

XV SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



2009 UPDATE NEWSLETTER

LAYING-UP OF THE OLD SQUADRON STANDARD

When OC XV(R) Squadron learned that his unit was to receive a new Royal Standard, he had to select a suitable location to lay up the old one. Squadrons are not permitted to possess more than one Royal Standard at a time and tradition demands that the old Standard be laid up in a consecrated place. Given the Squadron's close links with the village of Gellik in Belgium, it was decided to lay up the old Standard at St Laurentius Church in the village.



XV(R) Sqn Standard beside the Gellik village memorial

The Squadron's long-standing connection with Gellik goes back to 12 May 1940 when XV Squadron's Blenheim Mk IVs attacked the bridges over the nearby Albert Canal. Of the 12 aircraft involved in the raid, 6 were shot down, with 14 of the aircrew killed. One Blenheim, piloted by Sgt Hubert Hall with Sgt Edward Perrin as Observer and LAC Patrick 'Joe' McDonnell as Air Gunner, crashed in the canal on the edge of Gellik. Perrin and McDonnell died in the crash. Hall survived for a short period but died of his wounds on the canal towpath. The aircraft sank in the canal and it was some time before Perrin and McDonnell's

bodies were recovered. The villagers buried them initially on the bank of the canal. After the allies liberated the area over 4 years later they were moved to a military cemetery, but the villagers erected a memorial to them outside the village church, and have since remembered them around May 12 each year.

Peter Hall was 5 years old when his father was killed in action. After the war the villagers contacted him and invited him to join them in commemorating the sacrifice made by his father's crew. Peter had become a Church of England Priest, and returns each year to take part in a memorial service with the village's own Catholic Priest. XV(R) Squadron has supported this ceremony for many years, parading the Squadron Standard and, over time forging a close bond and friendship with the local residents.

So it was that Wing Commander Saunders, accompanied by RAF Lossiemouth's Station Commander, Group Captain Al Monkman and members of XV(R) Squadron travelled to Gellik on 23 November 2008. The Rev Peter Hall, accompanied by clergy of other faiths, led the laying-up ceremony. XV(R) Squadron's former Royal Standard is now in the care of the people of Gellik, who have done so much to honour the Squadron's fallen.



Wg Cdr Saunders handing the XV(R) Sqn Standard to the Parish Priest at St Laurentius Church

PRESENTATION OF THE NEW SQUADRON STANDARD

His Royal Highness The Duke of York visited RAF Lossiemouth on 10 December 2008 to present new Squadron Standards to both XV(R) Squadron and 14 Squadron. These were the third Squadron Standards that the two Squadrons have received. To cater for the possibility



HRH The Duke of York presenting the new XV(R) Sqn Standard

of bad weather the parade was practiced and finally held in the Eng Wg hangar. The parade was commanded by Wing Commander Steve Reeves, OC 14 Squadron, and the XV(R) Squadron Standard Bearer was Flt Lt Matt Murphy. Following the parade His Royal Highness met with members of both squadrons during lunch in the Officers' Mess.

XV(R) Squadron's original Standard was awarded in 1953, but at the time there was no

formal parade to present the Standard to the Squadron. The Standard was later presented by HRH the Duchess of Kent on 3 May 1961. The second Standard was presented on 8 May 1981 at RAF Laarbruch. The Reviewing Officer at this presentation was Squadron Leader Peter Boggis DFC RAF (Ret'd), formerly the first pilot of the Stirling 'MacRobert's Reply'. This second standard is now laid up in Gellik, Belgium.



XV(R) Sqn personnel parading in front of the current 'MacRoberts Reply'

ANNUAL REUNION DINNER 2009

This year's Annual Dinner will take place on Friday 5 June 2009 at RAF Cottesmore Officers' Mess. The dinner is Black Tie with medals and will start at 1900 for 1930. The price will be £70 per person, including pre-dinner drinks, a 3-course meal with wine, coffee, port and liqueurs. There will be a cash bar after the meal.

If you wish to attend please confirm in writing by returning the enclosed application form together with a cheque for the meal. This should be made payable to 'XV Sqn Association'. We will not be doing an all-inclusive package this year and rooms will be available on a first come first served basis. The Officers' Mess accommodation will cost £15 B+B per double room, which should be paid on 5 June when you arrive at the Mess.

Rooms, if you book them, will be available from 1300. Breakfast on the morning of 6 June is included in the room price. Limited mobility and wheelchair access can be easily catered for.

A presentation of the Victor Era and V Force Operations at Cottesmore between 1958 and 1964 will be given in the mess between 1530 and 1700hrs. If you would like to attend this presentation please indicate your interest in the space provided on the dinner application form.

This should be another great evening and we are looking forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

XV SQUADRON MEMORIAL EVENTS

Please note the following 2009 Memorial Events in your diary. As usual these events will be supported by serving members of XV(R) Sqn. We look forward to seeing members of the Association if you can make the trip.

Odense	Mon 4 May, 1000L at Middelfart
Gellik	Sat 9 May, 1300L
Vraux	Tues 14 July, 1000L

Further details can be obtained from the secretary.

WE REMEMBER THEM

XV SQN ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

It is with great sadness that since the issue of the recent newsletter, we have learnt of the passing of the following members of XV Squadron:

Alistair Bird

Warrant Officer Al Bird served on XV Squadron in Laarbruch during the Tornado Era and was the Squadron Warrant Officer from 1987 to 1990. He passed away suddenly in October 2007.

Doug Bryan

Flight Lieutenant Doug Bryan served as a Victor Captain on XV Squadron at Cottesmore during the late 1950s and early 1960s. He passed away in December 2008.

Gordon Spencer

Flight Lieutenant Gordon Spencer served as a Victor Navigator on XV Squadron at Cottesmore during the late 1950s and early 1960s. He passed away in January this year.

Keith Handscomb

Squadron Leader Keith Handscomb served as a Victor Captain on XV Squadron at Cottesmore during the late 1950s and early 1960s. He passed away in February this year.

SAVE THE TREES

The response to the annual newsletter has been very positive and I appreciate the feedback. Some of you have suggested that you would be happy to receive future newsletters and correspondence by email. This is a great idea and one I have been considering since posting out the last newsletter. Not only would email be a far more efficient way of getting information out to you quickly, but it would also reduce postage costs (which are quite significant) and save a few trees in the process.

If you would be interested in this service please email the secretary and I will make the change. I appreciate that some of you still like to receive a hard copy of the newsletter and this service will still be available. The newsletters are of course also available on our new website: www.xvsqnassociation.co.uk

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