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JACK RUSSELL DESIGNS

RUNWAY 22

Charity No: 1184409

Volume 1 No.30

www.mhas.org.uk

February 2023

Martlesham Heath Aviation Society

NEWSLETTER



RAF MARTLESHAM HEATH



THE MEMORIALS - BARRACK SQUARE



356TH FIGHTER GROUP

**Control Tower Museum
 Martlesham Heath
 Opened on the 23 September 2000**



Courtesy of
 Tarkey Barker



**Memorial Window
 St. Michael & All Angels Church
 Martlesham Heath**

**Dedicated on the...
 23 September 2000**



Editorial

So here we are in 2023! Belated Happy New Year to everyone!

Following on after the last two or three turbulent years. As I said in my editorial back in October, we are gradually recovering from the effects of the Covid pandemic and hopefully will continue to do so.

Attendances at our monthly meetings are somewhat erratic but compared with many other clubs and societies the numbers are encouraging.

This edition of Runway 22 contains more than enough obituary's. The loss of our great friend and supporter, Richard Barker is particularly saddening. He was a worthy and generous president and believed passionately in the aviation heritage and history of Martlesham Heath.

I continue to be fascinated by our successes in the field of intelligence and deception during WW2 and have included a story that I hope you will also enjoy. I'm quite sure we had our fair share of failures as well, but I like to be upbeat!

A big thank you for the contributions sent in. If they don't appear in the current Runway 22 I will hopefully include them in the next one.

Alan Powell.

To fill the space a few extra pictures from our 'Service of Remembrance'.



Newsletter Contributions

If you have an article or a story you would like to share with the other members of the Society then please send it to me....

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Membership Secretary Report

I would like to welcome 3 new members since our last newsletter...

Steve Broughton Pieter Shipster
Finley Black - Junior Member

Should you know of anyone wishing to join the following fees apply:

Single Membership cost: £8 on joining, £7 per year thereafter.

Joint Membership costs: £13 on joining, £11 per year thereafter.

Should you wish to contact me my details are as follows:

Martyn Cook : 4 Peel Yard: Martlesham Heath : Ipswich : IP5 3UL
Telephone: (01473) 614442 Email: martyn.mhas@gmail.com

Trustee Update

I am pleased to report that we have appointed two new trustees. By the time you read this they will have been in post for almost four months.

Paul Calver who with his carpentry skills is now our Building Manager and has already done some great work, the Anderson Shelter being one such task. We built it from original panels quite some time ago (several years in fact) which Frank Bright painted (several times). It has been sitting there as a rubbish depository, but no more. We hired a skip and cleared it. Paul has equipped it out with bunk beds etc. so we have something else to show visitors.

John Howarth has lots of experience in office procedures having worked in government establishments for many years. John answered the call when Alan Powell decided to cut his work load and stand down as our committee Minutes Secretary. John volunteered and has established himself as a great trustee.

Martyn



WHAT'S ON



VICKY GUNNELL - PROGRAMME SECRETARY

3rd February '23 Audio Visual Presentation **MICK MERAS**

'RAF Martlesham Heath - Air Sea Rescue'

3rd March '23 Audio Visual Presentation **RICHARD GIBSON**

From the 100th Bomb Group Thorpe Abbots Airfield

'The Munster Raid'

31st March '23 **MIKE PUGH-DAVIES SQD.LDR. (RETD)**

Audio Visual Presentation

'Aircraft v U-Boats WW11

5th May '23 'Annual Report to Members' **A.M.M.R.**

"Chairman and Treasurers Annual Report - Plus Audio & Visual Entertainment"

2nd June '23 Audio Visual Presentation **PAUL ROSS**

'Silver City Airways'

Please check our website - www.mhas.org.uk - for any programme updates

1st Lt Walter O Hedrick 356th Fighter Group, 360th Squadron.

Walters's wartime story while serving at Martlesham Heath

There are only a few of us left that welcomed the 356th Fighter Group on their visits back to Martlesham Heath on five occasions, 1990, 1992, 1996, 1998 and 2000.

