

# FRIENDS OF TEMPSFORD SQUADRONS



## INTRODUCTION

In 1997, following the discovery of the wreckage of Hudson FK790 and the remains of its pilot, Flight Lieutenant J W Menzies DFC, a small group of the relatives of the crew of that aircraft decided that it would be a good idea if the memory of all those who served in the Tempsford Squadrons could be kept alive by friendship between veterans and the families & friends of those who gave their lives for freedom. In those early days, newsletters were confined simply to those directly associated with FK790, while arrangements were made for the funeral, in October 1998, of Flight Lieutenant Menzies. As time has passed, however, more people have wished to become involved in this group - family members and friends worldwide, as well as local historians and visitors to the Tempsford area eager to learn more about the history of the Special Duties Squadrons. Having taken soundings from various people, we have decided that it would be good to publish regular newsletters, so that all who care about Tempsford Airfield and its history may be kept informed of any interesting events and to help keep contacts alive. We would very much welcome any feedback on this newsletter, and any information which you think might be useful to others.

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## Remembrance Sunday

9th November Wing Commander Tony Smith will be making the arrangements for a Remembrance Service to be held at the Barn. Please contact us nearer the date for details.

## Inside

July meeting 2003

Joining the FRIENDS

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July Meeting 2003

19th July

On a beautiful day, we met first at the museum, and were delighted to see the work that had been put in by Lady Errol's staff. Many of the exhibits had been rearranged, and given a greater degree of protection, and the rooms had been thoroughly cleaned. We understood, too, that arrangements were being made to make the building safer still; it is also hoped that there will, eventually, be an inventory of all the items in the museum.



Tepsford Farm in the 1940s

The Barn, too, had been swept and tidied. Poppy wreaths are displayed from previous years' Remembrance Services, with the most recent on display in the central area. Those visiting the Barn for the first time often feel very emotional - and this occasion was no exception. It is very hard to think how the agents felt as they were checked for the last time before setting out on their missions - many of them never to return.

Once everyone had had time for thought at the Barn, we returned to the museum for a final look around, and then a very pleasant lunch.

Over the years, it has been a great pleasure to encounter people from all over the world seeking information about aircrew from the Tepsford Squadrons, as well as those with a general interest in the operations which took place there. One of the former was Chris Jeffrey, who was seeking information about his uncle, Sgt Wilbur Jeffrey, who was lost on Halifax LL419 of 138 Sqdn on 31 May/1 Jun 1944. The latest information available indicates



Air Forces Memorial - Runnymede

that the aircraft may have been found, although there is, as yet, no confirmation of this. Chris has been helped in his search by Dutch historians - information is far more freely available in Holland, and the work done by researchers there is truly amazing. We have, in particular, received much help from Aad Neeven & Huub van Sabben, both of whom have contributed a great deal, over many years, towards solving the "mystery" of Hudson FK790. Perhaps part of the purpose of this newsletter is to make people aware that there are many who are willing and able to help either in tracing

missing aircrew, or giving information to relatives of those who have a grave. Many of the contacts have been made via the wonders of the internet, but a phone call will do just as well! Please pass the contact details on to anyone you know who wishes to trace relatives/friends and we'll try to help. Also, please let us know of any interesting Tepsford related stories for future newsletters - we need feedback from you to continue this enterprise. While we both feel it is very important, we can't do it without backing from all of you, so please let us know what you would like - the aim is to produce a newsletter twice a year (summer & around Christmas).

**Bob & Helen Body**

## Dutch Remembrance

IN May, Bob & Helen Body paid their annual visit to Holland, to join in Remembrance Services on 4th May. For those who haven't previously encountered Dutch hospitality, visiting Holland, particularly at this time, can come as rather a shock! This was certainly true for Ron & May Morris, who joined Bob & Helen at this year's May 4th Services. Ron, a former member of 161 Squadron, had been invited by the Dutch Authorities to lay a wreath at the memorial in The Hague to those Agents who were killed while playing their part in the struggle for freedom in The Netherlands. At this ceremony, Ron was able to meet some of the Agents whom he had dropped into Holland - a very moving encounter for all concerned. Bob was also able to meet one of the Agents who had been dropped by Flt Lt Menzies, and learn more of his story. The Agents' memorial is in a beautiful setting, just outside The Hague, at Scheveningen - if any of you are in the area, do try to visit it. The Dutch all say that the name of this place was used as a check to spot German spies - apparently Germans find it very difficult to say "Scheveningen"! The British, of course, are renowned for being unable to speak any foreign languages, but this is readily forgiven in Holland, which is somewhat embarrassing. The one word which is on everyone's lips during the Remembrance ceremonies is "Vrijheid" - freedom. The ceremony each year has a national "theme" and this year's is

VRIJHEID IS NIET TE KOOP -  
FREEDOM IS NOT FOR SALE



Gerard van der Weerd Harry Weelinck Ron Morris

LATER in the day, Bob & Helen and Ron & May drove back north to Makkum, which is the town where the crew of FK790 are buried. The Makkum ceremony comprises a silent march through the streets of the town, pausing at the town war memorial for wreath laying, and then continuing to the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, which is part of the cemetery attached to the Dutch Reformed Church. This church is 16th Century, and not in regular use (there is a new church in the town), but is always used for the Remembrance Service and other important public events. The funeral of Flight Lieutenant Menzies was held here in October 1998. On that occasion, as at every Remembrance Service, the church was full to overflowing. At this year's service, the priest gave his sermon on the theme "Vrijheid is niet te koop", and there was beautiful

singing from a local choir, as well as hymns which all could join. At the end of the service, Bob presented to the church three books which he had made detailing the history of all those buried in the Commonwealth War Graves section of the cemetery. When we were searching, all those years ago, for information about Flight Lieutenant Menzies, we learned how helpful were even small snippets of history. We hope that these books will help anyone who comes to Makkum to visit the grave of their relative and who wishes to find out more about them.



Wreath laying in Makkum Churchyard

Bob & Helen Body Ron Morris