



Twenty Four

The Magazine of XXIV Squadron Association



Issue 19

2012 is our 97th Anniversary

Summer 2012

Commemoration Edition



Twenty Four is the Newsletter of 24 Squadron RAF Association and issued once a year to all members.

Contributions to Assoc. Sec at :- **15 Birch Grove CHIPPENHAM Wilts SN15 1DD**
email: the24secretary@royalairforce.net data or pictures on disc most acceptable



The Photo Album -



Friday 11 November 2011— A selection of photos taken on the day of the Hawker Memorial Inauguration at Ligny - Thillooy

Cover feature is a collage of the various tributes and memorial inauguration photos taken in France and Yorkshire.



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Editorial



After another successful Summer Social this year of over 40 Members and Guests turning out (see late news), it should be confirmation that a buoyant groundswell is bubbling away as the Association and the Squadron head towards the 100 year Anniversary that is only 3 more years away. Until 2015 rolls round, let us for the second year keep that enthusiasm on a roll at Brize Norton on the 6th October.

The *Newsletter* you will detect is a little slimmer this edition. This is not deliberate attempt to keep postal charges down, but sadly a reflection on the lack of stories and news sent. Do send in a few jottings, it all helps to bolster that Association feeling.

One of the quickest methods of broadcasting news, events gossip is our [Blog Book](#). Use has been made of this medium to post updates between Newsletters, especially for items about XXIV Squadron that appear in the local paper. Do try it out, give it a browse and add your own comments.

Editor

David Burgin

Association President

Air Com Dick Gould

Association Committee

- Keith Chapman - Chairman
- Sam Wright - Dep. Chair
- TBD - Treasurer
- David Burgin - Secretary

Squadron Liaison

W/C Tim Jones (31 Jan 11)
F/L Rob Platt

The 96th Anniversary Reunion

Reunion Report for Sat 1st Oct 2011

For all of you not able to attend the Reunion, this article is a belated attempt to give you a bit of a feel of what the day is like.

After the AGM, W/C Tim Jones welcomed the Association to this first Reunion at Brize Norton and outlined the agenda for the afternoon, which included a tour round the new HQ and flight in a C130HJ.

It has been a big year with the move, change of Squadron role and 3 OC's in a short space of time. The Squadrons' new role is to be in effect the C130J OCU and be responsible for all the training for all crew members. The Squadron is half the size it used to be with only 11 crews but will expand to cover the training for the A400M and C17 in

the next few years.

Afghanistan is the main focus with Air Mobility, Air Drop and Aero Medical the most common tasks carried out by the Squadron. These roles have saved lives by taking the hospital to the patient and reduced the impact that IED's have to convoys and foot patrols. Since the increased involvement by the US, Camp Bastion Airfield has seen a huge increase in size and aircraft movements to almost Heathrow size proportions with UAV's, fixed and rotary wing aircraft all vying for airspace.

Iraq does not feature any more in the tasking, it is now all about Op Ellamy, the on going support to the NATO exercise in Libya. This involves mainly air mobility flights staging via Bari and moving personnel from all nations out of the country. This aspect alone has won much praise from those rescued from the potential dangers they faced.

That far off island in the South

Editor Still Wanted

To allow the current Editor to concentrate on the Association Web Site's development, the job of Newsletter Editor is up for grabs. Ideally suit anyone with reasonable IT skills, e-mail access and keen on Aviation research. You will enjoy this opportunity to give the current Newsletter a make over and reach a readership of 300 members each year.

You would work closely with the Secretary and Web Site Author to ensure a seamless end product. Full details and background from Assoc Sec.



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Atlantic, the Falklands also still appears in crew log books. Nowadays the flights are all about support to Army exercises and long range Search and Rescue patrols.

But all that was before the core business of the Squadron changed to TRAINING. Despite being given that mission to carry out, not many aircraft are actually available to train new crews on. What is available from 07:00 hrs to 02:00 hrs in any one day are the Flight Simulators. These are still located at Lyneham but will eventually be housed in the combined Sqn HQ and training facility, the TMRF (Training Mission Rehearsal Facility). The building itself was very under staffed at the time of the Reunion, with part of the Squadron based on the far side of the airfield, causing its own logistic problems in day to day routine. The Squadron are still operating between Lyneham and Brize and personnel are having to commute extra miles each day.

Charity work still forms a large part of what goes on during the year, with over £3,000 raised in the last 12 months and over £25,000 since the Squadron associated itself with CALM (Spell it out). Contact is still maintained with the Worshipful Company of Carmen, with some Squadron members attending a splendid dinner in the company of the Princess Royal.

A very productive "Professional Development" day took place with crews from the FlyBE airline to exchange ideas on the training roles they both undertake. The Air Training Corps make regular visits to the simulator facility and the crews are very active in the sports and social side of Squadron life. XXIV was represented at tri service level in cricket, luge and snowboarding as well as local theatre club and ballroom dancing.

The move to Brize Norton was an event not to be under estimated in the effort needed by one and all over quite a lengthy period. What made all this hard work so rewarding was the tremendous reception the whole county of Wiltshire gave crews and personnel on the final day. It did seem like everybody in the surrounding area turned out to wave as the 4 ship formation, representing the four Squadrons, flew over most of the main towns and villages, especially Royal Wootton Bassett.

The important role that Brize Norton has now become as THE transport and tanker hub of the RAF was obvious to all who visit the place

base along with the purpose built Britannia Gate facility on the south side of the airfield.

Looking ahead to future events, the Pisa Commemoration service was being held on the 6th of November with the unveiling of a Roll of Honour and the Hawker Memorial event on the 11th November 2011.

At this point Tim handed over to F/L Phil Mobbs for an update on the progress of the Hawker Memorial project. Phil explained that after some deliberation the final resting place of the Memorial would be in the village of *Ligny-Thilloy* next to an existing French Memorial, that way it would be cared and maintained for the rest of its life. The approximate total cost was expected to be around £3.5K. The actual headstone was being provided free of charge from the War Graves Commission and by donations from the Association and a raffle totalling £5,000. An additional bonus has come from the BAe Systems Heritage Fund who have contributed to the costs of the DH2 fly past on the 11th November.

By the time you read this Reunion review the event will have taken place and a full account will be available in the Newsletter.

These briefings are always a great hit on the day as they certainly put life into perspective, giving the listener a feeling of being privileged to hear the facts as they are.

Before adjourning for an excellent lunch next door in the Mess Dining Room, the results of the well supported raffle organised by Sam Wright were declared with a tidy boost of £100 raised for Association funds. The rest of the afternoon ran like clockwork with trips around Brize, the airfield, a static aircraft visit and a chance to look over the shiny new Squadron HQ. This two story building has yet to come fully on stream, being partly staffed at the moment and without the simulators that need to be moved from Lyneham, then it's everything under one roof.

The day time programme concluded for the vast majority of Association members and guests with a flight over the local area, back over old Wiltshire pastures and onto the Bristol Channel for a "Open Ramp and Door" experience. Many smiling faces returned to the Mess before leaving for home after a memorable day, with many others staying for the Ladies Guest Night later on with all the trimmings. This did not disappoint either.



It is on this high note that the Committee, Members and Guests ended the 2011 Reunion.

In Omnia Parati.

Latest from “The Squadron”

Test success sees C-130J upgrade move step closer

FLIGHT TESTING for the 'common core' development of avionics upgrades to the Hercules C-130J aircraft have finished more than six weeks ahead of schedule.

Favourable weather and better than expected availability of the US Air Force trials aircraft enabled more than 3,700 test points to be completed.

