump, flew P-51's from Martlesham Heath

Message: Thank you for remembering & honoring the US pilots and crews that were stationed at Martlesham Heath. My father, "**Wild Bill Crump**" was stationed at Martlesham Heath and his aircraft was named Jackie. It is pictured in one of your photos taken next to the control tower. Someday I hope to visit England and I will definitely come and visit your museum.



Date: 01st March 2008
Name: Richard McKenna
Email: rpmckenna(a)yahoo.com
Connection: Grandson of Squadron Leader H. W. McKenna
Located now: Carmel by the Sea, California, USA
Message:



Date: 17th February 2008
Name: vic wilkinson
Email: victorwilkinson(a)gmail.com
Message:

Re canberra crash 1956.

I was the RAE flight test observer on one of the conventional Martlesham Lincolns, no 2 behind the Canberra. It was also a very gusty day which may have contributed to his problem and so moments later we flew over the crash site which was a bit sobering especially for another new FTO - it was the first time he had ever flown!



Date: 17th February 2008
Name: Laurence Garey
Email: l.garey(a)freesurf.ch
Message: Ray Town just asked about a Canberra crash at MH. I assume it was the one on September 28, 1956:

TAKE-OFF POINT: Martlesham Heath, Suffolk

CRASH LOCATION: Martlesham Heath, Suffolk (Crown Point)

AIRCRAFT TYPE & SERIAL: English Electric Canberra T Mk 4 WE189

CREW FATALITIES: Flt Lt L.A. Coe, Blind Landing Experimental Unit TP; Mr J. Birkle, BLEU FTO

PURPOSE OF TEST FLIGHT: Blind landing trials at Wittering

ACCIDENT DETAIL: Attempted to climb away after undershooting in misjudged approach to Martlesham but port engine stalled and aircraft turned inverted before diving into ground

Two members of this forum also noted that they were involved in guarding the wreck: Roy Blake on 1/6/07 and Bob Blunden on 20/10/07



Date: 16th February 2008
Name: Maurice Higginbotham
Email: johnnyreb(a)valornet.com
Connection: Brother of fighter pilot
Message: My older brother, Merrion Higginbotham served with the 356th Fighter Group from September 3, 1944 until February 9th 1945.

On his 5th combat mission on September 19, 1944, he was shot down between Mons and Charleroi, Belgium. The following story was taken from the official records of the 356th Squadron history, the Mission summary of September 19, 1944:

“On the way to rendezvous, just after the boys crossed Liege, Lt. Higginbotham called in to state he had oxygen trouble and would have to return to base. He had not been on many operational sorties and the flight leader thought it best to dispatch Lt. Schlack to escort him. Lt. Schlack lost him in the thick

haze over the continent and could not contact him over the R/T and presumably that was the last seen of Lt. Higginbotham. More of his fate was to be learned later.

Following is a copy of the debriefing following Merrion's return to base from his crash landing in Belgium:

September 21, 1944

We had a welcome surprise today. Lt. Higginbotham, who had been reported N.Y.R. on the 19th of September, returned to the base. He recounted the following interesting story:

En route to R/V with the bombers on the 19th of September, I had trouble with my oxygen system. I notified my flight leader and he dispatched Lt. Schlack to escort me home. I lost him in the haze east of Liege, so I set a 270-degree course for home and let down to 11,000 feet. At this time, my engine started acting up, and I could only get 20" of Mercury with full power on, so I sought a place to set the ship down. (He learned later that the reason his engine started "Acting up" was that at that low altitude, his engine was hit with small arms fire, damaging it.) Haze and 8/10th clouds between 3,000 and 7,000 feet hindered me spotting an airfield and I finally let down into a large open field, wheels up. I was still kicking up dirt and my plane hadn't stopped, when at least 15 people came crowding around. I spotted a man with a German blouse and machine pistol heading towards the plane, so I detonated my IFF equipment. Closer investigation proved these people to be Belgians !

and the man whom I suspected of being German, turned out to be a member of the local resistance movement. I thought it better not to question him about his belongings. Another man pushed his way through the crowd, with a show of authority and took charge. He was a former town treasurer of Charleroi and a leader in the local Belgian Resistance Movement. With my phrase card I was finally able to get across that I wanted the local American authorities. He said the nearest town where I could receive aid was Mons, and that he would take me there. En route we stopped at his home, a modern, beautiful mansion and he insisted on showing me what the word hospitality can mean. I met his family and also a good portion of his wine cellar. They tried to force on me all the food they had, but I thought better of it and settled for some Belgian cookies and a few samplings of his wine cellar. His daughter showed a good deal of interest in the contents of the aid box, so I opened it and gave her all the candy.

