



Tempsford Veterans and Relatives

Newsletter
Summer 2010



Notes from the Cockpit

Welcome, everybody, to our latest newsletter.

On 10 July we held our summer reunion which, as always, was well attended. Again we were able to welcome families who were visiting Tempsford for the first time having only recently discovered what their relatives got up to over 60 years ago. The day (and the night before) was a great success but if anybody has any suggestions about how we can improve the reunions please let Bob, Steve or myself know.

My thanks to all who came in July - it was wonderful for the organisers to sit back in the Wheatsheaf and "listen" to the atmosphere on the day.

You may recall that last year we presented the cadets of 22 (Sandy) Squadron ATC with the Tempsford Trophy (138 and 16 Squadron crests mounted on a wood base) which was to be presented to the squadron member who had contributed most to the squadron during the year. At the moment the cadets have not yet held their presentation evening but the Commanding Officer has told me that he will let me have details of the award so that we may include it in the next newsletter.

Speaking about our next newsletter, we can only continue to produce it if we have something to put in it. Please, if you would like to contribute an article let Bob, Steve or myself know. It can be submitted anonymously if you wish (as long as we can verify it); it does not have to be long. Remember, our newsletter is read all around the world by many veterans of Tempsford and relatives of those who served at Tempsford. Your article may provide the missing piece in their research or provide a link to other members of TVAR.

My thanks to Revd Margaret and all connected with the church for a wonderful service and, last but not least - my thanks to Bob and Steve and also Helen, Pam and Jane for helping to get a few people to a disused airfield. Your help is greatly appreciated.

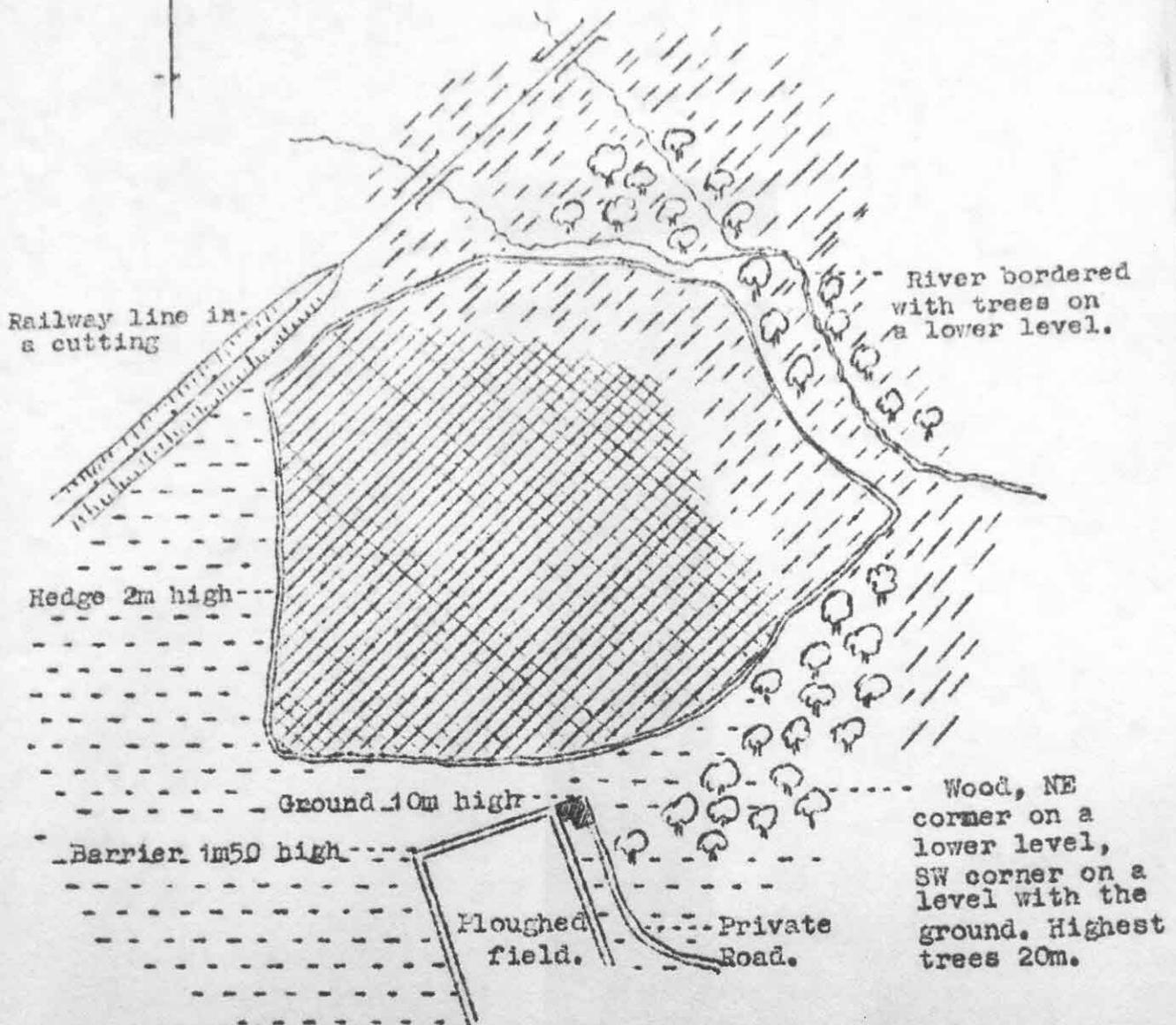
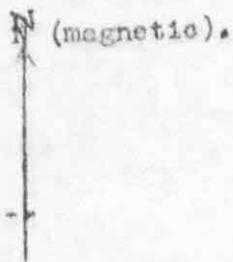
EDWIN BRYCE

