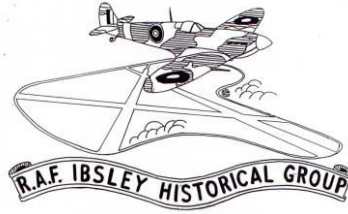


R.A.F. IBSLEY HISTORICAL GROUP

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

Hon. Secretary:
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Hon. Membership Secretary:
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NEWSLETTER

No. 97

October 2016

2016 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

This was held at Ibsley Village Hall on Thursday 15th September, but was poorly attended. Apologies were received from some fifteen members including Vice-Chairman John Sturges and Honorary Secretary Vera Smith.

Before the business of the meeting Chairman Bill Dow asked those present to stand for a short Silence in Memory of those with R.A.F. Ibsley connections who had passed away since the 2015 A.G.M., namely Ted Long, Armourer/Armament Instructor 1941/42; Willis 'Wally' Walling, Pilot 404 Squadron, 371st Fighter Group, 9th U.S.A.A.F., also Pat Marrable whose brother Sgt. Pilot A. E. "Teddy Joyce", 234 Sqdn. Ibsley who was shot down, captured, taken Prisoner and mortally wounded when trying to escape from Stalag Luft III in 1943. As today is Battle of Britain Day we remember also all who lost their lives fighting to serve our country.

Minutes of the 2015 Annual General Meeting were circulated and agreed as a correct record.

In his Chairman's Report Bill Dow thanked all the Committee for all their efforts during the past year. He thanked Secretary Vera for the many hours of work she puts in and also the use of her home for Committee meetings.

He went on to thank Secretary's son Graham for his work in clearing weeds and cleaning up the Commemorative Plaque at Cross Lanes.

Bill then congratulated two Life and Founder members, Betty Hockey who celebrated her one hundredth birthday in June, and Elaine Micklewright who was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours this year.

He followed his Report by reading Secretary's written one. *"I am sorry I am unable to be with you this evening. However I am sure Chairman Bill will have told you about the Group's activities over the last year and given thanks for help received and I endorse his remarks. We had a full Committee this year and my thanks to each and everyone of them for their input, and I hope all stand for re-election again for the coming year, when I will, hopefully, in July 2017 be producing my one hundredth Group Newsletter."*

We had one very interesting meeting, but poor attendance, in April when Anthony Howard-Williams came from Surrey to talk on his families one hundred year association with the R.A.F., now being carried on by his son Dominic. Anthony made no charge for travelling expenses or for the talk he gave. The Committee has now awarded him Honorary Life Membership of the Group – but he says he is still going to pay his subscription! Apologies were received for his absence this evening but he is orchestra conducting on a cruise ship and sailing home across the Atlantic.

There was no R.A.F. Ibsley Exhibition this year, but so that some distant members would have an opportunity to come to Ibsley, where they served, and meet up again, I myself put on an Ibsley Past and Present Exhibition at the Village Hall. The event incorporated a number of our smaller display boards, together with past and present local events to which several villagers and others contributed photographs and other information on village history. The 29 year old Ibsley Horticultural Society had a stand with plants and produce. All was well received with a steady

stream of visitors on both Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th August. I intended it to be a one off event but so many people have asked for another in 2017 so I have said just once more, and I have already started preparing local photographs and some historical information which has come in and there is more promised. Thank You cards have been sent or handed to those who helped me. In 2017 it will be on 5th and 6th August and the Hall is already booked for me. With donations and a raffle over £200 (some raffle prize Gift tokens were purchased by the Group) was raised. I handed the cash to the Historical Group Treasurer (the event had no bank account) who then made a donation cheque for £100 payable to Ibsley Village Hall.

I will be holding a Group meeting at my home on Thursday 1st December from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m. more about this on last page.

Enough ramblings from me, so thanks again and sorry I can't be with you but my mobility is not too good but getting better and I hope to start some physio before too long", Vera.

Honorary Treasurer Graham Steele then presented the Group's Annual Accounts which showed a profit on the year of £270.59 and the Group to be in a healthy financial position. The accounts were then adopted and Graham thanked for his efficient work as Hon. Treasurer. Full copies of the accounts are available for members from the Hon. Treasurer or Hon. Secretary.

Membership Secretary Don Blissett reported that numbers were down on the previous year.

Election of Officers and Committee then took place and all were re-elected, names and contact numbers will be in 2016/17 Membership Cards. There was no other business and the meeting closed. Thanks to Emma Blake who then served refreshments.

