



NEWSLETTER (WINTER 2025)

102 (CEYLON) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



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Chairman's Meanderings

It's that time of year when we get into the hustle and bustle of Christmas preparations, and look forward to those family gatherings, up to, over, and after the Christmas holidays. I always feel that sense of warmth and belonging that comes with remembering Christmas' past. It's also a time to remember those loved ones and friends who are no longer with us to celebrate this time of peace and celebration, for whatever reason.

Many of us will take a little 'quiet' time, amongst the festivities, to find a few minutes to remember back over the years, and those happy times spent with our family and friends. It doesn't take long for the laughter, the frivolity, the occasional tears, and the joy of being together, to come back to us.

Happy Christmas to you all.

Let's hope that we can see a lot more peace and goodwill in the coming year, with much less of the aggression and cynicism that seems to dominate the world's daily news. Perhaps the message of peace needs a little help from all of us. After all, we are sharing a very small planet!

One of the pleasant parts of being involved with your Association, is the many contacts we share during the year. From the occasional chat to someone making a family enquiry about a relative who served with the Squadron, to keeping in touch with our many '*old and bold*' who continue to support us.

A very pleasant occasion in October was the celebration of the 101st birthday of Iris Jeffrey, widow of Stan who was a Flight Mechanic with 102 from 1941 to 1946. Unfortunately, Iris wasn't feeling too well and, as she hadn't had her hair done, she refused to have any photographs taken of her birthday celebrations. Although she has some mobility problems, she remains bright as a button and can give you chapter and verse, along with some very forthright opinions, on world and government events!

We were fortunate in September this year to have had the support of Patrick Dare, a senior teacher at Pocklington School, and a Flight Lieutenant in the RAF Reserve. Patrick also leads the RAF Section of the Pocklington School Combined Cadet Force. (He also teaches French, which helps no end!) Patrick offered to write the article about our annual visit to Lyons la Foret, near Rouen, an offer readily accepted! While we were in Lyons la Foret, we took the opportunity to show Patrick the places of interest and where, on the Sunday, we would take part in the three ceremonies. Part of that reconnaissance led us to the dedicated memorial stone for the three crewmembers who were killed when DY-O crashed into the forest on the night of the 28th of June, 1944.

Now, it was hot, 26 degrees, as we drove from the ancient Abbaye de Mortemer we had the windows down. In the air we suddenly heard the sound of a ‘trumpet’ playing rising and falling notes which never quite got to the point of a tune! As we arrived at our crew’s memorial stone, deep in the forest, we found a man with a very large brass instrument. He turned out to be the ‘Trompette du Chasse’ practicing the calls for the deer/ wild boar hunts that take place in the Forest! The sound carries so far, and is so penetrating, he must find a spot in the Forest to practice, far away from people and animals!

So, guess who decided to have a go? Yes, our stalwart Flight Lieutenant Patrick.



The Trompette du Chasse



The apprentice!

I’m sorry, but my poor technology skills prevented me from reproducing the video clip of the sounds Patrick achieved, perhaps as well, as John Williams apologised before realising that it wasn’t him who was the source!

Next Year:

I’m looking forward to meeting many of you next year.

Our Annual Reunion Weekend is over the 5th to the 7th of June, 2026. The Annual Dinner will be on Saturday the 6th of June at The Feathers Hotel, Pocklington. (I’ll be sending out Booking Forms in March next year.)

We hope to dedicate a new memorial plaque to the crews of 102’s DY-K and 77 Squadron’s KN-K who died after a mid-air collision near Mohair Farm, Barmby Moor in November 1943.

Have a happy Christmas and a very Peaceful New Year.

Harry Bartlett (Chairman)

Honouring the Fallen in France

By Patrick Dare

Pocklington School's Flight Lieutenant Patrick Dare recently represented Pocklington School, the town of Pocklington, the 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association and the RAF at a series of memorial events held near Lyons-la-Forêt in Normandy, France.

The visit followed an earlier occasion in April 2025, when Flt Lt Dare attended the unveiling of a new war memorial in Boussières-sur-Sambre, in the Nord region of France. The ceremony, held on Saturday 26 April, marked the inauguration of the first memorial of its kind in over 60 years, dedicated to 116 Allied airmen who lost their lives in the Avesnois region during the Second World War.

The recent visit to Normandy was a continuation of these commemorations, paying tribute to members of the French Resistance and Allied airmen who fought and fell for freedom. The "Souvenir de Mortemer" event began at the Abbaye de Mortemer in honour of Madame Huguette Verhague, a courageous member of the French Resistance who helped Allied servicemen by hiding them in the loft of her hen house, even though she had enemy troops billeted on her farm. Some of the men she aided were from 102 Squadron, who had flown from RAF Pocklington, now the site of the Wolds Gliding Club.



The formal parade and standard bearers form up at Huguette's Farm

Further tributes were paid at the Croix des Fusillés (Cross of the Fallen), where Resistance members were executed on 24–26 August 1944. This is only 450 yards into the forest from Huguette's Farm.

