

EDITORIAL

I would, once again, very much like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year and a sincere hope that we have no repeats of anything like the horror visited upon New York last September.

A special “thank you” to all our members who have sent me articles and stories for inclusion in our Newsletter. Please keep them rolling in. I may be unable to include them immediately but watch this space; they may turn up in any edition!

The Second World War is long gone and although we shouldn't dwell on the past I believe that it is quite legitimate to continue to relate stories of heroism from those dark days. Indeed, we have a duty to remember and interest certainly does not flag. Several light-hearted snippets have been contributed to hopefully bring a smile to you all.

Congratulations to Vicky and Mike for “tying the knot” in August. Mike is from Yorkshire but we can forgive him anything now that he has married our Vicky and I know that everyone will join with me in wishing them a long and happy marriage! We are fortunate in our Society that we seem to attract artists and Mike Gunnell is another professional artist. How lucky we are to enjoy the artistic talents not only of our President, Gordon Kinsey, but also brilliant Geoff. Pleasance and now Mike!

Vicky and Mike were two of a party of from MHAS who visited Cincinnati in September. It was part of their honeymoon and notwithstanding that everything at the time may have been viewed through rose tinted spectacles, Vicky has written a predictably enthusiastic report! Don Kitt has also kindly contributed some impressions of his visit to Cincinnati.

ED

CINCINNATI 2001-by Vicky Gunnell

It seemed more important than ever, this year, to attend the Reunion following the events of September 11th. Five MHAS members went to the Reunion - Don Kitt, Les Boulton, Vic Wilkinson, Mike and myself. We received such a warm welcome, which included Mike Yannell paying for all our registration fees. About 150 people were present. Thirty-eight of their members were lost, since the last reunion, two years ago, however, they always seem to gain some new people who we had not heard of before.

Two of the highlights of the reunion were the tours they had arranged – one was a tour of Cincinnati - a city with much German influence - and the other one was a day visit to the Wright Paterson Aviation Museum at Dayton, Ohio, with a dedication service to lost members of the group.

I was invited to speak to their Board Meeting and the larger group about the activities of our Society and, in particular, about the Control Tower's progress.

There were several reports of their activities, but the two interlinked items they most discussed were the fact that Ken and Brita male were unable to continue organising such a large-scale Reunion, even though they have local hosts in each area. The outcome was that the 356th F.G. will piggyback on the 8th AF Reunion at Savannah, Georgia, with 1-2 days especially set aside for reminiscing and a banquet, in 2003. There will be no outings planned by the 356th, just a get-together. Ed and Ann Malo will be the organisers and would welcome contact from us.

At the Banquet, there was a silent auction, which had been the brainchild of Hilda Davis, who was ill in hospital. Nancy Hough took over the auction and did a very fine job, encouraging people to part with their money, all in aid of the Control Tower Museum, which was most successful. Referring back to the meeting, they quite unexpectedly called the MHAS members up on to the stage, whereupon a plaque was presented to me, representing our Society, which had been Sid Hewett's idea and design. This was to mark their appreciation of how MHAS had kept the memories alive of their time spent over here.

On a personal note, Mike and I delayed our honeymoon to coincide with the Reunion. We received the warmest welcome ever, beginning with being met from Newark Airport by a chauffeur-driven Lincoln Sedan limousine, which carried us 90 miles south to Absecon, New Jersey, where we spent two days with Doris Hewett and her family. Her son and daughter-in-law drove us to and from Philadelphia Airport to enable us to reach the reunion and Doris paid for all our internal travel, such was their generosity. All the family made a huge effort to travel hundreds of miles to visit us. Doris took us to local places of interest, but the highlight of our visit was the wedding present she and her daughter, Janet, treated us to – two nights stay in a Victorian Inn in Cape May, on the southern tip of New Jersey, a fitting finale to a memorable visit.

Vicky Gunnell

CINCINNATI 2001-By Don Kitt

It was following the visit of the 356 Fighter Group veterans and friends to Ipswich last September that I decided that I'd make the effort to attend the reunion in Cincinnati during October 2001. I had not been to the USA before so was looking forward to my first visit – however things did not go entirely to plan. After arranging my medical insurance with great difficulty I was able to tell Hilda and Cliff Davis I would fly to Newark via Stansted on Monday, 3rd October, as they had kindly offered me a 5 day stay in New York State where they lived and that we could fly to Cincinnati on the Saturday.

