



NZ Bomber Command Association (Inc)

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From the President

Best wishes to you all and may 2014 be a good year.

Bomber Command has received much well-deserved recognition over the last couple of years and it is about time it included the ground crews. There were many hazards flying in war time, not all of them of the

enemy's making, but engine or structural failure were near the bottom of the list.

Planes were patched, problems fixed and parts replaced with amazing speed. Aircraft flew in almost all kinds of weather while the ground crews often toiled outside without any shelter from penetrating rain, sleet and wind. Many of the ground crew were older with previous experience in various trades and were more worldly wise than the young fellows who flew their planes.

They took pride in making their plane the best in the squadron, making sure there were no last minute hold-ups and the engines started up first time and ran smoothly. No praise is too great for the hard working ground crews who made Bomber Command's achievements possible.

We must never forget the women of the WAAFs who also made a tremendous contribution in almost every section of the station. They drove tankers and tractors pulling bomb-trains and the crew trucks that took aircrew to and from the airfield dispersals. No ground job was more vital and responsible than in the control tower where WAAFs coped with emergencies while getting the planes airborne or down safely.

The ground crews and aircrews met regularly around their plane and strong friendships were forged. I remember well our ground crew coming close to see us off on our first op and the re-assuring words as we clambered up the ladder, "Don't worry, sir, our kite will always get you home."

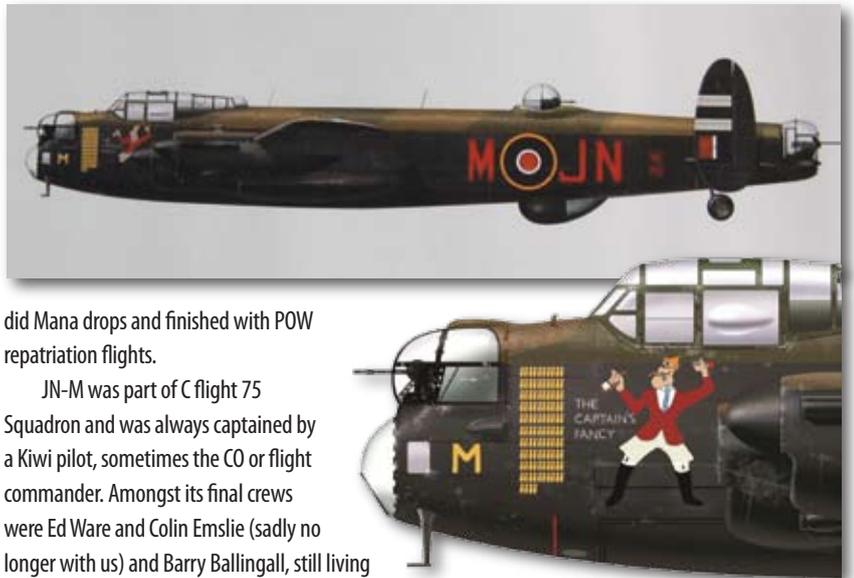
The Memorial Lancaster at MOTAT

The Association is rightly proud of the fine aircraft now on display. Several hundred thousand hours of work by veterans and associates and a similar amount of money has given us a fine exhibit. While no longer Wednesday's and Sunday's see dozens of volunteers turn up, we still muster half a dozen every week as the interest by veterans families just grows and grows.

When WU13, NX 665 was stripped of its Aeronavale white and repainted in camouflage, the executive team, Bill Simpson and John Barton settled on a 75 Squadron AA code for the starboard side and 101 Squadron SR code for the other. The selection of 75 was obvious but another squadron was required as the majority of NZBCA members did not fly with 75.

And so to today. As part of the update program being done on our displays at MOTAT, we have looked at adding a piece of nose art to the Lancaster to add to its significance.

The art selected is that of NE181 JN-M The Captains Fancy. The aircraft flew on over 100 operations,



did Mana drops and finished with POW repatriation flights.

JN-M was part of C flight 75 Squadron and was always captained by a Kiwi pilot, sometimes the CO or flight commander. Amongst its final crews were Ed Ware and Colin Emslie (sadly no longer with us) and Barry Ballingall, still living in Wanganui.

The repainting of the codes and artwork will be done by hand by Osborne Signs and costs will be met by the NZBCA reserve fund and the Lancaster Maintenance fund.

We would appreciate your comments, especially regarding what to replace the present starboard AA-N codes with.

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At The-New-Zealand-Bomber-Command-Association

Membership is free to RAF Bomber Command Veterans. Family and friends are most welcome as associate members (\$15 fee).

Contributions to the NZBCA news are always welcome.

War History Online – News:

Bomber Command centre to 'echo' Lancaster shape

British Military Records:

A centre dedicated to Bomber Command will be built in a design "echoing the crouching beauty" of one of its most famous aircraft, the Lancaster bomber. The centre in Lincoln – to be named after the aircraft's designer, Roy Chadwick – will tell the story of more than 55,000 personnel killed in WWII reports the BBC.

The Lancashire -born engineer designed for Manchester aviation company Avro. Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Trust (LBCMT) said the centre could have "no better name". LBCMT's Nicky Barr said the centre would "help provide an understanding of the effect the campaign had on the civilian population in continental Europe and at home".

Steel spire

She said the centre's design was based on the layout of a Lancaster Bomber, "echoing the crouching beauty of its form". She added that the name had been chosen because the trust "felt that Roy's influence and connection was of such great note that there could be no better name for the centre".

