



# NZ Bomber Command Association (Inc)

**NEWSLETTER** August 2012

## ***It's Been Dedicated!***

After nearly 70 years the men of RAF Bomber Command have been recognized.

Our president has composed a mighty report on the trip to London.

## ***The RAF Bomber Command Medal Campaign Continues***

Hello All,

It was only one week ago that I told many of you that there was a possibility of the Military Medals Review Panel reporting to PM Cameron by the summer recess which started today. Sure enough the civil servant, Michael Shryane of the Cabinet Office, forwarded to me at 1843 today his email covering Sir John Holmes' Report and a Statement about it from the PM David Cameron. Copies of both have tonight been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and I think it would be normal practice for Hansard to report these tomorrow.

Alas, my poor eyesight prevents me from reading both in detail. But I can say that our PM regards this as an interim report and has suggested that Sir John and his panel has set forth an ideal set of principles and guide lines on which the panel will dwell further with the aim of providing a final report in the Autumn.

I am sorry therefore, that I cannot yet say with any degree of certainty whether that Autumn Final Report will confirm or reject the award of a Bomber Command Campaign Medal (BCCM).

With sincere best wishes,

Jim Wright

*Wg Cdr AJ Wright DFC RAF (Ret)*

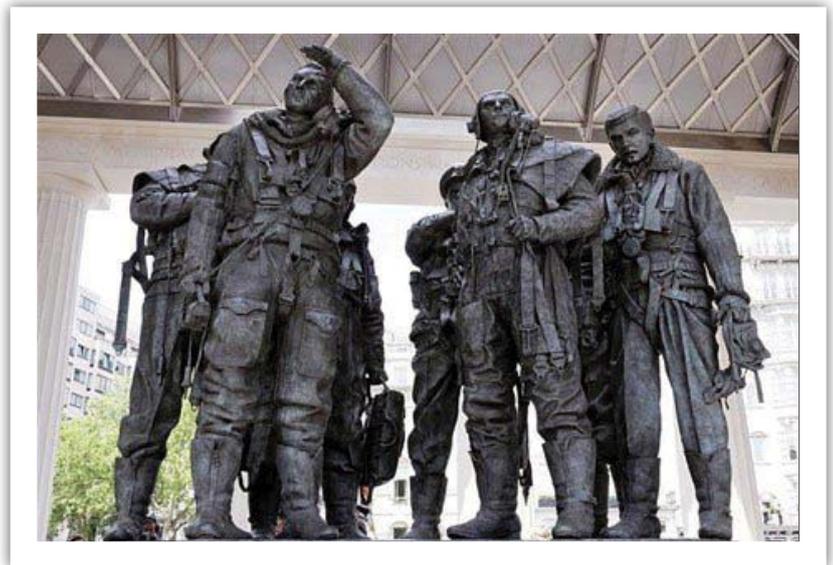
### ***\*URGENT\****

*The NZDF and Veterans Affairs will hold a formal commemorative service to Bomber Command in Wellington on September 26 at 1100. We have no further details.*

*We would expect all members will want to attend.*

*Should you and your partner wish to attend, contact your local VA office immediately or use Freephone 0800 483 8372.*

*We are told space is limited and widows and families will not be invited.*



## ***For your Calendar***

**September 26** National Bomber Command Memorial Service Wellington

**September 29** First public air display of the restored mosquito at Ardmore Airfield

**November** A luncheon will be arranged by Northern members, hopefully at RNZAF Whenuapai

## ***CONTACT US***

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## Numbers Game

Before the tickets were allocated for London, a complete review of Bomber Command losses by country was carried out by the RAF Historical Branch.

While Commonwealth losses on operations is generally known as:

RAF	38,464	
RCAF	9,919	
RAAF	4,050	
RNZAF	1,697	6,000
RAF (Poles)	929	
Other Allies (Fr, Cz, Neth, etc)	473	
Other Dominions	34	
SAAF	27	

The other allies and other Dominions losses are surprising especially Ireland:

Free French	218	8	226
Royal Indian AF	3	9	12
RN or AF	33	-	33
South Africa	-	86	86
Rhodesia	-	188	188
Eire	-	237	237
USA	68	42	110
Czechoslovakia	-	136	136
Belgium	-	19	19
West Indies	-	35	35
<i>(Jam. 12, Trin. 11, Br Guy. 4, Barb. 3, Gren 3, Br Hon 2)</i>			

