

DISPERSALS

2nd TAF MEDIUM BOMBERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Feb 2014

SEABED DORNIER

REGINALD DAY BEM

CRASH LANDING

BAILOUT

TRIUMPH OVER TYRANNY





2nd TACTICAL AIR FORCE MEDIUM BOMBERS ASSOCIATION

Incorporating
88, 98, 107, 180, 226, 305, 320, & 342 Squadrons
137 & 139 Wings, 2 Group RAF

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*On our cover: Dornier 17 shot down 26 Aug 1940 is recovered from the sea at Goodwin Sands
by RAF Museum team 10 June 2013* *RAF Museum photo*



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES • FEBRUARY 2014

LEONARD CLIFFORD

You will have noticed, on the inside front cover of this issue, the black band encompassing Leonard Clifford's details in respect of his recent passing. Leonard was an especially engaged member and chair, always concerned with the well-being of the MBA and its members. It was my pleasure to be warmly welcomed by he and Joan on both occasions of my attendance to UK reunions. Leonard will be missed and fondly remembered.

REG DAY

This issue congratulates Flt/Lt Reg Day BEM on his recognition by Her Majesty the Queen with her bestowal upon him of the British Empire Medal (BEM) for his work in preserving RAF Heritage at his Dunsfold Museum. Well done Reg; a most deserved honour.

WINTER

This winter in Southern Ontario brings us unseasonably low temperatures; this is the first time I can remember, since leaving Alberta, it being dry and cold enough to see ice crystals floating in the air and the attendant sun dogs...pretty is the best I can say for them. I'm not a big fan of winter; it would be OK but for the cold and snow. I purchased a snow blower this year, making things a little easier to take; it's kinda fun, I must admit!

DIEPPE

I've just read the new book 'One Day in August' by David O'Keefe. It's a fascinating account of the tragedy at Dieppe; this time with the benefit of military records de-classified only in 2013 shedding new light on the reasons behind the raid. Private Ron Beal, a Dieppe veteran interviewed after its completion was quoted: "Now I can die in peace; now I know what my friends died for." I recommend it highly.

YOUR TURN

Enjoy this issue; please let me know what you think of it. What's missing? What features should be added? Let us in on any ideas you have for future articles...your wartime experiences, your Dad's, your Mum's, Grandparent's, Aunt's or Uncle's; and we'd love to see the photos!

DAVE

LAST POST

LEONARD CLIFFORD • WIRELESS OP/AIR GUNNER • 88 SQUADRON



Leonard Clifford died peacefully in hospital 05 January 2014. He was 92 years of age and is survived by Joan, his wife of 67 years, by their daughter Rosalind, son John, their spouses and grandchildren. He is also survived, it can be said, by the many admiring members of the 2nd Tactical Air Force Medium Bombers Association, of which he was the current UK chair.

Leonard's good friend John Clifton relates: *"I first met Leonard on 88 Squadron RAF shortly after D-Day and we became good friends; he was posted away at the end of his tour and I lost touch with Len...until years*

later when I saw him walking towards me in the Birmingham Exhibition Centre; we had a very enjoyable reunion. He had signed on at the end of the war for a further five years, mainly involved in flying control. During that period he married Joan and achieved the rank of F/Lt. When he retired from the RAF he took up insurance, ran his own agency, and was involved with one of the main banks.

He was a keen golfer and soon became President of his local club and stayed on the committee for many years; I think his handicap was 14. He was a very keen Mason and became Master of his Mother Lodge. Len and Joan took up caravanning and toured for many years, mainly in Epping Forest and the west country. A very happy couple; Len was a popular person and liked by all."

Leonard and crew were posted to 88 Squadron RAF at Hartford Bridge on 06 July 44:

F/O Jack H. Williamson Pilot
F/O J.A. Mathias Observer
F/S Leonard A.J. Clifford Wireless Op/Air Gunner
Sgt J. Saurer Air Gunner

Their first operational flight, to attack enemy movements in the area of Coutance-Beny, Bocage-Aunay-Thury-Harcourt-Bretteville-Caen 08 July 44 ended early with a recall due to weather. The night of 09 July was their first successful operation when they were again part of 12 Bostons assigned to bomb and strafe the same targets. *"Weather made identification difficult but strikes were observed on several of the aiming points."*

Later that month, on the 14th, they were on hand for a special occasion (described in the Squadron Summary):

"His Majesty the King accompanied by Her Majesty the Queen held an investiture at the station (behind station headquarters) at 1430 hours. Air Marshall Cunningham and Air Vice Marshall Embry were present. Certain personnel of the Squadrons were detailed to form a representative party from each unit at the investiture.

After the investiture, the King inspected the four types of aircraft in service at this station (Boston IIIA & IV, Mitchell III, and Mosquito IV). Personnel of 226 and 342 Squadrons were brought over to 88 Squadron site and formed up. Their Majesties and party then came over and talked to the aircrews from the three Squadrons. Afterwards they went down to the static mess for tea."

Leonard and crew served with 88 Squadron until completing their tour on 10 Dec 44 at Vitry-en-Artois, France.

SISTER LAURENCE MARY



Sister Laurence Mary (Rosemary) Ashworth, of the Daughters of Jesus, fortified by the Rites of the Holy Church, died on 28 August 2013 in Rickmansworth, Herts.

Her copy of Dispersals was returned with the simple message "Sister Laurence Mary has died." Her friends in the happy little community did not gush; she had lived her life doing things for others; those who met her felt happier in her presence. 'Sister Laurie' had a long-time connection with the Medium Bombers, being particularly drawn to the Great

Massingham Squadrons and their history, especially the Boston Squadrons. From her funeral eulogy: *"In her later years Laurie developed a passionate interest in researching the lives and history of the veterans of Bomber Command stationed during WWII at Massingham Airfield in Norfolk. Pilots from there were billeted at Little Massingham Manor, which was later bought by The Daughters of Jesus as their Provincial HQ and later became a retreat centre. It was from here, in the onetime stable block, that Laurie started her work which has since developed into the Massingham RAF Museum."*

More on RAF Massingham and the Roll of Honour, listing 600 airmen, compiled by Sister Laurie, can be seen at <http://www.greatmassingham.net/page12.html>.