In this newsletter, and in future we will be giving you the chance to see some of the “paperwork” behind the activities of 138 and 161 Squadrons, as well as (more importantly) gaining some insight into the way in which operations were carried out, from the point of view of both aircrew and agents. The first of these excursions into life at Tempsford comes from a manual of instructions to agents in the field on the reporting of landing grounds.

On page 2 you will see a diagram of a potential landing ground. The description of this landing ground had to be given, via an encoded wireless transmission, to headquarters. This then had to be checked for suitability before being put into use. The method used to describe the landing ground was via reference to an imaginary clock face, and we have reproduced these instructions in full, so that you can see exactly how this was achieved. This appears to have been a fairly labour intensive operation, both for the agent on the ground and his or her W/T operator, and there were certainly times when it was not as foolproof as might have been hoped, as may be seen from the comments at the end of the second example or, perhaps, in the picture below!



We are also including a selection of comments, both lighthearted and serious, by pilots returning from operations.

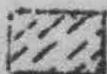


Scale:- 0 300 600 900 1200 metres.

Key



Landing ground; meadow, firm hard ground, flat surface without obstacles.



Meadow sloping away steeply.



Fields of any and every kind, on the same level as the landing field.

Description of L G (Landing Ground) by Direct Clock Method

Describe the landing ground itself:

- a State nature of soil, crop if any and degree of hardness.
- b Find the centre of the L.G. and face magnetic north.
- c Imagine yourself at the centre of a clock-face laid flat on the ground with 12 o/c at magnetic north. You now have 300 metres of L.G. and 300 metres of A and T.S. * ahead of you. That means that you must report every obstacle within 600 metres of you. If there is no such obstacle at 12, turn slowly to your right and when you find yourself in line with such an obstacle, estimate the time on your clock-face to the nearest half hour; pace the distance to the object and estimate the height of the object, then state these facts in the following order:
 - i Direction - ie time on your clock face.
 - ii Distance from centre.
 - iii Nature of object.
 - iv Height of object.

Example: 2.30 at 450 tree 25.