The eight were members of the French O.R.A. (The Army Resistance Organization), and were part of the group who rescued our crew from DY-O

after the four survivors parachuted into the forest on the night of 28th of June 1944.



Left: The senior government representatives including the Prefet of Eure, Charles Giusti.

Right: Jean -Marc Mouquet (MC), Jean Regnard and the Mayor of Lyons, Thierry Plouvier



The formal parade at the Croix de Fusilles with over 30 standard bearers

A further 350 yards up the hill, in the forest, brings you to the Carrefour de la Croix Vaubois. This is a memorial dedicated to members of the Organisation of the Army Resistance (ORA) and the Office National des Forêts (ONF) who were deported from the region. Over 180 were deported to forced labour camps in Germany where many of them died of disease and starvation. Only a handful returned at the end of the war.

The Foresters were the largest proportion of deportees, the German army knew that many of them were involved in the Army of Resistance and were able to lead forces through the unknown, off the track, routes in the dense forest, as had happened in areas like the Bourgogne.

Flt Lt Dare attended alongside Harry Bartlett, Chairman of the 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association, and John Williams, a member of the Association whose uncle served with 102 Squadron. (*His Halifax aircraft was hit during a mission, and although he parachuted to safety, he was tragically shot and killed after landing.*)



Prefet Charles Giusti Mayor of Lisors, Frederick Herbin

Among the dignitaries present were Charles Giusti, Préfet of the Eure region, who delivered a moving address, Frédéric Herbin, Mayor of Lisors, Thierry Plouvié, Mayor of Lyons-la-Forêt, former Mayor Jean-Marc Mouquet, Regional Senator Christina Luchet, and Deputy Thimotée Housin.

Although French Minister for the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu has attended in previous years, he was unable to do so this year following his appointment as Prime Minister of France.

After the ceremony was concluded, Flt Lt Dare, John Williams and Harry Bartlett, were invited to meet the Prefet and Government Deputy Thimotée Housin, followed by that lovely occasion of the ‘Verre d’Aimie’, provided by the Committee de Souvenir.



(Ed. Missing John Williams who'd had found the refreshment marquee!)

The ceremonies were well attended by local residents, who continue to honour the memory of those who fought and fell for freedom. During the event, Olek Brzeski spoke on behalf of honoured guest Cecily Hanson, whose father, H. Clark, was shot down in a Lancaster III ND 533 on 10 June 1944 while serving with 49 Squadron.

Following the main ceremonies, Flt Lt Dare, John Williams, Olek Brzeski and Harry Bartlett, visited the dedicated memorial stone in the forest to those members of our crew who lost their lives on the night of the 28th of June, 1944.



Flt Lt Dare described the experience as humbling and deeply moving, standing on ground where members of the French Resistance risked their lives to protect Allied forces. Pocklington School maintains a close connection with the 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association, with CCF cadets and adult volunteers regularly forming honour guards and taking part in remembrance ceremonies in Pocklington and Barmby Moor. The School looks forward to continuing its support at future events, including this November's remembrance commemorations.

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The Story of Nenette and Rintintin (and Radadou)

In 2023, John Williams and I visited Brissy-Hamegicourt, in Northern France, for the annual memorial service to honour our crew of five from DY-R who lie in the churchyard there. We have been attending this lovely service for a number of years now and, as in previous years, we went to the Mairie for the traditional 'glass of friendship' with the residents, the councillors and the representatives of the 'Porte Drapeau'. As this was the 80th anniversary of VE Day in Europe, we were treated to several speeches.

Following one of the speeches, we were each presented with a small set of knitted dolls, one blue, one red and one white. These small dolls were being worn by some of the members of the veteran's associations.



It was explained that they were 'good luck' charms from the first world war and, as this part of France played such an important part in the defeat of the German forces in 1918, they had been adopted by many of the veteran's associations.

The relevance of the three was explained in beautiful colloquial French, at such a speed, that I lost the thread within minutes.

Of course, when my limited French and aging brain caught up, the continuation of the story to Hollywood and television became clear!

November 1917, somewhere in the Somme

They are strands of wool tied together, often blue, white, or red, but not always. The soldier keeps them deep in his pocket, pinned to the shirt of his uniform, or to his kit. Sometimes he touches them mechanically or squeezes them in the palm of his fist. He likes to feel that reassuring and familiar softness beneath his fingers. Like soldiers the world over, he also has many other good luck charms. In Paris, young girls wear them in their buttonhole or pinned to their sweaters. A young mother hangs them above her child's crib, and they dance gently in the slightest breeze.

These strands of wool are like a thread between the frontline and the rear. Bombing raids, real and frequent, are no joke. And then you never know, maybe Nénette and Rintintin really protected so many?