DICK VERDUN • KALAMAZOO AIR ZOO

Dick Verdun was the man who created the display on the B-25 named 'The Gal From Kalamazoo' in the Museum. Bill Painter, archivist at the Air Zoo Museum, recently informed us of Dick's passing several weeks ago; he had been a volunteer at the Museum for almost 20 years.

'The Gal' was purchased with proceeds of war bonds purchased by the Kalamazoo, Michigan public; it made its way, through Lend Lease, to the 2nd Tactical Air Force. George Kozoriz provided much assistance to Dick during his research and Peter Jenner compiled a complete history of The Gal's movements for Dick and the Air Zoo. Dick Verdun was an interested Associate Member of the 2nd TAF MBA.

More on the Air Zoo at http://www.airzoo.org/index.php?menu_id=7

DORNIER Do-17 RAISED FROM THE SEA

With information from Paul Hudson, Head of Marketing • RAF Museum

German Dornier 17 bombers, ubiquitous in Battle of Britain skies, are now represented by a single 'survivor' recently pulled from the sea at Goodwin Sands, just off the Kent coast of England.

The Dornier's twin engine and twin tail construction prompted many RAF Mosquitos to 'nose around' RAF Mitchells, especially those returning from night operations (see 'Night Operation' by Fred Guest in May 2013 Dispersals). In at least one case, a Mitchell was shot down by a Mosquito: LCmdr J.N. Mulder of 320 Squadron was flying a Mitchell on a 26 Apr 44 dawn training exercise over Eastern Kent, in a direction which led a Mosquito pilot to believe that what he thought was a Dornier 17 had entered the UK from France. The Mossie driver, a former BCATP instructor on his first operational patrol, attacked the Mitchell; fortunately, LCmdr Mulder was able to make a successful crash landing in a small field. The Mossie was also from a 2 Group Wing! Details are found in the 'Eager Beaver Attacker' account by Air Marshall Larry Dunlap in the book 'Grumpy Flies Again.'



Dornier 17Z over France during Summer of 1940.

Credit: Bundesarchiv/Spieth/CC-BY-SA via lonesentry.com

Our subject Dornier, after considerable and lengthy preparations, was raised from the seabed on 10 June 2013 using a complex, specially-built lifting apparatus. It was quickly rinsed and coated



Dornier on recovery barge near Ramsgate.

AFP/GETTY photo via Telegraph

with protective gel to arrest corrosion before being moved to the RAF Museum in Cosford where its various sections are housed in purpose-built transparent hydration tunnels. Here, carefully located sprinkler heads will continuously apply water of the correct pH value to gently wash away the salts and chemicals that have accreted to the airframe without damaging the paintwork and components.

By being located in hydration tunnels, the Dornier 17 will be on view to the public throughout this important stage of conservation which will take 2 to 3 years.

Then technicians at the Sir Michael Beethan Conservation Centre will start the process of stabilising the corrosion, after which conservational efforts can begin.

CONSIDER THE DORNIER CREW

Chris Goss, Author & Historian • RAF Museum

To me, the Dornier 17 is the German bomber many will associate with the Battle of France and especially the Battle of Britain. Images showing crash-landed Dorniers or even the one whose remains crashed on Victoria Station on Battle of Britain Day after being rammed by an RAF fighter are tangible proof of the importance of this German bomber in 1940. It is therefore exciting that after 73 years, new and future generations will be able to see with their own eyes such an important aircraft which was known to many, both friend and foe, as the 'Flying Pencil'.

It is hard to both appreciate and visualise what had just happened to this bomber and its young German four-man crew the last time it was in fresh air – just after lunchtime on 26 August 1940. What must the four of them have thought as being used as bait to lure RAF fighters into what was hoped to be a massive German fighter trap as they lifted off from their Belgian airfield an hour or so earlier? The trepidation they and the other bomber crews must have felt approaching the Thames Estuary must have been eased by the sight of so many Messerschmitt 109s; only to see the RAF Spitfires and Hurricanes pounce on their would-be protectors. This then allowed the Boulton Paul Defiants of 264 Squadron to approach the bombers from underneath and which then opened fire with quadruple machine guns. The German crews must have been aware of their



264 Squadron RAF Boulton Paul Defiants; August 1940

Imperial War Museum photo

approach and the fear and no doubt panic as the British bullets ripped into their bombers, crippling their aircraft.

Some of the bombers managed to struggle back to France; others, like this crew, were not so lucky – mortally damaged, they limped over the British coast and eventually flopped onto the surface of the sea. It is not known if this crew bailed out or whether they were in the plane when it hit the water. Two survived – picked up, by who it isn't known, but they spent the rest of the war as prisoners of war in Britain and latterly Canada before

returning to their families in 1946. Two died, their bodies being washed ashore in Holland and the south coast of England, countries where they still remain buried.

As a historian, I am proud to be associated with the recovery of this enigmatic and important aircraft. Its restoration will allow future generations to appreciate what it must have been like

flying and fighting in an aircraft which by 1941 was all but obsolete and, by comparison with today's aircraft, appears almost prehistoric.

THE DOOMED FLIGHT OF THE LAST DORNIER

Excerpted from 'The Telegraph' • 16 June 2013

The aircraft was lost at the height of the Battle of Britain, as the men of the RAF and the Luftwaffe fought to the death in the skies over southern England.

The team behind the recovery project believe it to be 5K+AR from 7 Staffel, III Groupe/KG3 (7th Sqn of 3rd Group of Bomber Wing 3). It took off from St-Trond Aerodrome near Brussels in occupied Belgium on the morning of Monday 26 Aug 1940.

With 16 @ 33lb bombs onboard, it was one of nine German aircraft from the squadron on a mission to attack a Fighter Command airfield at Manston, North Kent. But the raid was a feint - designed to lure British aircraft into the air where waiting German fighters could pounce on them.

The four young men on board were the pilot, Feldwebel (F/Sgt) Willi Effmert, a married 24-year-old, from Bad Salzuflen, a spa town near Hanover; Observer Unteroffizier (Sgt) Hermann Ritzel, 21, from Frankfurt am Main; Wireless Operator Unteroffizier (Sgt) Helmut Reinhardt, 27, from Bochum; and Flight Engineer Gefreiter (Cpl) Heinz Huhn, 21, from Lotterfeld, then in East Prussia, now Loznik, Poland.

