

EDITORIAL

I would like, once again, to wish everyone a Happy New Year. So, here we are in the third year of the 21st century. Who said, “doesn’t time fly when you are enjoying yourself?”

Sadly, I have to include four obituaries. Three of them were members of the Society. All three of them were exceptionally keen and invariably attended our monthly meetings. The fourth obituary concerns an American who flew from here with the 356th FG.

A flattering piece sent to me by Ed Malo, who led the American contingency last September. Apart from that, the usual mix of news, nostalgia and (hopefully), humorous snippets which I hope you will enjoy.

Most folk who know me know that I have a tendency to hoard. This is on the assumption that “it will come in handy some day”. So it is with potential articles for “Runway 22”. When I sort through the paperwork I sometimes have to think to myself, Was that in a couple of years ago and I forgot to throw it away? However, all this is leading to a plea for articles for future newsletters because this time when I looked through I realised that the cupboard was nearly bare and I need some new material if we are going to continue to produce an interesting publication. So, please send ‘em in! Maybe an interesting story to relate regarding your Service experience? Perhaps you know someone with an interesting career history? Or maybe a poem or a joke. Clean, of course. Well, relatively!

ED

FIGHTER GROUP TRIP TO MARTLESHAM HEATH

From Sept. 20th through the evening of Sept. 27th, fifteen members of our Association from the US were given a terrific tour by our great friends from the Martlesham Heath Aviation Society. Unfortunately, four of our members had to cancel just before going to England because of illness.

The MHAS held their customary get together on the Friday evening to meet and greet all. They informed us of the plans for the week ahead. The tour started on Saturday with visits to Kesgrave Hall, the Control Tower Museum and Playford Hall (where Jeep Coyote is buried). That evening we attended a banquet with MHAS members and former RAF personnel.

Sunday was a great day at the Control Tower Museum celebrating the 2nd anniversary of the Museum. There were fly-bys by a P-51, two PT-17s and a Russian post war training plane. There also were many WW-II military vehicles as well as older & antique civilian autos.

On Monday we spent the morning shopping in the city of Woodbridge and that afternoon did a boat cruise on the River Orwell. That evening Don Kitt’s “Melody Makers” entertained us. On Sept. 25th we spent the entire day visiting Sandringham House in Norfolk. It is a Country home of Queen Elizabeth of England. Wednesday we visited Norwich which has a great modern library which has a section devoted to the B-24s of the 8th Air Force 2nd Bomb Division. In the afternoon we roamed around the Norwich Cathedral which is one of the greatest cathedrals in England. Although we were free on Thursday to explore the city of Ipswich, some of us visited a bomb shelter museum discovered some years ago under the playground of an elementary school in Ipswich. We sat in a replica of a London subway car, heard air raids sirens and AA gunfire, a V-1 buzz bomb overhead and bombs exploding. It brought back memories of visits to London that some of us made during WW-II. We ate our usual fish and chips at the Victoria Pub in Felixstowe that evening.

Friday Sept. 27th we left for the Duxford RAF Museum to attend the rededication of the American Air Museum. Former President Bush and England’s Prince of Wales spoke at the ceremony. Unfortunately, some of us could not visit the American Air Museum because of the security involved with the rededication. Also, we couldn’t visit the American Cemetery in Cambridge because of the lack of time.

We want to express our great appreciation to Robert Dunnett and all the members of the Martlesham Heath Aviation Society for the wonderful time we had during our seven days with them in the Ipswich area.

REMINISCENCES

I feel a strange nostalgia
For days beyond recall.
Days that are gone forever

Did they happen after all.
Why am I so full of memories
That vanished with the past.
That I thought would last forever
Why don't they ever last.
Do we live in a world of shadows,
Of images in the mind.
A world beyond reality,
That we can no longer find.
We can never recapture,
The days when we were young.
Those days are gone forever
And never will return.
Where are my friends of yesterday,
They're scattered like the wind.
Those friends I can no longer find,
Exist now only in my mind.

