

# BOMBER COMMAND ASSOCIATION IN AUSTRALIA Inc.

BCAA 71 Spring 2019



## Patron

Air Chief Marshal  
Sir Angus Houston  
AK AFC Ret'd

## President

Dr Ron Houghton DFC  
2502/37 Glen Street  
Milsons Point NSW 2061  
Tel. 02 9954 7000

## Secretary

Annette Guterres  
15 Flavelle Street  
Concord NSW 2137  
Tel. 02 9743 5794

## Treasurer

Anthony Trayhurn  
4 Fern Street  
Pymble NSW 2073  
Tel. 02 948 7436

Editor – Geoff Raebel 1/27 National Avenue Loftus NSW 2232 Tel 02 9521 3070 email [raebel.g@iinet.net.au](mailto:raebel.g@iinet.net.au)



## President's Report

So much for hibernating over winter! The last few months have proved to be quite busy.

On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May we gathered for the Bomber Command Commemorative Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Cenotaph at Martin Place (in association with RAAFA), followed by a luncheon at the Westin Hotel.

On Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June we gathered at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra for the annual Bomber Command Commemorative Day. The 'Reflection' was delivered by Elizabeth Wade, daughter of Robert (Bob) Wade, 109 Squadron as Bob had passed away not long before the day.

On Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July I was honoured to be invited to attend the 460 Squadron annual event and dinner in Canberra.

On Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July we had our annual winter luncheon at Doyles at Watsons Bay and the weather and camaraderie was once again superb.

Sadly, we have lost a number of our Bomber Command veterans over the last few months and I extend my sincere condolences to all family members.

## 149 Squadron Lancaster U – Uncle. "Coming home on two"

By Australian War Artist Dennis Adams

Captain Adams adventure with Bomber Command appears later in the Newsletter

Our next official event will be the spring luncheon and get-together at the Sydney Rowing Club at Abbotsford on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October.  
Ron  
Best wishes,

Houghton

**VALE** – Geoff Swindell MUG 463 Sqn - June Qld, Ron Rhode A/G 158 Sqn - 5 July 2019, William “Bill” McRae Pilot 104 & 148 Sqn, Douglas “Keith” Anderson 567 Sqn, 4 July 2019, Maurice O’Keefe 460 Sqn, Keith Campbell OAM, 16 July 2019 – 466 Squadron



**“I was always a bit optimistic and I managed to survive.”**

[Bill McRae was 106 and flew well with the Editor when 103]

**WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS** – Guy Cooper RNZAF, David Duckett, Wendy Witton, Mal Elliott, Robyn Kerr, Chris Longstaff and David Lawrence

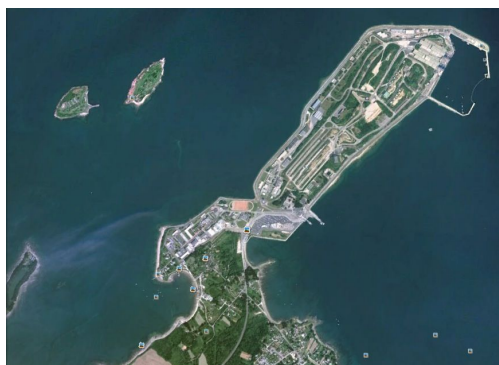
## **MEMBERSHIPS – Renewals due 1/1/2019**

**Memberships fell due 1st January, and are \$20 pa** (A Joining fee will be waived). Bomber Command Widows are gratis. Those who have paid ahead, will have that noted. Membership forms are available by email from the Editor by email or mail from the Secretary (Details Page 1). Cheques/Money Orders should be sent to our Treasurer, Anthony (See Page 1) or please Direct Deposit to BCAA – BSB **633000** Account no.**125530550**, being Bendigo & Adelaide Bank Ltd. Please put your name on the deposit reference [ED]. For convenience, you can pay, **Membership \$20**, and **if paying for a RAAFA subscription membership and Wings Magazine** add \$15 ie **\$35**

**ARE YOU MOVING HOUSE OR GOING INTO CARE?** Please mail or email our Secretary annette.guterres@gmail.com to keep our lists up to date so your newsletter can follow you.