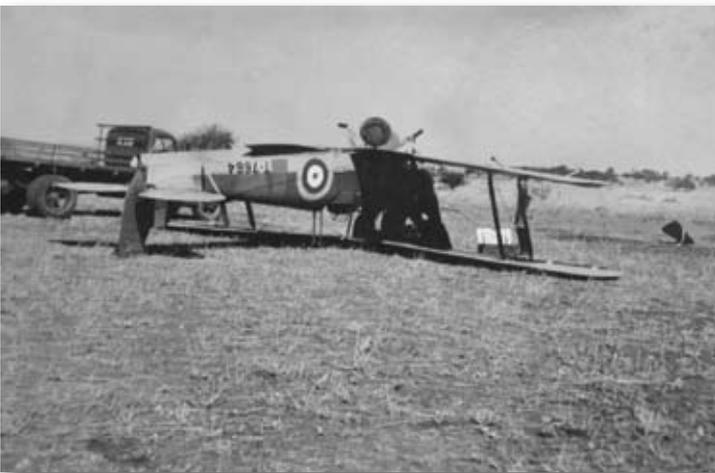
The Avro Lancaster is one of World War Two's most recognisable British aircraft. It is most famous as the aircraft involved in the Dambuster raids, which saw 19 Lancasters attack German dams with Sir Barnes Wallis's "bouncing bombs" in 1943. The Chadwick Centre will explain the story of Bomber Command and include details of the 55,573 personnel who lost their lives in raids over Europe between 1939 and 1945, the highest loss rate of any major branch of the British armed forces. The trust's plans for the site also include the construction of a 50m (164ft) steel spire engraved with the names of the 25,611 airmen who died while based in Lincolnshire.

The spire will face Lincoln Cathedral, a landmark used by many pilots and navigators as a beacon to let them know they had returned home safely. The trust also plans to create a database of all 125,000 airmen, ground crew and support staff, who were part of Bomber Command in World War Two.



Prangs

Strangely these pictures of prize prangs are all from ground crew veterans.



War Vet Still Flying after all these Years

Dick Perry NZ422790

It was a nice November day. A fine day for a plane ride. So at about 1pm, Dick Perry and his six mates took off from England headed to Cologne, Germany.

They weren't going to the historic city for a late-fall picnic on the banks of the Rhine River, though. They were men on a mission. A bombing mission.

It was a pleasant flight that day, Nov. 27, 1944, a month before his 21st birthday. Until they reached their destination. That's when enemy flak started flying at them from all angles. It was his 13th bombing mission into enemy territory and Dick had never seen so many shell bursts at the same time.

"Drop those bombs and let's get out of here," the other four crew members screamed at pilot Robbie Robertson and Perry along with a few expletives.

But they had a target to hit, a marshalling yard. Robertson and Dick persevered despite the sight of aircraft spiraling downward to their demise. Somehow they came out unscathed.

"As long as (Robertson) continued to fly the plane I would continue to handle the bombs," Dick Perry now 89, is a mechanical engineer who continues to work five days a week as a senior engineer emeritus for DEC Engineering in New Westminster. "I was mad at them for screaming and yelling. They were swearing at me."

It is the service of men and women like Dick during the Second World War and other battles fought throughout history that will be recognized in Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Dick Perry grew up in New Zealand and after finishing his final exam in college in 1942 he didn't know what career path he wanted to take. The military was seeking young men for the air force, and although he didn't know what he was getting himself into he signed up anyway.

"All I knew was that I wanted to fly".

He trained on Tiger Moths for a few months before being shipped to Southern Ontario for more training. There he not only earned his wings but met his future wife, Audrey. But after his training was completed, he was supposed to be sent back to New Zealand and he didn't want that – he'd been trained to be in the war.

"Everybody at that time wanted to get into the war. After all, we were young, we were invincible."

So he went to the commanding officer and asked him, "I have my wings, is there any way I can change that?"

The officer found a place for him in England but training to be a navigator and bomber.

"It's not as a pilot, but you'll probably find you'll get an opportunity to do a lot of flying anyway," the officer told him.

On arrival in England, he latched onto Robertson, an Australian. They decided to form their own crew and make it easy for the superior officers to put them into action.

"You go after the gunners and I'll go after the navigators and a wireless operator and we'll see if we can get us a crew," Perry told Robertson.

So they did, and the ploy worked.

"They were excellent," says Dick of the crew. "That's one of the reasons we got through the war."

When they got their first bombing assignments they weren't

nervous, they were excited. The first flight to Kleve, near the Dutch border, was fairly uneventful. A week later was a different story. They went on two raids on

Duisberg within 24 hours, first during the day and then at night when they could see flak bursting all around them with big balls of smoke rising up from a city lit up by fires from the bombing.

When they returned they had the usual de-briefing before heading off for a hearty breakfast.

"We always looked forward to the bacon and eggs. It was the only time we had bacon and eggs," says Perry of their post-bombing meals.

On their sixth raid the aircraft next to them blew up for no obvious reason, which was unnerving. But most of the time when they heard other planes had been lost they shrugged and forged on.

"We had a job to do and we did it," Dick says.

When it was over, he felt participating in the Second World War was worth it. "We'd had done a good job. We had come out of it. We were still alive."

If they hadn't succeeded, I believe England wouldn't have survived and the world would be quite a different place.

The reasons his generation went to war are unquestioned. But he says the same can't be said for much of the combat the world has seen since then.

"You wonder why they're doing it. Why is the United States getting involved in the war in Iraq?" It was the same about Vietnam."

After the war, Dick returned to New Zealand with Audrey but she didn't like it there so they returned to Canada, opting for British Columbia because her parents had moved to Vancouver Island.

He carved out a career as a mechanical engineer specializing in heating and cooling systems, becoming a technological pioneer and industry leader.

"I enjoy the work, I enjoy the people," continuing to have his hand in the profession as he nears his 90th birthday.

In addition to spending his Sundays flying Cessnas out of Boundary Bay airport, Dick has been part of a group based in Great Britain fighting to get medals for those in bomber command who died in action carrying out orders.

He says they weren't given their due because the pictures of Dresden being annihilated by bombs late in the war led to controversy over whether or not the attacks were justified.

"Dresden turned people's thinking around that we shouldn't have been bombing those cities".

That change in the political climate, however, should not have prevented the young people who lost their lives carrying out the missions from being honoured and they should be remembered, he says.

"Really . . . we only did what we were told to do."



An ERKS Memories

Geoff Pattenden, a fine upstanding erk and NZBCA member in Nelson gives us an insight to the ground crews world. It's time they were acknowledged at last by us. No Bomber Command clasp for them, no invitation to London and often, not welcome by their Squadron Association. Thank goodness it's different in this country.

An "ERKS" Memoirs 1942 – 1947

Early in 1939, and due to leave school by mid year, I was encouraged by my brother in law (a Flt/Sgt Regular RAF) to consider joining the service as a boy entrant.

