

EDITORIAL

Our Society continues to thrive and at the recent AGM our Chairman, Martyn Cook was able to report what I am sure members will agree, was our most successful year. Well, didn't we have the formal opening of our long-awaited Control Tower Museum last September 23rd? And didn't we hold a Dedication Service to mark the installation in St Michael's and All Angels on the Heath of the stained glass windows? Didn't we all do well! So many members have worked hard to achieve all this and so many friends from both sides of the Atlantic have been so generous with the funds needed for these projects. Although we derive much pleasure from our mutual interest in aviation I am sure that we appreciate that what we have done will ensure the everlasting memory of all those who flew from the Heath, never to return.

I must apologise for the lack of paragraphs and punctuation in the January "Runway 22". Of course I shall blame the computer! It seems that when the text was emailed to the printing destination that the text ran together and was inadvertently printed like that.

Members and friends have contributed some interesting pieces for this "Runway 22" and I sincerely hope that it will prove to be another interesting edition. I couldn't resist unashamedly lifting the contents of a recent Anglia Television Documentary, which has a Martlesham connection. A friend has drawn my attention to a piece which appeared in the Daily Telegraph, April, 4th. which I have entitled "Hardly Credible" and you will see why! Tony Barnard, one of our "long distance" members has researched an interesting Martlesham "Battle of Britain" story and this is included.

Alan Powell

. 2001 - 2002 COMMITTEE

Following a successful AGM on 6 April 2001 the Society elected the following committee which is as follows:

Chairperson - Martyn Cook

Deputy Chairperson - Robert Dunnett

Secretary - Alan Powell

Treasurer - Russell Bailey

Membership Secretary - Julie Hall

Program Secretary - Vicky Hall

General Committee - Roy & Ethel Gammage, Don Kitt, David Bloomfield, Les Boulton, Frank Bright & Tom Scrivener.

I know that all of you will support the new committee and we look forward to another exciting year.

Martyn Cook - Chairperson.

AN OBITUARY – Daphne Taylor

Some years ago I received a telephone call from a lady in Devon who had seen a book entitled "Martlesham Heath" and having looked me up as the author wondered if I could help her. She told me that her late husband had been a Master Engineer and served with the Bomb Ballistic Unit at Martlesham flying in the assorted Avro Lancasters and Lincolns which this unit possessed. She was thus very interested in anything to do with Martlesham.

She then asked that if she was in this part of the world she could give me a ring and we could meet. Sometime later I received another call from the same lady and I asked her where she was. She replied "Chartwell Close", Ipswich, where she had bought a house. I went round to see her and was amazed when she told me that she was an Ipswich girl and had spent her early days in Stradbroke Road, just around the corner from my own address. We talked Martlesham, about the Society and the rest is history!

Daphne was a wonderful worker, organiser, and she was in many ways responsible for the Martlesham Reunions. Countless letters all over the country for the RAF side of the Reunion. She us put on Ceefax and in the journals and did an excellent publicity job. Daphne travelled to the Reunions in the USA with the 356th and, I feel, was known and loved by all who knew her Stateside.

At our monthly meetings it was Daphne with the tray making sure that the Speaker and guests were served refreshments and with Ethel, Roy and Joan tended to our needs in the kitchen.

As a Committee member she was outspoken, full of ideas and vision and she will be greatly missed by all who worked with her.

To her family the Society extends our deepest sympathy, to Joan who brought Daphne to the meetings and to all our Society who knew her in so many ways.

Daphne has not left us, she has gone into the next room to sort something or someone out!

Gordon and Margaret Kinsey.

MISSING IN ACTION – FOR 39 YEARS

In Gordon Kinsey's book "Martlesham Heath", reference is made to an action on 7th September 1940, during the "Battle of Britain", when two officers of 257 Squadron were lost on the same day. One of these men was Flight Lieutenant Beresford, a career officer in the RAF. Flight Lieutenant Hugh Beresford had been attributed by other members of the squadron as being one of those who had been responsible for more or less holding the Squadron together during a time when the CO had come under criticism for poor leadership. The other pilot lost that day was Pilot Officer Mitchell, also a Flight Commander.

