



NEWSLETTER

Please book early for our Guest's Lunch on 20 May 2015 (Last Page)

Harry Irons & the BCM



Harry Irons DFC

We had a fascinating talk from Harry Irons DFC, a veteran Rear Gunner and member of the Board of the Bomber Command Memorial.

Harry explained how, after a long fight, the Memorial finally came to fruition. Despite all the enthusiasm it was inevitably the bureaucracy that caused many a delay, and ultimately a huge rise in costs!

Everyone thought the land in Green Park belonged to Westminster Council, but no it was actually London Transport (it had been earmarked as an exit point from Green Park Station), but they kindly gave it to the Bomber Command Memorial. This together with many generous donations led to enough money to be raised (much by Public Donation) for the memorial to be built.

The maintenance of the memorial was another headache! Harry claimed the RAF Benevolent Fund were keeping the money donated for themselves but as you will see from Page 5, that is far from the case and I am pleased that we have been given the exact details.

Harry finished by telling us of what it was like to be an Air Gunner on a Lancaster on a large raid to the Ruhr Valley. The vivid descriptions were mouth watering and no doubt brought back many memories to 'our' Bomber Boys. At their instigation a collection was made for the BCM which I am pleased to report made, including a donation from Funds £140.

Now go to Pages 4 and 5



LOTTERY FUNDED

Remember 15th April 2015

“Member’s Meeting”

Bring your old photos etc. & be prepared to chat to your mates.

Greenacres 10.30 for 11.00 am.

Malcolm Cloult's Story

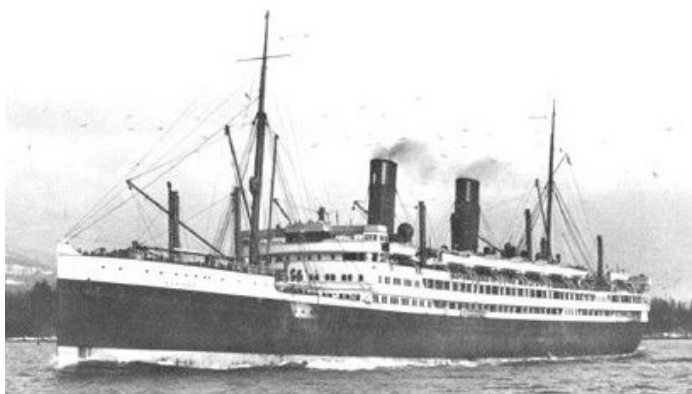
Part 2

Flying at last! - after a little boating

Ground training was intended to begin in Scarborough, where we were housed in the Grand Hotel at the top of the cliff, which we had to climb at 120 steps per minute! The only consolation was that the Officer in charge had to do it, too. It was here that I renewed my interest in art, specialising in illumination, but as with many other interests from time to time I soon gave it up.

However, that was soon to be suspended and we were sent to a transit camp at West Kirby near Liverpool to await transport to one of the Empire Air Training schemes in either Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) Canada or Australia. Each day we waited anxiously to hear if the "three musketeers" were to stay together. In fact it was to be so.

The normal peace-time journey of two weeks to Durban turned into six weeks due to our constant zigzagging across the Atlantic to avoid German U boats, as their submarines were known. I was seasick even before leaving Greenock harbour, and spent a couple of days in sick bay! I was fine afterwards, actually enjoying the rough Atlantic weather, with waves washing over "A" deck.



MV Aorangi

A few lessons on board ship were fitted in between regular life-boat drills. Or were they all drills? The Atlantic was a dangerous place; thousands and thousands of tons of Allied shipping were sunk by the Germans, with the loss of many Servicemen adding to the thousands of seamen drowned. The bravery of Merchant Navy men was equal to anything in the other Services.

Due to the unusual journey- time the ship ran out of some food, or it went rotten – like the potatoes that were thrown overboard (with the accompanying stench down- wind) - meaning that we lived on rice instead. At

one point we turned East for Freetown, anchoring in the harbour. Little naked kids dived expertly recovering the coins that we threw into the water, even the small silver there-penny ones (with apologies to Scots we called those little coins "Scottish sixpences"!)

