

The Aldwark Chronicle

Newsletter of the Royal Air Forces Association

- York Branch



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From the archives: Red Arrows at RAF Linton-on-Ouse 2006

Club opening hours: Thurs - 7:30pm to 10:30 pm; Sat - 11:30am to 3pm

Our Website is at: www.rafayork.org

Membership: 473

York Branch & Club Official Appointments for 2017 - 2018

President:	Mr J J Mawson	
President Emeritus:	Air Commodore W G Gambold DL FCMI RAF (Ret)	
Life Vice President:	Mr H R Kidd OBE	
Vice Presidents:	Mr R M Mathieson Mr J Allison BEM Ms S Richmond,	
Chairman:	Mr B R Mennell	chairman@rafayork.org
Vice Chairman:	Mr Richard Gray	depchair@rafayork.org
Hon Sec & N Area Delegate:	Mrs M Barter	secretary@rafayork.org
Hon Treasurer:	Mr D Pollard	treasurer@rafayork.org
Dep Treasurer	Mr A Ramsbottom	webmaster@rafayork.org
Welfare Officer:	Mrs C Hanson	welfare@rafayork.org
Dep Welfare Officer:	Mrs G Woodhall	
Wings Organisers:	Mrs M Smith & Mr I Smith	wings@rafayork.org
Branch Standard Bearer:	Mr G Murden	
Dep Standard Bearer:	Mr I Smith	
Bar Officer:	Mr R Gray	
Ass't Bar Officer:	Mr G Murden	
Social/Fundraising:	Mrs G McCarthy.	
Public Relations/Press Officer:	Mr A Bryne	
Buildings Officer:	Mr J Forrester	
Membership Secretary:	Mrs K Allison	
Newsletter Editor	Mr D Taylor	newsletter@rafayork.org

Please address all general enquiries to the Hon Secretary

EDITORIAL

Hello again everyone, and welcome to 2018, another new year, my 82nd! Now that the presents have all been opened, consigned to various drawers and cupboards, the decorations are back in the loft, the festivities over, it is time to dispense with reality and get back to the everyday world of Brexit etc. As for the large print, that is for the few printed copies we need. The printed version is reduced to A5 format, hence the print is reduced also. For those that do not know, on 'Windows' computers, if you hold down the Ctrl button you can use the scroll wheel on your mouse to enlarge or decrease the print to whatever size suits you.

On November 24th our Annual Dinner was held in the baronial Beden Hall. Evening dress, good surroundings, food, and company. This was one of the first times I had ventured out after my hip operation, and I was glad had.

At the start of the festive season, on December 7th, there was a dining-in night at the Club - Christmas with a Twist - where Gill and Dick Gray got to break in the new ovens in our refurbished Kitchen, (a lot of the finishing touches, both here and throughout the rest of the building, being done by Dick himself, for which I offer a vote of thanks on your behalf) the meal, naturally, reaching the normal high standards, hopefully with a little less hassle behind the scenes. 19 of us were seated - the new layout has a max capacity of 24 - to a very good meal, the new heating ensuring we ate in comfort. Seems the only thing that hadn't changed around here was Gill's food and presentation.

December 16th, date of the Annual Draw, saw the club packed to the gills once more, with 133 prizes up for grabs - well, 128 not counting my 5!

And that was the run up to Christmas, which I will once again be spending at the Union Jack Club in London.

See you all at the AGM on March 3rd, if not before.

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CHAIRMAN'S MUSINGS

A Very Happy New Year to one and all. This past year has been really busy as a read of the AGM Report enclosed in your envelope will show. I'm sure this year will be just as busy. The Annual General Meeting is being held in the Branch premises from 11am on Saturday 3rd March and we expect a good turnout. Incidentally the following day (Sunday 4th March) is our annual church service at All Saints Church, Pavement in York with the service commencing at 10.30am. We hope to see an equally good turnout with members being seated in the church by 10.15am. The Lord Mayor of York and the Civic Party plus Wing Commander Howard Newbould representing the Station Commander of RAF Linton-on-Ouse who is on leave, will be there.