Flight Lieutenant Beresford was known as "blue blood Beresford" because of his aristocratic bearing! A man of some "presence", coupled with a capacity for getting on with the job, Beresford was "A" Flight Commander and had been in action almost daily during 1940. That year of glorious sunshine and desperate dog fights. The day that he was posted missing Flight Lieutenant Beresford had already flown three interception "scrambles" before his last and final call.

On his fourth interception "scramble" on that fateful day Hugh Beresford took off with 257 Squadron. They encountered about 50 German bombers head on, but an overhead fighter escort fell on the squadron as they attacked. Beresford was heard to call a frantic warning "alert squadron – four "snappers" coming down.... On the ground below a Hurricane was seen to fall away from the fighting and enter a steep dive. The aircraft thudded into soft ground beside a ditch at Spit End Point, Elmley, Kent. All became quiet, except for a skylark singing. A very different airborne sound, contrasting pointedly with the sound of the air battle being waged high above.

No explosion or fire occurred. An eye witness arrived on the scene to find only "*a black stain of the smallest of craters. Two slashes in the turf on either side marked the impact point of the wings. Just the tiniest wisp of steam or smoke emerged from fissures in the surrounding ground and of the aeroplane itself only shreds of silver, brown or green alloy were in evidence*". Insufficient in the words of the eyewitness, "*to fill an apple box*"

Back at Martlesham they were facing up to the reality of the day. Three pilots failed to return. However, news came through that one of the pilots, Sergeant Hulbert was unhurt, having crash-landed his aircraft near Sittingbourne in Kent. Of Beresford and Mitchell, both Flight Commanders, there was no information. It was indeed the blackest of black days for 257 Squadron. Five days later the CO was posted out.... Appointed CO of No. 2 Squadron 10 Flying Training School. An appointment which would have appealed to the cynics, an example of 'if you can't do...teach'! On September 11th Squadron Leader Stanford Tuck took over command of 257 Squadron.

Hugh Beresford was simply listed as "missing in action". No further news was forthcoming. No further information that is, until the early 1970's when the site was excavated and the discovery of airframe components with serial numbers connected the crash with the identity of the pilot. Still the aircraft was not properly recovered until, in the presence of a BBC Documentary Film crew in 1979, just 39 years after Hugh Beresford lost his life and incidentally, the year which saw the last aircraft ever to fly from Martlesham Heath.

His body was recovered and on 16th November 1979 he was buried with full military honours in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey. Hugh Beresford was just 24 when he lost his life. Another of "The Few" and a reminder of just how much we owe....

AJ Barnard.

MORE MARTLESHAM MEMORIES

I joined the RAF on 12th August 1936 and trained as an Armourer. This was in the days when biplanes like the Hawker Hart were in squadron service and one wore puttees with Best Blue uniform! Life in those days consisted of much PT and fatigues and a great deal of time spent with metal polish and Blanco. Actually it did me a lot of good because I remember never feeling fitter in my life. We were paid 12 shillings per week and out of that we had to buy our own polish and Blanco!

From Uxbridge, where I did my basic training, I was posted to RAF Eastchurch in Kent. Six months were spent there training to be an Armourer. It was a pleasant enough place during the summer but the very devil in the winter! I learned all about machine guns, bombs and pyrotechnics and at the end was posted to RAF Wyton in Huntingdonshire where they had Bristol Blenheims, which were at that time considered to be modern bombers.

After eighteen months at Wyton I was posted to the experimental station at RAF Martlesham. We were testing bombs and bomb fuses manufactured at Woolwich Arsenal and this was done at Orfordness. All the men involved in this work were flown to Orfordness in the "Pig" – a nickname given to the ancient biplane Vickers Valencia. I remember how the ground crew started the engines, by furiously winding a handle! Those were the

days! One bomb out of each batch was sent to us for testing and the fuses were put into dummy bombs. These were dropped at Orfordness by Blenheims. The bombs were then dug up by civilian workers and the fuses examined.