Walter Hedrick did not return on any of the above visits nor did he feel able to join in the US reunions. Perhaps the following story will give us a clue as to why he didn't want to be reminded of those days where death could come at any time.



Walter was born in Springfield Illinois to Otto & Edna Hedrick. He trained and became an Optician.

After Pearl Harbour Walter enlisted in the Army Air Corps training and receiving his pilot wings in Texas. He was assigned to the 8th AF, 3rd Division, 77th Wing, 356th Fighter Group, 360th Squadron.

Walter was posted to England and eventually to RAF Martlesham Heath flying P-51's on escort missions over Germany as a 1st Lieutenant.

Whilst on one such escort mission his plane was hit and caught fire.

Not realising his predicament, his flying buddy Duffy called him up on the radio and informed Walter that his plane was on fire. Walter was not sure as to why his plane was on fire guessing that enemy fire had destroyed his engine coolant system but realised that he had to bail out and quickly.

Some time previously Walter had mirrors fitted to his plane beside the canopy which proved to be a serious problem when he tried bailing out.

The procedure to bail out was to turn the plane ‘turtle’ (upside down) and drop out of the cockpit. In his excitement (Walter’s words) and with the cockpit filled with smoke he was already upside down but didn’t realise it. The closed canopy was his next problem and he had to kick it several times to release it not realising that the incorrectly positioned mirrors recently fitted were holding the canopy in the closed position.

On leaving the plane he struck the tail plane and blacked out for a short time. On coming too he managed to pull his ripcord and landed damaging his ankle. When asked by his son Keith, my informant as to whether he had considered handing himself over to the civilians the air became ‘blue’. Walter erupted, *“having just been bombed the German civilians would not be in any frame of mind to treat us enemy aircrew kindly in fact they would probably have killed us”*,

Walter took cover in the bushes until the Gestapo got him. Walter’s injuries were treated by German doctors at a hospital in Nordstadt and remained there as a POW until the 10th Armoured Division of General Patton’s 3rd army passed through town liberating the POW’s

Walter was awarded the Purple Heart and became a member of the Caterpillar Club, a club that honours those whose lives were saved by silk parachutes, silk spun from the silk worm cocoons.

Upon his return home he completed a degree from the Illinois College of Optometry and practiced Optometry in Virden Illinois for 40 years.

Doctor Walter Hedrick a life long member of the Lutheran Church is survived by his son Dr. Keith Hedrick, who along with his wife Victoria and three grandchildren children and two great Grandchildren remember Walter as a man with wonderful qualities, who set the bar high for himself and lived his life showing duty, honour, service and love to his family and country.

Through our society I feel honoured to have been able to write Walter’s story. My only regret is that I never met him but, knowing or rather conversing with Keith I feel that I now know Walter O Hedrick and what he did for us without fear of the consequences.

Martyn
MHAS Chair

enjoy our monthly meetings. You are a hero, and Jessie would be the first to agree.

Rest in peace Jessie.

Martyn Cook
MHAS Chair

MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP

Friday 7th October and author John Vasco presented “The German Messerschmitt BF110 in the Battle of Britain and it’s role in the attack on Martlesham Heath in the afternoon of 15th August 1940”.

Friday 4th November featured an illustrated talk, “Orfordness, A Local Science Park For Nearly 60 Years”, given by David Warren of the “Independent Research Group Orfordness.”

David explained that although Orfordness is, of course, now owned by the National Trust, the organisation known as IRGON is entirely separate from the NT.

Orfordness was closely associated with the earliest days of aviation, but the subjects covered in David’s talk related to post WW2 research and development, including bomb ballistics, nuclear weapon stress testing, Blue Streak telemetry and ‘over the horizon radar’.

RAF Martlesham Heath was closely associated with these projects. The Bomb Ballistics Unit was based here and Lancaster and Lincoln bombers from Martlesham dropped dummy bombs, including nuclear, on the island and in the adjoining sea. This was to plot their trajectory, which was done by specialist cameras on Orfordness.

Friday 2nd December did not feature the advertised appearance of Clive Denny. Fortunately another old friend of the society stepped in. Howard Cook gave a talk, “Stars In Uniform”. This was a most interesting talk about stars of the Hollywood era who served during the second World War.

