

## Newsletter No. 18 – Christmas 2020

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### Reflection for the Season

It has been a strange year!

I got to spend 10 weeks in Switzerland staying with my son to help him prepare to move back to Britain. It was a real privilege to live in another country, not as a visitor but as a temporary resident in that lovely country. I shopped locally as well as in supermarkets, I bought wine from a local 'cave' made from grapes grown on the hills behind our house. Local people stopped and talked to me while I was tidying up the garden. My French improved! On Saturdays, we walked to a boulangerie to buy breakfast - croissants and pain au chocolate, freshly baked on the premises. And we thoroughly enjoyed the two things Switzerland does best – cheese and chocolate! And, although there were Covid restrictions, we managed to take some time out to see a few sights. And we worked very hard preparing for the move.

All this made me think that the cadets must have felt something similar when they came to America for their training. All those I have spoken to told me that they felt so privileged and fortunate to be selected to be sent to Florida and they all took wonderful memories home. They also took home a liking for new foods – perhaps quite difficult in wartime Britain. My father would always have tomato ketchup on meals; he drank 'Coke' and never felt that British beefburgers matched up to America hamburgers.

But now the vaccine is here – and in the UK, the vaccination programme starts tomorrow! Maybe we can start to be just a little bit hopeful that we are about to turn the Covid corner and that 2021 will be a better year than 2020 has been. So many people have died prematurely and so many lives have been disrupted in 2020. Families have been unable to meet, hugs are almost a thing of the past, and when out, masked people are trying not to get too close to other masked people! So, wherever you are in the World, it can only get better in 2021!

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 in 2020 –The Highlights (Yes - there were a few!)

### 64<sup>th</sup> Annual British Memorial Day Service May 25, 2020 – CANCELLED!



For the first time in 64 years, there was no Memorial Day Service. Preparations were being made, then Covid struck. In May, Florida, and much of the rest of America and the world, was in lockdown, flights from the UK were cancelled and Paul Seusy is still waiting to lead his first service as chair of the relevant Rotary Club Committee!

Meantime, thank you to Arcadia for continuing to look after the British Plot in Oak Ridge Cemetery. We wait to see what happens in 2021 but for now, the cadets who are buried there have not been forgotten.

#### In March, I reported on two visits that had been made to Oak Ridge.

- On UK Remembrance Sunday (November 10, 2019), RAF personnel of CXX Squadron and engineers from the Poseidon Line Squad in Jacksonville visited Oak Ridge to lay crosses and poppies on the graves of the 23 cadets;
- In February, Joe and Maria Browne visited Oak Ridge Cemetery. Joe was in the US Military and met Maria, who was born in Britain, while he was stationed in the UK. They live in Florida and visited with Bob and Sue Gordon (retired RAF navigator and ex-Wren respectively) whom they first met in Germany, and Bill and Maryann, whom they met while Joe was serving at RAF Chicksands near Bedford. They met Judy Kirkpatrick and after their visit, they enjoyed lunch at Mary Margaret's Tea and Biscuit in Arcadia.

**And on Memorial Day we heard from Ted Elkins, who was in the US Marine Corps between 1964 and 1968:** *“On Memorial Day, we [Ted and his wife, Sharon] visit Oak Ridge Cemetery and ensure these young brave lads are not forgotten. We’ll continue to visit as long as possible and give them a nod, and from myself a salute.”*

**We also remembered seven of the 13 cadets who were killed in 1943.** Three of these crashes were sadly double fatalities:

- Derek Clandillon and John Clay who died January 19, 1943
- Marvin (Terry) Thomas and Dennis Washer who died April 28, 1943
- Leonard Stone and Claude Vosper who died August 24, 1943

**Forbes Robertson** was another of the 13 who died in 1943. Forbes was killed on April 24 when his plane crashed during a turbulent storm at Kenansville, 79 miles north of Clewiston. His time at Clewiston was documented over three editions of the newsletter - in March and September 2019 and March 2020 – and the reason we know so much is thanks to two people:

- Mike Willoughby of the Henley-on-Thames WW1-2 Remembrance Association who has written a Memorial Piece for Forbes;
- Vicki Brittain who has made the logbooks of her father, Fred Brittain, an instructor at 5BFTS from 1943 onwards, available on the internet. Details of the Primary training of Forbes and fellow cadets, Cowan, Thorpe and Morse, are well documented from Forbes' first flight on January 20. For more, please visit, [www.frederickjbrittain.com](http://www.frederickjbrittain.com)

And finally, the words of someone who normally attends the British Service on Memorial Day *“It feels odd and very strange not to be attending these services after more than 10 years of doing so. I can't quite feel comfortable and am looking forward to the next time these events take place.”*

#### *In Memoriam*

Sadly during 2020, we heard that several ex-cadets had 'handed in their Logbooks'. Obituaries and other details about their lives are in the March and September 2020 Newsletters.

