



NEWSLETTER

See attached Membership List (Members Only)

May Buffet Lunch

Just under 40 members and friends attended our Buffet Lunch on 18th May. Stephanie and her team again provided a varied menu for our delight.

There were a few 'left overs' from the main course but the sweets got a pretty good talking to! It was good to hear the constant chatter as the various tables 'opened the hangar doors' and in some cases even spoke of other things.

June Meeting

We welcome our recently joined member Chris Brockbank on Wednesday 15th June, to talk about The Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Project. As some of you will know, Chris spends much of his spare time recording interviews with Veterans for the digital archive project in Lincoln.

We hope that after his presentation any of you who have yet to become involved will allow him to interview you for this very worthwhile project.

RAF Museum Hendon - Veterans Day

We laid on a minibus to take a group to this popular day at Hendon. The event was for those who served in one of the Armed Services and was held on 19 May 2016.

It's the Museum's way of saying "Thank you" to Veterans, young and old, from all 3 services. The event included live music, dancing, guided tours and memorabilia.

See Rod Finn's report on Page 4.

New Members

It is with much pleasure we welcome two new Associate Members. Their official details are on Page 8 but to introduce them, here we go.

Clive Dealey was in the Army during National Service, he served as a drummer in The Corps of Drums serving with the Northamptonshire Regiment. He saw service in Hong Kong, Japan and Korea. He is now retired and enjoys all forms of sport. Some of you may have met Clive at the last meeting or at the Veterans Day at Hendon.

Chris Brockbank was a Pilot Officer in Training Command in 1959-60. After he left the RAF he served as a VR Officer from 1962-70. He has flown in Tiger Moth, Chipmunk, Provost, Anson, Varsity and Meteor. In the civilian world he has flown a Beagle Terrier whilst Glider towing at Leicester. He worked with Kodak and Bunzle plc (Cleaning Product Supplier). He has spent time as a business advisor and now spends much of his time interviewing Veterans for the International Bomber Command Centre. To hear all about that, why not come to our June meeting and listen to him!



Remember 15th June 2016

**Join us for
"International Bomber Command Centre Lincoln"
with Chris Brockbank**

Greenacres 1030 for 11.00 am

Time for Cricket - or not?

Graham Laurie reports:

I have spent some very happy days this season at Lord's watching Middlesex County Cricket Club playing in Division I of the 'Specsavers County Championship'. It got me thinking about what went on there during WW2 and I know many of you started your RAF careers there.

By early 1941 the RAF realised that existing selection establishments would not be able to cope with the need to enlist thousands more aircrew. Lord's Cricket Ground was requisitioned to become the Aircrew Receiving Centre (ARC). In addition many nearby blocks of flats were requisitioned for billets, together with the restaurant at London Zoo, which was used as a canteen.

County cricket had ceased on 1st September 1939 - two days before the declaration of war - and the ground was used for many different activities.

Many buildings at the Pavilion End were used by the Aircrew Receiving Centre, which is commemorated today by a small unobtrusive bronze plaque near the pavilion, whilst part of the Nursery ground was used by 903 Squadron Balloon Barrage, part of London's defences against low flying enemy aircraft. The ground was also used as Auxiliary Fire Station (AFS) IIV of the AFS.



903 Squadron Balloon Barrage @ Nursery End

Lords was designated as No 1 Air Crew Reception Centre known to many as 'Aysee-Arsey' or other similar abbreviations! Sadly most of the Official Records are missing or have been burnt, so it is the memories of those who attended No 1 ACRC that are left.

In June 1941 the first flight to be recruited there consisted of mainly transferred soldiers from various Army Regiments. These 'Brown jobs' were followed on the second course by RAF personnel re-mustered from Ground Trades. From then on the intakes consisted of newly joined civilians, ex ATC or Air Defence Corps cadets. It all started when these Civilian volunteers received a letter telling them to report to Lord's, and there they were assembled into flights, each under the command of a corporal, kitted out and given accommodation in flats to the north of Regents Park.

Before reaching Lords, everyone had attended various recruiting centres. Here entry tests and medicals were dealt with and all potential aircrew were categorised for their flying duties, i.e. Pilot, Navigator, Air Gunner, Flight Engineer, Wireless Operator etc. Many also arrived under the famous 'PNB' scheme, i.e. Pilot, Navigator, Bomb Aimer.

