



NEWSLETTER

We sadly mourn 2 members this month

July Meeting

Members were shown a film for a change this month. It was an insight to the Lancaster. Then our 'Bomber Boys' swapped tales of their exploits, good and bad and were still talking when it was time for lunch!

August Meeting

The meeting on Wednesday 17th August will be a talk by our member **Dick Haven** about flying the Valiant. He has already spoken of his time on the Vulcan, so it will be good to hear all about the first V Bomber, built by Vickers.



An early line up of Valiant's

Not wishing to steal his thunder here is a short history of the Valiant (Courtesy of the RAF Museum) but Dick of course will tell us what it was like to fly!

First flown May 1951, the Vickers Valiant was the first 'V' bomber to enter Squadron service with the RAF, replacing the obsolete Avro Lincoln from February 1955. A versatile aircraft, the Valiant served in four versions in the bomber/tanker-receiver/long range strategic photoreconnaissance roles, in ten RAF Squadrons.

In the 1956 Suez campaign, Valiants were the first V-bombers to drop bombs 'in anger'. The tanker Valiants of No. 214 Squadron pioneered operational development of in-flight refueling in the RAF from March 1958, two squadrons becoming the RAF's first operational tanker squadrons on 1 April 1962.

On 11 October 1956, Valiant WZ366 of No.49 Squadron carried the first British operational atomic bomb to be dropped from an aircraft during 'Operation Buffalo' over Maralinga, Southern Australia. The RAF Museum's XD818, from the same squadron, dropped Britain's first live thermonuclear hydrogen bomb off Christmas Island on 15 May 1957.

Stress-induced wing spar fatigue cracking after transfer to the low-level tactical bomber role in 1962 led to a hurried withdrawal from service of all Valiants in January 1965. This was followed by a mass scrapping programme at the home bases when a re-sparing programme, tested on Valiant XD816 in 1964/65, proved too expensive.

Production ended in August 1957, 107 being built including prototypes.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Remember 17th August 2016

**Join us for
"Flying the Valiant"
with**

**Dick Haven
Greenacres 1030 for 1100 am**

Dave Francis



Dave sadly passed away on 13 Jul 16. His funeral will take place at St Lawrence's Church Abbots Langley at 1pm Tuesday 2 August 2016.

Dave attended ACRC at St Johns Wood in August 1942. Via ITW at Newquay, selected for Pilot training at Davidson, Canada. Got lost doing circuits and ended up doing forced landing (his only one) in a field with a blocked fuel line!

Because of Bomber Command requirements 30 of the 36 U/T Pilots were re mustered and Dave re trained as NAV/GD at 7 AOS Portage-la-Prairie in Manitoba. He was commissioned at the end of the course.

After short stays at West Freugh and Turweston (Silverstone) he went to 1667 HCU at Sandtoft. Crewed up with an Australian with only Don and FE being English, the others all Aussies!

After conversion to Lancaster's posted to No 460 Sqn RAAF at Binbrook. Did a full tour mainly mine laying in the Baltic. All that crew survived the war!

Then came radar instruction duties at 1667 HCU and later at 1653 HCU, North Luffenham. He then volunteered for Transport Command and was posted to Far East as a Nav Briefing Officer. After initially being in India was posted to Singapore and then on to RAF Iwakoni near Hiroshima. As Dave said one word 'Frightening'!

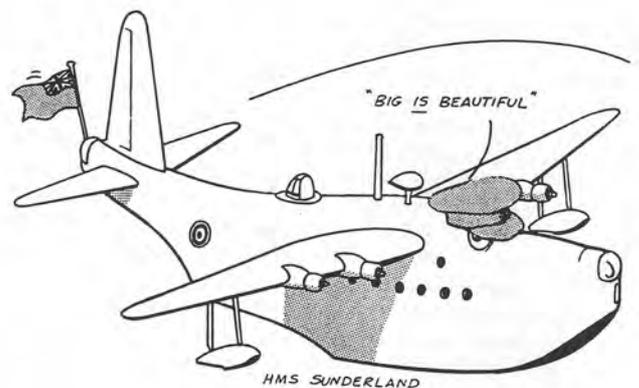
He was then i/c Passengers and Freight, looking after all freight inbound and outbound to Japan. Prior to demob he was made CO of the Staging Post.