**FIFTEENTH OP – NIGHT – Brest (Ile Longue – A/A Battery)–** from the diary of P/O Michael Wilson 466 Sqn.

25 August 1944 - “462 Squadron has now been separately formed and were not with us. 9 kites from our



**ILE Longue was a fortified island joined to the mainland that was a breakwater for Brest Harbour in France**

squadron were briefed at 17.30 and we took off in “D” Dog again at 19.30. We had Flight Sergeant Ron Laird as “Second Dickie” [pilot on last flight before his first solo operation], went down England at 2000ft a long way around to Brest, coming in with the moon behind us in an easterly direction. There was 9/10 cloud at the target [height] 12,000ft and too late the Master Bomber gave us a decreasing basement. We had to orbit twice, finally getting through cloud and onto the target at 3,400’. Bombed okay and climbed away for an uneventful trip home. Only a few, heard the Master Bomber and went down – then as the camera was set for higher, we did not get a photo. On return a War Correspondent got “Irish” and I to tell him of the explosion we saw on leaving the target and how the guns were silenced, Time over Target was 23.00 and home at 01.15, supper, bath and bed by 03.00.

courtesy of his Nephew Daryl Martin of Corowra - Operation 15 - 25/8/1944



## **IBCC (International Bomber Command Centre)**

To join the IBCC and receive a membership pack please email [members@internationalbcc.co.uk](mailto:members@internationalbcc.co.uk) To conduct research follow this link:-

<https://internationalbcc.co.uk/history-archive/digital-archive/>

[Just a random search brought up this interesting note]

<https://ibccdigitalarchive.lincoln.ac.uk/omeka/collections/document/10639>

*“On the night of July 24th in Lancaster VN-O. 50 Sqn Skellingthorpe we were on route to Stuttgart when we were attacked by a German night fighter. Which shot away our bomb bay door. Damaged the starboard landing gear Fractured the main spar and put 5-6 cannon shells in the fuel tanks, on a 2nd attack the gunners shot the attacker down. We all agreed to carry on to the target, on arriving back at Base we were told to orbit until all the other A/C were down – On inspection we found that the cannon shells were still there. They were removed and were emptied. They were found to contain **SAND** instead of explosive – which saved all our lives. A very lucky escape. After a belly landing, our first big escape. 15/3/2016.” – George Holmes (aged 93)*

[Several of our members are conducting interviews, one is member Adam Purcell. The reports on his site makes good reading. <https://somethingverybig.com/2017/12/27/ibcc-digital-archive-interview-wrap/>

## **LANCASTER LM-158 WP-P - STILL HONOURED**

Seventy-five years ago, Lancaster LM158 crashed very close to the small Dutch Village of Hall. From that moment on, until today, the Community of Hall, have cared for the graves of the six English, Australian and Canadian Crew. Only one, a Canadian, survived.

The bodies were quickly recovered from the aircraft by a local Forest Fire Fighter who had witnessed the crash assisted by a very brave member of the Dutch Resistance. German troops commandeered the deceased aircrew and hid the bodies in the forest. Later it was discovered that the bodies had been mutilated. The Dutch people quickly retrieved the bodies from the forest and buried them properly in the local cemetery. The very touching aspect of this story, is that from the first moment the aircrew were found, a local lady, Mientje Thomassen gathered some orange flowers - marigolds and calendulas - and placed them on the graves of the deceased aircrew. This tiny ceremony has been repeated every year since. Her son Joke has ensured that each year, he personally places flowers on their graves. Now, the local school children have the role as caretakers of the six graves and do so, with great respect and also attend the annual 4 May Remembrance Day Service.

I cannot imagine that any other RAF Crew has been cared for in such a compassionate and appreciate manner.

We were invited to come to the 75th Memorial Service, which coincided with the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Holland by the Canadian *Polar Bear* Regiment.



Lancaster LM158 was shot down by a highly experienced German Fighter Ace Gerhard Friedrich on 13 June 1944.

