

550 Squadron & RAF North Killingholme Association

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26 October, 2009

Newsletter No.44

Armistice Services, North Killingholme, Sunday, 8 November, 2009

Services at Westerlo, Belgium, Saturday, 22 May and Sunday, 23 May, 2010

Provisional Date, Annual Reunion, North Killingholme, Saturday, 3 July, 2010

Provisional Dates, Hull University Weekend, Friday, 2 July - Sunday, 4 July, 2010

Dear Member,

Last month, Bobbie and I were joking about our combined ages reaching that magic Darts number, 180. We are not joking now. For some time, Bobbie had persistent pains in her abdomen which medication would not ease. A CT scan on 7th October showed up several lymph nodes of a certain size. A week later she went back for a CT guided biopsy procedure. At the time of writing (well before 26 Oct) we have not got the results of that investigation but when her consultant saw the first scan pictures he immediately spoke about chemotherapy treatment. So we have to assume that Bobbie is facing a big struggle and that planning ahead is much more difficult. I am OK but feeling guilty about it.

Armistice Services, North Killingholme, Sunday, 8 November, 2009

2. Our programme for the Remembrance Services at North Killingholme on Sunday, 8 November, 2009 will be

1045 Wearing medals, assemble at the Squadron Memorial Stone, Lancaster Approach.

1052 Service starts and includes 2 minutes silence at 11 a.m.
Wreaths laid.

1105 Move to St. Denys' Church.

1120 Church Service starts.

1200 Service ends.

1230 Lunch at the Amethyst Hotel, East Halton.

3. Regrettably, Bobbie and I will not be present but Jim Lord has kindly agreed to lay the Association wreath and coordinate arrangements for the day. Therefore please notify Jim Lord [redacted] if you intend to lunch at the Amethyst Hotel on the Sunday. If there is a need for a last minute message, the Amethyst Hotel number is 01469 540205. Should anyone wish to use the Ashbourne Hotel opposite the church, the number to ring is 01469 541010.

Services at Westerlo, Belgium, 22 and 23 May, 2010

4. The services to remember the crew of P/O G.W. Hinde and crew who were shot down at Westerlo on 21/22 May, 1944 will take place at Westerlo (where the Memorial Stone is) on Saturday, 22 May and at Antwerp (where the graves are) on Sunday, 23 May, 2010. Further details will be circulated in April 2010.

Provisional Date, Annual Reunion, North Killingholme, Saturday, 3 July 2010

5. We are aiming for Saturday, 3 July as the date for our 2010 Annual Reunion at North Killingholme. Jim Lord will be organising it again and has requested a Lancaster flypast for that afternoon. We are not likely to hear whether we have been granted the flypast until December so for the moment the date is provisional. If a change of date is forced on us, we will circulate another newsletter.

6. We have decided to continue with the Hull University weekend so next year's dates will be Friday, 2 July to Sunday, 4 July.

Report on the 4 July 2009 Annual Reunion at North Killingholme

7. Our numbers are beginning to fall particularly from former members of 550 Squadron. We missed Bob Sebaski who had to go into hospital shortly before he was due to leave Montreal. This meant that for the first time since we started these reunions, there was no representative from overseas present.

8. Only 9 former members of 550 Squadron made it to North Killingholme: Ted Bastin, Harry Evans, John Elliott, Jack Harris, Sam Lipfriend, Jim Lord, Phillip Blackham, Ken Brotherhood and George Bulman. Only the first six of these made it to Hull University. Nevertheless, we came very near to filling the church and for this we have to thank three groups of supporters. Our solid supporters included Bob Bower, Mike Cross, Eve Dolphin, Julian and Edna Hill, Paula and Dan Jeffries, Don and Val Kentish and, for the first time representing the Pritchard family, Katy Pritchard. Then we have all our local supporters to whom we are deeply indebted. Thirdly family members augmented this year by the two daughters of Jack Harris and their menfolk. And they are coming again. So we still have plenty of support.

9. Hull University made us very welcome but only 39 people attended the Saturday evening dinner. Although this number is low compared with 61 in 2006 and 57 in 2007, we feel that the numbers are stabilising and we will continue with the Hull University weekend in 2010 and beyond.

10. In recent years, Humberside Police have never appeared to help control traffic, and particularly heavy lorries, interfering with our Memorial Stone service. Mike Leeman and his helpers do their best to halt traffic and reduce noise at the critical moments but this year one heavy lorry driver upset us badly by not only driving past both ways but by winding down his window and asking why the pavement was not wide enough for us. Mike Leeman noted the name of the company to whom the lorry belonged and wrote to the Managing Director and to the local newspaper. Mike Leeman received a very full apology from the Managing Director who not only tore a huge strip off the offending driver but, it seemed, was about to adopt the ultimate sanction.

