

XV SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



President: Air Marshal Sir Michael Simmons KCB AFC RAF(Retd)

2010 UPDATE NEWSLETTER

2010 ANNUAL REUNION

This year's Annual Reunion will take place on Friday 4 June 2010 at RAF Cottesmore Officers' Mess. The dinner is Black Tie with medals and will start at 1900 for 1930. A price of £60 has been negotiated with the Mess, which offers good value when everything is considered. This includes 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'. There will not be an all-inclusive package and rooms will be available on a first come first served basis. The Officers' Mess accommodation will cost £20 B+B per twin room, which should be paid on 4 June when you arrive at the mess.

Rooms, if you book them, will be available from 1300. Breakfast on the morning of 5 June is included in the room price. Limited mobility and wheelchair access can be catered for.

Unfortunately Tom Payne will be unable to give the Lancaster presentation as originally hoped, due to a recent period of ill health. We wish him a speedy recovery and hope to see him at the reunion. There will now be

a presentation of the Buccaneer Era, which will take place in the Mess at 1500hrs. It would be great to see as much support for this as possible. If you would like to attend this presentation please indicate your interest in the space provided on the dinner application form. We are looking forward to what should be a great evening and seeing as many of you there as possible.



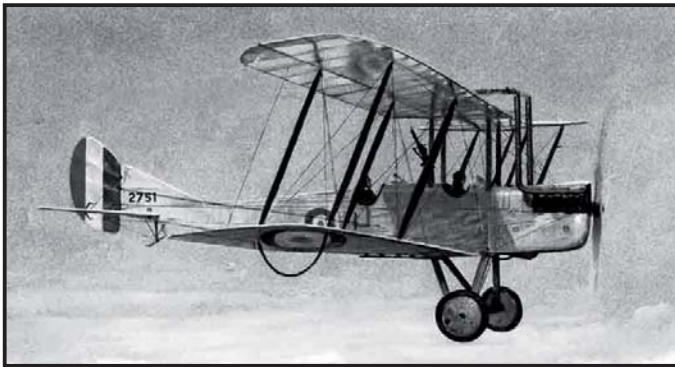
XV SQUADRON MEMORIAL EVENTS

Please note the following 2010 Memorial Events in your diary. As usual these events will be supported by XV(R) Sqn. Association members would be made very welcome at these events, but would be responsible for making their own arrangements. Further details may be obtained from the Secretary.

Odense - Tue 4 May, 1000L at Middelfart
Gellik - Sat 8 May, 1400L at Village Hall
Vraux - Wed 14 July

PLUCKY BEHAVIOUR

A 15 Sqn Combat Air Report from 1916.
A humorously dramatic account of a BE2c
escort mission over the Western Front.



Pilot: Capt G Henderson
Observer: Cpl C Nott
Date/Time: 19 January 1916, 9.55am
Height: 8,500ft
Hostile Aircraft: Aviatik Biplane,
Fokker Monoplane

While I was proceeding to Courtrai, one Aviatik and one Fokker passed at about 500yds on my right in the direction of Mouscron. I heard machine gun fire, which was directed at two of the escort flying some 100yds in my rear and one or two thousand feet higher. I held on with the reconnaissance machine flying about 300yds on my left front.

Over Courtrai Cpl Nott was preparing to fire at a hostile machine coming from our rear, when he was hit by AA in the eye, and became insensible, at the same time I felt something hit the machine (the carburettor) and the revolutions of the engine died down to under 1400. I fired a green light as a signal that I was returning disabled, and made for home.

At 10.15am an Albatros from the left front dived at Capt Maltby's machine, which was on my left front, and crossed my front, firing. Cpl Nott was unable to reply, this machine turned in behind me, and I think continued

firing from behind. An Aviatik then came up on my left at about 100yds and level and opened fire. Cpl Nott pulled himself together and opened fire, the Aviatik dived to the ground. I then made for home crossing the line at 5,000ft over Ypres.

I should like to commend Cpl Nott for the way in which he pulled himself together and forced the Aviatik to descend. If it had not been for this very plucky behaviour the Aviatik would have stuck to me and I had no means of replying.

For his gallantry Cpl Nott was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. This was the first ever decoration to be awarded to the Squadron.

V FORCE DAYS

by David Bywater

In the late 50s and early 60s, my first two operational tours after flying training were as a co-pilot and then as a Captain on the Victor 1A. In those days accidents and incident on all three V Bombers were a not infrequent occurrence. Personally I felt I and my crew led a fairly charmed life without too much excitement to disturb the daily routine, apart from usual QRA callout in the middle of the night with the nagging thought that one might have to fly a long way east and drop one of those nasty nukes on the bad guys; a concern which was often not dispelled until you reached the end of the runway ready to go and were informed that it was just another practice. However, the following incident was of some interest:

The Toss of a Coin

In 1961, having recently returned to my old squadron with my new crew, after having been away at the OCU for my Captain's course, we

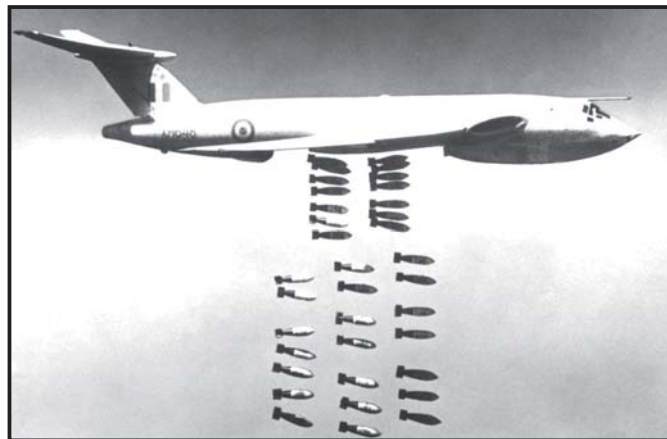
were programmed for a night sortie. At about 100kts on the takeoff run the oil pressure fell to zero on the number three engine and we aborted the takeoff and returned to the dispersal to enable the engineers to wave their magic wands. This procedure was re-enacted on a further three occasions, meaning that it was now well past our bedtime and a quick call to the Boss, (my previous Captain) confirmed that it was sensible to call a halt to further proceedings.