Later, he took me to Mons by car to the Civil Affairs Committee. I wanted them to post guards at my plane, but they were short handed and had to recruit the aid of the local Maquis. I started back with them to the plane and when we arrived there we were greeted there by the resistance chief of the locality in which the plane was grounded. He was indignant that I should recruit outsiders to guard such a valuable military object as an airplane that was in his territory. To avoid hurt feelings, he was left in charge and the Maquis from Mons were thanked and told to go back home.

"After returning to Mons, I was told that there was no transportation out that night. They fixed me up a place to stay. I was pleased to note the hospitality of even the Belgian brand of bedbugs, -- They didn't mind sharing the bed with me. While I spoke to a Belgian interpreter, he wished to give high praise for the accuracy of our bombing. He had not seen the actual attack, only the results and could not give the type of planes nor the date of this particular bombing on the marshalling yard at Mons, which was crammed full with six military trains, loaded with tanks, trucks and other war impediments. The bombing was done so completely and accurately, that not one piece of equipment in the yard remained intact, yet not a building outside the yard was touched! A feat which certainly must be seen to be believed.

That night a lieutenant took me out to see the sights. We ended up in a café drinking wine and beer and of course, with a few women to converse with. He spoke French and could get along well with them, while I was like a bump on a log, regretting my lack of knowledge of this wonderful language.

The next morning, after first securing two American M.P.'s to guard my plane, I hitchhiked to Florennes Airfield in Belgium. Traveling along the roads, I noticed many burned out vehicles, mainly German, attesting to the power of our Air Forces. We had just pulled onto the field; I was gaping at the blasted hangers, shattered Jerry planes and numerous bomb craters, when the driver spotted a C-47 fixing to take off. I was able to hitch a ride on this plane and came uneventfully back to England on Wednesday night.

“We are certainly glad to have old “Higg” back and may he have many more adventuresome times, provided he promises to do one thing --- Come back to base, safe.”

(Note: Fighter Pilot Merrion Higginbotham passed away February 11, 1968 at the age of 68.)



Date: 16th February 2008

Name: Maurice Higginbotham

Email: johnnyreb(a)valornet.com

Connection: Brother to pilot Merrion G, Higginbotham 356th Group

Message: For those of you who would like to learn more about your fighter pilot's history during his service in the 356th Fighter Group, you may purchase a micro-film record of every mission, official squadron data, prepared by intelligence officers of the 356th Fighter Group. You may purchase these documents from the United States Air Force Historical Research Center, at Maxwell Air Force Base, in Alabama. You can take these to your local library and use their "microfiche" to view these records. You start searching on the date the pilot flew his first mission and look through the squadron line ups and find the name you are looking for. The names of every pilot who flew with that squadron on a particular day. These records tell the times of departure, arrival back and gives details of what the squadron did that day.

Maurice Higginbotham

Elkhart, Texas



Date: 15th February 2008

Name: Ray Town

Email: rttown(a)btinternet.com

Connection: RAF RT/DF Op Sept.1956 to Feb. 1957

MH job: Cpl. see above connection

Located now: Retired. Live in Kent

Message: During my service at MH, a Canberra bomber crashed on a small patch of land at a road junction, just short of the airfield. I was Cpl of the (crash) guard and I am seeking local newspaper accounts of the crash. Can anyone help?