We stayed one night on board ship in Durban harbour before South African Railways took us on to Johannesburg for the onward route through the Kalahari desert to Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia. That was on a Rhodesian Rail sleeper. In the night I was deservedly very sick after imbibing too much of some deliciously and enticingly sweet African wine. Some "experienced" guys, including the aforesaid policemen, were in the toilet helping us poor unfortunates. Next day I "signed the pledge", and though such memories fade. I learned a degree of moderation.

Gerald and I had enjoyed exploring Durban that first night on African soil, riding in a rickshaw, with the "chauffeur" riding high in the shafts when going down-hill at a frighteningly breath-taking speed. Imagine the experience for lads who'd never been further afield than the Isle of Wight on a Sunday School outing.

In Johannesburg, waiting three hours for the Rhodesian train,, we got separated. One of many generous South African families invited Gerald to their home, which resulted in his missing the train, and arriving in Bulawayo three or four days later, without any penalty (which didn't seem fair!) Later, on leave in Jo'burg, I was similarly be-friended and treated to a couple of wonderful days of home comforts. They had a parrot that could recite clearly their postal address! Our host took us to a wealthy friend's home that boasted tennis court, bowling green and swimming pool. I found I was a "natural" at bowls.

I also met a South African Army Private, who went a long way to getting me. hopefully. drunk enough to spend the night with him. I remained sober enough to decline (though I had a bad night!) Apart perhaps from a more obvious purpose he may have intended me harm, for we had been warned about British guys being beaten up by members of an organisation called Os-sewabrandwag (known as O.Bs). They seem to be a hangover from the Boar War and consequently very anti-British.

Our arrival in Bulawayo on December 23rd left us no time to get to know any of the many local people whom I know from later contacts would have loved to entertain us. Our accommodation was on the Hillside agricultural show ground, initially in animal stalls protected from rain by a tarpaulin that could be pulled down in front.

continued on P3

It wasn't long, though, before I was befriended by the family of the Bulawayo Presbyterian Minister The Rev'd. Green, and to this day I still communicate with Ken, a son of his family. An older brother, an RAF pilot, was killed in England returning from a bombing mission over Germany, and I think this bound me more firmly in Mrs. Green's affection. She was like a second Mother to me.]

Although during our training we had regular leave periods we were not earning sufficient to travel anywhere. On one of my leaves I stayed in Bulawayo at a Boarding House, sleeping on the stoep (veranda). The landlady had a good library, and I spent almost the whole week lying on my bed, reading .

On another occasion, however, the Rev. Green phoned his opposite number in Livingstone , which is now in South West Zambia, but was then over the border of Southern Rhodesia in Northern Rhodesia.. The Rev'd. Robert kindly boarded Hugh, Gerald and me, and showed us the wonderful sights of the Falls and the Livingstone Game Reserve.



Reverend Green

It was during my time in Southern Rhodesia that I began receiving letters from two girls with whom I had worked before enlisting. They were also writing to other Servicemen. After a while the letters came from only one girl – Lily – who later became my Wife. That was quite extraordinary considering that we shared a mutual dislike when working in the same office.

However, as time went by, we revealed more about ourselves to each other, and a friendship developed. Consequently, when I eventually returned to England it was natural for us to cement that relationship, ending in our Engagement. Our courting lasted 4 years, because we were not prepared to marry until I had a home for us . In the meantime we were doing all we could to prepare. Later, in Burma, I wrote lengthy letters and received similar ones in return. But that's a long way ahead, and I must continue with my training.

In preparation for a time when we might, in the course of our active service, find ourselves "in the drink", we were required to swim the length of the Bulawayo swimming pool in uniform. An added difficulty was that while the first batch of swimmers wore dry uniforms, those following had to dress in heavy wet ones. I was a safe swimmer, but not a good one, so amid much friendly cheering I struggled on to complete my length three minutes after the others in my group. But I did stay afloat!

