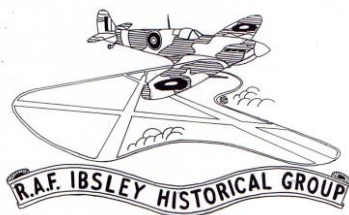


R.A.F. IBSLEY HISTORICAL GROUP

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President: Shirley Simmonds, MTC Driver, Ibsley, 1941
Vice President: Roy Chapman, R.A.F. Ibsley (Sopley) 1947

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NEWSLETTER

No. 96

July 2016

IBSLEY PAST AND PRESENT - 6th and 7th AUGUST

With the demise of the By-Gone Days event at South Gorley after 25 years, and at which the R.A.F. Ibsley Historical Group held its Annual Exhibition since 1992 in one of the still standing wartime huts As Honorary Group Secretary I am this year putting together a mainly photographic display of **IBSLEY** (and the local area) **PAST AND PRESENT** over the weekend of **SATURDAY 6th and SUNDAY 7th AUGUST in IBSLEY VILLAGE HALL, from 11.30 a.m. each day**

Things are coming together really well and the display will combine history, personal stories, and events that have taken place locally over many years. A number of old photographs have already been received, including some of the Ibsley Eagles Cycle Speedway team, with the names of riders, who were Hampshire County Champions in 1951. We have also invited some clubs and societies who use the hall today to come and join us, or give us their history. The Ibsley and District Horticultural Society who this year will be holding their twenty ninth Annual Show in September have already accepted.

We will be displaying photographs of some of the still remaining bits and pieces of RAF Ibsley Aifield, 1941-52 and will also be using a projector to show a few other war time events which included, as most of you know, the filming of flying shots for the film 'The First of the Few' in 1941 starring David Niven and Leslie Howard, with Ibsley pilots taking part between operational sorties. After a days filming the shots 'rushes' were taken to the Regal Cinema in Ringwood for viewing and the pilots who had taken part would often go there to watch them.

In the early 1950's most of the wartime huts were taken over by the Ringwood and Fordingbridge Rural District Council to be used as housing. There are families whose names I recognise from a 1953 Brown's Directory list, loaned to me, of over one hundred tenants, which will be on display, and whose children may still be living in the area today. Some photos have already been received from the Vaughan family who in 1953 lived in one of the old wartime huts along the A338 (Western edge of the old airfield) and their address then was given as 76 Salisbury Road. When council housing was built in Ringwood they moved to the Wessex Estate, also the Wallis family who lived in a hut at South Gorley in 1955. I would appreciate it very much if others could get in touch with me to share memories of their childhood living in those wartime huts, and if they have photos could let me have copies, or loan me for copying to display. I was at that time Vera Andrews and went to schools in Ringwood and Brockenhurst, then Bournemouth College.

Ex R.A.F. Ibsley personnel are hoping to come from South Devon, Bath, Weston-Super-Mare and more locally, for what might possibly be their last get-together.

There will be no admission charge but there will be a collection box or two for donations towards expenses. We also hope to have light refreshments available.

To get in touch with me please telephone Vera Smith 01425-474026, or e-mail vera.ibsleyhg@btinternet.com

If any member can please lend a hand with setting up on the Saturday morning, laying out photographs from 9 a.m. or stewarding, helping with refreshments either day please let me know.

GROUP MEETING, IBSLEY VILLAGE HALL, 14th APRIL

ANTHONY HOWARD-WILLIAMS gave members a most interesting and illustrated talk on his families flying history spanning one hundred years. He began by saying his Uncle W/Cdr. Peter and father Sqdn/Ldr. Jeremy Howard-Williams were born into an R.A.F. family in 1919 and 1922. They were the sons of Air Commodore Ernest Howard-Williams and his wife Nora. In 1914 Bill was a private in the E. Yorkshire Regt. Transferring to the RNAS in 1915 where he learnt to fly various planes before, in 1918 joining the new Royal Air Force. Anthony then listed his career up until WWII which included Command of the RAF in Sudan, and Inspector General of the Iraqi Air Force. At the outbreak of WWII he was acting Senior Air Staff Officer of Fighter Command, effectively Dowding's No. 2, with who he had a row. After the row he was rather side-lined with jobs at Halton and Blackpool. During the later stages of the war he was air correspondent of the Daily Telegraph. He also kept a detailed diary all his life which he formed into a fascinating autobiography, writing movingly about flying over the Battle of The Somme and seeing the awfulness of war. Anthony then told a few stories from the autobiography and said how he ended his working life as leader of the opposition in the Kenyan Parliament.