I arrived to an almost deserted Newark airport at 6.30pm on 3rd October to hear from Cliff that Hilda was in hospital. Despite this Hilda, Cliff and their

family gave me a simply wonderful 5 days. Sadly she had to return to hospital on the Friday and any chance of Cliff and Hilda attending the reunion had evaporated. They were both sorely missed by all. We'd arranged to fly to Cincinnati from a small ex-military airport named Stewart. The events of September 11th showed in the security at the airport and I counted six C5 transports at dispersal at the end of the runway as I took off. In Cincinnati we stayed at the Drawbridge Hotel, which was actually in Kentucky on the outskirts of the City. It was very comfortable and I was soon to be joined by the arriving veterans and Les Boulton, Vicky and Mike Gunnell and Vic Wilkinson from MHAS. The reunion got underway on Monday 10 October with a tour of Cincinnati, a truly super city and a get together with entertainment in the evening including a buffet. On Tuesday we had an unforgettable trip to the Dayton Air Force museum, which was fantastic, but before we went into the museum we attended a short service of remembrance at the 356 Fighter Group Memorial in the grounds of the museum. I found this very moving and a wonderful address by veteran Ray Withers made it all the more memorable

Wednesday evening we had a banquet. A lovely speech by Vicky Gunnell seemed to me to capture the spirit of the occasion perfectly. All the MHAS members were invited on to the stage and all the warm applause made this for me a very memorable moment. This made the long trip to Cincinnati for me so much worthwhile. Also at this time a beautiful plaque was presented to Vicky on behalf of the veterans to Martlesham Heath Aviation Society for our efforts at the Control Tower. Everyone was so friendly and so pleased to see us there despite September 11th – the organisation of the event was faultless – how much we all owed to Brita and Ken Male – the debt we of MHAS owed to Mike Yannell who sponsored us all – the wonderful silent auction organised so well by Nancy which raised \$800 for MHAS – these are memories I will cherish.

Don Kitt

WELCOME HOME.

It had taken a year to arrange and at times I wondered if it would happen, but on Sunday 23rd September The Lancaster, "City Of Lincoln" PA474 with the markings of QRM and called "Mickey The Moocher", allocated to 61 Squadron, entertained some 700+ people to a mind boggling 'flypast' over our Control Tower Museum. She was once stationed at Martlesham Heath and was coming home.

To call this a flypast was somewhat of an understatement as I have seen displays which did not measure up to this event. As our President said "I have seen the Lancaster on many occasions but this will be something to tell our

children and grandchildren. She came in low over the mast of the police station and then descended even lower. I thought she was going to take our roof off." The Lancaster was supposed to be accompanied by a Spitfire and a Hurricane, but due to operational hours running out, the two fighters could not fly. It was reported in the East Anglian Daily Times that the reason for the non-appearance of the Spit and the Hurricane was because they had wooden propellers and were unable to fly in the rain! (I've heard it all now! ED). I am sure if all three had come then the Lancaster would simply have made one pass.

It all started a year ago on the open day of The Lincolnshire Lancaster Association's open day at RAF Coningsby. I was there as usual and was with some friends. The whole place is thrown open to us and you can go just about anywhere within the area allocated to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. We were treated to a 5 Spitfire display and displays by the Lancaster and Dakota. After having several cups of Char in the Mess I had to make what the more polite amongst us call a comfort visit. Whilst doing what one does in these places I heard the door open and who should also need a comfort visit was Squadron Leader Paul Day, CO of the BBMF. I thanked him for the wonderful day and asked if it were possible to have a flypast over our museum, which had been officially opened the previous day. He asked me to his office and gave me the address to which to write.

As soon as possible I wrote requesting a flypast and was asked to give two dates. Of course I did not expect to be granted either. As a member of the Lincolnshire Lancaster Association I am sent a flying diary each Spring and you can imagine my surprise when I saw that 22nd May and 23rd Sept being entered as Martlesham. I telephoned Coningsby to enquire as to the nature of the flypast only to be told to contact the organiser, a Mr Barker from Ipswich (me)! To have a flypast you must obtain permission from the authorities to fly from 0 to 2000 feet and for a radius of two miles. You must also supply a map of all the sensitive noise areas and high buildings within an appropriate area. BT were really funny when I enquired about the height of Adastral Park. You are also asked to draw in the route you would prefer, although both occasions the aircraft came in from a different direction.