Old soldier

Mr Keith Flory, who is the neighbour of one of our members, relates the following episode. Keith Joined the RAFVR in 1939 to train as a pilot. This was not available at the time and he was eventually called up in January 1940. Keith survived the war as a navigator and flew from no less than 34 RAF Stations and 2 RNAS Stations. He flew in 24 different aircraft types, including Halifax Mk11 and Mk111's. **ED**

When, in the summer of 1940, 612, (City of Aberdeen) squadron moved from Dyce to Wick, with a detachment in Kaldadarnes in Iceland, we were allowed to retain a stripped-down Anson after converting to Whitleys. This was useful in many ways and very popular with all the pilots.

One such pilot was Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. He was qualified to fly Ansons, which were in use in his Country before the war. He had reason to visit Orkney on several occasions and was permitted to borrow our aircraft and crew.

On the first such flight I was chosen to be his navigator – not a difficult task for such a short distance.

He travelled to Wick by train from Inverness and stayed overnight in the “guest” quarters in our Officers Mess. With my crew I had done a daylight operational sortie the day before over the North Sea so was available, as was one of our WOP/AGS.

I did not meet Prince Bernhard until he joined us in the aircraft. I had prepared a note for him of the distance, ambient heights etc and as a precaution, accompanied the English with a French translation. He read this and beckoned me to join him. He said thank you for the note but that my French was awful and he had no need of it, having at some time been a reporter in Paris for an English paper!

The short flight was uneventful. When we landed at the naval air station in Orkney he taxied the aircraft to a dispersal standing, as directed and switched off the engines. We left our flying clothes etc. in the Anson. He asked me to follow him to the control tower, (quarterdeck in naval language!).

I had taken only a few steps when a young naval rating came and said what I heard in his strong Scots accent as, “Derek Marshall says the pilot should have rotated the aircraft and folded the wings”. I told him who the pilot was and then ran to catch up with the Prince and relayed the message.

He replied to tell them only the propellers rotated and if they could, they should fold the wings themselves! We learned afterwards from the officer in control that “rotated” meant turning the aircraft to face the runway, (which he called the deck!) and that “Derek Marshall” was the “deck marshal!” The naval rating was there when we took off to return to Wick and he apologised for any misunderstanding.

When, at later date, we repeated the journey we adapted better from RAF language and practices, to naval carrier-borne aircraft routine!

Keith Flory has also contributed a little aside attributed to the O/C RAF Wick.

As the number of WAAF personnel became substantial at RAF Wick the station commander decided that they should all be housed in a domestic compound out of bounds to all RAF personnel.

The senior WAAF officer told the commander that she resented this and the implications of it. She said to him, touching the top of her head, that all her girls had plenty up there. He said in reply that she should realise that wherever they had it his airmen would soon find it! No –I don't get it either!

ED

LETTER SPOT

From 356 Felixtowe ATC

356 (Felixstowe) Squadron ATC would like to thank Martlesham Heath Aviation Society for the support given to their Christmas Draw. The society had three winners:

Brian Kirk - basket of fruit. Dave Slaughter - ham voucher. Ernie Brooks – bottle of wine.

A total of approximately £430 was raised for the squadron."

Regards and all the compliments of the season,

Joe Cox

THE JOURNALIST AND THE OLD MAN

A journalist assigned to the Jerusalem bureau had an apartment overlooking the Western Wall. Every day when she looked out she saw an old bearded Jewish man praying vigorously. Certain he would be a good subject to interview. The journalist went down to the Wall and introduced herself to the old man.

She asked, "You come every day to the Wall? Sir, how long have you done that and what are you praying for?"

The old man replied, "I have come here to pray every day for 25 years. In the morning I pray for world peace and for the brotherhood of man. I go home, have a cup of tea, and I come back and pray for the eradication of illness and disease from the earth. And very, very important, I pray for peace and understanding between the Israelis and Palestinians". The journalist was impressed. "How does it make you feel to come here every day for 25 years and pray for these wonderful things?" she asked. The old man replied calmly, "Like I'm talking to a wall".

The following two stories are related and have been sent to me by one of our American friends. ED

World War II produced many heroes. One such man was Lieutenant Commander Butch O'Hare. He was a fighter pilot assigned to the aircraft carrier Lexington in the South Pacific.

One day his entire squadron was sent on a mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to top it up.