Anthony said his father, Jeremy, also wrote a book, published in 1976 by David Charles, 'Night Intruder' an account of his war from 1941-1945 with emphasis on the airborne radar war between the Germans and British. He did not go to Cranwell which his brother Peter had done as Cranwell was closed to new recruits for the duration of the war. He had to go to Canada for his final training and on his return joined first 604 Squadron led by "Catseyes" Cunningham, then Flt, which was involved in the experimentation of airborne radar. I guess the early stages of AWACS. Anthony went on to say his father flew a Messerschmitt 410 in RAF colours over southern England during the war and had to have a Mosquito as cover in case any patrolling aircraft or ack-ack gunners didn't see the RAF colours, just the outline of the German plane and blazed away. The enemy aircraft had been captured and was fitted with the latest airborne radar and Britain needed to find out how advanced they were in this. This happened on 4th August 1944 and a photo was shown.

Peter meanwhile being older, was in the last intake at Cranwell in 1939, and entered 19 Squadron at Duxford, flying in the B-O-B at only 21. After 19 Sqdn he joined 610 followed by 118 where he was stationed at Ibsley. Here he was one of the pilots picked for the film "The First of the Few", sanctioned by Churchill to be filmed on an active wartime base. It told the story of R. J. Mitchell, legendary designer of the Spitfire and starred Leslie Howard and David Niven. Niven was so impressed with the airmen who took part he sent them to the Savoy Hotel in London and said they should have whatever they wanted, wine, song and and he would pay. An excerpt from the film was then played. So all those airmen and ground support crew were putting their lives at risk on an hourly basis. Quite amazing.

Anthony then told of a story of brothers Peter and Jeremy who by now were officer pilots, and it happened either at Middle Wallop, where my father was stationed or Ibsley, a satellite of Middle Wallop, and they could take their aircraft to visit each other as a training run. One day their old housemaster from their public school Felstead was on the base, and seeing he was in NCO uniform in the Home Guard they found the opportunity too good to resist. Stationing themselves twenty feet apart they made their old housemaster march back and forth between them. My father said it had been accepted with remarkable good grace!

How were the brothers parents getting on at this time? My father used to say, their mother had the most terrible of wars, worse than both of theirs. During the day they worried about Peter, the eldest who was flying Spitfires into battle, and at night Jeremy the youngest, who was flying Mosquitos and Beaufighters in battle. So they could never rest. My father loved the Mosquito in contrast to the Beaufighter which he didn't. He found the Beaufighter cockpit ill thought out and almost impossible to fly at night as switches were in illogical position. A lot of thought had been put into the ergonomics of the Mosquito cockpit and he could fly it blind, which of course he had to at night as all lights had to be extinguished. A habit of his from flying the Beaufighter remained to the end of his life. Anthony said he would what I called blob things. Anything he used at night he would put little bits of glue onto knobs so in darkness he could feel by the blobs and layout what each switch did. As children we really took the mickey out of him when we looked at the bedside radio with all these bits of glue on top of the knobs and switches. But of course this was exactly

what he had done in his aircraft so that he could feel the switches at night, but the blobs must have been some size as he would wear gloves while flying, and colder the weather the thicker the gloves.

Anthony then went on to say how after the War Bill Howard-Williams emigrated to Nairobi and entered politics, ending up as the leader of the opposition in the Kenyan Government. He retired back to UK in the 1960's, dying in 1969. Peter H-W retired from the RAF in 1958 and first ran a pub, Pandora's Inn in Falmouth, then the Peter Pan Toy Shop, also in Falmouth, before moving to Spain with his fourth wife. They returned to UK and lived in Wimborne. He died in 1993. My father continued in the RAF after the war serving in Singapore and Germany and finishing as assistant air-attache in Paris before resigning in a fit of pique at the end of the fifties. History does not relate what it was about.

My parents divorced shortly after their silver anniversary in 1977. Unbelievably, a few years later, they re-married and I was the official photographer at that wedding, so I made the most of it and took a photo of almost everything including, to their disgust, the register signing. I got home, wound the film to the end, opened the back of the camera to take it to be developed, and found there was no film in it. I had nothing of the day. Mother was pleased, father less so!

Anthony went on to tell of talks his father gave illustrated with several slides, and how he became keen to help the Mosquito Museum, now The de Havilland Museum, an offshoot of IWM.

He went on to tell of flying accidents involving his two grandfathers, Bill Howard-Williams who survived a crash into the Suez Canal, and how his other grandfather Air Vice Marshal Frank Inglis crashed into the Euphrates in Mesopotamia. He too survived, married and fathered two daughters, one of whom was my mother. So, I am here, despite the best intentions of two aircraft, but due only to the fortuitous presence of two strips of water.

