

Newsletter No. 12 – Christmas 2018

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Reflection for the Season

One hundred years ago, at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the guns stopped firing and the 'War to end all Wars' was over. More than 16 million people had died; almost 7 million were civilians.

In his 1918 book "The Fourth Year", the writer HG Wells used the phrase "The War to end War" (or 'the War to end all Wars'). Woodrow Wilson, US President 1913 to 1921, linked these words with the phrase, "make the world safe for democracy", to support his conviction that US entry into WW1 was necessary to preserve human freedom. But, even during WW1 there were skeptics who said WW1 was not going to be the 'War to end War, and at the subsequent Paris Peace Conference, cynics called it the 'Peace to end Peace'.

And just as people were starting to hope for a better future, 'Spanish' flu was identified at Fort Riley, Kansas in March 1918. The number of people who died worldwide is now estimated at 50-100 million, the majority being healthy young adults. People survived WW1 just to succumb to the flu that thrived on malnourishment, overcrowded medical facilities and poor hygiene.

But there was hope and 1918 also saw two significant events. Both Great Britain (in February) and American (in May) took the first steps to grant women the vote in recognition of the tremendous contribution they made between 1914 and 1918. And in April, the RAF was created, which was to play such a prominent role in our lives and contributed significantly to the Allies winning the second World War.

The cadets at 5BFTS needed to hope that they were helping to give the world a future and 75 years ago, the Embry-Riddle Christmas present of the year (Flypaper, December 24, 1943) was "War Bonds – the Present With A Future!" Neither the 'War to end all Wars' nor WW2 ended war, but thank goodness, we do have a future, and every year, hearing the Christmas Story and then having New Year celebrations reminds us of this.

And so, to everyone, I send Season's Greetings using the words of Gerry Beardsmore, 5BFTS Chairman from 1998 to 2005:

"From me and mine to you and yours
Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas and
Health and Happiness and Peace in the New Year"

Jenifer Harding



Five 5BFTS Facts

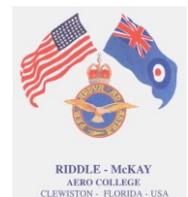
Opened in
July 1941 at
Carlstrom
Field

Moved to
Riddle Field
September
25, 1941

26 Courses

1434
graduates
(1325 RAF
and 109
USAAF)

Closed in
September
1945





5BFTS and RAF 100 in 2018 –The Highlights

In February:



On 21 February 2018, the Talylyn Railway in Wales celebrated the centenary of its locomotive No.6 'Douglas' in style by giving it a brand new livery of RAF Traffic Blue to mark the 100th anniversary of both it and the RAF. Douglas was originally made early in 1918 for the Royal Naval Flying Corps at Manston, Kent, and was 'transferred' to RAF Manston on April 1. From 1921, Douglas was at the seaplane base, RAF Calshot on the Solent but was sold in 1945 and in 1953 was donated to the Talylyn Railway.

In March:

1. Marking RAF100 at Oak Ridge Cemetery. The 23 British military personnel from the three services currently serving at MacDill Air Force Base marked RAF100 by visiting Oak Ridge Cemetery on March 14, 2018. They laid a wreath and paid respects to the 23 cadets buried there.

2. The March 2018 Newsletter had two new permanent features:

- **Instructors: If they hadn't been there - would we have been here?** Included so far: Alfred William (Pappy) Archibald, Marty Bennett, Harry Brazell, Gunnar Brink, Fred Brittain, Tom Carpenter and Douglas L Day.....and more to come during 2019!
- **The Hugo Trotter Archive.** Hugo (Course 11) has loaned me his album with photos from when he arrived in Canada to when he went back to Britain. **Thank you Hugo**

So far, we have seen pictures of:

In March 2018

- The trip from Halifax to Clewiston
- The Camp in 1942

In September 2018

- Clewiston – then and now
- The Primary Flight Line

*Hugo, Puff Train and Johnny Potter
(Course 11) West Palm Beach.
Christmas Day 1943 →*



In April:



On April 1, 2018, the RAF celebrated its 100th birthday.

An RAF100 Baton relay started in London on April 1, visited 100 sites associated with the RAF and ended 100 days later back in London on July 10

Edinburgh Castle in August →



In May (Memorial Day):

I stayed in Clewiston for several days prior to Memorial Day, continuing to catalogue and sort the 5BFTS archives, the results of which will eventually be uploaded to the website.

The Memorial Day weekend was a red-letter time for two 5BFTS people - Tuck Renshaw and me! Tuck father, Fred, was a USAAF cadet on Course 12 and my father was an RAF cadet on Course 3. Jeff and Carlota Barwick hosted dinner on Saturday evening and on Sunday, we went to Clewiston Museum, where Tuck met his 'mannequin father' Fred. Then to Airglades to see the 5BFTS plaque and the flags, which permanently fly on what was Riddle Field. The weather was not too good (understatement – it was extremely wet at times thanks to Sub Tropical Storm Alberto) but it was a great weekend.