- d Where an obstacle is continuous, eg a hedge, wood or line of telegraph wires, give the times on your clock-face between which it runs, with the distance of each extremity from the centre.

Example: From 3.30 at 400 to 7.30 at 600 hedge 2.

- e If this continuous obstacle is not straight, describe it by a reference to each point where it changes direction definitely. Slight curves can be ignored.

Example: From 3.30 at 400 by 5 at 600 and 7.30 at 450 to 9 at 600 hedge 2.

* Believed to mean "Air & Taxi Strip"

HERCULE.

Soil firm and dry. Meadow land.

From 12.30 hours at 270 yards
 by 02.00 hours 270 yards

"	03.15	"	310	"
"	03.40	"	610	"
"	03.45	"	680	"
"	04.10	"	610	"
"	04.30	"	630	"
"	04.40	"	740	"
"	05.10	"	650	"
"	05.30	"	710	"
"	05.45	"	650	"
"	05.50	"	510	"

(10) Recognition signal

(11) Pilot's answering signal

Trees 12 feet high bordering river.

From	05.50	"	510	"
to	06.05	"	440	"

(12) Take off signal

(13) Landing order

bushes 6 feet high.

From	06.05	"	440	"
by	06.00	"	290	"
"	06.35	"	220	"
"	07.45	"	250	"
to	09.50	"	350	"

Stream 6 feet wide.

From	09.50	"	350	"
by	10.20	"	490	"
"	10.25	"	600	"
"	10.20	"	800	"
"	11.30	"	720	"
"	11.35	"	570	"
"	11.55	"	490	"
"	11.40	"	400	"
to	12.30	"	270	"

trees 15 feet on river bank.

	02.25	"	200	"
--	-------	---	-----	---

Footbridge across stream.

	02.15	"	245	"
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House (height not stated).

Note: 12 o'clock in this description does not represent magnetic north. Magnetic north is at about 9 o'clock.

OPERATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR LANDING AND/OR PICK UP OF PERSONNEL.

- 1. Code Name: ORGANIST.
- 2. Operation comprises: Double Lysander Outward. 4 Homeward.
- Passengers: To be notified later.
- Packages (Weights & Dimensions): To be notified later.

Landing Point: HERCULE/FORTUNE.

HERCULE.

46° 41' 45" N. 15 1/2 Kms SSW Chateauroux.

01° 38' 49" E. 4 1/2 Kms W. of Arthon.

Reference: B.32. 1AF/205.

Description of Landing Ground:

Composite made up of HERCULE & FORTUNE
See clock ray attached.

FORTUNE.

46° 41' 30" N.

01° 37' 24" E.

15 Km SSW Chateauroux.

5 1/2 Km W of Arthon.

Map France 1/80,000
B.C. Folio 4, Sheet 94.

5. Departure aerodrome: TREMPFORD.

6. Reception Committee will stand by:

DATE.

TIMES G.M.T.

Zone 2.

hrs.

to

hours.

2230

0130.

Final warning given to Reception Committee at

1915

hrs., G.M.T.

7. Lighting System:

STANDARD.

Recognition letter: Air to Ground:

AD

Ground to Air:

BM

8. Flare path will be laid out by:

Olive.

Trained under the name of:

Shaw.

Pilot reports: Lieut. Shaw is quite an intelligent officer. His work was satisfactory and he should make a good operator.

~~FROM FILE~~ - Acted as assistant to RegisK on operation Chauffeur, April 1944. Speaks fair English.

9. Special instructions:

Flare path to be laid on Fortune if wind direction unsuitable for HERCULE.

Signed

FOR GROUP CAPTAIN

DISTRIBUTION:-

A.I. 2. (c) 1, 2 & 3.

Country Sec. 4.

Circulation. 5.

File. 6.