These young people are two woollen puppets a few centimetres tall, a girl and a boy: they form a couple, one in a skirt, the other in pants. With their bright colours, they look like scarecrows. They take their name from a pair of dolls that Francisque Poulbot, republican and patriot, created in 1913 to compete with the German dolls that dominated the toy market and cost much less than French dolls. With the war, the doll became a symbol; couples of dolls from Alsace

appeared in uniform and the numbers multiplied. After all, there is no age for patriotism!

Toys were part of the arsenal of things sold to support the war effort. Poulbot invented two little porcelain-headed urchins, whom he named Nénette and Rintintin, after the nicknames he and his wife gave each other: he was Nénette, she was Rintintin.

Nénette and Rintintin, a talisman against bombs

In 1918, Paris was bombed, and the woollen puppets spread rapidly. It was said that they protected Parisians from the bombing, and the home front sent them to the front in packages, among chocolate, sweaters, and cigarettes. They had the charm of women's handicrafts made by fiancées, children, or 'war godmothers'. They are talismans that would later become relics that brought the soldier's thoughts home. In the sky, they sometimes stand out against the fuselages of fighter planes. And on postcards bearing the image of Nénette (Blue) and Rintintin (Red) and their child Radadou (White), we can read "Accept this charm, it is the only one for sure with which we don't care about the bombing". War has always made people superstitious, and Albert Dauzat, a linguist who returned from the front described the craze for Nénette and Rintintin, the return of magical thinking and popular and pagan traditions.

What makes the charm so powerful is the story that accompanies it: a token of filial or romantic love, a Christmas or birthday gift, but above all, a time-tested good luck object that has been passed down from generation to generation.

But Nénette and Rintintin, (and Radadou), didn't just protect the French: they were found in the sporrans on the kilts of the Scots, and even in the American ranks. An American soldier Corporal Duncan, after saving two young German Shepherd dogs, a dog and a bitch, from the bombing of their kennel in Northern France, named them Nénette and Rintintin. He obtained permission for them to accompany him back to America where *Rintintin would become a movie star.

Many years after the end of the war, Nénette, Rintintin and Radadou can still be found as honoured souvenirs amongst the veterans.

***N.B.**

Many of us will remember those exciting Saturday morning flea-pit cinema experiences watching Roy Rogers, Tom Mix, Errol Flynn, ride, shoot and swashbuckle their way round the 'West' and on the 'high seas'.

At the old cinema I went to as a small boy, the 'B' film sometimes included old 1930s films starring the wonder dog, Rin-Tin-Tin. A smart and courageous

German Shepherd that always won the day! (The dogs in these films were direct descendants of the original Rintintin.)

Between 1954 and 1959 Rin-Tin-Tin appeared again in 166 episodes of the American television series, shown on the early days of ITV, and named after him/her. The story was of the adventures of 'Corporal' Rusty (Lee Aaker), a boy living in a cavalry fort with his trusty dog Rin-Tin-Tin.

I wonder if this was my later motivation to become a Police Dog-Handler!

(Taken from a French translation by Marc Bideaux, Secretary of the UNC Brissy-Moy, a veteran's association.)

Harry Bartlett

HALIFAX DOWN (Part 2)
(MY EARLY LIFE AND CAREER)

HUGH FIELDING MOORE



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Continued:

Prisoner of War

In the Police Station I was interrogated by one of the policemen who produced a piece of paper with the words "Major Atlimson" on it and queried if I knew a person of this name. This was obviously our Flying Officer Atkinson. At that time, I did not know how badly injured he was. But in accordance with RAF rules on becoming POW, I denied knowledge of him. Had I known of his plight, I might well have invented a subterfuge to try to see him. I was then taken to a cell under the police station, which had a stinking oil drum for any toilet needs. I was pleased to get out of this place about 6:00am on the 7th, when George and I were taken out to get into a Luftwaffe truck with a Luftwaffe private with rifle as guard. We were taken to Munich Airport where I was separated from George, the navigator, sat down in a room and given a plate of cauliflower and cheese sauce to eat. A Luftwaffe pilot, a captain (Hauptmann) came in to speak to me whilst I was eating, and he said that our raid had gone badly for us and 90 of our craft had been fetched down. He said he had shot us down. I said I didn't believe him. After digesting this reply, he walked out without a word. I was allowed to use their toilets, which was a great relief. I can't remember having anything else to eat or drink that day.

Eventually at about 6:00pm, I was reunited with George, and we were taken to Munich Railway Station where we were taken up some steps to a first floor room. There we joined several other raid survivors including quite a few badly wounded American Air Force men who had been on a day raid that day. After 30 to 40 minutes, we were taken down and loaded onto a train with compartments with wooden seats. We had a guard in the corridor but none in the compartment and I was considering my chances at opening the door and dropping onto the track but after looking at the activity on the station, decided against it. We had been given bread and sausage rations for our journey and German Red Cross women gave us drinks in cardboard cups of a sort of fruit juice. They did this in a very surly way and one could not blame them. Eventually we started and a flight engineer, whose parachute had caught up in a tree, asked if he could lie across the knees of George and me and a third RAF lad. It seems he thought he was about six feet off the ground, had twisted the quick-release and pressed it to fall about fifteen feet and injured his spine. We agreed and so we travelled to Dulag Luft at Frankfurt-am-Main. I met this flight engineer years afterwards and he said that not until 1985 had British medical staff had told him he had an old crack in one of his vertebrae that had healed up

over time! He walked ever after in a stiff limping fashion both in prison camp and when I saw him again in the 1990s.