The formation was detected over the sea by RAF warning systems, and 264 Squadron, based in Hornchurch, Essex, among other units, was sent to intercept over Herne Bay. In the cockpit of one of the squadron's Defiants was Flying Officer Desmond Hughes, with his gunner Sgt Fred Gash.



Crew of 'The Last Dornier' prior to final mission

Photo by Chris & Sally Gross via The Telegraph

At the time of his death at age 72 in 1992, Hughes, who later rose to Air vice Marshal, was writing his (unpublished) memoirs; he wrote: "The specks grew into the long, pencil-thin silhouettes of Dornier 17s and suddenly, there were the black crosses, insolently challenging us in our own back-yard."

That day, Hughes and Gash were credited with downing two Dorniers; and RAF Museum researchers believe one of them was the aircraft recovered by the Museum.

"Fed Gash took as his first target the second Dornier and made no mistake; his De Wilde incendiaries twinkled all over it, but particularly in its engine. It began to fall out of the

formation, the hatch was jettisoned, two parachutes streamed as little dark figures bailed out and the stricken aircraft went down increasingly steeply with its starboard engine well alight.”



*Gefreiter Heinz Huhn's headstone
RAF Museum photo*

The second ‘kill’ occurred in the chaotic scenes that followed the initial attack. The Defiants were then attacked by Messerschmitt Bf109s. After shaking them off, Hughes and Gash headed back to base, where they discovered six bullet holes in their aircraft.

Back onboard the Dornier, the gunfire had hit both engines and the cockpit, causing injuries among the crew. Ritzel lost two fingers on his left hand. With at least one engine stopped, Effmert attempted to make a controlled landing on Goodwin Sands, six miles off the Deal coast, which can be exposed at low tide. As it came in the stricken aircraft appears to have somersaulted and settled into the water on its back.

Two of the four, Effmert and Ritzel, were rescued; the other two died, with their bodies washing up on either side of the North Sea. Reinhardt was buried in Ysselsteyn, Holland, while Huhn was interred in the German War Cemetery in Cannock Chase, Staffs. The two survivors became prisoners of war in camps in Canada; both were returned to Germany at the end of the war.

Effmert found that his wife had been killed during an Allied bombing raid. He is understood to have remarried several years later and died about 15 years ago. Ritzel married, in 1949, to Annemarie and had a daughter, Gertrud. The couple divorced in 1964 and he remarried in 1976 to a woman named Trude. He worked as an engineer and lived in Fulda in central Germany; he died in 1996.

Hughes ended the war as the third highest scoring RAF night fighter pilot, nicknamed ‘Hawkeye’ Hughes by the press and known for taking his pet dog on a sortie. Hughes finished with 18½ ‘kills,’ having shared a bomber with another RAF pilot.

[Frederick Desmond Hughes earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for his exploits with 264 Squadron RAF and earned two bars to his DFC while with 600 Squadron (Mosquitos) RAF. On 20 Jan 44 Hughes was appointed to Air Staff, HQ No. 85 Group, 2nd TAF. He was given permanent commission and would attain the post-war rank of Air Vice Marshal. Frederick Desmond Hughes DFC died 11 Jan 1996]



*W/C F. Desmond Hughes DFC & Bars
bbm.org.uk photo*

FROM HERE TO THERE AND BACK

Jack Chinell (AG • 226) – From ‘Grumpy Flies Again’

“Look at all the bloody FLAK!” yelled Bunce, our Navigator. I swivelled the gun turret around for a peek. The flak was so thick you could almost walk on it and we were diving right into it. CRUMP! CRUMP! CRUMP! WHE-E-E-N, that one was close; for a second I couldn’t hear a thing. There were seven thousand Germans below trying to cross the Rhine River at Rouen on barges; we were trying to destroy the docks, the barges and anything else to hinder their escape. They, in turn, were throwing everything they had at us in a box barrage that we had to fly into in order to hit our targets.

“Have we dropped our bombs yet?” asked Gord Hammell.

“No” replied Bunce.

“Are you OK?” questioned Harv.

“I’ve been hit in the leg” replied Gord.

“Jack, look after him” ordered Harv.

“OK skipper.”



Jack Chinell, featured in a ‘La Presse’ article extolling the virtues of the Canadian Airmen returning to civilian life. Jennifer Chinell photo

When that close one exploded, it also hit our starboard engine; we were going down. It seems as if it all happened a lifetime ago...and indeed it was. But I’m getting ahead of myself. First came the training, then the boat ride to England, followed by more training and, finally, active duty.



*Lockheed Ventura at No. 34 OTU Pennfield Ridge
George V. Smith photo*

I joined the RCAF in 1942 and after training at Montreal, Quebec City and Mont Joli, Quebec, I was posted to No. 34 Operational Training Unit Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick. It was here that our crew was formed and we settled down to training for our task on medium bombers. After graduation and a short leave, we were posted overseas on March 5th 1944.

We embarked on the Louis Pasteur, a French liner of sorts. The North Atlantic crossing was very rough; on several nights we had lists of 24 to 30 degrees! I spent many a night with one foot

hanging out of the hammock ready for a fast exit to the stairs. We finally landed safely at Liverpool about 1:00 AM and boarded the night train to Bournemouth, on the beautiful south

coast of England. After being assigned our billets and locating the dining hall, we sailed forth to the nearest pub for our first draught of Mild & Bitter. It met with my instant approval. I'm sure that the reader will be impressed with how the Air Force took care of the important things first:

1- Shelter, 2- Food, 3- Booze.

At Bournemouth we first heard 'Lord Haw Haw' broadcasting from Germany. I believe that he was at one time, or claimed to be, a member of the British aristocracy who defected to the other side. In one of his broadcasts he said that he was aware that a large contingent of Canadians had just arrived in Bournemouth to join the war against Germany. He went on to say that he wasn't worried...half of the Canadians will drink themselves to death and the other half will kill themselves riding bikes home from the pubs in the pitch black of night. We were impressed with the fact that our arrival was known to the enemy within a day. It was also a valuable lesson in the need to observe secrecy when it came to military matters. Anyway, he was only partly right; a lot of our guys did indeed end up in hospital when they 'pranged' their bikes on the way back to barracks after a night on the town...but there were no fatalities.