H. A. B. C.

Clues Across

1. Where it all happened? (9)
2. See 13D (3)
6. Free? (8)
10. Not clerical. (3)
11. Harbinger of summer. (3)
12. Short fan. (2)
14. Female religious. (3)
15. & 17. HQ hit by Gerry Rafferty. (5,6)
19. A measure. (5)
22. The crucial time. (4,6)
27. & 43D Necessary Documents (5,6)
30. Good for golfers. (3)
31. Bucking Bronco here (5)
35.or id. (3)
36. Cool on a summer day. (4)
38. See 28D
41. Fly high. (4)
42. A musical one is useful. (3)
- 43, 78, 98, 46D. RAF Motto. (3,5,2,5)
44. Rider Haggard best seller. (3)
45. Only human, not divine. (3)
47. Feline snooze. (6)
49. Silver aircraft? (8)
50. Take for granted he amuses. (6)
51. Brazilian football star. (4)
53. Aristocrat.(4)
55. Shaftesbury Memorial fountain? (4)
56. Joyous leap? (4)

58. Alternative? (2)
59. Chinese porcelain. (4)
61. Thus. (2)
63. Catwalk, or rather Longer. (6)
65. See 9D
66. Mexican snack. (4)
68. See 87D
70. A very long time. (3)
72. A roadworks (4) breeder?
74. Male offspring. (3)
75. & 62. Posthumous GC for her? (8,5)
79. Keeps contents fresh. (3)
81. ...and every. (4)
82. No satellites for this chap. (9)
85. Boy scouts useful for these? (5)
88. Infamous gang 50s favourite from her. (4)
89. Sunny subject. (3)
90. Owl's about in the barn we hear. (4)
91. Male pronoun. (2)
92. Something or..... (5)
96. & 108. East Anglian brewery. (5,4)
97. 138 motto (7)
98. See 43
99. Where's it..... (2)
100. Faithful. (5)
101. A code inspector. (5)
102. Aerial bank? (7)
109. No blockage for free flow. (6)
110. Meeters & greeters. (9,9)

Clues Down

1. Safe place for emergency stop. (8)
2. See 13.
3. & 33A. Forward base? (5,4)
4. Elizabethan ships walled England. (3)
5. Coarse bread. (3)
6. Lizzie? (8)
7. Head here after ops. (3)
8. Go to work on one. (3)
- 9, 65A, 71D (1,1,1) Squadron
12. Spies r us. (6)
- 13 2. Biscuits dropped by parachute. (11,3)
16. Carnival town. (3)
18. Paleolithic.....? (3)
20. Goes on about turning round. (4)
21. One who defies? (6)
24. Certainly no amateur. (3)
25. A law or straight line. (4)
26. DZ? (8,4)
- 28, 23, 38A. Situated in 15A. (7,10,9)
32. A shortened Devon river. (2)
34. Some like it this way. (3)
37. Purple & yellow flags. (6)
39. Employ us 'ere. (3)
43. See 27A
47. Vital for celebrations. (9)
48. Near relative may mimic. (3)
52. Tool around for the money. (4)
54. Crusaders fought here for a land

56. Named passengers for Squadron pilots. (4)
57. Bader's alter ego. (4)
58. A debt. (3)
60. American soldier. (2)
62. Hibernian neighbour. (4)
- 64 & 86. White Rabbit. (3,6)
67. Not passive. (6)
69. For safe landings. (9)
73. A high flown US river. (6)
74. & 106. Fires ten snug Bullets. (4,3)
75. ..._? (7)
76. What the eagle did. (6)
77.parade. (3)
79. Young boy from Shropshire. (3)
80. Little Dorothy. (3)
83. Trap by spirited mother. (3)
84. In a suitcase? (5)
87. 68.A, 96. A fire under Brussels. (3,6,6)
93. Afternoon beverage. (3)
94. Alternative to high water. (4)
95. More Italian mixtures. (4)
96. See 87.
97. Smith's hot house? (5)
98. Turf or dome? (5)
99. Chance for fancy millinery? (5)
101. Seriously harm. (4)
103. Sick. (3)
104. The cost of entrance. (3)
- 107, 40, 105A (1,1,1) Squadron.

