



# TALLY HO!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 609 (WEST RIDING) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2017 | NUMBER 2

## WELCOME...

...to the second edition of our new-look digital newsletter.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to contact me about the first edition – I'm so glad that you liked it and I'd like to thank Neil at Shaefer PR in Richmond for all his help in making it possible.

As last time, this edition is being distributed by e-mail, but we're still sending paper copies to anyone who hasn't given us their e-mail address, or who doesn't use e-mail.

Please could you make sure that we have your up-to-date contact details because each time we use the Association group e-mail, a few of them come back as undeliverable.

I've been looking after the Membership list while Sarah's been away in the Falklands (Welcome Home, Sarah!) so if any of your details change, please let one of us know – our contact details are on the back page.

This time we've expanded from 12 pages to 18 and I hesitate to call it our 'Bumper Christmas Edition' but it's very close to it!

Please keep the articles coming – you can send them to me any time, and I will keep them for the next edition.

**Adele Hudson**

Editor

*Daughter of SAC Paul Hudson 1951 – 1953*



## IN THIS EDITION...

We're highlighting our links with Battle of Britain Veteran Terry Clark, now 98 years old and living in York. We were delighted to welcome him as our Guest of Honour at the AGM Lunch (his picture is on page 3) and he also visited RAF Leeming in September, hosted by Wing Commander Jeff Metcalfe (see the article on page 12). An amazingly modest man, humble to the point of dismissiveness about his achievements, it was a privilege to meet one of 'The Few' and have a chance to hear some of his stories. Terry also attended the Battle of Britain commemoration of the AAF Squadrons at the National Memorial Arboretum (see the article starting on page 8)



*Terry Clark DFM AE with Norman Monahan (ex 609)  
– both Battle of Britain Veterans*

We also have the usual round-up of news of Squadron and Association events this year.

On the eve of the 100th anniversary of the formation of the RAF in 1918, we look back to the events of 1917 involving the Royal Flying Corps, and at this season of Remembrance, there is news of the annual ceremony at Leeds Bradford Airport, always remembering that,

**For your Tomorrow, we gave our Today.**

*Left: Replica Spitfire Mk1a R6690 at Elvington  
– flown by Sqn Ldr H S 'George' Darley in the Battle of Britain*

# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Members

Welcome to Issue 2 of our digital Newsletter in which I hope you'll find something of interest, whether it be details of the latest activities by the Squadron at Leeming or recent Association events at home or abroad.

I wish to start with a few words on our AGM & Annual Lunch at Elvington in June. In my opinion it was a worthwhile return to the Yorkshire Air Museum (YAM), with an attendance in the mid-30s. We met the new OC, Sqn Ldr Merv Ashe, and we were delighted to present the Alec Ingle Trophy to LCpl Paul Meakin for a consistently high performance throughout the year. The lunch was well cooked, hot and plenty of it, and the service prompt and attentive – I was very satisfied and so must everyone else have been as I didn't hear any negative comments. The BBMF roared overhead with their usual aplomb and phoned me shortly afterwards to apologise for sending a Hurricane! All the arrangements for the day were well conducted and I have no hesitation in going back again next year – so much so that I've already booked the day, so please note that it will take place on **Saturday, 16 June 2018** (with the social

gathering at The Parsonage in Escrick on the previous evening **Friday 15 June 2018**).

There were some constructive debates on certain issues as follows:

**Membership** – please see my separate article on this subject within this newsletter.

**Middle Wallop** – the Army Air Corps Museum (AACM) is having a make-over and the 609 Sqn display there will also receive a lift. Our President, for obvious reasons, is very interested in this project and gave an update on the situation. The AACM has launched an appeal for funds and will also benefit from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Whilst the Association will be unable to assist with funds, we decided there could be some flexibility with regards to providing some artefacts and/or memorabilia for the refurbished Sqn display. We look forward to seeing how this progresses.

**Memorial Room** – our own Memorial Room at Elvington is in need of an uplift and I've had the two designers who are involved at Middle Wallop to visit it. They have come up with a selection of improvements which could form the



Presentation to Jeff Metcalfe on his retirement as OC



*Battle of Britain veteran Terry Clark*

basis of this project and I've had two further meetings with YAM management. Our Room as it stands is only attractive to a minority of the public and it needs to be modernised to appeal to a younger generation. The main hurdle to negotiate is funding, no surprise there, but a combination of using some Association funds, a kindly benefactor, a grant from the HLF and the support of the Sqn and HAC will hopefully see us going in the right direction. I hope that planning and funding can begin shortly leading to the start of works by next Spring. Wouldn't it be marvellous if we could have the re-opening of the refurbished Room on the same day as the AGM and Lunch?

**Social Media** – in addition to this redesigned newsletter, much work has also been completed on updating the Website and our Facebook page. We have also ventured into Twitter for the first time, all of which are designed to make the Association attractive to younger and new members, that is what people expect of an organisation these days. All of this doesn't just happen by itself, so many thanks to Adele, Alan H, Hugh, and Tracey.

**Events** – we continue to meet at The Stoop in October and at Leeds Bradford Airport to lay wreaths in November. Thanks to Marcia and John once again for making these arrangements.

I was sad to see Air Cdre Simon Bostock stand down as Honorary Air Commodore (HAC) after nearly 11 years in the post. He has been such a staunch supporter of both the Squadron and Association and to me personally when I was in command of 609. He'll be sorely missed in that role but I hope we'll continue to see him and his wife Lynn at our Association gatherings from time to time. Taking over as HAC is Air Cdre Nigel Corner, who I've already met and shown round Elvington. He is totally supportive of our plans to refurbish our Memorial Room and has many contacts that may well be used to facilitate the project – I look forward to working with him.



