



T V A R

Tempsford Veterans & Relatives

Spring Newsletter 2008

It is now nearly a year since the "change of management" and it is fitting that the first newsletter be opened with some remarks by the new "Captain" . Over to you Edwin....

It seems like it was only last week when I arrived home from Tempsford after the Remembrance Service and told Jane "Now I can have a break for a few weeks before getting ready for the Summer". Suddenly Spring is showing signs of arriving, and the number of e-mails from Greece are increasing; each one reminding me of the Summer newsletter. How time flies when one is having fun.

Over the Winter months I have kept in touch with a number of our members and I am surprised as to how diverse are the backgrounds of people, yet we are pulled together by a common denominator - Tempsford Airfield.

Over the Winter more people have found out about TVAR and, hopefully, at our Summer reunion (which is on 5th July) we will have some new faces to welcome.

Sadly, though, we have lost one of our stalwarts. Flying Officer Ron Morris passed away in February - later in this letter Bob recalls Ron's time at Tempsford and the enormous contribution he made to TVAR.

At the Summer reunion we are hoping to have a social evening on the Friday (4th) evening. Nothing fancy - hopefully we will be able to take over a room in a local hostelry and spend the night getting to know each other over a beer or two. On the day of the reunion there seems to be very little time to mix socially. Please contact one of the 3 Amigos for more details if you are interested, their e-mail addresses may be found on the back page.

Edwin

Following the tradition of previous years, a Service of Remembrance was held at the Barn on Remembrance Sunday, with approximately 60 people present. Reverend Barbara Ebeling officiated at the service which was attended, as usual by No. 22 A.T.C. (Sandy) Squadron.



The Cadets, as well as parading at the service, were able to play a larger part, with three of them laying wreaths on behalf of relatives who were unable to attend. Mark Stafferton gave, as ever, excellent renditions of both the Last Post and Reveille.

Following the service, many veterans and relatives adjourned to the "Wheatsheaf" to continue conversations and enjoy a meal.

This was to be the last November service at which Barbara Ebeling would officiate, as she will soon be retiring. She will, however, be taking the church service at the July meeting, so members will then be able to pass on good wishes to her.

A message from Barbara

Over the past 9 years I have been very privileged to take part in services of remembrance for those who served at Tempsford. To remember those who gave their lives for freedom is important wherever it is done, but in Tempsford, and especially at the airfield, it has become for me the REAL act of Remembrance. I have met so many wonderful people, and have been especially moved by those who actually flew from there into enemy territory, not knowing what they were going to encounter. It has been amazing to hear their stories, which they tell with such humility. It has been wonderful to meet people from the Resistance who bravely risked their lives to help the agents to land.

It has been profoundly moving to meet younger generations of relatives from all over the world who have, sometimes after much searching, come to see the place their relatives left, never to return.

As a post war child, I can only say thank you to that wonderful generation who have taught me so much about courage and self-sacrifice. Can I also thank all those who have been so friendly and welcoming to me. I will always remember Tempsford Airfield and I pray that it may long be a special place of memories. May it also remain a place where we can pray for peace.

Thanks to you all. Looking forward to seeing you in July.

Barbara Ebeling.

It is with great sadness that I have to report the death of Ron Morris.

Ron was the first veteran to join the newly formed association, back in 2003.

Although I had previously spoken to Ron on the phone, we first met on his first visit to Holland. On that occasion he was able, for the first time, to meet "properly" one of the Dutch agents he dropped (Barnabas). After 60 years, they finally got to see each other - a very emotional moment for both of them.

In 2007, Ron was again in Holland and met yet another of his "Joes".

Ron died, peacefully, at home on 20th February, and the funeral took place the following week. Edwin Bryce, Gordon Franklin and I were all able to attend.

Ron came to Tempsford in 1944, from 48 Squadron Coastal Command, having flown Hudsons off Gibraltar on anti-submarine duties.

He took the secrecy surrounding his Tempsford duties so seriously that it was not until the end of the war that his wife, May, learned the truth about his work. He had not "just been dropping tins of Spam and leaflets!"

