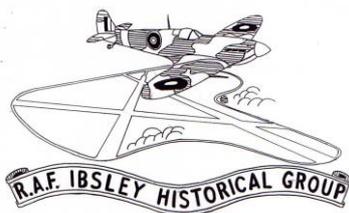


R.A.F. IBSLEY HISTORICAL GROUP

Patron: Stephen Young, Lord of Westbury and Waxham
President: Shirley Simmonds, MTC Driver, Ibsley, 1941
Vice President: Roy Chapman, R.A.F. Ibsley (Sopley) 1947



NEWSLETTER

No. 91

April 2015

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE



We were blessed with a fine winter's day for our Service in Ringwood Parish Church on Sunday 15th February, the anniversary of the date R.A.F. Ibsley became an operational World War II airfield in 1941. This year the well attended Service was conducted by Rev. Terry Roberts, Group Chaplain of Ringwood Royal British Legion. Our own Honorary Group Chaplain Rev. Canon John Turpin, M.A., was unable to be with us this year as he was in India, singing with The Bournemouth Symphony Chorus, and so grateful thanks are due to Rev. Dr. David Miell, Priest in Charge of Ringwood for contacting and arranging for Rev. Roberts to step in. Music was again provided by The Hyde Training Band whose players ranged in age from about 6 years upwards.

In attendance this year were the Rt. Honourable Dr. Julian Lewis, M.P. for New Forest East. Apologies were received from New Forest West M.P. the Rt. Honourable Desmond Swayne, TD. as he was in the Gulf on Government business, but sent by e-mail, his best wishes for a successful event. Also in attendance were the Chairman of New Forest District Council, Councillor Mrs. Maureen Holding, the Mayors of Ringwood, Councillor Mrs. Barbara Woodfield, and Fordingbridge Councillor Mr. Malcolm Connolly.

Rev. Terry Roberts welcomed all to the Service, and during the opening hymn, Praise my soul the King of heaven, the Standards of the Royal British Legion from Ringwood, Chandlers Ford and District, Eastleigh, Lyndhurst and District, and Romsey, with one from the Royal Air Force Association entered. Then followed the Reading from Ecclesiastes 3, vs.1-11, which was given by Wing Commander Colin Dixon (R.A.F. Ret'd) of Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. Rev. Terry Roberts then gave a short but interesting address, based on the reading Colin gave. The Bugler from Hyde Band sounded the Last Post before The Exhortation which was given by Mr. Roy Farmers, Royal British Legion and Group member. The Silence and Reveille followed and then Jennifer Dexter, daughter of No. 118 Squadron Leader Frank J. Howell, D.F.C., Commanding Officer at Ibsley in 1941 laid the Poppy Wreath. During the singing of the hymn 'Immortal, Invisible, God only wise' a number of Poppy Crosses were laid by members of the congregation

alongside the Poppy wreath and against our Group Logo board. Prayers then followed before the final hymn, 'Through all the changing scenes of life'. Rev. Roberts then gave the Blessing after which the National Anthem was sung and the service ended with the departure of the Standards.

The retiring collection, in aid of Service Charities amounted to just over £100 and cheques have been sent to the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. From the Groups own funds donations are being made to Ringwood Parish Church and the Hyde Training Band.

Following the Service tea, coffee and biscuits were served in the adjoining Church Rooms. Very grateful thanks must go to Brenda Dow for overseeing this, and to Wendy Clarke, and Pat Hoskins who offered to assist and also any others who helped with serving, washing up, and those who tidied up and ensured the Church rooms were left in good order afterwards.

My personal and very grateful thanks to Roy and Ruth Farmers who gave me a lift to the Church for the Service and back home again after, and to Steve Forward who arranged for the R.B.L. and R.A.F.A. Standards and their bearers to attend. *Vera.*

RECEIVED FROM ROGER MANSFIELD FOLLOWING JANUARY NEWSLETTER

Dear Vera,

Thank you for the latest newsletter. I noticed that Jennifer Dexter will be laying the wreath at the service on 15th February and that she is the daughter of Sqn. Ldr. Frank Howell who was C.O. of 118 Squadron at Ibsley. You may remember that a few years ago I wrote a book called "Flt. Lt. "Jonny Curchin DFC - One of the "Few" – *now out of print*. Well Jonny and Frank Howell were both on 609 Squadron at Middle Wallop from 1940 to the beginning of 1941. In the chapter about 609 Squadron there are many references to Frank Howell, and I have printed that chapter off and propose to give it to Jennifer Dexter at the memorial service. Would you please let her know about this and also send me her e-mail address if you have it. Thank you. Roger.