Interrogation

About thirty-five RAF and USAF aircrew were marched from the railway station to the Luftwaffe interrogation centre (Dulag Luft, Durschlager = transit camp) at Oberursel on the outskirts of Frankfurt. This was the 8th September. We were given a decent meal, which had been made from Red Cross parcel foods by a group of RAF aircrew POWs, who had decided that working in the cookhouse was a nice little number. We made our way to a basic barrack room with two-tier bunk-beds. The walls were covered with aircraft identification numbers and crew names by USAF aircrew who had previously occupied the barracks. I saw no RAF names on the walls. We were told by later arrivals at Stalag IVB that, when the Germans moved the Dulag Luft to the centre of Frankfurt, a Luftwaffe photographer had photographed all these numbers and names for their records.



Dulag Luft photo of Hugh
8 September 1943.

Prior to this meal we had been put in cells and given a form to complete which purported to be a Red Cross form. It asked for your name, rank and number and then went on to ask for your home address, type of aeroplane you were flying, squadron and similar information. We had been warned about this whilst at Operational Training Unit, Lossiemouth, so I filled in just name, rank and number. Presently a Luftwaffe man dressed like a padre came in and asked if I had filled in the form. I said, "Yes." He looked at the form and remonstrated that I hadn't. So I replied that I had filled in all that was required under the Geneva

Convention. He grumbled and said that it would take a long time to let my people know that I was safe. He then left. I was also photographed and fingerprinted. All of this ended up on a record form, which I still have.

These cells were known as “sweat boxes” because in summer they would put the heating on and shut the windows to make the prisoner uncomfortable and in winter the opposite, turning the heat off and opening the windows. This was to try to make you fill in the forms to escape the conditions. Fortunately for me it was a mild period, up to September 10th, and so neither would have made much difference.

After the cells we were interrogated by a Luftwaffe Captain, who could see I was a Bomb-aimer by the half-wing on my blouse and asked me what was the daily pay of a Bomb-aimer. I said I couldn't tell. He then kept on saying, “You must know what the pay is.” Eventually he said I was a spy, pulled a pistol out and slapped it on the table saying, “You know what we do with spies?” continuing into a long diatribe in German which I did not understand. After glaring at me, he got up and took me into the next room where I saw a man dressed as a British Wing Commander who said, laconically, “How do?” I asked him where he came down and he said, “In France, on a daylight sweep.” I said I came down near Munich and we got to talking about how to make chrome boots shine. He said that when he was first in the RAF, they use to fill their boots with “wee” and leave them overnight before drying them out when they would take a good shine! Such were the intellectual heights of our small talk. I have since wondered if he was another German dressed up as an RAF pilot to try to get information out of me but, if so, he spoke English very naturally.

Stalag IVB



After two or three days in Frankfurt, we were called to the cookhouse, given a ration of German sausage and bread and marched out to the railway station. There we were loaded into wagons labelled “8 horses or 40 men” together with Luftwaffe squaddies with rifles. It took us two days (12 September 1943) to get to what turned out to be Stalag IVB (see appendix 7) at Muhlberg-am-Elbe which is about halfway between Dresden and Leipzig. We were marched from the little town up the hill about one and a half miles to the camp. The existing kreigies, (prisoners of war *ed*) were out in force to welcome the new residents. I was astonished to see “Grapper” Storey who had been in my class in Folville Rise Junior School in Leicester, ten years previously.

Once inside we were given a very close haircut by two grinning Russians. One of them turned a hand wheel, which operated clippers with which the other sheared us like sheep. We were then photographed and details of our physical attributes taken for their records. We marched down the main street of the camp to the RAF compound. This comprised four timber-walled huts like Nissen huts each divided by an elementary ablutions block in the centre. In theory each half-hut held 150 men but, towards Christmas 1944, after the influx of American GIs from France, we were sleeping three men in two bunk beds. As a result there were about 250 men in the space meant for 150. These double-beds were three tiered and the men in the top bunks could barely sit fully up before hitting their heads on the ceiling planks. Half of the room was taken up by the bunks. A brick stove about 6’ by 2’ 6” stood in the middle of the hut, leaving an alleyway on either side of it and its flue, which ran for about ten feet to a central chimney. The stove had a steel sheet so that we could warm our skilly on top of it. Initially I was in hut 34B (second left of centre in Fig. 9)

