

# XV SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



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## 2011 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

### ***PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE***

Shelagh at future reunions.

**M**y first duty at this time is, on your behalf, to congratulate Wing Commander Jonny Moreton on his appointment as OC XV Squadron and wish him a successful tour. He has already expressed a close interest in the activities of the Association. I hope that those who have not already done so will have a chance to meet him at the 2012 reunion.

After 14 years as Chairman of the No XV Squadron Association, David Bywater has felt it necessary to relinquish his responsibilities. As members and particularly those who attended the very successful reunion at Wyton this summer will know, he has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Association with particular reference to the organising of our annual reunion and the maintenance of a close relationship with the Squadron. As an acknowledgement of the debt that we all owe, the Committee agreed that David should be invited to become a Life Vice-President of the Association. I am pleased to be able to report that he has accepted this offer and we look forward to continuing to see him and

It has been very difficult to find a suitable location for next year's reunion however we have managed to provisionally book RAF Honington for the weekend of 8th - 10th June for the 2012 event. Please pencil this date in your diaries and the Secretary will confirm details as soon as he can in the New Year. In the afternoon before the dinner we hope to have a presentation on Operation ELLAMY (Libya) in which No XV(R) Squadron was directly involved. This was an outstanding example of what air power can achieve and should be of great interest.

In closing I would like to offer special thanks to our Secretary, Stan Boardman, who has edited this newsletter and does much important work on our behalf.

To all members of the Association I extend very best wishes for a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

***Michael Simmons***

## *XV(R) SQN SQN CDR'S REPORT 2011*

It was a cold and snowy start to the year as shovels were required to dig out the aircraft from XV(R) and 12(B) Squadron post Christmas leave. Despite the heavy snow in January the Squadron did enjoy much valuable flying over the beautiful wintery Scottish countryside. Not all XV(R) Sqn personnel would suffer from the cold as many staff aircrew and groundcrew deployed to Afghanistan in support of other frontline squadrons. Over the year XV(R) Squadron would continue to send personnel out of area in support of Operations in Afghanistan and Libya. The big shock for the Squadron was the loss of a Tornado on the West Coast of Scotland, due to a fire in flight, at the end of January. Thankfully the staff and student crew ejected safely with only minor injuries. Having only just recovered from the shock of losing an aircraft, 2 weeks later a XV(R)

Squadron staff crew ejected from their Tornado as it departed the runway at RAF Lossiemouth at high speed. Once again the Squadron was relieved to hear that the crew suffered only minor injuries. The aircraft also suffered minor damage as it came to rest a few hundred yards off the runway in soft ground. The Squadron held its breath in March in the hope that our luck would change; thankfully the Squadron did enjoy a quite month.

Half of the staff and students of XV(R) Squadron, including 103 engineers, deployed to Canada in April to take part in Exercise ALBERTA FOCUS. This was a heavy weapons detachment at Canadian Air Force Base Cold Lake. XV(R) Squadron was asked to take part in this exercise due to II(AC) Squadron being unable to take part as they were deployed to Op ELLAMY at short-notice. As the year progressed it soon became apparent that the summer was going to set





*A Tornado GR4 from the 2011 Role Demo at Southport Airshow, July 2011.*

the tone for the rest of the year. When 14 Squadron disbanded the crews all crossed the airfield to fly with the OCU, this put a huge strain on resources for several months until the crews were re-homed across the Station. The now yearly Qualified Weapons Instructors Course was in full swing on the Squadron and would graduate successfully in September. The Tornado GR4 Role Demo Team was once again supplied by XV(R) Squadron and they gained Public Display Authority after an extensive work-up in May. XV(R) Squadron would support many airshows across Europe over the coming months, including the Association Reunion at RAF Wyton; attracting high praise throughout.

July was a difficult month for the Squadron as half of our engineers were deployed in support of Op ELLAMY, with only a few days notice to move and with little granularity on when they would return. The effects of having so many personnel away were felt immediately. A reduced flying programme was enforced over those months as maintaining the Tornado became increasingly challenging. However, both aircrew and groundcrew alike worked tirelessly to

maximise training opportunities both in the air and on the ground. For the remainder of the year Squadron life remained busy but rewarding. XV(R) Squadron was praised by Senior Commanders for its fortitude in maintaining the highest possible standards both in theatre and at home - it is clear that XV(R) Squadron played a pivotal role in the success of the Libyan Campaign.

