

The Old Crusader

Issue 14

The Newsletter of the 14 Squadron RAF Association

Spring 2010

Reunion Date

**Saturday 9 October
at RAF Cottesmore**

Pub Night Date Friday 21 May

The Punch and Judy
Covent Garden



Lawrence of Arabia gets a lift with 14 Squadron. Col TE Lawrence is in the back seat of this 14 Squadron Bristol F2b flown by the Squadron Commander Sqn Ldr WL Welsh DSC AFC at Amman in April 1921

2010 Reunion

Dates for the diary - as above - include the Annual Reunion which will take place at RAF Cottesmore on 9 October 2010. Full details will be promulgated nearer the time in the next issue of the Old Crusader Newsletter. Costs are likely to be the same as last year (around £40 a head) and with the same informal style that seems to work well for us.

Pub Night

This year's Pub Night will take place on Friday 21 May at The Punch and Judy in Covent Garden. Tom Boyle has already checked out the venue and has found it is ideal for meeting up for a beer. Tom promises to be in the chair for the first round at about 1800 hours (though he points out that there's no rule against starting early if you want to!) and he hopes to still be ~~standing~~ there at throwing out time (usually 0030!). It would be good to see as many "Old Crusaders" there as possible; you don't need to book, just turn up on the night and stay for as long (or as little time) as you want.

2009 Reunion

The 2009 Reunion at RAF Cottesmore went well and we were particularly pleased by the tremendous support, once again, of the current OC 14 Squadron and his

team. Those attending were: Deryck Stapleton (*Gordon/Wellesley/Blenheim*), Mac Furze (*Canberra*), Tom Boyle (*Tornado*), Mike Allton (*Tornado*), Bob Broad (*Venom/Hunter*), Ernie Coppard (*Canberra*), John Craig (*Tornado*), Arthur Galilee (*Wellington*), John Galyer (*Canberra/Phantom*), John Hanson (*Canberra*), Andy & Julia Jeremy, (*Tornado*), Derek Jordan (*Canberra*), Joe Lowder (*Marauder/Wellington*), Ken & Yvonne McGowan (*Hunter*), Mike Napier (*Tornado*), Pat O'Connor (*Hunter*), Snip Parsons (*Hunter*), Rick & Alison Pearce (*Tornado*), Peter & Anthea Perry (*Accompanying Joe Lowder*), Dougie Potter (*Tornado*), Smudge Smith (*Venom/Hunter*), Jerry & Sarah Spencer (*Tornado*), Geoff Steggall (*Venom/Hunter*), Malcolm Steward (*Canberra*), Phil Wilkinson (*Canberra*), Wing Commander Steve Reeves (*OC 14 Squadron*), Andy Coe (*14 Squadron*), Daryl Wicks-Randy (*14 Squadron*), Neil McCall (*14 Squadron*), David McHugh (*14 Squadron*), Richard Podsmore (*14 Squadron*)

New President

The Reunion included a mini-AGM during which Deryck Stapleton stood down as President of the Association. Deryck's departure marks the end of an era, since his connection with 14 Squadron goes back to 1937 when he arrived as a brand new Pilot Officer on "C" Flight 14 Squadron at RAF Amman in Transjordan.

Deryck left the Squadron four years later, by which time he was a Wing Commander commanding the Squadron in Iraq and he had won the DFC and AFC during his tour. His next involvement was when he was the Group Captain commanding RAF Oldenburg and he was able to offer the Squadron a home after RAF Fassberg was closed in 1955. Deryck has been a champion of the Association since its early days and was the major driving force in getting the Squadron's wartime history "*Winged Promises*" through to publication. He has been our President since 2001. At the meeting Timo Anderson was voted in as Deryck's successor, and John Craig "JC" was appointed as a Vice President to fill the vacancy there left by Timo.

Dougie Potter reported that the Association funds were in good shape, despite a loss in the year of approximately £130, with a balance of around £900. Next year should look a little more healthy as revised costings for the Reunion by the Mess at Cottesmore after the event meant that we made a modest profit.