The Block 7 Upgrade project, as it is known, is being delivered via the broader C-130J Collaborative Upgrade Programme. This allows the UK and six partner nations Australia, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Norway and the USA to achieve value for money by sharing development costs to deliver capabilities that might otherwise be unaffordable.

The project is being developed and delivered by Lockheed Martin at Marietta, USA. This software-intensive project will provide a major overhaul of the aircraft avionics system by introducing a new Flight Management System as well as enhancing capability with a Joint Tactical Integrated Data Link. With the USA as the lead customer, the joint testing has been led by the USAF Flight Test Centre and Lockheed Martin with participation from partner nations.

Contributions from RAF test pilots, QinetiQ engineers and the Block Upgrade team within DE&S' Hercules/TriStar team have helped the UK influence the joint testing programme.

Test results are now being analysed to determine acceptability of the software. Agreement of the final design to meet the UK's specific requirements will clear the way for a trial kit installation on an RAF aircraft, scheduled to begin in the summer.

Andrew Sneden, DE&S' programme manager, said: "Block 7 is an extremely complex project, in terms of the technical challenges and working with a number of international partners to deliver the project.

Although there will undoubtedly be challenges to face before the upgrade is fielded to the front line, the end of 2011 saw a number of significant milestones achieved on a project

that will ultimately provide excellent value for money and contribute to a world class air transport capability."

[courtesy of DESIDER Magazine]



Latest from "The Squadron" cont



SQUADRON GOODIES STOCK LIST

Another little job I promised to do for the Squadron after the Reunion this year was to promote the range of items they have for sale. So below is a list and photo of the goodies that are available and a couple that may need to be ordered rather than in stock.

24 SQUADRON STOCK PRICES 2010

In Stock

- | | |
|--------------------|--------|
| 1. Cummerbund | £25.00 |
| 2. Small A/C Print | £5.00 |
| 3. Large A/C Print | £7.00 |
| 4. Cloth Chevron | £2.50 |
| 5. Cloth Crests | £5.00 |
| 6. Black T-Shirts | £8.00 |
| 7. Sand T-Shirts | £6.50 |
| 8. Bow Tie | £7.00 |
| 9. Tattoo Sheet | £0.20 |

To Order

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| 1. Mug | £11.50 |
| 2. Tankard | £20.00 |

To place an order, contact:-

The Adjutant, XXIV Squadron, TMRF, RAF Brize Norton, CARTERTON, OX18 3LX stating item/s and quantity and despatch address. Make cheques payable to "24 Squadron Fund".

Had a phone call recently from Association Member Chris Kelly asking about the availability of the original black with a red ziz zag Squadron ties. The bottom line is that the Association does not hold stock of any ties or other memorabilia items. Items that are available can be purchased via the Squadron at Brize, follow this link <http://the24sec.wordpress.com/2010/11/10/xxiv-squadron-stock-list/>.

Chris has made some enquiries but most retailers understandably have a minimum order of around £400, which might buy say around 10 ties. The answer is to drum up a bit of trade and work up to a decent order quantity. So with that in mind and to be a bit pro active, I thought a Blog Post might be a good format to start an order list.

The idea is that if you DEFINITELY want a Squadron tie in the Zig Zag style, send me your name and I will put you on the list. I will keep the list running for a few months so we can put in an order in time for delivery for the 2012 Reunion. This should bring down the costs to a sensible unit price. If the demand is not sufficient, no order will be placed. A request for payment will be made once the list closes and total costs can be divided by total quantity prior to the order going in.

Luckily John Martin has sent in a photo of the tie design for reference,



Full Article on Hawker Memorial Inauguration

INAUGURATION OF MEMORIAL TO FIRST OC NO XXIV SQUADRON, MAJOR LANOE HAWKER VC DSO, AT LIGNY-THILLOY, FRANCE, ON 11 NOVEMBER 2011

Friday 11 November 2011 dawned grey and gloomy in Northern France. It was a day that had been eagerly awaited by all connected with No XXIV Squadron and aware of its exploits during the First World War.

By about 10.30 am, some 50 members of the Association, including partners and private guests, were gathered in the centre of the small village of Ligny-Thillois, about 25 km south of Arras. With them was a sizeable contingent from No XXIV Squadron led by the Officer Commanding, Wg Cdr Tim Jones. A large turn-out of villagers, including the Mayor (Monsieur Dominique Deleplace) and his colleagues on the local council, plus three officers from the Luftwaffe's present-day Richthofen Geschwader (Wing) and a handful of other guests of No XXIV Squadron, brought the numbers in the crowd up to about 200 persons in all. The weather was bitterly cold with an ominously low cloud base that did not bode well for the hoped-for fly past by a replica DH2 later in the day

The large British element had made the long journey to Ligny-Thillois to attend the unveiling of a newly-erected Memorial to No XXIV Squadron's first commanding officer, Major Lanoe Hawker VC DSO. The inauguration ceremony was not scheduled until the afternoon but as a mark of respect the Squadron and Association representatives had decided to attend Ligny-Thillois's own annual Ceremony of Remembrance in the morning. Like hundreds of similar ceremonies held throughout France on 11 November each year, this one was planned to take place at the village war memorial at 11.00 hrs. Led by the Mayor, the secular ceremony was held in the open air in a beautifully-landscaped area between the imposing church and the small Mairie. It was a

simple but moving occasion. After the Mayor had relayed a message from the President of France, the audience stood in silence as two villagers took up position alongside the war memorial to share the reading-out of the long list of names of men from this tiny village who had lost their lives during the two World Wars. Floral tributes were then placed on the steps of the memorial by the Mayor and other locals, after which poppy wreaths were laid by Wg Cdr Tim Jones (OC XXIV Squadron) and Gp Capt Keith Chapman (Chairman of the XXIV Squadron Association).

Before and during the village ceremony, many eyes were drawn to the Union Flag draped over the newly-built memorial to Major Hawker, which had been built only a fortnight earlier in a well-chosen position some five metres from the village war memorial. As readers will be aware from last year's edition of this magazine, the construction of a memorial to Major Hawker was a project sponsored and driven by the Squadron rather than by the Association. Nevertheless, the Association had offered strong support from the outset and had been influential in determining both the location of the memorial and the date of its inauguration. We had also offered help and advice throughout and had become ever more deeply involved as the project gradually gained momentum.

The inspiration and impetus for constructing the memorial had come from one of the Squadron's QFIs, Flt Lt Phil Mobbs, whose interest in military history had led him to delve deeply into the Hawker story. Over a period of eighteen arduous months, Phil slowly but surely got the project off the ground and was finally able to breathe a huge sigh of relief when the construction was completed with only a fortnight to spare before the date set for the unveiling. Inevitably, there were many problems along the way, not least in raising the money needed for such an ambitious project. The cost of constructing the memorial had originally been estimated at £2400 but, as

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is so often the case with such projects, the final bill came in at more than twice that sum. A considerable chunk of the funding came from generous donations from Association members and friends. Other substantial financial assistance was provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, P & O Ferries and the Worshipful Company of Carmen whose Chairman, Mr Bob Russett, very kindly provided one of his firm's trucks to transport heavy pallets of building materials from Leeds to Ligny-Thilloy completely free of charge.