Friday, 6th January featured an illustrated talk by Adrian Bleeze entitled, “Above The Law”. Which incidentally is the title of his new book. Adrian recounted many incidents involving the Suffolk Police Helicopter and later the National Police Air Service.

Richard was a former vice-president of our society. ED

AN OBITUARY

Jessie Royston

If you have attended any of our meetings in the last 13 years you will have seen Jessie. She always walked with a stick and sat, usually in line with the doorway. I'm sure she will forgive me for saying, she loved her lipstick, and bright red seemed her favourite shade.

Jessie and her late husband were members of the 'Air Crew Association'. Sadly many of its members have passed away to fight other battles. Jessie was always on hand to make sure that those left had all the information on meeting dates etc.



She and her husband were very good friends with the late Stanley Ward another of our members and his wife and would often socialise together. When Stanley and Jessie's partners passed away Stanley would collect Jessie and bring her to our monthly meetings.

I guess then they looked at their current domestic arrangements and decided, two could live more cheaply together than two separately, so they decided to share Jessie's home in Holyrood Close Ipswich.

Sadly in 2009 Stan passed away leaving Jessie unable to attend our meetings. A call went out to our members and along came Keith Endersby one of our members. Keith volunteered to pick Jessie up from her home and bring her to our meetings and take her home after. Keith, if we had an award system you would be our first recipient of any reward. In a recent email Keith said, *"It will be very strange turning up for a meeting without Jessie"*. Keith, we thank you most sincerely for all the years you have helped in transporting Jessie for her to

Service of Remembrance The Barrack Square Martlesham Business Park Sunday 13th November 2022

Sitting here writing up this report on our Service of Remembrance on the Tuesday after Remembrance Sunday it is cooler than of late and pouring with rain, but Sunday the 13th was just glorious, thank goodness. The following pictures show the Memorial Plinth before and at the end of the service. But remember the van parked at the back against the Bt. Fence. Thanks to Alan Powell our editor it's disappeared. Thanks Alan.

Martlesham Heath Aviation Society (MHAS) re-established the Remembrance Service on the Barrack Square back in 1981, the year the society was formed. The memorial was then a large raised grass plinth. Later as more car parking space was required it was rebuilt to a smaller dimension



using a brick plinth.

At that time there was only one Memorial pillar. This was dedicated in June 1946 to the 72 airmen killed from the 356th Fighter Group of the 8th USAAF who were stationed here at RAF Martlesham Heath from 1943 to 1945.

It is unique in two ways. It was the first memorial raised to any USAAF group after the end of WW2 and it has all of the 72 names engraved on its brass fascia plate.



As is our usual custom work begins during the morning. There is moss to clear between the bricks that make up the plinth that supports the two Memorial pillars and the centre

pillar that's dedicated to the aviation units that were stationed at Martlesham Heath at the end of WW1 and then between the two great wars and post WW2.

These units were the 'Royal Flying Corps' who moved into the newly established airfield during late 1916.

In 1915 the 'Armament Experimental Flight' moved from Upavon in Wiltshire to Orfordness. A year later the Aeroplane Experimental Flight needed to move but to where.

Enter Henry Tizard who was tasked with finding a new airfield. There was a criteria to follow, but Martlesham Heath was eventually selected and in January 1917 was dedicated as a new RFC airfield.

At the end of WW1 the 'Armament Experimental Flight moved to Mar-

drive a steam train and so his children clubbed together to treat him for his 70th birthday, to have a steam driving experience on the Swanage Railway.

Through being associated with these two Guilds, we made many friends and enjoyed many wonderful exhibitions up and down the country and got to see several museums of special interest.

Sadly, Mike developed Parkinson's disease, finally being diagnosed in February 2015. He gave up being the East Anglian Organiser of the GAvA. Over the years, his situation worsened. He died in May 2022, in his 85th year, leaving behind his widowed wife, Vicky, four children and four grand children.

Mike was a kind, humble man, an artist of great talent, who will be greatly missed by his family and many friends. However, happy memories remain and his art lives on.