We have moved on to the new system of delivering the Chronicle and that seems to be going quite well. I hope all those who opted to receive it by email are seeing it arrive correctly and that those who requested a special delivery by post are getting it through the door. Due to this we are saving quite a lot of money on postage as compared to previously. If for any reason you are not receiving the Chronicle and you wish to, then please advise the Secretary of your email address so we can put that right.

There is a lot to read in the AGM paperwork including a detailed Chairman's report on 2017, so this "Musings" is being kept short. I finish with

what we expect in 2018. It has two significant events being recognised - the 100th Anniversary of the end of the First World War and the 100th Anniversary of the birth of the Royal Air Force. Both will be high profile events for the public, the services, and for us. We will do whatever we can to support RAF events, organise our own events and join in with other service charities as required. We will publish these events in the Chronicle so as many members as possible can attend.

Please note that our web site www.rafyork.org is available to keep you up to date with the branch, what we are doing, what we have planned and how it went. There are photographs too and each copy of the Chronicle is available to read after it has been published.

We look forward to being of service during 2018 and please, if you have a welfare problem be aware we are not mind readers and we have almost 500 members, so please let us know, and our welfare team will kick into action to do all we can to help.

Brian Mennell
Chairman

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Australian Hero

4am, Jan 6, 1942. Four twin-engined Whitley bombers of 102 Squadron prepared to leave RAF Dalton, Thirsk. One failed to taxi out due to engine trouble, the other three headed for the runway. The lead aircraft, Z9289, Captained by Alexander 'Bruno' Hollingworth, an Australian, took to the air at 4.24 am. This was his 'nursery flight' - first as captain - and as the day unfolded, would prove to be his last, as it would for Wop/AG, Canadian Sgt Alexander Gibson Buchanan, known as 'Buck' to his friends. The three other crew members that day were: Sgt John Toker Clough Hazledine, second pilot; Canadian Ed A Brain, observer (later known as navigator/bomb aimer); and, seated in the tail, manning the four Browning machine guns, was Sgt Leonard Jackson.

Their brief that Tuesday morning was to attack docks and shipping at Cherbourg, but over the French coast they found it impossible to identify their target due to heavy cloud cover. So, as instructed on the pre-flight brief - if they could not identify the target they were to return with full bomb load - all three Whitleys turned for base.

It was whilst over Cherbourg that Hollingworth's aircraft started to develop problems; the starboard engine's exactor control - an early form of constant speed unit - started to fail, which caused the engine to over-rev. With the temperature gauge off scale it became obvious the engine was in danger of catching fire, so it was decided to shut it down and limp back on one.

Over the English coast they were greeted by a cone of three searchlights, indicating it was known the aircraft was in trouble, and showing the direction to the nearest airfield. A point noted by the Officer in Command, who in his report, bluntly remarked, 'Should have landed at nearest drome instead of trying to return to base'.

Perhaps, as it was his first flight as captain, Hollingworth decided he would rather attempt to coax the aircraft back to Dalton, though it soon became apparent it was losing height too quickly. 12 miles south of Sheffield, over open

moorland, Hollingworth gave the order to jettison their 12 x 250lb bombs, after first disarming them.

Still losing height, and by now approaching areas to the south of Barnsley, Hollingworth tried to restart the engine, but it burst into flames. It became clear that the aircraft was now going down. Hollingworth signalled Brain to bail out, along with the rest of the crew.

Eye-witness accounts indicate three parachutes unfolding. The first - probably Jackson - in fields between Genn Lane and Locke Park; next - Hazeldene - in 'Bull Fields', somewhere between Broadway and Dodworth Road, thirdly - Brain - just before Dodworth Road. As the plane crossed over the road, a fourth figure emerged, Buchanan. But he'd left his exit too late.

One eye witness, Mr Ernest Guest reported, 'a crewman baled out and may have caught the chimney of the destructor [incinerator] cottage'. In any case, he was too low for the parachute to open and Buchanan was killed.

Alexander Hollingworth, was left alone in the bomber. Witness accounts differ in the exact course to its eventual crash site, but it was clear Hollingworth was desperately trying to steer the plane away from any populated area.