To complete this sad summary:

	British	RCAF, RAAF RNZAF & Others	Total
Died	38,462	17,111	55,573
Wounded	5,847	2,556	8,403
PoW	6,792	3,046	9,838
Missing <i>(later safe)</i>	1,725	1,226	2,951
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,826</b>	<b>23,939</b>	<b>76,765</b>

**Total British Armed Forces Dead 264,243**  
*(incl. Bomber Command)*

Merchant Seamen	30,248
Home Guard	1,206
Auxiliary Services (Fire, ARP etc.)	626
Civilians	60,595
Others	198
<b>Total</b>	<b>357,116</b>

## New Status

After some years as an Incorporated Society, NZB CA has received Charitable Trust status. This means our funds and projects can receive money from The Lion Foundation, Lotto and other donors. Private donations (yes please) are tax deductible.

**The Trustees of NZBCA Charitable Trust are:**

<b>President</b>	Ron Mayhill
<b>Vice President</b>	Bunny Burrows and Frank Prebble
<b>Executive</b>	Roy Montrowe, Des Andrewes, Doug Taylor (All are veteran aircrew)

**Plus**

<b>Executive Officers</b>	Peter Wheeler Phil Furner, Ian Barron (both veterans' sons)
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Front

## Greeting Cards

The Association has printed greeting cards to record the unveiling of the RAF Bomber Command Memorial in London.



RAF Bomber Command Memorial  
Green Park, London  
Dedicated by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II  
28th June, 2012

Inside front

They are ideal for greetings as well as condolences. Measuring 105 x 150mm. Packs of ten are \$15 (including envelopes).

## Simulator

For all those pilots and crew who want to try their hand again, but without the pain, check out a simulator ride. Unless you are like lucky Grant Wilson with his own set up, simulators are based in most centres and offer a semi realistic flight that will still crash. I know!

NZ Bomber Command News is published twice yearly, all contributions welcome.

## MOTAT

The Association has become an affiliated member of the MOTAT Society. With many years of co-operation between us, formal membership was appropriate.

## Grandslam

After three years of Wednesday mornings by the boys the replica 24000 lb Grand Slam is complete and ready for its final paint job. It will be exhibited alongside the Lancaster at MOTAT.

## Badges

Official NZBCA badges are still available and all veteran aircrew members should have received their special blue background model. These are only for veterans and are free.

Associate membership continues to grow and these members receive the black background model.

This membership is open to all friends and family and carries a once only \$15 fee.

Members were surprised to see that their membership card coincided with the last three digits of their service number. No, it wasn't a coincidence.

## Songs

There's always been songs in the mess with special ones for pilots, navigators, gunners and so on. I have heard them sung at luncheons, reunions and on bus trips often with a 'da de da' at the naughty bits.

Have you got a favourite or two, and time to jot it down for us. All contributions welcome.

## Photo Records / Archives

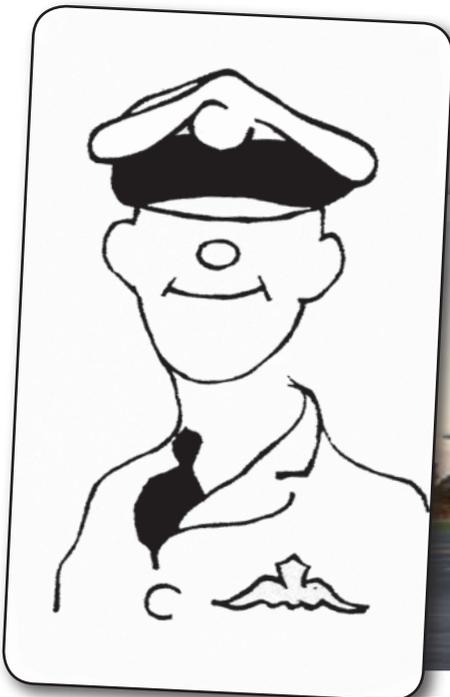
If you would like to check for details on RAAF friends or squadrons try [www.awm.gov.au/search/collections](http://www.awm.gov.au/search/collections) or [www.cas.awm.gov.au/item/uk\\_o212](http://www.cas.awm.gov.au/item/uk_o212)

For a similar service here go to [www.nat.lib.govt.nz/digital](http://www.nat.lib.govt.nz/digital)

Both lots of records can be located easily using Google.