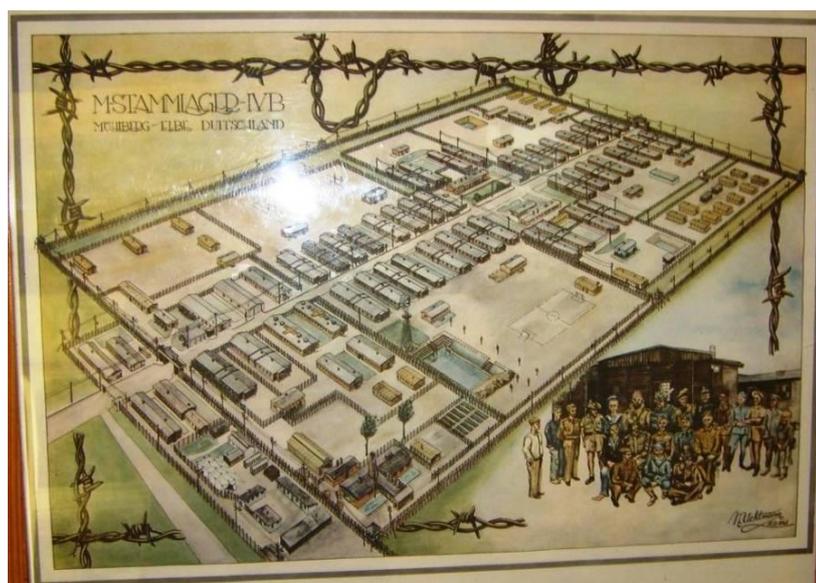


Fig. 9

Rations

Until Christmas 1943 we had no Red Cross parcels, and I remember lying on my bunk feeling half-starved at that time. The rations were:

Breakfast – a cup of boiling water with some horsemint in it.

Dinner – between six and twelve small potatoes boiled in their skin plus a mugful of either boiled millet seed or reconstituted dried black vegetables with a little purple horsemeat or boiled swede with a little horsemeat. These alternatives came in approximately three-monthly cycles.

Tea - was one round of quite heavy black bread with a teaspoonful of ersatz jam and about 1¼" square of ersatz margarine. Sometimes we had instead a small cheese, which was white and crumbly inside with a gelatinous orange skin around it. This stunk shockingly and many boys refused to eat it. We acquired home-made knives from the Russians, who were starving, in exchange for a tin of sardines. These knives turned black when used to spread the jam on bread!

Trip to Munich

Shortly after I arrived at Stalag IVB, along with about 30 other POWs, we were taken to Munich! We left the camp on 12th October 1943 and returned on the 20th. We were accompanied by an English speaking Luftwaffe Captain, a Sergeant and eight airmen. We were taken to be shown the damage we had done. This was an exceptional event. Supposedly Hermann Goering was to come to address us, but he never appeared. Although this was meant to castigate us, we were all very pleased about the damage we saw and gave us more confidence that we would win the War!

Red Cross Parcels and letters from Home

Red Cross parcels started to arrive in early 1944 and we began to feel a bit better, so much so that we started a camp swap shop for lads to change their tins of Red Cross food or even buy food with the cigarettes, which were in the parcels. Cigarette parcels from home were few and far between owing to their being filched on the German railways.

I received letters from my parents and some from Eileen, my girlfriend, and one from Alderman Newton Boys School! We were given either postcards or single sheet, official POW letters to send home, about one a week or fortnight. I still have some of my letters home, which my mother kept.

The lads played football in the compound between the huts and the wire. One day, a Ju 88 from the adjacent aerodrome came flying very low, showing off and suddenly realised he would hit the guard tower behind the wire and pulled back on the stick. The aircraft's tail went down and struck two of the lads, killing one

outright (RCAF WO2 Herbert Mallory) They said the pilot was court-martialled and it was possible, knowing what sticklers the Jerries were for rules and regulations. The “Man of Confidence” (Vertrauensman) as the POWs’ representative to the German Commander was known, reported this death to the Red Cross.

Attempt to Escape!

In October 1944 I decided I wasn’t going to spend another birthday in IVB if I could help it. I tried to escape on a working party by exchanging with another, American, POW who had just come into camp from the capture of a whole American Division at the “Battle of the Bulge” in the Ardennes.

To prevent these changeovers, the Germans locked the huts of soldiers being sent out on working parties about an hour after they had been informed as to where they were going. I asked my friend in the hut if he would join me in an exchange. He agreed and we quickly went to the hut and put the proposition to two American GIs who agreed to the exchange. Unfortunately, due to the time factor, I had to swap with a fair-haired boy from Route 1, Rome, Georgia whose name was Ross Miller Coker. I was dark-haired but about the same height. What I didn’t know was that a stringent check on outgoing working parties was carried out outside the camp and we were confronted by a Sicherheitsdienst Offizier (Security Officer) with the details, photo and thumbprint that the American had given them. He had details of his grandma and so on, so I bluffed my way through the photo saying that someone else’s picture had been put there by mistake. I think the thumbprints were too blurred for him to check on but when I was asked for his mother’s maiden name, that floored me and I said I wasn’t telling him. He replied, “But you’ve already told it to us.” This work party was going to somewhere near where we crashed so I thought I would be a chance to make it to Switzerland (the crash site was 100km from the Swiss border).