Extracts from Debriefing reports of 161 Squadron Operations

From Operation BERYL 11 28th Jan 1942 S/Ldr Nesbitt-Dufort

After a hasty conference with the pilot on the advisability of one member of the crew getting out again, and pushing, to assist take-off, we decided against this somewhat drastic course and, after eight or nine anxious minutes, “Gormless Gertie”, the aircraft in question, achieved a speed corresponding to a smart trot! Having passed No 2 and No 3 lights earlier in the evening!

On proceeding at a slightly increased but rather dangerous speed we found, to our amazement, that we were airborne.

The pilot informed me that if it had not been for the almost previously unheard of and drastic use of “skyhooks” this undoubtedly would not have been accomplished.

The remainder of the trip to base was uneventful, if slow. The skill of the pilot and navigator proved in this case to be exceptional, as we were only lost the majority of the way home, which only goes to prove!

From Operations BERYL II & III 1st & 2nd March 1942 S/Ldr Murphy

The above laconic report marks the completion of a very stout effort by the pilot and navigator and the Cooks tourist passenger, but the writer must point out that although it appears to end at 02:40 hours, at 02:41 hours a party commenced over which a veil has been drawn by the participants, a select three, and those members of the Squadron who were so glad to see our DSO able to use the return half of his ticket.

From Operation EASTER 1 2nd April 1942 S/Ldr Murphy

I became airborne at Tangmere at 22:00 hours and set course for Cabourg. The weather was excellent and the French coast was clearly visible 20 miles away. The ground defence at Le Havre was putting up a commendable firework display. The French coast was crossed at Cabourg at 22:50 hrs and course set for Andelys on the Seine. At 22:58 hrs I passed into 10/10 cloud and on my ETA at Les Andelys I came down through cloud and saw a longish river which I assumed was the Seine. It was not, however, and at 23:30 hrs I came to the conclusion that there was no future wandering around France like a lost lamb so decided to return to the French coast. Le Havre was picked up at 24:00 hrs and I went down to 500 feet and followed the Seine, craftily nipping round Rouen to avoid unpleasantness....I climbed steadily and at 01:00 hrs got involved with thundercloud of monstrous dimensions, the bumps being very severe, and I realised that my blind flying was not all it should have been. At 01:05 hrs the female passenger was violently sick, but as she was unable to speak English I could not find out whether it was the bumps or my blind flying which had caused this regrettable effort.

From Operation BRIDGE 27th-28th April 1942 S/Ldr Murphy

I became airborne at 02:07 hours and after setting course for a point 4 miles N of Dieppe closed my windows. I immediately became conscious of a powerful smell of perfume, and I assumed that I had a female passenger on board, and it was with pleasurable anticipation that I flew back.

***From Operations JELLYFISH/GAZELLE 26th-27th April 1942
F/Lt Lockhart***

Unfortunately the landing ground was a hill and I bumped my landing. The engine commenced to burn so I switched off. Meanwhile "Gazelle" disembarked with luggage and disappeared. After six or seven minutes the flames died out so I started the engine and taxied to light "A"....

.....and this is what happens when things really go wrong!

