

ME846 Family

Spring Newsletter 2018– Vol.12



*** Please see the bottom of page 4 for crew details*

Compiling this edition of the ME846 Family Newsletter has been underway since just after the 619 Squadron Association Luncheon at the end of October 2017. However various circumstances have combined to delay its publication.

Amongst these delaying factors was the illness of Howard Heeley's father-in-law, Cledwyn (Cled) Thomas, who passed away peacefully on 18th January at home in Nottingham. As many of you will know the ME846 story has been littered with coincidences, and even this in this family loss there is a possible link to the ME846 Family.

Cled was born in North Wales and as a young teenager during World War II he grew up not far from RAF Penrhos in Gwynedd, where a young Peter Knox underwent armament and gunnery training before crewing up at Turweston and Silverstone. Who knows Cled may have witnessed some of the extensive wartime training that was undertaken on the edge of the beautiful Snowdonia National Park.



2017 view across towards the cloud covered Llŷn Peninsula where RAF Penrhos was located.

Below is a picture of Peter Knox and his fellow trainees that was taken at RAF Penrhos in 1943.



*Royal Australian Air Force - Bomb Aimers 115 A stationed at RAF Penrhos North Wales in 1943.
Back row: left to right: Sgt. Peter Knox, P/O Keith Steinbeck, P/O Lyle Bowes, Sgt. Joe Millmot, Sgt. Pierre Burge
Front row: left to right: Sgt. Charlie Kroschel, Sgt. Norm Jarvis, P/O Bert Tyne, Sgt. Stan Black, Sgt. Norm Page*

Another sad loss was notified to the ME846 Family on Remembrance Day, 2017 when we were advised that Dimphna Sterckx had passed away in Belgium on 10th November 2017.

There will be more details about Dimphna in another newsletter edition later in the year, which will also soon be digitally archived as part of a new website that Jane is developing.

Some initial details can be found by following this weblink here:

<http://knoxetal.com/raf/Dimphna/>

28 October 2017

619 Squadron Association Luncheon

The 619 Squadron Association's 2017 autumn reunion was held in the historic surroundings of the RAF Club in London on Saturday 28th October.



The reunion was well attended with around 40 people travelling to London, this included veterans, Association members, relatives and families; who enjoyed pre-lunch drinks, a good lunch with excellent service provided by the RAF Club staff; and some good company with everyone catching up with news from the Association and its diverse range of members from around the world. Sadly illness prevented a number of veterans from attending. After the customary speeches and toasts the group moved over to the nearby Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park.



A short service was conducted by Rev John Campbell in memory of "496 members of 619 Squadron who paid the supreme sacrifice" a wreath was laid to commemorate them.



619 Squadron Badge

Shortly after the luncheon in London there was some communications from the RAF Club regarding the 619 Squadron crest which we presented to them at the luncheon in 2016. Their communication advised the following information.

"We continue to display the 619 Squadron Badge on the second floor bedroom corridor, very proudly as part of a collection of crests and items given to the Club over the past few decades.

We did have your Squadron Badge assessed by the College of Arms and although it is an excellent painting, it was not prepared by them, so we are unable to add it to the Badge Corridor.

Should you wish to commission a College of Arms painted badge to be placed in the badge corridor, please let me know. The cost for this is £500 - made payable to the College of Arms. There is a £100 charge placed by the Club. This is for our framing and plaque making service. (It ensures they are all similar.)" The current badge is pictured below.



Offers of financial support have already been made from several people within the ME846 Family, and as yet a decision has not been made about how to proceed. However we wanted to make everyone aware of the possible request for fund raising support.

12 November 2017

Newark Air Museum Remembrance Service

Newark Air Museum's annual Remembrance Sunday Service in our Memorial Garden on Sunday 12th November and once again the ME846 related memorials were an integral part of the wider acts of commemoration.



The service and parade, which was organised by museum Groundsman, Nigel Bean, commemorated all of the service personnel who are remembered on the various memorials and tributes in the Memorial Garden and around the wider museum site. It was a bright autumnal day, but there were biting cold winds blowing across the airfield.

The service was led by museum member the Reverend Alan Boyd, and we are grateful to the various local civic dignitaries who attended and laid wreathes; plus the representatives of various local service organisations. A special thank you goes out to all of the ATC Cadets from North Hykeham, who were magnificently turned out and were a credit to their officers and families - well done to everyone.