Mrs Olive Gledhill was at the time sweeping the street outside her home in Cresswell Street, Pogmoor; 'I heard a funny noise, realised something was wrong and looked up to see this plane on fire. I don't know where my brush went but I ran inside, shut the door and got under the stone sink'.

The bomber crashed into the clay pit quarry off Cresswell Street. Mr Norman Greenfield, a Fire Service Officer, was on the tender that went to the crash. He saw the aircraft from the Fire Station (then in Church Fields), as it flew towards Pogmoor from the direction of town. Upon arrival he saw the wreck on the upper slopes of the ash infill. An engine had detached and pushed the pilot into the tip, displacing a large volume of ash. (It was a Corporation tip and the infill would be soft stuff - coal ash, etc. The pilot's leg and arm could be seen but his body remained trapped by the engine.

Mr Les Hall was manning a searchlight battery at Ardsley when he was called to attend the crash. He saw, 'a body of a man trapped under the engine, lying face down, stretched out, the engine across his back. They couldn't rock the engine off him, so a fire tender was used to drag it away'.

Even though the site was guarded by the military police, many managed to get pieces of plane as souvenirs. Children also collected ammunition from the site. The deaths were not reported in the newspapers of 1942, such incidents being subject to a strict embargo. The bodies were taken to RAF Finningley. Alexander 'Bruno' Hollingworth was buried alongside Alexander Gibson Buchanan at Rose Hill Cemetery, Cantley, Doncaster.

In recognition of Hollingworth's brave decision to stay with the aircraft, to prevent it crashing into a populated area, a plaque dedicated to the memory of Hollingworth and Buchanan was unveiled by the Mayor of Barnsley, on Sunday 5 January, 1985, on the frontage of a Royal British Legion bungalow in Cresswell Street.

Story courtesy of Paul Wilkinson, *Memories of Barnsley*

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ONLY IN AMERICA! 2016 STELLA AWARDS

The annual "Stella Awards" are named after 81-year-old Stella Liebeck, who

spilled hot coffee on herself, then successfully sued McDonald's, from where she purchased the coffee. You remember, she took the lid off the coffee and put it between her knees while she was driving. Who would ever think one could get burned doing that!

These are awards for the most outlandish lawsuits and verdicts in the US. Kind of cases that make you scratch your head. So keep your head scratcher handy.

*** SEVENTH PLACE ***

Kathleen Robertson of Austin, Texas was awarded \$80,000 by a jury of her peers after breaking her ankle tripping over a toddler who was running around inside a furniture store. The store owners were understandably surprised by the verdict, considering the toddler was her own son.

*** SIXTH PLACE ***

Carl Truman, 19, of Los Angeles, California won \$74,000 plus medical expenses when his neighbour ran over his hand with a Honda Accord. Truman apparently didn't notice there was someone at the wheel of the car when he was trying to steal the hubcaps.

*** FIFTH PLACE ***

Terrence Dickson, of Bristol, Pennsylvania, was leaving a house he had just burglarized by way of the garage. Unfortunately for Dickson, the automatic garage door opener malfunctioned and he could not get the garage door to open. Worse, he couldn't re-enter the house because the door connecting the garage to the house locked when Dickson pulled it shut. Forced to sit for eight days and survive on a case of Pepsi and a large bag of dry dog food, he sued the homeowner's insurance company, claiming undue mental anguish. Amazingly, the jury said the insurance company must pay Dickson \$500,000 for his anguish.

*** FOURTH PLACE ***

Jerry Williams, of Little Rock, Arkansas, was awarded \$14,500 plus medical expenses after being bitten on the butt by his next door neighbour's Beagle - even though the dog was on a chain in its owner's fenced yard. Williams did not get as much as he asked for because the jury believed the animal might have been provoked at the time because Williams had climbed over the fence, into the yard, and repeatedly shot the dog with a pellet gun.

*** THIRD PLACE ***

Amber Carson of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. A jury ordered a Philadelphia restaurant to pay her \$113,500 after she slipped on a spilled soft drink and broke her tailbone. The reason the soft drink was on the floor: Ms Carson had thrown it at her boyfriend 30 seconds earlier during an argument.