*BBMF Hurricane over Elvington*

In my humble opinion I think this year has seen an upturn in the Association's fortunes despite my 'doom & gloom' of 2016, it hasn't been so bad after all! We had a successful AGM & Annual Lunch, we've relaunched this Newsletter, refreshed the Website and Facebook, set up Twitter and are now involved in the projects at Middle Wallop and Elvington. In addition, we have attracted several new members and many more new followers on Facebook. There's plenty for our Secretary to do when she gets back from her six-month deployment to the Falklands, any time soon, so welcome back Sarah!

Thanks to all the Committee and others who have contributed their time to the Association this year, it is very much appreciated. Thanks also to you, the Members, who keep turning out for our events, we wouldn't have an Association without you. We have quite a bit going on and I'm already looking forward to 2018!

Oh, my very last words. Please keep the ideas and comments coming, good or bad. It's good to talk!

## TALLY-HO!

**Jeff Metcalfe**



# ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP



The subject of Association Membership created a worthwhile debate at the AGM in June, as I outlined my views and proposals for the future structure of the Membership.

To reiterate: The Association's main source of income is the annual subscription and we rely on this to give us some flexibility when it comes to granting subsidy for the Annual Lunch and other activities from time to time. It also gives us money in the bank which funds projects and other events. We'd be well and truly stumped if we didn't have it! So, it follows that the majority of the membership should be paying a subscription if we are to maximise that source of income. Unfortunately, that doesn't appear to be so, we have too many 'honorary' members who aren't paying anything and there is some confusion as to categories of, and eligibility for, membership. Also, each year we lose contact with members for various reasons and others pass away.

In order to ratify eligibility and categories of membership, I propose the following:

**1. Full Membership** for all those who are serving or have served on the three Squadrons plus the spouses,

partners, children or grandchildren of same if they wish to do so;

- 2. Associate Membership** for those with a more distant family relationship to a serving or ex-serving member plus those with no previous connection to any of the Squadrons, who are interested in joining and can put forward their reasons which will be considered by the Committee;
- 3.** Any family members in category (1) who do not wish to become full members will be known as **Affiliated Family**;
- 4. Honorary Members** will be a very small group authorised by the Committee who have proven to be or will prove to be useful to the Association, due, for instance, to their connections and influence.

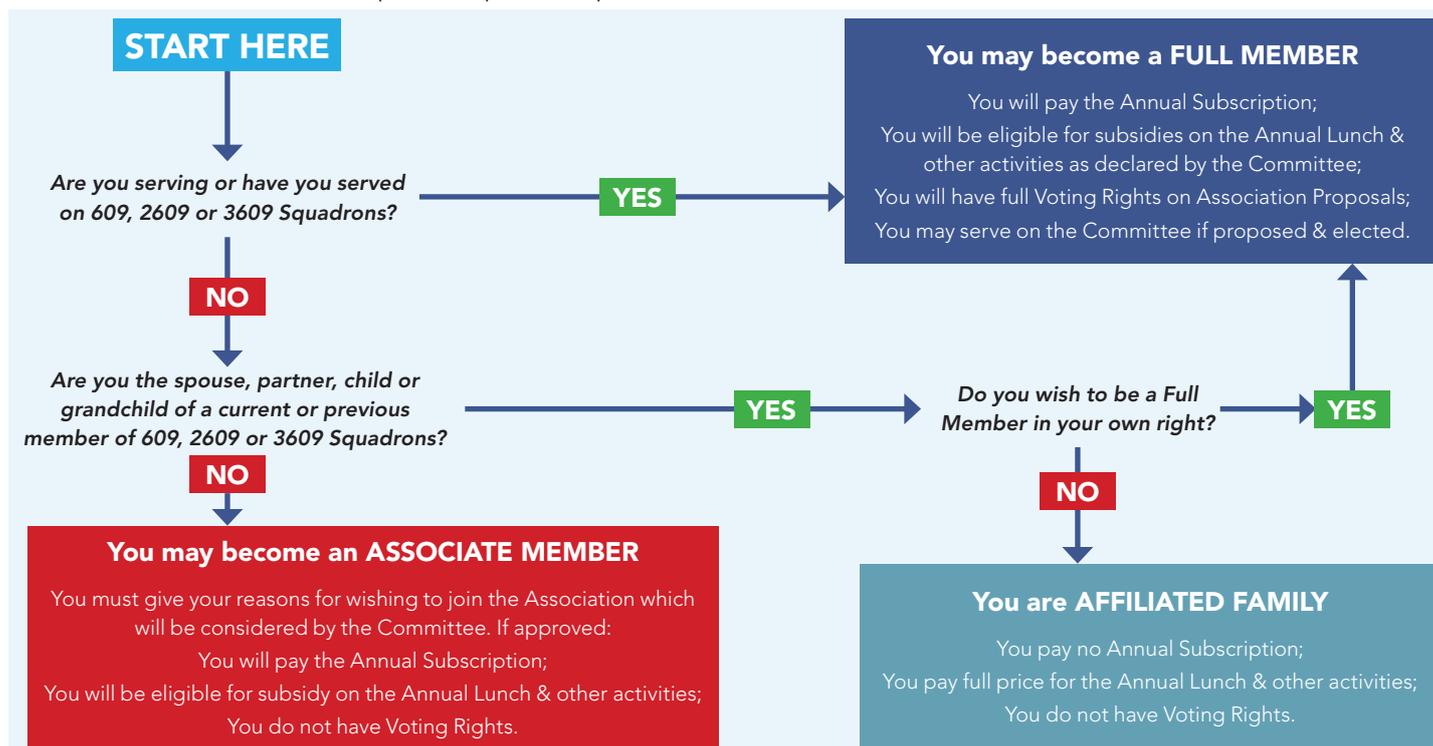
Please look at the accompanying flow-chart for details in diagrammatical form.

I'm not putting these proposals to a vote, but instead, I will assume your agreement. Please respond to me if you object, disagree or wish to comment and I welcome such as soon as possible - definitely no later than 18 December.