Vicky Gunnell (GAvA) Vice President & Programme Secretary MHAS

AN OBITUARY

Richard Storer

Tributes have been paid to former Red Arrows squadron leader and owner of Baylham House Rare Breeds Farm, Richard Storer, after he died at the age of 88.

Mr Storer - who was a well-known figure in the region - died peacefully in his sleep in the early hours of Wednesday October 19. He had been receiving palliative care at his home at Baylham House.

Richard was the first Red Arrow Squadron Leader for the RAF Display Team and owner of Baylham House Rare Breeds Farm - whose breeding program saw Mr Storer win an award for 25 years of service to rare breeds.

Daughter Katrina described her father as "a people's person with a wicked sense of humour" who was "devoted to both his family and the farm."

Mr Storer was the father of Katrina (60), Fiona (64) and Neil (62), grandfather to Tony (41), Sophie (33) and Benjie (27) and great-grandfather to Tracy (five), Nora (three) and Leyla (seven months).

In August, the Red Arrows flew over Mr Storer's home to pay their respects to the former RAF pilot.

exhibition in 1991.

Mike also became an Associate Member of the Guild of Railway Artists and a Friend of the Guild of Aviation Artists, reflecting his two main interests. He had always been fascinated with steam trains, as both his grandparents were signalmen and he had several relatives who worked in one form or another on the railways. His National Service in the RAF and subsequent civilian work sparked his continuing interest in Aviation.

In March 2000, it was through us both attending the GAvA's AGM & Sketching and Painting weekend at the Duxford Conference Centre that we met and married the following year. He transferred to teaching adult leisure painting in the Ipswich district, until he retired in 2004.

In the meantime, Mike had become a Full Member of the GRA and an Associate of the GAvA. His contact with the GRA saw him sometimes being asked to sit on a panel to judge work for exhibitions. He and I were warmly welcomed in both settings and once he gave a talk about painting for both Guilds. Then he became the East Anglian Regional Organiser for the GAvA, arranging local sketching and painting days.

The pinnacle of his artistic achievements has to be one GAvA commission, when he was asked to produce twelve designs for the Stone Mason in the making of the Memorial at the Army Air Corps Training Base at Middle Wallop in Hampshire. Mike and Vicky were invited to their Families Air Day, where the then Prince Charles (Colonel in Chief) dedicated the Memorial and asked to meet Mike. The AAC also bought his original designs to display them in their Headquarters.



As a Life member of the Swanage Railway, Mike treated his family to several memorable journeys. Many holidays were devoted to riding on heritage lines. He and I also enjoyed our forays on the Severn Valley Railway, which accompanied many GRA Exhibitions. He let it be known he would love to

tllesham Heath from Orfordness to join the Aeroplane Experimental Unit. In 1924 Martlesham Heath was renamed the 'Aeroplane & Armaments Experimental Establishment' testing new aeroplanes, guns, bombs and everything in between. After the end of WW2 many experimental units came to Martlesham Heath. All of these made Martlesham Heath a very important airfield along with Farnborough. It is said that you only come to Martlesham Heath if you were top of your trade, anyway enough of the history lesson.

With the moss cleared away it was time to place the floral tributes supplied by Tesco's. A quick lunch and a change of cloths and time now to set up the sound equipment essential as the Barrack Square backs up to the A12 North, a busy road at any time.

The Service was taken by the Reverend Tate vicar of Martlesham Heath and Brightwell parishes and Martlesham Brass under the leadership of Adam Cable provided the music.

There were a number of organisations taking part including...Royal British Legion, the Royal Air Force Association, the Kesgrave Parachute Regiment Army Cadets, Suffolk Constabulary (DCC Robert Jones), Captain Mike Ward and WO1 Robert Drake representing the Army and the Army Air Corps. The Christian Motor Cyclists Association Suffolk Branch, the Martlesham Scouts and the Martlesham & Brightwell Girl guides, Martlesham Parish Council, and the Martlesham District Council and Martlesham Heath Householders Ltd.