Flights usually consisted of 50 airmen. Intakes were approximately 120 airmen per fortnight and the time at ACRC was usually about 3 weeks. It was claimed that the camp hairdresser could do each haircut in 90 seconds, not with scissors but electric clippers!

Lords was mainly used for documentation, pay parades, morse code tests, maths and other similar things. The Long Room was mainly used for documentation and the FFI inspection (FFI Inspections were just one part of the campaign to keep the incidence of VD - sexually transmitted diseases - in check).

It appears that at the Nursery End there was a hut used to test airmen with and without a gas mask in the gas chamber. Many red eyes emerged from that building. The old Tavern was used as a NAAFI for tea breaks and on occasions the YMCA and Salvation Army appeared with their mobile tea vans.

Cricket still continued at Lords. An ACRC team played an 'Australian Aircrew' team and Air Cadets played Naval Cadets. Counties also played occasional matches whilst the ground was being used by the RAF. Some well known cricketers were on the staff, Leslie Ames and Group Captain Gillingham were either at Lords or Regents Park, Cyril Washbrook was an RAF PTI and Wally Hammond also was an instructor. Other cricketers seen occasionally were Sqn Ldr Bill Edrich DFC (a Blenheim Pilot) and Dennis Compton.

With The Oval and many other venues unusable during the war, Lord's Cricket Ground acquired a special status and Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) took on great responsibility to set up a meaningful programme of matches each season and so, as Pelham Warner put it, "(enable) cricket to provide a healthy and restful antidote to war strain". Warner played a major role in organising cricket during the war as, with other MCC staff joining the services, he took on the Secretary's duties under the title of "Deputy Assistant Secretary". His first priority was to work with the RAF who occupied most of the Lord's estate including the practice ground and all buildings. The playing area was unaffected and the pavilion and the stands were always available for cricket; Warner paid tribute to the RAF authorities for their considerable help in enabling him to organise matches. Numerous ad hoc clubs and teams were formed, mostly based on the services. Until 1945, the majority of matches were one-day only, owing to time constraints imposed by the needs of the services, with a single innings each, but they were not limited overs and so the result could be a draw.



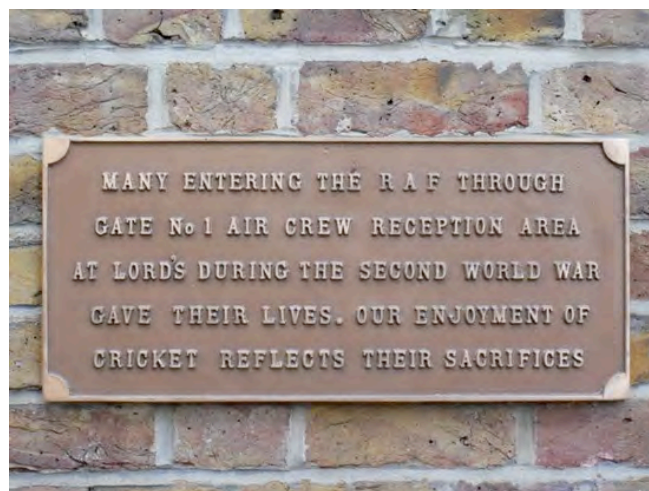
A large crowd watch a wartime game, or was it Pay Parade?

The two best-known wartime teams were the British Empire XI, Warner's own concept; and the London Counties XI which was founded by the politician Desmond Donnelly, then in the RAF. Despite its name, the British Empire XI featured mainly English county players, although West Indian Test player Bertie Clarke was its mainstay. These teams were first established in 1940 and played one-day charity matches, mostly in the south-east and often at Lord's. Although the teams were successful in raising money for charity, their main purpose was to help sustain morale.

There never was any real hope of staging a County Championship, even on a limited basis, although Lancashire did propose a regionalised competition to include the minor counties. The idea was that home-based servicemen and those in reserved occupations would play when time allowed, but it was not realistic

and MCC declined to take it forward. This was in early 1940, during the so-called "Phoney War" but Lancashire's Old Trafford was subsequently bombed and the club effectively closed for the duration, directing all members' subscriptions into a war relief fund. Other county clubs closed at the outset and appealed to the members to keep paying their subscriptions as a future investment. This policy had varying success with Yorkshire declaring an increased surplus and Worcestershire, for example, only a slight improvement while Leicestershire needed funds granted by Sir Julien Cahn to keep going.