*** SECOND PLACE ***

Kara Walton, of Claymont, Delaware sued the owner of a night club in a nearby city because she fell from the bathroom window to the floor, knocking out her two front teeth. Even though Ms Walton was trying to sneak through the ladies room window to avoid paying the \$3.50 cover charge, the jury said the night club had to pay her \$12,000.... plus dental expenses.

*** FIRST PLACE ***

This year's runaway First Place Stella Award winner was Mrs Merv Grazinski, of Oklahoma City, who purchased a new 32-foot Winnebago motor

home. On her first trip, having driven on to the freeway, she set the cruise control at 70 mph and calmly left the driver's seat to go back to make herself a sandwich. Not surprisingly, at the first bend the motor home left the freeway, crashed and overturned. Also not surprisingly, Mrs Grazinski sued Winnebago for not putting in the owner's manual that she couldn't actually leave the driver's seat while the cruise control was set. The jury awarded her \$1,750,000, plus a new motor home. Winnebago actually changed their manuals as a result of this suit, just in case Mrs Grazinski has any relatives who might also buy a motor home.

* *

Not sure where I picked this up from, who it is by, or even if it is true, but I thought it a good read, so here it is.

TURN BACK! TURN BACK!

As darkness settled over the steaming Bengal jungle, I followed my crew up the ladder and climbed into the nose of our Wellington bomber. We cursed our bulky flying jackets, parachutes and Mae West's. Sweat soaked our khaki shirts, further irritating the prickly heat that plagued us all. The greatest hazards we faced were monsoon thunderstorms, heat, humidity, mechanical problems and dysentery - not night fighters, searchlights and ack-ack that flooded the skies over Europe.

Before starting the engines I called the crew for an intercom check. Mac, sitting behind his four Browning machine guns, was the first to answer. "Rear gunner okay, Skipper." Fane, the radio operator, and Frank, the navigator in the cabin behind my cockpit, spoke almost simultaneously. "Ready, Skipper." My bomb aimer, Nick Rushworth, settled into the auxiliary seat beside me and gave me a thumbs up sign. The five of us had been flying together for nearly a year, a long time by World War II standards. Although the youngest of the crew, aged twenty, I was their Skipper.

It was the night of 26 January 1944. We were setting out on an operational sortie to bomb the railway marshalling yards at Mandalay, to the east of the Arakan hills. We'd been told in the briefing to look for the hooded lights of Japanese trucks on jungle roads, and if we saw any, to bomb them. The 'plane carried a mixed assortment of bombs totalling 4,000 lbs.

I taxied slowly towards the end of the runway, an aircraft directly ahead, another behind. The air brakes hissed as I released the pressure on the control column brake lever, then, as I squeezed the handle, the brake linings squealed protesting the Wellington's lumbering weight.

I turned and lined up. A single line of smouldering paraffin goosenecks on my left acted as the flare path. At briefing I'd been given a take-off time, and at that precise moment I eased the throttles forward with my left hand, pushing the right lever slightly ahead to hold the ungainly aircraft straight until I had rudder control.

As the 'plane slid away from the wavering lights and rose into the velvet darkness of the tropical night, I touched the brakes to stop the wheels spinning, then raised the undercarriage. The jet-black aircraft inched upward, wheels clunking into the engine nacelles.

Inside the cockpit, pale, green, instrument dials glowed just enough to be visible. Outside, two Hercules sleeve-valve engines roared like wounded animals until I throttled them back for the long, slow climb to our operating

altitude, heading east, towards Burma.

The sky, a black, star-studded dome, blinked and flickered like a field of diamonds. Other than an occasional routine report from one of the crew to me, or from one to the other, the intercom was silent. I was leaning back in my seat with the knee rest raised under my legs, listening to the mesmerising beat of the engines when, slowly, a strange feeling came over me. A peculiar sense of unrest I couldn't push aside. For another hour we flew on performing our respective jobs. Finally the gnawing sensation of impending danger drove me to click the microphone button to break the intercom's silence.

"Frank. Give me a course for the nearest emergency landing strip", I said to the navigator. "We're turning back." It seemed ages before he answered.

