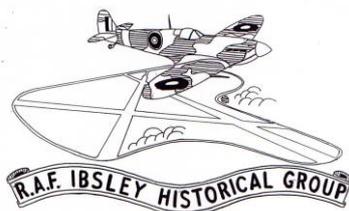


R.A.F. IBSLEY HISTORICAL GROUP

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Vice President: Roy Chapman, R.A.F. Ibsley (Sopley) 1947

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NEWSLETTER

No. 92

July 2015

Firstly my apologies that this Newsletter is so late, as I write just two Saturdays away from the By-Gone Days weekend. This is due to circumstances beyond the control of your Group Secretary who has been waiting for information on a few people on articles she hoped to include.

BY-GONE DAYS - TWENTY FIFTH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND SATURDAY 1st and SUNDAY 2nd AUGUST, 10.30 a.m. each day.

Attractions this year include special displays to mark the 25th.

SATURDAY

RBL Wilton Band + Dog Show + Scout Centenary Band + Various aircraft including Mk 9 Spitfire + Air Ambulance + Model Aircraft Club displays
EVENING – ROARING FORTIES CONCERT WITH HYDE BAND - Refreshment Supper available – Tickets £10. Telephone enquiries for tickets 01425 652499.

SUNDAY

Thanksgiving Service + Demonstrations + Hyde Band + Cycle Display + Aircraft Displays + Model Aircraft Clubs Displays. Admission is £4.00 each day – Free car Parking
Word is circulating the this is to be the final By-Gone Days weekend.

THE R.A.F. IBSLEY EXHIBITION HUT

Things will be different here. I was informed, in April by Emma Blake the Director and Event Organiser of the R.A.F. Ibsley Heritage Trust's 2015 Revival Day, on 22nd August at Moyles Court had been cancelled, due to a clash of dates with the Bournemouth Air Show, and that they were planning an extensive exhibition at By-Gone Days, with updates and Spitfire EE602. Last year they used just the far room in the Hut.

When a Group Meeting was held at the Hut on 15th June, to see what preparation work needed to be done to the building just four Committee members were present, and one other who had been sitting in our Committee meetings with a view to, hopefully putting himself forward for election at this year's AGM. I myself was not able to be there due to my mobility and for this reason I will not be at the Exhibition Hut this year, and cannot sit all day now without visits to the little house, which I still managed last year. Any members attending the event are welcome to call at my home for a chat, a cup of tea or coffee, any time afternoon or evening over the weekend.

Following the June meeting I received notes on this from Roly Errington, so this is some of what he says will be happening in the Hut this year. End Room, Airfield Heritage Trust Displays, Centre Room – Historical Group (except space under window by entrance to End Room, which will be Airfield Heritage Trust. Hospitality Room/Kitchen area half of space separated from sitting area by free standing display panels. Airfield Heritage Trust to supply display panels. Roly Errington

will be making the blocked up door in the End room useable again to create another exit route, replace the extractor fan and fit period lighting and better power supply. Not all memorabilia will be displayed this year. WWII vehicles will be alongside the building. Airfield Heritage Trust flags will be hung in the kitchen area and elsewhere. Food and drink will be available from the By-Gone Days people opposite the end of the Hut. There will be a couple of tables and some chairs in a partitioned area so hopefully enough at times for members and family to sit, chat and eat.

Another meeting was held on 10th July at my home attended by the same members plus myself. Roly Errington again took notes but as I write I have not received any. Help is urgently needed so if there any able bodied members willing to lend a hand, painting, dusting, cleaning etc., please get in touch with Roly on 01425 474224 as soon as possible. The Exhibition staging will take place from 10 a.m. on Friday 31st July.

FROM DOREEN BILES ON HER VISIT TO ALREWAS, STAFFORDSHIRE, FOR THE DEDICATION OF THE MEMORIAL PLAQUE TO HER LATE HUSBAND JIM

On Thursday 9th June 2015 we had a good journey to the village of Alrewas in Staffordshire, very near to the National Memorial Arboretum and Remembrance Garden. We stayed nearby at Wychnor Park Country House overnight so that we could get to the Remembrance Garden nice and early. Friday morning, on entering the main building, I soon spotted Sheila Dooley, whose brother Sgt. A. E. 'Teddy' Joyce, who had flown from Ibsley with No. 234 Squadron, in 1942 when he was shot down, taken Prisoner of War, and while trying to escape from Stalag Luft III in June 1943 was shot and mortally wounded. We both recognised each other although it has been some years since we last met, when Sheila and her sister Pat visited Ibsley. We attended the Service together so had chance to chat and catch up. Unfortunately Pat who had hoped to be there is in very poor health and was unable to make the long journey.