One of the main risks in staging matches was bombing and Lord's was hit by bombs in 1941, as reported in the 1942 Wisden, but fortunately without casualties and the damage was not serious. During a wartime match between the Army and the Royal Air Force, play was stopped when a German doodlebug was thought to be heading towards the home of cricket. The players laid down on the turf and spectators were urged to retreat under the stands. In the event, the bomb made the short journey to Regent's Park and dropped there. Wisden, getting its priorities right, wrote that it was the "first flying-bomb to menace Lord's during the progress of the match." After the resumption Jack Robertson, the future Middlesex and England opener, showed he wasn't to be cowed by Bavarian aggression by defiantly hitting the next ball into the stands for six.



The Plaque at Lords

After the war, David Geach, (1923 - 2015) a bomb aimer in the RAF from 1942, fought a one-man battle to commemorate the sacrifices of his fellow aircrew. In 1991 it came to fruition.

Ed: *Now what about your memories of Lords?*

Veterans Day - RAFM Hendon

Rod Finn reports:

Rod, Tom Payne, Roy Briggs, Clive Dealey, Derek Gurney, Sandy and Ron Dobie all met on time outside The Greenacres Tavern at 9.45.a.m. last Thursday the 19th May but sadly George Meredith and David Bray couldn't join us.

By 10.05.a.m. we were 'seated and belted' on our Minibus and on our way via the M1 to the RAF Museum at Hendon for their Veterans Day' event., we duly arrived at 10.45.a.m. and were greeted by the 'Events Team' who had us all booked in quickly., we then headed to The Dermot Boyle wing where coffee and refreshments were being served

After a short while most of us went 'walkabout' and met with Doug Hadland and Chairman Geoff, after a while we found Charlie Flint and son Robert and then Dennis Swains with daughter., I was aiming to get a 'group' photo of our 'Vet's' i.e. it would have been 7 from one 'branch' area but wasn't successful as most of us were looking at different exhibits in different area's at different times or simply meeting up again with aircrew guys and more conversations., Sandy and I did accompany Doug Hadland to view the Mosquito, I did persuade Doug for a photo which I'll make available at our next meeting/and or the next Newsletter

We had to be back by our Minibus for a 4.00.p.m. departure, we were then informed that the Dakota would be appearing at 3.20.p.m. and right on cue she arrived and gave us three lovely passes, immediately after we shook hands again with friends, climbed aboard our Minibus and arrived back at The Greenacres a little tired after a super day out at Hendon.



The B of B Memorial Flight Dakota

Most of us met again with Doug Radcliffe the Bomber Command Association Secretary who we met with at the Green Park Memorial/RAF Club last November and also Harry Irons who visited us at Greenacres in March 2015.....Both said to say 'hello' to all of our membership.

Ed: A lovely footnote to this story, the driver supplied for the minibus had worked with Roy Briggs for 20 years - small world!



Yes there was even a dance band but we just listened - a pity George Meredith was not with us!

Thank you Rosemary



For many years Rosemary Calvert has held an RAF Ensign and the RAF Officers hat, which belonged to her dear late husband Les Calvert, that many members will remember so fondly. The ensign has been borrowed for those families who wished to have their loved ones coffin to be covered with it at their funeral.

Rosemary has now asked the Association to look after it and thus it has been taken into the care of David Bray. Our thanks go to Rosemary for looking after these items so well, so that so many others could benefit.

Does anybody have access to a Warrant Officer's hat? We obviously have an Officer's cap but it would be nice to have the WO's when required. Please advise Dave Bray.

Geoff Hulett renews Type Rating on Spitfire



First time back in 71 years!

A Spitfire which shot down a Messerschmitt during the Second World War has found a new home at the most iconic air base of the Battle of Britain - Biggin Hill.

The Mark 9 saw action in Holland and after the Second World War it was converted to a two-seater to be used for training by the Irish Air Corps. One of only seven two-seater Spitfires in the world, it has found a new home at the Biggin Hill Heritage Hanger on the site of the famous Fighter Command base in Kent, where it is now giving rides to paying passengers

Built in 1943 the plane was flown in September 1944 from an airfield in France by Royal Canadian Air Force Pilot Officer Sid Bregman of No. 441 (Silver Fox) Squadron.