Date: 14th February 2008

Name: Maurice Higginbotham

Email: johnnyreb(a)valornet.com

Connection: Brother to M. G. Higginbotham fighter pilot 356th

Message: I would like to correspond with anyone who knew my brother Merrion G. Higginbotham. His first mission was on September 3, 1944. He flew 33 combat missions over enemy territory and participated in the fighter sweeps over Holland before the troops landed and escorted troops



Date: 07th February 2008

Name: Gail Crane

Email: gail.c(a)ntlworld.com

Message: Does anyone remember Sgt Rita Mary Crane (born 1920) or Sgt Joseph Henry Foster (born c 1919)? They were stationed at various airfields in the Ipswich area during WW2.



Date: 4th February 2008

Name: George Witte (14)

Email: pgtipsmonkeywitte(a)hotmail.co.uk

Connection: Live close to it!

Message: I went to the talk on Vulcan XH558 last friday, it was really interesting. Probably my favourite aircraft. I can't wait to see it fly. There is also a Buccaneer being restored to airworthy condition, should be flying this year, can't wait. Never seen these aircraft fly.



Date: 2nd February 2008

Name: Stan Miller

Email: stan.miller(a)talktalk.net

Connection: Stationed at MH during 1958; MHAS Memb. No. 174

MH job: R/T. D/F. Op 2 SAC One year

Located now: Herne Bay, Kent, England

Message: Anyone remember me or my fellow D/F Op. Mike Kirby?

We worked at both the Control Tower and the D/F Homer and were billeted upstairs in barrack block A which was north of the barrack square next to the road.

During this time the Battle Of Britain Flight Hurricane and Spitfire were based at MH and a USAF F100 Super Sabre crashed on a caravan dealer's garage at Kesgrave.

I would be intersted to hear from anyone who was also stationed at MH in 1958.



Date: 29th January 2008

Name: Trevor Moore

Email: T1r9e5v7o4r8(a)aol.com

Connection: Family owned a Garage/cafe in Martlesham during the WW2

Located now: Living in Essex

Message: My nan and grandad owned a garage and cafe in Martlesham right next to the airfield, and aAmerican airmen used it frequently. The Family name was Smith, William and Annie were my nan and grandad, and they had two sons and two daughters at the time. My mother was one of the daughters. I just wondered if anyone could recall the garage and cafe from that time.



Date: 27th January 2008

Name: Curt Wolters

Email: curtwolters(a)yahoo.com

Connection: Friend of former P-47 pilot "Wild Bill" Crump

MH job: Just a kid in occupied Holland, grateful to Bill

Located now: Owner/Manager: CWEDAS, LLC, economic development consulting company.

Message: Re. Stephen Claypole's August 25, 2006 message, referring to "Jimmie" James. I was a member of the Lagos (Nigeria) Yacht Club, 1969-1974. We had a member (sailed a GP-14) by the name of Jimmy James, who claimed he was an ex-RAF pilot, shot down over occupied Western Europe, and was said to have escaped from Stalag Luft III. If he was in China in 1969, pray tell, who and where is/was the real Jimmie James?



Date: 23rd January 2008

Name: Ernest Corner Jr

Email: e.corner(a)att.net

Connection: My father flew a P-51 1944-45 with the 360th

Message: I might have some pictures, I would love to hear from someone who knew him at that time. My father died of lung cancer in 1989. He never talked much about that time in his life.



Date: 18th January 2008

Name: Robert Macy

Email: robertmacy(a)talkamerica.net

Connection: Father-in-law was with the 360th fighter squadron (armorers)

MH job: Joe Ziolkowski, corporal (armorers) 360thsqd.

Located now: Dearborn Heights Michigan USA

Message: Joe is turning 91 years old on February 6, 2008. He wishes all his friends who served with him a big hello and ,well done.



Date: 06th January 2008

Name: Rob Drake

Email: robdrake(a)tiscali.co.uk

Connection: Manage the Roll of Honour project

Message: Thanks to the exceptional goodwill and assistance of Linn Barringer the Roll of Honour website is now fully operational. There is a mass of information to be uploaded but still plenty of interesting facts for those yet to visit. Any information you may have regarding any of the entries is always welcomed.

Please visit martleshamheath-rollofhonour.co.uk.

Thank you all for your continued support and Happy new Year!!!

Rob Drake