A Memorial Plaque was unveiled near the crash site. Whilst there was sadness - even 75 years later - there was also a celebration. The Dutch used to watch the bombers flying overhead to Germany night after night, relentless. The Dutch really did, more than any other continental country, appreciate the sacrifices that were being made for them. It must have been a great day when the Canadians rolled up into the village of Hall.

What was astounding was that all of my life, I had tried to visualise exactly what happened to my father's Lancaster.

It appears that a ten year old girl witnessed a Lancaster as it flew over her house with the tail already on fire. The plane made a large circle and then came back in. By this time, the whole of the plane was on fire. The pilot made a crash landing. It is unbelievable that one man survived unscathed. The rest were badly burned. This ten year old girl who is now 85 years old, met us at the Fletcher Hotel in Eerbeek. She was bright, sharp as a pin, smartly dressed and very moved. It was an emotional meeting as we asked her to relate what had happened. It was a very special moment. The next day, at the final Memorial Ceremony at the Cemetery and grave site of the Lancaster Aircrew, we were able to present her with a bouquet of flowers. She was overwhelmed. That was a very nice moment.

My conclusion is that some of the crew would have had an opportunity to bail out. Some of them were probably already wounded or dead. Those who were able to bail out made the decision to stay together and hope for a successful crash landing. This wasn't just a crew - these men were very close friends. My father was the only married member. He had three children and a very young wife. The crew came to our house twice and even so long after those occasions, I can remember how kind and how happy and how generous they were. You would not have thought that they were taking on one of the most dangerous jobs in the war. They never showed it one bit!

The way that Bomber Command has been honoured in this tiny village is just beyond belief.

F/Off A C Elliott RCAF (KIA); Sgt D C Kibble (KIA); F/Off A Allan RCAF (KIA); Flt Sgt K C Walker RAAF (KIA); Sgt D M Willmott RCAF (KIA); Sgt E R Cocker (KIA) F/Off P C Hoffos RCAF (POW)

*By - Peter Cocker UK – son - Eric Royston Cocker, Tail Gunner, Lancaster LM158, 90 Squadron  
RAF Bomber Command*

## 75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION OF AIR RAIDS ON FORÊT DE NIEPPE

Between 28 July and 9 August, 1944, nine raids by Bomber Command on the FORÊT DE NIEPPE, a large forest west of Lille in northern France, were aimed at destroying storage sites of V2 rockets which were being launched on London. Seventy five years later the local community is honouring the airmen of over 1,500 aircraft who took part in the raids in a commemoration which will take place as part of the French Heritage Days celebrations on **21-22 September, 2019**, in the Chateau de La Motte au Bois. The Australian government will be represented by Group Captain David Titheridge and the British ambassador will also be represented.

The driving force behind the event is the deputy mayor of the region, Frédéric Massa, who is **seeking information** from surviving airmen or their families, such as copies of photographs of participating crew or logbook entries, so they can be included on display panels which will be unveiled at the remembrance ceremony. Squadrons known to have participated were No. 7, 10, 102, 156, 425 and 460.

**If you have any information or, indeed, if you would like to attend, please contact in Australia, Dr. Graeme Woodrow at [graeme.woodrow@gmail.com](mailto:graeme.woodrow@gmail.com)**

## **THE DISASTER OF MAILLY-LE-CAMPE** [developed with thanks, from an article by Brian Lissette NZ]

Events to this raid started in February 1944 when a French resistance man named Raymond Bassett whose code name was 'Nazi' risked his life gathering information about the German occupied military camp at Mailly-Le-Camp. Using a false police warrant card supplied by London he entered the camp at great personal risk, the main entrance of the Panzer Training and Maintenance camp. From his conversations with an attentive German Officer about the camp security, Raymond Bassett used his brilliant memory to recall information displayed on charts and plans scattered around the office.