In the spring of that year I applied, and sat the educational exam for entry, attaining a satisfactory pass, but unfortunately failed the medical due to a defect in my right eye. I left school a few weeks before the outbreak of WW2, taking a job as a crew member on the Southern Railway Steamship Company. The steamers plied between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, and I can remember my wage was fifteen shillings (45 hours) plus sixpence a day "danger money". Shortly after this and wanting to study for a trade I signed up as an apprentice fitter/turner with the Airspeed Oxford Company manufacturing aircraft components for the "Oxford Aircraft," a company I stayed with until my enlistment. During my early employment I like many of my buddies did voluntary war service after work. Mine was with the Portsmouth Auxiliary Fire Service as a messenger boy. I can only recollect taking one message back to base, my main time was assisting the firemen (volunteers) with dousing down fires started during the "Blitz" on the city by the Luftwaffe. I can recall an incident that occurred during the early day of those air raids. I was assisting another young man with holding the hose nozzle, plying water on a house on fire, when we heard a "phut-phut-phut" my partner shouted, "the buggers gunning us". He immediately let go of the nozzle, diving under the nearest vehicle. I was stuck holding the hose and because of the fear of whiplash if I let go, suddenly I felt a warm sensation in my crotch, yes! I was 'peeing myself with fright'.

Come August 1942 by which time many of my friends had entered one of H.M. Services, I decided to apply once more to join the RAF as an aero-engineer mechanic, was accepted and put on the reserve list to await call-up papers. This time they seemed anxious to have me. The papers duly arrived shortly before my eighteenth birthday telling me to report to No 1. Recruit Centre, Penarth, Glamorgan, South Wales on 3rd December 1942.



The train arrived in evening darkness, being late because of air raid interruptions to services. There were many young

men (boys) congregated on the station platform and we were met by a burly Flt/Sgt who formed us up into three ranks with two leading recruits carrying a white oil lamp and two recruits at the rear end carrying red lanterns. We were then marched around the town stopping periodically at unoccupied houses where six or more recruits were ordered to bed down for the night and to be ready by 6.00am next morning.

Having not eaten for most of the day the cry went out for some grub! Which was duly delivered later; spam sandwiches and hot tea. Inside the billets were iron beds with three biscuits and two blankets (no pillows) per recruit. Most of us bedded down for the night with our clothes on. We later found out that the reason for the recruits carrying the lights was because of an unfortunate accident when a vehicle had run into a squad of recruits in the blackout causing fatalities.

Next morning everybody was up bright and early for it was a brisk cold morning and all were anxious to get some hot food. The duty NCO for collecting the recruits was not so prompt, and on his arrival we were hurriedly joined up with our hungry colleagues and marched to the cookhouse, 'with lights front and rear'. Here hot porridge, scrambled eggs (powdered) and toast was available with of course the hot mug of tea. Breakfast finished, we were taken to another building where we were divided into two groups of forty and each group put into a room and told to wait until the doctor arrived. On the MO's arrival the Corporal i/c indicated half the recruits from the room to follow him and we were taken to an area and told to drop our slacks, pull up our shirts in preparation for FFI inspection. After which we were taken back to the room previously occupied. Ten minutes later the same NCO appeared, split the room in halves again to go for a FFI inspection. Some of us complaining that we had already been were told to "obey orders" get outside in the queue, and so we went quietly for another inspection.

The next visit was to the clothes store where we were issued with uniforms and other clothing where size was assessed by the issuing store person. The only personal sizes requested was for footwear and hat so when the opportunity came you made a swap with another recruit or waited for the evening session when the stores were open for exchanges. Most recruits thought that of all the issues made; our irons, (knife, fork and spoon) and mug were the most important.

The following morning after another night in the luxurious billet, (using our greatcoats as an additional blanket), after a quick breakfast we boarded a train for our journey to No. 14 RC. Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset.

At this centre we were to undertake a disciplinary course, in short, to do our "square bashing" along the promenade. On arrival (fortunately in daylight), we were formed up into a squad and with kit bags slung over our right shoulder we were marched into the town. Weston being a seaside resort on a very large estuary, the township contained a great number of boarding houses, and many owners had an agreement with the RAF

to take in airmen as boarders, and so we were allocated to our respective billets, I along with eleven other airmen was taken in by the owner and allocated a room which had two tiered bunks, for airmen per room. At first we thought the owners were going to be 'stickler', but after laying down the rules of the house he and his wife turned out to be two softies who treated us like sons and their food was always tip top, despite the rationing.

The next morning we were paraded on the promenade and after a general administration talk we were split up into squads of twenty-four airmen. Cpl. Spicer was our drill instructor and so our six weeks course of marching up and down the promenade, five and a half days a week, interspersed with rifle drill, aircraft recognition, physical training, cross country running and talks on the history of the RAF. Prior to going through this disciplinary course many of us in civilian life had been through experiences which normally a teenager would not be able to comprehend and it would be fair to say that we grew up very quickly. We were now physically and mentally past our teenage life. We had now become young men who were disciplined to accept the responsibilities that the future held.

We were now given seven days leave but had to report back to RAF Station Locking which was four miles outside of Weston-Super-Mare. The leave days passed very quickly and it was a joy to be back with family despite the occasional air raid.

On arrival back at Locking a number of us were put on standby for posting to await a vacancy on a course. Within two days a group of us were sent to 16 MU. RAF Station at Stafford in the Midlands to do general duties.

We arrived in Stafford at 1900 hours once again in darkness. Formed into a squad, lights front and rear, marched around the suburbs knocking on doors of private houses allocating one airman here two there. When it was my turn we stopped outside a very large house and three airmen were taken up to the front door for billeting but the owner (a specialist doctor), argued against taking the three of us. Eventually condescending to take one which unfortunately was me as it was obvious I was not wanted. My first three days were not very comfortable having to sleep on the examination couch in one of the consulting rooms until a bedroom was made available and things became normal. Later I discovered that these were delaying tactics used whilst the Doctor tried to cancel any billeting in his home.