95 Anniversary

14 Squadron celebrated its 95th Anniversary with an open day and an all-ranks Dining-In Night at RAF Lossiemouth on Saturday 6 February. The Guest of Honour was the President of the 14 Squadron Association, AVM Timo Anderson; the Association was represented by a small number of members as also was the museum at Shoreham which now boasts a display area dedicated to 14 Squadron (which was formed at Shoreham in 1915). It was a very enjoyable event and a wonderful celebration of 95 years' worth of history and the prospect of many more years' worth of future!

People News

Congratulations to **Colin Campbell** (*Marauder, Wellington*) who has just celebrated his 90th birthday in Australia. I've also been delighted to hear from **Don**

Francis (*Wellesley, Blenheim, Marauder*) (the "Founding Father of the Association!") and also **Jim Hanson** (*Wellesley, Blenheim, Marauder*), another long-time stalwart of the Association (see more from Jim on the back page). Another wartime Crusader, **Ron Dawson** (*Blenheim, Marauder*) celebrated his 89th birthday in December. I also recently received a letter from **Bob Fagan** who served as a Marauder pilot with 14 Squadron in summer 1943 and is alive and well in Australia.

Dick Froom (*Wellingtons*) kindly sent me a photo of his crew (skipper John Robertson - see last page) taken just before they parted company at the end of the war. I've also heard from **Dick Slatcher** (*Marauders*) who's had a tough 2009 but hopes 2010 will be better (as do we all!)

Amongst those at the 95th Anniversary were **Russ Torbet** (*Tornado*), now retired, who has just taken the job of OC Simulator at Lossiemouth. **Martin Wintermeyer** (*Tornado*) is with the Nav training school at Linton-on-Ouse and is the Manager for the Tucano Display. **Mike Hill** (*Jaguar*) was there as "proud dad" as his son **Tom** is just joining the Squadron as a Flight Commander. Also present were **John Abra** (*Jaguar*) and **John Hanson** (*Canberra*).

A warm welcome to **John Eavis** (aka "Snake") and **Geoff Griffiths** who both served on the Squadron with Jaguars in the late '70s (see photo below!). Also to **Nic Holland** and **Matthew Spencer-Jones** who recently left the Squadron.

That's all for now, Folks

Mike

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20th Anniversary Reunion for the Gulf War

Were you serving with the Tornado GR1/GR1A detachment in Dhahran in '91? Did you serve at Bruggen and get sent down to Bahrain as an early responder and returned to Bruggen before the hostilities began?

If the answer to either is yes then you may be interested in attending the Reunion which is being organised to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the conflict. Yes you are that old! Want to see old mates, lost touch with people? We already have more than 100 people interested.

Date: Saturday 15th Jan 2011.

For details and to register an interest contact Les Hendry, either email to Les@onearth.eu or phone on 01692630900.

You could also look at www.gulf91.net



Left: Griff, Snake (complete with 1970s haircuts) and their Jaguar

Memoirs of a Venom Flight Commander

Concluding Bob Broad's account of Fassberg and Oldenburg in the mid-fifties



Above - the last Line-up of 14 Squadron's Venoms at Fassberg, 1955

121 Wing had gone up to Sylt (the island on the North Sea coast) for three weeks' air firing. Flying had stopped on the Saturday and the general game plan was that on Saturday night we would head into Westerland to celebrate. This would be followed by a leisurely Sunday morning, followed by a few lunchtime drinks, a bracing walk in the afternoon and by Monday morning we would all be fit and well for the flight home.

The first part of this plan went well and most people went into Westerland, although I did hear later that Sergeant Callaghan and the Wing Commander Admin at Sylt (Wing Commander Hamish Mahaddie) had got into a fight with some German civilians. However as our Wing Co. Flying rolled back to Sylt around dawn on the Sunday morning the weather was bloody, heavy rain and cloud on the hangar roofs. "This looks like a bloody awful day," he said, "let's go home!" So at an unearthly hour of about 8.30, I was roused from a deep alcohol-induced sleep to be given this news. I went down to breakfast to have this ghastly news confirmed. After a battle of wills with an egg I went back to my room, slung my possessions in a case to be taken home by our ground party and went down to flights.