With his natural skill Bassett drew from memory, plans and details about the camp and passed the information to another agent near Chalons sur Marne. A few weeks later at Bomber Command Headquarters at High Wycombe the Royal Air Force started preparing for an attack on this occupied military camp 128 kilometres east of Paris. By the spring of 1944, just 4 weeks before D-Day, Bomber Command was getting more skilful in the art of directing the bomber stream towards obscure targets in enemy occupied territory with pin point accuracy. Also becoming more skilful in the accuracy of bombing with the emphasis drawn to the fact of nearby villages and towns such as Mailly.

The operational order was issued to Numbers 1 & 5 Bomber Groups who were operating Lancaster bombers with 4 Mosquitoes from 617 Squadron the famous Dambusters and 10 Mosquitoes from 627 Squadron - Light Night Striking Force who would all have the responsibility of marking this important target. The executive order for bomb loads was prefixed 'Plumduff' calling for all main force Lancasters to carry an instantaneously fused 4000 lb 'cookie' and sixteen 500 lb GP (General purpose) fused from eleven seconds to six hours.

This was intended to destroy completely the large Wehrmacht depot engaged in maintaining of armoured vehicles and tanks including the Panzer Training establishment. The Military camp also contained extensive workshops and over sixty large (ex-French Army) barrack blocks.

The raid was carried out during a full moon period and the forecast for the night of Wednesday 3/4 May 1944 was for fine weather with no cloud in the target area. 617 Squadron led by Wing Commander G.L. Cheshire D.S.O. D.F.C. was briefed to mark the target at midnight precisely. The main Lancaster force of 346 bombers led by Wing Commander L.C. Deane D.F.C. of 83 Squadron would bomb the target in two waves, with No.5 Group Lancasters leading the way. Only 83 & 97 Squadron's would carry H2S and only a few Squadrons would employ 'window' whilst 101 Squadron carrying AirBorne Cigar (A.B.C.) was jamming German radios.

A new system of Pathfinding was to be employed on this raid with four Mosquitoes from 617 Squadron marking the target with the *backer up markers* from 627 Squadron Mosquitoes. W/Commander Cheshire would be the Master Bomber and would transmit using VHF to W/Commander Deane, leader of the main force who in turn would transmit to the main force. Backing up and moving the aiming point would be carried out by the Mosquitoes who would remain in the target area so long as they had markers left.

Take off for the attack commenced at 21.30 hours and continued for nearly 50 minutes from the Lincolnshire bases. The route to the target was uncomplicated, assemble west of Reading then south to Beachy Head, across the channel to make land fall at a point 5 kilometres just north east of Dieppe. Then flying a straight course of 220 kilometres to the target. Yellow route markers would be dropped 20 to 30 kilometres north of the camp near the village of Germinon. These markers would act as a datum point for the final run up to the target, which would be attacked on a north to south heading. After the bombing run the attacking force would continue to the next turning point; over the town of Troyes, before heading west on a course south of Paris and eventually to the Normandy coast near Bayeux. Following a northerly track across the Channel to Selsey Bill and finally home to their respective bases.

The leading Illuminators from 83 & 97 Squadrons were dropped accurately at 5 minutes to midnight and the Yellow Datum Markers dropped by 627 Squadron shortly after, marking the way for the main force. W/C Cheshire in his Mosquito dived from 3000 feet to just under 1500 feet before dropping his two Red Target indicators. Not satisfied he called W/C Deane and told him not to commence the attack.

Cheshire summoned Squadron Leader D.J. Shannon to re-mark the target. Satisfied that the target was marked accurately Cheshire then instructed Deane to commence the attack, it was now six minutes past midnight. 627 Squadron successfully backed up the datum point markers and then the leading main force Lancasters were for 18 minutes, circling and perhaps colliding over the Yellow markers awaiting for the instruction to bomb from the *Master of Ceremonies*. As Deane attempted to order the main attack the radio frequency was almost totally jammed by an American ground station carrying out a training transmission on an unauthorised frequency. By this time more than sixty bombers had reached the yellow datum markers and were having to circle the target area awaiting instructions. As the wireless operator of Deane's aircraft tried in vain to search for a common

channel only fifteen bombers responded to the near indecipherable message. Despite the fact that 101 Squadron was dropping *Window* the German night fighters had penetrated the bomber stream, and in less than six minutes nine Lancasters were tumbling out of the night sky in flames.