The Bomber Command Memorial

11. At the Association AGM held at Hull University on 5 July this year, it was agreed by those present that the 550 Squadron Association should donate £500 to the Bomber Command Association to help finance a Bomber Command Memorial. The cheque has been sent and a letter of thanks received in return. As a result of the first appeal in the Daily Telegraph, the Bomber Command Association received over 86,000 letters mostly with donations. From these and other sources, over one million pounds have been raised which ensures that the project will go ahead although more funds will be needed. It is understood that the Daily Telegraph will launch a second appeal towards the end of October.

12. The most likely site for the Bomber Command Memorial is Green Park in London and the target date for its unveiling is the Spring of 2011. I wonder how many of us will be there to see it. For the next couple of years all energies will be concentrated on the Memorial and the case for a Bomber Command Medal will be soft pedalled.

Sad News

13. The following have died since the last newsletter:-

W.G. Anderson	B/A with F/O A.Lohrey	11/44 - 11/45
Fred Dawson	WOP with F/O W.H.NBrawn	2/44 - 7/44
C.D.Goughnoor, RCAF	B/A with F/L C.A.Rhude	11/44 - 4/45
Keith W.Jeans	Pilot	3/45 - 11/45
Frank Tyers	Nav with F/O W.Alderdice	11/44 - 3/45
Frank be B.Wall, RAAF	Pilot	5/45 - 6/45
John Washington	A/G with F/L L.Wareham	5/44 - 8/44

New Member

14. A warm welcome to
Judith Appleby

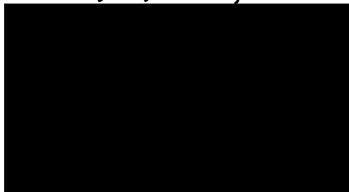
Grand-daughter of Sgt. J.D.Shilcock, F/E with
F/O L.J.T.McCarthy all killed on Gelsenkirchen raid 6 Nov 44

Changes of Address

15. There are new addresses for
Eve Dolphin,



Harry Quick,



Our North American Members

16. Ever since Jack Harding died in 2001, Bob Sebaski has done a great job in looking after our Canadian members. Unfortunately Bob is seeing too much of the doctors; in July he had to go into hospital which was followed by a spell in "rehab"; we now hear he is back in hospital again. We all send him our best wishes but feel it is imperative to ease his work load. Very kindly, Susan Kahro, daughter of Freda Barber and the late Phil Barber (B/A with the F/L Edlund crew), has volunteered to look after both our Canadian and American members, in particular to distribute newsletters and collect subs (just over 9 dollars per year in both countries). So, for Canadian and American members, their first point of contact in future will be:

Susan Barber Kahro,



550 Squadron Lapel Badges

17. There is a problem with 550 Lapel Badges. Sam Lipfriend has received an enquiry for one but we have run out of stock. Normally we replenish from the Bomber Command Association but the BCA has also run out of stock. To produce more, the manufacturer insists on a minimum order of 25 badges and at £4 each we are looking at an outlay of £100 which we would have to finance. We are reluctant to commit ourselves unless we are pretty sure that we can sell most of them. So please contact Sam Lipfriend on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] if you would like a badge or if you have a spare which the Association might acquire.

550 Squadron Websites

18. I am not on the Internet so this is a strange world to me but apparently we have two websites:-
www.550squadron.wordpress.com run by the Pritchard family
www.550squadronassociation.org.uk run by Peter Coulter, son-in-law of Jim Cassidy.
Our thanks to both.

Annual Subscriptions

19. There was a piece in the last newsletter about Mike Leeman collecting £5-50 subs for the year starting 1 July 2009 and encouraging members to set up a standing order. Some members have experienced difficulty in setting up bank standing orders and this arose because we quoted a 7 digit number for the 550 Squadron Association bank account. Lloyds TSB now insist that all account numbers have 8 digits which means adding a nought at the start of our account number which is now [REDACTED] and the branch code is [REDACTED]. Anyone setting up a standing order should include their own name as an account reference.

The 550 Squadron Museum

20. Although the work is not finished, enough was done on the two small rooms at the front of the North Killingholme Village Hall for us to make a start in July. We were able to hang several of the larger Squadron and Station framed photographs and a few display panels giving outline history, senior officers and basic operational records. It will take us quite a time to complete all the displays but it is possible that a formal opening could be held in July 2010. Mike Leeman and George Turner are talking to the NK Parish Council, who own the Village Hall, about a more formal agreement which would cover security, insurance, access, etc..