The Parade Marshall addressed the Parade in place of Mr Richard Barker MHAS President who sadly passed away in October of this year. His address was a tribute to Richard who was dedicated to the MHAS and to the Barrack Square me-

morials. Each year prior to the service he personally had each of the memorials cleaned paying for the work personally.

Unfortunately, with there being no RAF or USAF Officer available to

make an address. Captain Mike Ward stepped into the breach giving an account of his family's involvement in war service, which was a wonderful personal account and we thank him most sincerely for addressing the parade.



The Kesgrave Parachute Regiment Army Cadet Force was our only marching military group this year and as always carried out their roll perfectly.

We are indebted to the Martlesham Heath Business Park

(Avison Young UK Ltd.) and its manager Mr Andrew Hunt for their help and their generous donation to help cover the service costs. The remaining money will go towards MHAS projects. MHAS thanks them most sincerely.



Martyn Cook
MHAS Chairman & Parade Marshall

sanctuary in this country when things became too difficult for them to stay in their own country.

Richard did indeed have a wonderful group of friends up and down this country.

We send our sincere condolences to Ann Richards Wife, Michael and David his sons and to all his Grandchildren.

Richard your work is done.... Rest in Peace.

Martyn, Friend & MHAS Chair

AN OBITUARY **Mike Gunnell Railway & Aviation Art**



After doing his National Service from 1958-1961 with the RAF as a Ground Radar Fitter, Mike became an Electronic Technician with Hawker Siddeley, working on the Buccaneer at Holme and Spalding Moor, Yorkshire. When Hawker Siddeley were about to be absorbed into British Aerospace, he retrained at the Teacher Training College in Hull, which led to him being a Junior School Teacher, for twenty years.

Latterly, he retrained as an Adult Teacher, enabling him to teach adult leisure drawing and painting classes in Humberside. He joined the Hornsea Art Club and exhibited his varied paintings. He had his first solo

quite a conversation.

I have given a big thank you to Martyn and the finder of my wallet all due to my MHAS Membership Card.

The more of my story is 'do not leave home without your MHAS Membership Card'.

Steve Littler - Membership No: 385

AN OBITUARY

My Tribute to Richard Barker

Richard was made President of the Martlesham Heath Aviation Society in May 2015 following the death of its 1st President Mr Gordon Kinsey. They were very different characters, chalk & cheese is the phrase that comes to mind, but both had MHAS running through their veins.



I well remember Richard's joy at being asked to take on the Presidency. He had worked with Gordon on establishing the RAF, Commonwealth and Dominion Air Force Memorial behind me.

Prior to its erection Richard would stand each day looking out from his office wondering why there was no memorial dedicated to them. So he set about establishing one, and in 1991 the memorial was dedicated at what was a wonderful and unforgettable event.

Richard was a very generous man. All the memorials behind me got a wash and brush up immediately prior to the Remembrance Service which he paid for personally.

Richard was particularly interested in the WW2 'Special Operations Executive' known simply as the SOE. Amongst Richard's friends were ex-British agents (British Spies) who were parachuted into France and other European countries to help those countries' resistance groups to foil the German advance. Also French agents who found

THE BIGGEST ASPIDISTRA IN THE WORLD

The use of propaganda is recognized as a powerful psychological weapon in times of war. The British had been particularly successful in undermining the morale of the Germans during WW1 and Hitler made reference to this in Mein Kampf. Perhaps that was the reason that Joseph Goebbels was appointed Minister of Information soon after the rise of the Third Reich.

Germany was quick off the mark at the outbreak of WW2 and three propaganda stations that purported to be British began broadcasting to England. This use of propaganda is called "Black propaganda" and was the type that the British had used to great effect in the Great War. "White" propaganda is that which makes no attempt to conceal its origins and the use of aircraft to distribute leaflets over enemy territory is an example of this.

The late Sefton Delmer, whose parents were Australian, had spent his childhood in Berlin and could speak German as a second tongue. Towards the end of 1941 he was to become the head of an organization called, The Political Warfare Executive, (PWE).