During a short interval 617 & 627 aircraft re-marked the target and a Lancaster of No.97 Squadron captained by F/Officer H.J.W. Edwards laid ten red spot markers across the western edge of the target. The Deputy Bombing Leader, S/Ldr R.M. Sparks finally gave the order to commence bombing and in just over ten minutes over 250 Lancasters dropped more than 1500 tons of explosives with great accuracy. The results being 114 Barrack Blocks, 47 Transport sheds, including some ammunition buildings were hit. Destroyed were 102 vehicles including 37 tanks.

The French people suffered heavy casualties the result of falling aircraft and of a stray bombs. Marcel Jean Goudard, his wife and two children died and were buried close to thirteen young airmen killed that night at Trouans. At Poivres the homes of Anthony Garnier and Charles Villemin were destroyed with only three children surviving and fourteen villagers being killed. Their deaths were coupled with thirty seven airmen killed in the vicinity. Typically the French bore the losses bravely, as necessary to get rid of the Nazi invaders.

There were six German night fighter bases within sixty kilometres of the main bomber force and that night two of the top German aces were operating Hauptman Drewes and Hauptman Bergmann. Between them they accounted for eleven of the 45 aircraft destroyed that night.

For the crews that operated and survived that night, the myth that targets in Occupied Countries were 'A piece of cake' was completely destroyed. Although the raid was reviewed as a success it did not reflect the loss of 258 airmen killed on that clear moonlit night of Wednesday 3/4 May 1944. Sadly a train, loaded with King Tiger tanks parked in a nearby railway cutting was not targeted.

Losses were heavy 460 Sqn RAAF – 5 Lancasters, 463 Sqn RAAF – 1 Lancaster, 467 Sqn RAAF – 1 Lancaster, 161 Sqn RAF - 1 Halifax, 101 Sqn RAF – 5 Lancasters. In total 45 aircraft were lost. Brian & Jean Lisette have two related UTube shows of recent visits available for you: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQjG2Rk-ZPE>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojtNvmTJScI>

#### **KRIEGIES IN BUCHENWALD** [Developed from Keith Mills - MY EXPERIENCES AFTER BEING SHOT DOWN AFTER MAILLY-LE-CAMP]

[Although it was highly unusual for German authorities to send Allied POWs to concentration camps, Buchenwald held a group of 168 airmen for two months. These men were from the US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Jamaica. They all arrived at Buchenwald on August 20, 1944.

All these airmen were in aircraft that had crashed in Occupied France. Two explanations are given for them being sent to a concentration camp: first, that they had managed to make contact with the French Resistance, some were disguised as civilians, and they were carrying false papers when caught; they were therefore



Above Bob ('Lofty') Mills and his crew at the National Press Centre dinner in Canberra, 24 June 1988. (left to right) Bob Mills, Jim Gwilliam, Keith Mills, Ian Innes and Eric Johnston. (Photo: C. Burgess)

categorised by the Germans as spies, which meant their rights under the Geneva Convention were not respected. The second explanation is that they had been categorised as *Terrorflieger* ("Terror aviators"). The aviators were initially held in Gestapo prisons and headquarters in France. In August 1944, they and other Gestapo prisoners were packed into covered goods wagons and sent to Buchenwald. The journey took five days, during which they received very little food or water.]

**It happened on June 22nd 1944**, on a clear night after we had left the target well behind. Two loud bangs and the order "Bail Out"!

Our petrol tanks in the Halifax's wing bomb bays had been hit and we were burning fiercely. I stowed my navigation table and seat and fixed on my chute and Joe and I had a few hectic moments when the escape hatch

jammed. Two hearty kicks cleared it and I yelled to *Joe* (Ian Innes) to jump. I immediately followed and experienced a sensation akin to diving into a deep feather bed. I saw the tail unit flash over my head and after waiting a few seconds pulled the rip-cord. The parachute worked perfectly and as I swayed back and forth under the starry sky, I could hear the bombers passing over head. I looked down and watched the weaving searchlights probing the dark. A quick glance in the direction of where the kite had been and I saw a large explosion light up the countryside as it crashed into the earth.

