

102 (CEYLON) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER MARCH 2012

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*'And when you come to 102
And think that you will get through
There's many a fool who thought like you
It's suicide but its fun.'*

(Anonymous 102 Squadron member, 1941).



To My Friends and Colleagues,

I hope you enjoyed our last 'News Letter'. This was assembled with the assistance of two of our new associate members.

I've now assembled the second 'News Letter of 2012', again with the assistance of many friends.

I'm unable to get out and about as I used to, but I'm hoping to regain the use of my legs in the near future. I feel this is going to take some time.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

The association's finances are in a somewhat perilous state. It would therefore help if everyone could send their annual subscription, of £5 to the secretary, as early as possible. Many thanks,

Tom Wingham



'Remembrance Day 2012'.



'Lest We Forget'



Your Hon Sec is asking for a Volunteer to attend 'Barmby Moor Church' for this years 'Remembrance Service' and the wreath laying at the Church Memorial followed by a short service and wreath laying at the 'Memorial at Pocklington Airfield'.

Please advise both Tom and Mike Cummings regarding the wreaths, as follows

Mikes' contact details are; Tel/Answer phone: 01923-711818 when leaving a message Please prefix with 102 Squadron, or email

mikecummings@talktalk.net

This year Mike will be attending Remembrance Day services at Fresnoy-la-Riviere, Oise, France. There are four 102 Squadron aircrew interned at this Church yard.

Tom Wingham

The Big City (Duisburg 26th March 1943). (Extracts from 'Halifax Down').

Some days passed, kicking our heels, before my crew, having been on the squadron for six weeks, became entitled to Leave and so went our separate ways for the next seven days. A few days after returning we were again on the order of battle for 26th March, this time with Duisburg as the target for the 455 bombers scheduled to attack. Since joining the squadron at the end of January, a matter of seven weeks, we had lost twelve aircraft and, as we rarely had put that number in the air on any one night, it did not require a mathematician to work out that the odds on survival were not good.

We took off at 19:57 hrs, with a route taking us over the coast at Hornsea from where we set course across the North Sea for Egmond on the Dutch coast, having been allocated Q-Queenie, not a particularly favourite aircraft of anyone on the squadron. It did not climb very well but we managed to get to 18,000 feet some way before reaching Egmond. As predicted, there was 10/10th cloud over north-west Europe with the cloud tops above 5,000 feet.

We flew on to our ETA (estimated time of arrival) which coincided with the dropping of a release point flare and bombed on that. The Oboe Mossies had a bad night with several of them suffering malfunction of the equipment, so on the whole the raid was not too successful. We landed at 00:28 hrs so were in bed by 02:30 hrs to get a reasonable night's sleep.

The Big City (Berlin 27th March 1943).

After a last breakfast on 27th March, we found that we were again on the order of battle for the night, one of eight from the squadron, this time it was for the big city – Berlin.

Attending briefing where we learnt that we were part of a force of 396 heavies attacking the city. By 20:00 hrs we were airborne on what was to prove a fairly quiet trip as our route brought us in on the south side of the target. It was a clear sky and using astro-navigation, we stayed on track so that we missed the defensive flak surrounding the Ruhr and other towns on the way, although we saw the odd bomber, which had strayed, getting a pasting as it over flew flak batteries. By staying in the middle of the bomber stream there was no problem with fighters, although there was little evidence of much activity on their part.

Things livened up, however, as we came to Berlin from the south-west with fairly intensive flak coming up left, right and centre, although it seemed more of a barrage than predicted fire. There was no cloud cover and visibility was good with searchlights sweeping everywhere and time, I am sure, stood still as we droned across Berlin. I set the bombsight and started giving Dave directions towards the collection of red and green ground markers around which most of the bombs were being aimed. We were on a heading of 015°T at 18,000 feet when I released the bombs towards the centre of the green primary markers with everyone relieved as we turned north-west to get out of the place. After an uneventful flight back home we landed at Pocklington at 03:14 hrs.



Squadron Notice

We will be holding our 2012 Annual Meeting at the 'Wolds Gliding Club' on the 21st July 2012

Due to popular request dinning will be a 'HOT BUFFET' £20.00p per person.

Please advise me as soon as possible by letter your intentions of attendance to help organise the rationing and any dietary requirements.

Church Parade will be at St Catherine's Church Barmby Moor
Sunday 22nd July 2012.

Those attending will need to organise their own overnight accommodations at the usual hotels and B & B's.

I am hoping to make the reunion this year. I look forward to seeing as many of the 'Squadron Members' as possible.