I obtained a Rhodesian Driving Licence on the strength of my UK provisional one, so with three others sharing the cost we travelled around the area, including the Matopos Hills, which is the site of Cecil John Rhodes' grave and a memorial to the British troops massacred by the Matabele.

For more detailed information on the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in Southern Africa and elsewhere, John Golley's book 'Aircrew Unlimited', published by Patrick Stephens Ltd in 1993 is highly recommended, as is Hugh Morgan's *By the Seat of your Pants*, published by Newton in 1990.

To be continued next month

Medals sold for the Bomber Command Memorial



Sqd Ldr Les Munro said he had been moved to sell his medals after visiting the Bomber Command Memorial in 2013.

Medals belonging to the last surviving Dambusters pilot have been sold to a British peer and donated to a museum in his native New Zealand, the day before a planned auction.

Les Munro was selling his medals to help pay for the upkeep of the Bomber Command Memorial in London. The 95-year-old has accepted an offer of £75,000 from Lord Ashcroft, which will go to the RAF Benevolent Fund to help maintain the memorial.

His medal collection will now go on display and will be gifted to, The Museum of Transport and Technology in Auckland, which will pay an additional £10,000 to the fund.

The airman's medals were due to be auctioned in London on Wednesday and were estimated to fetch about £50,000. But they were withdrawn, along with logbooks and associated memorabilia, when Lord Ashcroft, who has the largest collection of Victoria Crosses, offered to donate the money to the RAF Benevolent Fund, the auction house said.

Lord Ashcroft wrote on Twitter: "Delighted that last Dambuster pilot Les Munro has accepted my medals offer."

The auction house has also waived its cancellation fees, allowing all the proceeds to go to the charity.

Sqd Ldr Munro made it home after flak destroyed the communications in his Lancaster bomber over Holland

Sqd Ldr Munro said: "I am content that I have achieved my goal of doing all I can to ensure that the men of Bomber Command who lost their lives during the Second World War will be remembered with pride for generations to come.

"I have been astonished and very touched by the huge interest that the sale of my medals to raise funds for the upkeep of the memorial has aroused."

He added he was extremely grateful to Lord Ashcroft for his generous offer.



Sqd Ldr Munro is also being honoured by the RAF Benevolent Fund, which said it was "enormously grateful" to him. Mike Neville, director of fundraising, said: "Les' sacrifice and Lord Ashcroft's donation will help assure the long term future of the memorial."

The charity is compiling a book of gratitude to thank the airman for his support. If you would like to leave a message please go to:

<http://www.rafbf.org/5724/leave-a-message-for-les-munro.html>

VE Day 70th

8th May marks the 70th anniversary of VE Day and we're looking for your stories and photos. Perhaps you were a young person on VE Day and can remember the celebrations or maybe you have stories from that day that your parents or grandparents shared with you. Whatever your story we would love to hear it. Get in touch by emailing stories@rafbf.org.uk.



RAFBF
THE HEART
OF THE RAF FAMILY

The Bomber Command Memorial

Ed: *After Harry's rather strong comments re the RAF Benevolent Fund, I thought it only correct that they should have their say, particularly as so many of you support them and have been involved with their fund raising on behalf of the Bomber Command Memorial. I wrote to **Mike Neville CBE Director Strategy and Fundraising** and here is his reply:*

Dear Graham,

I am aware that there are some who may be under a misapprehension about monies donated to the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund for the purpose of maintaining the Bomber Command Memorial. But I would like to stress one or two points about our involvement.

We were approached by the Bomber Command Association and their subsidiary, the Bomber Command Memorial Ltd, to inquire as to whether we would act as guarantor to the BCM's maintenance in perpetuity: recognising the long overdue nature of such a Memorial the Benevolent Fund agreed under certain conditions. In the main, these centred around costs. The money the Fund had raised over the years was for the purpose of welfare, with a little going to the maintenance of the RAF Memorial on the Thames – our first founding charitable object. The Fund's Trustees wished to ensure that the monies donated to the Fund for welfare purposes would be spent on delivering welfare support to those in the RAF Family who found themselves in need. Taking on another heritage commitment in the form of a memorial was arguably outside the bounds of our charitable objects, but more of that later. However, should we not have made that commitment the wonderful Memorial to those brave men of Bomber Command would not have been built.