These new proposals will be due to take effect from 1 January 2018 for all new and existing memberships.

*For most of the membership there will be no change at all.*

Jeff Metcalfe, Chairman  
07749 851164, jeffmetty18@gmail.com



# RECRUITING NOW!

**YOUR ASSOCIATION NEEDS NEW MEMBERS...**

# COME AND JOIN US...

*(or pass this to a friend)!*



- Meet like-minded friends and colleagues
- Share camaraderie
- Receive regular newsletter updates on Association and Squadron news and events
- Discounts off Annual Reunion Lunch
- Social Events



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e-mail Sarah McGhin - [sarahmcghin@gmail.com](mailto:sarahmcghin@gmail.com) for membership forms today!

# SQUADRON NEWS

## 609 Sqn Rocks in the Rockies

Ex DIAMOND ROCK has been designed to mark the Corps' prestigious 75th Anniversary, by providing the RAF Regt Whole Force with a suitably ambitious and demanding series of expeditions which include a number of climbing, mountain biking and sailing legs. The expedition which is now underway and will last for another 12 months will cover 15,000 miles with 8 climbing and biking legs and 6 sailing legs, travelling from Mt McKinley through Alaska, the USA, Central America, South America and to Mt Aconcagua. The Ex will test the resilience, moral courage, determination, unselfishness, tolerance and enthusiasm of all those taking part.



FS Keith Geldart & SAC Sean Doughty from 609 (WR) Sqn rose to the challenge and were part of the team that completed Leg 2 which saw RAF Regt personnel deploy to Banff National Park in Canada. The trails varied in difficulty levels and many required technical riding skills to limit accidents and mechanical issues. Over the 2-week period, the distances covered ranged from 11km (9km uphill) to 40 km around Spray Lake. Unfortunately, the last endurance ride which was planned for Lake Winniewonka was cut short due to grizzly bear activity along the trail. Erring on the side of caution, the lead group decided to go no further thus reducing any risk of upsetting the locals.

Accommodation was classed as luxurious for the Regt and consisted of 3 men sharing 4-man tents establishing



a comfortable routine using the limited ablutions and cooking fresh rations over an open camp fire. Cleanliness was paramount around the site, nothing could be



left out or left unattended for long periods of time in case of encouraging bears or the light-fingered chipmunks that became regular attendees at meal times. Lunch was served daily, en-route, by a reliable admin support team offering delicacies to boost the energy levels and maintain morale for the hills that lay ahead. Casualties were sustained; however, they were limited in comparison to the first week, all mechanical faults were dealt with on the trail, failing that the other option was to walk back with a broken bike.

The views and scenery offered by the Rocky Mountains were just breath-taking and one that you could never get tired of looking at; it was noted that the start point for Spray Lake was actually higher than Mt Snowdon. Opportunities to take in the great history of Canada and North America and a further indulgence of the stunning views, including the chance to meet the more friendly and approachable side of Canada's wildlife were available. Other visits included a trip to Lake Louise, surrounded by the snow-filled glaciers of the Rockies and a small climb up Sulphur Mountain sitting at a height of approx. 2200m to observe the natural beauty of Banff from an aerial view.

Despite the lengthy inclines which encouraged the knees to scream even louder and the fears of being mauled by either a bear, cougar or a pack of wolves, the opportunity to experience such beauty and be a part of a worthy expedition was greatly relished by all.

**With thanks to Sqn Ldr Merv Ashe.**

# SQUADRON NEWS

## IMM NATO International Military Skills Event



### 609 Sqn Teams

The IMM NATO International Military Skills event is held annually near Monchengladbach, in Germany. This year's event took place during the weekend 08-09 Jul 2017 and was sponsored and organised by Land Command North Rhine Westphalia, the German Army and the Federation of Reservists, with support from the German Red Cross and Fire Brigade. Thirty-eight teams participated, with prizes being awarded for the first, second and third teams overall, the top German Regular and Reserve forces teams, the top three Male International Regular and Reserve Forces teams and the top Female and mixed teams.

609 Sqn entered 2 x teams in to the event with the aim being to develop leadership and team work in a competitive environment, whilst sharing the common spirit of dedication to military service with teams from other NATO and other Allied countries. Activities started at 0630 hrs and concluded around 1900 hrs. A formal awards ceremony followed, commencing at 2000 hrs and finishing at 2100 hrs. The competition involved the teams having to navigate around a course containing a mixture of both physically demanding and mentally challenging stands. The troops were tested on their overall

fitness, navigation, fieldcraft/observation skills, first aid, conflict management and numerous other stands, such as aircraft, weapons and uniform recognition, as well as their ability to effectively judge distance.

The event was well organised by our hosts and overall very successful providing various challenges and opportunities, with every member gaining and invaluable experience. One of our teams was awarded 1st place in the International Reservist category. In addition, the same team was presented with the Mayor's trophy by the Burgermeister of the City of Mönchengladbach for being the best overall Reservist team in the competition.