The provision of this free logistic support at the eleventh hour was entirely due to the timely intervention of the Association's project officer, Wg Cdr Chas Whitaker, who drew on his personal contacts with a senior member of the Carmen Livery to arrange this transportation. Chas played a constructive indeed invaluable role from the very beginning, a fact gratefully acknowledged by OC XXIV Squadron as the project neared completion. For example, Chas made a series of liaison visits to Ligny-Thilloy at his own expense; co-ordinated the participation of Luftwaffe and French Air Force representatives; prepared a series of comprehensive briefs for Association attendees; and acted as chief point of contact with members of the Hawker family. Effectively it was Chas – in collaboration with Phil Mobbs - who drafted the final programme for 11 November and who, together with the Mayor and his extremely efficient assistant, Madame Brigitte Le Grand, organised the highly appreciated Vin d'Honneur (or Reception) that followed the afternoon ceremony. Thanks are also due to Tangerine Films of Pinewood Studios for converting Chas's 'Vin d'Honneur Multimedia Programme' into an impressive Powerpoint Presentation. Tangerine provided four full 'man days' of very skilled work entirely free of charge.

But I digress. After the morning ceremony, a group of about 25 people made their way along a rural lane to a site about one km south of Ligny-Thilloy where Major Hawker is believed to have crashed. Here, on the edge of a bleak windswept field under a leaden sky, folk huddled together against the biting cold while Phil Mobbs vividly related the events leading up to Hawker's death almost ninety-five years earlier

on 23 November 1916.

For the record, it is worth remembering that No XXIV Squadron was the RFC's first single seat fighter squadron, having formed under Hawker's command on 21 September 1915 at Hounslow Heath near London. After a work-up of some five months, the Squadron deployed from Hounslow to Bertangles - a grass airfield just north of the River Somme - in February 1916 equipped with DH2s. In the early summer of 1916, with air casualties mounting at an alarming rate in the build-up to The Battle of the Somme, the RFC had issued an order banning squadron commanders from undertaking operational sorties. Characteristically, Hawker paid scant regard to this stricture and continued to fly more than his fair share of offensive missions and reconnaissance patrols over the battlefields of the Western Front. This calculated defiance of orders explains how he came to be flying an operational sortie on 23 November 1916, the fateful day on which he encountered the Red Baron.

The weather that day over the Western Front had been surprisingly good for the time of year and was certainly adequate for VFR flying. At about 13.00 hours, Major Hawker took off from his base at Bertangles, situated 10 km north of Amiens and about 45 km south-west of the small town of Bapaume. His aircraft was one of a section of three DH2s of No XXIV Squadron tasked for this sortie but Hawker himself wasn't leading the formation. This role had been assigned to Captain Andrews, the 'A' Flight commander. The third pilot in the formation was Lieutenant (later AVM) Saundby. After a loose formation departure, the three aircraft climbed steadily to ten thousand feet and turned onto a north-easterly heading towards the battlefield frontal zone, looking for targets of opportunity.

Some twenty minutes later and soon after passing over the front lines into enemy territory, Andrews spotted two German aircraft flying below the DH2s. He was about to lead the three DH2s into the attack when he suddenly noticed more German machines above his own formation. Quickly concluding that discretion was the better part of valour, Andrews had

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decided to abort when he became aware that Hawker was already diving to engage the two enemy aircraft below. Andrews promptly changed his mind and decided that he and Saundby would have to support their squadron commander regardless. Within a couple of minutes, however, Andrews was forced to break off from the action when his engine was crippled by a burst of enemy machine gun fire. Seeing his flight commander pulling out of the scrap and putting the nose down to glide back towards the British lines, Saundby promptly followed him to provide covering fire.

Meanwhile, having lost contact with the other two DH2s, Hawker was locked into what was to prove a lengthy dog-fight with an Albatross D II. It is doubtful whether he was aware at the outset that his adversary was the 25 years old Lieutenant Manfred von Richthofen, better known as the Red Baron. But even if he had been able to identify his opponent, it would have made little difference to the 26 years old Major Hawker whose aggressive credo was 'attack everything'. He most certainly would have known that the Albatross was superior to his own aircraft in almost every way. It was faster, more powerful and more heavily armed - if slightly less manoeuvrable - than the DH2.

After an epic combat of nearly half an hour, in which neither pilot was able to gain the upper hand, Hawker found himself at very low altitude and low on ammunition and fuel. Realising he would have to make a break for home, he executed a steep descending turn towards the British lines but Richthofen followed closely behind and, having cleared his jammed gun and also with ammunition running low, fired one final burst at the fleeing DH2. A single round hit Hawker in the back of the head, killing him instantly. His aircraft plunged to the ground from about 1000 feet and crashed into a field behind German lines close to the village of Ligny-Thillois and about three km south of Bapaume. Hawker was buried with full military honours by the German Army close to the site of his crash. But within a few weeks the whole area was carpeted by heavy shelling and all traces of Hawker's last resting place were lost for ever.

Now, nearly 95 years later, his long-overdue

memorial was about to be unveiled. After a leisurely lunch in nearby Bapaume, the Squadron and Association parties re-deployed back to Ligny-Thillois to prepare for the ceremony at 15.00 hrs. An even larger crowd had now assembled in front of the Mairie, because Mayors and residents of neighbouring villages, who had been involved in their own memorial ceremonies during the morning, were now able to attend the inauguration of the Memorial to Major Hawker. Notable among a number of private individuals present at the unveiling were Hugh Gemmell and his wife Meg who had travelled all the way from Portland in the State of Oregon, USA. An avid military historian with family links to the Great War, Hugh had learned of this historic event from the Internet. Hugh is a US Army veteran of the Iraq war whose American grandfather William H Gemmell served on the Somme as a piper in The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada.

The open air ceremony was led jointly by Monsieur Deleplace and Wg Cdr Jones. Once again it was secular and fairly brief. After a series of speeches in both French and English, the Union Flag was removed and a number of floral arrangements and wreaths were placed around the new Memorial. Those laying tributes included Monsieur Deleplace; Oberstleutnant Matthias Fensterseifer (OC 711 Staffel of the Luftwaffe's Richthofen Wing); Colonel Eric Gernez (Commander of the nearby French Air Force Base at Cambrai); and a diplomat from the South African Embassy in Paris. We were not quite sure why the latter had made such a thoughtful gesture; perhaps it was because No XXIV Squadron had provided air support for the 1st Infantry Brigade of South Africa, which had been heavily engaged in this sector of the Western Front in 1916. Poppy wreaths were then laid by Wg Cdr Jones and Air Cdre Richard Gould (President of XXIV Squadron Association). Finally, the 'Last Post' was sounded from the steps of the Mairie by solo trumpeter Monsieur Jean-Jacques Lesage (son-in-law of the Mayor) who plays in a renowned local band called 'L'Harmonie de Bapaume'. The RAF had been unable to provide either a bugler or a chaplain.

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At this point, everyone had chilled off once again and in dire need of the warmth and other creature comforts that awaited in the adjacent village hall (or Salle des Fetes). The Vin d'Honneur (Reception) got underway at 15.30 hrs. It was hosted jointly by the Mayor and OC XXIV Squadron; it was funded in equal shares by the Mayor, No XXIV Squadron and Association attendees; and it was expertly stage-managed by Chas Whitaker who had gone to considerable trouble to orchestrate a most convivial ambience for the 200 or so guests. Against a backdrop of 'Son et Lumiere' and with 25 musicians of L'Harmonie de Bapaume serenading us, copious quantities of fizzy cocktails and canapés were served, gifts were exchanged and more speeches were delivered - usually more than once to allow for translation! One of the most memorable speeches was made (in fluent English) by Oberstleutnant Matthias Fensterseifer, who began by admitting that he had asked Chas a fortnight before for some advice on what to say. Chas had replied - tongue in cheek - that he might begin by apologising on behalf of the Red Baron for shooting down our first squadron commander! Matthias Fensterseifer did so apologise, getting a huge laugh! He went on to say that he was sure that Manfred von Richthofen would have enjoyed having a few beers with Lanoe Hawker if they had ever had the chance to meet. He also pointed out that the Royal Air Force, the Luftwaffe and L'Armée de l'Air are now long-standing NATO allies and he made some salient observations about the need for warfare to be the last rather than the first resort of politicians. Colonel Gernez also emphasised the collaborative nature of the three NATO air forces and highlighted the fact that, as in the Great War, it is still the young who endure the greatest suffering and make the greatest sacrifices in warfare today.