Here the situation did not look all that good: Sam D'Arcy was putting his Mae West on back to front. But the CO seemed unconcerned and was briefing his flight on a display flight over the airfield before setting course for Fassberg. Eventually I collected my four and we started up taxied out and then my R/T failed; I handed over the lead to Dickie Adams who was newly married and buying a camera, two activities which had reduced both his desire and financial ability to wallow in the fleshpots of Westerland and hence he was in better shape than most of us. I went back into dispersals, leapt out, banged the R/T set - which fixed it - and taxied back out again to catch up with Dickie only too happy to let him lead. We took off straight into the murk but the weather cleared completely by Schleswig so we had an uneventful trip home somewhat enlivened by the R/T chat; the indomitable Sam D'Arcy had rounded up 7 aircraft which he was leading back to base. Number 7, thought to be Sergeant Pilot "Ginger" Stone, was effectively unable to speak and only incoherent honks came from him.

Thankfully we made Fassberg without incident and all landed successfully. However the station personnel who had turned out en masse to see the homecoming were immediately aware that all was not quite right when they saw us



Audrey Macpherson looks ever so pleased to be surrounded by a group of drunken pilots! "Mac" Macperson OC "A" Flt in on her left and Ces Crook on her right. Back row left to right: Mike Paxton (later killed in a midair collision with a helicopter), Peter Peacock (later an Air Cdre), Mo Stilwell (in uniform - killed in a midair collision over Ankara while flying a Viscount in 1963), Ron Wilie, Don Headley, Chris Cross, Sam D'Arcy, Bugs Deluce (killed in a Hunter mid-air collision in 1955), Tubby Carder, Charles Allison (Killed in a flying accident at North Weald), Geoff Steggall. After Mac was tragically killed in a mid-air collision while flying a Seahawk at Lossiemouth, Audrey married Bob Broad; she died last year.

shambling down the road. I made it to the bar to recuperate, Dickie I imagine rushed home and to bed. The confusion at Sylt on takeoff with R/T failures, pilots forgetting to check in etc. resulted in ATC records showing only 49 takeoffs - however 53 aircraft landed! Our Station Commander PR "Johnnie" Walker was one of the nicest men you could ever meet with a very distinguished wartime record. This, however was going too far even for him and the Wing Leader was posted very swiftly to be Wing Commander Flying at North Weald.

At that time was one Flight Lieutenant Cecil "Ces" (pronounced "Cess", as in "pit") Crook on the Squadron. He was a Cranwell product at a time when Cranwell produced a stream of highly gung-ho types and Ces was gung-ho than most. He was able, keen, innovative and enthusiastic, but totally devoid of good sense and as a result he was always lurching into trouble, which was mostly tolerated as it was thought that if the balloon went up he would be very good [a belief, incidentally, that was to be fully justified ten years later when he commanded 209 Squadron (the Pioneer force) brilliantly during the Confrontation with Indonesia]. He also didn't appear to suffer from hangovers - which is always a bad sign. I was aware of some of Ces' various exploits; he had managed to get hold of the PA system on the Leave Boat and caused some alarm by announcing that there was a Yeti on board and initiating a search for it. Then during his brief tenure as Squadron adjutant of 14 he had wired up the CO's bell push so that when he was summoned a series of explosive charges went off outside. However, Ces really first came to my attention when at breakfast on Sunday morning the adjutant said to me that one of our chaps was in trouble: it was Ces who had allegedly driven a train out of Hamburg station and had been stopped and was now under arrest by the Army police at Luneberg. It turned out that this was not quite true as he had merely joined the driver on the footplate with a bottle of whisky to cheer him up and accompanied him as far as Luneberg. Rather fortuitously our Station Commander was acting AOC at the time and merely sentenced Ces' to a week working on the station railway engine (Fassberg had a little railway system for delivering fuel trucks). We gathered that there were factions who would have wished for a more severe sentence.