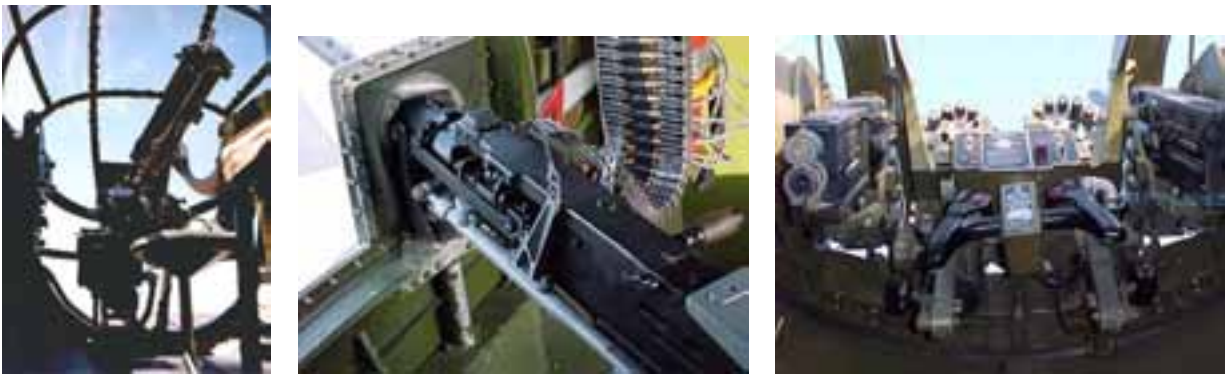
Bath Hill Court (converted to RCAF billets) No. 3 Personnel Reception Centre, Bournemouth, England. Peter Ryan photo

While at Bournemouth, all Air Gunners were assigned the job of daily anti-aircraft duty and maintenance of the guns. These posts were located on the roofs of the tallest buildings and commanded a good view of the town and its coastal approaches. Although we didn't have to ward off any attacks, there was plenty of evidence around town of the damage German aircraft had caused on low level 'hit & run' raids prior to our arrival. This was our first visible sign of war.

After a brief stint at Bournemouth, our crew was posted to No. 13 Operational Training Unit at Finmere, Buckinghamshire. Here we began our conversion to the B-25 twin engine Mitchell. We had trained in Canada on the Ventura medium bomber and were awfully glad we weren't going to do our 'ops' in that crate! It was known as 'The Pig' because it flew like one.

I'll never forget the thrill of our first familiarization flight over historic England. The colour of the English countryside, neat patchwork of fields, the narrow winding roads (with a pub located at almost every intersection...a pleasant discovery) with towns nestled by streams and rivers; quite an idyllic scene. It was hard to believe that this country was involved in a bitter life and death struggle. London, which we had not yet visited, was a dark grey smudge on the horizon.

We took to our new ‘kites’ like ducks to water. The Mitchell was a well-built, sturdy aircraft that you could trust to get you there and back. It had power and good flight characteristics. Our pilot, Tom Harvey, and Navigator, Lloyd Bunce, were located at the front of the aircraft. Next came the bomb bay usually containing eight 500-pound bombs. Gord Hammell, our wireless Air Gunner, and I as Air Gunner, were located aft of the bomb bay. Our operational altitude was from eight thousand to fifteen thousand feet, depending on bomb load and the amount of fuel. Early models of the B-25 carried six fifty-calibre Browning machine guns, with one each in the nose and tail position, and one out each side window for Hammell. My ‘office’ was the top gun turret with twin guns. Together, these gun positions gave us a fair amount of firepower. The Browning was a formidable weapon with the typical ammunition configuration: a tracer followed by an armour-piercing shell, an explosive shell and finally an incendiary shell. Unfortunately, these guns could jam in several ‘stoppage’ positions. As an AG, I was expected to know them all and be able to fix any problem under any condition. Time was of the essence in clearing a ‘stoppage.’ If a shell were left in a hot barrel for too long, it could explode causing damage to the gun, not to mention the gunner as, in my case, the breach-blocks and barrels were located either side of my head. We practised for hours clearing stoppages.



L-R: Nose gun position, side gun (one either side), and upper turret guns. D. Poissant collection photos

Aircraft recognition was also an important part of my trade and I was good at this. It was vital to be able to identify the various enemy ‘kites’ at a distance so appropriate evasive action could be taken. If I couldn’t hit him, he wasn’t going to get a good shot at me if I could help it. After weeks of training trips, we were posted to the Second Tactical Air Force No. 226 Squadron RAF at Hartford Bridge, Surrey. This was a bit of a surprise as we had expected to go to the RCAF station at Dunsfold. However, we soon learned from chums who were stationed at Dunsfold, it was too ‘Pukka; that is too much ‘pomp and circumstance.’ Anyway, there we were, loving every minute of station life. We soon learned that the British weren’t imbued with protocol; they were interested in winning the war with a minimum of ceremony which suited us fine.

We arrived on our new station on June 5th, the eve of ‘D-Day’; what timing! Again, after we were assigned to our billets (Nissen huts), we located the mess hall and bar and were ready for action. Imagine the thrill and wonderment when we were awakened at 4:30AM on June 6th by an overpowering din of aircraft engines. Staggering out of our huts, we saw hundreds of DC3s

towing gliders at about five hundred to one thousand feet covering the entire sky. The ground vibrated from the throbbing of thousands of engines. Then at tree-top level, flights of about twenty Spitfire or Typhoon fighter-bombers were roaring overhead, going like the proverbial ‘bats out of Hell’ toward France.

That was it – the BIG one – it had started and we would be part of it. For the next few days we did trips around our locale to pinpoint landmarks and become familiar with the general area. During one trip as far as the coast, we saw several large, two-story concrete barges. No one could, or would say what they were. Later, we learned these barges were the famous ‘Mulberries’ that were towed across the channel to form temporary harbours for LCTs and troop carriers.