Feeling itchy feet he volunteered for the VR in 1948. Lectured at Stanmore then moved to Panshanger where he flew as Nav on the Anson. All this finished in 1958 but he joined the local ATC Squadron and within 24 hours was Nav Instructor, 'A' Flight Commander, Sports Officer and i/c Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme and 2 years later was the Commanding Officer finally retiring in 1982.

He attended 460 Sqn reunions at Binbrook and went 'down under' to attend one in Sydney. He still had time to be Chairman of his local RAFA, a member of The British Legion, Bomber Command Aircrew Association and of course The Aircrew Association,

Most Frightening Experience: In a Lanc 1,000ft over Lincoln, heavy blizzard, zero vis. Homed down a G Line to the end of runway, calling base and then letting off flares which we saw on time. a s/a turn (for those not familiar with abbreviations the s stands for 'split'). Safe at last.

Most Enjoyable Experience: Flight in Sunderland from Karachi to Calcutta. The a/c had brought out a parliamentary delegation. Food; out of this world!



Most Humorous Experience: Playing Rugby 7s and watching a Tiger Moth spin in from 2,000ft. Smashed into pieces in the next field, rushed over to a heap of wreckage. Suddenly it all heaved up and the pilot walked out-not a sign of damage, just a few scratches. We had to laugh as we had expected the worst!

He lost his dear wife Edna a few years ago and one cannot exaggerate just how much work for Abbots Langley RAFA the pair of them achieved and both were recognised for their involvement.

On 10th March 2016 as Branch President, 92 year old David Francis DFC, was recently awarded the French Legion Of Honour Medal for his part in the liberation of France in December 1944.

David was presented with his medal by Air Marshal Sir Roger Austin KCB, President of the Royal Air Forces Association, South East and Eastern Region, at the Branch social evening on 10th March. David was Branch Chairman for many years.

He was also Officer Commanding of Watford 2F Squadron Air Training Corps for over 20 years and the present HQ building is named after him.

Members of the branch, family and friends, representatives of the ATC and members of the Parish Council attended the presentation and congratulated David on his most prestigious award.



David with Sir Roger Austin, Chairman of the Council Steven Giles-Medhurst and RAFA Branch Chairman, Trevor Hayes. (Photographs taken by Tim Perkins, Clerk of Abbots Langley Parish Council.)

Our condolences to daughter Elaine and the rest of the family.

Gerry Sealy-Bell

Gerry sadly passed away on Saturday 23 July in Watford General after a stay of only a few days. He was taken to hospital the night before our last meeting. His funeral is at West Herts Crematorium, Garston. (North Chapel) on Thursday 4 August at 3.20 pm.

After the service all are invited to Manor House Sports & Social Club, Langley Road, Abbots Langley WD5 0DD [Phone: 01923 265139](tel:01923265139)

Donations in memory of Gerry Sealy-Bell can be made to any of his chosen charities listed below:

- RAF Benevolent Fund
- Salvation Army (UK Territory)
- Peace Hospice
- via A & C Tadman Funeral Directors
- 39a High Street, Kings Langley WD4 8AB

Needless to say he will be sadly missed by us all, having stoically continued with the Membership Secretarial duties, despite increasingly poor health. He of course also looked after our bookings for Buffets and Christmas Lunches. What many may not realise that it was often due to Gerry's efforts that the numbers have been maintained, as he would telephone people who had come to a previous event but not yet booked, and very often that call triggered a 'yes'.

Gerry served on 97 (Straits Settlement) Squadron alongside Harold Kirby and Ron Doble. The picture was taken at Thorpe Camp, Lincolnshire in 2011 when it was visited by a group attending a Squadron Reunion at nearby Woodhall Spa.



RIP Gerry and thank you for all your help. You will be sadly missed and yes 'We will remember to sign the Register!'

Our condolences to Alison and the family.

Lincolnshire Visit

Your editor took a visit to Lincolnshire this last week-end. The aim was to visit an ex RAF colleague and take in the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) but alas it was closed to visitors, and heavy machinery was in place, so I had to make do with a view up the road to the 'Spire' and will have to visit again in the future.