As I neared terra-firma I saw a long winding streak bordered by patches of darkness underneath me. Steering myself just clear of these patches and landed in a grassy field. I quickly gathered my chute and harness and crossing the road emerged into a patch of thick brush where in soft earth, I buried my chute, harness and Mae West. Then, proceeding to the thickest clump I could find I wormed my way into it. From this position I could keep the road under observation in the hope of meeting Joe. At this moment I became aware of a stickiness about my left hand and upon examination I perceived that my navigation watch was missing and three of four deep cuts on my wrist. I presumed that I had stopped a bit of shrapnel and so wrapped it up with my handkerchief as best as I was able.

I lit a cigarette making sure I kept the light cigarette well shielded. While enjoying the smoke, I pondered over the situation into which I had fallen. The Western Front was well over 100 miles away and although it meant crossing the Seine River, I decided that this would be my best shot. As the time must now nearly be daylight I decided to rest up that day and start out on the next night. I managed to catch some sleep and when night came, I proceeded along the edge of the road which was a secondary one and which I had observed during the day was not traversed to any great extent. After by passing two villages, I found myself nearing a town from which the sound of motor engines was audible.

Looking around I located a hiding place in a field of barley. Night fighters were visible at frequent intervals as they roared overhead. Shortly after lying down the day broke and as the sun rose the day promised to be very warm indeed, as the day wore on with leaden feet, key thirst increased and as I hadn't had anything to eat or drink since I had been shot down, my feelings were anything but marvellous. After sunset and as twilight was drawing to a close, I approached an old farmer who was wending his weary way home. With what French I knew, I was able to make him understand that I was an English airman and needed food and water. His reply was quick and he also said that the Dutch were to the north, east and west and pointed south and said that was the best way to travel. So I set out and crossing fields and ploughed paddocks with only the stars for guidance and as my flying boots were not the best things to walk in, I did not cover as much distance as I had hoped to. When the first streaks of light appeared in the east, I crawled into a clump of bushes and slept for awhile. Awakening, I found the sun high and also perceived an old Frenchman with a horse and cart approaching along a small track in the fields.

I greeted him and asked him for food and water and immediately he told me to stay hidden until he returned. After about half an hour's wait he returned on foot with a bag and a young lad. As he emptied the contents out into my eager hands he asked whether I had come down by parachute. I answered "yes" and gave me four boiled eggs, a loaf of black bread, cheese and butter and a bottle of cider which I distributed in various parts of my battle-dress. Thanking him very much, I inquired as to whether I was in a dangerous position concerning German troops.

When night fell, I was off again and putting my best foot forward, and having covered about eight kilometres, I emerged from a forest and beheld a building. Thinking it was a farmhouse I circled round it and was surprised to find myself in a fair sized village. I had already taken my flying boots and socks off as walking in wet boots wasn't very pleasant, and so making my way like a ghost I crept through the village and bar for a moment when I nearly walked into the local duck pond, when a dog started barking, everything was *Al*. Proceeding along the Paris-Rouen road, I branched off and travelled over ploughed fields until I came to a haystack. Where I lay down for a rest. Awakening to find rain pouring down again, I pushed off and as dawn was starting to break and I was a few hundred yards from a railway line, I kept going hoping to find a good hiding place. Skirting another small village I passed through a cemetery and about a mile from there I met a middle-aged Frenchman driving his horse and cart to market. I asked him if he could give me food and shelter explaining that I was an English airman. He immediately said "Bon Ami" and pointing to a distant hayseed, he told me to wait there for five hours. With that he drove off. The rain was still pouring down so I quickly got under cover and finished off the rest of my bread and cheese. At about midday the same chap came into the shed carrying a bottle of hot coffee and a metal container full of stew. It this was my first hot food in five days, I was in heaven. After asking how I had come down, he told me to wait for two hours. At the end of the two hours the same chap and a younger man drove into the place with a horse and cart. Bidding me to get in, he covered me with straw and hay and drove off. After bumping over rough roads for about two miles they halted and upon being uncovered I found myself in a great barn. The young chap motioned me up into the loft and after giving me the makings (his own home-grown tobacco) he left me but not for long before appearing with a bottle of wine and two glasses in

his hand, I really felt that all my worries were over. After drinking two glasses each he departed leaving the bottle with me.