My allocated duties with four other airmen whilst stationed at the MU was unloading coal from the railway sidings into bags and assisting in its distribution around the airmen's and airwomen's billets. This went on for a period of four weeks at the end of which even my muscles had muscles. Eventually my posting came through on the 16th April to report to No. 2 School of Technical Training RAF Station Cosford, Wolverhampton to attend training as an Aero-Engine Mechanic.

On arrival at the station the usual formalities of booking in were observed and the following day we started the sixteen week course. The studies commenced with the very basic fundamentals of the internal combustion engine, its lubrication and cooling systems. As weeks went by we were confronted with the intricacies of the radial and coolant cooled engines, their many components and the stripping down and servicing of each item. Some of our time was devoted to bench work where we were put to the test of hand making jigs from metal plate. Many were the wonders that we potential mechanics turned out on our first attempt. Eventually we progressed to

working on a genuine R.R. Engine which was mounted on a mobile trestle enabling us to wheel it outside for ground testing.

During the early part of the course two or three of the recruits were withdrawn as not acceptable material, this became a physiological incentive for us to work harder so at the end of the course when the trade examination results were announced we qualified as an Aircraftman 2nd class (but trade men) even though we were the lowest rank.

Before our departure on leave we were asked if we had a preference for an area we would like to be posted to. I opted for Tangmere, Thorney Island (Nr Portsmouth), or anywhere on the South Coast. Needless to say when my posting came through it was to 19 OTU Kinloss, North Scotland. So on the completion of my leave my journey north took 26 hours travel by train. I arrived at the bleakest outpost of RAF Station Kinloss, Nr. Elgin in July 1943.

On my arrival at this my first active station I was not very impressed. Having elected for a South Coast Station I was soon to learn that things don't happen that way in H.M. Services and its up to you to make the best of what you have.

So, after the usual arrival procedure I reported for duty. Servicing the engines of the 'Whitley Bomber'. Being the new boy on the Flight I was to work under the guidance of the Corporal Fitter for the first three or four days and then I was trusted to work on my own. I quickly fell in to the routine of the duties required of me and started to enjoy my new trade.

As an Operational Training Unit the station was very busy but I found life very routine. So to brighten the day the Rigger and I decided to take a flight in our plane on its next air test which normally was a 20-30 minute flight. The next day it was on so at the last minute we hopped in the side door (with the help of another ground crew) but unbeknown by the pilot or navigator the only crew aboard. This was our first flight in an aeroplane and as there was no windows to see out of, we opened up the flare shoot to see 'terra ferma'. The usual time for the air test went by and for some reason it was an hour before we landed. On arrival at the dispersal unit we quickly alighted from the side door before the pilot had cut the engines. Smirks all over our faces because our very first flight (as stowaways) and nobody knew, or so we thought. During our absence the Flt/Sgt i/c had required us both for other duties and of course we could not be found. To save embarrassment we both reported to the office admitting our misdemeanor. It was then that we caught his wrath with him lecturing us on the penalties of desertion of duties etc etc. By this time we were shaking in our boots and he asked if we would accept his punishment or have the matter referred to the Commanding Officer. Needless



to say we opted for his penalties which was seven days confined to camp and two hours extra duty each day for fourteen days. Phew! We considered ourselves lucky. Some time later it was said that the Flt/Sgt had remarked that "at least they are both prepared to fly in the plane they had serviced." Which we thought on reflection had something to do with the leniency of his punishment.

After being at 19 OTU for approximately eight weeks I was posted to 84 OTU Desborough, Northamptonshire arriving 20th September 1943.

The journey by train was long and drawn out and needless to say we arrived on Desborough railway station at 2000 hours again in complete darkness. The only person around to give us a general direction was the night duty railway porter who gave us directions to what he said was a new RAF Camp. No other means of transport available it was again kit bag on top of the backpack, shanks pony and away we went. By this time there was seven airmen who had alighted from the train. Leaving the village of Desborough travelling in the direction given by the railway porter we met two airmen cycling in the opposite direction who gave us new directions to the camp guardroom where we duly arrived thirty minutes later. Booking in we were told, "yes, it is a new RAF Station being established but there are no aircraft on site as yet and the cookhouse was closed until 0500 hours next morning when breakfast would be available." So we had no alternative but to bed down in a nearby Nissan hut for the night.

The next two days were spent walking around this widely dispersed camp finding our permanent billets, booking into various support units and most importantly the Administration HQ to get on the payroll. Shortly after the appointment of the resident Commanding Officer things began to change very quickly and with the arrival of our first aircraft, the Wellington Bomber (Wimpeys) training schedules for the aircrew started to form so we tradesmen who were to form the nucleus of the ground staff were allocated to our respective flights. Work began in earnest allowing a routine to be established for our duties as servicing ground crew. We were now able to plan ahead for any off duty hours or days.

It was whilst on one of my off duty days in the township of Kettering that I met and courted a local girl Dorothy Denton from Rothwell (two miles from Desborough). Working on aircraft on dispersed locations around the aerodrome one needed flexibility in relation to transport so we were issued with bicycles which made it easy to get around the camp generally and I found it easy to ride the short distance to Rothwell (although hilly) as the public bus service was not too convenient. Many a night one would see this lone airman riding his bicycle as fast as he could to get back to camp before midnight.

Having now spent a number of hours working on the two different types of engines I was encouraged to apply for my first promotion duly taking the examination which I applied for and passed on 1st March, 1944.

As the weeks passed by, working on engines, refueling aircraft, duty night crew, which also entailed compressor duty when the training pilot was on circuits and landings. This was an onerous task where two airmen with a mobile compressor were stationed adjacent to the landing runway so the pilot who was short of compressed air (poor taxi-ing) could stop and have the air tank topped up from the mobile compressor. The entry socket for air was approximately eight feet away from the spin-

ning propellers so the person connecting the airline had to be particularly careful. We quickly knew which pilot was good at maneuvering his aircraft on the ground.