Therefore, and to ensure the correct use of our funds, ensuring support to our beneficiaries, it was decided to create and grow an endowment or restricted fund within the RAF Benevolent Fund to be known as the Bomber Command Memorial restricted fund. The initiative would focus on raising an endowment of £2m to ensure the BCM would be looked after well into the next (the 22nd) Century. And we have done well with a little over £1.5m being raised to date. From this 'endowment of £2m, we, the Fund, would use the interest to maintain the BCM and thus not use welfare money. I hope that very soon we will reach our target and will be able to afford to concentrate our focus, once again, on raising money for those members of the RAF Family who find themselves in need of our help.

And I would just like to reassure all readers and members that any money raised by the Fund or given to us for the purposes of maintaining the Memorial is placed in a restricted fund which can only be spent on the Memorial. So although Harry is correct in saying that we keep it we do so only for use on the Memorial – we can't use it on welfare, marketing, communications, resources or whatever – it must be used solely for the maintenance of the Memorial.

As for the WCC and the Fund causing the maintenance costs to be so high I can say that in terms of the Section 106 which dictates the maintenance regime, there is very little flex in what is demanded of us. This regime must be followed and we have to comply. However, I did tender the maintenance contract and got the best deal possible with Serco military division who came in a good £10k under the next closest bid. That I get the VAT back is a bonus. I do feel for Harry and the boys as it does seem, and is, an awful lot of money to spend each year; money which could be spent on people's needs. But I really do see the very real benefit provided by the Memorial to not only those surviving members of Bomber Command but to all the families of those who have passed away or didn't return from the air war. When I show veterans and their families around the Memorial it is an uplifting experience for all, with many reminisces, laughter, smiles, tears, and many moments of silent consideration and thanks.

It was the right thing to do for the Fund to step in and secure the building of the BCM, and without us it would not have been built. It has brought such joy to so many that I see it as a form of welfare – boosting the morale of the RAF Family. I wouldn't change a thing and I am very pleased to say once again that we have already raised £1.5m which at current spending rates should see the Memorial kept in perfect condition for many years to come."

Mike



BCM = Bomber Command Memorial
 BCA = Bomber Command Assoc
 WCC = Westminster County Council

Ed: *Well there you have it, straight from the horses mouth. As you see without the long term guarantor the Memorial would not have happened. So let us all work as one to ensure it lives on in recognition of all those wonderful Bomber Boys and particularly for the families of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. We will remember them*

Guy Buckingham

Part 3

I started my flying career in the Wellesley, these had Mark 9 bombsights and a few 303 machine guns; they would carry eight bombs, four in a 'pod' under each wing.

We had a few 'Fairy Gordon's, again these were ancient and had been float planes which used to land on the Nile. They had been converted to land planes during some part of their life and the old floats were stored in the hangar. I had the bright idea to convert one of them into a boat and started to cut out a small cockpit, however the project failed because the whole thing was just too heavy!

There was a link trainer on the aerodrome, this was used about twice per week. I spent a lot of time messing about with it, it was quite a novelty and I looked upon it as a bit of fun rather than instructive, but it did teach me a lot about flying - especially what not to do.

The aerodrome was also shared with Alitalia Airways, which we had to watch closely as the Italians were about to enter the war. The station was still on peacetime routine; the war had not officially reached Khartoum. We started at 6.30am and finished about Noon, with weekends free. After lunch we all had a lie down as it was far too hot to work. After a short rest we would don our 'civvies' and go to Khartoum, where we would play tennis, go sailing, horse riding or drinking - the latter being the usual!

The Khartoum Sailing Club was popular with the RAF; we shared it with the Army and had regular race meetings on the Nile. I took part in a lot of races, learning about sailing as I went along. We eventually won the annual cup, and were presented with it by the Governor General, on the steps of the Palace Gardens, followed by tea and cucumber sandwiches, all extremely civilised.

