

EDITORIAL

I make no apologies for the lengthy obituary and tribute to Sir Ivor Broom. Such a distinguished career demands no less. We were honoured when he accepted our invitation to be an Honorary Vice President of Martlesham Heath Aviation Society. This invitation was extended when he and his wife, Jess, attended the Reunion of RAF and USAAF veterans in 1999.

Incidentally I interviewed Sir Ivor during the course of the Reunion for a piece to be included in an edition of Runway 22 and sent him a draft for his approval. He wrote back to congratulate me on my memory because he had realised I had taken no notes at the time. He was unaware that the interview was being recorded on video and I took the details from the sound recording of that tape. I never did tell him!

I have endeavoured to include most of the details of Sir Ivor's RAF career but omitted to mention that in his later years he was at one time President of the Mosquito Aircrew Association. He also worked tirelessly for the Royal Air Force Association, The RAF Benevolent Fund, the Blenheim Society, the Aircrew Association and the Bomber Command Association. He had been a member of the Civil Aviation Board and Chairman of Farnborough Aerospace Development Corporation. A full life indeed!

Because the DH Mosquito was such an outstanding WW2 aircraft and figured prominently in Sir Ivor's wartime flying career I have taken the opportunity to compile a short article on that aeroplane. I don't have the actual number to hand but approximately 8000 "Mossies" were built. How sad that none are now flying and that so few remain in museums.

Our old friend Sid Cooper is no longer with us and Alan Smith has written an obituary for "Mr Orwell Bridge." Thank you for that, Alan

A short article given to me by our Archivist, Alan Smith about one of the many cloak and dagger institutions that existed during WW2. I am sure that a book has been written about these elite WAAF's. Perhaps someone will be able to jog my memory and tell me the title?

Please keep those stories rolling in!

ED

Late news. We have to report with great sadness that Roger Bryant, one of our long standing and dedicated members has died. Roger was involved in a hit and run accident in Norwich and suffered serious injuries from which he was slowly recovering. Unfortunately Roger developed liver complications and died on 16th April. I am sure we would all wish to send our sympathy to Roger's wife, Doreen and to all his family.

ED

TEACHING THE SEAGULLS

What were 10 W.A.A.F. sergeants doing in a hut at the top of the Castle grounds? They all lived in what in happier times had been a seaside boarding house being looked after by the Landlady. If you saw them around the town they were always smartly dressed, their uniforms tailor made. Some of them spoke with a foreign accent. Some often sported shoulder flashes of other nations. Of course the towns people were curious just as other Service personnel were. The hut in which they worked was near the Coastguard Outlook and even they could not satisfy their curiosity. The girls had to come up with some kind of story as the truth could not be revealed. And so the story about the Seagulls was born. They were being trained to act as Carrier Pigeons to carry messages and these often had to be in a foreign language of our allies; hence the Polish and Czech flashes.

I doubt if anyone believed that story but it meant we were no longer asked what we were doing. Now of course we can talk about it. We were all German speakers and our job was to intercept and "listen in" to German pilots out on sorties. There were similar units situated all around the coast and, with the results from the different units, just where the Germans were operating could be established. We would know just who was operating and from where so that our own forces could be prepared.

We were never more than about 100 altogether and considered ourselves quite an elite force. The first recruits had come from the Universities and had degrees in languages. After that came the girls who had lived in Germany and knew somebody in the Air Force who knew and then came the girls who had been able to escape from their own countries. We were quite an effective force, until our own forces knocked out the German Air Force, and were proud of our work.

The Seagulls? Well that was just a nice story...

Ruth Susskind

SID COOPER – AN OBITUARY

Sid has always numbered amongst his many interests aircraft and, was in fact, a member of the Harkers Club, a wartime collection of aircraft spotters who were used by industry to give warnings to their factories and workplaces of the approach of enemy aircraft, so that the workers could ignore the general public air raid siren and only stop work when danger was imminent.

From this interest Sid joined the Royal Observer Corps and I had the privilege of serving with him on Bravo 3 Post at Claydon during the 1950s and the 1960s.

This was an interesting time for the post as not only did we man the post, which had an above ground post for aircraft spotting, it also had an underground post for nuclear reporting. We were also called to form a crew at our area Centre in Colchester and also manned a Radioactive Reporting Cell in the underground site at RAF Bawdsey. In all these areas Sid played his part.

Sid continued to serve in the Observer Corps until it disbanded in 1991 and gained the Long Service Medal with two bars. – This medal together with other memorabilia of his time in the Corps is now on display in the Museum. His last uniform is also on display in the Museum in memory of him.