226 Squadron members from the Toronto area, l-r: F/O Bob Fowler, F/O Russ Hunter (standing), Sgt Gord Hammell, F/O J.A. Loudon, F/O S.H. Irvine, Sgt Joe Ouellette, Sgt Jack Chinnel.
Toronto Star photo 17 August 44

We flew 44 missions from England and France before our crew disbanded. As was inferred in the opening section, Gord Hammell was badly wounded in the leg by flak shrapnel and was repatriated. Lloyd Bunce was screened and sent home after bailing out of a burning aircraft, leaving Tom Harvey and me as the only members of our original crew still flying ops. By this time we operated in France out of an aerodrome [Vitry-en-Artois] our troops had captured. Together we had many memorable trips, including operations against the infamous bridge at Venlo – our very own ‘Bridge Too Far’ that took seven trips to destroy. Every time we hit it the Gerries would repair it almost overnight, as they had to keep it open to get their troops back across the Rhine to Germany. It was very heavily defended against air raids; it seemed every flak gun in Germany was there and shooting at us! In 1976, when my wife and I passed this very bridge as tourists, it was just as we had left it in 1944 – only the abutments still intact.

Harv and I were finally sent back to England for a rest and I was screened, having completed my tour of duty. On leave in London, I picked up my officer’s uniform from a Fleet Street tailor – my commission had finally come through. My next posting was to Repatriation Depot and HOME! Harv continued flying with the 2nd TAF communications wing in Belgium until he was shot down during the Battle of the Bulge. He was fortunate to survive.

Praise the Lord; we all made it safely home with no physical problems, but with perhaps a few emotional ones. On reflection, we all agreed that we would not have missed it for the world. We were lucky – some of our pals weren’t.

The recollections of Lloyd Bunce, Observer, follow:

UP, DOWN, REPEAT, REPEAT

Lloyd Bunce (O • 226)

Editor's note: Lloyd Bunce penned his recollections for Jack Chinell but didn't mail them. Lloyd's son Larry discovered them folded inside his Dad's copy of 'Grumpy Flies Again' and shares them with us.

After 50+ years you wonder if it really happened; however this is how I remember it:

[26 Aug 44] I was in the nose [Mitchell MQ-E FW196], concentrating on the target [transport concentrations at Rouen] during the bombing run; about the time I released the bombs the big bang hit. I managed to close the bomb doors and scramble back up the tunnel to check how things were in the back and had a look at the starboard engine, to see a lot of smoke and flame. Harv decided to feather it and continue on one engine. We discussed our options; to bail out with Gord's condition was ruled out and so was getting back to England, as by this time we were losing altitude pretty fast. Things got worse with an attempt to restart the engine...a burst of flame and smoke was the result.



Lloyd Bunce
Larry Bunce photo



B-25 Bomb aimer tunnel to nose (about 30" high)

David Poissant photo

Decision time: where to put it down. At the time, the beach seemed like a good idea however the shore was lined with tank traps. Since we were still losing altitude (now under 600 ft), Harv headed inland at treetop level; then there appeared an open space [in Allied territory]. I managed to get rid of the hatch and strap in; we hit real hard.

I never realized we had the port wheel down, hence the starboard engine ripped off one way and the port another and pieces of airplane were flying loose. Losing the engines saved us from the chance of fire. Before we stopped rolling I got

out of the hatch, knowing we had to get you and Gord out. I came around the side just in time to see you burst through the side window.

Army people arrived with an ambulance and hauled Gord out and away. At this time I had a chance to look at the remains of our Mitchell and wondered how we got away without a scratch; then the fright sets in...that's about the time you and I met W/C with a bottle; after we killed that

things settled down and the rest was history. As to what went through the mind during all this: scared, yes; but too busy to realize how scary it really was.

The other trip was during the move to France [Vitry-en-Artois] by the Squadron [30 Sep 44]. The aircraft [MQ-L FW205] was loaded with a ground radio station and jerry cans of gas for the generators. Boxes were piled over to the bomb bay, completely closing off the back of the aircraft. All kind of tools (shovels, etc) were in the tunnel to the nose, closing it off, and over the bottom of the hatch leaving me very little room in the Nav compartment. F/O Walters, the Squadron Adjutant, decided to go along.

We stogged along at about 700 ft; after about 10 minutes airborne [still over England] Harv lost radio so I yanked out some boxes to look in the back; all I saw was flames...it was really burning back there! Harv gave the order to bail out, however I still had to clear the bottom hatch and kick out the stair assembly. I then proceeded to throw out some of the boxes and tools; before leaving I handed out parachutes then climbed through the hatch, thinking we were at about 700 ft. In fact, we were considerably higher, as Harv had climbed when we got into trouble.

Due to my thinking we were at low altitude, I pulled my chute as soon as I went out and it caught on part of the aircraft. After my chute opened up, I could see considerable blue sky through it! I looked for other chutes and saw



B-25 crew entry hatch and ladder assembly (jettisoned as escape hatch)
D. Poissant photo

Walters'; I looked for Harv's but didn't see it. On looking back, I lost sight of Walters, but later found out he had not put on his parachute harness properly and fell through it. I now had my own troubles, as under me was a power line and railway tracks (I later found out they were electric). I landed close to the power line and within a couple of feet of a very surprised horse.

A first aid type came to meet me, very unhappy to find no bones to service; he told me he saw the aircraft that shot us down...what he really had seen was the tail break away when it blew. I got a ride out to Friston Aerodrome, where S/L Betts came down to take us back. The reaction was about the same as before: very scared but too busy to know until after.

After getting back to base, I was told by the Medical Officer to quit, so that was it.

F/O Clifford James Walters RAF, of Tolworth, Surbiton, is buried in the Surbiton Cemetery.

GOODNESS GRACIOUSLY

Peter Jenner

January 1st, 1945: Reg Day is wounded at RAF Aerodrome B58 (Melsbroek, Belgium) in the Luftwaffe's Bodenplatte (Baseplate) raid. The operational Mitchells of 98, 180 and 320 Squadrons had gone about their business, so the ground crews had to bear the brunt of the raid.