My contact details are as follows:

14 Fornham House, Fornham St Martin, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31-1SR
Telephone 01284-765224.

Alternatively you can email Mike Cummings as follows
mikecummings@talktalk.net

Tom Wingham

The Big City (Berlin 29th March 1943).

Having visited Berlin two nights before it was a bit surprising that on 29th March it was on again, but the word was that Harris wanted another crack at this vital target before the lighter evenings made it too difficult. The weather forecast was appalling and, unofficially, our two met officers at Pocklington were backing a 'scrub'. There were ten aircraft detailed from the squadron and at the original time for take-off, I think about 18:30 hrs, a postponement of two hours came through since there was an occlusion running north to south right through the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire airfields with cloud base down to 800 feet. At take-off time it was pouring with rain with cloud up to 16,000 feet.

The occlusion was moving more slowly than forecast and a further postponement was made as the new take-off time drew near. Having hung about the messes for nearly three hours awaiting a decision no one really believed that we were going to face this weather and a great deal of incredulity was expressed when we finally found ourselves committed. One of the few nights I can remember when Harris's parentage was in doubt!

After the postponements, the ten aircraft from Pocklington started to take off at 21:46 hrs with the last leaving at 22:06 hrs, my own aircraft, Q-Queenie, being airborne at 21:47 hrs.

When aircrews were tired take-offs and landings could be extremely hazardous particularly as most airfield circuits usually overlapped with one, or not two other circuits.

Pocklington was no exception, with our two satellites, Melbourne and Elvington. On this night G-George, taking off at 21:58 hrs, seemed to have hit the slipstream from another aircraft on a nearby circuit which appeared to have flipped it over on its back. It went straight in with the full bomb load exploding on the edge of the town. All the crew were killed.

Q-Queenie was the oldest, clapped out aircraft on the squadron and from the moment we took off straight into the cloud at 700 feet we were struggling. We were to take the northern route to Berlin across the widest part of the North Sea to Denmark and then down over the Baltic. Quite a lot of sea! The cloud was solid and our rate of climb was abysmal.

As we reached the Danish coast we were just about breaking the top of the cloud at a little over 15,000 feet and then realised that we had iced-up and the rear gunner could not see out and half the pilot's windscreen was also covered. With the throttles fully open we were just about able to get 135 knots IAS instead of the usual 160 knots. At that moment the guns from Flensburg opened up which made us decide to turn back.

Although the flak was bursting ahead of us, probably because the Germans didn't believe anything could be flying so slow! I aimed the bombs towards the centre of the gun flashes and we turned back for the long haul across the North Sea, the graveyard of many aircraft. It proved to be fortunate that our wireless operator was very experienced having completed a previous tour on Hampdens.

As a result he established contact with base and periodically reported our progress.

We eventually landed back at base at 03:12 hrs and as we reached the end of the runway had to cut the starboard outer engine for lack of oil pressure. We proceeded to dispersal and as Dave cut the engines the ground crew were signalling vigorously not to open the bomb doors as was usual.

As we disembarked we were led to first look at the port wing bomb bays where, due to icing, one of the small bomb containers had failed to release, but as we descended to lower temperatures had unfrozen with the result that ninety-six 4lb incendiary bombs, all live, were now pushing through the light bomb door.

A rough landing could have set them off. It was also pointed out that our IFF (identification friend or foe) aerial had disappeared with the ice and the two inners of our remaining three engines were literally pouring out their glycol coolant.

Had we not turned back it would have been impossible to get back home on one good engine and we would probably have ended up in the North Sea.

And so we moved into April, which was to prove our busiest month.

The Big City (April to be continued).



'Remembrance Day 2011'



13th November

St Catherine's Church Barmby Moor



The day dawned misty and damp as Mike approached St Catherine's Church at 9.45am, it appeared surrealistically out of the mist. Mike and his wife Jean went into the church. Chris our web master and his family arrived earlier at 9.30am to lay roses on each of the 55 war graves. The idea was to meet with Bill Leyland and his brother, however they were both delayed.

At approximately 10.45am the service commenced with the Reverend Gail Dailey leading the procession of the wreath bearers, four I believe including the '102 Squadron wreath carried by Mrs Jean Cummings followed by Mr Michael Cummings carrying the 102 Squadrons book of remembrance, (yes I was wearing white gloves), the wreaths were laid at the foot of the alter and the book of remembrance was placed upon the lectern, opened, in the centre of the alter.

Reverend Gail Dailey conducted a very moving and thoughtful service during which Mr Michael Cummings completed the ceremony of turning a page in the book of remembrance and to quote Mike 'that was difficult' as this page contained his fathers name.