In the Cooler

I was pushed to one side, and I later found that my pal had also been flushed out too. We were put in the “cooler.” This was a prison with 7’6” by 4’6” cells each with one wooden bed with boards and no mattress but two thin blankets discarded by the German Army. I discovered I was being bitten by bed bugs. Where they hid I don’t know as I scraped every inch of the bed. I was there for seven weeks; two out of three days on bread and water and on every third day the German rations were restored. Eventually, Ross Coker got cheesed off with being in an RAF hut and gave himself up and I was sentenced to two weeks on

the aforesaid bread and water diet. I weighed three stones less when I eventually got home. (Approx seven and a half stones.) I was moved to hut 23 in the British Army compound on discharge from the cooler and was later moved back to the central RAF huts.

Once the winter of 1944 was coming to an end, we began to gain confidence that liberation was in sight, even though it meant that Red Cross contacts began to dry up. This meant no food parcels and mail from home. We began to get very hungry. The clandestine radio gave us the BBC news. Closer to home, for a few days we had a group of Polish women, captives from the Warsaw rising, billeted in the camp in one of the blocks cleared for the purpose. They were soon moved on westward away from the advancing Russians.

Night after night we heard our comrades in Bomber Command flying over to targets all around us. We could even hear the attacks on Berlin 80 miles away.

To be continued

REMEMBRANCE IN BELGIUM



On the 7th February 1945 my father took off from the airfield at Pocklington in his Mark 11 Halifax registration NA175-DY-Q affectionately known as Q Queenie. The crew had been briefed that they were to be a part of an operation

detailed to attack German defences in the town of Goch. The operation given the code name of “Veritable” was drawn up given that the German defences had been highly successful in delaying the forward advance of XXX Corps.

My father , John Grist, had flown on several sorties together with the crew of Q Queenie and as my father told me many years later had been “together in a Cook’s tour of the major towns and cities of Germany”.

A considerable distance from the target my father told me it was clearly identifiable from the glow of burning buildings and the flashes of bombs hitting their target. As they prepared for an approach to the target they were ordered by the Master Bomber to turn away from the target as it was now totally obscured by smoke. Either during that turn or as they settled into their return leg it is clear that a German night fighter managed to avoid detection and engage the aircraft from underneath. It is clear that many German night fighters had been equipped at this time with upward angled guns (*Schrage Musik*) thereby enabling them to engage bombers from underneath often targeting fuel tanks.

The night fighter immediately hit the fuel tanks in the starboard wing and also sprayed bullets through the floor of my father’s position as Flight Engineer to the rear of the pilot. The fire took hold rapidly and the pilot Bill Smith immediately ordered the crew to “bale out” . The bravery of these pilots is remarkable . as in this instance Bill Smith held the aircraft steady in order that the crew could get out safely. Due to his actions the crew survived coming down on the Allied side of the front line. Two of the crew came down through the roof of a farmhouse owned by the Didden family . They ended up in the bedroom of the teenage daughter. Both her brothers rushed to her rescue but when the details of the incident was established bacon and eggs were cooked for those members of the crew who eventually also made their way to the farmhouse . It transpires that the two young men may well have been members of the local branch of the Belgian Resistance. They were able to guide the members of the crew through the forest and into the British front line.

Bill Smith failed to bale out . He crashed with his aircraft just outside the town of Lommel . Bill’s body was found some 800 yards from the aircraft . He is now buried in the military cemetery at Leopoldsburg .

HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR THOSE OF HIS CREW

In 1995 my father John Grist and Bill Ollerton the Mid Upper Gunner travelled to Belgium to remember the sacrifice made not just by Bill Smith but to remember all their comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice at various sites across Europe. A memorial tree was planted at the site of the crash of Q Queenie

which had become a site for the international company Visko Teepak . The ceremony of the planting of the tree and the laying of a wreath at Bill's grave was substantially covered by both local and national media. The interest was summed up by a member of the Didden family who said that "whilst at night when we heard the drone of the bombers overhead then we knew that soon we would be free".

In September this year I returned. Supported at a small memorial service which included the sounding of the Last Post and a two-minute silence there was attendance by a group of veterans from the Antwerp Branch of the Royal British Legion together with their branch standards, and a friend of the 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association Yael Reicher*. Grateful thanks must also be given to Bart Peeters Manager of the site, who not only provided permission for our entry to what is a secure site, but who provided a very delicious lunch. Not only was that lunch provided but a hand-out provided detailing the history of the event and with a photograph of the crew in front of their Halifax.



I attended the grave of Bill Smith the following day. His gravestone bears the words "Worthy of everlasting love" as detailed by his parents. A friend of mine, a veteran of the Welsh Guards, stood with me and played the Last Post before I laid a 102 (Ceylon) Squadron wreath.

