



# NEWSLETTER

**If you have not paid your Subscription - please do it today!**

## February Meeting

On yet another cold and wet Wednesday we had a wonderful human story of a Lancaster crew lost in action on 7 Jul 44. Steve Potter told the story of the crew including his Father's cousin Sgt Des Potter of a Lancaster of No 106 Squadron based at RAF Methwingham.

Most of the crew led by the pilot Captain Flt Lt Clement were on operations for on average the 27th time as they took off for a raid on a VI site at St Leu D'Esserent, just East of Paris. The aircraft was shot down with the loss of all seven crew.

Through painstaking research Steve has managed to make contact with the families of all seven crew and they were able to add to the story with photos, memories and memorabilia. Some of the crew trained in Canada whilst the pilot trained in the USA. They were crewed up at the Heavy Conversion Unit flying Sterling's before moving to 106 Sqn flying the Lancaster.

After being shot down they were buried on the French farm where the wreckage landed in the 'Bois de Locus' close to the village of Bures-en-Bray. Later in 1947 the bodies were exhumed and moved to the Commonwealth War Grave St Sever Cemetery near Rouen.

Steve told the story of the crew in some detail and we were left with the thought that this type of thing happened for so many fatal Bomber crashes. So many like these 'Seven Short Lives'!

**Ed:** Steve left 5 copies of the book for sale at £10 a copy and if you would like one contact Rod Finn (P 8).



LOTTERY FUNDED

## Tom Tate

Some of you will now be familiar with the story of Tom Tate, a Bomber Command veteran from 214 Sqn. He had lived in Prestwood and Chalfont St Giles but sadly never joined the Chiltern Branch of the ACA. However when we had a call from a 214 Sqn Association Committee member advising his cremation was to be at Amersham and it was unlikely few, if any, family were to attend - the RAF Family came out in force to ensure he was seen off for his final flight in style. Thank you to all our members who rallied to the call for help. See Pages 3 and 4. Next month there will be more of another fascinating side to Tom with his link to Germany after the war and a look at what the B17 was doing over there

## Flying Concorde

Squadron Leader Robert Gwyn Williams flew Hunters with Nos 43 Sqn in Aden and 8 Sqn in Muharraq before joining No 4FTS as an instructor on Gnats at Valley. He was then selected for an exchange with the Canadian Armed Forces in Quebec flying the F-101 Voodoo with 416 Sqn, 22nd NORAD. Moving back to the UK he re-joined 4 Sqn flying Gnats again before serving with the MoD responsible for Air Defence and Flying Tactics.

He then spent over 20 years with the Civil Aviation Authority which included 10 years flying Concorde. Join him for our March meeting to find out more about flying this wonderful machine.

**Remember 16th March 2016**

**"Flying Concorde"**

**by**

**Gwyn Williams**

**Greenacres 1030 for 1100am**

### Small World

*Fred Maryon from North Bucks reports:*

In September 2008 a member of my branch of the Aircrew Association and I were privileged to go with the 'Not Forgotten' association on a 5 day trip to Europe to visit the Mohne and Eder Dams, Arnhem and Ypres. The party of 30, mainly veterans included several limbless ex servicemen. Whilst most were veterans of Northern Ireland or the Falklands campaigns, one, Ron Chandler was accompanied by his wife June, he had been an Air Gunner, in the rear turret of a Lancaster in WWII. He had lost a leg fighting off a German night fighter.

I asked him which squadron he flew with, he told me he was on 57 Squadron at East Kirkby. I remarked that the late Chairman of our Branch, Geoff Copeman was a Flight Engineer with 57 Squadron and did he know him? Ron replied yes and that they were on the same crew! I thought this quite a coincidence as the number of Air Gunners must have been much greater than the other aircrew disciplines, there being 3 turrets on a Lancaster and other 'heavies'. Not bad to meet this chap out of what were approximately 120,000 aircrew.

Some years before, Geoff Copeman had written a book "The Able Lady" i.e. "Lancaster A - Able". He described an operation when the crew headed by Nick Nicklin RNZAF took over another "Lancaster J - Jig" for an operation on which they attacked Scheinfurt. They suffered horrendous damage from a JU 88 night fighter with upward firing guns. This put a cannon shell through Ron Chandler's knee but he continued to fight off the enemy. The ensuing damage to the aircraft plus a seriously injured rear gunner forced an emergency descent and landing into Tangmere. "J - Jig" was declared unfit to fly and the crew were collected for return to RAF East Kirkby.