Now for an Ops report filed by Geoff Hulett 24 May 16:

The weather on Tuesday 24 May could not have been better for a flight in a Spitfire.....so away to Biggin Hill for a reunion with this iconic aircraft.

During the war years every schoolboy had a burning desire to fly a Spitfire; today there is no less enthusiasm with pilots of all ages and so we are grateful to Peter Monk of the Heritage Hangar for making this possible and a dream come true.

Arriving at Biggin Hill airfield ,access to the viewing platform and briefing room is through the Heritage Hangar where rare and valuable Spits are serviced and modified to two seaters by competent fitters and ex RAF engineers. Briefing notes cover 13 pages backed up with two videos explaining the risks of flying in ex-military aircraft which do not conform to civilian standards. and disclaiming all responsibility in case of accidents.

There is an air of excitement in the crew room as budding pilots are called forward and finally it is my turn to climb in to the rear cockpit to make friends with my

parachute and briefed on its use. Method of escape seem to have changed over the years....no longer do you turn the aircraft on its back, jettison canopy,release harness and fall out. but that is another story.

Now time for a few words from my pilot (ex Royal Navy,Harriers) before the mighty Merlin springs into life and we taxi out. Time now to look around the cockpit and check the instruments....seems vaguely familiar except a hole where the compass should be. Perhaps it is fitted with one of those new-fangled GPS devices!

Pre-flight checks completed,cleared for take-off ,we speed down the runway to that captivating sound of the Merlin and the heart skips a beat as we lift off and climb to 800 feet where I am given control,climbing to 2000 at 200 mph in very bumpy conditions. Controls on the Spit are extremely sensitive as I quickly recalled during turns to port and starboard, keeping an eye on the horizon, altimeter and surrounding airspace. For 10 minutes my world changed as I was transported back 71 years to 1945 and my last flight in a Spit.

Such is the rarity of these treasured aircraft that aerobatics are restricted and so I was delighted and impressed by the victory roll carried out by my pilot. With fuel at £1000 per hour it was soon time to return to base but not before a few more minutes in control before handing over as we joined the circuit, a typical Spitfire approach and perfect three point landing.

As we taxied to dispersal there was just time for a look around the cockpit to memorize the instruments just in case my final flight (to heaven?) should be in a Spitfire.

My thanks to Peter Monk and his team at the Heritage Hangar for making this flight possible and to Joan Goldby who put my name forward



Back at Biggin Hill!

For flight details: www.flyaspitfire.co.uk or telephone 01959 576767

Programme 2016

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (*)

2016

15 Jun 16	IBCM Lincoln	Chris Brockbank
20 Jul 16	TBN	
31 Jul 16	A Gathering of Moths	Old Warden*
17 Aug 16	The Victor	Dick Haven
21 Aug	RAFALO BBQ RAF Halton*	see Tom Payne
21 Sep 16	Members Meeting	
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

Your Committee

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Welfare

Jim Copus has moved to a care home near his daughter in Leighton Buzzard. He went there initially for respite care whilst his family were away but decided he liked it and no longer wished to live alone. He will still get the Newsletter and we can keep in touch via his daughter.

It was good to chat to Rosemary Calvert and take over the ensign and SD Cap she has lovingly cared for since Les died.

David

Membership Secretary

I am glad to report that we have two new Associate Members. Their details are below:

509 DEALEY C (Clive) 18 Howe Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts
HP3 9JN Tel: 01442 251461

510 BROCKBANK C (Chris) Linden House, Edgcott, Aylesbury,
Bucks HP18 0TN Tel: 01296 770450

We welcome them both and am glad to see that Chris has already been asked to talk this month!

Gerry

Secretary/Editor

The new membership list is included with this issue (Members only). Please check your entry and advise of any inaccuracies.

Re the article on Lord's Cricket Ground and ACRC. I would love to have your stories of what went on there. We are hoping to arrange a visit later in this cricket season

Graham

Programme Secretary

We are hoping to finalise the full programme for the year, very shortly. I am currently trying to juggle the speakers dates.

Bill

Chairman

Having just renewed my type rating on the Spitfire, I may tell you about it if you come to the meeting in June. Just do not mention the 'traffic' trying to get to and from Biggin Hill. I can actually appreciate why those millionaires chose to fly by Helicopter!

Geoff