Sid's life did not only revolve around aircraft, it covered a wide area including the building of the Orwell Bridge on which he wrote a book and about which he gave many talks being known locally as "Mr Orwell Bridge". He was imbued with a sense of adventure, for, in his later life, he travelled widely and gave talks on such varied of his adventures as balloon flights in America and panning for gold in Alaska!

He was a regular member of the society whose attendance at meetings was sometimes prevented by his public talks.

He, I am sorry to say, has joined the ever growing list of departed members and, like them, will be sorely missed.

Alan Smith

AIR MARSHAL SIR IVOR BROOM, KCB,CBE,DSO,AFC – AN OBITUARY

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of our distinguished Hon. Vice President, Sir Ivor Broom at the age of 82. He was the holder of no less than three DFC's. These, together with his other decorations, were gained during the course of three tours of duty in some of the most hazardous bomber operations of WW2.

Sir Ivor and his wife, Jess attended our reunion in September 1999 and I was able to interview him for a previous article in Runway 22. I recorded at the time that Ivor Broom first piloted Bristol Blenheims and was posted to Malta for the dangerous shipping sweeps in the Mediterranean. These were intended to prevent Rommel's troops receiving supplies. After four months he was again posted back to England and managed to find time to get married whilst instructing on low-level bombing with Blenheims.

It was in May 1943 that Sir Ivor began his love affair with the De Havilland Mosquito. At first he remained an instructor for pilots selected by Air Vice Marshal Don Bennett for his No8 Pathfinder Group. In May

1944 Ivor Broom joined No. 571, a Mosquito XV1 squadron of the Light Night Striking Force, (LNSF). His navigator was Flt Lt. Tommy Broom. They were thereafter called “the flying brooms” and had the emblem of crossed broomsticks painted on the nose of the aircraft!

They flew the Mosquito modified to carry the 4000lb bomb known as a “cookie”. The “flying brooms” made numerous raids over Berlin with their lethal 4000 pounders. Tommy Broom was an exceptional navigator who had survived a crash landing in Holland, then evaded capture and escaped via the famous cross-Pyrenees route into neutral Spain and finally home. Pinpoint mine laying in the Dortmund-Ems canal was just one of many typical sorties.

Searchlights could cone the Brooms for as long as 15 minutes at a time while they weaved and dived and twisted. Ivor Broom once asked his disoriented navigator for a course to base. Tommy Broom replied, “fly north, with a dash of west while I sort myself out!” During this period the Flying Brooms lobbed a cookie up the mouth of a railway tunnel in Germany with two fighters on their tail. Ivor Broom received a second bar to his DFC for this exploit.

In autumn 1944 Ivor Broom became acting Squadron Leader in command of a flight in No. 128, another LNSF Mosquito squadron. Just a few months later he was appointed acting Wing Commander to lead No. 163 squadron. Tommy Broom, now DFC and Bar, joined him as squadron navigation officer.

After many further offensives over Germany and occupied Europe by the reunited Flying Brooms the war finally ended. Ivor Broom had undertaken 58 operational missions in Mosquitoes. They included 22 raids over Berlin and his navigator, Tommy Broom accompanied him on most of those. Ivor Broom was awarded the DSO and Tommy a third DFC.

At the end of the war Ivor Broom was just 24 years old, an acting Wing Commander and in command of a Pathfinder force. He had flown a total of 103 operational sorties. 45 in Blenheims and 58 in Mosquitoes.

After the fall of Germany Ivor Broom was posted to Ceylon but saw no further action before the surrender of Japan. He was then sent to Singapore and became a Squadron Leader once more when he commanded No. 28 Spitfire fighter squadron. He returned to England in 1948 he attended Staff College before learning to fly jets. In April 1953 he formed No. 57, the third squadron to be equipped with the English Electric Canberra bomber. Ivor Broom received the AFC as a result of, what was then a pioneering route to Ottawa from London and back. This flight was in a specially modified Canberra.

1956 and Ivor Broom was made responsible for the Bomber Command Development Unit at Wittering. He led intensive trials on Canberra’s and Vickers Valiants of the developing Nuclear Defence Force.

1959 saw another move. This time to the Air Secretary’s Department. Then, in 1962 he was appointed Station Commander at RAF Bruggen, in Germany.

After this he spent a year at the Imperial Defence College, two years at the Ministry of Defence and then commandant of the Central Flying School before taking command of No. 11 Group. This, of course was the famous Fighter Group which had defended London and the south east in 1940. Martlesham was the most northerly Station in 11 Group. Sir Ivor Broom ended his RAF career as Controller of National Air Traffic Services.