I took Command of XV(R) Squadron from Wg Cdr Brian James in September; although, I was already well established having been on XV(R) Squadron for a number of months. I had taken Command of 14 Squadron in February 2011, only for the Squadron to be disbanded in June. It was clear that my 5 years of experience (1999-2004) running the Qualified Weapons Course provided me an ideal opportunity to move across the Station and command XV(R) Squadron. I am looking forward to the challenges the lie before me in an ever changing Royal Air Force. The Squadron is now looking forward to a well-deserved break over Christmas - the shovels are at the ready!

***Jon Moreton***

## ***MORE MEMORIES AND ANECDOTES OF XV SQUADRON IN THE 1960s***

*Air Cdre Norman Bonnor presents some more of the lighter moments of XV Sqn on the V-Force.*

We achieved the “Select” crew classification at the end of 1962 and, by this date, we were one of the most experienced crews on the squadron as many of the longer serving crews had already moved on to the Mk2 squadrons at Wittering. That winter, it was 10 Squadron’s turn to go to the Far East and, of course, the Station Commander – Group Captain Bob Weighill - wanted to visit them, so one of our crews was selected to take him out to Butterworth in early February.



***XH587 in the snow in January 1963.***

The winter of 1962/63 was particularly cold and icy, and clearing the runway and taxiways at Cottesmore was a 24/7 task and not always completely successful. When the aircraft took off for the Far East, it had a problem – the Maxaret Anti-Lock Braking Unit had failed on one side – but on the icy runway it wasn’t obvious; it became very obvious when they landed at Akrotiri, and all eight tyres on the starboard side burst and caught fire. In their enthusiasm, the local fire crews managed to spray foam over everything including down the engine intake, so the aircraft was out of

action. The frustrated Group Captain called for a replacement aircraft, and we were tasked to take one out to Akrotiri and wait for the damaged aircraft to be repaired to fly it back. The first part was easy, but the second became a nightmare as a bureaucratic row began between Bomber Command and the Near East Air Force HQ about who was responsible for assessing and repairing visiting aircraft in Cyprus. We enjoyed a day or so swimming and water-skiing but then decided to start working on the aircraft ourselves which caused yet more trouble with the local engineers. Under the supervision of the Crew Chief who travelled with us, we repacked the brake parachute, changed the wheels and tyres using a knuckle jack under the bogie and started working on the two engines that needed replacing. However, we reached our competence limit after a couple of days and returned home on 11th February as priority aircrew in transit on a Comet from Nicosia much to the relief of my fiancé as we were due to be married in Melton Mowbray on the 23rd.

As a Select crew on the Squadron, we were chosen as one of four crews to represent XV in the annual Bomber Command Bombing Competition which ran on 20 and 21 April 1963. Eighteen squadrons competed that year; six with Victor B1s & 2s, nine with Vulcan B1s & 2s, and three with Valiants; the other Valiant squadrons had already been converted to tanking. When compared to the Valiant and Vulcan, the Victor had not performed very well in earlier competitions. Despite spending many hours calibrating the G4B gyro-magnetic compasses on the ground to fractions of a degree, the navs believed that compass errors were our main problem. So we convinced the Boss that we should fit Vernier scales to the periscopic sextant rings and calibrate the compasses in the air using the Sun as the reference. To everyone’s amazement, we found that all eight Squadron aircraft showed a similar error pattern with up to two and a half degrees

deviation on South Westerly headings. I later completed the Specialist Navigation Course at the College of Air Warfare and then understood why these errors occurred in dynamic flight at 500 knots. Using these airborne values as compass corrections, our navigation errors were significantly reduced but the greatest effect was on bombing accuracy. Almost all our RBSU targets were in cities and buried in other radar returns, so we had to use offsets; some could be over ten miles away from the target, particularly if the RBSU was jamming our H2S radar as well (a Type 2B attack, or 2C attack which combining the weaving approach of the Type 2A while the radar was being jammed); these offsets were measured against a true North datum so any compass error could cause very large bombing errors. We flew our competition sortie on 22 April with a take-off time of 0520! Of the 72 crews competing, I vaguely remember that we came a creditable third in the Individual Bombing and fifth in Individual Navigation and Bombing combined.