Sandra Mason

21. Sandra Mason was formerly Sandra Day who served us very well in the early 90s. With the help of Ray Chapman she set up the "friends of 550" group and came up with the idea of Brian Petch (an aviation artist who went to school at East Halton) doing a painting of "The Phantom of the Ruhr" from which 500 prints were made and sold, by her and the Association, to raise money for the Memorial Window in St. Denys' Church. She is now helping to put together a History of 550 Squadron. Will any member who has written a personal memoir of life on the squadron or station or about a specific raid or event please get in touch with her at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It might be wise to check with me first as I am copying to her some of the stories already received from members.

The Pforzheim Raid and its consequences

22. Pforzheim is a large town about 30 miles west of Stuttgart and 10 miles south-west of Karlsruhe. It is just a few miles east of the River Rhine. Its 1939 population was 79,000 but became larger as the war went on and evacuation took place from Stuttgart and Karlsruhe which were both heavily bombed. It became a Bomber Command target on the night of 23/24 February 1945 presumably because it was a Communications Centre and Garrison Town for German troops sent to stem the advance of the U.S. 7th Army (with Canadian and French divisions) who had landed on the French Riviera in August 44 and reached the River Rhine by February.

23. 550 Squadron sent off 27 aircraft as part of a force of 367 Lancasters and 13 Mosquitos to attack this target. The weather was clear, flak was minimal, the target markers were accurately placed and 1825 tons of bombs dropped in 22 minutes from 7000-10,000 feet did enormous damage. Post raid photos and damage reports estimated 83% of buildings were destroyed and 17,600 people killed. On a percentage scale, this raid was probably more destructive than those on Hamburg and Dresden. Luftwaffe night fighters achieved some revenge shooting down 10 Lancasters and causing 2 more to crash on return to the UK. 550 lost F/O D.H. Grundy, RCAF and crew and the mid-upper gunner of F/O R.D. Harris had his shoulder fractured when hit by incendiaries dropped from above.

24. This raid produced horrible side effects 3 weeks later. On the night of 14/15 March 1945 a Fortress of 214 Squadron with a crew of 10 (it was a radio countermeasures aircraft belonging to 100 Group) was returning from the Lutzendorf Oil Refinery raid when it was attacked by a night fighter which set fire to the port inner engine which could not be feathered. The pilot ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft. 9 of the crew jumped. The pilot should have been the last to leave but was delayed for 30 seconds when his intercom lead got tangled up with the controls. In that 30 seconds the engine fire went out and vibration stopped. The pilot got back into his seat and flew back solo landing with searchlight help at Bassingbourne. Of the 9 who jumped, one was badly injured and sent straight to hospital and another evaded capture for a day or two. The other 7 all landed near Pforzheim and were immediately rounded up. After a night in a gaol, they were taken to the centre of Pforzheim by lorry and, with 5 guards, the 7 POW were forced to march through the rubble strewn streets with the locals pelting them with bricks although the guards stopped them being manhandled.. That night the 7 POW were locked in a kindergarden cellar in the village of Hohenfeld, about 2 miles from Pforzheim. Local feelings were running very high as the village contained many evacuees from the Pforzheim raid. Worse still, the village contained a group of the Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth)

who were 16/17 year old boys called up as a panic measure, put into uniform and armed. They had little training and no discipline. Somehow the Hitler Youth, possibly goaded by other German troops, broke into the cellar and dragged out the 7 raf Aircrew . There were confused struggles in the dark and 3 aircrew managed to dart up alleys and escape. The other 4 were taken to the cemetery, put up against a wall and shot. A week later, French troops occupied the village.

25. In August 46, at a War Crimes Trial in Essen, 22 Germans were charged with the murder of the RAF aircrew. 3 Germans were hanged, 14 given prison sentences and 5 acquitted.

26. In november 1992, two acts of reconciliation took place in Hochenfeld. The village put a plaque on the church wall with the names of the RAF aircrew shot. The pilot presented a large rocking horse to the children of the village.

RAF Sports Lottery Retired Membership

27. The RAF Sports Lottery is a registered charity set up to provide income for RAF Sports Associations, units and individual sporting endeavours. A weekly draw takes place for 12 prizes totalling £20,000. Currently two thirds of serving RAF personnel take part but in 2006 the scheme was opened up to retired RAF personnel. Tickets cost 75p per ticket per week; the maximum ticket holding per individual is 5; 12 months minimum membership is expected. Details can be obtained from

RAF Sports Lottery,
Rm 43 Kermode Hall,
RAF Halton,
Aylesbury,
Bucks HP22 5PG

www.raf.mod.uk/rafsportsboard.

Pay by cheque and join at any time in the year.

28. With strikes and go-slows by postal workers getting very close, I am going to cut this newsletter short. I have a piece in draft about "Air Gunners, Their Turrets and Our Defence" but it is rather long and needs quite a bit more work. So it will have to wait for the next newsletter.

29. Keep the subscriptions coming in; £5-50 per head per year and send them to Mike Leeman or arrange a standing order.

Best regards,



Jack Harris