On both occasions, bang on time, the roar of Merlin Engines could be heard and then we were treated to wonderful display. The only problem is how do we follow this next year!

Tarkey Barker.

Visit our web site (www.MHAS.org.uk) for pictures and a video clip of the Lanc. **ED**

MORE MARTLESHAM MEMORIES – AH YES! I REMEMBER THE "HEATH"

I arrived at Martlesham Heath on "Battle of Britain" weekend 1950. The first eight months of my National Service was spent firstly at Henlow, "square bashing", and the next six-months at Kirkham, on the armourers course. I can say, without fear of contradiction, that Kirkham was the worst period of my entire life. I'm told it is now a prison. I'm glad they have upgraded it!!

Harry Ambler the HQ. admin corporal, after shaking half a pound of fag ash off his jacket, said "Don't know what to do with you lad, its Friday, you had better go home for the weekend". He disappeared and came back with a 48 hour pass. He thought he was doing me a favour, so did I, until I was harassed on 4 occasions by RAF Police between Ipswich and Liverpool Street Station. Nobody had told me I should be confined to camp that weekend!!

From the start of my service my father had warned me not to volunteer for jobs. He was a WWI veteran of the trenches. I let slip to the PTI, Cpl Culyer, that my brother I had volunteered for the station boxing team! With other simple minded souls we began pounding the lanes around Kesgrave and Woodbridge in 'eavy' boots trying to squeeze the Woodbine smoke out of our lungs. Dogs used to chase us, paper boys jeered and milkmen muttered under their breath, "bl---y mad", comes to mind.

My first public appearance was at Wattisham, I had enraged dear old W/co. Oldbury, DFC, by declining an invitation to his morning parade. He, or his adjutant gave me 7 days "jankers" for my impertinence, so for my first bout I was out on parole! The adjutant's last words were "You had better win". Poor AC Robins my opponent, did not understand my ferocious behaviour. I did win but I had to complete my "jankers"! My prize was a fountain pen. (Parker of course!).

I represented the Heath and 41 Group at the Maintenance Command championships at Colerne. I broke my thumb on Cpt Savage's (RAF Police) skull so that was the end of that. We were given a 48 hour pass after the match. I went home, waited for my girl friend of the time, outside her employer's posh gown shop. I had my hand in plaster, a black eye and a cut lip, not a pretty sight! Her boss came out and asked me to stand on the other side of the road!

There are many lovely stories to tell about the team, but space is at a premium. One bout I shall never forget, although my mind was a blank for most of it. We had a big tournament at the Ipswich Corn Exchange, against the Army. Top of the bill was Suffolk ABA champion Alby (no surname recalled) and Cpl Arthur Worrall of the Royal Horseguards, an Army champion. A very useful lad! He went sick on the night and I was put in against Alby who soon "put the lights out"! I could not eat solids for 5 days One of the best R.A.F boxers I

remember was local Wattisham PTI Frankie Lee, (I believe he is now a physio in the area). Our manager was FLT LT 'Nobby' Clarke-a gentleman. If I remember one senior NCO with great affection and respect, it was W/0 Peter Stribley of our armoury. He did not deserve the "shower" of National Servicemen dumped onto his section!

My 18 months at the "Heath" is remembered with great affection. The food, especially around Jolliffe Trophy competition time.was good. Who remembers the arrival of the Auxiliaries every summer for their annual camp? Sometimes the women out numbered the men 3 to 1..... Oh well happy days!

Brian Cane 2456536 (Barrack block 1, room 1 1950-52)

Just a word to say I'm living, that I'm not among the dead,
Though I'm getting more forgetful and mixed up in the head.
I've got used to my arthritis, to my dentures I'm resigned.
I can cope with my bi-focals, but ye Gods I miss my mind.
Sometimes I can't remember when I'm, standing by the stair,
If I should be going up for something, or coming down from there.
And before the fridge so often, my mind is full of doubt,
Now did I put some food away, or come to take some out.
So remember, I do think of you and wished that you lived near,
And its time to post this, and say goodbye from here.
At last I stand beside the post-box and my face it sure is red.
Instead of posting this to you, I've opened it instead!