That was not the only railway problem associated with Hamburg. One group returned from a weekend outing with the tale of how they had got confused at a level crossing on the way home. Some German commuters waiting on the platform at a nearby station were somewhat startled when a car drove past them.

Then there was the development of our cannon; this should not be confused with a replica cannon which Fassberg, Celle and Wunstorf feuded over. One day, a substantial collection of metal tubing and clamps was delivered to our hangar. This, we were told, was to construct frameworks which would drape camouflage netting over our aircraft when dispersed. Unfortunately no instructions on how to assemble these bits had been included, so one particularly wet day

we tried our luck. It was apparent that there were 16 sets so anyone who wanted to do so took a set and built their structure. There were some amazing results, one or two of which would now be suitable for the Tate Modern Gallery: but we realised, looking at the most successful attempt, that it had the slight snag that it actually had to be built round a Venom and then taken to pieces again when the time came to fly. Some time later instructions did arrive and we built one properly, but the slightest wind risked damaging the Venom it was supposedly sheltering, so we abandoned the idea. However, the pieces were absorbed into the station infrastructure and subsequently appeared as goal posts behind barrack blocks and a neat little footbridge etc. They also were built into a cannon, which test fired a broom across the parade ground. Its formal introduction took place after the next dining-in night when it was announced that 14 Squadron would give a display of gun-drill. The cannon was wheeled in and after a lot of suitable shouting of "Number One on the Gun" and similar cries a thunderflash was put in and an impressive bang produced. This was repeated to the delight of the audience and then, to liven up affairs, came the command "Give the mob a whiff of grapeshot!" "Aye aye, Sir!" came the response, and this time the weapon was loaded with a thunderflash followed by a bag of Maltesers, and then trained on the crowd around the entrance to the bar. There was a spectacular bang as plaster fell off the wall and I shall always remember Dave Madgwick clutching the handle of his shattered tankard and hot chocolate dripping down his face.

When the news that we were to have the Standard presented broke, we all realised that there would need to be an appropriate amount of ceremony; however when the CO decreed that for a month before the airmen would have an hour's drill early each morning before work started I thought this was going to break the Squadron's morale. At that time everyone was working like beavers to try and get some serviceability and I thought this would be the last straw. Here I have to admit that I was quite wrong.

We had some advice from the 2TAF protocol department which was to the effect that two flights of 45 airmen should escort the standard, as we had an airman strength of 62, one of whom was excused boots and one sick we compromised on two flights of 30. Anyway the airmen started their drill under the tuition of an RAF Regiment NCO, the officers learned sword drill, and the Standard party (Peter Peacock and 3 SNCOs) organised itself.

Morale, in fact, did not suffer appreciably once the airmen got into the spirit of the thing, far from it and I became aware during rehearsals that actually I had a very smart and keen outfit behind me. We had our final dress rehearsal on the station parade ground lined with station personnel for the occasion. We marched on splendidly but came to a halt in front of the Station Commander a little too close. From where I stood the resultant saluting with swords was reminiscent of the "Prisoner of Zenda"; then one of the station personnel lining the parade ground fainted and skewered himself with his bayonet but apart from that all went well.



The Standard Presentation parade, held in the Squadron hangar at Fassberg because of the weather. The Squadron Commander Sqn Ldr John Lawrence (later an Air Marshal) is far right of the picture and Bob Broad follows him. On the far left is the right marker Mike de Torre, an instrument fitter (and coincidentally also a member of the 14 Squadron Association!)

Came the great day on 21 August 1954 and the weather was awful. We had to switch to an indoor parade in our hangar, which was in some ways easier, as chalk marks had been surveyed into appropriate spots. However two problems arose, the first problem was the flaming row that developed among the airmen, as on the day we had no-one sick and hence 61 candidates for 60 slots - almost unbelievably no-one wanted to miss the parade. I cannot remember how we sorted that one out, but the CO did. The second problem was that unlike the open air parade where we marched on smartly, now we had to debouch through a quite narrow door and march off immediately on the far side without looking like a football crowd: this our airmen managed to do. However, the parade itself went off very well and subsequently we were delighted to hear that two Guards officers had expressed the wish that their lot would do as well!