I have many memories of Martlesham. When war was imminent the station was elaborately painted in camouflage colours and when war was actually declared I was a member of a gun crew on ant-aircraft duty. Although whether our Lewis gun would have been very affective is doubtful! As things started to hot up it was decided to move the experimental side to Boscombe Down in Wiltshire. I went with them and stayed there until being posted to RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire on a fitter-armourers course.

I moved about quite a lot after that and ended up doing four years in Egypt, Tunisia and Italy – but that's another story....

Maurice Cunningham.

THREE CHEERS FOR THE MAN ON THE GROUND

Wherever you walk, you will hear people talk
Of the men who go up in the air
Of the daredevil way, they go into the fray
Facing death without turning a hair.

They'll raise a cheer and buy lots of beer
For a pilot whose home on leave
But they don't give a jigger
For a flight mech. Or rigger
With nothing but "props" on his sleeve

They just say 'nice day' and then turn away
With never a mention of praise
And the poor bloody erk who does all the work
Just orders his own beer and pays.

They've never been told of the hours in the cold
That he spends sealing Germany's fate
How he works on a kite all hours of the night
And then turns up next morning at eight

He gets no rake-off for working till take off
Or helping the aircrew prepare
But whenever there's trouble its quick, at the double
The man on the ground must be there

Each flying crew could tell it to you
They know what this man's really worth
They know he's part of the RAF's heart
Even though he stays close to the earth

He doesn't want glory, but please tell his story
He's one of the few, so give him his due
Three cheers for the man on the ground!

Eric Sykes, 1942

PILOT OFFICER PRINCE OBOLENSKY

In 1854 we were at war with the Russians in the Crimean War and everyone is aware of the heroic but lunatic "Charge of the Light Brigade" at the battle of Balaclava. The much respected Light Brigade were led in this battle by the 7th Earl of Cardigan. The Earl, who incidentally sailed in his private yacht to Russia to take up his command, had never taken part in a military operation before. But as was all too often the case it was not ability so much as who you were that was important. The General in overall command on this particular fateful day

was some 700ft above a valley which was bordered by two ridges. Guns were situated all along the ridges and the order was given to “charge the guns”. Because Lord Cardigan (yes it was from him that the name of the garment “cardigan” comes from!), was unable, because of the lie of the land, to see the guns along the ridges, he assumed that he had to charge the whole length of the valley to silence the artillery at the end, which were the only guns that he could see. He ordered his horseman to advance along the valley at a steady trot. When an officer made to overtake him that officer was rebuked. He (the Earl) was leading the charge, thank you. No, one doesn’t have to be bright to be a member of the British aristocracy! Of the 673 that began the charge only 195 survived. These included the gallant Earl, who, once the survivors were amongst the guns, then retreated back down the valley. It was no place for a member of the aristocracy to be seen fighting with ordinary mortals! The whole point of this preamble is to tell you that the Russian officer commanding the Cossack Artillery on that fateful day was a certain Prince Obolensky. To which you may well exclaim, so what! Well, a descendant of that family of Russian aristocrats was a fighter pilot at Martlesham. His family had fled Russia to escape the Bolsheviks during the Revolution. Count Alexander Obolensky had already made a name for himself in England, when, aged only 19 he had been undoubtedly “Man Of The Match” when England played the all conquering All Blacks at Twickenham between the Wars.

Now Prince Count Alexander Obolensky, who was called Obo in the Mess, (well they were hardly going to call him Your Highness, were they), was a Pilot Officer with 140 hours on Spitfires with 504 squadron. Unfortunately he had only two hours on Hurricanes and it was whilst landing a Hurricane for only the second time that he well and truly overshot the runway and the Hurricane flipped over. The date was March 29th 1940 and he was fatally injured. The accident report cites “a lack of judgement and inexperience with an unfamiliar aircraft”. His grave is to be seen in Ipswich cemetery and the headstone reads “Pilot Officer Prince Obolensky” *“His undaunted spirit and endearing qualities live for ever in the hearts of all who new him”*.