A big event during peacetime was 'Sheik's Day', this was when the RAF invited all the local Sudanese Chiefs and business dignitaries to an open day (similar to RAF Open Days at home). We all did our bit with 'spit and polish', the camp was cleaned up, the hangars were decorated and all the planes were displayed, there would also be a flying display.

A few of these events went wrong, on the last Sheik's Day a Vincent made a very heavy landing and the engine fell off, then a Wellesley did a big shoot up, tried to pull out whilst flying too fast, both wings came off and the whole thing crashed on the runway, sadly kill-

ing the pilot. The Sheik's thought this was great and cheered and clapped; needless to say this was the last Sheik's Day we held.



GB's (Far left) Jazz Band

We had a very good Jazz Band which a friend and I started; when we were not on duty we played at The Great Britain Cabaret, this was usually two or three nights a week, we were allowed to wear 'civvies'. One night a rival cabaret, run by a Greek man, set fire to the place and burnt all the instruments and music, this was a big set back as we could not replace them easily. The CO soon got us back on track, he got the Bombay out and flew us to Asmara where we were able to buy some more instruments and start playing again.

One of the outstanding incidents took place during one Christmas. We had an idea of decorating the statue of General Gordon seated on a camel in the centre of Khartoum. We set off from base and painted it red, white and blue and also put under the camel's tail, a large lump of dough. We also broke off a number of tassels from the camel's coat as souvenirs.

The next day the Governor General came to the station and demanded the statue be immediately restored to its former glory. We welded the tassels back on and with gallons of thinners washed the paint off and off course removed the dough which had by now set hard!

The RAF was on the black list for quite a while. After the War I met up with Brian Lamb an ex RAF friend of mine who told me the statue is now back in England at Gordon's School in Wokingham - so we didn't do too much lasting harm.

Ed: *Next month the war will have finally arrived in Khartoum and we hear of the 'The Takoradi Route'*

Alan Dicker



'Together Again'

Just as we go to press I have sadly to advise that Alan passed away on 3 Apr 15. Following war time service he flew with No 15 Squadron at RAF Cottesmore from 1 Sep 58, when the previous Canberra squadron was reformed with the Handley Page Victor.

Details of his funeral will be advised when known. Our thought are with Vi and her family.

Presentation to RAFA Aylesbury & Halton Branch

On Wednesday 4 Apr 15 a number of Chiltern ACA members were present at the Annual General Meeting of the local RAFA Branch at Halton Airfield. Our super keenness was for a very good reason, for at the conclusion of their AGM a picture of the two Lancasters "Together Again" was presented to the branch by our very own Tom Payne.

The picture of the RAF Memorial Flight Lancaster, with it's Canadian counterpart was taken during the recent visit to these shores of KB726.

The RCAF Museum's Lancaster Mk. X was built at Victory Aircraft, Malton in July 1945 and was later con

verted to a RCAF 10MR configuration. In 1952, it suffered a serious accident and received a replacement wing centre section from a Lancaster that had flown in combat over Germany. It served as a maritime patrol aircraft, with No. 405 Squadron, Greenwood, NS and No. 107 Rescue Unit, Torbay, Newfoundland for many years and was retired from the RCAF in late 1963.

With help from the Sulley Foundation in 1977, it was acquired from the Royal Canadian Legion in Goderich, Ontario, where it had been on outside display. Eleven years passed before it was completely restored and flew again on September 24, 1988.

The Lancaster is dedicated to the memory of P/O Andrew Mynarski and is referred to as the "Mynarski Memorial Lancaster". It is painted in the colours of his aircraft KB726 –VR-A, which flew with RCAF No. 419 (Moose) Squadron. Andrew Mynarski won the Victoria Cross, the Commonwealth's highest award for gallantry, on June 13, 1944, when his Lancaster was shot down in flames, by a German night fighter. As the bomber fell, he attempted to free the tail gunner trapped in the rear turret of the blazing and out of control aircraft. The tail gunner miraculously survived the crash and lived to tell the story, but sadly Andrew Mynarski died from his severe burns.