Meanwhile, over in the United States, RCA had built two very powerful transmitters, which, due to their very power, had been refused a license to transmit. One of them had been produced for an order from station WJZ in New Jersey but it far exceeded the 50kw maximum allowed for commercial radio stations in the US.

Harold K Robin travelled to the United States and together with RCA, developed the transmitters to become one, with 600Kw power. To put it in perspective, most transmitters at the time were 25-150 KW.

The thing that made the transmitter really impressive, however, was how easy it was to tune. Back then it usually took several hours to change the frequency of a transmitter, as technicians had to rearrange crystals. Harold K Robin made it possible to move frequency in a fraction of a second, the same way you change channels on a car radio. This meant Aspidistra could do more, and it was harder for the Germans to stop it.

This transmitter was purchased by the British at a cost of £165000, which, incidentally seems to me to have been an enormous sum for the time and for a transmitter, which, to all intents and purposes had little practical use for the purpose for which it had been intended, due to its enormous power. However, the British had it shipped over to England and it was given the code name "Aspidistra". Why Aspidistra? – Who remembers the Gracie Fields song, "The Biggest Aspidistra in the World"? – Now you know

why! With an output of 600kw it was by far the most powerful medium wave transmitter in Europe. It was installed in an underground bunker at Crowborough in Sussex. It was rapidly tuneable over the whole range of the medium waveband. A very sophisticated capability for its day and no other transmitter came near to it.

First used by the BBC on 8th November 1942. It broadcast pre-recorded speeches by President Roosevelt and General Eisenhower when the American landings in North Africa were taking place. It remained in use by the BBC to reinforce its European services until later the following year, when it was taken over by the Political Warfare Executive. It was time to employ this powerful weapon in the role for which it had first been envisaged. Black propaganda.

Two “black” radio stations had been planned. The first of these two stations was called Deutsche Kurzwellensender Atlantik. This was mainly aimed at the German maritime service. The other station was known as Soldatensender Calais and directed at the army and Luftwaffe. They initially broadcast on the short wave band using spare BBC transmitters, but on the run up to Operation Overlord, (D Day), Aspidistra took over to broadcast the programme on the medium wave and was the one that was aimed at the German army and Luftwaffe.

This station was so successful, it received high praise from the master of propaganda himself: Joseph Goebbels.

"In the evening the so-called "Soldatensender Calais" which evidently originates in England and uses the same wavelengths as Radio Deutschland – when the latter is out during air raids – gave us something to worry about. The station does a very good job of propaganda, and from what is put on the air one can gather that the English know exactly what they have destroyed in Berlin and what they have not."

Churchill had taken a personal interest in our nefarious operations and a studio was built to facilitate the expanding exercise! This had several high grade private wires to the likes of Reuters and also to the POW interrogation centres at Latimer and Wilton Park. Much use was made of information provided by POW's, either unwittingly by them, or by bugging their holding cells. These stations purported to be official forces programmes and played popular music and news stories designed to undermine morale. They played American jazz with a German flavour and records of the latest German hits were specially flown in by *Mosquito from neutral Stockholm. Marlene Dietrich was duped into making recordings in German in belief they were for use on a German broadcast of “The Voice of

Martyn received a letter from Steve Littler who lives in 'Pentre Halkyn near Holywell Flintshire North Wales. He has a lot to thank our humble MHAS Membership Card for.

Dear Members

My name is Steve Littler. My home is on the opposite side of the country to Martlesham Heath, but I have attended one of our meetings.

My story relates to the loss of my wallet containing my MHAS Membership Card along with my Credit and Bank cards etc. whilst on a Friday morning shopping excursion to M&S in Prestatyn.

With shopping done it was time to return to my car to unload. You know yourself that if you don't have a trolley then the bags containing your shopping become a bit of a problem to handle and, I hadn't put my wallet away safely in my pocket so disaster was inevitable in some form. Usually, it's one of your shopping bags falling to the floor spilling the contents over the car park. This time however it involved my wallet which I was clutching in my hand. I decided to put it on the car scuttle by the wipers to free up one of my hands in order to help in opening the car door.