From Operation BLUDGEON 8th-9th Feb 1944 F/O Affleck

Weather conditions for landing were very good, landing carried out at 00:15 hrs. The surface of the field was extremely wet and muddy and on touching down the aircraft skidded for well over 100 yds. The aircraft was taxied back to the down-wind end of the field (as directed by the signalling light) and now became completely bogged. The engines were switched off and we commenced to dig out the wheels. Our first attempt was to manhandle the aircraft but only succeeded in getting it into wind. We then tried by using the engines, this was unsuccessful. Oxen were sent for and some more digging carried out, and some wooden planks procured. With oxen on one wheel and horses on the other the aircraft still failed to move. Finally with the tail wheel resting on a runway of planks and long inclined channels dug for the main wheels, the aircraft was moved by use of full throttle, and taxied further up wind to slightly firmer ground. Reduced load was taken on board. In the short time it had been stationary, the aircraft had again sunk in deeply, but was finally moved by continuous use of full throttles. First attempt to take off was unsuccessful. Even when taxiing back along the lengths the aircraft was sticking. The next attempt at take off was just successful. There were about 50 people on the ground and they rendered invaluable assistance in digging and manhandling the aircraft. It is recommended that all aircraft carry wooden planks.

The agent is entirely responsible for allowing this operation to take place when the state of the ground was totally unfit, and but for the magnificent performance of F/O Affleck and his crew it would certainly have ended in disaster.the load brought back...was as follows: - one Frenchman, one Frenchwoman in advanced state of pregnancy, one child of not more than two years of age, one sergeant air gunner.....

I think F/O Affleck and his crew deserve great credit for their magnificent effort.

G/Capt commanding RAF Tempsford

Echoes of an extraordinary past

I have been Priest in Charge of Tempsford with Little Barford for just over eighteen months now and, thus far, I've officiated at three TVAR services. Having lived in nearby St Neots for most of my life, I can almost be counted as local, but it will surprise few of you to learn that very little of RAF Tempsford's history was known to me before I took up this appointment. Even the real locals - living in the village itself - knew practically nothing about the secret life of the airfield until decades after the war. Of course I was not totally ignorant: my father, whose national service had been with the RAF, was very interested in the local wartime airfields and I consequently knew where many of them were situated, even if there was no visible sign of them remaining!

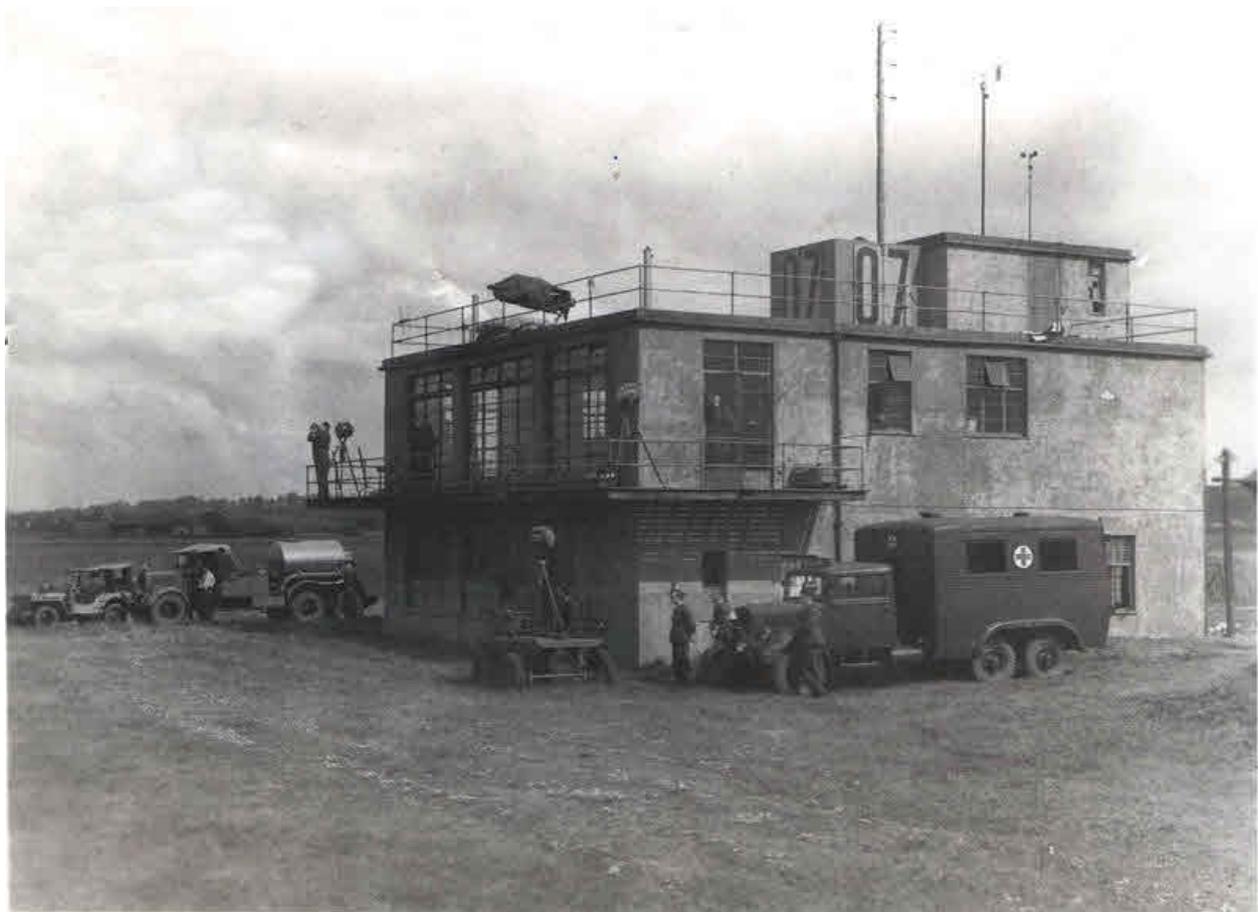
But Tempsford was a bit of a special case - its purpose unlike any other... and as I began the pleasant task of getting to know some of the veterans and their families, I also began to piece together some of the amazing human stories of an equally unspectacular parcel of land at the very edge of my ecclesiastical benefice.