Sir Ivor Broom married Jess in 1942 and they had two sons and a daughter. They all survive him.

Alan Powell



The “Flying Brooms” – Ivor Broom on the left, accompanied by his navigator, Tommy Broom. Flanked by their Mosquito.

DE HAVILLAND MOSQUITO

The concept of the unarmed bomber was completely against the conventional policy of the 1930's. If the Mosquito had been ordered in 1938, when it was first shown to the Air Ministry it would have proved itself much earlier during WW2 and might well have spawned the concept of a fast, four-engined, unarmed bomber. Indeed the unarmed Mosquito was capable of flying to Berlin with a 4000lb bomb load. It did this at 300+ mph and at a high altitude and proved almost impossible for the Luftwaffe to engage it.

However, this was an age when all newly designed aircraft were built with metal airframes, the Mosquito was built almost entirely of wood. The powers that-be failed to realise that this construction was of a new ground-breaking concept involving the sandwiching of balsa wood between two thin layers of birch wood. Remarkably this method of construction had a higher tensile strength than metal construction of the time. It was because of this inability to understand that this was indeed a new concept, that they rejected the design. It was left to the De Havilland Aircraft Company and more specifically Sir Geoffrey De Havilland himself, to develop it solely as a private venture. How fortunate we are that they did! It emerged as an aircraft with an unparalleled power-to-weight ratio and able to withstand much battle damage.

Eventually the design was adopted on the understanding that it should be produced as a long-range reconnaissance aircraft. It entered service with the RAF in July 1941 and was soon being developed as a bomber and night fighter as its potential became apparent.

The Germans made efforts to combat the Mosquito and a few Junkers 88 fighter/bombers were modified in 1943. The modification involved the injection of nitrous oxide into the engines. This was soon abandoned and probably did the engines little good anyway. The pilot of a Luftwaffe night fighter squadron who shot down a Mosquito was allowed to count the victory as two aircraft.

With a flight time to Berlin of 3.8 hours against 4.7 for the Lancaster and a crew of two instead of seven, it delivered twice the bomb load per crew man-hour at a saving of 27% on the fuel used. The American B17 had a crew of up to eleven and was escorted by fighters but its bomb load was roughly equivalent to the Mosquito. The Mosquito was a much smaller investment and exposed to much less risk. Because casualties were so much fewer, crews did 50 sorties per operational tour. Some Mosquitoes flew over two hundred sorties. An achieved unmatched by any other Allied aeroplane.

The De Havilland Mosquito was the only aircraft to be built in three continents – Britain, Canada and Australia. The Canadian built aircraft were fitted with the RR Merlin engine produced under licence in great numbers by the American Packard automobile Company for the P51 fighter. It was unequalled for use in specialist roles. Because it was as nimble and fast as the contemporary fighters of the day it could sneak in under enemy Radar and featured in many spectacular and daring sorties, such as the Amiens prison raid and the attack on the Gestapo HQ in Oslo.

Fitted with British developed airborne Radar, four 20mm cannon and four machine guns in the nose, the Mosquito almost entirely prevented enemy activity over our shores from 1943 until the end of the war.

It was constantly being developed for different uses and must surely be the world's first multi-purpose warplane. With the accurate six-pounder gun, or using rocket projectiles corresponding to a salvo from a six-inch cruiser, it was a lethal aircraft. They bombarded ships, harbours and numerous installations that required pinpoint low-level attack.

Americans were also initially sceptical of the use of wood in the modern airframe. Indeed, when a Canadian built Mosquito was delivered to the research centre at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, the Canadian test pilot walked into the hangar containing the aircraft to find two small piles of sawdust and a notice, "warning – termites at work!"

The Americans had been dependant upon the RAF meteorological unit to supply them with knowledge about weather over Europe. Eventually they formed their own unit and it was the De Havilland Mosquito they chose. They recognised that it was the ultimate tool for the job.

Whether equipped with cameras, cannon, machine guns or rockets it was unequalled. It was indeed the first truly multi-role aircraft.

Little wonder that Sir Ivor Broom had such affection for the "wooden wonder". He admitted to "showing off" with the "Mossie" by feathering one engine and diving down to tree-top height and then climbing away again on one engine. No other multi-engined aircraft of the day could achieve this. It was an indication of the unique power-to-weight ratio which was the secret of the Mosquito's undoubted success and probably the reason why the impressive JU88 was not in the same league.