The Reception had been scheduled to last only one hour but was still going strong after two hours when your correspondent decided it was time to bale out! I got my passengers together and drove back through the gathering darkness to the hotel in Arras where many of us had set up base camp. Everyone I spoke to later that evening or during the weekend agreed that Friday 11 November 2011 had been a truly memorable day for all the right reasons.

Postscript

Had meteorological conditions on 11 November permitted VFR flying, the unveiling ceremony would have culminated in a fly-past by a privately-owned replica DH2 which had flown earlier in the week to Abbeville in France from its base at Wickenby in Lincolnshire. The participation of this aircraft, which bears the markings and colours of No XXIV Squadron, had been separately funded by a donation of £5000 by BAE Systems. As things transpired, the DH2 was unable to fly on 11 November due to adverse weather. However, all the expense and effort entailed in deploying this aircraft to France was not entirely in vain because the weather next day was 'gin clear' allowing the DH2 to make several orbits over Hawker's Memorial exactly 24 hours after it had been unveiled. A few fortunate Association members (including your correspondent) who had heard rumours that a fly-past might take place after all, returned to the memorial site after lunch on 12 November and were rewarded by seeing this amazing aeroplane make several passes over the village of Ligny-Thillooy. The photo accompanying this article was taken by Association member Andy Stewart at about 15.00 hrs on Saturday 12 November.

Visit to Thiepval Memorial

After watching the DH2 perform its manoeuvres over Ligny-Thillooy on 12 November, a small group of us set off to visit the nearby Thiepval Memorial. This huge and sombre edifice designed by Lutyens commemorates 72,000 soldiers of the British Commonwealth who died during The Battle of the Somme between the beginning of July and the end of November 1916. It is almost beyond comprehension that the Allied side sustained some 60,000 casualties on the very first day of the Somme offensive. It was for men such as these that No XXIV Squadron along with other RFC units provided Air Support during the bloody summer of 1916 when Hawker was living out the final months of his all too short life. Like Lanoe Hawker himself, the 72,000 men honoured at

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Thiepval have no known graves.

Looking Ahead

In future years, many visitors are expected to make the pilgrimage to Ligny-Thillois to pay their respects to Major Hawker. Henceforth, it will be the responsibility of our Association to preserve his Memorial and the Squadron's relationship with the village of Ligny-Thillois. Some Association Members and partners will no doubt wish to attend the commemoration ceremonies held annually in Ligny-Thillois at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. From now on, these ceremonies will remember Major Hawker as well as the villagers who lost their lives in the two World Wars. Wg Cdr Chas Whitaker will attend the ceremony on Sunday 11 November 2012 and has volunteered to coordinate arrangements on behalf of other Association members and partners who are thinking of doing likewise. Anyone who is planning to attend the ceremony on 11 November 2012 should contact Chas as soon as possible by email to: ChasWhitaker@hotmail.co.uk

Looking further ahead, the Centenary of Lanoe Hawker's death will occur on 23 November 2016. Earlier that year, the 100th Anniversary of The Battle of the Somme will also be reached and will probably be marked by a series of special ceremonies. As the Association will need to take due account of these events when formulating its own arrangements, it is by no means too soon to be exploring the various possibilities and evolving provisional plans to ensure that the Hawker Centenary is marked in an appropriate manner. As a next step, this topic will feature on the agenda at our next AGM, in order to stimulate discussion and allow Members to decide whether a small sub-committee or team of volunteers should be set up to begin preliminary planning for the Hawker Centenary.

KC (with acknowledgements to CW)

Hawker Memorial Connections

The following post is from Pete Hoare. He was not only in Ligny-Thillois for the ceremony but also in Belgium the previous day to visit the graves or inscriptions of family members who had been killed near Ypres during WW1. During that quick visit to the Ypres battlefield, Pete managed to pinpoint the site of the airfield at Poperinge (about 10 miles west of Ypres) from which Hawker had flown with No. 6 Squadron before taking command of the newly-formed XXIV Squadron. Pete has written a most interesting and informative report about Poperinge airfield etc which is shown below.

HAWKER CONNECTIONS

In 1979 the Squadron was asked by the RAF museum to organise a First Day Cover in tribute to Major Lanoe Hawker, one of a series celebrating WW1 flying aces. I was pleased to take on this task as a secondary duty. Many months of preparation included a visit to Hawker's birthplace, Longparish in Hampshire, where I had the pleasure of meeting Lanoe's brother, Lt Col Tyrrell Hawker MC, the author of 'Hawker VC'. I also visited the village church where there is a stained-glass window depicting Hawker at Bertangles airfield, where 24 Squadron was based in 1916.

For added significance the First Day Cover was connected to a commemorative flight to mark the 25th Anniversary of the first flight of the C-130. This was added to the end of a normal task, so on the appointed day we flew Lyneham – Bergen – Bardufoss – and then to Cambrai. Relations with the French services then were not as cordial as they are now, nevertheless we were provided with a coach by the FAF. The main task in the short time we had in a long day was to pick up a number of envelopes, the 'specials', from the main post office in Amiens where they had been left that morning by my wife Chris for hand-franking. This passed off smoothly and left us time to drive north of Amiens to attempt to locate Bertangles airfield. No evidence remained of its one-time significance, but by using the description in 'Hawker VC' and the skyline from



the stained glass window in Longparish Church it was possible to be sure that we were standing on the same turf as our gallant

predecessors. On the way back to Cambrai we were able in the short time remaining to pass close to the site of Hawker's final dogfight with the Red Baron. The short hop to Lyneham concluded a long but memorable day.

When I heard about the Hawker Memorial and the ceremony at Ligny-Thillooy I was understandably keen to be present. Chris and I travelled to Belgium the day before the quite remarkable event at Ligny to visit places where our own family members were remembered. We stayed in Poperinge. Although only 12k west of Ypres and subject to frequent shellfire, 'Pop' as it was known in WW1, remained west of the front line; indeed, it served as the rail-head for the Ypres salient and a welcome 'R & R' destination for weary troops.

I was aware from my previous research that 6 Sqn, in which Lanoe was serving in 1915, was based at Poperinge during the second battle of Ypres. With some time to spare I set out to try to locate this airfield from which he had set out on the missions which would lead to the award of the DSO and VC. Our enquiries led to Talbot House in Poperinge. This all-ranks club, was known (in signallers' shorthand) as Toc H in WWI. The widespread movement providing moral support originated from this building which is still open as a hostel and run by volunteers. My enquiry about a local airfield was met with blank looks until I met by chance a gentleman who had written a number of books about the First War. He suggested I should try at the Chateau de Lovie, about 3k NW of Poperinge, on the road to Krombeke. The grounds of the chateau now house a large institution for mentally handicapped people of all ages. However a very helpful PR manager, after a few hours research, was able to show me photos of the chateau when it served as GHQ for the Ypres campaign both for French and later British General Staff. Indeed it was the HQ of General Gough during the battle of Paschendaele. She then produced aerial photos of the chateau taken shortly after the end of WW1 which showed Poperinge airfield close by with aircraft on the ground.