Programme 2015

All events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (*)

- 15 Apr Member's meeting
- 20 May Guest's Lunch* 1200 Noon
- 30 May Project Propeller* - Cosford
- 17 Jun Airliners - Chris Sprent
- 15 Jul Concord, Boom or Bust? - Alan Merriman
- 15/16 Aug International Moth Rally at Woburn*
- 19 Aug Battle of Britain - Chris Wren

Your Committee

Chairman: Geoff Hulett

11 Pearsewood Gardens, Stanmore, Middx
HA7 1NU. Tel: 0208 952 4092
Email: banghulett@btinternet.com

Newsletter Editor/Secretary: Graham Laurie

19 High St, Prestwood, Gt Missenden, Bucks
HP16 9EE
Tel: 01494 863492
Email: graham@kitty4.co.uk

Membership Sec: Gerry Sealy-Bell
31, Hempstead Rd, Kings Langley, Herts,
WD4 8BR Tel: 01923 262707

Treasurer: Rod Finn

67 Hayfield, Chells Manor Village, Stevenage
SG2 7JR Tel: 01438 350115
Email: rodfinn@btinternet.com

Welfare: David Bray

23a Aylesbury Road Wing, Leighton Buzzard, Beds
LU7 0PD Tel: 01296 688425
EMail: adbbay@aol.com

Programme Secretary: Bill George

Blossom Cottage, 54, Green End Street, Aston
Clinton, Bucks,
HP22 5EX Tel: 01296 630998
Email: bill.bbgi@btinternet.com

Welfare

Just back from a venture to the Far East, China in fact. Came back with the lurgey but hope to be fully fit by the April meeting.

Hear that **Jim Copus** has been poorly but is now able to come to the meetings if someone can pick him up, as he no longer drives.

Bill Hyland is doing well and has a break from treatment. He is improving he says and although his appetite is a bit up and down, the thought of the Greenacres 'Pensioners Special' is already a mouthwatering prospect! Bill mentions that he recently had lunch with the notorious 'Winkle' Brown the Royal Navy wartime Test Pilot. He is now 96 but has just bought himself a new 'sports car'. He described his career as 'lucky'! Well Bill says his luck continues as he parked his new pride and joy in the car park of Aces High, Wendover and two days later a large hole appeared, just where his car had been parked!

Heard news of **Stan Colley**, now in a care home in Marlow. He is taking part in many of the activities but sadly we are unlikely to see him at our meetings, but we send him our very best wishes.

David

Membership Secretary

Please use the form on Page 9 to complete your request for placed at the May 'Buffet Lunch'. Please also remember you can bring guests, so why not invite a friend or relative to join you. As our numbers are obviously declining it is always good to see visitors to our lunches.

Gerry

Secretary/Editor

Please accept my apologies for the slightly late arrival of this Newsletter, it was not the Easter holiday or anything to do with Stuart and his fabulous dispatch system, it was purely my being on Jury Service for the last two weeks! As they say, normal service has now been resumed. Please send me anything for the May Newsletter by email or post as soon as you can, as I am also away for a week in April and will thus miss the meeting (trying to catch up with Dave Bray - but a long way to go!).

Had a note from **Bernie Tebb** still sunning himself in Thailand, mates rates for CACA are available at www.thevillage-coconutisland.com

Graham

Guest's Buffet Lunch

Greenacres Tavern

Wednesday 20th May 2015

Noon for 12.30pm (Please do not arrive before Noon)

Cost £7.00 per head

Please complete the form below and send to Gerry Sealy-Bell together with cheque payable to 'Chiltern Aircrew Association' and a stamped addressed envelope, the closing date for postal requests is Tuesday 12 May 2015. You may also collect tickets at our April 2015 meeting.

----- Please Tear here -----

Guest's Buffet Lunch

Greenacres Tavern

Wednesday 20th May 2015

NAME:

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

TELEPHONE

Please send me tickets for the buffet lunch on 20 May 15.

I enclose cheque (Chiltern Aircrew Association) for £..... and a stamped addressed envelope

Post to: Gerry Sealy-Bell, 31 Hempstead Road, Kings Langley, Herts WD4 8BR