"What's wrong, Skipper?" It was Fane talking from the little cubicle he shared with his Marconi radio transmitter, behind me. "You have a problem up there?"

I flipped the switch again. "Everything looks good on the gauges, but I have an uneasy feeling that something's wrong. We shouldn't go on."

After a long pause a sarcastic voice cut the tense silence. "Losing your nerve, Skipper?"

In the seat beside me Nick leaned forward and examined the instrument panel, as if saying, what the hell's wrong anyway?

I turned on the red cockpit light and noted the tightness of his jaw, the quick scanning movement of his eyes. Apparently satisfied with what he saw, he leaned back and glanced uneasily at me. "Feel alright, Skipper?"

"I'm fine, Nick, but I have a feeling," I paused, "No, a premonition we're heading for trouble."

Nick didn't answer. I tried to analyse my unease but I couldn't. No gauge had flickered a warning. The steady drone of the engines hadn't sounded different. It wasn't fear: it was just a strange sensation. A sensation there was something looming behind me. Some invisible force. A sensation I'd had before but couldn't remember when. I spoke to the navigator again.

"Frank. Give me that heading to Chittagong. We're turning back." When he answered, I eased the control column over. Levelled the wings and settled the aircraft on the compass course he'd given me.

The intercom was now silent. I sensed the crew's hostility. I knew they were perturbed. Did they think I'd lost my nerve? Or feared enemy fighters? Or were they remembering the crash we had during training back home at OCU. That one, at Chipping Warden, had been partially my fault, but they had never since had questioned my decisions. How could I explain to them this force that was making me turn back?

The engines drummed steadily as I tried to think where I'd experienced the odd sensation before. Suddenly, it came to me. I was a little boy in Weybridge. I had just put my bicycle away in the wooden shed at the end of the garden. It was autumn, late in the afternoon, nearly dark. As I turned to leave the shed a strange feeling made me stand perfectly still. It was as if icy fingers had touched my skin. Was someone or something behind me in that dark shed? Afraid to look back I bolted through the door and flew over the gravel path as fast as my little legs would move me to the safety of the lighted house. The same sense of impending danger had prompted my decision to

turn back now.

On the ground below a few dim lights appeared. Small outdoor fires in Chittagong, a native village on the edge of the Bay of Bengal, near the mouth of the Ganges. As I descended, looking for the landing strip cut into the jungle, I called across to Nick. "We'll drop the bombs on the beach over there."

Turning the 'plane towards the beach I could see the white surf breaking on the sand. Nick slid from his seat to the bomb aimer's position below me. I moved the lever to open the bomb doors and called over the intercom, "Bomb doors open. Drop 'em when you're ready."

A few moments later the aircraft leapt upwards as 4,000 lbs of bombs fell from the open bomb bay. The sudden, unexpected huge orange flash of exploding bombs gave me a fleeting glimpse of land, sea and clouds - then blackness.

"What the hell happened, Nick?"

"Don't know." Leaving his bombsight he climbed back into the seat beside me. "I left the switch on 'Safe' but they all went off anyway" He shook his head. "Luckily they missed the beach and hit the ocean some way out."

I turned my attention to the landing. We were on finals and still no runway lights had appeared. I would have to put the aircraft down without any help from the ground. As I skimmed over the trees at the end of the narrow landing strip, I closed the throttles and yellow flames spurted from the short exhaust stacks. Tyres squealed on the tarmac; it was a good landing in the circumstances but the crew's usual, ribald comments were missing.

I glanced at Nick, beside me. He was looking straight ahead, his face a surly mask. Ahead, near a small, thatched bamboo building a torch's wavering light appeared. I taxied slowly towards it until a side to side movement signalled me to stop. The hatch was opened from outside and a hand reached in to pull down the wooden ladder. Still no one spoke.

Quickly undoing my seat belt and shoulder harness, I was first to step on to the tarmac. I saw the double stripes on a Corporal's shirtsleeves. One by one the rest of the crew came down the ladder. The corporal was playing the light of the torch up at the port engine. He gave a long, low whistle. "God! You're lucky you made it, Sarge," he said. With the rest of the sullen crew, my eyes followed the beam of the torch. Instead of dull, black paint, the engine nacelle and wing leading edge glistened with globules of oil running down the wing and dripping on the ground beneath. As the beam of light followed the flow down all stared in silence at the pool of shiny, black slime.