We were then able to locate the site on the ground. As we studied the photos to be certain a lady came out of a nearby house. She had no knowledge of an airfield but asked her elderly father who with a sweep of the arm indicated the totally flat and treeless area where it had once been. As expected no signs remained of its significant role in history. My research was hurried and certainly not original but nevertheless I felt privileged to be the first 24 Sqn representative, probably for some decades, to be at the site where Hawker was based when he made his name as the first fighter ace.



Mailbox  Your Letters

We do seem to have quite a lively bit of snail and e-mail traffic on issues featured in the Newsletter and long may it continue. So for your interest and comments, read on.

Ps - you can also comment on line at the BLog Book.

WW1 Casualty – 2 Lt E A C Archer Feb 1916

We have had an email query from Tony Keane from Dublin, Ireland and so posting the details to see if a bit of publicity will help.

“A great Uncle of my wife was killed in World War 1. He flew with the 24th Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps. I have got some information from the internet as you can see below but I was wondering if you or anyone could help me get a little bit more about him such as where he took off from on the day that he was killed.

According to the tables in the 24 Sqn History by Illingworth and Robeson, he was killed whilst flying and was the first casualty the squadron suffered. He goes on to say that.

” Only two machines failed to cross the English Channel on February 7 (1916), and the following day the Squadron was unfortunate enough to suffer its first casualty – Lt. Archer , then in charge of “C” flight, failing to pull his machine out of a spin and crashing into the ground. Thus a career full of promise to the RFC terminated on its threshold.” >

From the serial listing for a forthcoming CCI monograph on the DH2: 5922 24 Sqn C Flt dd 4.1.16, to BEF with unit and wrecked in landing crash from spin from 70’ at St Omer 9.2.16 (2Lt E.A.C. Archer KIFA).



An email from a mystery sender only known as JHY.

I was stationed at RAF Staging Post Mauripur 1954-56 in Air Movements and compiled many a weight and balance sheet for all the Hastings passing thru to and from the UK, Far East and

Australia many of which were 24 Sqn aircraft. For some reason aircrew didn't like Mauripur but after being to most staging posts in that part of the world Mauripur was by far the best; only a few of us stationed there with plenty of spare time you could get away from uniforms; not like that doss hole Aden.

Attached is a photo WD500 that arrived in Oct 56; the only VIP I can recall being on board was G/Cpt Johnnie Johnston

Hope the foregoing might be of interest.



.Another piece of email news, this time from Graham Harradine

Thought you and the association might be interested in this picture of a prop used as a grave marker for a Lt. H. C. Cutler of 24 Sqn. I photographed it in the military section of the Worcestre museum. I didn't have time to get any more info as the museum was closing for the day.

(Continued on page 14)



Mailbox Your Letters - cont

(Continued from page 13)

Just a short note to say that my father, William Mcllroy (90 next month) served with 24 Squadron. After about 4 weeks at RAF Hendon in January, 1946, he was posted to Bassingbourne. After about 5 weeks there he was posted to Vienna, as part of the personal aircrew of General McCreery. My father returned to RAF Bassingbourne in February, 1946.

I wrote an account of my father's wartime experiences in RAF Bomber Command (POW 3267) One of the later chapters recalls some of his experiences in Vienna, with 24 Squadron. The book contains a photograph of my father with his aircrew colleagues with General Montgomery and a French army colonel. They had just landed at RAF Northolt.

Yours faithfully, Simon Mcllroy



and a correction for the record from Jane Wickes (daughter) :-

I have just looked at you latest news letter for the Association, and noticed that you now have my fathers details showing, but I was wondering if at all possible could make one correction to this, as you state his name as Alan Wickes, when it was Alec Wickes, DFC AFC he served in RAF based at Wickenby flying Lancaster during the WW11, before moving to Bassingborn on transport command, he was also part of the Berlin air lift, as well as many other things during his time with the RAF.



De Havilland DH95 (Flamingo) Commemoration



After the recent success in commemorating the resting place of Major Hawker in November 2011, the following email arrived earlier in the year from Keith Scott, Chairman, Great Ouseburn Parish Council with interesting news of a similar nature.

On 30th April 1942, De Havilland DH95 (Flamingo) R2764 from 24 Squadron crashed just behind the village of Great Ouseburn in Yorkshire with the loss of life of the 10 people aboard. The flight carrying 2 Air Ministry Staff and 4 members of a Russian Delegation was secret and the crash kept out of the media with information only recently becoming available.

To commemorate the 70th Anniversary, Great Ouseburn Parish Council is arranging the erection of a blue plaque to the memory of the people on board: P/O Iain Ramsay, Sgt James Smith, F/Sgt Alan Stripp, LAC James Lewis, S/Ldr Kenneth Edwards, F/Lt Francis William Wilton, Major Sergey Asyamov, Peter Baranov, Colonel Gregory Pugachev, and Major Boris Shvetsov

This will be dedicated and unveiled on the afternoon of Sunday 29th April 2012, which is also the date of the village Spring

Festival. The current plan is to start the ceremony at the Church War Memorial with a short service by our vicar Fr Christopher Parkin and then walk the short distance to Vine House where the plaque will be unveiled.

Editor's note:- Having passed on the information to the Squadron at Brize, I am pleased to report that Flt Lt Phil Mobbs, in his role as Squadron Historian did represent XXIV on the day.

Background:-

On 29th April, after flying continuously for more than 7 hours, Asyamov landed the bomber at the military airport at Tealing, a big RAF base not far from Dundee, Scotland. Immediately, the plane on a secret mission was surrounded by curious British pilots and engineers. RAF men were very interested in the Soviet PE-8, not least because the best British and American long-range planes were not up to the same technical level as the TB7, especially during the first half of WWII. The RAF didn't have anything of the same class.

The crew was transferred to London, but their holiday there was short. The day after they arrived, the crew, in response to many requests from their British colleagues, planned to return to the military airport at Tealing to provide an excursion on the Soviet plane, and also to have a look at the new military technology being developed by the RAF in East Fortune. But only one member of the crew could fly. Pusep and Asyamov, as Pusep recalled, decided who would go on the excursion by drawing straws. Fatefully, it was Asyamov who drew the long straw. Co-pilot Pusep was to stay in London and attend the 1st May celebrations being held by the Soviet Embassy together with the Military Mission in London.

(Continued on page 16)



(Continued from page 15)

After having inspected the British aircraft at East Fortune, the DH95 Flamingo (number R2764, No. 24 Air squadron based at Hendon), and its 6 passengers, including Asyamov, gathered for the return journey to London. There were no portents of the coming tragedy. The weather forecast was for sunny and practically still weather. Following inspection and readying of the aircraft for flight, the Captain took off for London at 4.25pm. It should be noted that the captain of the British plane was one of the most experienced pilots the RAF had. At the time of the accident Pilot Officer I. Ramsay had clocked up 3755 air hours piloting different types of planes. During his career he had piloted aircraft carrying famous passengers such as Prince Bernhard, Lord Sherwood, Sir Archibald Sinclair, and Lord Louis Mountbatten. The 24th Air Squadron was reserved for undertaking internal flights and as a rule carried VIPs including members of the royal family and members of the Cabinet.