Tuck and 'Fred'



Tuck and Jeff Barwick comparing notes at Clewiston Museum



Jenny and Reiko (Tuck's wife) at the Tiki Bar, Clewiston

Annual British Memorial Service May 28, 2018

Although Sub Tropical Storm Alberto peaked in intensity on May 28 and storm surges were reported on the Panhandle Gulf Coast, Memorial Day morning in Arcadia was dry and bright. It was once again, a very special day when more than 200 people came to the British Plot to remember the cadets.

Brigadier General Bradley Swanson, MacDill AFB, gave the address and thanks go to everyone who came, to take part or just be there to remember. More in the September 2018 newsletter.



Every annual service is special and we owe an ongoing debt of gratitude to Judy Kirkpatrick and the Rotary Club of Arcadia



Judy Kirkpatrick, Vicki Brittain, Bradley Swanson and Susan Sweet Phillips

After the service, over an excellent lunch at Mary Margaret's Tea and Biscuit in Arcadia, I joined with Tuck Renshaw, Susan Sweet Phillips (Fred Renshaw and Charles Sweet were two of the 109 USAAF cadets graduating at 5BFTS) and Vicki Brittain (daughter of instructor, Fred Brittain).

Dennis and Bruce who have run Mary Margaret's for many years told us they were retiring. We look forward to meeting Helen Cooke, the new owner, her mother Maureen in 2019.

Thank you Dennis and Bruce for looking after us so well over the years

The next **Annual British Memorial Service** will be held on **May 27, 2019**, at 10am at the British Plot, Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia. Everyone is welcome.

In June: it was 70th anniversary of the start of the Berlin Airlift (Operation Plainfare)

In 1949, **Flt Lt Roy Mather DFC** (Course 12) became the pilot who flew the most sorties during the Airlift – a total of 404, more than any other pilot, British, American or civilian. The Berlin Airlift was a massive achievement, which prevented starvation in the city during the Soviet blockade.



British aircraft spent more than 210,000 hours in the air, the equivalent of 24 man-years, flying more than 30 million miles (equal to the moon and back 63 times). Roy's first flight for Operation Plainfare was on July 7, 1948 and his last was on August 18, 1949. For his part in the Airlift, Roy was awarded the Air Force Cross (AFC). See the September 2018 newsletter and 'A Pilot's Story A Chesterfield Hero' for more information. www.vickersvaliant.com

← Roy and W/C Sidney Charles Sutton MBE walking away from Roy's York C1 after flying the last of his record breaking 404 sorties during Operation Plainfare.

In July: The national celebration of RAF100 was held on July 10



A centenary service in Westminster Abbey was followed by a parade in The Mall (in front of over 70,000 people). Then there was a spectacular flypast over Buckingham Palace with over 100 iconic aircraft used by the RAF and including Spitfires, Hurricanes and a Lancaster



In September:

- 1. Flt Lt Robert Lee (Course 4)** - the September newsletter includes Robert's remarkable story. In 1944, Ernie Pyle (American War Correspondent) found a crashed RAF plane in France and discovered Robert Lee alive and conscious. He had been there for 8 days lying on his back and trapped in the cockpit with very limited movement and without food or water. Robert survived, was awarded the DFC, and Ernie Pyle learnt at first hand the quality and mettle of pilots trained at 5BFTS. The September 2018 Newsletter has more information.
- 2. Annual Reunions** - the September Newsletter focused on an Annual Reunion; the first of what will become a regular Reunion feature.



In November 2017, Dina Moore (Dina's husband was L O Moore Co 17) sent me a lot of information about various Reunions they attended, and since then other people have sent information, pictures, etc. Thank you to all.

Christmas card sent to Dina and Laurie Moore from → John (Slow Walker) and Ronnie Davis – Christmas 1998

The message is as relevant for today and for tomorrow as it was yesterday, in 1998 and in fact, always. Thank you John and Ronnie.

May you have
The Spirit of Christmas,
which is Peace,
The Gladness of Christmas,
which is Hope,
The Heart of Christmas,
which is Love.
John and Ronnie Davis

- 3. The Duxford 'Battle of Britain Air Show' (September 22 and 23)** - A celebration of 100 years of RAF history with a vision of the future, it included the Red Arrows display team and the celebration of 617 Squadron (WW2 Dambusters Raid) featured a Lancaster. The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight mustered around 20 Spitfires, six Hawker Hurricanes, the rare Bristol Blenheim flying with a Lysander as well as a Gloster Gladiator biplane. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/events/duxford-battle-of-britain-air-show-2018>

5BFTS continues to be very grateful to Anne Hughes and the American Air Museum (IWM Duxford) who host an archive of 5BFTS people on their website. To read more, please visit <http://www.americanairmuseum.com> and search on 5BFTS and/or Riddle Field.

In October:

Readers may remember that Charles (Chuck) Neyhart, died on November 12, 2017. Chuck (Course 17) was one of the 109 US cadets who graduated from Clewiston earning both AAF and RAF Wings. His wife, Shirley, has set up a Scholarship Fund at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) in honour of her husband. The Major Charles A Neyhart No. 5 BFTS Memorial Scholarship is to help those full time students enrolled at the Daytona Beach Campus who have financial needs. The students must be seniors in the College of Aviation, major in Aeronautical Science and be actively enrolled in Flight Training.