The reality of the job we were doing was forcibly brought home to us one cold rainy night when we had been refueling the aircraft and had come into the Nissan hut to warm ourselves around the stove heater. Suddenly one of the mechanics burst into flames and in panic ran out of the hut. We took off after him but by the time we were able to roll him on the ground to extinguish the flames his burns were so serious that he later passed away in hospital. One of the dangers when filling the wing tanks is the danger of overspill of fuel as the tank gets full and can contaminate the airman's clothing. This can happen particularly at night in inclement weather so from then on if we had been refueling we would remove any outer raincoats before coming into the hut.

In the beginning of May I applied for examination for my next promotion to Leading Aircraftsman. To ensure success I again swatted up my knowledge on both types of engines and achieved the necessary standard. So subject to Station Standing Orders I was promoted to Leading Aircraftsman with a further pay rise of two shillings a day. What do I do with all this money?

Whilst on duty one night all flying was cancelled and we were delegated as 'duty crew' for any aircraft that might request to land in an emergency. Around midnight a Stirling Bomber was requesting to land but during the process lost contact. Shortly afterwards a loud explosion was heard with resulting fire clouds and smoke in the distance. We were quickly mustered to go out and find the crashed aircraft and mount guard duty until morning. We set off in a truck in the direction of the fire which was a gully on the right of a hill between Desborough and Rothwell. On arrival at what was once a wooden copse we found complete devastation with burning aircraft parts scattered around and the stench of burning flesh.

By this time the Duty Officer had arrived and inspected what he could of the area and before leaving gave the Corporal i/c instructions to mount a perimeter guard allowing no outsider near any part of the remains of the aircraft. Needless to say within a short space of time voices were to be heard coming towards the crash site and they were obviously American Servicemen. The usual challenge was immediately called out by me with the RAF Corporal immediately arriving alongside. As the intruders

advanced to be recognised, four officers appeared who had obviously been drinking, having said they had come to get some souvenirs. On hearing this the Corporal stated that the aircraft was RAF responsibility and would they please leave the area. Not to be outdone, the Captain tried to pull rank on the Corporal who responded by ordering myself and the other guard to put a bullet up the spout of our rifles and escort the Americans away from our area. This must have made them realise that the Corporal was serious and discretion being the better part of valour they wisely departed. I often wonder what would have happened if they had insisted on their original intentions.

When morning came we had the unenviable task of locating the bodies of the aircrew which were all badly burnt and the stench of burnt flesh was horrendous. On our return to camp none of the duty crew, even though we had just finished ten hours guard duty, could eat any breakfast. We all just wanted to shower and try to wash some of the unfortunate stench of burnt flesh away from our bodies and climb into bed. A few days later the deceased members of the aircrew who were overseas personnel were given a military funeral at the town cemetery in Desborough to which all the duty crew voluntarily attended to pay their respects.

Our routine servicing of the 'Whimpys' continued and many times I would request permission to fly on 'test flights' prior to the routine training of aircrew. Acceptance depended on the instructor pilot and my own F/Sgt maintenance, but in most instances would be in the affirmative. Again the routine was interrupted by my temporary posting to a recently built aerodrome at Harrington, approximately sixteen miles from 84 OTU. This was the first drome built by the American Construction Corp. under the Lend Lease Scheme and on its completion was to be ceremoniously handed over to the RAF so it was pretty obvious that 'high politics' were involved. It fell to the Officer Commanding 84 OTU to accept the aerodrome as a satellite airfield to use for Training 'circuits and landing'. On the specified day a squad of approximately one hundred RAF airmen and officers were sent to Harrington to partake in the ceremony. This started off with a drive pass of all the American Construction Equipment bulldozers, front end loaders, mechanical rollers, tipper trucks, jeeps, lorries, tractors, cranes, you name it and the Yanks had it on display.

Next followed two hundred GI's with rifles at the slope led by a Military Band playing the Star-Spangled Banner. Whilst at the rear the RAF contingent dressed in their best blue, webbing belts and bayonets with rifles at the slope, marched along doing their best to look like guardsmen on parade. At the time, unbeknown to us all, this was being recorded on World Pathe News, (the only time I've been a film extra).

When all the formalities were completed most of the Americans moved out and a nucleus of RAF personnel were temporarily posted to take over so that aircrew training landings and take-offs (circuits and bumps) could commence.

The living quarters of the airmen left a lot to be desired. Doors would not shut properly, being out of square and the mortar between the brickwork was really shoddy, so that one could see daylight through the walls at the end of Nissan Huts. Windows could not be opened, not that you wanted them to, when you were getting all the cold air through the walls. But as I said somewhere at the beginning of these Memoirs, in the service you make the best of what you have.

Flying training continued for a short while until the concrete

runways started to collapse and break up making it very dangerous for the training aircraft. Eventually a decision was made at a higher level to abandon Harrington as U/S for operating for RAF Training Command and the station was handed back to the Americans, (without any ceremony). Our transfer back to RAF Desborough was a welcome relief with all personnel quickly settling back into a routine. It should be noted however that the many faults were corrected by the Army Construction Corp. and their Army Air Force operated out of Harrington with Liberator Bombers quite successfully.

On the 12th September 1944 I was posted to 128 Squadron, RAF Station, Wyton, Huntingdonshire, part of No. 8 Group as a Light Bomber Night Striking Force. The Squadron Commanding Officer was Wg. Cdr. K.J. Burroughs DFC. 8 Group Commanding Officer was Air Vice Marshall Don Bennett. CB. CBE. DSO.

My arrival on the Squadron coincided with its second operation (one aircraft) over Berlin on the 13th September (8th was the first op.) and was repeated on the 15th the day the Squadron officially came into operation. By the end of the month the squadron had four Mossies which were mainly serviced by the ground staff from one of the large hangars situated adjacent to the airfield. At this early stage I was fortunate to be able to work alongside engine fitter tradesmen who were familiar with the merlin engines, and so by the time the Squadron was up to full strength my knowledge and experience had a good foundation for flight work.



Full strength attained we were moved out to a dispersal site the other side of the airfield and divided into A & B flights. Each aircraft being allocated a permanent flight mechanic engines and a rigger airframes which I feel was done to establish a bond between the aircrew and mechanics whilst other trades such as electricians, instrument makers, radar mechanics, armourers would all service a number of planes.