He would not have enough fuel to complete his mission and get back to his ship. His flight leader told him to return to the carrier. Reluctantly, he dropped out of formation and headed back to the fleet.

As he was returning to the mother ship, he saw something that turned his blood cold. A squadron of Japanese bombers were speeding their way toward the American fleet. The American fighters were gone on a sortie and the fleet was all but defenceless. He couldn't reach his squadron and bring them back in time to save the fleet. Nor could he warn the fleet of the approaching danger.

There was only one thing to do. He must somehow divert them from the fleet. Laying aside all thoughts of personal safety, he dived into the formation of Japanese planes. Wing-mounted 50 calibers blazed as he charged in, attacking one surprised enemy plane and then another. Butch weaved in and out of the now broken formation and fired at as many planes as possible until finally all his ammunition was spent. Undaunted, he continued the assault. He dived at the planes, trying to at least clip off a wing or tail, in hopes of damaging as many enemy planes as possible and rendering them unfit to fly. He was desperate to do anything he could to keep them from reaching the American ships.

Finally, the exasperated Japanese squadron took off in another direction. Deeply relieved. Butch O'Hare and his tattered fighter limped back to the carrier.

Upon arrival he reported in and related the event surrounding his return. The film from the camera mounted on his plane told the tale.

It showed the extent of Butch's daring attempt to protect his fleet. He had destroyed five enemy bombers.

That was on February 20, 1942, and for that action he became the Navy's first Ace of W.W.II and the first Naval Aviator to win the Congressional Medal of Honor.

A year later he was killed in aerial combat at the age of 29. His hometown would not allow the memory of that heroic action to die. And today, O'Hare Airport in Chicago is named in tribute to the courage of this great man. So the next time you're in O'Hare visit his memorial with his statue and Medal of Honor. It is located between Terminals 1 and 2

STORY NUMBER TWO

Some years earlier there was a man in Chicago called Easy Eddie. At that time, Al Capone virtually owned the city. Capone wasn't famous for anything heroic. His exploits were anything but praise-worthy. He was, however, notorious for enmeshing the city of Chicago in everything from bootlegged booze and prostitution to murder.

Easy Eddie was Capone's lawyer and for a good reason. He was very good! In fact, his skill at legal manoeuvring kept Big Al out of jail for a long time. To show his appreciation, Capone paid him very well. Not only was the money big; Eddie got special dividends. For instance, he and his family occupied a fenced-in mansion with live-in help and all of the conveniences of the day. The estate was so large that it filled an entire Chicago city block. Yes, Eddie lived the high life of the Chicago mob and gave little consideration to the atrocities that went on around him.

Eddy did have one soft spot, however. He had a son that he loved dearly. Eddy saw to it that his young son had the best of everything; clothes, cars, and a good education. Nothing was withheld. Price was no object. And, despite his involvement with organised crime, Eddie even tried to teach him right from wrong.

Yes, Eddie tried to teach his son to rise above his own sordid life. He wanted him to be a better man than he was. Yet, with all his wealth and influence, there were two things that Eddie couldn't give his son; two things that Eddie sacrificed to the Capone mob that he could not pass on to his beloved son: a good name and a good example. One day, Easy Eddie reached a difficult decision. Offering his son a good name was far more important than all the riches he could lavish on him. He had to rectify all the wrong that he had done. He would go to the authorities and tell the truth about "Scar-face" Al Capone. He would try to clean up his tarnished name and offer his son some semblance of integrity.

To do this he must testify against The Mob, and he knew that the cost would be great. But more than anything, he wanted to be an example to his son. He wanted to do his best to make restoration and hopefully have a good name to leave his son. So, he testified. Within the year, Easy Eddie's life ended in a blaze of gunfire on a lonely Chicago street. He had given his son the greatest gift he had to offer at the greatest price he would ever pay.

What have these two stories have to do with one another? **Butch O'Hare was Easy Eddie's son.**

OBITUARY – Joseph Ordowski

Joe came from Poland and after service in the Free Polish Air Force during WW2 married an English girl and settled in England.