With shopping stowed away I drove off, my destination, Sainsbury's in Rhyl, I needed some cash, goodness knows why I didn't get some whilst at M&S. The cash machine beckoned me and I reached for my wallet. I broke into a cold sweat, realising suddenly that I hadn't picked it up off the car scuttle. I retraced my steps to M&S and looked where I had parked my car, but my wallet was nowhere to be seen. What now, as you suddenly realise that there are those who would exploit your loss. I will have to drive to Flint and join the queue at the TSB and report that I had lost my wallet containing my Credit and Bank cards. With that done I drove home.

On Saturday morning I received a phone call from Martyn our MHAS Chairman and Membership Secretary who himself had received a call from a member of the public asking him if he knew a Steve Littler. Martyn of course replied “yes I do”. The gentleman then went on to say that he had found a wallet containing a MHAS Membership Card in the name of Steve Littler and would like to return it, and the wallet to the owner. Martyn gave him my telephone number and after a phone call and a trip to Mostyn I was reunited with my wallet.

It transpired that we were both Liverpool Football Club fans so we had

ED

I replied to Brin and put some questions to him. Seems he was on the strength of the Blind Landing Experimental Unit. The ILS he refers to stands for Instrument Landing System.

He explained to me that the parabolic reflector transmitted two approach beams, one left and the other right. They were modulated at different frequencies to line up the approach of aircraft, as the plane deviated off course it was corrected automatically, much as an autopilot operates.

Our member, Roger Brown would like to remind us that a new book entitled 'Mosquito Men' is now available. The book is about 627 Squadron; it has been well researched and features our member, Kenneth Oatley, who was a navigator on the Pathfinder squadron. In fact he has over 30 mentions in the book'

Another of our long-standing members is John Cooper. He writes to say 92 years ago his father, then stationed at RAF Hawkinge Kent, was detailed at short notice to take the ferry from Folkestone to France where they were ferried to Beauvais to recover the bodies from the R101 Airship disaster <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R101#Finalflight>. Dad never went into the details of this disaster but all the bodies laid in state in Westminster Hall. Ironically a designer of the R101, a Sqn/Ldr Rope, was stationed at RAF Martlesham Heath at the time, this is dedicated in his memory <http://www.mhas.org.uk/page17.html> together with a memorial in the form of St. Michaels RC church a 1/4 mile from where I live.



America!" Several more highly ingenious ploys were used to dupe the German listeners.

Sefton Delmer was amazed that so many Germans believed the programmes to be authentic. A POW reported that a sergeant had been piping it to the recreational huts of the German equivalent of the NAAFI because he thought the music was so good, until he was reprimanded by an officer for entertaining the troops with an enemy station!

In the bulletins between the music there were subtle reports of increasing crime waves, unsolved murders, Nazi Party officials being allowed to move away from bomber targets and people smuggling money to safe bank accounts in Switzerland. When it was learned that people were being evacuated during allied bombing raids it was broadcast that epidemics of Cholera and Typhoid had broken out. All were stories aimed at undermining the morale of servicemen and causing them to be fearful for the safety of their loved ones at home.

Both stations continued transmitting until the very end of the war and they were "on the air" virtually 24 hours a day. In fact the whole British propaganda machine employed thousands of staff by the end of hostilities.

At the end of 1943 "Aspidistra" was also being used to interfere with the German ground control transmissions to the Luftwaffe night fighters when RAF raids were taking place. It was given the name of "Operation Dartboard". Incoming RAF bombers would, of course, be plotted and Luftwaffe night fighters were scrambled to vector over an area controlled by a radio beacon to await directional instructions.

Luftwaffe Ground Control exercised strict radio silence during this stage and it was suspected that coded instructions to the pilots were concealed in German medium wave broadcasts that the pilots were able to listen to. For example, a waltz might signify Munich as the target or perhaps jazz would indicate Berlin.

"Aspidistra" was far more powerful than the German transmitters and could easily overwhelm the German station. Pilots were often unaware that they were being duped and a popular trick was to broadcast a recording of a musical instruction that had been made the previous night. On one occasion when the RAF were targeting Ludwigshafen a voice instructed all night fighters to land because of imminent fog!