Training on high level profiles continued until late April 1963, when the decision was made to change the plans for penetration and attack of the Soviet Union by Mk1 Victors and Vulcans to low level (500 feet and below); the reason was the dramatic increase in deployment of the SA3 missile system around Soviet borders and cities. This change involved a very different approach to training and, in particular, our navigation techniques. The Nav Plotter still used 4H pencils and Lambert's plotting charts for the high level phase but, for low level, he used chinagraph pencils and ½ million topos laminated with clear plastic. The normal mode of operation was for him to provide a running commentary of what the guys in the front should see and for them to confirm. My role as Nav Radar was still to update the NBS with regular radar fixes, but this now involved a new set of radar prediction techniques as the picture at low level was severely affected

by hill shading, and the height of an object or feature was far more important than what it was made of. Thus railway embankments and even hedgerows became important when interpreting the picture. Our primary armament remained the 1.1-Megaton, Yellow Sun Mk2 which, unlike the later WE177, was not a lay-down, delayed fuse weapon. So we had to learn new bombing tactics involving popping up to 26,000 feet just in time release the weapon; later we were cleared to release it at 12,000 feet in a full-power climb and effectively throw the bomb before escaping back to low level.

At the end of June 1963, we were scheduled for another Western Ranger to Offutt via Goose Bay, but the trip didn't go as expected. Planning for the trip was routine except that our co-pilot – Pete Armstrong – was now cleared to fly in the left-hand seat, so David said he should take the first leg to Goose Bay. We took off at midday on 25th June in XH620 but, on climb out at about 30,000ft, the first pilot's hatch came off! All the dust and loose articles in the cockpit were sucked out through the large hole (approximately 7ft x 4ft), and Pete pushed hard over to descend giving us even more discomfort in the back with the resulting negative g. The buffeting noise level was horrendous making it impossible to communicate but, as we slowed down approaching 10,000ft, I realised that Dennis Halliwell next to me was laughing because his Gee chart had disintegrated under the tip of his pencil as he was taking a fix at the time the hatch blew and the only piece of chart left was about 2 inches across; I was also conscious of someone trying to make themselves heard on the intercom; it was Pete; he desperately wanted someone to put the pins back into the main gun and top handle of his ejector seat because, with the hatch gone, he was one step into the ejection sequence! In those days, the Crew Chief in the 6th seat

faced forward; clearly, this was not a very comfortable position as he was directly in the airflow from the missing hatch and he didn't have a bonedome; the two pilots had lowered their seats as much as possible and were below the worst of the problem; fortunately they always carried some goggles so these were passed to the Chiefie causing much hilarity in the tower as through binoculars it looked as though he was sat up in an open cockpit flying the aircraft like something from the 1st World War! As a bomber, the Victor couldn't dump fuel so we spent an hour and a half in the circuit burning off the surplus to get down to max landing weight. Unfortunately, it was raining so we were very wet by the time we finally climbed out in the squadron dispersal. We were re-scheduled on the Ranger in August, but this time with SASO 3 Group – AVM Johnie Johnson – who wanted to go Salmon fishing at Goose Bay. The hatch was found by a farmer near the Wash some years later.

A foggy evening at Cottesmore in October resulted in us being diverted to RNAS Lossiemouth from the end of a Bomber Command Exercise Anchor. With the long transit to Scotland, we descended to land with our fuel state almost at minimum and declared a PAN. As a result of our problem, air traffic gave us priority over a returning FAA Hunter which put him on minimums too. Fortunately, we both landed safely and later met up with a relieved Lieutenant Commander in the Wardroom bar. After congratulating one another for a good outcome, he asked what our fuel state was on landing; when David said it was 8,000lbs, he exclaimed “That's more than I took off with!”, and we had to spend the next hour explaining why 8,000lbs spread around 21 tanks was our

absolute minimum with a risk of flameouts if we had to overshoot. He wasn't happy, but I think he finally got the point.