**With thanks to Sgt Steve Young**



*Trophies and the winning team*

# BATTLE OF BRITAIN EVENT

## The National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas



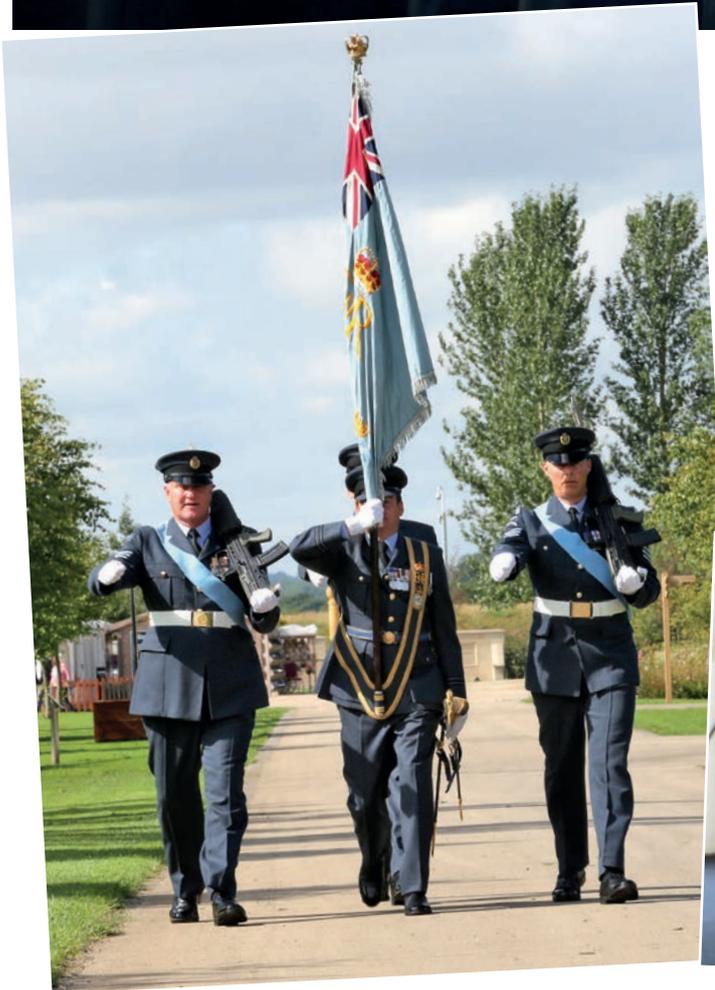
**A Service of Commemoration was held at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on 16 August 2017 to remember those 14 squadrons of the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF) that took part in the Battle of Britain in 1940. A Colour Party from 605 Squadron paraded the Sovereign's Colour for the (now Royal) Auxiliary Air Force on the day.**

The Royal Air Force has never publicly acknowledged any 'league table' of credited victory claims during the Battle; however, there exists in the underground operations room at the former RAF Uxbridge, which was the HQ of 11 Group Fighter Command during the war, such a record of credited

victories within that Group which saw the heaviest fighting. The record shows that, of the top scoring 15 squadrons, eight were from the AAF, with the top scoring UK squadron, No 501 (County of Gloucester) AAF **(see following pages for top ten Battle of Britain Squadrons).**

The Service of Commemoration was led by Squadron Leader (Sqn Ldr) Richard Clement, Station Padre of RAF Leeming and was attended by Air Vice-Marshal (AVM) Mike Smart, Vice Chairman (Air) of West Midlands RFCA, Air Commodore Laurence Howard, Honorary Air Commodore of 504 Sqn and two wartime veterans, Norman Monahan ex-609 Sqn and Terry Clark, ex-615 Sqn. Also in attendance were representatives of the office of the Commandant General RAuxAF, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Foundation (rauxaf.net) as well as serving personnel from current RAuxAF squadrons and Associations and their families and friends. During the course of the Service two new benches were dedicated at the Memorial, one for 600 Squadron and the other for 607 Squadron. Also, three new Memorial Stones were laid in respect of AVM Ambler, Sqn Ldr Womersley and Plt Off Mitchell **(see separate biographies on following pages).**





It was back in 1997 that a decision was made to allocate original AAF flying squadron number plates, titles and badges to current RAuxAF units, in recognition of their proud achievements. The Commanding Officers and other personnel from six current Squadrons were represented at the Commemoration, being, No 501 (County of Gloucester), No 504 (County of Nottingham), No 600 (City of London), No 605 (County of Warwick), No 607 (County of Durham) and No 609 (West Riding). There are currently 28 squadrons of the RAuxAF in being, of which 16 have inherited the original AAF flying squadron number plates, regional affiliations and badges.



# ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE FOUNDATION

Patron: His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester. Registered Charity No 1104826

The following is an extract from: 'The Auxiliary Air Force in the Battle of Britain' by Squadron Leader A F Freeman RAuxAF (Retd) January 2011.



Showing the top 10 of 61 Squadrons in Fighter Command

## Battle of Britain Credited Victories

Squadron	Destroyed	Probable	Damaged	Total	Kill Ratio	Aircraft
1 303 (Polish)	130	14	9	153	6.84	Hurricane
2 501 (County of Gloucester)	100	20	62	182	2.27	Hurricane
3 609 (West Riding)	96	33	39	168	4.57	Spitfire
4 41	87	40	58	185	2.64	Spitfire
5 213	83	7	20	110	2.86	Hurricane
6 602 (City of Glasgow)	75	20	31	126	2.78	Hurricane
7 603 (City of Edinburgh)	75	47	41	163	1.78	Spitfire
8 92	73	36	47	156	1.78	Spitfire
9 601 (County of London)	72	58	37	167	3.79	Hurricane
10 234	71	14	20	105	3.23	Spitfire

This only includes statistics from the recognised period of the Battle of Britain – 10 July to 31 October 1940.

It takes no account of enemy aircraft shot down or damaged by Squadrons engaged in or over France from May 1940, of which there were many.

### 92096 Air Vice-Marshal Geoffrey H Ambler CB CBE AFC

Geoffrey Ambler was born in 1904 and educated at Shrewsbury and Clare College, Cambridge. He was a keen sportsman and rowed for Cambridge in the Boat Race in 1924, 1925 and 1926. Following his studies, he joined the family textile firm, F Ambler Ltd, in Bradford.

In 1931 he joined the Auxiliary Air Force and served as a pilot with No 608 (North Riding) Squadron, rising to the rank of Flight Lieutenant by November 1933. A year later he was promoted to Squadron Leader as Officer Commanding.

In 1938 he was appointed to command No 609 (West Riding) Squadron at RAF Yeadon, north of Leeds. He took delivery of the first Spitfire to be issued to the Sqn in August 1939, and led the unit from peace-time to war, commanding the Sqn during the first wartime deployments to Catterick, Acklington and Drem.