Steve Robson, kindly arranged by Roly Errington, then gave a presentation on the build-up to the Battle of Britain. with the aid of a projector, for which he was thanked

HOW ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER, WITH AN R.A.F. IBSELEY CONNECTION

A long time ago, before the Group was formed. I started to research my family history and having inherited the large old family Bible dating from 1842 when my great grandfather, on my mother's side, William Bailey, was born near Verwood, Dorset it gave me a good start as the pages and spaces for family details had been filled in. However, in 1992 the Historical Group was formed and that took over, so family history took a back seat. In 1995 a Verwood and Three Legged Cross Official Guide, compiled by Colin W. Burgess was published, and reading through this only recently I came across something of interest, a picture of an earth covered Nissen Hut, which I reproduce below, and the details from the Guide, of what it was used for during World War II. I said to my son, who was with me at the time, "I've just been reading about this picture and Peter had a story about that from a member, now deceased, Cyril Risbridger M.B.E., and that seems to tally in some ways with the one printed in the Verwood Guide". So I quote from both below -

From Verwood and Three Legged Cross Official Guide, 1995



EARTH COVERED NISSEN TYPE HUT

As part of the general War Effort, Lower Common, Three Legged Cross, Verwood was one of the sites where decoy runway lights were deployed. When switched on they led the Germans

to think they were over an actual airfield and induce them to drop their bombs harmlessly on the open countryside. The site is now occupied by the Moors Valley Golf Club. However, the two rows of lights were a long way from mains electricity and were powered by a generator.

The earth covered Nissen type hut, with extension for the diesel generator, complete with anti-blast walls protecting the two entrances still stands fifty years later. The raised concrete base onto which one presumes the generator was bolted is still in situ. In all probability it would have been the R.A.F. Group "Controller" who would call for the lights to be switched on. Two R.A.F. men, Fred Hooper and Bob Chapple were billeted in a local house, with their R.A.F. issue bicycles. They would maintain the system in good order and cycle to switch it on when telephoned.

Cyril Risbridger, M.B.E., one time Group member, number 146, a Corporal Electrician One, recalled that there were three flashing Beacon sites used at Ibsley during 1941/42, and the Beacons were used to assist pilots to locate their base at night. The sites were used in a random fashion, sometimes for a single night, the Beacon then moving to another site, perhaps for a few days. The Beacon only operated whilst Ibsley aircraft were flying, and in most cases only for short duration.

They were crewed by three Airmen, a Fitter Driver, Electrician and General Duties Airman. The Ibsley Beacon flashed for the first time on Tuesday 17th June 1941. The Beacon flashed out a two letter code which was changed daily, as authorised by the Station Headquarters Intelligence Officer.

The accommodation at each Beacon site was pretty basic, i.e. a Bell Tent (later replaced by a small Hut) a slit trench and the Beacon and Generator set that was mounted on a four wheeled trailer and towed into position by a three ton lorry.

The Beacon sites as Cyril remembered them were at Three Legged Cross, Dorset, on Lower Common. Here the Traveller's Rest Public House was within a kilometre, and very convenient on a dirty rainy night when flying was not possible. Verwood Dorset, which was a remote site, the nearest Public House being the Railway Hotel, that is what Cyril believed it was called, next to Verwood Station; and Hyde Common, near Fordingbridge, not far from the Practice Bombing Range at Ashley Walk, which was fenced in during the war. This site was also close to Ogdens Farm where they were able to get black market dairy produce.

The only other directional aid at the Beacon site was an arrow shaped appliance, which Cyril said was made up from a 4 metre length of timber with 1.5 metre arrow heads festooned with a large number of 12 volt 20 watt lamps. The arrowhead was positioned about fifty metres from the Beacon and pointed in the direction of the airfield. It was only used if they considered the aircraft was lost and friendly. Contact was made with the pilot via an Aldis lamp, and provided he gave the correct Airfield recognition letters, by flashing his lights, the arrow was illuminated until we were sure that the aircraft was on course to base. He also recalled that he was involved in a lot of duty of this nature, maybe over a hundred operations, so they got to know the locals quite well, although at first they were a bit apprehensive of having a Flashing Beacon so close to their villages. Duty of this type did involve risk and they were often buzzed by unidentified aircraft. This story gives an insight into some of the mundane jobs that were necessary to operations at a Wartime Airfield.

I have no idea if the Nissen Hut is still standing now, or whether the sites were used for different purposes. The Verwood and Three Legged Cross Guide says to confuse the Germans and Cyril Risbridger, M.B.E. to assist Ibsley pilots. Doubt now whether we will ever find out.

2016/17 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS - DUE 1st SEPTEMBER

£5.00 per Adult, £4.00 for Junior 14-18 years.

As agreed at the 2015 Annual General Meeting Adult subscription rates are being reduced this year to £5.00. Members who have already paid will find their new Membership Card enclosed with this Newsletter. Subscriptions should be sent to Hon. Membership Secretary, Owen 'Don' Blissett, Habbaniya, 234 Kempshott Lane Kempshott, Basingstoke, RG22 5LR. Don will then send you your new blue Membership Card.

Received from Don: Vera, Perhaps you could put something in the next "Newsletter" about this, as all the "Fighter Plotters" in 1948+ did all their training at "Bawdsey". We were there for a month, next stop Ibsley. It is from The Sun Newspaper. EXCLUSIVE by MATT WILKINSON – GONE IN 60 SECONDS.

"Six illegal immigrants leap out of a Range Rover and escape from cops after a series of border blunders. CCTV films the four men and two women as they speed into a pub car park before fleeing into woodland.

Fifteen minutes earlier a dinghy was seen heading ashore off Bawdsey, Suffolk, ten miles from the pub.