So that is the family history of the Howard-Williams association with the RAF, or it would have been until a year ago said Anthony, when my eldest son 19 year old Dominic, always keen on flying, graduated from RAFC Cranwell and is now undergoing flying training there. This means Flying Officer Dominic Howard-Williams has expanded these members to the Howard-Williams RAF family tree by including his great-grandfather on his grandmother's side, my grandfather. He was Air Vice Marshall Frank Inglis, head of RAF Intelligence during WWII and as such was on Hitler's hit list for after the war if he had won it. He was sent by Churchill to see Roosevelt at the White House so was responsible for America joining the war in Europe ahead of Japan.

Thank you Anthony for giving us such an informative and interesting talk, one of our best. At a Committee meeting in June it was proposed, and seconded, that Anthony, for many years a Group member, be made an Honorary Life Member and this was carried.

CONGRATULATIONS TO FOUNDER AND GROUP LIFE-MEMBER BETTY HOCKEY ON HER ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY



Betty a founder Committee member of our Group in 1992 celebrated her 100th birthday with a surprise party, organised by the Bournemouth Red Arrows Association at the Osborne Centre in West Parley. Betty thought she was just going out for lunch with a few friends, but she arrived to find a packed hall of family, her daughter Gloria and six of her eight grandchildren, and friends, Admiral Sir Jonathan Band former First Sea Lord, who paid tribute to her charity work, and Nick Arnold a former Mayor of Ferndown, who said Betty is still involved with the Red Arrows Association even now. Also in attendance were the Mayor and Mayoress of Bournemouth A sort of This is Your Life film was played and she watched this with great interest and amazement. Betty was a forces wartime entertainer, and I now quote excerpts from her story in "So Much Sadness, So Much Fun" She formed the "Non-Stops" a large concert party of 16 Artistes, so consequently they had nearly every Act available. Shows were performed in Garrison Camps, Units, Ship and shore bases, but they concentrated mainly on the small Units, often wallowing in mud in the New Forest on the lead up to D-Day as this was where they were sadly lacking in entertainment, to boost their morale. Many times recalls Betty there would be no Stage, but most venues managed to rig up some sort of

platform. Sometimes the back of a large truck would be used, and the performances would be known as tailboard shows. "I well remember Ibsley", said Betty, the Can-Can Dancer, "who didn't. "It had a wonderful atmosphere and was close to our doorstep. "It was certainly one of our favourite places to be and extremely popular with us". We saw the numerous and varied squadrons come and go". "Just getting to know them all, when off they would pop at the drop of hat, many times without warning". Thank you Betty for what your Non-Stops Concert Party did to boost the morale of those war time days of sadness and fun for all those service personnel.

Several cards were sent by members who knew Betty and the Group at its last Committee meeting decided to send her a bouquet of flowers but shortly after her birthday, as her little home would most probably be overflowing with congratulatory bouquets on the day.

**CONGRATULATIONS ALSO TO ELAINE MICKLEWRIGHT
ANOTHER GROUP FOUNDER AND LIFE MEMBER ON HER AWARD OF
THE BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL IN THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS.**

Elaine, like Betty Hockey was a founder Committee member of our Group. She then organised, the By-Grone Days event at Campbell Sampson's Brooklands Farm for twenty five years. From humble beginnings it grew and grew, until it ended last year, raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for charities over the years, the main ones being Salisbury Hospice, Salisbury Alzheimers and Royal British Legion Women's Section, but other smaller charities benefitted as well. A well deserved reward for all your hard work Elaine.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY NOW:

**2016 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
THURSDAY 15th SEPTEMBER, 7.30p.m.
IBSLEY VILLAGE HALL**

We hope local members, who are able, will make every effort to attend.

**REDUCED RATE
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE 1st SEPTEMBER**

From which date they will be £5.00 per Adult member, £4.00 Junior 14-18 years.

This reduction was approved at the September 2015 A.G.M.

These can be paid by sending, nearer the time, to Membership Secretary Owen 'Don' Blissett, address on the heading of this Newsletter, or put in an envelope and handed to me, Vera, if Don isn't there, at the Ibsley Past and Present event in August, but we will not be able to send out 2016-2017 Membership Cards until October, with the Newsletter, as they cannot be printed until we know who the new Officers and Committee members are.

I end this Newsletter with a picture taken at the very first R.A.F. Ibsley Exhibition at By-Gone Days in August 1992. The reason being that I have, as I write, received a phone call from Garth Long to say his father Ted, an R.A.F. Armourer/Armament Instructor at Ibsley, 1941/42 and a former Group Member had passed away aged 96. Obituary will be in October Newsletter.



L to R: Charlie West, Peter Smith, Bob George,
Ted Long. All now deceased.