In December 1939 he was promoted to Wing Commander and posted to RAF Drem as Operations Controller, gaining further promotion to Group Captain two years later. In June 1942 he became an acting Air Commodore and took



command of the Royal Observer Corps, the first serving RAF Officer to do so. During his time as Commandant he reorganised the Corps and Sector HQs and realigned each area to that of its associated Fighter Command Group, thus ensuring more cohesive interception of enemy aircraft.

Now confirmed in the rank of Air Cdre he was appointed as Deputy Senior Air Staff Officer (DSASO) in June 1943 at RAF Fighter Command HQ, Bentley Priory. In February 1945 he became the Senior Air Staff Officer (SASO) in the rank of Acting Air Vice-Marshal. He was also Aide de Camp to King George VI between August 1943 and October 1944.

Post war he retired from the RAF and returned to the family firm in Bradford, eventually rising to be Chairman of the company. He was made a Deputy Lord-Lieutenant for West Yorkshire in July 1949 and became the Honorary Air Commodore to all three West Riding Auxiliary Squadrons – 609, 2609 and 3609 – until their disbandment in 1957.

He died in August 1978, aged 74, and remains one of the few pre-war Auxiliaries to rise to 2\* rank during their career.

## 90649 Sqn Ldr Patrick A Womersley DFC\* AE – 609 Squadron

Patrick Womersley joined 609 (West Riding) Squadron AAF on 29 March 1939 as an Acting Pilot Officer. When war broke out he was as yet not fully trained, so when 609 proceeded to its first War Station at Catterick, he reported to No 6 Flying Training School at Little Rissington, together with several other trainee pilots from the Squadron. He graduated in December 1939 but did not return to 609 Sqn, instead being selected for twin-engined aircraft which resulted in another training course to convert him to the Bristol Blenheim.



He was posted to 59 Sqn, flying numerous sorties over France and the Low Countries gaining his first DFC for his actions. 59 Sqn later converted to the Lockheed Hudson and took on convoy protection and reconnaissance duties with Coastal Command.

In 1943 he was posted to 18 Sqn as an Acting Sqn Ldr flying the Douglas Boston, a twin-engined light attack and bomber aircraft. He saw much action in Italy until the end of the war, gaining a Bar to his DFC during that time.

Post-war he returned to the now reformed 609 Sqn at RAF Yeadon on 1 August 1946, as Sqn Ldr. Initially flying De Havilland Mosquito NF32s and then Spitfire Mk 16s, he served as the Officer Commanding until 3 October 1949.

He received an extension of service for five years at the end of which he resigned his commission.

When the 609 Squadron Association formed in 1967 he briefly joined and took part in activities, also contributing to the Squadron Memorial at Leeds-Bradford Airport.

He died in March 2009.



## Pilot Officer Gordon T M Mitchell – 609 Squadron

Gordon Thomas Manners Mitchell was born in Ceylon on 24 September 1910. He was educated at Leys School, Cambridge and Queens' College, Cambridge where he read Law and Economics. He was a member of the University Air Squadron from 1930 to 1932 and obtained his 'A' Grade Flying Licence.

In 1933 Mitchell obtained a commercial appointment in Sarawak and remained there for four years.

On his return to England he joined the Export Credits Guarantee Department in Bradford, West Yorkshire and

was commissioned in 609 Squadron, Auxiliary Air Force in November 1938. He was called to full-time service on 24 August 1939 and posted to 6 Flying Training School at

Little Rissington on 7 October. With his training completed he rejoined 609 Squadron, then at Northolt, in May 1940.

He was shot down in combat by Oberleutnant Ludwig Franzisket of JG27 over a convoy off Portland on 11 July in Spitfire L1095 and reported 'Missing'. His body was eventually washed ashore near Newport, Isle of Wight.

Mitchell is buried in All Saints' churchyard, Letchworth, Hertfordshire.



# SQUADRON NEWS

## Visit of Battle Of Britain veteran to RAF Leeming

**Battle of Britain veteran Terry Clark, 98 years old from York, visited RAF Leeming on 7 September in response to an invitation from the Station Commander, Group Captain David Arthurton.**

Escorted by Wing Commander Jeff Metcalfe throughout the day, Terry had a tour around the Station and commented that it had changed a lot since the summer of 1940 when he flew in and out of Leeming and Catterick on a daily basis. He visited 100 Squadron, where he talked with current aircrew, looked around the aircraft and viewed their history room. He had a guided tour of Leeming's museum by Squadron Leader Alfie Hall and then called on 607 Squadron where he chatted with present-day reservists over a cup of tea, answering many questions. This was particularly poignant as Terry himself had been a pre-war airman with 615 (County of Surrey) Squadron Auxiliary Air Force in 1938. His next stop was 609 Squadron where he met the OC, Squadron Leader Merv Ashe, and other members of the staff. His day was rounded off nicely with the Battle of Britain Dinner in the Officers' Mess, where he was Guest of Honour. An address was read out on his behalf which described the activities of the seven night-fighter Squadrons which fought in the Battle of Britain flying Blenheims; Squadrons and aircraft which were in a minority in the Fighter Command order of battle and whose contributions are very often forgotten.

RAF Leeming was honoured to host Terry, also one of 'The Few'. Terry was also Guest of Honour at the AGM and Lunch at Elvington in June.



## Flt Lt William Terence (Terry) Clark DFM AE RAF (Retd)

William Terence Clark was born in Croydon on 11 April 1919. He joined 615 (County of Surrey) Squadron, Auxiliary Air Force, at Kenley in March 1938 as an Aircrafthand/Air Gunner. He trained and flew in Hawker Hectors on Army co-operation duties. Called to full-time service on 24 August 1939, Clark remustered as a trainee Air Gunner. He completed his training and joined 219 Squadron at RAF Catterick on 12 July 1940, flying in the twin-engined Bristol Blenheim IF, the fighter version of the Blenheim light bomber\*.