Alan Powell

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

Friday, January 5th and the first meeting of 2001. I see that I reported in the Parish Magazine, “Martlesham Monthly” that we once again had a large audience. But then I am able to say this every month! Mr Lindsay Peacock gave us a return visit and we enjoyed an illustrated talk by someone who is a freelance photographer but who also contributes to the prestigious publication “Jane’s All The World’s Aircraft”. As a keen photographer myself I certainly appreciated the quality of the air to air shots shown by Lindsay and envy his ability to be included when the RAF decide to hold a photo-shoot!

I was not present at the February meeting as I was on holiday. However, I understand that a very good meeting was enjoyed by all who attended. Some of us had visited RAF Coltishall in the autumn of 2000 and our guide was Warrant Officer Mick Jennings. He was unable at the time to show us a slide presentation of the history of Coltishall on the day and promised to visit us to rectify this. Consequently Mick Jennings was welcomed at Martlesham and congratulated on having just been presented with the MBE. (MBE = Member of the British Empire for the information of our American readers). There may no longer be a “British Empire” but the prestigious award of the MBE is a great honour and Mick Jennings will be very proud of this recognition of his work as an historian and aircraft restorer.

The evening of 2nd March was very cold and it snowed! That didn’t stop our intrepid members from once again turning up in force to hear a most interesting talk by Mr Gary Garretts of his experiences as an Avro York pilot during the “Berlin Airlift”. The Berliners required approximately 2000 tons of supplies per day to be flown in and it was a massive task performed jointly by the British and Americans. We flew in 1 ton of supplies for every 2 tons flown in by the Americans. The York was little more than a variant of the Lancaster but it performed a task alien to the original design. With so many aircraft flying in and out of Berlin Air Traffic Control must have been a complex operation and the airlift must have been a hazardous operation during the winter months. Gary was a pilot during WW2 and for a time was involved with ferrying Dakotas across the Atlantic via Newfoundland and Iceland. A most interesting evening.

April and the occasion of our Annual General Meeting. Some 60 members attended and Gordon Kinsey began the meeting with a tribute to Daphne Taylor and a short silence for a much loved and respected member of our Society. Our Chairman, Martyn Cook was able to report a most successful year in which we have at last achieved a long standing ambition and opened a museum in the old Control Tower. Julie Hall reported that membership now stands at 309.

Editor

HARDLY CREDIBLE

A pilot who was 15 years old when he flew heavy bombers across Germany in the Second World War has died, aged 74.

Thomas Dobney applied to join the RAF in 1941, aged 14 after a dare from a school friend. He flew in a Tiger Moth at No. 2 Elementary Flying School near Gloucester six days after his 15th birthday and went solo after 12 flying hours.

After being sent to Canada to complete his flying training, he was given a pilot's licence when still 15. He returned to Britain and was posted as a Sergeant Pilot to a squadron flying twin-engined Whitley bombers over enemy territory.

After he had made at least 20 missions over Germany, his father, who was estranged from Tom's mother and out of touch with Tom, identified his son among a group of airmen talking to King George VI who was on a visit to RAF bases in East Anglia.

Mr Dobney then rang the Air Ministry to ask why his 15-year-old son was in an RAF uniform talking to the King!

Tom was discharged from the RAF with a letter which said; "The reasons are solely that you are below the minimum age". But it promised that he would be able to wear his pilot's wings if he joined at a later date.

The youngster went to work in a Coventry aero-engine factory, but as soon as he became 16, he joined in quick succession the Fleet Air Arm and the Air Transport Auxiliary until, in 1942 he was at last allowed to join the RAF legally.

However, he crashed while taking off on a mission when an engine failed and by the time he had recovered from severe injuries the war was almost over.