Above Yorkshire, the right engine exploded. According to the report drawn up by the commission that investigated the accident, the passengers did not manage to use any of the life-saving equipment: all the parachutes were untouched. There was no chance of survival. The aircraft fell from a height of 600 metres (2000 ft) not far from the village of Great Ouseburn, between the towns of Easingwold and Knaresborough in North Yorkshire. The blast from the stricken craft was so powerful that parts were scattered for up to 3 miles around the crash site. The joint Soviet / UK commission under Chief Inspector Vernon Drown found the following: "The cause of the accident was an internal defect in the engine, its destruction and the subsequent ignition of fuel vapour, which led to the disintegration of the wing". According to another version: "a snapped connecting rod broke the crank case. Parts of the connecting rod and the crank case pierced the fuel tank. Inside the wing, the fuel vapour mixed with air and ignited, which blew the wing to bits."

The four crew members of the Flamingo and all the passengers died as a result of the accident. In total, the tragedy took the lives of 10 men. They in-

cluded: Major Sergei Asyamov, members of the Soviet Military Mission to the UK: Assistant to the Head of the Military Mission on Aviation issues Colonel Grigory Pugachev, Assistant Military Attache Major Boris Shvetsov, Secretary to the Military Mission Peter Baranov, Officer Francis Wilton, Officer Kenneth Edwards, Pilot Officer Iain Ramsay, Sergeant James Smith, Sergeant Alan Stripp and Engineer James Lewis.

Because of the highly secret nature of the operation, the British press did not report these tragic events at the time. No information on the crew and members of the Soviet mission could be found in the British archives or the archives of the Imperial War Museum. It is likely that these documents are still sealed away as "Secret". There was nothing in the media about these events. And, for example, the New Zealand Evening Post only mentioned Pusep's flight in autumn 1942.

Much more online at the [Great Ouseburn site](#).



Keeping in Touch - Association

RECENT LOSSES

We have been informed of only the following Association member passing away since the last AGM.

Group Captain Geoff Moss MBE AFC

Sadly we have to report the loss of Group Captain Geoff Moss who died peacefully on 24th December 2011. Geoff was an enthusiastic member of the Association before ill health forced him to take a back seat and spend his later days near his relatives on the Wirral. Geoff also held that privileged title of Squadron Commander between 1966 – 67 while at Colerne flying Hastings.

3rd Jan – A further update from his niece Mrs Richardson via Richard Bates:-

His funeral service and cremation will be at 1.00 pm on Monday 16 Jan 12 in the Centre Chapel at Landican Crematorium, Arrowe Park Road, Woodchurch, Wirral, Mersyside CH49 5 LW and afterwards at the Riverhill Hotel, Oxton.

The family request family flowers only and donations, if desired, to the RAF Benevolent Fund, .

Wally Makepeace Sadly we have learnt from Martina Makepeace that Wally passed away on Sunday 28th August 2011 and his funeral is on 7th September. Details are on www.wallymakepeace.info.

Wally had so many friends, was a larger than life character and served on XXIV Squadron on Hercules at Lyneham between 1974 – 1979 as a pilot before leaving for a career as a Captain on civil airlines..

NEW MEMBERS

Thanks to an initiative of ex OC XXIV, W/C Andy Bacon who probably had the Adj rustle up a list of those who left the Sqn in recent times, we can report a healthy influx to the membership list. A total of 4 new recruits have joined the ranks and they are:-

Last Name	Initials	Mem No	Date on Sqn	Place on Sqn	Trade
Howard	P G	423	Jul 1965 - Dec 1968	RAF Colerne	Airframe Mechanic
Hoare	P F	424	Aug 1975 - May 1981	RAF Lyneham	Pilot
Pembrey	T	425	1973 - 976; 1976 -1979	RAF Lyneham	Pilot
Lees	B G	426	Jun 1966 - Mar 1968	RAF Colerne	Navigator



Aircraft Operated by XXIV from Outbreak of WWII

Simon Batchelor, our XXIV authoritative aircraft historian, has put together a summary of the aircraft operated by the Squadron from the outbreak of WWII until the fall of France. By coincidence, it does include the DH 95 Flamingo, the focus of the Great Ouseburn commemoration.

The piece below is only an extract with the full article on the Blog Book.

World War II Rapid Changes in Role and Equipment.

At the start of WWII the squadron was tasked with delivery of post in the Air Despatch Letter Service (ADLS), transportation of important persons on war service and a continuation of its normal communications duties. Civil aircraft were impressed for RAF use and a number of De Havilland aircraft were transferred from airlines to 24 squadron. These were used for the ADLS and transport of personnel around the country and to France. To cope with the increased tempo and scope of work more men and machines were posted in and the Squadron was reorganised. C flight was responsible for the ALDS and transport of VIP's, A&B flights were pooled and the establishment increased with DH Rapides, DH Flamingoes, Lockheed Electras, and Percival Q6,s joining the existing aircraft held by the Squadron.

Airspeed Envoy

A special version of this twin engined low wing monoplane with retractable undercarriage had been used by the Kings Flight before the war, marked as G-AEXX. It was kept at RAF Hendon, and maintained by 24 Squadron, it had the distinctive blue and red Brigade of Guards colour scheme, At the outbreak of war it was transferred to the RAF painted in camouflage and given it's proper serial L7270. Another civil example G-AFWZ was impressed as X9370, and used until destroyed in an Air Raid on the 8th October 1940. Seven aircraft were ordered as Envoy IIIs for the RAF, and of these P5626 served with 24 Squadron from August 1940 until February 1942.

The Envoy was the forerunner of the Airspeed Oxford, which was used by the RAF in large numbers, and also by 24 Squadron

De Havilland DH95 Flamingo

This all metal high wing twin engined civil airliner was quite a departure for the de Havilland Company, whose previous designs had principally been wooden biplanes. Including such innovations as retractable undercarriage, flaps, and feathering propellers the Flamingo was quite a step up from the aircraft operated by the squadron. In October 1939 G-AFUE the prototype which had first flown in 1938 was issued to 24 squadron after use by Guernsey & Jersey Airways Ltd. It was followed over the next few months by 3 service models, called officially Hertfordshires, and two other civil production aircraft. From what I have been able to discover they were not used a great deal, and due to low clearance often bottomed out on the rough grass airfields they used.

In service, in common with a number of civil aircraft they were operated in camouflage, but with civil registrations still applied. Service serials being applied at major overhauls. During the phoney war period, before Germany invaded, Winston Churchill was flown to a number of places in France. Notably General Charles de Gaulle was flown from Bordeaux to London and back on the 16th June 1940, and on the 17th was flown back to London to form the Free French government in exile.

A number of different aircraft types were given names in 1942 and the Flamingos included R2765 (Lady of Hendon), R2766 (Lady of Glamis), AE444 (Lady of Ayr).

On a sadder note two aircraft were involved in fatal crashes, R2510 23/10/40(11 dead), and R2764 30/04/42 when 6 died. The fatalities in the latter accident included 4 Russian officers who were on a mission to Britain. This accident almost causing a major diplomatic incident, with sabotage being suspected.

[Link to Full article on line](#)

<http://the24sec.wordpress.com/2012/06/04/aircraft-operated-by-xxiv-sqn-from-the-outbreak-of-wwii-until-the-fall-of-france/>



Diary of a Navigator - Pt 14



Another instalment from John Mitchell's diary of his VIP flying days with the then Prime Minister Winston Churchill during August 1944.