I did as Roger asked and he and Jennifer met up at the Memorial Service and chatted in the Church Rooms over refreshments. I telephoned Jennifer to ask about their meeting, for this Newsletter, and the following is Jennifer's account sent to me by e-mail.

"Roger Mansfield has sent me his book about Johnny Curchin as he had included information about 609 Squadron and my dad Frank Howell. D.F.C.

The great thing about reading someone else's story is that although you may have the facts from other books there are always new pieces of information that come to light, as well as new photos and the stories behind them.

Quite often a small reference will trigger some memory in your research and help that fact make sense, add to your research, or it may even lead you on a new path, for example two entries in Dad's log book, dated June 14th and 15th 1940, First pilot in a Harvard. I had no idea why he flew a Harvard. The answer - he was instructing Miller, Curchin and Feary.

There is a photo in Roger's book of my Dad, Curchin and Crook going to Buckingham Palace to collect their DFC's. I knew about Crook from his book now I know about Curchin too. So the photo has a complete story behind the picture now.

As research never seems to end the more information the better. Roger's book, now out of print, is an easy and interesting read. It was very kind of him to send it to me. Jennifer Dexter.

DOREEN BILES (ONE TIME GROUP TREASURER) also wrote thanking me for the January Newsletter and here are a few excerpts from her letter.

Dear Vera,

"I was very interested in your item about the Royal Air Force Association Remembrance Garden. I have had a stone put there for Jim (her late husband and for some years our Group Chairman). I received notification before Christmas that the stone is now in place. I hope my daughter and son-in-law will be taking me there in June to visit when they have a special service with the Royal Air Force Band. I hope to see Sheila (Dooley) and Pat (Marrable) there." Sheila and Pat are the sisters of 234 Squadron Sergeant Pilot A. E. 'Teddy' Joyce who was with No. 234 Squadron at Ibsley in 1941. He was lost on 30th December 1941, while on a Circus operation and

taken Prisoner of War In attempting to escape from Stalag Luft III in June 1943 he was mortally wounded, and lies in the Poznan (Polish) Military Cemetery.

Doreen went on to say *“I will be writing to them to see if we can arrange something. I was going to do something locally, but when I saw the advert about this I thought it a much better idea, and Jim would have been thrilled to know his name was there and it will be kept in good condition by the Royal Air Force Association.*

Also how much she misses being able to come to Group meetings now due to health problems but is hoping when her eldest daughter returns home from America in the Autumn she may be able to bring her.”

I telephoned Sheila Dooley, as I compiled this Newsletter, and she said it would be good to meet up with Doreen and her family at the Memorial at Alrewas in Staffordshire in June, but it will be a long day for both families as they have to be there by 9.30 a.m. Sheila whose home is in Diss, Norfolk, says her son will take her and her sister Pat who lives in Bognor Regis, West Sussex.

We look forward, hopefully, to including a photo or two of the event in the July Newsletter.

REQUEST FOR HELP

Early in February I received an e-mail from John Wastle in Scotland, as follows:

Hi Vera, This is a shot in the dark. Lois Andrews is a friend of mine, I believe you know her. I am trying to trace my GI dad from back then. In September 1944 he was S/Sgt. Gale Robinson or Robertson, spellings may be different. You don't have any record of someone by that name from then have you? I live in Scotland, my GI dad came to Edinburgh on furlough. Thanks, John.

Since then I have been corresponding with John, and going through countless books on the American Groups, not only at Ibsley but other stations where Americans were based in the UK., and so far have not come up with anything that could help him trace his father who, personally I think, would be in his nineties now, or may even have passed on. Anyone any ideas where John could get information? Please let me know and I will let John know.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TUESDAY 21st APRIL, 2.30 p.m. AFTERNOON GROUP MEETING, GROUP SECRETARY'S HOME, NORDEN, MOCKBEGGAR LANE, IBSLEY, BH24 3PR

Vera will give a talk illustrated with slides. It will feature WWII R.A.F. Ibsley personnel, a few U.S.A.A.F., and also some of their relatives with an Ibsley connection, who have stayed at, or visited Norden since the Group was formed in 1992, together with their stories. I think MEMORIES would be the best way of describing it. There will be refreshments. I can seat 18-20 in my thirty foot long lounge/diner.

PLEASE NOTE: Of necessity the following two meetings will be held on Mondays.

MONDAY 11th MAY, 7.30 p.m. SALISBURY MILITARIA HUT, BROOKLANDS FARM

By kind permission of Campbell Sampson

We are trying to arrange a speaker for this meeting, but there will be something interesting if we are unable to do so.