The Crew - John Crisp, Cliff Kingdon, 'Mac' MacPherson, Bill Smith, Bill Ollerton, 'Peck' Peckam, John Grist

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Steve Grist

*NB. *Yael Reicher's father, a Jewish forced labourer who had been held in the Belgian Labour Camp at Les Mazures, in the Ardennes, was rescued, along with nine others, from the final transport of two hundred and fifty victims who went to Auschwitz-Birkennau, by Capt. Emile Fontaine, (FFI), a gentile, while it was stationary overnight in Northern France. All the other surviving forced labourers, (over 1000), who had been previously transported were murdered in*

Auschwitz. The link to 102 (Ceylon) Squadron is that, for some time, Emile Fontaine ran part of the Comet Escape line, in the Aubenton area of Northern France, which helped several 102 Squadron crewmembers, notably Squadron Leader 'Wally' Lashbrook, to evade and eventually get back to England. Captain Fontaine was killed by the Gestapo after a brief gunfight, as the result of being betrayed in March 1944. Yael researched the Labour Concentration Camp at Les Mazures and the wartime work of Emile Fontain. As a result of that research Emile Fontaine was recognised as 'Righteous Among the Nations'.

Remembrance Weekend November 2025

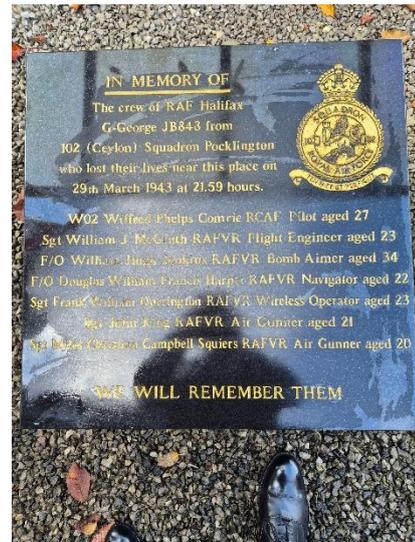
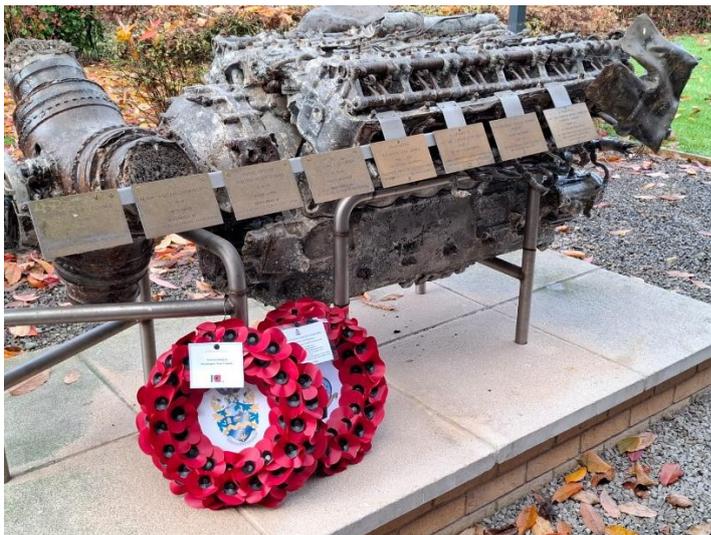
To round off our Association duties in 2025, we assembled at Pocklington to take part in Remembrance Sunday, and to remember our Squadron members memorialised in the areas of Pocklington, Barmby Moor and Driffield.

As the usual suspects gathered on the Friday evening, the staff at the Italian Restaurant, Pane Vino, were moving the valuable ornaments, bringing out the shock resistant glasses and ordering more Sardinian Ichnusa beer! Joined by Ruth and Dean Hodgson, past Mayor and Mayoress, a very convivial evening followed.

Saturday the 8th of November:

We were riding our luck with the weather when we assembled at The Beckside Medical Centre to honour our crew at their 'G – George' memorial in the grounds. Councillor Roly Cronshaw attended in his official capacity as the Mayor of Pocklington Town to lay a wreath on behalf of the Town. Alan Johnson, the Royal British Legion Standard Bearer, and Mark Abel, Chair of ((Pocklington and District Branch), paraded their standard during the memorial ceremony. The Association wreath was laid by Steve Grist.





(Thanks to Paul Cambell for the photographs.)

Following our remembrance duties at the 'G-George' memorial we moved to the Pocklington Town Burial Ground where we have seven of our lost crewmen are buried.

Pocklington Burial Ground

Accompanied by the Mayor, Roly Cronshaw, Standard Bearer Alan Johnson and Mark Abel, our group formed up near the graves. We had been joined by Lily Ashby and her cousin, whose great grandfather had flown with 102 and been involved in a fatal crash near Norwich while returning, damaged, from an operation, in January 1944. The fatality in the crew was Flying Officer James Turnbull, and he is one of our seven buried in the Burial Ground.