January 1st, 2014: Reg Day features in the 'New Years Honours 2014' from the list of people who have been recognized by Her Majesty the Queen:

BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL (BEM)

Flt Lt William Reginald Day • Custodian, RAF Dunsfold Museum

For voluntary service to RAF Heritage (Reading, Berkshire)



*Reg In his Dunsfold Museum
Peter Jenner photo*

Joining the RAF in 1941 at the age of 18, Reg trained as an Air Engines Mechanic and was posted to 98 Squadron at its Sep 1942 reincarnation at West Raynham. He remained with the Squadron until its disbandment after the war. Reg celebrated his 21st birthday and his wedding to Ivy while serving at Dunsfold Aerodrome, the place at which he created and now curates his Museum. In 1959 he brought his experience to the Reading Air Training Squadron (ATC) as a civilian instructor. This link became commissioned Reg moved to nearby Woodley to form a new ATC Squadron (1116), taking with him his Flight Sergeant [now Air Commodore Bruce Hedley MBE MA RAF]. Another of Reg's cadets was the recent Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshall Sir Stephen Dalton.

Reg was also involved in the Museum of Berkshire Aviation with his Woodley Cadets; at the same time he was gathering his own collection of 139 Wing memorabilia. When, thanks to Dunsfold Park Limited, the opportunity of putting it into a portacabin on Dunsfold Airfield came up he, with volunteer helpers, set to and made it fit for the purpose...the collection was on display. His current custodianship is aided by Owen Warren and Terry Bachelor.

THREE COMPASSES PUB RENEWS DUNSFOLD LINK

Jennifer Morris • Surrey Advisor (Godalming)

A 400-year-old village pub has been completely overhauled in the style of 1940s wartime Britain.

The proprietors of the Three Compasses in Alfold, near Cranleigh, took their inspiration from the pub's location on the boundary with Dunsfold Aerodrome. The airfield is commemorating 70

years of service so Three Compasses landlady Sonia Duncton and her team, who have been running the Dunsfold Road pub for two years, decided to reinstate the bar's historic link with the airfield.

Reg Day – a former RAF serviceman who served at Dunsfold – was invited to cut the ribbon at a private opening on Wednesday. Mrs Duncton said: “We have done this to honour and remember



David Rodwell, Sonia Duncton, Reg Day, Owen Warren, Terry Batchelor at opening of the refurbished 'Three Compasses' pub.

the airmen and crew who were based at Dunsfold in the Second World War, with the help of Reg. In 1942 the Royal Canadian Engineers came to Surrey and created Dunsfold Aerodrome in just 20 weeks. The airfield was, and still is, surrounded by trees and nestled between the sleepy villages of Alfold and Dunsfold. But during the Second World War it was home to many RAF squadrons from around the world, including Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and of course Great Britain, flying such

planes as B-25 Mitchell Bombers, Typhoons, P-51 Mustangs and Spitfires. The Three Compasses was like a second home to many airmen and crew and was soon affectionately known as The Crew Room.”

Mr Day spent Wednesday morning at the pub inspecting the overhaul after the entire venue was refurbished. The restaurant has been expanded to seat 30 and has been renamed the Crew Room, the public bar has been called the Ops Room and the games room is now known as the Officers' Mess. All the rooms are crammed full of Second World War and 1940s memorabilia. The pub hosted a day of celebrations on Saturday, November 2nd to raise money for the Poppy Appeal.

EVER THE TWAIN

Peter Jenner • with information from 'The Telegraph'

Reg introduced me to Christopher Paul's book 'Aviator Extraordinaire'; extraordinaire is low key for an amazing story; not least for the people met along the way, many of them known to 98 Squadron.

Known to Chris Paul, whose files supplied the photo used in his Telegraph obituary, was Lt Gen Baron Michel 'Mike' Gilbert Libert Marie Donnet, also known through Paul's air gunner Mich Jansen...both were Belgians.



*Michel Donnet in his 350 Sqn Spitfire cockpit.
Christopher Paul photo*

Donnet joined the Aviation Militaire Belge in 1938 and trained as a pilot. He joined the 9th Squadron at Bierset flying the outdated Renard R 31 aircraft. Following the German invasion of the Low Countries on May 10, 1940, Donnet flew reconnaissance missions in support of the retreating armies until he was captured on June 1 following the capitulation of France. He was held in captivity in Germany for seven months before he and his Belgian squadron colleagues were released and he returned to Brussels. Donnet and a friend, Leon Divoy, were

determined to carry on the fight and made plans to escape to Britain. They and two other patriots discovered an old Stampe SV-4b biplane (similar to a Tiger Moth) in a hangar on the grounds of a heavily-guarded German depot. It needed considerable work to make it airworthy so, aided by Mich and several others, the four men cycled 20 miles each night to the hangar, replacing missing parts and manufacturing others under the noses of the Germans. Leon Divoy, looking for instrumentation, put his hands on a climbing altimeter from an optician of Saint-Gilles; soon after, he bought a marine compass and a car compass and with the help of a pharmacist friend, made slope and turn indicators. His electrician uncle mounted all onto panels forming a dashboard while Divoy was tinkering with a clipboard and coil spring to make a speedometer.



*The Stampe SV-4b in which Donnet made his escape.
Photo from The Telegraph*

Michel Donnet did not remain inactive. Through relationships with *Winter Relief* and with the help of a German corporal, he managed to divert 100 gallons of gasoline drawn from the reserves of the Luftwaffe. After a couple of false starts (due to the unsuspecting Germans changing the locks to the hangar and the engine failing to start) Donnet and Divoy crept into the hangar the night of July 4/5 '41 in their Belgian Air Force uniforms, wheeled out the aircraft, started the engine and took off for England, intending to land in Kent. Steering by the Pole Star they landed, short of fuel, in a field near Clacton in Essex.

Lt Gen Baron Mike Donnet served in the RAF throughout the war as a fighter pilot; amongst his 375 operational flights he led 350 (Belgian) Squadron giving cover over the D-Day beaches, tactical missions, anti-V1 attacks, Arnhem cover, escort duties with 137/139 Wings and for the Copenhagen version of the Danish pinpoint Gestapo HQ destructions by 2nd. T.A.F. Mosquitos, in which Wing Commander 'Smith' took part. When Belgium was liberated, Donnet led his 12 Spitfires in a celebration formation over Brussels.

"Whilst I [Christopher Paul] was still at Dunsfold our crew flew down to Hawkinge to thank the Belgians who had supplied our escorts and protected us so well. This was 350 Sqn...armed with the Spitfire Mk XIV...350 was commanded by Mike Donnet."