During the Battle of Britain 219 Squadron also operated out of RAF Leeming, carrying out day-time convoy escorts and coastal patrols despite the aircraft being unsuitable for the task. Enemy aircraft were seldom encountered along the north-east coast, but on 15 August 1940 219 were ordered to intercept a large German raid from Scandinavia, which split up to attack the Firth of Forth, the North-East and East Yorkshire, especially Hull, and were met by aircraft from Drem, Usworth, Acklington, Catterick and Leconfield. Unfortunately, this ended in frustration for the Blenheim fighter crews as in most cases they weren't fast enough and the enemy aircraft just flew away from them; it was said that the rear gunner in a Junkers was waving a fond farewell as they disappeared into the distance!

In the late summer of 1940, 219 Sqn re-equipped with the Bristol Beaufighter and airborne radar, at which point some of the air gunners were trained on radar with the squadron as Radio Observers/Operators. Clark qualified in this category. The Beaufighter was a huge step-up in terms of power, speed and armament and in conjunction with the AI radar gave the RAF night-fighter Squadrons a superb weapons system with which to hit back at the Luftwaffe's night blitz. On the night of 16-17 April 1941 Clark flew with 219's OC, Wg Cdr Pike, when his own navigator was taken ill. They intercepted and destroyed a Junkers Ju88 and a

Heinkel He111 in the Guildford area. During the night of 27-28 April, flying with Fg Off Dudley Hobbs, his regular pilot, Clark assisted in the destruction of another enemy aircraft, and on 1-2 June and 13-14 June they shot down two more Heinkel He111s.

Clark was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal, gazetted on 8 July 1941.



In July 1941 he was posted to 1455 Flight, then forming at Tangmere with Turbinlite Havocs. In May 1942 he went to 1451 Flight at Hunsdon on the same duties, locating enemy aircraft by radar in the Havoc, for accompanying fighters to attack and destroy. The scheme was not a success and was eventually abandoned. He was commissioned in May 1942 from Warrant Officer and moved to 60 Operational Training Unit in October 1942 as a Navigation and Radar Instructor, a job he hated! But in May 1943 he was back flying, being posted to 488 (New Zealand)

Squadron at Ayr, now flying the De Havilland Mosquito, as Navigator to the newly-arrived 'A' Flight Commander, Sqn Ldr D Hobbs, his original pilot from 219 Squadron and 1455 and 1451 Flights. On 20 December 1943 Clark was flying with Plt Off Robinson when they destroyed a Me410 over Sussex.

At the end of his tour in March 1944 Clark went to North Weald Sector Operations, where he trained as a Controller. Whilst there he was given leave to visit 488, then at Colerne. He went to dispersal to see Robinson, now a Flying Officer. His navigator was unfit to fly and Clark offered to take his place. On this sortie, a beach-head patrol on the night of 28-29 July, they destroyed a Ju188. Clark returned to North Weald next day. He rejoined 488 in August 1944 but two months later went to RAF Honiley Ground Approach School, after which he took No.1 GCA Unit to Prestwick, as second-in-command.

Clark was released from the RAF in November 1945 as a Flight Lieutenant.



## \*The Bristol Blenheim IF

The Blenheim was first developed by Bristol in 1934-35 as the Type 135 cabin monoplane twin-engined commercial transport. It had high performance and with a top speed of 307mph could outpace any RAF fighter of the time, so it was ordered into production for the RAF in early 1936 as a light bomber and by the outbreak of war equipped 16 Squadrons. As a light bomber it provided sterling service during the early years of the war. The fighter version equipped a further seven Squadrons, but as

a day fighter it was a failure – underpowered for its role, inadequately armed and easy prey for enemy single-engined fighters. It was best suited as a night fighter.



# THE ORIGINS & HISTORY OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE ROUNDEL

Although a cockade type of insignia had been used in heraldry for many years previously, the origins of the Royal Air Force roundel come from the First World War. All the air forces of the United Kingdom - the RAF, the Army Air Corps and the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm – together with many air forces around the world - use a circular identification mark painted on their aircraft, usually in national colours, to identify them to other aircraft and ground forces. In one form or another it has been used on British aircraft from 1915 to the present day.

When the First World War started in 1914 it was the habit of many ground troops to shoot at all aircraft, friend or foe, so the need for some form of identification mark became evident. Orders were issued at the end of August 1914 for the Union Flag to be painted under the lower wing and on the fuselage sides. This was satisfactory at low level and at a short distance when the details were clear, but further away there was some confusion, as only the large cross could be seen. It soon became obvious that the cross of St George on the Union Flag could be mistaken for the Maltese Cross used by the German Air Force with dire consequences!

Something completely different was needed, so it was decided to follow the lead of the French who were using a tricolour cockade of red, white and blue centre. The British reversed the colours to blue, white with a red centre, and it became the standard marking on all Royal Flying Corps (RFC) aircraft from 11 December 1914, although it was well into 1915 before the new marking was used consistently. A small Union Flag was still painted on the rudder. The Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) were using a large red circle with a white centre but they too standardised on the new roundel

from June 1915, so from that point all British aircraft, whether RFC or RNAS, were carrying the same markings and the use of the Union Flag was discontinued. The RFC and RNAS merged to form the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918, by which time the roundel marking had evolved from its early beginnings. By 1917 a thin white outline had been added to the roundel to make the blue of the outer ring easier to distinguish against dark camouflage colours, and Squadrons operating at night usually painted over the white ring with red, making it less conspicuous.

The greatest change to the RAF roundel occurred in the mid to late 1930s with attempts to standardise the marking relating to which type of aircraft it was being applied to (fighter, bomber, transport, etc) and in which position (fuselage, upper and underside of wing). A fourth colour, yellow, was introduced during the war, added to the outside of the blue circle to make the roundel stand out against the camouflage schemes. Aircraft operating in the Far East with South East Asia Command (SEAC) had the red centre removed to avoid confusion with the Japanese insignia, the red circle 'hinomaru'. Some American planes had attacked British and Commonwealth aircraft thinking they were enemy!