## Prune

Remember him, rumour has it he lived to father a large family, many who apparently work not only in Government (local and regional) but have broken through into public companies. No confirmation required.



## Archives

Many thanks to all those who have opened their photo albums and log books to be copied. Some of the most mundane pictures were priceless. Charlie Shepherd's shots of ground crew at Feltwell in 1940-41 were gems.

We now have archives of over 2,000 photographs and are looking for more. If we can copy material at your place or ours please contact us.

This archive is being used increasingly by veterans and their families looking for pictures of friends, aircraft and airfields. Two television production companies have recently chosen pictures for Bomber Command and RNZAF documentaries.

All photographs are acknowledged by name. So please keep the material coming.

## The War Was Apparently A Numbers Game

The US statisticians have completed this list for discussion and argument:

US built aircraft	276,000	
Lost in Combat	23,000	
Lost in USA	14,000	
So where did the others go?		
And the most prolific aircraft in WWII – US dollars		
Yak series	30,000+	
Me109	30,480	
FW 190	29,001	
Spitfire	20,351	
Liberator	18,482	at \$215,516 each
P.51 Mustang	15,875	at \$51,572 each
P.47 Thunderbolt	15,686	at \$85,578 each
JU88	15,000	
Hurricane	14,533	
P40 Kittyhawk	13,738	at \$44,892 each
B17 Fortress	12,731	
Corsair	12,571	
Hellcat	12,275	
And Mosquito	7,780	
Lancaster	7,377	



## Queen unveils RAF Bomber Command Memorial

The Queen unveiled the memorial to over 55,000 airmen of Bomber Command who died in WWII.

A £6m memorial to the 55,573 airmen of Bomber Command who died during World War II has been unveiled by the Queen.

At the ceremony in London's Green Park, Chief of the Air Staff Sir Stephen Dalton said Bomber Command's "service and raw courage" had been recognized.

Some 6,000 veterans and families of the deceased watched a Lancaster bomber drop thousands of poppies in a fly past.

Bomber Command Association chairman Malcolm White said it was clear that the memorial's message included a sense of reconciliation.

"That's why it's writ large on the wall, 'We remember those of all countries who died in 39 – 45,'" he said.



### At the scene – Alex Kleiderman, BBC News

Hundreds of Bomber Command veterans have been taking a close-up look at the new memorial in London's Green Park honouring the sacrifice of 55,573 of their comrades.

They crowded around the bronze statues of seven Lancaster bomber airmen and had their pictures taken with family members.

Earlier, there had been applause as the Queen unveiled the memorial.

Veterans described it as "impressive" and "moving".

About 5,000 had watched the dedication service on a big screen in the "salute area", a short walk away. The event was organized by the RAF Benevolent Fund, which will look after maintenance of the memorial and is now seeking to raise £1.5m to help cover costs.

Russell Oldmeadow, 90, from Canberra, Australia, a Lancaster pilot during WWII, was one of a number of Commonwealth airmen present.

"My brother was killed – that's one of the reasons why I'm here," he said.

"But it's also a great occasion and I'm privileged. The memorial is absolutely magnificent."

Air Chief Marshal Dalton said: "Many of those who gave us our freedom, and to whom this memorial is dedicated, cannot join us physically, but their spirit is certainly here."

"For their bravery and sacrifice which helped to give us our freedom, we will never forget them."

Doug Radcliffe, secretary of the Bomber Command Association, read an extract from WWI poem "For the Fallen."

The repetition of the final words, "We will remember them," by all gathered at the ceremony, was followed by a trumpeter playing the "Last Post" while veterans and

current service personnel saluted.

The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh departed after the dedication ceremony, leaving the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall to meet Bomber Command veterans.

"I told him I flew 72 operations and he was surprised," said 89 year old Rupert Noye, from Totton, Hampshire. He said the Prince asked what it was like and I said "Cold – I was a rear gunner. It's cold at the back."

Mr Noye added: "Its sheer luck if you survive, doing that many ops."

The memorial features a 9ft high sculpture of seven Bomber Command aircrew.

The memorial, designed by Liam O'Connor and built in Portland stone, features a bronze 9ft high sculpture of seven aircrew.