After the war he took part in the Berlin Airlift and served as a pilot in the King's Flight when he could "legally" shake hands with his sovereign!

He left the service for the Metropolitan Police but later rejoined the RAF as an Air Traffic Controller.

Mr Dobney later joined the *Daily Express* where he was still employed when he took early retirement in 1986. His last posting with the newspaper was as deputy art editor in the Manchester office.

Mr Dobney died from Cancer at his home in Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire.

Taken from the Daily Telegraph April 4th. 2001.- ED.

TRUE STORIES

The following are accounts of actual exchanges between airline pilots and control towers from around the world.

The controller working a busy pattern told the 727 on down-wind to make a three-sixty (do a complete circle, usually to provide spacing between aircraft). The pilot of the 727 complained, "*do you know it costs us two thousand dollars to make a three-sixty in this aeroplane*"? Without missing a beat the controller replied, "*Roger, give me four thousand dollars worth*"!

This next extract from an air-movements record must have been a few years ago!

The German controllers at Frankfurt Airport are a short tempered lot. They not only expect one to know one's parking location but also how to get there without assistance from them. So it was with some amusement that we (a Pan-Am 747) listened to the following exchange between Frankfurt Ground Control and a British Airways 747 (call sign Speedbird 206) After landing, Speedbird 206 "*Good morning Frankfurt, Speedbird 206 clear of the active runway*". Ground "*Guten morgon, you vill taxi to your gate*" The BA 747 pulled on to the main taxiway and stopped. Ground. "*Speedbird, do you know vare you are going*"? Speedbird. "*Stand by ground, I'm looking up the location now*". Ground, (with impatience). "*Speedbird 206, haff you never flown to Frankfurt before*"? Speedbird 206, coolly. "*Yes, in 1944, but we didn't stop*"!

A DC10 had an exceedingly long roll out after landing with his approach speed just a little too high. San Jose Tower, "*American 751 heavy, turn right at the end if able. If not take the Guadeloupe exit off of Highway 101 and return to airport!*"

And finally.... O'Hare Approach Control: "*United 329, traffic is a Fokker, one o'clock, 4 miles, eastbound*" United 329: "*Approach, I've always wanted to say this – I've got that Fokker in sight!*"

Editor

BAR-BE-QUE!

We are holding a Barbecue for MHAS members and friends on 2nd June!

The Museum will be opened at 3pm and this will also be an opportunity for members and friends who have not yet viewed the contents. The party will start about then on the grass beside the Control Tower.

Food will be available from about 4.30pm. Bob tells me that he and Mike Rumsey will be your personal chefs!! Tickets are £5 each and that will cover the food and soft drinks but Bob says much as he would like to treat you all it may be as well if you bring your own bottle of whatever you fancy!

Bob would appreciate it if you could phone him for tickets (01473 624510) and these will also be available at the May meeting. It is important to get some idea of how many will come in order to be able to estimate the food requirements so please let Bob know in good time. I am on 622458 if you can't speak to Bob.

Do join us for a fun afternoon and bring your friends. The more the merrier!

Alan Powell

SUMMER OUTINGS

Russell Bailey has asked me to give the following details of the summer trips that he has organised.

The outing to the Shuttleworth Collection at Old Warden will now take place on Sunday 1st July and **not** Sunday 5th August.

Russell proposes that we have a visit to the secret "Cold War" underground bunker at Kelvedon Hatch near Brentwood on the afternoon of Saturday, 16th June.

As usual there will be no formal monthly meeting in August and this will be replaced by an evening visit on Friday, 3rd August to the RAF Regiment Museum at Honington, followed by a buffet supper at a local pub.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

I have been asked to remind our American members that MHAS membership subs are due! 25 dollars covers the period 1st. April 2001 to 31st. March, 2002. Please make cheques out to 356th. Fighter Group (MHAS Account) and send to Ken Male with a note explaining that it is for the Annual MHAS subscription. Thanks folks.

Editor