Geoff had described how he exited the top hatch and walked down the bullet ridden fuselage of the Lancaster while the medics were extricating Ron from the rear turret. The holes which were made by .303" calibre bullets were caused when the enemy cannon shells hit the ammunition racks feeding the rear turret.

Ron was whisked off to Chichester Hospital and his leg amputated. For his heroic action he was awarded an 'immediate' DFM. Unfortunately a long convalescence meant he was eventually invalided out of the service by the end of the war and thought he would never see RAF East Kirkby again. However as a result of our meeting after a gap of sixty four years, Ron had the chance to renew his acquaintance with RAF East Kirkby (now The Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre) and their Avro

Lancaster. The 'Lanc' at East Kirkby, "Just Jane" is unique as although it is no longer airworthy it regularly takes passengers on 'taxi runs' around what is left of the airfield.

A few words with the owner Harold Panton and by magic the rear door was unlocked and steps were provided for Ron. Despite his artificial leg he climbed aboard with surprising agility. While June was busy in the limited space recording the event on camera, Ron was too deep in thought to say much as he sat in the Lancaster fuselage after a gap of so many years.

I write a monthly newsletter for the Branch, in which I recounted this story. Another of our members Henry Ricketts, a friend of Geoff read the story. Henry was also a Flight Engineer and flew with 57 Squadron. His working life after the war was spent in South Africa and following retirement he went to live with his daughter in Perth, Western Australia. Annually he came to UK to visit his sister who lived locally and he always attended our meetings whilst he was here to renew his friendship with Geoff. His sister and Geoff both having died, we no longer see him.

Henry wrote to say that he had read my story and that the coincidence went even further. He said that he and Ron Chandler were in the same class at two schools in Watford, furthermore another class mate of theirs; Fred Sloan was also on 57 Squadron, though sadly he was lost in a Lancaster that was shot down over Germany.

It certainly is a small world!



*Ron Chandler in WWII*



*Ron on a visit to East Kirkby in 2009. His foot is resting on the boot scraper that had been outside his billet in WWII.*

**Tom Tate**

**Ed:** *Sadly few, if any of us knew Tom but his story is fascinating and thanks to Vic Pheasant (Portsmouth ACA) we were linked to an appeal for help in giving him a good send off on 10 February.*

Thomas Henry Tate - known as Tom - died peacefully in his sleep at Catherine Court care home in High Wycombe on January 19 at the age of 98. When aged just 21, Tom volunteered for the RAF when the Second World War broke out in 1939. He went off to Training School to be trained as a radio operator and eventually made the rank of Flying Officer.

He was a member of the 214 Squadron Association and had flown as a WOP/AG on Stirling's and B17's. Tom had completed a remarkable 44 sorties and with his 45th almost completed, could not know that his luck was about to be tested once again.

Tom remembers the order: 'Bale out! Bale out!' He obeyed, hurling himself into the rushing darkness. Above him, the aircraft flew on. He drifted in the inky blackness unsure whether he was even descending. 'Everything was dead still,' he recalls. 'There was no movement, no sensation, no lights. Suddenly there was this mass of earth rushing up towards me.' He landed safely and, after blundering about for half an hour, bumped into a fellow crew-member Norman Bradley. Together they set course west. It proved a short journey. At the very first village they came to, they were surrounded by local people and hauled off to a nearby interrogation centre.

For all of Thursday and most of Friday, Tate was interrogated by German forces in a perfectly acceptable fashion. As well as Bradley, five other crew members

had also been captured and the next day the seven men were transported under armed guard en route for a prison camp. The journey was to take them through a town called Pforzheim, which three weeks earlier had been the target of a devastating raid by Bomber Command.

Tom Tate would never forget his first sight of Pforzheim. The town lay in a valley. When the RAF men looked down on what had once been a thriving community of some 70,000 souls, all they could see was ruins. 'It was no more than a pile of rubble,' Tate remembers in awed tones. According to official records, a huge force of Lancasters and Mosquitoes had dropped 1,825 tons of bombs on Pforzheim in just 22 minutes, causing a firestorm that destroyed more than 80 per cent of the town's built-up area and killed at least 17,000 people. Many died in their cellars, when their lungs burst with the intense heat. Although Tom Tate's crew had not taken part in the raid, his shock at this ghastly evidence of the bombers' capacity for destruction was immense. He was certainly not surprised when some of the surviving townsfolk, catching sight of the prisoners' RAF uniforms, began stoning them furiously with the rubble that lay at their feet. If it wasn't for the armed guards defending them from the onslaught, all seven men might have been killed there and then. As it was, they reached the neighbouring village of Huchenfeld, where they were billeted for the night in a boiler room filled with heaps of coal. They were given buckets of water. Tom Tate was exhausted and after he had removed his boots to wash his feet and socks, he lay back on the coal and was instantly asleep.