Sculptor Philip Jackson said the tone of the work was reflective and portrayed men returning from a mission: "I chose the moment when they get off the aircraft and they've dumped all their heavy kit on to the ground."

The memorial also has a roof made of aluminium reclaimed from a Handley Page Halifax III bomber shot down over Belgium in May 1944.

An inscription says the memorial "also commemorates those of all nations who lost their lives in the bombing of 1939 – 1945."

Pilot Alen Biffen, 87, said: "I am so glad that at long last Bomber Command is being remembered not only for what it achieved but also for the lives of the young men who never came back.

"Many of them were boys. I myself added a year to my age at 16 so that I could join the air force."

Almost half of the 125,000 men of Bomber Command died, many killed by night



fighters and anti-aircraft fire in raids over occupied Europe.

The ceremony is the culmination of a five-year campaign, spearheaded by the late Bee Gees singer Robin Gibb.

The Bomber Command Memorial Appeal secured funding from public donations and private donors John Caudwell, Lord Ashcroft and Richard Desmond.

The RAF Benevolent Fund will take over guardianship of the memorial.

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## **'Who Betrayed The Bomber Boys?'**

### **Yesterday Channel, Review**

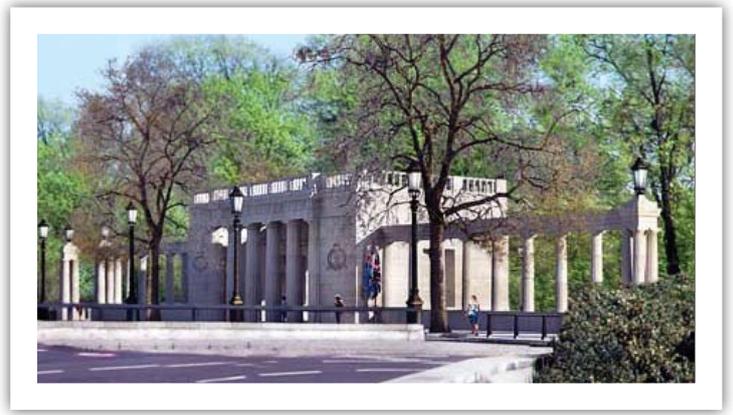
Iain Hollingshead reviews *'Who Betrayed the Bomber Boys?'*, a Yesterday documentary that explores the achievements of the RAF Bomber Command in the Second World War.

History, they say, is written by the victors. And yet not all victors are given equal space in the history books. In the last decade new monuments have commemorated everyone from the women of the Second World War to the animals of 20th-century conflict. Meanwhile, the airmen of RAF Bomber Command, who fought with almost unimaginable bravery throughout the Second World War, suffering 55,573 losses and winning 19 Victoria Crosses, have gone seven decades without proper public recognition.

Yesterday, thanks in part to a Daily Telegraph campaign which has raised more than £1 million from our readers, a Bomber Command Memorial was finally unveiled in Green Park. Even this event, attended by senior members of the Royal family, has not been entirely free of controversy. The BBC has come under fire for only providing live coverage of the event on its news channel (highlights were broadcast yesterday at 5.00pm on BBC Two), while a recent Guardian blog questioned the "celebration of perceived British war crimes".

Who Betrayed the Bomber Boys? (Yesterday) was therefore a timely reminder of what it was that the public tried so hard to forget after the war. Expertly narrated by Stephen Fry, it included wonderful archive footage, tow Dimplebys, understatedly moving interviews with veterans and an appearance from the late Robin Gibbs, the Bee Gee, who once stumbled upon an abandoned airfield and started taking a keen interest in Bomber Command. The only bum note in an otherwise excellent documentary was a bizarre cameo from Iain Duncan Smith, making exactly the same point about the importance of the Russians as Fry had just made in the narration.

Fry, an invisible but certainly not a dispassionate narrator, made little attempt to disguise his own stated belief that Bomber Command deserves greater recognition. In what amounted to a compelling case, he argued that Britain did not set out to bomb cities; that other tactics did not work; that the Germans did it first (in Warsaw and Rotterdam, as well as in London and Coventry); that there was pressure to retaliate; that there was little other choice if we wanted



to win the war and keep our allies on side; and that the bombers did not kill nearly as many civilians as claimed by the likes of Goebbels, spinning frantically post-Dresden as the horrors of Auschwitz became known to the world.