At 11.00am. Mr Paul Dyson played the 'Last Post' followed by two minutes silence, followed by 'Reveille'. On completion of the service we filed outside to the Cenotaph.



Sgt Michael Norman Reilly KIA 11/2/1943

After a few words from the Reverend Gail Dailey, again Mr Paul Dyson played the 'Last Post' followed by two minutes silence, followed by 'Reveille'.



There were four wreaths laid in total I'm not sure as to who laid the first three wreaths.



The last wreath laid was for '102 Squadron' by Mr Michael Cummings

Following the wreath laying Mr Bill Leyland started to lay the flowers and cards he had brought with him.



Sadly Bill missed the short ceremony at 'Pocklington Airfield'.

Pocklington Airfield was very quite and still, appearing surrealistically out of the mist.

Following a short prayer by the Reverend Gail Dailey Mr Paul Dyson again played the 'Last Post' followed by two minutes silence, followed by 'Reveille'.



I believe there were three wreaths laid, the second was laid by Flight. Sergeant. Tom Sayer DFM.



The third by Cllr Graham Perry the Mayor of Pocklington, who also laid a wreath for 102 Squadron at 'All Saints' Church in Pocklington.

After the short service and wreath laying we proceeded into 'The Wolds Gliding Club'

Quote, from a gliding club member 'The most well attended Remembrance Day Service for many a year'.

A huge thank you has to go to the wife of 'The Wolds Gliding Club Chairman, Aveline for providing the teas and cakes, indeed to Mr George Morris from the gliding club for being available to over see every thing.



Flight. Sergeant. Thomas Sayer DFM speaking to guests at the Wolds Gliding Club (Pocklington Airfield) on Remembrance Sunday 2011.



Left to right: Chris Harper, Flight. Sergeant. Tom Sayer DFM, Mike Cummings and Bill Leyland at the Wolds Gliding Club (Pocklington Airfield) on Remembrance Sunday 2011.

102 Squadron would like to thank the following;

- Rev Gail Dailey.
- The Wolds Gliding Club special mention to Mr Colin Stevens.
- Mr Bill Leyland.

† 'NOT FORGOTTEN' †

Sqn Ldr Bernard Albert Lea, FE. Sadly passed away 28/February/2012 after a short illness. Bernard flew with 102 Squadron during 1944/45 completing 39 operational missions. Bernard was at the Lancaster conversion squadron when the war ended. He married Joan, his childhood friend, on the 10/March/1945, sadly Joan died in August 2009. He leaves three much loved children, Anthony, Julie and Mary. A guard of honor was formed by Mr Lou Pozzo, President Farnborough Royal British Legion who also gave the Commendation, Mr Den Poulter Alton RAFA and Mr Michael D Cummings. The standard bearers from the Farnborough Royal British Legion, and the Royal Air Forces Association Farnborough & Aldershot, RMG, lead the coffin into the chapel; the coffin was carried by Bernard's grandsons.

Here I would like to paraphrase his daughter Mary's eulogy.
On behalf of Anthony, Julie and myself.

I would like to thank you all for coming here today to help us as a family, to heal and to celebrate our fathers life. He would be touched by you being here for him.

We would especially like to thank the standard bearers from the Royal British Legion John Izant, and the Royal Air Forces Association George Proctor also Michael D Cummings representing 102 Squadron.

We would especially like to thank his special team of carers who looked after him so beautifully these last two years always bringing a smile to his face. During the last year Dad had several stays in the Princess Marina House in Sussex, part of the RAF respite centres where his carers and nurses showed him great affection. My dad was not only a war hero. He was loved by everyone who met him for his wonderful smile and the twinkle he had in his eye. You never left his company without a wave and a "cheerio" as you left the room.

Today we salute you for the war hero that you are.

We salute you for the gentleman that you are.

Finally we salute you for the great father and husband that you are.

Goodnight dad, until we meet again, may God keep you safely in his arms.



VETERANS

Composed by a 12 year old young lady

Who are these men
Who march so proud
Who quietly weep
Eyes closed, heads bowed
These are the men
Who once were boys
Who missed out on youth
And all its joys



Who are these men
With aged faces
Who silently count
The empty spaces
These are the men
Who gave their all
Who fought for country
For freedom all



Who are these men
With sorrowful look
Who can still remember
The lives that were took
These are the men
Who say young men die
The price of freedom
Is always high



Who are these men
Who in the midst of pain
Whispered comfort to those
They would not see again
These are the men
Whose hands are held tomorrow
Who brought back our future
With blood tears and sorrow



Who are these men
Who promise to keep
Alive in their hearts
The ones God holds asleep
These are the men
To whom I promise again
Veterans my friends
I will remember them.





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