MONDAY 15th JUNE, 7.30 p.m. in the EXHIBITION HUT, BROOKLANDS FARM

A chance to see how the Exhibition Hut has survived the winter, what if any work needs to be done during July, and best days and time when people are available to help prepare for the Exhibition. This will be followed by a speaker at approximately 8 p.m.

SATURDAY 1st and SUNDAY 2nd AUGUST ANNUAL R.A.F. IBSLEY EXHIBITION at BY-GONE DAYS from 10.30 a.m. each day

TUESDAY 15th SEPTEMBER – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 7.30 p.m. IBSLEY VILLAGE HALL BEING BOOKED

OTHER DATES IN NEXT NEWSLETTER

TO ALL WHO RECEIVE THEIR NEWSLETTER BY E-MAIL

Your Group Secretary would very much appreciate an acknowledgement that you do in fact receive the Newsletters sent to you by this means. In January a 'read receipt' was requested, but I did not receive this from seventeen members, so I had no idea whether they received their Newsletter or not. Is it to much trouble to ask, when you receive this one, and future editions, when it arrives in your 'In box' to reply please. Just one word 'received', in an e-mail, will suffice, and I will know that it has been received by you.

Some members still receive their copies by post. If you have e-mail and would be happy to receive them electronically please send me an e-mail saying so, to vera.ibsleyhg@btinternet.com By doing so it will confirm I have your correct e-mail address and it will save the Group money, on postage, paper, envelopes and printing. *Thanks, Vera.*

NEWS OF OUR FRIEND WILLIS 'WALLY' WALLING, GROUP LIFE MEMBER

I have been concerned about Wally from South Carolina, U.S.A., as I received no acknowledgement of the January Newsletter, nor of a copy of the Brief History of Ibsley Airfield sent to him by Air Mail post in January. I have kept in regular contact with him by phone but recently got the message that his number was no longer available. None of those who normally receive Christmas cards had not heard from him either.

We were wondering what had happened, bearing in mind Wally is now 93. I brought this up at the last Committee meeting and Terry Wallis tried, as I had done, to see if he could glean any information from the Pawley's Island website, his home town. We tried but could find nothing.

On Thursday last, 2nd April, I received an e-mail from Rev. Dr. David Miell, Priest in Charge of Ringwood Parish saying he had a letter addressed to the R.A.F. Ibsley Historical Group, C/o Ringwood Parish Church, Att. Vera Smith. He would send it on to me. It arrived today, 8th April. Easter is a busy time for clergy and no post on Good Friday or Easter Monday. It was a pretty floral 'Thinking of You' card from Wally, and in his own hand writing inside he wrote: *Dear Vera and all our friends in England. Thank you for the copies of your writing. Love to all, Wally.*

There was no Air Mail notice, or sender's address on the envelope but a postmark date of 12th March, and SC290. It would therefore seem that Wally has moved from his Pawley's Island address and is still somewhere in South Carolina. We will now try to find out where he has moved to, so that we can keep in touch.

FROM FRIENDS OF THE NEW FOREST AIRFIELDS

Our Chairman Bill Dow in his capacity as a local New Forest District Councillor has received an invitation letter from Mrs. Lucy Eden, Hon. Secretary of the above. In her letter she says:

**On Sunday June 28th 2015, the Annual Outdoor Service will be held at
The Memorial in Black Lane, Holmsley South**

Assembly commences at 2 p.m. and the service commences at 2.30 p.m. with a short Parade of Standards (14.30hrs), and usually lasts for 45 minutes.

The purpose of this service in Armed Forces Week is to remember all those, civilian as well as military, who served on or worked at the 12 airfields in times of both war and peace.

We do hope you will be able to attend again this year and that you can pass this information on to the R.A.F. Ibsley Historical Group.

BY-GONE DAYS 2015 - SATURDAY 1st and SUNDAY 2nd AUGUST

This will have all the usual attractions, and no doubt new ones too, including Military vehicles, Stationary Engines, Cars, Tractors, Motor Cycles, and numerous other invited displays. Aircraft displays will, no doubt, be flying over the event on both days. More details nearer the time.

This year marks the 25th Anniversary of By-Gone Days, which evolved from the Ibsley Church Annual Garden Party when the Church was declared redundant in 1990. I feel sure Campbell and Elaine will have a surprise or two up their sleeves for this special year.

R.A.F. IBSLEY HERITAGE TRUST

will be holding their

2015 RAF IBSLEY REVIVAL - SATURDAY 22nd AUGUST - MOYLES COURT SCHOOL

We hope to have some information on this event in July Newsletter.