On return from an operational night flight it was the responsibility of the N/Flying Duty Ground Crew to immediately refuel the aircraft, check engine oil levels and make the aircraft secure. In preparation for servicing checks to be carried out the following day by its regular tradesmen.

The F/Sgts (tradesman) responsibility was to oversee and administer the work to be carried out to ensure the maximum efficiency of all tradesmen so as to achieve one hundred percent serviceability. On reporting for duty the airmen responsible would check with the F/Sgt any report in the Form 700 by the pilot, concerning any abnormalities of the aircraft's performance. If the fault was of a 'major nature' depending on the

pressure of work and the availability of other aircraft, the F/Sgt would make arrangements for the plane to go into the hangar for servicing, alternatively, all other work would be carried out on the dispersal unit. This type of work would vary daily and could entail a number of jobs, eg; oil radiator change, spark plugs replaced, magneto, or points replaced, gaskets replaced. It was usual for these jobs to be conducted under supervision of the Corporal fitter, responsible for a number of aircraft.

As mechanic for the engines I would check that all petrol tanks are full, that the glass connecting tubes situated in the drop tanks are intact and that the oil and coolant tanks (now cool) are at the right level. As the engine cowlings were removed I would ensure that all fixing clips (buttons) are working correctly, including prop spinners. Inspection of both engines would then be carried out. Firstly for any obvious leakage (stains). Checking all nuts are secured with copper locking wire replaced where necessary. No leakage from any tubing ensuring all jubilee clips are tight. All connecting cables to spark plugs are secure and any linkage controls are greased and free moving. It was important that the engine nacelle was kept as clean as possible so that a quick identification of any minor leakage could be made. It was usual that flight servicing be carried out in all weather conditions.

When inspections and the necessary work was completed on my kite K--King, I and the Cpl. fitter would ground test the engines for maximum revs each of the dual magnetos being switched off in turn to check the drop in engine revolutions that optimum boost pressure and propellor pitch control were within the specified range. Satisfied that all met the required standard I would then report to the Flt/Sgt i/c and sign the Form 700 so that the aircraft could be listed as "May Fly" on the squadrons serviceability list. This being completed it was usual to assist where necessary on any other servicing on the flight.

It quickly became obvious that pilot F/O Douglas Swain RAAF and navigator P/O Hagley RAF were to become my regular crew and at the first opportunity on a test flight when the navigator was not required to accompany his pilot I volunteered to accompany him, which was readily accepted by Dougie, (of course having previously had permission from my F/Sgt).

Squadron life was different to being on an OTU. Somehow you seemed to become involved in everything that was going on around you and we worked long hours which built up a good team spirit throughout the maintenance crews. On occasion when there was a stand down from operations the inevitable 'get together' between air and ground crews would be arranged down at the local pub, and believe me, they were hectic. On these occasions it was an opportunity to let off steam for the young flyers who lived for today not knowing what tomorrow might bring and for the ground crews who were appreciative of the stresses and strains that they were submitted to. So that our recognition could only be expressed by ensuring that our contribution to their return to base was always at the maximum possible which may in some way have helped to build the '128 Squadron spirit'.

Unfortunately, some operations had their dark side. One in particular I recall when we sent eight kites off on a combined raid to Berlin. On their return to England a thick fog suddenly clamped down over base. It was too late to divert the planes to another airfield and petrol was dangerously low. The Flight Commander managed to land, followed by two others, (New

Zealanders) who run off the runway. The remaining five were requested to set their aircraft towards the coast and bale out. On this occasion K--King was being flown by another Aussie, Flt/Lt Heckmann whose navigator baled out but when he (the pilot) tried to escape through the top hatch his harness webbing got caught up trapping him in the aircraft as the fuel ran out and the plane went into a dive. His radio communication with base was switched on and base could hear the dilemma he was in struggling to extricate himself as the plane went out of control and exploded. That night we lost five planes and the Squadron was in deep shock as the remaining flyers concerned in the debacle were later returned to Wyton from wherever they had landed by parachute. Some who were injured were taken to hospital near where they had landed before transferring to RAF Hospital Ely. This was the only time I had lost a pilot. During the next two or three days ground crews were busy servicing the replacement aircraft and with the Squadron being brought back up to strength, operations began in earnest once more.

I can recall one particular day whilst working on the flight awaiting the return of some of our aircraft who had been on a daylight sortie over the continent. There had been a request from a pilot who had been on a test flight for a belly landing on the grass alongside the runway, due to a hydraulics failure. Not knowing the reason why at the time, the first we the ground crew knew of the crash, was seeing the Mosquito ploughing along the grass. Then three of us immediately jumped on our bikes, pedaling as fast as we could towards the kite to help the crew. However a duty officer arrived first, assisted the pilot out and into his vehicle (luckily uninjured). The navigator had been instructed by the pilot to bale out by the pilot. As he drove away towards us he shouted, "keep clear its going to explode!" We quickly turned around, each riding his bike as fast as he could like Olympic Sprint Cyclist's. It transpired that the danger was the possibility of fire from the spilt fuel. The pilot I discovered many years later was Tom Empson one of our New Zealanders.



At Christmastime 1944 the Squadron was placed on 'stand down'. The weather being very cold, foggy and wet, hence no likelihood of any flying. So without hesitation I quickly got my RAF issue bicycle out, left camp by an unauthorised exit and started riding the forty miles to Rothwell to spend Christmas with my fiancé and her family. I left at midnight two days later, cycling through the night in similar weather. I arrived back at camp covered in frost but in time to report for work.

Many and varied were the operational targets that the

Squadron undertook. One in particular was the 'Skip Bombing' of rail tunnels, upsetting communications. Which from all accounts the aircrews reported was a joy to see. Waiting for the train to go into the tunnel before placing the bomb behind it. The last bombing raid by the Squadron was an attack on Kiel on the night of the 2/3 May and on the 8th May 1945 hostilities ceased in Europe and VE Day was officially announced. Many were the joyous celebrations around the camp and country as that night the lights everywhere were switched back on, a phenomenon which meant so much to free people.