Before Remembrance Sunday an expanded commemoration was reintroduced to the artefact display area known as Lancaster Corner in Hangar 1 at the museum.

The evocative 'Weeping Lancaster' stream of poppies was re-laid on to the floor of the Lancaster fuselage section from IX(B) Squadron Lancaster Mk.1 W4964 WS-J that was donated to Newark in 1974.



The 2017 commemoration comprised of more than one thousand (1,000) poppies that have been reclaimed from wreaths laid in the Memorial Garden at the museum during recent years.

Newark Air Museum Café

As 2017 drew to a close the museum received a notification email from the East Midlands Building Consultancy (EMBC) about Building Regulations Conditional Approval for the new Modular Café & Toilet facility; it read as follows.

"Thank you for the submission of your Full Plans application to East Midlands Building Consultancy (EMBC).

The plans have been checked for compliance with the Building Regulations and I am pleased to advise the application has been approved. Please find your Conditional Approval attached to this email, this is an important document you will need to keep safe.

You will be allocated a dedicated surveyor who will guide you through the process and carry out site visits throughout the development."

This was well received and allowed the project to proceed with a further set of defined targets and requirements. Various site visits have been made to view the café that was built on the former site of RAF North Witham, and the finished unit was eventually delivered by the end of March.



In parallel to the build work the museum has been working with external contractors to install new services (water & electric) for the project and to build the base for the project.

A final decision on naming the new café still has to be made, but it is hoped that it will reflect the site's wartime connections to 1661 HCU the unit that the ME846 crew trained with in Nottinghamshire. The new café being assembled is pictured below.



Commemoration of 619 Squadron Lancaster in France April 2018

Letter received from Anne Grimshaw

Dear Friends of 619 Squadron (and apologies to those recipients who already know about this),

You may have seen my slide-talk and book *The Last Flight of Lancaster LL919* about a Lancaster and her crew from 619 Squadron which flew from RAF Dunholme Lodge, Lincolnshire, and was shot down over France in 1944. There was one survivor. The rest of the crew are buried in the churchyard at Landéville in the Haute Marne Département. Every year there is a commemoration at the church and in the village.

Last September friends and I visited Landéville and laid a poppy wreath on the graves. I met André

Massaux, the mayor, who I have met several times before. He said that he was hoping to organise a big commemoration next year - probably Friday 27 April or Saturday 28 April 2018. He asked me to find out if people with a connection to 619 Squadron and/or the crew would be interested in attending, hence this email.

Might you consider attending? Perhaps you could make a holiday out of it. It is an attractive area of France that no one seems to go to much. It would be a case of make your own way there, I'm afraid. I find this sort of holiday which has a real focus and purpose to be much more satisfying than lying on a beach or just wandering aimlessly around. You feel you have achieved something and made a connection with people of the past who, in these cases, were 'ordinary' people doing extraordinary things.

It would be great if you could come and tell the folks in Landéville that you are a relative of a crew member or have a connection with or interest in 619 Squadron. The people in Landéville would be delighted to meet you.

In September, my friends and I used the Shuttle/Eurostar whereby you drive your car onto the train, sit in it for 35 minutes then drive off at Calais and head south on motorways (not nearly so busy as ours) skirting Arras, Rheims, Chalons-en-Champagne, Vitry le Francois, St Dizier, Joinville and Landéville. It is about 265 miles from Calais.

If you are interested in attending, please email me so that I can give André Massaux an idea of numbers. I'm not actually organising anything – just passing on notification of this event for André.

Best wishes, Anne Grimshaw, Member of 619 Squadron Association

*** The crew at RAF Winthorpe, HCU in early March 1944 in front of their Short's Stirling (left to right): F/S Peter Edmund Knox – A418433 RAAF – Bomb Aimer; Sgt Thomas. A. Newbery – 1602063 RAF – Wireless Operator; Sgt W. Dennis “Geordie” Belshaw – 1808996 RAF – Flight Engineer; P/O Mark Anthony Hamilton “Dave” Davis – 174023 RAFVR – Pilot; F/S Leslie E. J. “Tagger” Taylor – 1585057 RAF – Navigator; Sgt George Harry Moggridge – 1896779 RAFVR - Mid-Upper Gunner; P/O John Ernest Ralph “Porky” Bowering – J/88199 RCAF – Rear Gunner*

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