Always a keen MHAS member, Joe recently had severe back trouble, which had prevented him from attending meetings lately. Just as he was improving he had a fatal heart attack. Joe leaves a widow, Florence, a son and daughter and five grandsons. He is also survived by a sister who still lives in Poland.

The Polish community, which is still active in Ipswich, arranged for the Polish flag to be draped over the coffin at his funeral.

OBITUARY - Douglas Philip Baxter (Barney to all who knew him).

Barney died unexpectedly but peacefully in Ipswich Hospital on November 28th, age 83 years. A caring husband of Margaret and beloved father of Trudy and Beverley.

Barney became an instructor after learning to fly in the United States during WW2. He subsequently flew Spitfires and P47 Thunderbolts in Burma and Sumatra.

A great supporter of our Society and also the Aircrew Association. He will be sadly missed by us all and also many in America.

OBITUARY - Michael Geoffrey Elmer.

Known to us all as Mike, he died December 7th, aged 69 years. Much loved husband of Gillian beloved father of Tim, Simon, Sara and Hannah.

Mike was another great supporter of MHAS and all it stands for. A popular Framlingham Town councillor who died on November 21st 2002, a few weeks after undergoing major heart surgery at Papworth Hospital, Cambridge. He amazed people with his energetic life style and was never happier than when helping others in need. Hobbies included gliding and Vintage motoring, He undertook National Service between 1954 and 1956, spending some time at RAF Lichfield. He launched his own company; Michael Elmer Caravans in Martlesham in the 1970's. He was a founder member of the Eastern Counties Motor Club and loved his classic cars.

OBITUARY – Eldon Riley

I have been informed of the death of Eldon Riley at Austin, Texas on Thanksgiving Day. Eldon was a Captain in the 360th squadron of the 356th FG and flew Mustangs from Martlesham. Gordon Kinsey recalls that Eldon and his wife, Lucille, would visit them and Eldon would make a nostalgic trip around his old base.

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

September and a visit from Sqdn Ldr Charles Sandeman all the way from RAF Marham. Charles has been retired from active service as an engineer for two years but is still a uniformed officer in the RAF. One of his duties is to promote the image of RAF Marham.

He was invited to give a talk at one of our monthly meetings following a visit by a small party of MHAS members to Marham. It first became operational in 1917, just a year before the formation of the RAF. The circumference of the airfield is some 9 miles and with five operational squadrons it is one of the largest RAF bases in the country.

Among the complement of aircraft at RAF Marham are Tornado GR4's and some rather aged Canberra bombers. These are still found to be a most useful aeroplane for reconnaissance duties although spares for the Rolls Royce Avon engines may soon be unobtainable. Some of the Canberras are 48 years old!

Marham has also been the home of the Flight Refuelling section of the RAF for more than 30 years.

A vote of thanks was given by Stanley Ward.

Our October meeting featured films obtained from the East Anglian Film Archive. Among the films shown was a pre-WW2 colour film shot at Ipswich Airport and showed Vickers Armstrong Wellington and Bristol Blenheim bombers. Another film was entitled "Intercept" and featured Wattisham based Phantom fighters. Another of the films was footage from the 1945 victory flypast over London and Buckingham Palace. These aircraft flew from North Weald and among the pilots were some of the "aces", such as Douglas Bader.

After the break a recent film of Jaguars from RAF Coltishall was shown. The evening was rounded off by an excellent film made in the seventies by the BBC East film team, entitled "If There Were Ghosts". It showed derelict airfields once inhabited by the USAAF and was accompanied by some reminiscing by a former American veteran of the Second World War. RAF Martlesham Heath was among the old airfields visited.

Our November meeting was hurriedly re-scheduled when the Suffolk Police Helicopter Unit were unable due to operational commitments, to give their talk. Our own member, Geoff. Pleasance stood in and gave one of his very interesting illustrated talks. This was entitled "Berlin and Other Travels" and consisted of a talk illustrated by slides of Geoff's visit to the 2002 Berlin Air Show. Geoff. Also displayed some of his excellent prints.

Our Christmas Dance and Social in December was quite well supported. We had the same entertainer as last year. Peter Clarke is able to provide music to dance to and made the evening go with a swing.