At the beginning of the war, the RAF was often coming off second best in the skies, losing up to half its aircraft on every bombing mission. Daylight raids on Germans who were attacking merchant ships led to particularly catastrophic losses. It was almost impossible to navigate at night, often relying on a combination of the stars and peering anxiously out of the window. Only one in 10 bombers got within five miles of its target, whatever time they flew.

Meanwhile, there was huge pressure to do something in return for the Blitz, which killed around 43,000 civilians and injured 50,000 more. As Mike Lewis, a Canadian pilot, put it: "You can't have experienced the Blitz without getting a very natural human reaction of wanting to punch back. So I punched back."

The fist in that punch were the men of Bomber Command, volunteers with an average age of 22 who were not expected to survive longer than two weeks. They were feted as heroes by the public and a media who made little secret of the fact that the British were bombing civilians. It was, after all, an effective tactic. The Germans had to divert 70 per cent of their fighter planes from the Russian front, as well as 50,000 guns. And while many have criticized the bombing of Dresden in particular, the war was far from over in February 1945: British civilians continued to be killed for another six weeks; the Allied Forces, who still hadn't entered Germany, would experience another 96,000 casualties in February and March alone.

Political support, however, was more complicated. It was repeatedly denied in the House of Commons that targets were anything other than military. In his VE day speech, Churchill praised all branches of the Armed Forces except Bomber Command. It was, this programme concluded, a "betrayal of the aircrews who had flown and died for the freedom of Europe".

One can imagine more nuanced appraisals of the rights and wrongs of bombing innocent civilians. But after 70 years of political correctness – a lazy willingness to ignore or condemn what we have neither experienced nor can ever fully understand – this was a welcome antidote.

## **Bomber Command Commemorative Trip 2012**

It was a long journey to London in four stages, but it was an outstanding once in a lifetime experience. Two nights in Takapuna for meetings, briefings, luggage checks and final medicals and we were away 21 June to a great send-off by family, friends and Minister of Veteran Affairs. Our RNZAF 757 with friendly aircrew and cabin crew took us to our first overnight stop, Darwin, where we enjoyed drinks by the pool and al fresco dinner at a holiday resort. "I think I'll stay here instead of going to London" remarked one of our veterans.

On the flight next day King Neptune appeared with full robe and trident. At Kuala Lumpur we were VIPs provided with well upholstered coaches and military escorts. No sooner had we finished lunch then we were invited to a special afternoon tea with the Malaysian High Commissioner, and a proud group of British-Malayan army veterans who had travelled long distances to meet the New Zealand veterans. Our group responded whole heartedly to their second meal with these wonderful fellows.

Dubai impressed us with its own warm welcome, 40°C, its well watered gardens and trees, striking architecture (graffiti not encouraged!) and five star hotel.

At last we touched down at RAF Brize Norton and went by coach to our Marble Arch hotel. Customs, immigration and security of each Air Force stop were minimal, and quickly attended to by our caregivers. Our luggage was always quickly and efficiently taken to our rooms. The busy medical team, in fact the whole support group ensured a very happy trip. Our party comprised 32 veterans averaging 90 years, two delightful Air Training Corps cadets and about 50 assistants ably led by Sandy McKie and Elaine Myers-Davies.

Our first day in London was a rest day, for sleep, visiting family and friends, shopping and sight-seeing. The RAF Hendon Museum impressed us with its sheer size and well presented exhibits, namely aircraft. The group photo by the Lancaster brought the inevitable, "why can't we stand on the wings like we used to do, 67 years ago?" That evening we were guests of the High Commissioner at NZ House where we enjoyed a home away from home, with New Zealand food and wines, New Zealand people and the 'best view in London.'

The following day the journey to Runnymede was called off due to "veteran fatigue", but that didn't stop some from exploring the delights of the Oxford Street area with its cosmopolitan crowds; "Don't the Brits live here anymore?" Later that day we were in the Guildhall where we mingled with hundreds of fellow veterans – British, Canadians, Australians, South Africans and others from the Commonwealth. Photos were taken with the Mayor of London, the Marshall of the RAF and the red plumed guards complete with full body armour, swords and pikes, all amidst mediaeval splendour.



The Big Day began at 06.30 but it still took well over an hour to crawl the short distance from our hotel to Green Park where we squeezed into temporary stands close to the Bomber Command Memorial. Bottles of water and our broad-brimmed and distinctive New Zealand hats gave some comfort on a very hot day.