About half an hour later a very young Frenchman came into the loft with blankets and sheets and made me a bed in the straw. He also gave me papers and a pouch of tobacco. He told me that he had false identity papers as he should have been sent to Germany to work with his correct ones. I asked him how the war was going but from what I could gather there had been no advances but great tank battles were in progress around Caen. At about ten o'clock that night the young chap who had driven me here and whose place I was now in, came and took me across to his kitchen where I met his wife and the odour of soup and frying eggs assailed my nostrils. A basin of warm water, soap and a towel were placed on the table and after having made myself as respectable as possible, I sat down to supper. Between mouthfuls questions were continually being asked concerning how I had been shot down and life in England. When the questions neared anything which I considered military information, I made out that I was unable to understand the question. Supper was followed by coffee and wine and after I could eat or drink no more, I went up to the loft and slept. So for the next five days I lived coming down at night and having breakfast and dinner brought up to me. I was also fitted out with civilian clothes and so I felt a little safer than when I had been wandering around the countryside. On my fifth day I was informed that I was to be moved over to a village and would be placed in the care of a woman who could speak English. During these five days, German soldiers had come to the farm daily, buying eggs from my friends.

So on the Sunday morning a young Frenchman came to the loft and asked me to follow him. I did so and after leaving the wheat field at the back of the barn, I beheld the man who I had asked for shelter. He was driving his old horse and cart and he motioned me to get on. In this fashion, sitting up beside him and smoking Gauloise cigarettes which the new contact offered me, we progressed for about two hours. We passed through villages and across railway lines and it was a very enjoyable trip. At last we finally halted in front of a cafe in the very small village Coivrel where I spent the rest of my free time in France. We went inside and here I met my future host and hostess. They were a fairly aged couple and Madam Tempez greeted me with "Good-day" and she explained that she had learnt a little English in the *Big War*. We drank more wine and then I went off with the young Frenchman to his house. I bid "au revoir" to the old Frenchman who helped me and I never saw him again. *[This is an odd/interesting, first hand story of Evading capture. I'll break it into three parts, so more in Issue 72 Summer 2019]*

#### **FOR KING QUEEN AND COUNTRY – The Life Story Of Thomas Arthur Lockett GM**



*The cost of the book [cover painting on the Winter Newsletter is £12.95 + p/p in England of £3.75. The postage/packing cost to send to Australia and New Zealand is a hefty £9.25p. Anyone buying directly from Carole (author & friend), will receive copies signed by Tom and Carole along with a colour photo of the two of them plus some other flyers. Weight about 650grams.*

The book is A4 size with many photographs black and white for the first part of the book covering Tom's wartime exploits. The second half of the book has many colour photos and covers his personal life and his Police career, his retirement and current situation is also well documented. *[For a researcher it contains a wealth of RAF Bomber Command information – It is stocked at East Kirkby UK Ed]* Contact Carol Widdicombe [carole3567@hotmail.com](mailto:carole3567@hotmail.com) If you are seeking a copy.



#### **Harold Panton awarded the BEM**

*[Harold, who some of us met at East Kirkby was reported in the Skegness Standard] The man awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for his services to Lincolnshire's rich bomber heritage says he has never felt so humble. Harold Clifford Panton - who established the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirkby with his late brother, Fred, in 1987 - has received the BEM in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. The Centre is a commemoration to their brother, Christopher, who was killed on the Nuremberg raid in March 1944. On Monday, Harold said he went along to the centre to sit in the chapel, where the names of*