For the rest of my time on the Squadron it guarded its reputation for drill fiercely: new airmen posted in were taken to the back of their barrack block to be instructed by old hands in how 14 Squadron did it.

There was always a slight question mark about the Venom as one or two accidents had occurred for no apparent reason and somehow a concern about fire was around. Anyway I was out at the dispersals in the woods on the W. side of the airfield when I saw a Venom of 98 come scurrying back into the circuit with, I thought, its downward identification light on. Shortly afterwards a pall of smoke showed that it had crashed on the other side of the airfield - it had in fact been on fire and I think the pilot must have been overcome by fumes. Flying stopped while this was investigated and the problem was thought to be associated with fuel venting so with some hesitation and with certain restrictions flying resumed. However John Severne, a Flight Commander on 98 Sqn went off to do some aerobatics and it was always suspected but never acknowledged, deliberately tried to catch fire. He succeeded and force landed on the airfield with all the evidence now available for inspection; he was awarded an immediate AFC. This time there was a thorough and meticulous inquiry headed by our squadron commander which firmly established what was wrong. More modifications took place and serviceability which had been recovering plummeted again.

Then in 1955 the Wing re-equipped with Hunters. It all started when I came back from doing the Short Guided Weapons course at Manby and found the Mess buzzing with rumours - we were going get Hunters, we were going to move to Jever etc. While my immediate reaction was to give all this the credence that I would have given to a report that Mao-Tse-Tung had defected and was opening a takeaway in Scunthorpe, it turned out to be substantially correct except that 14 would be going to Oldenburg where our old CO (Deryck Stapleton) was now Station Commander. So very shortly I and Alan Powell (a 118 Flight Commander) were off to West Raynham where we each had 10 sorties in a Hunter 1 following a very straightforward conversion syllabus. The Hunter was a very nice aircraft to fly and much easier to fly on instruments than a Venom, so apart from the fact that one would be landing faster I foresaw no real problems - there were more systems to know about but nothing overly complex. Mac then went off to do the Day Fighter Leaders course at Raynham so that by the time conversion started both Flight Commanders had flown the Hunter.



A brand new Hunter Mk 4 touches down at Oldenburg

There was a down side to all this as our manning level which was already very low now started to fall as no airmen were now being posted in to avoid the problem of moving them to another station. However to alleviate our problems Flight Sergeant Winrow, said to be the best Flight Sergeant in 2TAF was posted in to help and with his skills, the improving serviceability of the Venom and the fact that we could now ignore any forthcoming inspections and just fly the aircraft into the ground we were able to get some 300 hours a month and get our pilots worked up to a reasonable level.

The actual conversion went smoothly and as a measure of the Hunters tolerance Brian Pettit did his first solo into a 20000 foot cloud layer; this was due to some faulty met predictions but nevertheless did give me a bad forty minutes when I realised what had happened. With swept wings and a higher stalling speed our pilots were understandably a bit cautious and landed hot. A derisive ditty from the two Sabre squadrons went round:-

*One Six Zero - that's no sweat
We're equipped with Maxaret.*

There was a little truth in this but it stopped hurriedly when their conversion started and one of their pilots stalled a Hunter on the approach and swung into the clutch of vehicles which in those days were poised at the end of the runway. He wrote off the crash jeep, the runway caravan and two Mercedes Benz fire engines with sadly some casualties; however the Hunter while a little battered was still quite recognizable.

However we did have one incident during Hunter conversion when we were suddenly called by ATC that one of our Hunters (WT806) was in some trouble. We hurried out to see it land and it looked rather like one of those elderly pigeons one saw in London who has obviously passed its sell-by date: it drooped all over. The pilot, one Colin Field was helped out with a nose bleed and the g-meter stuck firmly at 12. His story was that he had gone into a tight turn at speed (as indeed he was meant to) and it had then pitched up which was a known fault of early Hunters. The accident/incident was attributed to pitch-up and no more was said.