I am indebted to Martin Sharp and Michael Bowyer, from whose excellent book, "Mosquito", some of the information in this article has been obtained.

Alan Powell

The poem on the next page was written by one of our several far-flung members. Paul lives near Aylesbury and is clearly a real enthusiast because he tells me that he has spent years photographing Base or crash site memorials. Perhaps we may be able to feature some of these in future newsletters.

ED

*Flying control it once used to say
Along time ago in my heyday
But no longer any windows
To my soul inside
Only dark gaping holes
That now hurt my pride.*

*From my balcony high
The sight was one of awe
As the planes rolled by
On their way to war
Some returned
Their engines brightly aflame
Others were never seen again*

*In my days of activity
I was like a hive
Some good with the bad times
When the field was alive
But now only dampness
In my cracked walls at night
I'm really no longer a welcoming sight*

*I stand all alone now
Neglected and serene
All around me open space
Where other buildings were once seen
And even when I've gone this spot will always remain
A haunt for ghosts come snow, hailstones or rain*

*But now sounds of movement
From around my feet
A crowd of old airmen
And they've come here to meet
With me they stayed
For more than an hour
I felt quite proud for an old Control-Tower*

Paul J Cannon

MUSEUM NOTES

Several interesting items have been donated to the Museum in the past few months. Among the items is a collection belonging to the late Sid Cooper.

A further item donated to the museum which has involved me in a lot of research, was a propeller blade which, on closer inspection, had a bullet hole, with the remains of the bullet still embedded in, and was inscribed with about thirty signatures. It was donated by the son of a First War pilot who served in France in 55 Squadron and was shot down and taken prisoner on 24 March 1918. The signatures turned out to be by pilots and observers of the squadron and probably dates from late 1917 to early 1918. Included were the signatures of three officers who remained in the RAF and later rose to Air Rank, becoming an Air Marshal, Air Vice Marshal and Air Commodore respectively. Research is still on-going regarding the other names. The propeller blade, which is from a DH.4, which the squadron was flying, is on display in the museum.

Alan Smith,
Museum Archivist

CONTROL TOWER – AIR RAID BUNKER

The Wednesday working party have at last cleared all the rubbish from this bunker and the general condition inside is quite good. We had permission from MCL to remove a very large tree growing right over the entrance, a very difficult job but with the help from the Duncan Sweeting and other members of the Portal Ave. Woodland Group, it went. Colin Whitmore arranged for a colleague to repair some brickwork and it now remains for us to repair, paint and restore the bunker to its original condition. We have landscaped around the perimeter of the area and grass seed has been laid down, when growing the area should be nice enough for a picnic area as well. Ultimately I hope to have two lanterns and some sound equipment in the bunker when an authentic blitz recording can be played, giving young and old an idea of what it was really like. Any new helpers on a Wednesday morning will be welcomed.

Ipswich and District RAFA Standard Laying up Ceremony. A short ceremony will be held May 7th 2003 at 10-00 to witness the Laying Up of this important Standard. All members are welcome-tea and coffee afterwards.

Please remember folks, that the Museum is our creation and is manned each Sunday afternoon by a small and dedicated team of enthusiasts from the Society. Why not volunteer your services occasionally from 2pm to 4.30pm on Sunday afternoons to give them a break? There will always be regular volunteer present but you will surprise yourself with your own knowledge as you talk to some of the visitors. It can be great fun and a really enjoyable experience. Just contact Bob Dunnett on 01473 624510 and have a word with him.
ED

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

Our first meeting in the year 2003 was held on January 3rd and the speaker was Adrian Bleeze from the Suffolk Police Helicopter Unit. He explained that aerial surveillance was not new. Indeed the 1931 Derby Day saw the airship R33 overhead to monitor the crowds.

Suffolk Police obtained their helicopter in 1998 at a cost of £2,000,000. Annual running costs are approximately £500,000. The helicopter is conveniently based at Wattisham, which is fairly central in the county and is the site of an existing military airfield.

The helicopter is an A99 with twin French turbojets. Both Cambridgeshire and Essex have their own helicopters and the three counties work together so that they can cover for each other when one of the helicopters has to be serviced. G-SUFF, which is, as Adrian said, a “personalised number plate”, normally operates at around 1000ft.

The high-tech equipment includes two cameras, a powerful searchlight, a 700 watt loudspeaker, a video down-link and satellite navigation equipment. One of the cameras is for daylight use and the other is a thermal imaging camera which is able to pinpoint humans on the ground by the body heat they generate. The video down-link enables operations to be overseen by the control room at Suffolk Police Headquarters. Altogether an extremely sophisticated addition to policing in Suffolk which operates around 700 flying hours per year.