During the next few weeks work on the Squadron was very low key by comparison to our previous activities. Whilst the heavy bombers were used to supply food to the starving people of the formerly occupied countries, and return with the Allied forces POW's back to England. Someone in high authority decided that in recognition of their work the ground crew who serviced Bomber Command, that they be given the chance to fly over Europe to see some of the havoc that had been created by the Allied Air Forces. I quickly volunteered and on the due day, kitted out with a parachute, I boarded one of the Squadron's Mosquitos for my 'Cooks Tour' of the continent. Being only a two seater plane, I lay in the nose of the aircraft for the whole of the four hour flight as we flew over towns, cities, industrial areas, rocket sites, canals and rivers at a reasonably low altitude viewing all the devastation caused by the Allied Bombers. Meanwhile the navigator would give a running commentary over the intercom explaining as much as possible, and so the tour filled in the missing parts of what the ground crews had been involved in.



Shortly after, 128 Squadron was moved to RAF Station, Warboys, Huntingdonshire (approx. 15 miles from Wyton). there we were to await the arrival of special Mosquitos for service in the Far East, in the war against Japan. Fortunately this did not materialise because Japan capitulated after the dropping of the Atom Bomb and hostilities ceased around the world (for a short while) and VJ Day was announced on the 6th June 1945.

One month later on 7th July, Dorothy Denton and I were married in the local church at Rothwell. On my return to camp preparations were underway by the Medical Officer for my admission to RAF Hospital Ely, due to an ongoing medical complaint that I had on. Fortunately my admission was only for 14 days as a walking patient but on my return to Warboys the Squadron had already been moved to the Continent. Having been placed on light duties for one month, I was not permitted to join them, so

was taken off the Squadron strength. For a short period I was put to work in the Technical Library until my posting came through to RAF Station Upwood, Huntingdonshire.

After going through the usual formalities and being allocated a bed in a barrack block (this was a pre-war RAF station), I reported to the Station Warrant Officer to establish my duties and was directed into the Central Registry Office in Station Headquarters. I found the work most tedious, after being on aircraft maintenance, so began looking for more interesting employment. My month period of light duties having terminated, I requested the opportunity to work back in my trade but was told there was no vacancies on the station. Around this time the SWO's Orderly was being demobbed so I applied for, and was accepted, and took on the duties of Administrative Clerk.

Working in the SWO's Office had many advantages. Most leave passes short or long went through our system and many times I would issue the pass out to an airman who had been on night duty and wanted to get away early. Even the station police would ask to have their leave pass early, and I was not game to refuse. I knew that when I walked through the gates at the weekend without a pass, I would never be pulled up. My efforts to ensure my work standards were at a high level must have been appreciated by the SWO for he made sure that I remained permanently on his staff for the rest of my service in the RAF.

Christmas 1946 I was on official leave, having made arrangements with the NCO i/c Demobilization Office at the camp to wire me if my release came through. On the 28th December 1946 I received a telegram to return to camp as my release was due on the 2nd January 1947. This I can assure you was the quickest return to camp that any serviceman has ever made. On my arrival back, and having completed the necessary clearance dockets, I was sent to the Release Centre, South Blackpool, Lancashire. Here, after a cursory medical examination (FFI inspection not included), and in the receipt of all the necessary documentation, I was taken along to a clothing store and issued with a dark grey pinstriped suit, trilby hat and shoes. (You kept your previous issue of service greatcoat, underwear, shirts and socks). Then it was down to the rail station homeward bound. On my arrival I decided to knock on the front door, which was opened by my wife Dorothy, who found it hard to recognise her husband in his ghastly grey pinstriped suit and trilby hat. The effective date of my release was 27th February 1947, and for four years and six months service, I received a gratuity of ninety pounds.

G.N. Pattenden



The Flight Mechanic

He wears a suit of faded blue, no badge upon his breast,
You'll find more streaks of dirty oil than medals on his chest.
He wields a hefty spanner and piece of dirty rag,
While other fellows shoot the Hun, and add a fighter to their bag.
He works in sleet, in mud and rain, and curses the blinking war
And wonders ninety times a day what he joined the Air Force for.
He's only a Flight Mechanic, nothing more or less,
With a greasy suit of overalls in place of battledress.
But he strikes a blow at Gerry, with his honest British skill
As sure as the pilot who delivers the bombs
Or the gunner who makes the kill.
So when you read of bombings or a Messerschmitt shot down,
When you've covered flying heroes with honour and renown,
When you've given all the DFMs and DFCs and such
Just think of the Flight Mechanic - he does not ask for much.
Just shake him by his oily hand and tell him he did a lot
To make those roaring engines safe for the man who fired the shot.

Anon



627 Squadron 1944

To the Armourers

How often have you sat at home
And heard on the news at nine
That our bombers have raided districts
On and around the Rhine?
And have you thought as you sat there
In the comfort of your easy chair
Of all the blokes who never fly
And so unnoticed get passed by?
No wings or brevets on their breast
In ragged blue they do their best
To load the bombs and fill the guns
To blast the daylight from the Huns.
A job of danger, a job of skill,
The power the aircrews need to kill.
So the Armourers let us raise
A handshake true and a word of praise
And when victory comes to this fair land
Don't just forget that scruffy band.

Anon



10 Squadron 1940

Maintainers Lament

Through the history of world aviation
Many names have come to the fore
Great deeds of the past in our memory will last
As they're joined by more and more.

When man first started his labour
In his quest to conquer the sky
He was designer, mechanic and pilot
And he built a machine that would fly.

But somehow the order got twisted
And then, in the public's eye
The only man that could be seen
Was the one who knew how to fly.

The pilot was everybody's hero
He was brave, he was bold, he was grand
As he stood by his battered old airplane
With his goggles and helmet in hand.

To be sure, these pilots all earned it
To fly you have got to have guts
And they blazed their names in the Halls of Fame
On wings with bailing wire struts.

But for each of these flying heroes
There were thousands of little renown
And these were the men who worked on the planes
But kept their feet on the ground.

We all know the name of Lindbergh
And we've read of his flight into fame
But think, if you can, of his maintenance man
Can you remember his name.

And think of our wartime heroes
Bader and Gibson's lot
Can you tell me the names of their crew chiefs?
A thousand to one you cannot.