Anyway the aircraft was straightened up somewhat, the pitot tube realigned and after a phone call to Neville Duke at Dunsfold (who recommended less than 250 knots and no airbrake) I limped it back to Dunsfold. We had an enjoyable argument with Customs who wanted me to land at Tangmere for clearance which we refused to do; in fact two Customs inspectors then actually came to Dunsfold to meet me and instantly saw we had not been fooling about. Bill Bedford then entertained me royally that evening. Hawkers final estimate was that it had pulled 14g.



Above - Ces Crook

Finally I might mention the firework display at Oldenburg. Ces had just been court-martialled for low flying outside the low flying area where he was beating up some tanks and his Number 4 went in. He got off the court martial by hiring a splendid barrister (which is essential if you are technically guilty) and producing some tale about missing the boundary of the low flying area. My impression was that the prosecutor did not have his heart in the prosecution. Anyway Ces escaped but was in distinctly bad odour and was given the task of running the Oldenburg station fireworks display as some form of penance; my thoughts that this was not a good idea were ignored. To be fair if you had been making a short list of highly unsuitable officers in 2TAF to run a fireworks display Ces wouldn't have headed it although clearly he would have been well up on the list. I think heading any such list would have been Paddy English of 98 Sqn who had set off the Fassberg station bonfire on November the 4th. The problem was that while one knew with certainty that Ces would produce some disaster you couldn't predict how. Anyway sinister looking packages wrapped in tarred string with a fuse and marked "Hoch in die Luft Werfen" started to arrive and got stored in Ces's locker. Now, the Germans are a thorough race and these packages did give the impression that were one not to Werf them in the Luft as Hoch as possible there would be serious trouble.

All might still have been well if Ces had not divined that his fireworks would be lacking in "oomph". To remedy this he started to disembowel them and reload them in an improved manner; this process was carried out in the crew room and he stored the propellant and payloads in ash trays.

The Sabre squadrons (20 and 26) at Oldenburg had a rep from Canadair to assist them who was extremely nice and used to visit us in a social manner for coffee; unfortunately one day he stubbed his cigarette out in an ashtray which went up in a loud whoosh and a sheet of flame. He was extremely tolerant about it but Ces's operations were transferred to a safer location. On the actual night heavy rain and very low cloud prevented much of a display and Ces's overloaded rockets lumbered painfully up into cloud where they burst ineffectively. The display ended prematurely when one of Ces's rockets fell back, into the main box of fireworks.

Two days later I was somewhat sadly on my way home after an exciting first tour.

Obituaries



Above: John Robertson and "friend" at RAF Chivenor early in 1945

I am very sorry to announce the passing of another former wartime member of 14 Squadron, John Robertson last autumn aged 88. Originally from Sydney, John trained in the USA and flew Marauders and Wellingtons with 14 Squadron before returning to his native Australia at the end of the war. John has been a great supporter of the Squadron Association and an active correspondent via letter and e-mail; he will be sorely missed.



Above - Phil Wilkinson & Paddy O'Shea 1966

Paddy O'Shea who served on 14 Squadron in the mid-sixties unfortunately came second in an encounter with cancer and died on 20 March. There will be a memorial service for Paddy at 2pm on Thursday, 15th April at St. Agnes Church, Bury Road, NEWMARKET, CB8 7BT. *Directions: drive through Newmarket and head out due east on the main Bury Road. St Agnes is a couple of hundred yards beyond the Clock Tower opposite the Bedford Lodge Hotel.* Paddy's family would be delighted to have the attendance of any of Paddy's friends and colleagues

Sports

Below: The 14 Squadron Football Team at Port Sudan 1941. I am indebted to Jim Hanson for identifying the players in the team as follows (left to right):

Back Row Hanson, Wood, Wilson A, Unknown, Kinden, Wilson T, Front Row L-R Earl, Collins, Robinson, Else, Wells

Jim reports that they **Played 34, Won 26, Lost 2 and Drew 6; Goals For - 168, Goals Against - 45** - so a pretty good team! Sadly Jim says that he's not in the best of health these days, but I hope that this photo of his former youthful glory will remind him of happy days! By the way, can anyone remember the goalkeeper's name?