*800 men who lost their lives after flying out of East Kirkby during the Second World War are placed on the memorial. "It took quite a while for the news of the BEM to sink in" said Harold, aged 85. "It's very humbling to receive the award. I came to sit in the chapel today to sit by the memorial with the names of the 800 men who flew out of East Kirkby and lost their lives. I started the aviation centre 31 years ago with my brother, who as the eldest was honoured before he died. I cannot thank the people who nominated me and have supported the aviation centre over the years. This really came as a bolt out of the blue." Harold is still heavily involved in the day to day running of the centre with the next generation.*

## ODD BODS and THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY CAPTAIN and THE STIRLING CRASH

I was the Wireless Operator in a crew of four Australians and three Englishmen on RAF Squadron 149, based in Methwold, Norfolk. The skipper was an Australian, Walter (Wal) Cryer DFC.

The Squadron was operating the four engined Short Stirling bomber in May 1944 when Cryer's Crew joined and continued to do so until September 1944 when it converted to Lancaster bombers.

My older brother, Dennis Adams, was appointed an Official War Artist by the Australian War Memorial, in 1942, with the rank of Captain- Army. Initially Dennis was attached to the RAN and served on many ships north of Australia in the war against Japan. From late 1943 he was directed to cover Australians serving in the RAAF both in Australia and overseas. In July 1944, 5 weeks after D-Day, Dennis arrived in England after visiting RAAF squadrons in the Middle East and Italy and decided that the first of several squadrons to be visited in the UK would be mine!

On arrival at Methwold, on his very first day in the UK, I introduced Dennis to our crew and within hours he flew with us on a short training flight. Dennis, fully kitted out in flying gear and carrying his sketch pad, was able to move around the aircraft sketching crew members.

Upon landing Dennis expressed a wish to fly that night to see England under blackout conditions. As Cryer's Crew was unable to take him it was arranged that he fly on a training flight with another Australian captained crew.

At breakfast in the mess next morning, I was sitting opposite two ground crew sergeants and one said to the other "Bad crash on the 'drome last night". I pricked up my ears and asked if anyone was hurt. "Yes" he said, "Two killed, I believe". I asked him if he knew the name of the pilot and he replied "No, but I understand the pilot was Australian". I dashed to the telephone and phoned the Station Hospital and was very relieved to hear "Your brother is here Flight Sergeant and is OK".

The high undercarriage of the Stirling had collapsed and the aircraft had turned completely upside down. Dennis, very luckily, suffered only a badly cut ankle. Sadly the two air gunners were thrown out of their turrets and killed whilst other crew members were badly injured.

Over the next few days, whilst recuperating, Dennis still managed to get around on crutches and before the written off aircraft was towed away he commenced a painting of the accident. This painting "Night Prang" is one of about 350 of his artworks in the AWM collection.

During this time he also sketched a portrait of me, in flying gear, seated at my Wireless Operator's position in the Stirling.

As RAF 149 Squadron was about to switch to being a Lancaster Squadron, our crew asked Dennis to design the nose art for our new Lancaster, "C" Charlie. After several possible designs were discussed we realized that the part of Norfolk where Methwold was situated was where Queen Bodicea was fighting the occupying forces of the Roman Empire back in the year AD60. Dennis's design of Queen Bodicea on her chariot was adopted and remained on "C" Charlie until the end of the war.

*Tony Adams, July 2019*

**COMING EVENTS – For numbers,** Please advise Gwen Stead, our events Coordinator on 02 9630 1083 or 0411 554 359 (or email [gwenstead@optusnet.com.au](mailto:gwenstead@optusnet.com.au))

**Spring Luncheon**—Abbotsford Rowing Club Lunch, 12 noon Thursday **17th October** - a la Carte lunch. Pay on the day, easiest by Ferry (steep walk 50 metres, bus or car (level walk) – please message Gwen for numbers 3 weeks before

**BCAA & PFF Christmas Luncheon**— NSW Parliament House Sydney, Friday 6th December 11.30 for 12 noon **Queensland** – 467/463 Associations Day - Tuesday 10 September 2019  
Contact - *Dianne Strubb* (467and463raafsquadronsqld@gmail.com)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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