By the end of 1963, the Bywater crew had achieved Select Star rating, the highest and most difficult classification, which only some 10 percent of V-Force crews ever managed. We had been together for more than two years and the co-pilot, Pete Armstrong, had completed his intermediate captain's course and David had been selected for the Empire Test Pilot School so we were ready to move on. At this time, President Sukarno of Indonesia was threatening the newly formed Malaysian Republic as a means of diverting attention from his own internal problems as a failing dictator, so Sir Alec Douglas-Home's Government decided to confront this threat by sending a few “aerial gunboats”, eight Victors in the conventional role, four from XV and four from 55 Squadron. The crews from XV included the Boss, now Wing Commander Marshall, and the “A” Flight Commander, Squadron Leader Dave Mullarkey; however, the Nav Radar on this crew was due to get married around Christmas time so, as a spare Nav Radar, I was drafted in to take part in Operation Chamfrom.



The next instalment includes Operation CHAMFROM (pictured above) at RAF Tengah in Singapore and the infamous 35 x 1,000lb bomb drops and will be included in the 2012 newsletter.



Into the Wind is a first feature length documentary, capturing the life and wartime experiences of former Bomber Command veterans from the Second World War. As well as a document of unique historical value and significance, Into the Wind is a record of deeply personal stories, tales of friendships gained and lost, the perpetual possibility and proximity of death, the importance of love and family and the shared passion for flying.

The documentary features interviews with former aircrew originating from Poland, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom, all of whom share the weight and responsibility of having helped change the course of history.

On November 30th 2011, Into the Wind was released on DVD and the film will be aired on the Yesterday Channel in the UK, sometime in 2012. The DVD includes the 72 minute director's cut of Into the Wind, extra short documentaries and trailers,

chapter selection menus and optional subtitles.

We would be very happy to offer XV Sqn Association members a discounted price or instead perhaps even offer a percentage of the proceeds of each sale to the Association fund.

Extra features include:

- New Zealand at War: A 22 minute documentary looking at New Zealanders in Bomber Command. This film was made for the opening of the new aviation display hall at the Museum of Transport and Technology in Auckland, New Zealand.
- Ken Wallis Aviator. A 13 minute documentary portrait of Ken Wallis career in aviation from his days in Bomber Command to his ground breaking autogyro designs.
- Into the Wind trailer.
- The trailer for Steven Hatton's new documentary, *Heilig*.
- A short film in which former Halifax pilot Dick Smith talks through the workings of the aircraft.

The film already has a large online following and reviews have been extremely positive:

*"This is a wonderful film. Beautifully filmed and bound together by an emotional and understated music score, the powerful testimony of these veterans deserves to be heard."*

Further information on the film can be found at [www.intothewind.co.uk](http://www.intothewind.co.uk) or by calling Steven Hatton on 01522 837273, mobile 07739022221.

## *LOST CONTACTS*

We have lost touch with some members of the Association and would be very grateful for information, in particular contact details, for any of the following people:

Sqn Ldr	B A	Armstrong BA RAF	Tornado: Aug86-May 89.
Mr	G A	Barbour	Tornado: Mar 87-Jul 91.
Wg Cdr	Steve G	Barnes RAF	Tornado: Aug 90-Dec 91.
Mr	D R	Bourne	Victor: 4 Sep 61-23 May 62 & 1 Mar 64-9 Nov 64
Wg Cdr	S J	Boyle RAF	Tornado: Jan 95-97/
Wg Cdr	Nigel	Clifford RAF	Tornado: May 87-Sep 90.
Sqn Ldr	C	Cochrane RAF	Tornado: Aug 93-Mar 96.
Mr	S E	Cooper	Vickers Virginia: 1930-32.
Mr	E C	Cox	Blenheim/Wellington: 7 Jun 40-17 Ma
Mr	Steve	Day	Tornado: Jun 90-Jan 92 & 96/99.
Flt Lt	H J	Evans RAF	Tornado: Feb 95-Feb 96.
Mr	J W L	French DFC	Lancaster: Jun to Dec 1944.
Major	Jeff	Gingras USAF	Tornado: 1995-1997.
Wg Cdr	T N	Harris RAF	Tornado: May 94-Jan 98.
Mr	J F G	Hay	Lancaster: 1944-45.
Air Cdre	A T	Hudson OBE RAF	Tornado (OC XV): Apr 92-May 94.
Mr	G A	Hume	Tornado: Sep 1983-Sep 1986.
Flt Lt	J B L	Jones	Tornado: Oct 94-Feb 96.
Flt Lt	A	Jones RAF	Tornado: 1994-1996.
Mr	S B	Keightley	Tornado: May 87-May 90.
Mr	F W	Lewis	Blenheim MkIV: Feb-Nov 1940.
Sqn Ldr	J B	MacDonald RAF(Ret'd)	Tornado: 1988-91 & 1994-96.
Mr	David H	Patterson	Tornado: Aug 83-Apr 88.
Wg Cdr	J V	Plumb RAF(Ret'd)	Buccaneer: 1977-80.
Wg Cdr	A	Renshaw RAF	Tornado: 1983-86.
Mr	E	Roberts BEM	Lancaster/Lincoln: 1945-1947.
Sqn Ldr	P	Robinson	Tornado: 95/97.
Mr	G	Sanders	
Mr	Mick A	Scothern	Tornado: 1987-1990.
Sqn Ldr	Paul	Smyth RAF	Tornado: 1992-95.
Mr	P J	Watts	Canberra: Jan-Feb 1955; Feb 55-Mar 56.
Mr	H E	Williams	Washington: 12 Feb 51-9 Oct 51.
Cpl	C A	Williamson	Tornado: Apr 85-Jul 87.
Mr	A	Winnard	Tornado: 1986-1989.

## ***1st GULF WAR REUNION 30th MARCH 2012***

One of our members, Cedric “Hoppy” Hopkins has taken it upon himself to organise a reunion for all those members of XV Squadron who served during the 1st Gulf War to celebrate the 21st Anniversary of the Squadron’s return from the Middle East on 31st March 1991 following the cessation of hostilities in Kuwait and Iraq. The focus of the event will be on XV Squadron personnel who served during the era of 1987 to 1991 and Hoppy has gained approval from OC XV(R) Squadron and the Association Committee for the function.

It will take place in the Sgt’s Mess at the former RAF Laarbruch on the weekend of 30th March 2012. The Sgt’s Mess can accommodate 147 people; there is also additional accommodation available in Weeze and Goch. The Sgt’s mess is available from Friday 30th March until Sunday 1st April and an informal meet and greet will take place on the Friday night to let people catch up with the actual celebration occurring on the Saturday evening.

A special price has been negotiated for the accommodation: a double room will cost 54 Euros per night, single rooms at 37 Euros per night, both inclusive of breakfast. The evening meal will cost £30 per person. Hoppy is co-ordinating the bookings, and will need to know if you need an evening meal on the Friday.

There will hopefully be a bus available for the Saturday morning so that the ladies can go shopping in Goch and return to Laarbruch via Weeze for an ice cream stop at Alpagos. Hoppy is hoping to organise a Station Tour for the boys and in the

afternoon there will be a visit to the RAF Museum Laarbruch-Weeze. The evening festivities will start at 7 pm when the bar opens, followed by a champagne reception at 7.30pm. The Reunion Meal will commence shortly afterwards.

This is the current overview of events and Hoppy will send more details to those interested in attending, together with a Booking Form, once they have contacted him personally either by Email: [hoppy\\_engdoc@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hoppy_engdoc@yahoo.co.uk), mobile phone 07500 405473 or home phone 01235 223488.

## ***ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP***

The XV Sqn Association has a healthy membership of around 300 at present but the Committee is always keen to encourage new members and currently offers lifetime membership for a single payment of just £15. Please spread the word to any past or present XV Sqn members who you think may be interested in joining. Additionally, the Committee continues to offer associate membership to close relatives of former members of XV Sqn and those with a particular past association with the Sqn. All membership forms can be downloaded from the association website. Please contact the Secretary if you don’t have Internet access.