February 7th. And a large audience to hear Mr Ian White give an absorbing factual account of the deployment of night fighters from 1939 to 1955, with particular reference to the development of Radar.

Night fighters were, of course first used during the Great War when they hunted the German Zeppelins. By 1936 the British were gradually becoming concerned about the warlike aims of the Third Reich and by 1939 a Blenheim Mk1 had been fitted with the fledgling AI (airborne interception) radar, which had been developed at Bawdsey. Blenheims of 25 squadron operating from Martlesham Heath were employed in this development.

Six fighter or fighter/bomber types were adapted from 1939 to 1955. The Blenheim was the first of these but in truth was outdated by the beginning of WW2. The Bristol Beaufighter became available in late 1940 and was fitted with a Mk4 version of the original AI radar. These early systems operated on a 1.5 metre band. In 1939 the first successful cavity magnetron was produced at Birmingham University. A brilliant British invention that was immediately handed to the US. We simply did not have the manufacturing capability of America.

Wavelengths could now be measure in centimetres. Suffice to say that this completely revolutionised airborne radar. Development of both radar systems continued together for a while but “centimetric” radar, as it was known, soon became the standard. The cavity magnetron is now present in most homes as it is the operating mechanism of microwaves.

Our March meeting was another “full house” affair as we had invited Roger Freeman to speak. . Roger Freeman lives at Dedham and is the author of several books charting the exploits and history of the United States Army Air Force in the UK during WW2. He is highly regarded in the United States and recognised as a foremost authority on the subject.

The talk was entitled, "With Martlesham in Mind", but Roger ranged over the entire history of the development of air warfare. The lack of aeroplane development between the two wars of the 20th century by the British was in contrast to that of the United States. The American air force in WW1 actually used only British and French aircraft. However, the US is a big country and air travel was the catalyst for a higher rate of development of all metal airframes in that country. By the outbreak of WW2 the Spitfire was the only all-metal airframe deployed by us but American industrial ability had outstripped us in terms of the manufacture of modern airframes.

April and the occasion of our Annual General Meeting. Approximately 50 members attended and our Chairman, Martyn Cook gave a comprehensive resume' of the past years achievements and activities. He also thanked the many members who had contributed to the work of the Society.

Our Treasurer, Russell Bailey was able to report that the year's activities had resulted in a profit of £1600.

Julie Hall is our retiring Membership Secretary and she was able to report a current total membership of 265. Our committee member, Leslie Boulton has agreed to take over as Membership Secretary.

The executive Committee was re-elected en bloc.

Our President, Gordon Kinsey was unable to be present and also the Society secretary, Alan Powell was unable to attend.

The AGM concluded at 9.10pm and after the break Don Kitt presided over the annual Holly Hall Photographic Competition. The theme this year was "civil aircraft". The trophy and competition winner was Barry Newson and the runner up, John Castle.

ONLY IN AMERICA

A middle aged woman had a heart attack and was taken to hospital. While on the operating table she had a near death experience.

Seeing God, she asked, "is my time up?" God said, "no, you have another 43 years 2 months and 8 days to live."

Upon recovery the woman decided to stay in hospital and have a facelift, liposuction and a tummy tuck.

She even had someone come in and change her hair colour.

Since she had so much more time to live she figured she might as well make the most of it.

After the last operation she was released from hospital. While crossing the street on her way home she was killed in a road accident.

Arriving in front of God she demanded, "I thought you said I had another 43 years?"

God replied, "I didn't recognise you!"

IF THE CAP FITS....

*Oh, give me some pity, I'm on a committee, which means that from morning to night,
We attend, and amend, and contend, and defend without a conclusion in sight.
We confer and concur, we defer and demur and reiterate all of our thoughts
We revise the agenda with frequent addenda, and consider a load of reports.
We compose and propose, we suppose and oppose, and the points of procedure are fun!*

*But though various notions are brought up as motions, there's terribly little gets done.
We resolve and absolve, but we never dissolve since it's out of the question for us.
What a shattering pity to end our committee, where else could we make such a fuss!*

This doesn't apply to MHAS Committee – or does it? ED

We welcome the following members who have recently joined us.

Mr T Gibbons.

Bob Tipper

Ray Gooden

Fred Squires (One of “long distance” members who lives at Barnstaple)

Eric Ramsey,

Colin Harper

Guy Templeton.

Ivor Gibbons.