The following report was submitted by one of our members and is a graphic account of the experiences of a Bomber Command crew over Germany in 1944. **ED**

ONE OF OUR AIRCRAFT IS MISSING.....

Halifax Mk IIII Serial no. LV794 Code letters EY-0. Target M.A.N. Diesel factory AUGSBURG Time/Date Midnight 24/25th February 1944.

We were en-route to the target at 24,000 ft. when a J.U.88 night fighter attacked us. According to the rear gunner this first strike was fatal, the whole of the port main-plane was ablaze and as the inter-com was dead he put his turret on the beam and tried to get out. One of his boots was stuck between the guns, so he pulled his parachute ripcord whilst still in the aircraft. This extricated him and he eventually came to earth safely. The only injury he sustained was a badly bruised face and a thick split lip where the parachute 'D' ring attachments hit him in the face. Meanwhile in the nose section of the aircraft I (the navigator) Wireless operator and Bomb Aimer put on our parachutes.

According to the Bomb Aimer (who never lost consciousness) the aircraft exploded and the nose section was "blown off" from the main aircraft. He landed reasonably near the aircraft -holed up for a couple of days, got away from the scene but was captured days later.

I regained consciousness whilst dropping through the air with my parachute still packed above my head. Although I had a complicated compound fracture of the left 'Tib. and Fib.) and a 9-mm. gunshot wound in the left elbow, I didn't feel any pain at the time. I was able with my right arm to reach up and pull the ripcord and I thought for a second or two the world was wonderful! It was literally a few seconds later I was in the tops of fir trees. Fortunately for my damaged leg I dangled about three feet above the ground. I was able to cling to the tree trunk, press my quick release box and slide to the ground. Took off my Mae West and slid it under my backside as there was slight snow on the ground. Just completed that when a figure came through the woods and knowing I wasn't going anywhere I shouted HELP. It was Alf! We sat talking things over for about 5 mins. when we heard someone coming through the woods. We froze; thinking they were Germans when 10 yards in front of us the unmistakable form of Bernie was passing us. We called him and I think it almost startled him to death! You cut a splint for my leg and made me as comfortable as you could when a clock in the distance struck one o'clock. We decided that I would be left on the edge of the village and then you would try to make your escape.

I lay there until first light when I started blowing on my whistle. Shortly afterward two ancient members of the 'Landwacht' (Home Guard) presented a pistol at my head and tried to get me up. I learnt my first bit of German - it was 'Bien Gebroken' and I was able to answer, 'Ja! They got a wheelbarrow with a plank in it and wheeled me to the schoolhouse and the local Catholic Sister, cum teacher, cum first-aid worker splinted my leg properly. I managed to see you and Bernie next day briefly. You went to Dulagluft and I went to the local hospital at Dahn for 2 months until I was able to travel. Then to Stalagluft VI and eventually got to the U.K. in Feb. 1945.

From Charles Antell, Beverley (one of our "long distance" members) – to the editor

"This may, or may not be of interest to you. Found it among some old magazines I happened to be browsing through".

Occasionally, items of significant historical importance appear at auction. Competition for these is always keen and prices correspondingly high. Once such example is the RAF Book of Heroes. This is an autograph book kept by a

mess steward at Martlesham Heath during the early 1940's. It contains the signatures of many of the most famous fighter pilots of the Second World War. This important record of heroism in a great cause was eagerly bid for by collectors to the final price of £16000.

From the Antique Dealer and Collectors Guide, September, 1989.

OOPS!

This is the transcript of an actual radio conversation of a US naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in October 1995. Radio conversation released by the Chief of Naval Operations 10-10-95.

Canadians: *Please divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.*

Americans: *Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.*

Canadians: *Negative. You will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.*

Americans: *This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.*

Canadians: *NO, say again, you divert YOUR course.*

Americans: *This is the aircraft carrier USS Lincoln. The second largest ship in the Unites States Atlantic Fleet. We are accompanied by three Destroyers, three Cruisers and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change your course 15 degrees to the north. I say again; that's one-five degrees north, or counter measures will be taken to ensure the safety of this ship.*

Canadians: This is a Lighthouse -Your call.