## ***XV SQN SILK TIES***

There are still a number of silk XV Sqn ties available and, thanks to a very generous donation from two members of the Association, are on sale at the incredibly low price of £9.50. They come in either Navy Blue or Maroon and if you wish to make a purchase send a cheque, made payable to “Service Funds RAF Lossiemouth”, to the Secretary.

## ***WE REMEMBER THEM***

It is with great sadness that since the last issue of the newsletter in March 2011, we have learnt of the passing of the following members of the Association:

### **Vernon Prior**

Vernon Prior, passed away at his home in Australia on 15th September after a long and brave fight against cancer. His wife, Shirley, and family were at his side. Vernon joined the Royal Navy as a boy seaman and was always proud to recount his experience at his training establishment, HMS Ganges, where he was “Button Boy”, standing on the very top of the training mast when it and its yardarms were manned for ceremonial occasions. After transferring to the Royal Air Force he was commissioned and trained as an Air Electronics Officer before joining the CO’s crew at RAF Cottesmore in June 1959. Subsequently he served on Canberras at Cottesmore in the electronic warfare role and on the Vulcan B2, from which he made a difficult escape through a part open escape hatch following a fire in the air. Injuries sustained in his escape, and the prospect of a beneficially warm climate, persuaded him to retire from the Service and emigrate to Australia, where he pursued a successful career in the commercial world.

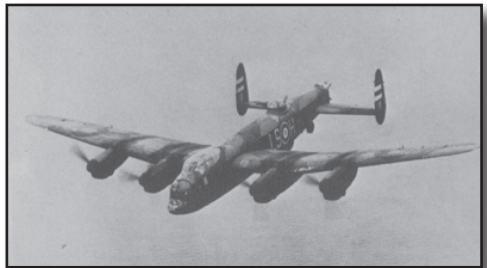


### **Warrant Officer George Allen DFC**

Warrant Officer George Allen DFC flew Lancasters during three tours on XV Squadron between 1943 and 1944. A full obituary will be published in the Newsletter update in 2012.

### **Flight Lieutenant Tony McGlone RAF**

Known as ‘Magoo’, Tony lost a two-year battle against cancer just four-weeks ago. He served on the Sqdn during the first Gulf War and was still a member of the Royal Air Force working in the simulator at RAF Marham. He leaves a wife and two children. A full obituary will be published in the Newsletter update in 2012.



### **World War II Veterans**

Although not members of the Association we have received notification of the passing of two former members of the Squadron who served during World War II: Flying Officer Alan Sellwood, DFC, RAAF, a former Lancaster pilot who served with No.XV Squadron during late 1944 passed away on 3rd March 2011. Alan was one of those characters on the squadron whom everybody seemed to know; Early March also saw the passing of Flying Officer William Sievers, another Australian pilot, who flew Lancasters during the early part of 1945.

XV(R) Sqn attended the Odense and Gellick memorials on Wednesday 4th May and Saturday 7th May and the Vraux event on Thursday 14th July.



Although the details for the 2012 memorial events are yet to be confirmed, we expect them to take place around the same time as in 2011.



Following this year's extremely successful reunion I am looking forward to making the arrangements for the 2012 event so that it is every bit as memorable. I am very pleased that RAF Honington have provisionally agreed to host us and it will probably take place on either Friday 8th or Saturday 9th June.

I cannot promise that the Role Demonstration will be able to wow us again with their coordinated Tornado GR4 display but I am very confident that the talk on Operation ELLEMY, the recent NATO effort to protect the civilian population in Libya, will be extremely interesting.

The finer details for the 2012 Reunion are obviously still to be finalised but I will endeavour to inform you as soon as these are complete. The Update Newsletter, normally published in March, will have the booking forms for the event however, I can take provisional bookings at any point and I will use emails and the website to keep you updated in the interim period.

I would like to pass on my thanks to those that have contributed to this edition and if anyone would like to write an article for either of next year's newsletters, please let me know - contributions are always gratefully received.

As ever we are looking to save costs so please let me know if you have an email address so that I can send the newsletters to you electronically.

It just remains for me to wish you and your families the very best for Christmas and the New Year. See you at next year's reunion. Until then, 'Fly Safe and Aim Sure!'

**Stan Boardman**  
**Secretary**

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#### **Tornado:**

Flt Lt Stan Boardman