Of course I had officiated at Remembrance Day services during my years at St Neots, but nothing could have prepared me for the deeply moving equivalent at the Gibraltar barn. Somehow the wartime sacrifices and acts of courage seemed much more tangible there than standing by the usual kind of war memorial. The slightly forlorn building holds real echoes of the SOE agents preparing for imminent missions... and the flat fields around are invisibly etched with the ordinary everyday struggles of the many souls who performed their secret, often mundane duties with matter-of-fact efficiency.

St Peter's Church, on the other side of the A1 houses a small collection of wartime memorabilia and a commemorative plaque. It seems very little in the way of tribute to those who did extraordinary things in the name of freedom - not just British subjects, but people of many other nations too, who came to assist in supporting resistance in occupied territories.

I find the secret history of Tempsford fascinating; it is a delight to research, for our two annual occasions, some aspect of its past. It is plain that not everything that is to be said or known about those difficult days has yet come to light. Families near and far still try to make connections and solve mysteries and, particularly, to see due honour paid to lost forebears. Their dedication to the task is both inspiring and humbling, as is their willingness to return time after time, to pray, remember and celebrate. Playing even a small part in our collective remembering of the brave and the dutiful is, in itself, an honour and a very special feature of my ministry in this group of churches. I hope to go on welcoming you here for many years to come, and to continue discovering alongside you, little by little, just how extraordinary this place's contribution was to hastening the war's end.