The transmitter site in Sussex was never attacked, which seems surprising since it must have been relatively simple to obtain a "fix" on the signal and anyway, three 350ft high masts advertised the presence of the station.

A small mobile transmitter acting as a relay was transmitting from the top of the cliffs near Dover and this was done to lay a false trail, but it is difficult to believe that this would have fooled a determined assault. I recalled that I had heard of a very powerful BBC transmitter being used in what I like to think was the ultimate hoax and after obtaining a copy of a Bletchley Park report entitled, "Black Propaganda", I now have the details. It was indeed the ultimate hoax and was codenamed, "Big Bertha".

Whenever a RAF bombing raid was taking place within about a 50 mile radius of the target the local regional transmission of the national domestic radio service would go off the air. Of course this was so that the bombers could not use the signal to "home in" on the area.

The RAF targeted Cologne on the night of the 24th March, 1945. It was therefore known that the Cologne transmitter would go off the air. The German broadcasts were being received in England on two frequencies. One of these was the Cologne frequency. As soon as Cologne went off the air "Aspidistra" automatically switched on and relayed the programme from the other region. The break in transmission was only 6 milliseconds because of course, our powerful transmitter had been pre-tuned to the Cologne radio broadcast frequency and the unsuspecting German listeners were therefore unaware that their programme was now being beamed from England.

It continued broadcasting for a time and then the announcer, (who had been chosen because of his ability to mimic the genuine German announcer), cut in to issue dire warnings. People were told to leave their homes immediately and take only bare essentials with them. Men were told to report for duty immediately in readiness to defend their city against the approaching enemy. As can be imagined, the whole thing descended into farce, with the official German transmitter cutting in to warn the listeners that they were being duped by the enemy and our announcer breaking in to tell them that indeed they were the official German programme.

In the last months of the war Aspidistra was employed on 10 further occasions for the "Big Bertha" hoax and reports captured at the end of the war confirmed that it had been successful and had indeed caused panic and confusion among the population and caused roads to become blocked. On mature reflection so many years later it seems to have been a cruel trick to play on the civilian population. But then, I suppose it was no less horrific than the saturation bombing of German cities or the use by the Germans of the indiscriminate V1's and V2's. To misquote Air Marshall "Bomber" Harris, they had "sowed the wind and consequently reaped the whirlwind."

"Aspidistra" was used for many years in the post war period by the BBC in its World Service broadcasts to the European zone.

Inevitably in such a small article I have "skated over" the fascinating and sometimes even hilarious story of the British use of Black Propaganda in WW2. Post war analysis revealed that it had achieved considerable success and it has since been proved as a model for other countries to emulate.

Much of the information was gleaned from mostly anonymous sources on the World Wide Web, but Sefton Delmer wrote a book entitled "Black Boomerang" which is available from the public library for anyone interested in looking further into the subject.

**British Overseas Airways Corporation, (BOAC), had replaced Imperial Airways in 1939. During WW2 they flew on several routes with a variety of aircraft. All of them with civilian markings and sporting the "Speedbird" logo. De Havilland Mosquito's flew regularly between neutral Stockholm, in Sweden carrying vital cargo in the converted bomb bay.*

Alan Powell

LETTER SPOT

Hi Alan,

I was at Martlesham for a 12 month period from RAF Cosford, May 1955, my first posting as after a boy entrant trained as a Ground Wireless Mechanic.

I was put in the Parabola hut with its wooden fence reflector that worked very well, probably just to keep me out of harms way. I remember a Jet Lincoln and also a Jet Varsity flown by the last non com pilot, Flt Sgt Spittal.

One thing I recall was the power stage on the ILS transmitter used a KT66 valve, much prized as the output valves in the Williamson Hi Fi of the time. After my 12 months the operation was dismantled and moved to Farnborough as was I.

Instead of being reunited with the, by now familiar ILS, I was to be a lab assistant in the Bio Physics dept at the Institute of Aviation Medicine. Good times and I learned a great deal from patient men, but I never saw another piece of RAF radio.

Brinsley Jenkins.