The next thing he knew, he was being violently dragged up the iron staircase out of the cellar. A gang of young men hauled him and his fellow prisoners along the street. Their captors were dressed in ordinary civilian clothes, but there was a menacing air about them and they were evidently in a state of high excitement. 'Then someone hit me on the head,' Tate says. 'Blood flowed. God, I thought, this is lynching.' The mob now turned right taking their captives toward the church. Increasingly alarmed, Tate noticed a barn with a huge pair of doors. Inside in one of them was a small door, which was open. An electric light burned inside, and it was then that Tate saw something that froze his heart: a stout beam from which hung several heavy ropes. I saw those ropes and that instant my imagination told me we were going to be hanged, he remembers. Driven by fear of his imminent execution at the hands of a baying mob his instinct for survival kicked in.

(continued from Page 3)

Bursting free from his captors, he ran like mad in his bare feet, back up the road. It was a spontaneous action, and it saved Tate's life. One shot was fired after him, but he ducked down past some houses, raced across a field and plunged into the nearby woods.

Luck was with him. Most of the trees in the area were pines, difficult to hide among, but by chance he had found a copse of oaks, whose leaves lay thickly on the ground. With the Instinct of a wild animal, and without even thinking what he was doing, he burrowed under the leaves until he was hidden from sight.

For a while he lay awake, troubled by a sudden burst of gunfire he had heard coming from the village, wondering what had become of his comrades. Then he fell asleep. Tom Tate awoke in his leaf-mould bed at dawn on Sunday. By lunchtime he had been recaptured. But now, at least, he was in the hands of the German Army, not the dangerous youths of the night before.

He spent the remainder of the war as a PoW - much of it in horrendous conditions. For weeks he was on the road with thousands of other, near-starving men, mostly Russians, as the Germans retreated from the advancing Allied forces. But he survived. Amazingly, so did four other members of the Flying Fortress crew who had been on board that fateful night.



Boeing Fortress Mk III - B17 F

A year later, in June 1946, Tom Tate and Norman Bradley returned to Germany as witnesses in the war crimes trials against 22 men and youths who had taken part in the killings.

The five murdered airmen are remembered at The RAFA Ely Cambs Branch Memorial Rose Garden situated at what used to be the RAF Hospital there. (now the NHS Princess of Wales Hospital) and in the 214 Squadron Book of Remembrance in Ely Cathedral.



Tom with the Book of Remembrance, Ely Cathedral



The Hearse follows three Standards to the Chapel



A full house to see Tom off

Photos from Chris Perkins

**Ed:** Next month there will be a report from a Flt Eng on the B17 and the work they did towards the end of the war

**If you go down to Cardington today**



*The Airlander 10*

You are certainly in for a big surprise and when we say big we mean big! Airlander 10, world's biggest aircraft will soon be launched, according to experts building it, manufacturer, Hybrid Air Vehicles. Longer than a soccer pitch and filled to the brim with helium, at 302 feet long, the Airlander 10 will be the world's biggest aircraft.

Part blimp, part plane, part helicopter, it was originally created by British design company Hybrid Air Vehicles (HAV) for military surveillance by the U.S. Army. But budget cuts doomed the project and HAV bought the airship back across the pond, where it seemed set to remain on solid ground until the company received a £3.4 million (\$5.1 million) grant from the UK government. Thanks to this recent injection of financing, designers and engineers are now readying the craft for first flight tests. While an airship might seem like a craft from a time long passed, it has been given a 21st century design overhaul and HAV hopes to have airships back in the skies over the UK by 2016.