TRIUMPH OVER TYRANNY

Dave O'Malley • Vintage Wings of Canada • Edited

In the early spring of 1942, the fatigued and despondent citizens of Paris, the City of Lights, did not see much light on the horizon to brighten their days or their futures.

The sidewalk cafés were crowded with German officers and soldiers, the theaters smelled of German tobacco, and the grand avenues and boulevards were draped in the red and black banners of a smug and haughty conqueror in the disguise of an ally. Many street signs were in German, with French secondary. While gas-rationed Parisians moved about in sad homemade hand- and pedal-operated carts, the Germans cruised the Champs-Élysées in Daimlers and Mercedes. As if this evidence that Parisians were not the masters in their own world wasn't enough, there was one daily humiliation that they had to endure with gritted teeth and burning shame.

Each day, just after noon, while thin Parisians were sitting, warming their wan faces on the terraces and wooden restaurant chairs of the Champs-Élysées, nursing ersatz café-au-laits and reading the depressing news and Vichy propaganda in the day's *Le Figaro*, the Teutonic strains of marching songs could be heard coming up the Champs towards the Arc de Triomphe. Up the Champs they came—hobnailed boots thumping, glockenspiels ringing, horses clopping—the long grey lines of Wehrmacht and Waffen SS soldiers led by Hauptfeldwebels with jutting jaws, sitting on big white horses; banners, pennants and streamers flying.



Life Magazine photo



Dave O'Malley collection

It was a deliberate, mocking and daily insult. Along the parade route, as the soldiers sang, men were watching, hiding anger...and plans. Out of this display of superiority, there was one thing that really struck these men as a weakness: the simple fact that the Germans paraded at the same time and place every day. Something should be done about that!

Some of these angry, quiet men were in fact secret agents who, in early spring of 1942, made contact with Major Ben Cowburn of England's Special Operations Executive and told him of the regularity of the parade. The Air Ministry thought this might be a job for fighter Command's

night fighters, as Spitfires did not have the range at the time. When the intelligence came to the attention of Air Marshal Philip Joubert de la Ferté, commander of Coastal Command, he declared that one of his day Beaufighter aircraft could do the job. With the raid left to his discretion, he devised a daring, possibly suicidal, raid which could, IF successful, reap tremendous propaganda rewards and would give the downhearted citizens of Paris, and indeed all France, a massive boost in morale to raise their weary spirits. They would know, by this one act, that the Germans were not in fact superior and that they had friends who would, in time, come to liberate them.



Bristol Beaufighters of 404 RCAF Squadron

IWM photo via Terry Higgins collection

The Bristol Beaufighter, sometimes referred to as *a fuselage in hot pursuit of a pair of engines*, was a magnificently powerful and rugged aircraft, much loved by its pilots and navigators. It had a beauty born of function. This aircraft would be the technology upon which Joubert would hinge his daring and risky plan to disrupt Nazi confidence and the daily parade of haughtiness in Paris.

The only way to gain the superiority of surprise against a nation expecting you, was to attack with just one aircraft—an aircraft flown by men capable of flying at thirty to fifty feet all the way; an aircraft with the range to fly from England to Paris and back; an aircraft that carried a specialized and highly trained navigator that could take them to then up the Champs-Élysées and home again; an aircraft whose crew was trained to strafe at the lowest levels and limit collateral damage. The Bristol Beaufighter.

From this point on, Joubert and Coastal Command took over the operation, naming it “Operation Squabble” which was appropriate; a squabble being an argument over something trivial. Joubert looked to 236 Squadron to provide a suitable Beaufighter crew for the mission. Again, 236’s squadron motto was appropriate: *Speulati nuntiate*—“Having watched, bring word” as the mission would bring word to the citizens of Paris that they were not forgotten. For the operation, Joubert selected pilot Flight Lieutenant Alfred Kitchener “Ken” Gatward and his navigator Flight Sergeant Gilbert Fern, who squadron mates called “George.” This pilot and “looker” team was selected because Gatward had demonstrated aggressive and accurate low-level flying whilst attacking German positions during the recovery of the British Army from Dunkirk.

Once Gatward and Fern had agreed to do the operation, Joubert filled them in on the intelligence report, the concept and then told them outright that this mission could only be done when there was sufficient cloud cover above to prevent them being detected by Luftwaffe fighters above. They would fly the entire route in the clouds and then descend near Paris for the attack.

The original plan called for them to run down the Champs-Élysées at the exact time of the parade and strafe the Germans in front of the Parisian citizenry, and then, opportunity and ammunition remaining, to strafe the headquarters of the German High Command occupying the Ministère de la Marine building on the north side of Place de la Concorde, but then Joubert and Coastal Command mission planners added a symbolic and dramatic twist to the operation—one which, in the end, would save the mission. In Portsmouth Harbour, they acquired a large French Tricolour flag which they had cut into two strips, and weighted to allow them to unfurl. They were stowed in the two flare tubes just aft of Fern's compartment half way down the fuselage. The plan was to drop one on the Arc de Triomphe and the other on the Ministère de la Marine as a symbol of solidarity with the French.

During the first part of June, Gatward and Fern attempted the operation three times, flying from RAF Thorney Island, at that time a Coastal Command air base 7 miles from Portsmouth. They entered Nazi-occupied France with little trouble, but were forced to turn back three times when they ran out of cloud cover along the route. The weather situation over France was getting better as summer progressed and it began to look as though the operation was not going to happen. But Gatward and Fern decided, without official approval, that they could do the mission if they flew on the deck the *entire* way across the English Channel and northwestern France.

The Beaufighter left RAF Thorney Island at 1129 hours on 12 June and flew at wave top level across the English Channel, crossing the enemy coast just north of the city of Fécamp 29 minutes later. Fern called for a course southeast, roughly following the direction of the serpentine Seine, but to the north, bringing them close to the Luftwaffe bases at Rouen. The single Beaufighter did not get reported or if it did the Luftwaffe did not send anything after it.