The Association wreath was laid by Association Member Bill Stowe, and individual remembrance crosses were placed on the graves by a member of the group.



(Lily places James Turnbull's cross, while her cousin honours John McShane.)

Our duties at the Pocklington Burial Ground completed, we left there and travelled to Driffield North End Park.

Driffield.

We were only able to save three photographs due to a logistical issue, (blushes spared!), but we paid our respects at the memorial to those killed when RAF Driffield was bombed in 1940. Steph Stowe's father was in Ground Crew and she placed a cross in the 'Remembrance Plot' nearby, alongside an Association cross in memory of ACW Marguerite Hudson. She then laid the Association wreath at the memorial.



Sunday the 9th of November – Remembrance Sunday

As the morning broke with threats of rain showers, wind and cloud, we gathered at St. Catherine's Church, Barmby Moor, to take part in the Remembrance Service under the guidance of the Reverend Mark Poole and our Chaplain Annie Harrison.

To our delight, Patrick Dare, (Flight Lieutenant RAF Reserve), arrived with a significantly large group of Pocklington School Combined Cadet Force, smart as paint and carrying their standards ready to support the duty of Remembrance. They were joined by Royal British Legion Standard bearer Alan Johnson.



In front of a packed St. Catherine's congregation, the national Remembrance Service began and, after the placing of the standards and wreaths in front of the altar, Reverend Mark led us through the service and gave a thought provoking address, on the subject of 'Love'. Our Chaplain, Annie, guided us through the part of the service when we remember those members of 102(Ceylon) Squadron who gave their lives in the cause of freedom.

We were indebted to Mrs. Becky Lovelock, Head Teacher of Pocklington School who read the very moving poem, 'Remember' by John Roy Walsh.

John Williams then ‘*turned the page*’ in the Roll of Honour in remembrance of his uncle who was killed on operations. In accordance with tradition, the Chairman gave the Binyon Epitaph, which was followed by Tom Taylor, a teacher at Pocklington School, playing the Last Post before the two-minute silence. Following reveille the Kohima Exhortation by Bill Stowe, our Chaplain Annie, and Reverend Mark brought that part of the service to a close.

We then moved outside to the Commonwealth War Graves section of the Churchyard. The Combined Cadet Force formed a guard of honour and Reverend Mark and Our Chaplain, Annie guided us through a short memorial service for those buried there.



Wreaths were laid by Bronya Emmison, (Barmby Moor PC), The District Council, Richard Bryon, (Pocklington Town), John Williams, (Association) and Mrs. Becky Lovelock, (Pocklington School.)

After the traditional epitaph, Last Post, silence and exhortation, Cadet Sergeant Jack Dicconson, sang the emotional song, ‘The Geen Fields of France, accompanied by Tom Taylor. There were many observed, ‘speck of dust’, in the eyes seen amongst those assembled around the Churchyard.

Before we left St. Catherine’s Church, there was time for a photograph of those who took part in the services. We were particularly pleased by the significant number of Cadets who took part. Flt Lt. Patrick Dare explained that they had all volunteered to be there, all of them giving up their Sunday morning relaxation. (All of these Cadets later took part in the traditional Pocklington Town Remembrance Sunday parade through the town.)



The Airfield:

After the National Service of Remembrance at St. Catherine's, we moved along the road to the Wolds Gliding Club for our Remembrance Service at the Airfield Memorial.

In very blustery conditions our Chaplain, Annie, led us through the remembrance service, flanked by the Standard Bearers and Cadets.



Wreaths were laid by Richard Byon, (Pocklington Town Council), Bronya Emmison, (Barmby Moor PC), Steve Grist, (Association), Colin Stevens, (Gliding Club), followed by family tributes.



Following the service, we retired to the warmth of the Gliding Club for tea and biscuits before dispersing for their long journeys home.

Later in the afternoon, John Williams, Bill Stowe, Steph Stowe and Harry Bartlett took part in the Pocklington Town Remembrance Sunday Parade. Harry Bartlett, (Association Chairman), laid an Association wreath at the War Memorial and Steph laid her wreath, remembering her father.

Weekend Conclusion:

What did we take away from this weekend? We were welcomed as valued annual guests by the Town and residents. We continue to have the ability to carry out our duties of remembering those who were lost while they were serving with 102 (Ceylon) Squadron. The redeveloping link to the Cadet Force at Pocklington School goes a long way to passing on the duty of remembrance.

We will continue, for as long as we can, to fulfil our Association duties.



*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 it's fun".
(Anonymous 102 Squadron member, 1941)*



Royal Air Force - Pocklington Airfield

The home of 102 (Ceylon) Squadron RAF and 405 (Vancouver) Squadron RCAF No 4 Group Bomber Command during World War II from where so many gave their lives in the cause of freedom.

This memorial was raised by Old Comrades in gratitude to all those men and women who served in both squadrons in War and Peace.

**(Squadron badge produced by kind permission of Crown Copyright)*