Alan Cesar, Assistant Director of Digital Engagement and Philanthropy, ERAU, has given me details of the scholarship fund if anyone else would like to support the fund with a donation. Please visit: givingto.erau.edu/bfts

A great idea for a Christmas Gift – and to quote Oxfam, it is a present “For Christmas and Forever”

←Chuck and Shirley Neyhart in Florida in 1993.

There will be more about this in March 2019.

In Memoriam

Sadly during 2018, we heard that several ex-cadets had ‘handed in their Log Books’. Obituaries are in March and September 2018 Newsletters, or will be published in March 2019

- Denis Page (Course 6) died January 21, 1944 in a flying accident in Kent
 - *Judy Barradell-Smith (Denis’ niece) wrote and told me about Denis. His story is in Riddle Round-up September 2018.*
- William Charles (Charlie) Strong (Course 20) died October 2004
 - *Joanne Strong, Charlie’s widow, wrote and told me about Charlie in July. His story is also in Riddle Round-up September 2018.*
- John R Midlane (Course 17) died November 4, 2017 in Scarborough, Ontario
- Robert (Bob) Leslie Cecil Lasham DFC and Bar (Course 4) died December 10, 2017
- Rodney Diran Scrase DFC (Course 3) died February 25, 2018 aged 96
- Geoffrey L Reynolds (Course 22) died July 31, 2018 aged 93
- Ivan D. Sneezum (Course 22) died October 3, 2018 aged 93

We remember with thanks these pilots who have handed in their logbooks, and to other pilots, Riddle Field staff and friends known to us who have done so much to keep their memories alive. [SEP]

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE THEY WERE THERE! [SEP]

RIDDLE ROUND-UP

Harold Kosola is still a regular correspondent by email, although sadly, he was not fit enough to attend the British Memorial Day Service in 2018. Harold has been the main US contact for 5BFTS for many years and has distributed this newsletter in the US since the first edition in March 2015. For a variety of reasons including rising costs and failing health, Harold has now called time on distribution. We are working on a long term solution, but meantime, my apologies to anyone in the US who has not received a copy recently – Harold did such a wonderful job that I am sure people will now be slipping through the net. Sorry to those people - and pleased be assured that we are working on it!

Harold – thank you so much for being such a loyal friend to 5BFTS and distributing the newsletter for us since March 2015. Your retirement from the task is well deserved

Lois Heflin Blount is a wonderful correspondent. She tells me that she still walks a half-mile each morning – not bad for someone who is 92! She has also sent me a newspaper cutting about cargo developments at Airglades Airport (originally Riddle Field). More in March 2019.

Bryan Gait (Course 24) – Bryan lives at Gracewell of High Wycombe. Having shared his memories with people there, Bryan then wanted to share them with everyone. These are included in the September newsletter.

Ron Cox (Course 22), at 93, has passed his Private Pilot's medical and is still able to do a little flying in his (shared) Piper Archer. He is active in the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, enjoying Flying Club Fly-ins, lunches, etc, not to mention the Annual Dinner at the Guildhall. Fantastic achievement – keep it up!!

We also heard news about the following cadets (with details to come in March 2019):

- Roger Bensley Crosskey (Course 3)
- Alan A J May (Course 8)
- A Hicks, David Morgan and Brian Moore (all Course 22)
- John A Hibberd (Course 26)

Amy Ferrell, President of the Gulf Coast St David's Welsh Society sends me details of all their activities, which sound extremely tempting. Sadly, my attendance is unlikely as I live over 4000 miles away, but it is lovely to be invited to Dinner for St David's Day (March 1), Brunch in Little Sarasota Bay in June, the Fall Dinner Party in September and the Annual Family Picnic in October (to name just a few of their activities!).

Amy – to you and your members - Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda (Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year) from 5BFTS and thank you for your support.

1BFTS - During 2019, you will hear more about projects with 1BFTS Museum in Terrell.

The next newsletter will be published in March 2019. Please can you let me have any articles, information, etc, by the end of February. The more you tell me, the more interesting the newsletter will be – and I would especially like to hear if anyone worked with, or knows, any of the people mentioned in this newsletter. Anecdotes, stories and pictures would be great.

Useful websites:

- Clewiston Museum: <http://www.clewistonmuseum.org>
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Archives: www.erau.edu/archives
- #5 British Flying Training School: <http://www.5bfts.org.uk>
- 'George Hogarth – Clewiston and Beyond'. Memoires of George Hogarth, Course 3 <http://commons.erau.edu/clewiston-beyond/1/>
- Frederick J Brittain Flying was my Life 1918 – 2002 www.frederickjbrittain.com
- Roy Mather DFC (Co 12): "A Pilot's Story – A Chesterfield Hero" www.vickersvaliant.com



The last words for 2018

On December 24, 1943, part of the message from Mr. and Mrs. John Paul Riddle's said:

At Christmas [and] the close of 1943, may we display sentiment despite the pressing business of War. We say to each and every one of you – we're proud of you. You deserve the merriest of Christmases and the brightest of horizons in the New Year

Until we meet again, good-bye to y'all and may one and all have a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year