MARTLESHAM MUSTANG IN CROSS-STITCH

My wife Elaine is an enthusiastic cross-stitcher and has completed many pictures of aircraft using this technique. Recently she came across a design for a Mustang produced by a firm called Avid, and sent for the kit. When it arrived we were surprised when we read the caption below the design on the instructions:

"North American P-51D Mustang, the great fighter and fighter-bomber of World War II, built to British specification and shown here in the colours of Eight Air Force's 359th Fighter Squadron, 356th Fighter Group, based at Martlesham Heath in Suffolk"

As the serial number, 359356 and name, "Yankee Doodle" were very clear I decided to research the aircraft in "Escort". The search came up a blank. Elaine faxed the firm to ask where the design had been obtained and explained our interest in Martlesham. She got a fax back saying that the designer had based the colours on those of the 359th squadron, 356 Fighter Group but had used a fictitious serial number using 359 and 356 (neither of us had twigged this) and also a fictitious American sounding name "Yankee Doodle". No wonder I could not find any reference to either in Escort!

Elaine has started doing the kit and hopefully it will soon join the Lancaster, Spitfire and Hurricane that already grace the lounge wall.

For anyone interested details of the kit are: Mustang, price £19.95 plus £1.50 p&p obtainable from Avid, West House, 5a Park Avenue, Bedford, MK40 2JY, Tel: 01234 327518. Avid have many other aircraft designs on their product list and can also supply frame sets etc.

Colin and Elaine Whitmore.

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

Our September meeting saw another audience in excess of 100 to enjoy and illustrated talk by Mr Terry Holloway about the history of Marshalls of Cambridge. Terry Holloway's title is Group Support Executive and he gave a fascinating insight not only of the history of the Company but also some of the many activities with which it is currently involved. With 3500 employees and an annual turnover in the region of £500 million per annum Marshalls is a real force to be reckoned with in Cambridge and a vital part of the economy of that region. The founder of the Company had always been interested in aviation because he grew up during the very earliest years of flying. An airship landed in a field next to the fledgling engineering business in 1912 and from that time on Mr Marshall was convinced that aeronautics was the future. A very professional presentation and a most interesting evening. A vote of thanks was given by Gordon Kinsey

Friday 5th October and our monthly meeting was well attended. Geoff. Pleasance is one of our own members and a most talented aviation artist. In the course of his business Geoff. attends air shows in this country and abroad and entertained us with a slide show of aircraft mainly at a Belgian Air Show and images taken at an aviation day at Upavon in Wiltshire. Many who visited the Control Tower Museum on 23rd. September will have seen some of the work that Geoff. Pleasance does. Perhaps because of the attention to detail in his drawings, his knowledge of all the different types of aircraft and what all the many appendages attached to modern jets are, is quite remarkable. A most entertaining evening by a very dedicated and interesting member. A vote of thanks was given by Ralph Rutherford.

Another good crowd in November to listen to Mr Geoff. Raynor. Geoff. Gave an illustrated talk about the continuing story of aircraft recovery and restoration and, in particular, a Hurricane which flew for the last time from Martlesham. The Hurricane in question was from 257 squadron and crashed on marshes at Frinton. The remains of it now reside in the Battle of Britain Hall at the Royal Air Force Museum, Hendon. A vote of thanks was given by Gordon Kinsey. In December we "let our hair down" and the Christmas Social/Dance was voted a success by the 70 or so members and friends who attended!

ED

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

I have been asked to remind our American members that MHAS membership subs are due! 25 dollars covers the period 1st. April 2002 to 31st. March, 2003. 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.

ED.

APPRO PRO TO NOTHING IN PARTICULAR

An Irishman was walking through some boggy land when he espied a little Leprechaun struggling in a quicksand to free himself. Being a kindly and sympathetic person he stopped to give the Leprechaun a hand to extricate himself from the quicksand. Needless to say the Leprechaun was overjoyed and told the Irishman he would grant a wish in repayment. The Irishman thought for a while and then said, "I would like a bridge between Ireland and England". The Leprechaun said, "that is rather a tall order, have you any other wish that I could grant?" Irishman, "I would like a beautiful woman who would look after my every desire and would be frugal and careful with money". The Leprechaun thought about this and then said, "does this bridge have to have street lighting?"

The olden's are best!-ED