As they stood there the cooling engines creaked and crackled. The corporal had meanwhile got himself on the upper wing, and from the top of the engine nacelle, he called down. "I checked the oil Skipper. I reckon you had about ten minutes flying left before that bloody engine seized solid. There's a ton of metal in the filter. Looks like the bearings have had it!"

Suddenly my crew were talking among themselves. The corporal dropped down and moved towards me. "Did you not see the fighters parked alongside the runway? He asked.

"What fighters?"

"Over there." Again he pointed his torch. We both walked along the light's path. Sure enough, eight Spitfires were lined up wingtip to wingtip. With

their main wheels on the very edge of the landing strip, the long Merlin engines of the fighters jutted several feet out over the runway.

The icy fingers touched me again. I couldn't believe I had managed to land without my wingtip ploughing into the parked aircraft.

Then from behind I heard flight boots coming to join us. "Thanks Skipper," said one of the crew softly.

Nick squeezed my arm. "Just keep that crystal ball polished, Tony. We'll need to take it along on all our flights!"

* *

A group of provost officers and a group of RAF Police sergeants take a train to a conference. Each officer holds a ticket but the entire group of sergeants has bought only one ticket for a single passenger. The officers are just shaking their heads and are secretly pleased that the arrogant sergeants will finally get what they deserve. Suddenly one of the sergeants calls out. "The conductor is coming!" At once, the sergeants jump up and squeeze into one of the toilets. The conductor checks the tickets of the officers. When he notices that the toilet is occupied he knocks on the door and says, "Ticket, please!" One of the sergeants slides the single ticket under the door and the conductor continues merrily on his round.

For the return trip the officers decide to use the same trick and buy only one ticket for the entire group but they are baffled as they realise that the sergeants didn't buy any tickets at all. After a while one of the sergeants announces, "The conductor is coming!" Immediately all the officers race to a toilet and lock themselves in. All the sergeants leisurely walk to the other toilet but before the last sergeant enters the toilet, he knocks on the toilet occupied by the officers and says, "Ticket, please...!" And the moral of this story is: Although provost officers like to use the methods of their sergeants, they don't really understand them.....!

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EVENTS for RAFA (York) Branch 2017

Known dates for diary for 2017 (will be up-dated on a regular basis on website and Club noticeboard)

Please note in would be appreciated out of courtesy if you intend/would like to attend any of the events listed to inform the chairman so that we know numbers to seat/cater for

Thurs 4 Jan	Turning the Page, York Minster 11.00am
Wed 17 Jan	Film Show at the Club 12.30pm
Saturday Jan 20 th	Auction at the club 12:00
Thur 25 Jan	Wings Collection Tesco Clifton Moor
Fri 26 Jan	Wings Collection Tesco Clifton Moor
Saturday Jan 27 th	Burn's Night Supper at the Club 19.00
Wed 31 Jan	Film Show at the Club 12.30pm
Wed 7 Feb	Wings Collection B & Q Hull Road
Wed 21 Feb	Wings Collection B & Q Hull Road
Saturday Mar 3 rd	AGM at the Club 11:00
Sun 4 Mar	Church Service at All Saints, Pavement 10.15am
Fri - Sun 16-18 Mar	Northern Area Conference, Gateshead
Sat 28 April	Wings Collection Morrison's Foss Islands Road
Sun 2 Sept	Allied Air Forces Day, Elvington Air Museum

Please note that in relation to all the above Wings/Fund raising events, a list for volunteers will appear on the Branch/Club notice board nearer the event date (as times/confirmation details on some are yet to be ratified).

PS. Please note: 'Themed dining-in dates' may be subject to change/cancellation in order to avoid clashing with other more pressing branch activities/matters. For the latest events list please check our website - www.rafayork.org

**Aldwark Chronicle is the in-house newsletter of York Branch RAFA. Any views expressed or implied are those of the editor or contributors.
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