Now pilots are highly trained people
And the wings are not easily won
But without the work of the maintenance man
Our pilots would march with a gun.

So when you see mighty jet aircraft
On their way through the air
The grease stained man with the wrench in his hand
Is the man who put them there.

The Psalm of the Redundant Bods

- 1 And it came to pass that the Germites and the Japites did go for a burton. And the erks rejoiced saying unto one another: now goeth the uniform and on cometh the bowler hat.
- 2 But the rejoicing was followed by a great pestilence and a mighty exodus, and the prophets called Records did sound an alarm, saying: Get thee hence, for Transport Command cometh in great wrath. And the erks fled, leaving behind them their beloved Lancs, and they said to one and other: we are redundant.
- 3 And in their multitudes did they arrive at Cardington, even from Gloucester and St. Athan. And nightly were the queues, even unto the ablutions and many were the double bunks.
- 4 And two erks said unto each other: we will go to the release section there to get griff. And their oppos went a great bundle upon this wise decision. And the scribe therein knowing not what day it was, and borrowing a fag, said: I cannot cope. And it was apparent to all that he did possess a great twitter. Being also in a flat spin.
- 5 Then did the bods bind in their bespaces saying one to another: are we not cheesed. But there arose one in their midst, a minister called labour, and he did bind like the clappers saying unto the War Lords: digitus extractum, which being translated meaneth: get a move on.
- 6 Then were the Inns filled and the bods rejoiced again, saying one to another: blessed are they which are in early release groups for they shall receive their bowler hats.



Ode to a New Zealander

(By WAAF) (1944) Stockton-on-Tee

The boys from New Zealand have stolen our hearts,
 As they walk around England so gay,
 They're so hard to catch, but boy what a match,
 If they should name a wedding day ...
 That happens but rarely, I'm sorry to say,
 And many the lives that are torn,
 When a girl can't resist a New Zealander's kiss,
 From which many passions are born ...
 He'll give you an evening of joy and delight,
 And spend all his money like wine,
 But taking you home, his hand's sure to roam,
 And he'll whisper "Please darling, be mine" ...
 He doesn't mean marry him - goodness me, no!
 Such a thought never entered his head.
 All he wants is a "Jill" who will give him a thrill,
 And maybe an evening in bed ...!!!
 He'll thrill you with stories and songs of his home -
 Of Maoris tall, dark and daring,
 He'll tell you with glee, how hot they can be,
 In spite of the clothes they ain't wearing ...,

If you're taking him home he'll behave at his best
 A Sgt. and gentleman he -
 But his goodnight embrace will lead to disgrace,
 Cause he's only a Sgt. ... you'll see!!! ...
 So they are the Kiwis, the lads from New Zealand,
 Who will capture your love while they're here.
 Though they lead us astray, in our hearts they will stay.
 They were bold - they were bad - but so dear!



75 Squadron NZ Association – 2014 Reunion – May 30th – June 1st – Christchurch

Association members are invited

The Secretary
 75 Squadron NZ Association
 C/- 3 Plain Street, BULLS, 4818, NEW ZEALAND
 Email: 75sqn.assnz@windowslive.com

GROUND STRAFE

In many service clubs today you will probably find a gaggle of retired army Officers deploring the fact that the R.A.F. isn't the same as the Army was, and "as for discipline, my boy . . . Grr!!:"

Well it is true that the difference is there alright, but in our anxiety to mark it, we surely slip up on one essential, and that is "knowing your men."

That sounds dull to some people, and unnecessary—damped as it can be by the old cliché that the men want to be left alone and not interfered with. That, however, is a half-truth—and air crews (commissioned and non-commissioned) have not been slow in getting hold of the wrong half, and using it as a reason for a complete ignoring of the personal side of flights and sections, on whose competence and discipline their lives may well depend. It is no use saying, "Oh, we are too busy flying," for in between such spasms there are long hours of waiting. An intelligent (if possible) or an assumed (if necessary) interest in what the ground staff are doing on, to, and with the kites is a sure way of improving serviceability, by the very simple method of personal contact. Just to take a small instance: most of us like to be known by our names, and you will have made the first step in the right direction when you can

yell out "Snooks" instead of "Hi! You!"

Crew rooms and Flight Offices seem to possess some strange power (stored up, maybe, from magnetic waves given off from shooting lines) of firmly clamping air crews to what seats are available. An occasional visit to Maintenance, Armoury, Signals or Parachute Sections would need a terrific effort of will power, but it might be done if you put your mind to it. Get cracking with that old wander-lust and see where it leads you. You'll meet new faces, we shouldn't wonder.

Again, do get rid of the "Milord-the-carriage-waits" complex, whereby you clamber into the aircraft and expect (quite reasonably) to find everything to be ticking over perfectly. Have you the haziest idea what has been happening to it during the past twenty-four hours, let alone who has been working on it? Try and find out!

During working hours—which are bound to include lengthy periods when airmen develop their genius for just leaning—opportunity may arise for something a little more organised than the game of statues. Think that one out, too! See how your men feed, and what their quarters are like. You'll be surprised. So, incidentally, will they.

After hours is another story, but it can be read on the same lines. Most stations are distant from the alleged glamour of towns—so that local entertainments, and particularly those run by your own unit, are most necessary. To rely entirely on the fare provided by E.N.S.A. is not enough (as the airman said when admonished for being adrift three days). The Station Entertainments Officer should be as glad of suggestions as you should be to make them, but if they are to be constructive they must reflect the men's ideas, and not just your own.

And what will be the results of all this deliberate rushing in where air crews fear to tread? The answer is easy. A happy and a healthy Squadron, with the men as keen as you are on the immediate job of Winning the War, and with the added satisfaction of being sure that your acquired knowledge of men will do much to win the peace as well.



An intelligently interested group.

*Reading from left to right : Sergt. Straddle,
Ground Staff, P.O. Prune*

Dates to Remember

APRIL – MOTAT view the new Lancaster paintwork and enjoy a luncheon. Date TBA.

MAY 30th – 75 Squadron reunion – Christchurch.

JUNE 7th – Commonwealth Bomber Command Memorial Service. Auckland War Memorial Museum 10.30 hours