Two days later we were programmed for a day "Grouper" which involved a high level sortie before a standard descent into a straight-in approach and ILS from about 12mls at 2,000ft. Two aircraft and crews were involved. One aircraft was that in which we had attempted

to get airborne two nights previously, it having now had the oil pressure problem sorted out; the other crew was my old crew, the Squadron Commander's, with, of course, his new co-pilot. The Boss suggested we toss a

coin for choice of aircraft; I won and said that I would prefer not to have the aircraft that had let me down two nights previously.

Off we went, following the Boss around the high level route at about 45,000ft before we began the letdown. By this stage we had closed to about 5mls and heard his call as he levelled out at 2,000ft. Shortly after this we heard "Mayday, Mayday. Mayday - abandoning the aircraft - engine failure" The Victor is a very poor glider. Ahead of us three parachutes emerged from the aircraft, closely followed by two ejection seats and we flew over the burning wreckage of one of Her Majesty's aircraft, noting as we did that there were a number of discarded parachutes on the ground in fairly close proximity to the bonfire!



We diverted to Wittering as Cottesmore's fire trucks were otherwise engaged.

All five of the crew were safe apart from minor cuts and bruises and the fact that they were so relieved and excited to still be around that they could hardly stop talking for the next 24 hours. As the aircraft levelled out and power had been applied all four fuel low pressure warning lights had illuminated, closely followed by all four engines flaming out.

There was adequate fuel on board, but all the fuel pumps in the Victor, of which there were many, were controlled from a panel which slid out horizontally from beneath the vertical panel ahead of the pilots on which all the engine instruments, including the oil pressure gauges, were located. The electrical connections to

this panel all ran through one multipin plug and socket, which had been disconnected, and the panel removed to gain access to the oil pressure gauges. After the panel had been replaced, vibration had loosened the locking ring around the multipin connector during

the flight to the point where many contacts were intermittent and the loss of control over many pumps, at a time of high demand, had starved the engines of fuel.

It only dawned on me later that, but for the toss of a coin, I and my new crew would have been flying in this aircraft. Four engine failures cannot happen and they were not practiced too often in the simulator. In retrospect it struck me that, to avoid losing one of the new mega costly V bombers, we might have been frantically trying to find the right page in the checklist to rectify this hitherto unthinkable problem as we hit the ground. The Boss, a decisive man of great experience, did not hesitate to act, and four aircrew owe their lives to him.

INVITATION TO VISIT THE TRENCHARD MUSEUM AT RAF HALTON

I recently donated a 30 year collection of Flypast magazines, RAF Year Books and other RAF and aviation related material to the Trenchard Museum, at RAF Halton, near Wendover. Although the Museum will retain some of the material, the bulk of the collection will be transferred to the Air Historical Branch based at RAF Northolt, where it will be available to a larger readership.

The Museum at RAF Halton is situated to one side of the parade ground, and is housed in what was originally a large shed type construction, open on one side and of very early origin, where, in the past cadets could parade and drill without getting wet! Although the three original enclosing walls were constructed of brickwork, when the open side was filled in, the structure was built with timber, along which a number of windows were introduced. The original steel trusses supporting the roof are still open to view.

Having delivered the above mentioned collection, Valerie and I were invited to look round the museum. Amongst the many treasures housed in the building are photographs and maps dating from period when the land formed part of the Rothschild estate, before the construction of the RAF camp. There are also a number of photographs and uniforms dating from the RFC and many artefacts relating to the cadets, or “Brats” as they were known, who learned their trade at Halton. The collection, which follows the history of RAF Halton, also has a small number of diorama settings, which enhances many of the items for the visitor. In the centre of the building, surrounded by all the other exhibits and showcases, is a Folland Gnat aircraft which has been used as a ‘classroom’ aircraft for many a cadet to gain actual “hands-on” experience during training.

Following our visit, I received a letter from Mr Francis Hanford, the curator of the museum, thanking me for donating the collection of magazines etc. The letter went on to offer an open invitation to any members, past or present, of XV(R) Sqn and the XV Sqn Association, together with their families to visit the museum. For those wishing to take up the invitation, now or sometime in the future, the contact details for arranging a visit are:-

Mr Francis Hanford,
The Trenchard Museum,
RAF Halton,
Aylesbury,
Bucks,
HP22 5PG.

Telephone: 01296-656841

E-mail: francishanford@lineone.net

If you do choose to visit the museum, why not complete your day by calling in at the Aces High Aviation Gallery, a couple of miles down the road in Wendover. The collection of original artworks and signed prints, by artists such as Robert Taylor, Richard Taylor, Gerald Coulson, Anthony Saunders and many more, is well worth seeing. Look closely at some of the signed prints and you will see the signatures of many former XV Sqn members. The gallery is open six days a week (closed on Mondays). You will be made very welcome and even offered tea, coffee or other beverages during your visit.

Happy viewing!

Martyn R. Ford-Jones

ASSOCIATION WEBSITE

Visit www.xvsqnassociation.co.uk for more details of events such as the Reunion Dinner and contact details for the association committee.