While screaming at thirty feet towards Paris, the Beaufighter scared up a flock of French crows, one of which struck the starboard oil cooler. The Hercules' operating temperature spiked, but they pressed on and eventually some of the remains of the rook fell away to allow the engine to cool enough to continue. At the chosen time, the Beaufighter arrived over the suburbs of Paris, with Gatward and Fern picking up the Eiffel Tower in the hazy distance. Gatward steered a course that would take him close to the Eiffel Tower, which he rounded to the south and then they turned to the northwest and climbed slightly to pick up the other large Parisian landmark... the Arc de Triomphe. Below them as they banked, women and men waved and cheered as they saw the inspiring roundels of the RAF flash in the sunlight.

At this point, Fern readied one of the flare chutes to release the French Tricolour over the Arc de Triomphe. Coming up to the west of the big monument, Gatward reefed it into a turn to bring him in line with the massive monument. Just as he flew over it, Fern opened the flare chute and let fly the French flag. There was no time to stop and admire their handiwork, but as Gatward dove to about 40 feet over the Champs-Élysées and swept down the magnificent boulevard, it was clear that there was no parade to strafe.

There have been a few reasons given for the Germans were not being there, ranging from intelligence agents getting the time wrong to the story that the Germans knew they were coming. It's hard to believe that the Germans knew they were coming as there was no resistance to the operation at all and as to the fact of the secret agents getting the time wrong, one suspects that this could not be possible given the fact that it was a daily parade.

Regardless of the reasons for the absence of Germans to shoot, Gatward dropped down into the cultural canyon that was the Champs-Élysées, picking up speed as they levelled off below rooftop level. Fern in the back readied the second flag to be dropped over the Ministère de la Marine where the German High Command was about to have a surprise visit, then picked up his heavy F24 reconnaissance camera and snapped a few photographs along the way down the Champs toward the Place de la Concorde. One of those photographs captured the Champs-Élysées entrance to the Grand Palais, Paris' premier exhibition hall and a rather ironic exhibit sign—*La Vie Nouvelle* (The New Life).



RAF photo by F/S George Fern DFM

Coming down the long slope from the Arc de Triomphe, Gatward and Fern each witnessed Parisians waving and smiling as they passed overhead. One can only imagine the scene, the Beaufighter bumping and bucking on the mechanical turbulence, the sound of the full-throated Hercules engines, the people, apartments, the horse chestnut trees and cafés flashing by, Gatward and Fern's hearts racing like locomotives. As they closed in on the eastern end of the Champs, they passed the Grand Palais on their right, while on their left the parks gave a fair unobstructed view to the north side of Place de la Concorde, where their secondary target, the German High Command headquarters, was situated. It was at this end of the Champs-Élysées that Gatward did a quick visual check to make sure there were no innocent citizens in front of the Ministère de la Marine before he hosed off a rain of 20mm cannon fire from his four cannons that sent Nazis running for their lives. It is not clear from what I was able to find on the web whether Gatward hosed the German High Command (at an extreme angle) before he made his turn at the Jardin des Tuileries, or, as I suspect, as he was coming out of the 270° hard banking turn (or both). Regardless, as they overflowed the building on their way home, Fern dropped the second of the two French flags.

At 1230 hours, Paris time, it was all over and the two adrenalin-charged airmen were moving as fast as they could out of Paris, flying to the North of the Saint-Lazare train station and spires of Saint-Augustin's church. From there, Gatward kept it as low as possible, fire-walled the throttles, and following the same route out as he took in, beat feet for home, flying so low and hitting so many flying insects that it became difficult for Gatward to see forward through his windscreen. When they reached the coast just north of the point they entered enemy territory an hour before,

Fern gave Gatward a new course for RAF Northolt in London, where they landed 25 minutes later and handed over the 61 photographs that Fern took of the mission.

The result of their flight down one of the storied boulevards of the world was not as initially expected. There was no Nazi parade to shoot up and no infliction of violence, except for a symbolic hosing of the front door of the Ministère de la Marine. Two flags were dropped at the planned places, but there is no report what happened to them. Initially, the Germans put out a story that one of their own aircraft had had mechanical trouble and was the one that was flying low over the city, but the Royal Air Force had 61 black and white photographs showing Gatward and Fern's progress into France, through Paris and on the way home. Within eight weeks, these photos were published in LIFE magazine along with Gatward's story under the title "*British Take a Look at Paris*".



Heading for home, Fern captured their exit to the north of Église Saint-Augustine and the Eiffel Tower RAF photo by F/S George Fern DFM

Afterward, Gatward was awarded the first of his two Distinguished Flying Crosses and Fern, as a Non-Commissioned Officer, was Mentioned in Despatches, awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal and given a commission. Fern would rise to the rank of Squadron Leader before war's end and, after the war, went back to teaching woodworking and arts and crafts. He died in September of 2010 in Bath.

Gatward rose to the rank of Wing Commander by war's end and Group Captain by the end of his RAF reserve career. After the action over Paris, he would be given a rest until the following June, when he was given a flight command job with the Royal Canadian Air Force's 404 Squadron, a Beaufighter unit engaged in anti-shipping operations in the north of Scotland. When 404's commanding officer, Wing Commander Chuck Willis, was killed in action, Gatward took command. He relished commanding the exuberant and lively Canadians and together they added to the magnificent history of 404 Squadron.

It was the recent auction of Gatward's service medals in late 2012 that brought his and Fern's compelling story to the fore once more. They were being auctioned off as part of the estate of Gatward's widow Pamela (née Yoemans) and sold for £41,000. Part of the auction included a magnum of Champagne in a presentation case given to Gatward after the war by the government of France in gratitude for his actions that day.

I am happy to report that the bottle was empty.



CANADIAN WARPLANE HERITAGE MUSEUM

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

9am to 5pm

For our Father's Day weekend this year, we return to a smaller & more intimate event on the ramp at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum. Although not an airshow, there will be flying throughout the day featuring all of the Museum's flying aircraft (including the rare Westland Lysander, Fairey Firefly and Avro Lancaster) with support from specially invited guests. These guest aircraft will be of the historically significant and rare warbird variety. Already confirmed are the T-28 Flying Horsemen, the Commemorative Air Force's B-24 Liberator "Diamond Lil" and the Military Aviation Museum's de Havilland Mosquito.



6:30pm to 11:00pm

An unmatched display of piloting skill, dazzling lights, pyrotechnics, smoke and fireworks plus an incredible barbeque will be featured at the 2014 version of the Hamilton Night Airshow.

More details, tickets and updates on both events at www.warplane.com