MOSCOW CONFERENCE Pt 2

9th October 1944. With the blessing of Air Commodore Whitney Straight (pre-war racing driver and private pilot - now AOC of 216 Air Transport Group in the Middle East and later a Director of BOAC), we took off from Cairo West at 0015 GMT for Moscow via the Caspian Sea route. Heading east through the air defence corridor over the Suez Canal at Kantara, we set course for Amman, leaving Jerusalem on our port as we climbed 10,000 feet. At this height we would get the best fuel consumption, though later we would be obliged by the weather and Russian defence regulations to fly very much lower. After Amman our track lay along the Haifa pipeline via the desert pumping station known as H3 to Ramadi, then over Mosul to Lake Urmia in northeast Persia.

After passing the 16,000 foot mountain peak of Savlan, we reached our first Russian reporting point at Lenkoran, south of Baku. We duly made contact with our main in Moscow Control and thus were assured of permission to continue; we gave an estimated time of arrival of 1300 GMT or 1600 local time, not much before dark, in the capital.

We were to discover later that air to ground communication with our Military Mission in Moscow was ludicrously impeded. The Russians had laid down from the beginning that our Mission telegraphists could work only those frequencies approved by treaty for our communications with London and Cairo. But there could be no question of those operators working their sets for communications with RAF aircraft, even though such frequencies had been approved by both sides in the aircraft's latest clearance. Such messages would in any case be en clair in the International Aviation Q Code. So our RAF Moscow operator on this occasion had to sit in the Soviet Naval Headquarters with only the morse key under his hand. Alongside him, the Soviet opera-

tor tuned the Russian transmitter and receiver to the designated frequency. I recall Jock Gallacher had quite a trial to follow the ground operator, for the Russian allowed his frequency to drift. It is much easier to communicate with someone who is trained to use his skills in the same ways as one's own. The reason for our involvement with Soviet Naval Aviation, rather than the SAF, was that the defences of the Crimean coast, and indeed all the Black Sea, were under naval command and this must include air defence of this area. We were to use the Crimean route to and from Moscow several times in future flights, so it was as well to become accustomed to their methods of working. It was going to be a long flight, over 12 hours, without much fuel reserve and over a countryside for which we had most inadequate maps (literally, on the scale of wall maps) to a destination airheld of which we had little description and for which there was no designated alternative. Radio navigational aids were nil - at least, nil briefed to us. Our instructions were to fly within sight of the ground (for visual identification) and to report our position by radio every hour. This we did most faithfully.

We followed the western shore of the Caspian Sea, passed Baku and over Makhachkala before turning northwest for Stalingrad, now renamed Volgograd, at Cherny Rynok. From this point on we had little option but to lose altitude to 4,000 feet to remain under the cloud base. This was really Bradshaw flying (sometimes without the railway lines), the weather was deteriorating all the time, as forecasted. From Stalingrad to Tambov my log records that we were cruising at 2,000 feet in the rain, with the landing forecast received by radio getting gloomier and gloomier. Fortunately, we were pretty sure there were no natural obstacles en route, only man-made aerial masts or chimneys.

Over Reutovo and then Ramenskoye and the southeast outskirts of the city, all strange to us. Without large scale maps of the surrounding area, we literally zoomed towards the city centre, catching a glimpse of the shiny domes and cupolas of the Kremlin to port, which we could recognize from pictures. We were scared stiff we would be shot down, but we aren't lose contact with the ground. Our briefing told us only that Moscow Central Airfield, our destination, lay on the northwest side of the city, on the west side of the straight main road towards Leningrad but within the built-up area of the

(Continued on page 20)



city, and that it lay beyond the unmistakable Dynamo Stadium, the headquarters of the KGB football club. We found it and the series of Verey Lights fired from the ground announced that we were recognized. So, with a tight circuit, down on to the very smooth paved runway in the wet and misty murk of a late autumn afternoon. It was rather like having a complete stranger to the UK try to find Hendon, being told that it was somewhere along the Edgware Road, and with no radio direction-finding facilities.

We had covered nearly 2,600 miles in 12 hours 45 minutes flying, an average of about 200 miles an hour. This was the longest flight we had ever made in 'Ascalon'- without very much to spare. We had now been without proper sleep for the best part of 72 hours ex-UK. I must confess to resorting to Benzadrine tablets to keep going on this last leg. We had only four passengers on board (no VIPs), the balance of the official party as one might say: Colonel Boyle of the RAMC, Messrs Millard and Drysdale of the Foreign Office, and Lieutenant Commander McEwan, a naval interpreter.

So, this was Moscow! After a brief reception we were introduced to the Soviet Air Force Engineer Officer assigned to us - he had already been coping with MW100's crew. Fortunately, he had been with the RAF Hurricane Wing in Murmansk in the winter of 1941 and had a smattering of English. His eyes lit up with excitement at being re-assigned to Merlin engines again. We soon discovered that we had easy access to the field by Embassy car, pausing only to shout 'Equipage Churchill' to have the gates opened by the bewildered armed sentry. Our Air Attaché had never before been inside the airfield boundary in the two years he had been in Moscow! I believe there was a similar relaxed attitude towards the PM's delegation. But all this was in the days ahead.

We were driven from the airfield down the Leningrad road towards down-town Moscow. Named Leningrad Prospect this road eventually became Gorky Street, reaching right down to the Kremlin and Red Square. We were accommodated in the Hotel National, bang in the middle of town and listed first of all the hotels in Bradshaw's 1914 Guide to Moscow. Amid the war-time gloom of Moscow it's Victorian (or Czarist) style of faded red plush and weakly lit, dusty chandeliers, looked positively attractive. We thought it was great and far from uncomfortable. As we reckoned to have more than a week in the city it was most convenient to see the sights, for such tourism the hotel could not have been better situated. On the corner of

Gorky Strasse (as we called it from the rather Teutonic architecture) and the Menage Square, the hotel looked right across the Alexander Garden, where lies the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in the Kremlin walls. Straight ahead the road slopes up to Red Square between the Historical Museum in rather forbidding but powerful red brick and the Arsenal Tower - one of the corners of the Kremlin wall. We really could say we were dumped in the middle of things.

That evening we were all summoned to a party at the Mission, given for all the visiting air crews. We were extremely tired and the reaction after Benzadrine was the penalty of its earlier benefit. I do not really remember very much about the party, but I slept soundly for well over 12 hours after it.

We quickly adapted to the old-world atmosphere and relative inefficiency of the Hotel National: its building and décor seemed quite undamaged and unaltered by the change in its clientele since the Revolution. All our wants were attended by the Intourist English-speaking young ladies, who were in attendance at all hours. They were far from unattractive, their appearance and clothes had been especially smartened up for their duties - so they told us. Their silk stockings were 'issue only' and would have to be returned to the Quartermaster Stores after our departure. Reliable intelligence added that their underwear was heavily darned. There was a splendid old commissionaire on duty at the door who attempted to account for our movements in and out of the hotel swing doors. Twice or three times round the door soon had him confused. We were not obviously shadowed, though I was then a novice at the 'Spotting the Goons' game. We never attempted to conceal our sightseeing journeys so it was hardly a coincidence that we were always welcomed by Intourist guides at our destinations.

What astonished us most were the extravagant rations we received in the hotel dining room. Whether it was breakfast (seldom taken before nine) or an early evening meal, we found caviar and a variety of smoked fish and meats on the table before us. Plenty of bread - and the Russians make excellent bread - and to wash it down vodka, brandy and local wines. It might sound as if we were blasé about the constant repetition of this diet, but it was horrid to have passers by staring at us through the windows of the restaurant. Clearly very hungry, they made us ashamed of the rations and our appetites.