Dutch traffickers had moored a 24ft yacht on Bawdsey Quay. A witness said he saw people climb from the yacht into the dinghy. And a coastguard officer at the quay called 999 after seeing six people get into a Range Rover.

Cops and coastguards raced to the scene but there was nothing they could do as they had no boat.

Harbour Master Stephen Read had prepared one on the other side of the River Deben at Felixstowe Ferry.

But Border Force officials based just five miles away failed to arrive before the traffickers set sail at 10pm, three hours after they were called. Mr. Read said: We kept being told they were five minutes away. "But I had to go after 8.30pm as we can't launch after dark".

A witness said: "The police and coastguard were on the jetty and they could only watch the boat sail away. You couldn't make it up. They were left standing there waiting."

It is not clear why the yacht waited so long to leave but it may have been waiting for the traffickers to return or for bad weather to clear.

The Home Office did not comment. Suffolk Police and UK Border Force have launched a joint probe.

THURSDAY 1st DECEMBER, GROUP MEETING

2.30 p.m. at Norden, Mockbeggar Lane, Ibsley

For this meeting I will show a fifty six minute VHS documentary video "DOGFIGHT" by Jacques Besson, the story of an American fighter pilot Bob Izzard who served with 371st Fighter Group, who were at Bisterne, and documents his story from the pages of his own log book.

Bob from Amarillo, Texas, enlists in the Army Air Force in 1942. Pearl Harbour has just happened and he signs up to defend his country and freedom. He is shot down over Normandy, June 1944, but with the help of French resistance he escapes and is soon back in the air in battle. Bob sent Peter and myself the video after several telephone conversations with him, put in touch by Wally Walling, both having now passed on. We tried various places to get it put on to DVD but all said it was protected and copyright.

I can seat about a dozen in view of the TV in my large lounge so please let me know if you hope to come. I am happy to have a repeat showing in the evening for any extras or for whom afternoon is not convenient at 7.30 p.m. Tea or coffee, biscuits, savouries, and mince pies will be served.

ADVANCE NOTICE

**THE DATE OF THE 2017 ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE IN RINGWOOD CHURCH
WILL BE SUNDAY 19th FEBRUARY AT 2.30 p.m.** Full details in January Newsletter.

IBSLEY PAST AND PRESENT

The Ibsley Past and Present Exhibition, that I organised over the weekend of 6th and 7th August, which included the surrounding villages, brought a steady stream of visitors to the Village Hall on both the Saturday and Sunday. On display were numerous copied old photographs which had been contributed. These showed family life, some of people who lived in the old wartime huts when they were taken over by Ringwood and Fordingbridge R.D.C for housing, with a list of well over a hundred tenants living in them in 1953 on display, and with the sites where their homes were situated. It also gave ex-Ibsley personnel the chance to meet up again with their service colleagues. Sporting events, included the 1951 Hampshire Championship winning Ibsley Eagles Cycle Speedway team, with rider and lifetime local resident, Gordon Sharman, who supplied photos for copying, attending the event on the Sunday. There was also a display panel showing the Motor Racing which took place round the perimeter track of the old airfield in the early nineteen fifties, plus the Somerley Cricket team 1957, Gorley Youth football and Hyde Colts cricket. 1970's.

There were also photographs of two large fires, one a chemical fire in 1952 when the wartime Bellman hangar along Gorley road was being used as a chemical store by British Drug Houses and another of a fire on 12th August 1983 which destroyed the thatched Old Beams Inn.

There were photos of the Ibsley Sunday School, 1980's, which ceased when Church closed in 1990. Thanks to the Ibsley and District Horticultural Society who joined the event on both days with their stand of plants and produce. They held their 29th Annual Show in the Village Hall in September.

Display panels showed some of the wartime history of R.A.F. Ibsley and the United States Army Air Force who took over the airfield for several months in both 1942 and 1944. There was also a tribute to some ninety airmen who lost their lives when serving at Ibsley. Alongside their names were also the dates and how and where they were lost.

My grateful thanks to Gordon Sharman, Margaret Day, Iris Peckham, Pam Barnwell, Stuart Wallis, Trevor Vaughan, Matthew Stevens, David Wilson, Dennis Carlow, Ted Marchant, Ibsley Service Station, and Hockey's Farm Shop for their contributions to the event, and apologies for anyone I may have missed. Thanks too to John Sturges and Terry Wallis for stewarding all day Saturday, those who helped on Sunday, and the ladies who served refreshments, Sheila Moir and Dorothy Moulard on Saturday for a few hours, and June Elsworth, for Saturday afternoon and all day Sunday. John Whelan, a visitor brought in three photos of motor racing. I have copied and returned.

Among the visitors was one of the very earliest R.A.F. Ibsley Historical Group's founder members in August 1992, number three, 102 year old Bill Price, who served at Ibsley with 439 LAA Battery. As mentioned in my Secretary's report to the A,G,M numerous requests have been made to hold a similar event on the first weekend of August 2017 and I hope to do so. The Village Hall has already been booked for me, and more photos, documents, etc., promised for copying. If anyone has old photographs of the local area which would be of interest and could be copied, or stories from the past, please do get in touch with me, smith.vera@btinternet.com or call 01425 474026.