When Ron attended our Summer gatherings, he would always find time to answer questions on many subjects posed by relatives. His answers, carefully considered, would often give comfort to those seeking information about a relative.

Ron with 2 of his agents



Gerde van der Werde
(Harlech)

Harry Weelinck
(Barnabas)

Ron Morris

Photo taken at the monument to the victims of the *Englandspiel*, at Scheveningen, near The Hague.

WATCHING YOU, WATCHING ME!

By Stan Sickelmore

I was 19 when I volunteered for the RAF, in September 1941. After being posted around to various training stations in America, Canada and the UK, I finally got to 84 OTU, Desborough to fly Wellingtons. Then on to 1651 HCU, to fly Stirlings. By then I had selected a full crew. My Navigator, Harry Richards, a Chemist from Hartlepool, Bomb Aimer, John Ashcroft, a teacher from Liverpool, Engineer, Ted Privett, a Civil Servant from Inverness. My Wop/Ag, was an Australian from Sydney, and my two Gunners were from Glasgow. Having finished the conversion course, we were told we would be posted to one of the secret squadrons at Tempsford, and that we would be told more when we arrived there. We joined 138 in July 1944.

We started operations straight away, and found the Mk IV Stirlings very suitable for our low level operations

One interesting trip took place on Xmas Eve 1944. We had all hoped, of course, that we would not be required for operations that night. But alas, our hopes were dashed when we were called for briefing quite early in the day. We were accustomed to doing many types of operations, but this one was a little different.

We were going to play a small part in The Battle Of The Bulge.

Our load this time was not containers of supplies, but dummy parachutists loaded with fire crackers and explosive devices, which, when dropped, would explode on, or near, the ground. This was to be done behind the enemy lines to deceive them into thinking that an airborne force would be attacking them from the rear. It was hoped that they would divert some troops in that direction, thus weakening the front. At the same time the Allies would make a determined push forward. Whether it worked at all I don't know since the battle went on for some time after that. However, history tells us that December 26th is recorded as being the turning point. So perhaps our parachutists (code named Gingerbread Men,) did help.

We took off at 1610, and flew at 1500ft. Our task was to make the drop at 1000 feet near the small town of Prüm. It was a very dark night but with very good visibility. I descended to 1000 feet and, as we crossed over the battle area, we could see the flashes of opposing artillery fire brilliantly against the dark ground, and artillery flares lighting up different areas. All hell seemed to have broken loose down there. It was an awesome sight, and the picture remains vividly in my memory to this day. We completed our drop successfully, our fire crackers made a fine display, and we turned for home. We recrossed the lines, but saw little this time as we were climbing to a higher altitude to keep above other incoming aircraft.

Tempsford, and most of the South of England, was closed in with thick fog, so we were diverted to Lyneham, where conditions were a little better. We landed at 2145, and were in time to join their Xmas party. However, the weather clamped for two days, so we were unable to fly back to base until the day after Boxing Day. All that time in our flying gear and with only borrowed toiletries!

Still, we had New Year's Eve to look forward to. We'd make up for it then. But no! On 31st December we on our way to supply the Danish Resistance Fighters. But, that's another story!

Many years later I met a chap at a reunion, who told me that he was fighting on the ground at the Battle of the Bulge; I told him of what I had seen and that I and my crew said, " God, I'm glad we are not down there". He laughed, "that's what I used to say when I saw your planes being shot at as they flew over - I'm glad I'm not up there"! We had a laugh and another drink together.

Ed. This is one of Stan's many memories of his time at Tempsford. Does anyone else have memories to share with the rest of us? Just drop me a line and let me know.

Bob

MEDALS

There has been some discussion in the past as to the wearing of medals; to wear or not to wear, that was the question.

It is understood that, in the days of the "Tempsford Association", reunions were combined with two services, one at the Barn and one in the church, and medals were not worn.

Now that we have two separate occasions, it is felt that, for the Remembrance Sunday Service, medals may be worn as this is a formal parade and open to people other than members of the T.V.A.R.

For the summer gathering, an informal occasion, we believe that it is right to keep the tradition set by the "Tempsford Association", and no medals will be worn.



138 & 161 Special Duties Squadrons

Special then - Special now - Special always

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