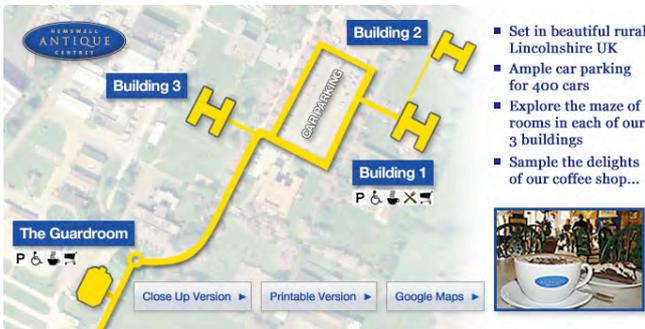
Of course you are never far from the RAF in Lincolnshire. **RAF Hemswell** is for instance now a thriving Antique Centre and anyone who has lived in a 1950's Barrack Block would recognise the surroundings. Now they have even converted the Guardroom. Look out on Bargain Hunt as they often film there.



The Astra Cinema, all converted for antiques!

So it was on to East Kirkby, the home of the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre and home of 'Just Jane' their taxiing Lancaster.

I had visited before but was agreeably pleased with the changes made over the past few years, they have certainly not rested on their laurels! In addition to the Lancaster resplendent at the front of the hangar, was also behind it a Dakota.



Douglas C47A (DC3-C) - 'Drag-'em-oot'

This Douglas C-47 with c/n 19345, was delivered to the United States Army Air Force on December 28, 1943 with serial 42-100882. She joined operations with 87th Troop Carrier Squadron, based at Greenham Common. Being equipped as glider pick up, her crew named her "Drag 'em Oot" (slang for Drag them out).

She participated in the air assault during D-Day when at 00:46 on June 6, 1944 she dropped 18 paratroopers of the US 82nd Airborne Division, just behind the Normandy beach heads, near St. Mere Église. She returned safe to the UK and after a second mission the same day, she started to resupply the troops in France until she was transferred to the Royal Air Force as Dakota C3 with serial TS422 in September 1944.



The layout with Barrack Blocks, Guardroom and...

Once with the RAF she was assigned to Number 1 Heavy Glider Servicing Unit, attached to 38 Group RAF at Netheravon, Wiltshire. The RAF wanted to have a specialist glider recovery unit and she commenced recovering Horsa assault gliders from the Normandy beach heads as soon as she joined the RAF. The unit recovered about 40 Horsa's prior to Operation Market Garden.



TS 422 picking up a Horsa glider with Model 80

TS422 herself was, just like the Horsas she recovered from the Normandy beaches, in action during the biggest paratropping in history, Operation Market Garden in September 1944. During this mission the pilot must have been wounded as the aircraft was attacked by a German fighter as she has twelve bullet holes on the top of her cockpit and nose. She was repaired and in August 1945 she joined 435 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force that just returned from Burma to the UK. After the war was over the Dakota left for Canada where she served with the RCAF as a trainer, transport and, equipped with skis and jato rockets, search and rescue aircraft.

Allocated the registration N473DC she has been at East Kirkby since late 2008 and kept in flying condition. I for one never realised they collected gliders after landing, I thought they were all left in situ!

Whilst at East Kirkby I came across a couple of vehicles that might be remembered by our veterans. The Austin K2 'NAAFI Wagon'. This would take the 'char and a wad' to the ground crews servicing aircraft out on the dispersal points. The other was the Fordson 'Crew Bus' used to take Bomber crews to their aircraft, which on occasions meant a drive of over 2 miles. It had a Ford V8 engine. This vehicle at the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre was found being used as a camper van! It has now been restored to it's former glory and is probably in better condition now than in World War 2!



NAAFI Wagon



Fordson Crew Bus

So my quick visit came to an end but what wonders are there in other parts of Lincolnshire, we passed a sign for the Metheringham Airfield Visitors Centre, described as 'a Gem in the Lincolnshire countryside' which I will visit next time. Finally just room for a another photo:



Can you help your Editor?

Jane's Dream



AC George Laurie (North Africa 1943)

This drawing of my father was done whilst he was serving in Egypt - Alexandria? An excellent likeness and I always thought it was signed by the artist, but alas no. From what I remember my father telling me, the Air Ministry sent out an artist/cartoonist and he visited various camps and did these A4 portraits of airmen to send home to their families in UK.

I just wondered if any of you had similar experiences and knew who the chap was who was obviously a very accomplished artist, as the likeness is superb. Did any of you have similar pictures done? Yet another example of letting your relatives know all about things before you fly to the hangar in the sky.



**A GATHERING
OF
MOTHS
31 JULY 2016**

Report next month

Ed: I came across this at East Kirkby and thought I would share Mr Patrick's poem with you:

For quite sometime I have had a dream
That I would fly again with my own team
I am a girl that travelled all over
But have always missed the White Cliffs of Dover

I flew for many a weary hour
Then came to rest near Blackpool Tower
I thought this was the end for me,
There was no future that I could see

My saviour came one winter morn
That Scampton's gate I would adorn.
The gates I guarded for many a year,
Then two brothers did appear.