Because we were 'Equipage Churchill' we had



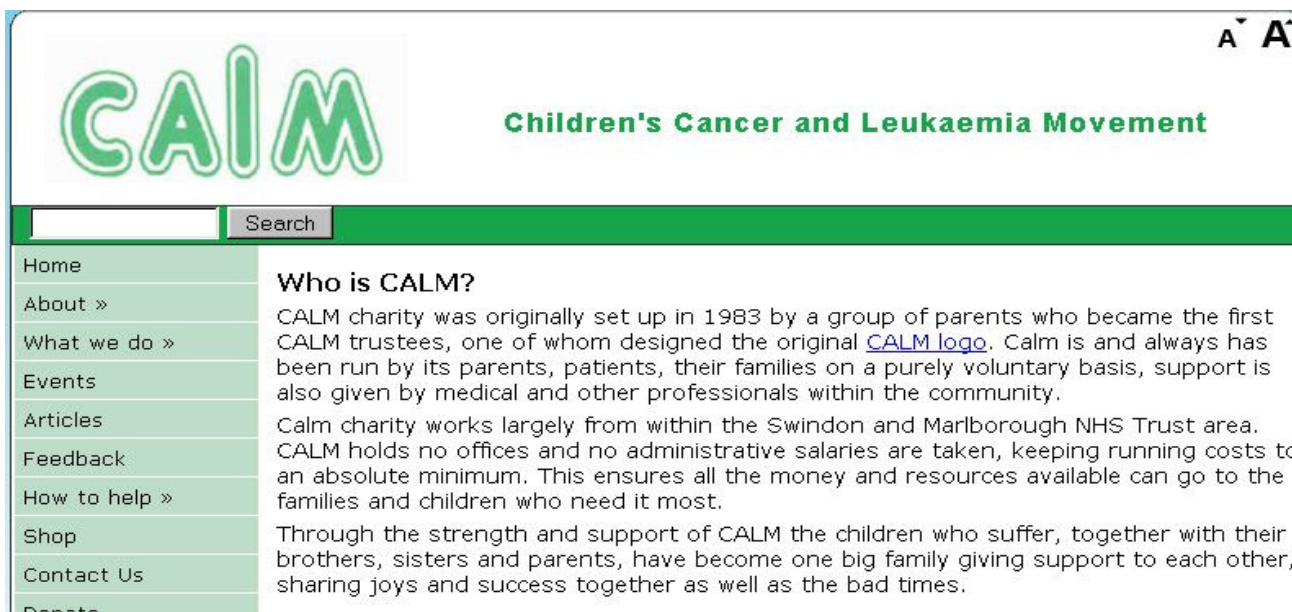
a special visit to the Kremlin arranged for us through the ADC. Thus I was able to see the fabulous St George's Hall and the early Czarist apartments of the Terem Palace, not to mention the Armoury and the Royal Jewels, some 20 years before I was to return to Moscow in 1965 as the Air Attaché. We went to the Bolshoi Theatre twice. The first time to see a concert programme given in the Prime Minister's honour. He occupied what must have been the Royal Box in the centre of the dress circle, resplendent in red and gold but with the Soviet badge on the front and not the Imperial coat of arms. The Americans were represented by Mr Averill Hariman and the party was hosted by Marshal Stalin himself, who was not often to be seen in public during the war, or in later years. The first half of the concert programme was the First Act of the ballet Giselle danced by Lepeshinskaya: the second part was a variety performance by the Red Army Choir and Orchestra. In the interval the assembled company in the stalls turned to the Royal Box and gave a great ovation as did all the performers on the stage. We had seats in a box on the same level as the VIP's and two away from the centre. Of course, we had a KGB plain clothes man sitting with us.

(always finish on a cliff hanger — Part three of this Moscow story will be in Issue 20)



Notice Board

A couple of notices for you to read. The first is the new sponsored charity, CALM, that the Squadron has adopted since the closure of Burton Hill House School. See below for a screen shot from its web site. Its internet address is <http://calmcharity.org> Also we have details about accommodation for the Reunion weekend. You are of course free to select anywhere but the coach will only be picking up from the Burford area.



Who is CALM?

CALM charity was originally set up in 1983 by a group of parents who became the first CALM trustees, one of whom designed the original [CALM logo](#). Calm is and always has been run by its parents, patients, their families on a purely voluntary basis, support is also given by medical and other professionals within the community.

Calm charity works largely from within the Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust area. CALM holds no offices and no administrative salaries are taken, keeping running costs to an absolute minimum. This ensures all the money and resources available can go to the families and children who need it most.

Through the strength and support of CALM the children who suffer, together with their brothers, sisters and parents, have become one big family giving support to each other, sharing joys and success together as well as the bad times.

ACCOMMODATION 2012 - BURFORD AREA



Shown is a clip of the many Hotels and Guest Houses in the Burford area from a Google search. The local Visitor Information Centre will also be able to assist if you do not have Internet access.

[Burford Visitor Information Centre](#)

Located in an historic building, once a brewery, Burford VIC is not only an official Enjoy England Partner but holds a Silver award in the Green Tourism Business Scheme: recognition for the excellent service that the centre provides and the efforts that they make to promote sustainable tourism.

Burford VIC, The Brewery, Sheep Street, Burford, Oxon, OX18 4LS
 Telephone +44 (0)1993 823558, Fax +44 (0)1993 823590, Email burford.vic@westoxon.gov.uk

NOTE - the coach (a snip at only £5/head) will be picking up guests at the Four Pillars, Witney and Burford hotels, i.e. High Street and Travel Lodge, then Brize.

BOOK DIRECT FOR ALL ACCOMMODATION.



The Photo Album - Pt 2



Sunday 29th April 2012 - A selection of photos from the DH 95 Flamingo Plane Crash, Memorial Event at Great Ouseburn, Yorkshire.



Just for a change and a bit more up to date, a Handley Page Hastings, C.4, WJ325, the VIP version belonging to Royal Air Force Far East awaits retirement in Malta, on Christmas morning -1967. Brought to our notice by Nev Cooper who flew in this one as an AEO and thought it more appropriate to re title it "Heading to the knackers yard"



Late News - Summer Social 2012,



SUMMER SOCIAL - 6th June - The Crown Blockley, Glos

At last an excuse for a leisurely lunch in the heart of the Cotswold's in Blockley this year and more specifically the home of Richard and Heather Bates with lunch after at the The Crown.

After four days of Diamond Jubilee celebrations, what better appointment could you have in your diary than the XXIV Association Summer Social? An overwhelming response for places at this years venue of The Crown in Blockley had over 40 Members and Guests spending a long leisurely lunch catching up on the latest news and gossip.

The pre lunch meet and greet hosted by Richard and Heather Bates and Keith and Peggy Chapman had the feel of of a Wimbledon event, with the call for "covers on" "covers off" as the squalls swept through the Cotswolds. The upside was that this did make for a more cosy get together before making a stately dash to The Crown for lunch afterwards. The hotel was well prepared for the assault and had all the lunch choices delivered to everyone's satisfaction. Sam Wright, our Deputy Chair, is now at professional status with his raffle ticket selling and button holing skills generating a very healthy £125 towards Association funds.

Before final farewells, the Association showed its thanks to Heather and Peggy with a presentation of a bouquet to each for making the hosting arrangements and the smooth running of yet another very enjoyable social event as a pre cursor the our 97th Anniversary Reunion at Brize Norton on the 6th October later this year. With Wing Commander Tim Jones and his wife Susie in attendance on the day, that spirit between the Squadron and the Association continues to be fostered.