Today the roundel appears in three formats on RAF aircraft. Attack aircraft, tactical transports and helicopters carry a two-colour roundel of dark blue with red centre. Fighter aircraft, such as the Eurofighter Typhoon, carry a reduced visibility 'washed out' version of the same roundel whilst the traditional bright three-colour roundel can still be found on transports, tankers and VIP & training aircraft.

## Royal Air Force roundels



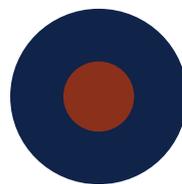
Type A



Type A1



Type A2



Type B



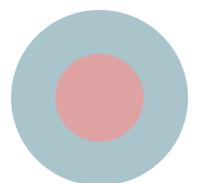
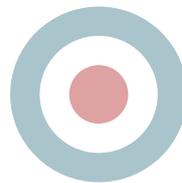
Type C



Type C1



SEAC



All Type D – standard, pale, low-vis

# SQUADRON NEWS

## Tally-Ho! weekend at Airfield B-67, Ursel, Belgium



**Our Belgian friends conducted their annual 'Tally-Ho!' event at the Ursel Flying Club and on Airfield B-67 during the weekend of 28-29 October.**

The main organisers of the event were Kurt Plyson and Philippe Verleyen of the B-67 Workgroup, the members of Ursel Flying Club, Conrad Roumieux of the 609 Association Belgian Branch, ably assisted by Omer Vanden Bosch, aka 'Boomer', from the Wings of Memory Group. The event marks the anniversary of the arrival of four Typhoon Squadrons in October 1944, one of which was 609 Sqn, and commemorates the men who flew from here during the liberation of this last corner of Belgium. 609 were particularly instrumental in the operations to clear the island of Walcheren and the Scheldt estuary.

A delegation from the Association attended – myself, Mike Foster, Peter Wilson, Dez Robinson and Daryl Johnson. The welcome on our arrival and the hospitality shown to us throughout the weekend was truly exceptional. Attending the commemorations was just one reason for going, the other was to present some honorary awards to three of our long-standing Belgian friends who have shown us great support and friendship over the years - an Honorary Vice-Presidency to General Van Caelenberge, and Honorary

Memberships to Adjudants Kurt Plyson and Omer Vanden Bosch were presented during the early evening ceremony.

During the weekend I presented 'The History of 609' to a very attentive audience in the Ursel Flying Club and completed a 'Wandeling' around the wartime airfield whilst the rest of our delegation were flying in the wartime Stinson Reliant aircraft. They also got airborne again with The Victors display team, and we all visited the Atlantic Wall Open-Air Museum at Ostend and the Freedom Museum at Ramskapelle.

There is absolutely no chance that our history will be forgotten in the Ursel area! The weekend was also attended by many members of the general public, very much interested in what happened in 1944, and keen to pass on the story to future generations. And a lot of this is down to the organisers of the event who have made it their passion to continue this good work.

We were all very impressed with the whole weekend, long may they continue...

Tally-Ho!

Jeff Metcalfe

# A REFLECTION ON 1917

**As we look forward to the centenary of the formation of the RAF in 2018, it is an appropriate time to look back at the events leading up to 1918, involving the (then) Royal Flying Corps. Wg Cdr Metcalfe gave this address at the Remembrance Service in Catterick Village on 12th November 2017, during which wreaths were laid on the graves of three RFC pilots killed in 1917.**

1917 – The third year of a war which had already cost millions of lives, and showed no real prospect of coming to an end. By this time in the conflict, The Great War truly was a total World War, with fighting going on around the globe – the Western Front, the Eastern Front, the Italian Front, in the Middle East, in East Africa and on the world's oceans.

The year 1917 is remembered for several notable events.

- After three years of sitting on the fence, April 1917 saw the entry of the United States into the war, when President Woodrow Wilson requested, and received, from Congress a declaration of war against Germany. The US had tried desperately to remain neutral and keep out of the war until this point, but Germany had announced unrestricted submarine warfare in January, which had led to 35 American citizens being killed in three sinkings of unarmed merchant vessels. This, coupled with American ties to Britain, propaganda, and the German attempt to forge an alliance with Mexico to declare war on the US, pushed America into getting involved. Two million US soldiers eventually fought in Europe under Major General John Pershing although their arrival took some time and their involvement wasn't really felt until 1918.



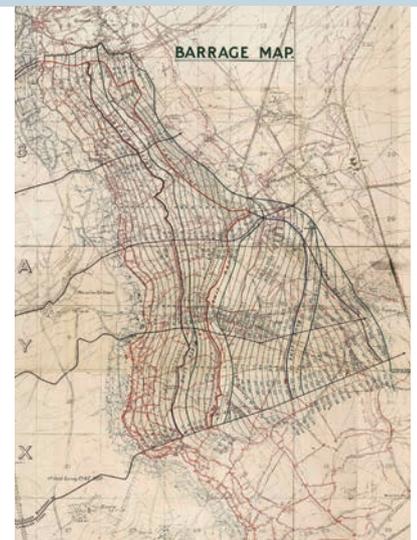
Woodrow Wilson, Public Domain. <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

- The Canadians captured Vimy Ridge, an important feature of high ground north-east of Arras which had been held by the Germans since the first year of the war. In 1915 the French Army had lost 150,000 men trying to capture the ridge; in 1916 the British Army suffered similar casualties in attempting the same. But in April 1917, the four divisions of the Canadian Corps, fighting together for the first time and under Canadian command, captured the forward positions on the ridge in four hours and the remainder over the next two days; it was to remain in Allied hands until the

end of the war. The Canadian success has been put down to a mixture of technical and tactical innovation, meticulous planning, powerful artillery support and extensive training, together with the fact that the hardy Canadians attacked during a bitterly cold period,

in a snow storm, when the Germans least expected it. Four Victoria Crosses were awarded and the Canadians suffered 10,600 casualties, with 3500 of those killed - but it was a defining moment for the country. The Battle of Vimy Ridge is often referred to as the birth of modern Canada, it had considerable significance for the Dominion, symbolising Canada's coming of age as a nation.