- Revd Kenneth MacVicar DFC (Course 3). Died May 23, 2017 aged 95
- John Stanley Wright (Course 26). Died January 5, 2020 aged 93
- Ralph D Black USAAF (Course 18). Died March 8, 2020 aged 95
- Dennis Wyatt (Course 22). Died March 10, 2020 aged 95 (Obituary will be March 2021)

**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.**

**WE ARE HERE BECAUSE THEY WERE THERE!**

**May 8, 2020: Victory in Europe – 75 years on**

A strange day and apparently, quite a contrast to the real thing. No public gatherings or events, no church services or concerts! In the UK, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall led the two-minute silence in Balmoral. A physically distanced wreath-laying took place in the Palace of Westminster. The government encouraged those in lockdown to join in from gardens, doorsteps and living rooms to celebrate Victory in Europe 75. Katherine Jenkins sang in an empty Albert Hall and during the afternoon a socially distanced band played in the garden of Downing Street. Around the world, similar quiet, peaceful - and distanced - ceremonies took place. It was all very respectful and dignified and was a fitting remembrance for those who fought and died, and those who survived, so that we can remember today.

**Dame Vera Lynn died on June 18, 2020 at the age of 103**

Her funeral was held on July 10, 2020. People lined the streets of her hometown of Ditchling to pay their respects to the woman who came to be known as the Forces' Sweetheart.

**RIDDLE ROUND-UP**

**Harold Kosola** is occasionally in contact via email but sadly, would not have been fit enough to attend the British Memorial Day Service in 2020 if it had taken place.

**Lois Heflin Blount:** In January 2020, she said that *“the weather was great”*. In April just as Covid was gathering pace, she wore a mask while out on her daily walks *“just to be on the safe side”*. She was 94 in July 2020, and in November told me that she was still walking half mile a day – one day she walks east and the next, she walks to the west.

**Amy Ferrell** invites me to the Gulf Coast Welsh (Sarasota Welsh) Society events. Since the St David’s Day Banquet on March 1, no actual gatherings have taken place, but thanks to technology, the Society organized a Zoom Gymanfa in October – community singing in Welsh and English with people joining in from the safety of their own homes. This was so successful that today (December 13) there is a Gymanfa Ganu (Welsh hymn singing festival).

**See Newsletters 16 and 17 for more information about the following 5BFTS people:**

**Air Vice-Marshal David Vaughan Carnegie, CB, CBE, AFC**

As Group Captain David Carnegie, he went to Washington DC as part of the RAF Delegation and was Director of the British Flying Training Schools in America. He visited 5BFTS in December 1941 and August 1942 and became a lifelong friend of many people he met at the various BFTS, one of whom was John Paul Riddle. When David married Kathleen in August 1942, the ceremony was held at the home of John Paul Riddle in Miami Beach.

**Wing Commander George Greaves, AFC (CO 5BFTS January to November 1943)**

In December 2019, David Sudemann from Minnesota wrote asking about his relative, George Greaves. It was a fascinating story, starting with cabinet making in Sheffield, on to Germany and Russia and the manufacturing of agricultural machinery in Berdiansk (now Ukraine). Then came the Russian Revolution and a return to Sheffield. George born in Russia in 1906, joined the RAF and after operational flying, went to Washington to join the British Delegation about the same time as David Carnegie. After a spell as Commanding Officer (CO) of 2BFTS, he came to 5BFTS and was CO from January 27 to November 10, 1943. He was at the first 5BFTS Reunion Dinner in 1967 and joined the new 5BFTS Association. He died in 1973.

### **Dr Ian (Jock) Blue DFC: Course 3 (October 1941 to March 1942)**

Sadly, Ian died in 1981. He and his wife had been great friends with my parents, but we lost contact after Ian died. By chance, I made contact with Kyle Blue, Ian's son, who allowed me access to the transcript of a chapter about Ian's wartime exploits which was included in a book written by Don McClen. In March, I wrote about Ian's early life and his time at Clewiston and in September, his time after Clewiston to D-Day. More in March 2021.

### **John (Johnny) Penman: Course 3 (October 1941 to March 1942)**

Johnny was one of the 13 Edinburgh University Air Squadron cadets on Course 3 and was one of the eight cadets in my father's hut at Riddle Field, Clewiston. These eight young men also included Ken MacVicar (see Obituary) and Ian (Jock) Blue (see above).

In August, John Fockler who was researching his father Eddie's flying activities in Burma from 1942, asked me if I knew of John Penman who was with Eddie in Burma! A real co-incidence as John Penman on Course 3 was a good friend of my father and was also Eddie's best friend.

### **Rodney Scrase DFC: Course 3 (October 1941 to March 1942)**

In January 2020, I heard from Steve Wilde, owner of the Peak Advertiser asking for permission to use information about Rodney published in earlier 5BFTS newsletters. This was because Rodney had lived in Bakewell in the Peak District of England for some time. Permission was given with great pleasure and the article can be read at [www.peak-advertiser.co.uk](http://www.peak-advertiser.co.uk)

### **Robert Gordon Fallas Lee DFC: Course 4 (November 1, 1942 to May 2, 1943)**

In September 2018, I wrote about Robert Lee who had been trapped in his crashed plane in France for 8 days before being rescued. In August 2020, I heard from Bob McGavin. Robert Lee was his father's cousin, but Bob had only just heard about Robert's incredible story. I was able to send Bob copies of newspaper articles written by Ernie Pyle, US War Correspondent.