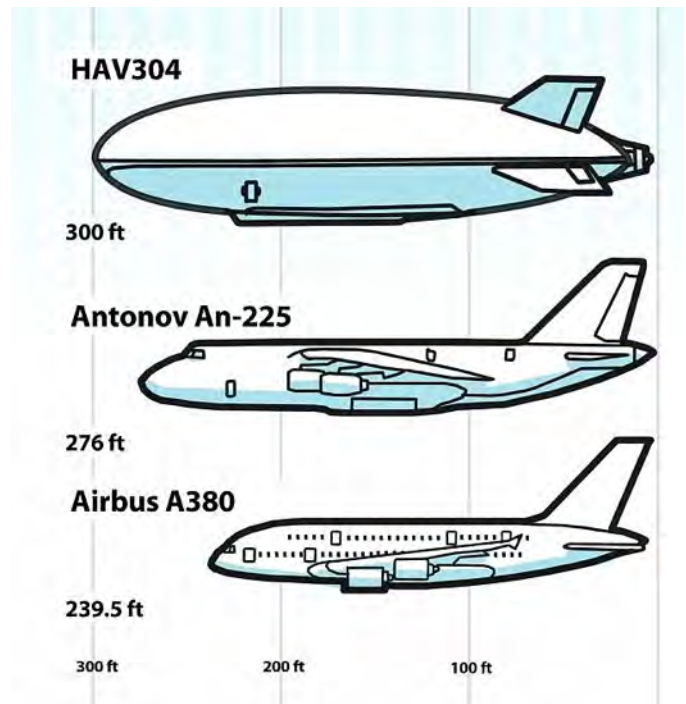
While the concept has been around for nearly a century, airships fell out of fashion following the Hindenburg disaster in 1937, when the German passenger craft erupted into flames while trying to dock, killing 36.

There has been incredible interest from at home and abroad. The U.S. Coastguard has expressed interest in using the hybrid airships to monitor the nation's coastline. Meanwhile Swedish firm OceanSky, in conjunction with the government, wants to use the Airlander as an air transport system for wind turbines. At the moment, the only way of doing (transporting the equipment) is basically plowing a 50m-wide highway through pristine Nordic forest, but nobody wishes to destroy ecological environment.

There is great variety of uses the airship could have. Oxford is keen to task the aircraft on aid relief missions following natural disasters, while HAV is in talks with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, to help conduct scientific research. Using airships for military purposes such as reconnaissance and surveillance is not a new idea and today faces stiff competition from drones.

The Airlander 10 -- named because it can carry 10 tons -- is made of a bespoke fabric of carbon fiber, kevlar and mylar, while the pressure of the helium inside maintains the aircraft's shape. Diesel fuel helps the Airlander take off and land and powers the propellers. The spacious cockpit is currently configured to accommodate a pilot and one observer but this can easily be reconfigured to end-user specifications.

The airship also has green credentials -- its creators say the current version uses 20% fuel burn of existing aircraft, can be fitted with solar panels, uses near-silent 325 hp V8 engines and can stay airborne for five days while carrying its maximum payload. The vehicle can also operate in extreme weather conditions (+54 to -56 degrees Celsius).



*It is big, as you can see*

**Ed:** My thanks to Gerry Sealy-Bell for putting me in touch with this project. We will investigate the possibility of a visit to Cardington later in the year, once we have an idea of when the Airlander 10 will take to the air.

### An 'Irish Story'



*Air Lingus A330-200*

Shortly after take-off on an outbound evening Air Lingus flight from Dublin to Boston, the lead flight attendant nervously made the following painful announcement in her lovely Irish brogue:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm so very sorry, but it appears that there has been a terrible mix-up by our catering service. I don't know how this has happened, but we have 103 passengers on board, and unfortunately, we received only 40 dinner meals. I truly apologize for this mistake and inconvenience."

When the muttering of the passengers had died down, she continued, "Anyone who is kind enough to give up their meal so that someone else can eat will receive free, unlimited drinks for the duration of our 5 hour flight."

Her next announcement came about 2 hours later: "If anyone is hungry, we still have 40 dinners available."

**Ed:** *Despite extensive research I could not find confirmation that this happened but Guinness sales were well up that day!*

### New Airbus A321 Neo - Wups



*The ill fated Airbus A321 neo*

On 12th February 2016 an Airbus Airbus A321Neo, (new engine option) registration D-AVXB performing

test flight AIB-04XB from Toulouse to Perpignan (France), landed on Perpignan's runway 33 but struck its tail onto the runway surface. The aircraft rolled out without further incident but was unable to continue its test schedule due to the damage received.

The aircraft will have to undergo significant repair work and stay on the ground for weeks following a the tail strike. The aircraft was performing tests at Perpignan when the incident unfolded. "These things happen," Airbus President/ CEO Fabrice Bregier said during the Singapore Airshow. "We go beyond certified limits (during testing)." He did not give further details as to how and why exactly the tail strike occurred.

According to Bregier, the aircraft was in good enough condition to be flown back from Perpignan to Toulouse where it will be repaired. Flight tests are suspended for now. "It is a matter of a few weeks," Bregier said. He does expect any impact on the published delivery schedule. The first aircraft is to be delivered to Qatar Airways before the end of the year.