The Service was led by The Venerable (Air Vice Marshall) Jonathon P. M. Chafey, and The Rev. (Sqdn Ldr) Chris Carre, Station Chaplain, R.A.F. Cosford. Music was provided by The RAFA Concert Band led by Mr. Peter Skellon, B.E.M., and the Standard Bearers were paraded by National Standard Bearer Mike Facey.

After the Service we all made our way to the RAFA Remembrance Garden to see the stones. I was pleased to see that Jim's and Teddy Joyce's stones were very close to each other.

The Service was very well attended and therefore it was difficult to view the Memorial and Stones well, or for very long in order for others to get a view, so it would be nice to go back when it is quieter. After the Service, by the Memorial there was a flyover by a Dakota, it circled us several times before flying off and we had an excellent view.

My daughter took a lot of photographs and has produced not only a photobook of the Day for myself but also a Digital Slideshow which can be viewed on YouTube. If you would like to view this just type the following web address into your browser:- <https://youtu.be/r3tHkhnZOgM> or just open youtube and search for Jim Biles. Please feel free to leave comments my daughter would love to know if you enjoyed the slideshow.

To anyone thinking of visiting the Arboretum it is well worth a visit, there are many Remembrance Gardens there from very large to quite small. *Doreen Biles.*

Note: For more recent members who may not know, Jim Biles was Chairman of the R.A.F. Ibsley Historical Group for a number of years and his wife Doreen the Group's Honorary Treasurer.

OBITUARIES

Sgt. Kenneth Fritz, U.S.A.A.F. 1941-1945



Ken Fritz passed away on 30th June aged 94. He served at Ibsley from 25th August to 14th November 1942 with 8th U.S.A.A.F. 1st Fighter Group, 71st Squadron, under Col. J. N. Stone. The Group left Ibsley to go to the Mediterranean Theatre where Ken served until 1945. Now I quote from a paragraph in "So Much Sadness, So Much Fun", "*Whilst the P38 Lightnings were at Ibsley, Peter Smith recalled how one pilot had a one pound bet with another that he could fly a P38 between two of the large elm trees in Gorley road, just South of Cross Lanes Chapel. This he accomplished, but not without losing four feet of the planes wing tip!! Ken Fritz also remembers this incident and wonders if anyone knows who the pilot was. He said they were playing cat and mouse with a couple of Spitfires that were still at Ibsley.*" This incident wasn't mentioned when Ken and his son Lee came to stay with me for several days in 2003, but when I was staying with Lee near Seattle, in 2007, he took me to Minneapolis to meet his Mom and sister, and while they were all out one time shopping I stayed at home with Ken, reading his daily wartime diary, particularly the pages concerning his time at Ibsley. Ken then told me he now knew the name of the pilot who flew his Lightning between the trees, and that he was still alive. As much as I tried to coax it out of him he would not reveal it, so now he has passed on it seems unlikely we'll ever know. I only wish Peter had lived long enough to meet Ken, they would have had so much to talk about, but Ken only made contact by e-mail two days before Peter died in 2002, and I remember taking the letter to the hospice and reading it to him.

After the War Ken worked as an electrician on many large projects in Minneapolis, and when he retired would spend countless hours as a volunteer at the Serviceman Centre at Minneapolis St. Paul Airport, meeting and welcoming USAF personnel back from overseas tours of duty. Ken was a member of Mount Bethel Methodist Church and served in many positions there over the years. Following a Service there on 7th July, for which I felt privileged to contribute two readings, given by his son Lee, Ken was laid to rest in Fort Snelling Military Cemetery where there was a Uniformed Guard of Honour, taps and a 21 gun salute. I sent a personnel floral tribute, but due to strict rules in the Military Cemetery they were not able to be placed on the grave so were taken to the Inver Glen Senior Living complex where Ken had spent his last five years, with wife Delores who survives him, and placed in the entrance hall for all residents and visitors to see. Rest in Peace Ken.

We are also planning an extensive exhibition with film show at the 25th **By-gone Days**, Brookland Farm, South Gorley (SP6 2PW) on 1 and 2 August (<https://bygonedaysibsley.wordpress.com>). The Exhibition will be covering all aspects of the **RAF Ibsley Airfield Heritage Trust's** plans for the restoration of the Control Tower at Ibsley, and the rebuild of the "Ibsley Spitfire", EE602, which actually flew from Ibsley Airfield during the war. She has been rebuilt by VMI Engineering, and is booked to fly over the showground on Saturday 1 August around 3.30pm. It will be a breathtaking and very emotional moment. We do hope to see some of you there.