At last a fanfare heralded the Queen and ten seniors of the Royal Family. The dedication of the huge and magnificent memorial, and the unveiling of the 9ft bronze figures of a bomber crew, huddled close, bonded by war, five looking in vain for missing aircraft, and two looking down in grief, was overwhelming. The Queen was giving royal approval and long awaited official recognition to the achievements of Bomber Command. This was a fitting and emotional tribute to the 55,573 who died during the war, to some degree redressing the grievous wrong and political correctness that had for so long marginalized the great debt owed to Bomber Command with its huge sacrifice; even denying them a campaign medal. The well chosen words of the dedication addresses added to the atmosphere. "It is vital to remember the men of Bomber Command. Without these brave men we would probably be under Nazi occupation now." We were very conscious that we were among the 800 fortunate survivors representing the 3,500 Bomber Command aircrew who remain. Right on time we looked up to the familiar, sweet and throaty roar of the Lancaster emerging from the tree tops, trailing a shimmering cloud of red poppies against a clear, blue sky. The Queen and Royal party made their way slowly down the front rows, pausing to talk to veterans before departing.

Next morning we returned, to the last truly great monument of the two world wars that had to be built, for photographs and reflection. This Bomber Command Memorial will surely become a lasting and iconic feature of London to inspire future generations.

As usual, bottles of water were thoughtfully provided on our journey to the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede. Sited on a commanding, wooded hill, this atmospheric memorial for those with no known graves contains a seemingly endless list of names, most of them Bomber Command. We

searched for long remembered friends and squadron badges and gazed over the vast and lonely marshes to the Thames. A procession of aircraft approached from the east to slowly fade away, an appropriate tribute to missing comrades. Our Padre led us in prayer, before we continued on to our Huntingdon hotel.

We were awakened at 0600 by our good caregivers; we were to dress in our No.1s with medals, our bags to be collected and bus boarded after breakfast. With the octagon tower of Ely Cathedral visible across the Fens, we travelled to Mepal Village, one time home of 75 (NZ) Squadron. The Friends of 75 Squadron would be our hosts for the day. The Mepal Village Memorial was a little gem, with a wrought-iron fence enclosing this special place, backed by a magnificent bed of roses and mature trees full of song birds. The city of Ely band, in scarlet uniforms, the Padre's service, and A.V.M Peter Stockwell's address gave meaning to the ceremony, completed with the laying of the wreaths and The Last Post.

Lunch was provided in the old school room before continuing to lay wreaths at the Newmarket Racecourse and Feltwell memorials. A walk in the local church cemetery revealed many New Zealand graves, the final resting place of those whose aircraft didn't quite make it home.

In very much lighter mood, we enjoyed dinner at the 1650 Crown Inn, Mundford, and an hilarious chain raffle conducted by our friendly hosts in the old courtyard, once the setting for Shakespear plays, with perhaps the bard himself. It had been a 16 hour day, but one of the highlights of the trip; in fact each day was a highlight.

Sunday 1st July, our hold luggage was taken at 0900, before we did a cross-country to stay the night in Oxford and our departure from RAF Brize Norton. We retraced our steps with an extra day in Dubai, an official escort at Kuala Lumpur, a farewell dinner at Darwin, and then Whenuapai where the local contingent disappeared quietly into the night, leaving the others to stay an extra night in Takapuna.

It had been a truly momentous journey, both exhilarating and exhausting which kept amazingly to schedule, guided by our very capable leaders, Sandy McKie, Defence Force and Elaine Myers-Davies from Veteran Affairs, who had made all the right decisions in the pre-trip planning and also in the small day to day adjustments. This could not have been possible without those two thoughtful and generous



government departments. An example was the pocket-money in U.S. and Australian dollars and sterling, supplied for times when meals were not provided. The 32 veterans, the fortunate few who made the trip, were very well looked after by a large and magnificent team of 50; the aircrew and cabin crew, the luggage team, Padre, photographer, press, a very much needed medical team and of course the much appreciated caregivers – pity we couldn't take them home with us!

It was a great privilege to be the President of the veterans, the Super Vets, who continually amazed with their unfailing good humour and their endurance in typical Bomber Command manner. As our popular CAF put it – “young minds in old bodies”.

Ron Mayhill,  
President