### HLF grant secures future of the Bomber Command Story

The IBCC at Lincoln has been awarded Round 2 funding of just under £3 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the creation of the exhibition, community engagement and education programmes and digital archive for the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC).

President of the Bomber Command Association, Air Commodore Charles Clark DFC, said "Knowing how difficult it was to raise the funds for the memorial in London, it is exciting news that the HLF are supporting this worthy project. We have to do everything we can to ensure this project is delivered whilst we still have some veterans alive." Jim Dooley, 70's Pop star and fundraiser says, "It is absolutely wonderful news that HLF have agreed a grant to fund the archive and exhibition installation for the IBCC. A really significant milestone has been achieved, many thanks and congratulations to all who have played a part. The race is really on now, to raise the necessary funds in order to build the Chadwick Centre that will house the archive and exhibition."

There are a wealth of stories connected to Bomber Command that, until now, have never been fully told. With testimonies of veterans as well as those affected by the bombing. It will be an essential resource to help us all appreciate and reflect on people's experiences during this important period in history."

The numbers game for 2015 - our Accounts

Chiltern Aircrew Association

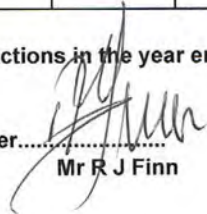
Revenue Account from 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2015

<u>Expenditure</u>			<u>Income</u>		
	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>		<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
<b>Administration</b>					
Committee Expenses, includes newsletter	414.85		Subscriptions	490.00	
Speaker Expenses	55.00		Raffle (Net Proceeds)	824.00	
Donations	335.00		Interest Income	0.32	
Minibus Hire	87.85		Donations	195.00	
		892.70			1,509.32
<b>Entertainment</b>					
Guest's Event May 2015	336.00		Guest's Event May 2015	294.00	
Xmas Dinner Dec 2015	1,152.70		Xmas Dinner Dec 2015	930.00	
		1,488.70			1,224.00
<b>Total Costs</b>		<b>2,381.40</b>	<b>Total Income</b>		<b>2,733.32</b>
<b>Excess of Income over Expenditure</b>		<b>351.92</b>			
Assets at 1st January 2015		2,379.17			
Excess of Income over Expenditure		351.92			
<b>Assets at 31st December 2015</b>		<b>2,731.09</b>			
Current Account		2,179.67			
Savings Account		551.42			
Cash in Hand		0.00			
		2,731.09			

We Certify that the above accounts are correct and properly reflect transactions in the year ending 31st December 2015

Signed

Hon Auditor   
Mr A C Deether FCA

Hon Treasurer   
Mr R J Finn

Dated

12th February 2016

Our thanks to Rod Finn for his sterling work throughout the year and as you can see, many thanks to those who regularly attend our meetings and buy raffle tickets. This has enabled us to benefit those attending our lunches and go on our visits which we have subsidised. Keep up the good work.

**Programme 2016**

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (\*)

2016

Mar 16	Flying Concorde	Gwyn Williams
Apr 20	The Cinderella Op	Dusty Miller
May 18	Guests Lunch*	1200 Noon
May 19	Veteran's Day (RAF Museum)*	

**Your Committee**

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**Welfare**

I made a few calls before going to Cuba with little to report. I spoke to Ann Hyland and Norma Hagen. Now back in residence I have caught up with news of Charlie Flint, who is in hospital having had a blood clot removed from his leg. He is now taking early steps with the help of a frame but hopes to be fully operational in due course. When visited he was enquiring about the February meeting he missed and is keen to get back to our meetings. Harold Kirby is currently in dock having a new knee fitted, so we hope he will also be taking his first steps shortly. Good luck to you both.

**David**

**Membership Secretary**

So far 34 of our 49 members have renewed. As we would like to get our new Membership List published with the April Newsletter, please, please get your £10 cheque to me by return of post.

**PLEASE DON'T DELAY - PAY TODAY**

**Gerry**

**Secretary/Editor**

My personal thanks to those who attended Tom Tate's funeral. Time constraints meant that only those on email were contacted direct. I have had a telephone call from the Secretary of the 214 Squadron Association, Peter Walker, thanking us for our contribution.

**Graham**

**Programme Secretary**

I nearly have this years programme complete with speakers. I also hope to have a lunch when I get the tents up in my garden, dates to be confirmed

**Bill**

**Treasurer**

The 2015 accounts can be seen on page 7. It has been suggested that we split Newsletter expenses (over £300) with the routine Committee expenses which are normally nominal. I will do this for 2016. If anyone has any queries please do not hesitate to get in touch

**Rod**