- The second uprising or revolution of the year took place in Russia, which finally overthrew the Tsarist regime and the provisional government in favour of the Communists led by Lenin. Aggrieved by the conduct of the war, the vast number of casualties and the poverty of the people, the new authority immediately sued for peace with Germany, hostilities on the Eastern Front came to an end and the era of the Soviet Union was born. This now gave the German Army the opportunity to move hundreds of thousands of troops to the Western Front to oppose the British and French. The German High Command planned for an all-out offensive to regain the initiative before the United States Army arrived in force, something that was thwarted by the next British attack in Flanders...
- Despite these three notable events mentioned, for Britain and her Commonwealth 1917 is mostly remembered for the Third Battle of Ypres, also regularly referred to as the Battle of Passchendaele, one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War. In the summer of 1917, fighting on Germany's eastern borders had stopped due to the Russian Revolution and it was possible to redeploy German troops to the west. Faced with this imminent surge in German military strength, Britain knew it had to act quickly but couldn't rely on the French who had problems of their own, so Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig developed a plan to regain



Vimy Ridge Barrage map, Public Domain. <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

the high ground north-east of Ypres and push the enemy back from the coast to deny the Germans use of their U-boat bases. Ypres had been surrounded on three sides since the start of the war with the German Army occupying all the dominant high-ground, especially the ridge at Passchendaele, which was heavily fortified and this would be the key objective for the British, Australian and Canadian forces. Haig ordered a preliminary two-week bombardment of the German positions, during which over four and a half million shells were fired, before the offensive proper started on 31 July. Initial progress was good but then the heavens opened and for the next three days the heaviest rains in 30 years turned the region into a quagmire. Tanks and transport got bogged down, gun mechanisms jammed and the attacking armies floundered in a sea of mud and water. Men and horses drowned and were sucked into the glutinous morass in enormous numbers. Haig called off the attack but then stubbornly ordered it to restart on 16 August, with further attacks on 20 & 26 September and yet another on 4 October. By the time the attacking forces captured the village of Passchendaele on 6 November, 325,000 had lost their lives with 260,000 Germans also being killed, all for the sake of five miles of ground. It is estimated that for every square metre of ground gained, 435 men lost their lives. Unfortunately, this huge sacrifice was all in vain as all this ground was recaptured by the Germans during their last major offensive in the spring of 1918.

- Nowhere can the human cost of Passchendaele be better appreciated today than from the Tyne Cot Cemetery and Memorial which stands on the ridge itself amongst the relics of German bunkers. This was named by soldiers of the 50th Northumbrian Division who thought the fortifications resembled the cottages back home. This is the largest Commonwealth War Grave in the



Aerial view Passchendaele, Public Domain. <https://commons.wikimedia.org>



First battle of Passchendaele. Frank Hurley - National Library of Australia, Public Domain. <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

world with 12,000 burials, 70% of which are unidentified. On the Memorial Wall to the rear of the cemetery a further 35,000 are named, those who have no known grave. From here there is a clear view down the valley to Ypres, making it the dominant position that all those men gave their lives to capture.

- Historians continue to debate the merits of Passchendaele. Some will show that it prevented the Germans launching their own offensive by eroding their strength by attrition and that it helped to shore up the tottering French Army. They also state that it gained more time for the Americans to arrive in greater strength. Others declare that there was no other alternative satisfactory theatre of operations. Opponents of the battle will ask whether this slip of Flanders soil justified the expenditure of so much life. Much greater doubt and controversy still surrounds the performance of the British Army's higher command, so much so to suggest that at Passchendaele, as on the Somme in 1916, there was no clear logic linking what Haig wished to achieve and the means used to achieve it. The common soldiers paid with their lives in their hundreds of thousands for that shortcoming.

## WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

# REMEMBRANCE

## Annual Remembrance Ceremony at Leeds Bradford Airport

Members of the Association and the Squadron gathered at Leeds Bradford Airport on 1 November 2017 for our annual Remembrance Ceremony at the Squadron Memorials.

With the kind permission of the Chief Executive, Mr David Laws, a small service was conducted by the airport Padre at each Memorial together with a wreath laying by the Chairman and the Mayor of Morley airside and OC 609 landside. Those present included Wg Cdr Jeff Metcalfe, Sqn Ldr Merv Ashe, WO Ian Pollock and FS Vic Rose from Leeming, together with Association members Marcia Gadd, Ursula Granahan, Peter Blayney, Phil Proudley, John Matley, Peter Wilson, Hugh Mulligan, Daryl & Debbie Johnson and Ken Cothcliff.

Thanks to the management and staff who facilitated this event and looked after us on Wednesday and once again to John Matley for making the arrangements.



## ASSOCIATION INFORMATION

### President

David Darley: david.dd.darley@virginmedia.com

### Chairman / Deputy Chairman

Jeff Metcalfe: jeffmetty18@gmail.com

Mike Foster: 55mike.foster@talktalk.net

### Secretary

Sarah McGhin: sarahmcghin@ymail.com

### Treasurer

Rosemary Darley: rosemary.darley@virginmedia.com

### Web Manager

Alan Hayman: alanhay48@hotmail.com

### Newsletter Editor

Adele Hudson: adele.hudson@btconnect.com

### Committee Members

Hugh Mulligan: mullihm@hotmail.com

Alan Parkes: alanparkes57@yahoo.co.uk

### Squadron Membership Representative

John Carruthers: jcarruthers@hotmail.co.uk



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or 609 Squadron (Spitfires)