Alan Powell.

My brother has lived in France since 1961 and some time ago he sent me the following:-

Knowing that your society is interested in all things concerning the history of aviation, it struck me that the following narration would be of interest to you all. Living here in Alsace in the extreme east of France, next to the German border, it is not unusual to read articles in the paper as to the latest 'find' as far as the remains of Second World War aircraft are concerned. Alsace was the scene of much fighting at the end of the war and, also, being close to southern Germany, was a crossing point for many an allied bomber on its way home after a night's work. The subsoil here harbours the remains of a number of aircraft, allied and enemy, which fell to the DC, or other aircraft.

Many of you may know that the jet aircraft had a chequered history in Germany during the war years. Starting with the Heinkel HE 178 which was the first jet to fly on 27th August 1939 and leading up to the squadrons of Messerschmitt ME 262 fighters and fighter bombers, used in haste during the last stages of the war This is part of the story of one of the latter, a Messerschmitt ME 262 A2a of the 11/JG 51 squadron.

At the approach of Christmas in December 1994 a farmer in the north of Alsace was busy ploughing his fields and hit a large metal object buried in the ground. This find turned out to be the remains of a Messerschmitt ME 262 which was part of the jet squadrons operating in the south of Germany late 44, early 45.

News of this find reached the ears of some local aircraft enthusiasts (and, of course, of the local Gendarmerie, who, as is usual in such cases, called in the de-mining squad). So, on Christmas Eve 1994 a joyous group was to be found in a cold and wind swept field some 20 odd Kms to the north of Strasbourg near to Seltz, Bas Rhin, busy uncovering the rest of the ME 262. In fact the remains consisted of only the heavy aircraft parts, gas turbine, machine guns (4-20mm canons and one 30mm one), undercarriage etc. The Gendarmes and de-mining experts got on with destroying the 20mm/30mm shells while the enthusiasts dug out the guns and the turbine.

Adolf Galland, the German fighter ace, considered the ME 262 the most effective fighter plane of the war. He was of the opinion that if this aircraft could have been made available much earlier in the war than the end of 1944, when it began to be used. Work was stopped on its development in the beginning of 1940 following the German General Staff conference to discuss the acceleration of the armaments programmes in February 1940. Here it was decreed that no research or development shall be pursued unless it promised military results within 4 months. Willy Messerschmitt continued work, as far as he could, on the jet until the Spring of '41. At this point his personal enemy, Feltmarschall Erhard Milch (sinister individual), went to Messerschmitt's home and insisted that all work be stopped. As said, Galland considered that this order delayed the entry into service of the ME 262 by about two years.

The second misfortune of this aircraft was Hitler. With his obsession for the Blitz-Krieg, or lightning war, he continually demanded rapid bombers to take the war deep into enemy territory. Thus, when told during a demonstration flight of the ME 262 that it could be fitted with bombs, he insisted that it be equipped as a fighter-bomber thereby losing the potential, or at least a large part of it. No doubt if the ME 262 had been used as an interceptor fighter for use against the Allies bomber formations it would have caused considerable losses.

This insistence of the use of the ME 262 as a fighter-bomber brings us back to the beginning of our story. The plane, which was destroyed near Seltz, was being used for bombing and ground support. Strasbourg was liberated on the 23 November 1944 by the American 7th army under Denver and Leclerc with the Free French. With the counter offensive and the battle of Bastogne starting on the 16th December the ground gained in the north of Alsace and Strasbourg immediately came under threat. In the night of the 31st December the Germans opened the second counter offensive, *Nordwind*. This swept the Allies back some considerable distance in the north of Alsace and included in this sweep was a small village called Rittershoffen, the sight of a battle between the 21st Panzer and the US 14th Tank Division. In ground support it appears that the High Kommand used the ME 262 fighter bomber extensively as there are a number of records of houses and buildings being bombed and damaged by jet aircraft.

So, some time on the 13th January 1945 we have this ME 262 bombing and strafing the village of Rittershoffen and, believe it or not, but the unfortunate pilot's name was, wait for it, Ritter von Rittersheim! What a coincidence. The reasons for the aircraft's destruction are unknown.

Colin Powell