They fixed me up to be such a beauty,
That I now stand here on hangar duty.
Would that I fill the air once more,
With my Mighty Merlin's roar.

After all that hard work and strife,
Once again I have a life.
I now have part of my own team,
Maybe some day I will have a dream



'Just Jane'

AIRCREW LUNCH
FRIDAY 30th SEPTEMBER 2015 – 1200 Noon for 12.30pm
BLACK HORSE, GOZZARDS FORD, ABINGDON OX13 6JH

After the success of recent years, we plan to repeat the 'Aircrew Lunch', open to all aircrew, Military, Civil (ATPL/PPL) whatever and of course partners. We can seat 60 people, so please book early to avoid disappointment.

The attached menu I think you will agree, has something for everyone. Should you have any special dietary requirements please do let me know when you order and I am sure Dawn Neil and the team at The Black Horse, will be able to accommodate you.

I am keen to broaden the reach of the lunch to beyond the ACA and No46 Squadron who have supported it so brilliantly in the past, so if you know of anyone you think might like to join us then please do let me have their contact details and I will forward them the details.

As The Black Horse no longer accepts cheques, so I will make a single card payment to them on or about 25 September. Please therefore ensure I have your completed order form by 23 September at the latest but I hope we can get near the 60 mark so please reply soonest.

Menu

Hand Battered Fish, Chips & Peas. A cod fillet, in our homemade Abingdon Bridge beer batter.

Fish Pie. Our homemade mix of cod, smoked haddock, salmon and prawns cooked in a creamy sauce and topped with cheesy mash with seasonal vegetables on the side.

8oz Gammon Steak. Served with a fried egg or pineapple slice, chips and peas (+ E or P).

Beetroot, Goat's Cheese and Quinoa Salad. Braised beetroot tossed with warm goat's cheese and quinoa in our sweet salad glaze on a bed of baby leaves and cucumber

Pasta Paddardelle pasta in a chunky tomato and aubergine ragout, topped with rocket and parmesan, served with garlic bread.

Homemade Crumble. Individually made Apple and Mixed Berry served with custard

Sticky Toffee Pudding. Delicious homemade toffee sponge covered in Toffee sauce and served with custard

Mango and Passionfruit Cheesecake. Served with cream.

Ice Cream Sundae Served with chocolate, strawberry or toffee sauce (+C or S)

Cheese Board Selection Oxford Blue, Brie and Mature Cheddar with crackers and homemade chutney

Tea and Coffee

Please send your order to: Graham Laurie, 19 High Street, Prestwood, Great Missenden, Bucks HP16 9EE
with a cheque payable to **G H Laurie for £22.00**
Latest dates for orders is **Friday 23 Sep 16**

Programme 2016

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (*)

2016

- 17 Aug 16 The Valiant Dick Haven
- 21 Sep 16 Members Meeting
- 30 Sep 16 Aircrew Lunch @ Abingdon*
- 19 Oct 16 RAF Hendon past & present-David Keen
- 16 Nov 16 The role of the Czechs locally in WW
Neil Rees
- 14 Dec 16 Xmas Lunch* 1200 Noon

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Welfare

Sad to see our losses this month. I have been away on the high seas again this month but will ring round shortly.

David

Membership Secretary

With the recent passing of Gerry, this post is currently vacant, but we hope to announce a replacement shortly.

Secretary/Editor

It was a little late to report on the Gathering Of Moths at Old Warden on 31 July but I hope to include a report and photos next month.

Graham

Programme Secretary

I had promised to run a luncheon Garden Party but due to an admin error the Secretary (who has admitted his error) did not get the date in the programme. We will (and he has promised) put next years date in the programme early!

We are now full this year and I hope to announce next years soon

Bill

Treasurer

Accounts all good. This came into my hands and wondered how many of you remember these pay rates?

Sergeant	13.6d per day
Flt Sgt	15.0d per day
Warrant Officer	16.6d per day
Pilot Officer	14.6d per day
Fg Off	18.2d per day
Flt Lt	£1.9.9d per day
Sqn Ldr	£1.10.0d per day
Wg Cdr	£1.16.2d per day

Oh those wonderful days, and still money was sent home to family and loved ones!

Rod