Margaret Marshall, Priest-in-charge, Riversmeet Benefice



The Control Tower

138 & 161 Special Duties Squadrons

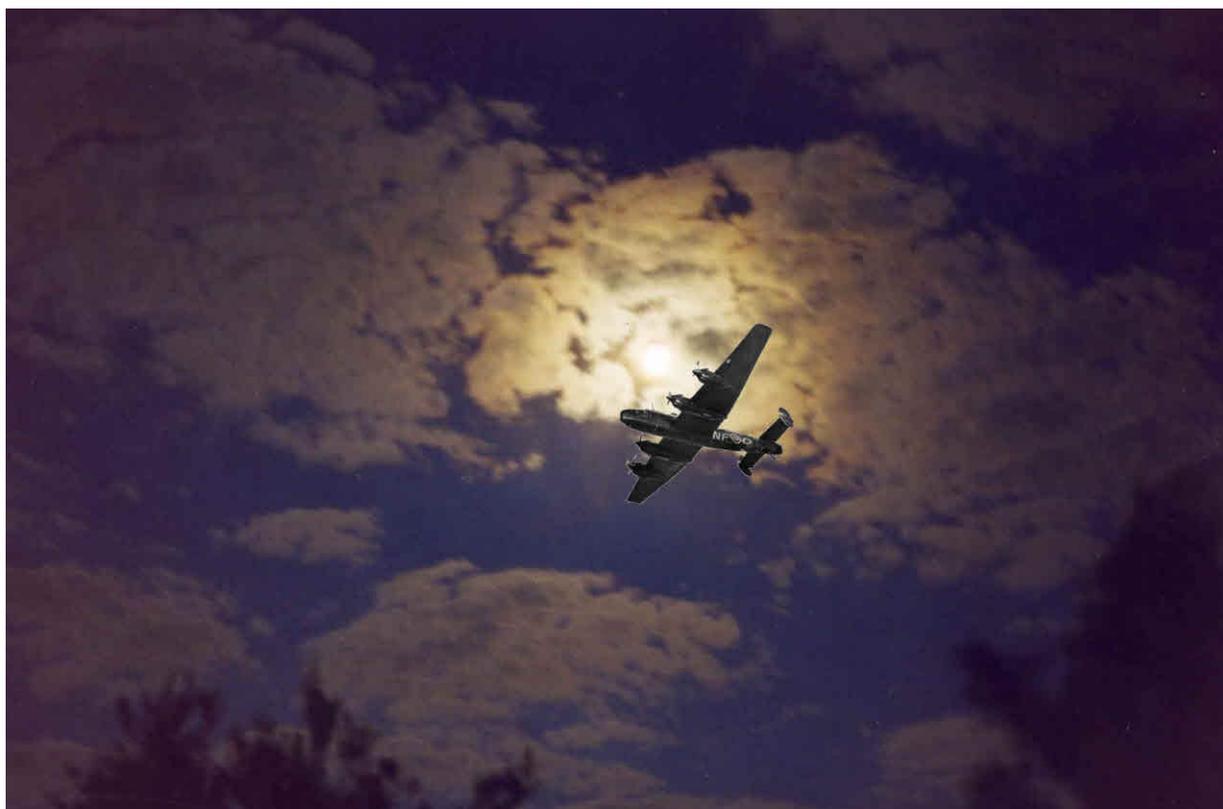
Special then - Special now - Special always

There will be a Remembrance Sunday Service on 14th November.

Gates open 10.00am, service at 12.00

Arrangements for a meeting at the Wheatsheaf after the service are under way; in the interests of efficient service and speed, and to help the staff, we will again be taking orders in advance. If you have not received a menu, please contact Edwin. Some people may, as in July, wish to come down the day before and stay at a local hotel. The one we used in July was the Premier Inn at Eaton Scoton - 0870-9906314 for bookings (check in from 14.00). Bob and Edwin will be there from around 12.30 on Saturday.

As before, may we remind people that there has been discussion in the past about the wearing or not wearing of medals. As this is a “military” occasion, those attending who are/were in the Services should wear their medals. Some of the “civilians” attending may have the medals of their relative, and it is quite in order for them to wear these (on the right breast) should they so wish. We encourage this, as a mark of respect to the relative.



Contact Details:

Edwin Bryce: tvaradmin@tempsford-squadrons.info

Bob Body: editor@tempsford-squadrons.info

Steve Harris: sparris@btconnect.com

Tempsford Web Sites

www.tempsford-squadrons.info

www.161squadron.org

www.tempsford.20m.com