### **Frank Whitford Jackson: Course 6 (January 25, 1942 to August 18, 1942)**

In August, Frank Golding asked about his uncle, Frank Whitford Jackson who died when his Wellington crashed in June 1943 near Bircham Newton after being hit on the way to bomb somewhere in Europe. In 1975, the rear gunner, Ivan Prothero wrote, "*Our skipper, Pilot Officer Frank Jackson, gave his life trying to save us and the aircraft, he never saw his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, a courageous and brave young man which we had the honour to serve under*".

### **Dr Stuart James Cox: Course 11 (September 1942 to April 1943)**

Stuart Cox, who died in 2016, wrote a brief history of his life. His son, Bob sent me a copy of his experiences in WW2 and the RAF. Part 1 (his obituary) was in March 2019 and Part 2 followed in September 2019 which covered his arrival in America. In March 2020, I wrote about his journey to Clewiston and his arrival at Riddle Field and in September about flying training.

### **Charles A. Neyhart (known as Chuck): Course 17 (November 1942 to May 1943)**

It has been lovely to 'talk' with Shirley Neyhart throughout this Covid year. Shirley lives in a retirement village with about 700 residents, of whom 90% are ex-military. Rules are followed and visitors banned! Exercise consisted of walking the halls and up and down the stairs! Shirley said, "*This isolation is getting to all of us, now the high point is grocery shopping. Chanukah and Christmas will have no gatherings of more than 8 people!*"

Shirley has kindly donated a further sum to her husband's 5BFTS scholarship fund. A reminder that to support the **Major Charles A Neyhart No 5 BFTS Memorial Scholarship**, please go to [givingto.erau.edu/bfts](http://givingto.erau.edu/bfts) to make a donation. **Thank you, Shirley, for your generosity.**

### **William Charles (Charlie) Strong: Course 20 (April 1944 to November 1944)**

Joanne Strong has offered Charlie's much-loved wallet (inscribed Riddle-McKay Aero College) which he was given when he left Clewiston (Newsletter September 2019) to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. And the good news is that ERAU would like to have it.

### **John McKenzie: Course 21 (June 20, 1944 to January 21, 1945)**

Another co-incidence! In March, I heard from Stephen Carr whose father-in-law was John McKenzie (Course 21). Stephen wrote that he had been reading the March 2020 Newsletter

when he spotted the photo of Course 21 on page 15. This was part of an article on the Harrogate Reunion of 2000 and the cadets from Course 21 who attended that Reunion.

### **Ron Cox: Course 22 (August 1944 to March 1945)**

Ron was at Bonita Springs for the Festive Season 2019 but Covid has stopped him going there this year and he is having to make do with a UK winter! Ron helped with the US TV film "The Flying Days of Riddle Field", which includes a few seconds of Ron filmed when they sent a camera crew and two interviewers to spend a day with him in Bonita Springs. I spoke with Ron a few days ago, and he tells me he has a few copies of this video (sorry – no DVD format). If anyone would like one, please tell me, and I will pass on the request to Ron.

### **Alfred Maurice Hicks: Course 22 (August 1944 to March 1945)**

Colin Hicks is still trying to find out information about his father. We have found out that he started on Course 21 but moved to Course 22 (Alf is on both course photos) as he was probably ill at the start of Course 21. Alfred was older than most having been released from the police force to join the RAF and was 29 when he arrived at Clewiston. Unfortunately, Ron Cox (also on Course 22) can't remember a great deal about Alf as they were in different sections of Course 22 but does remember his being there and remembered that he was a policeman.

In my search, I noticed the Fly Paper in the ERAU archive has just 4 pages of Listening Out for Course 22 and is missing details of the cadets who graduated. Ron has come to the rescue as he has a complete Course 22 Listening Out and is sending me a copy. More in March 2021.

### **John Ambrose Hibberd: Course 26 (started June 1945 but not completed)**

John's son, Nigel recently sent me a link to some rare colour pictures of WW2 in a book 'War in the Air: The Second World War in Colour' published by the Imperial War Museum.  
<https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/wwii-aerial-color-photos-scli-intl/index.html>

### **INSTRUCTORS: If they hadn't been there - would we have been here?**

In March and September 2020, I wrote about:

- **HM (Buddie) Carruthers** who died in April 1942 in a mid-air crash. Flypaper, April 9, 1942, recorded that "*Bud has gone to his Eternal reward and we can all be thankful that we knew a person like Buddy Carruthers*".
- **Reed Clary** who claimed he was younger than all his pupils; however, Ron Cox spoiled this claim when he told Reed that he (Ron) was 3 months younger than Reed!
- **Harold Cowlshaw** (Senior Navigation Instructor and Chief Meteorologist 5BFTS)
- **Albert Mueller** whose son, Robert, sent me some documents including Albert's logbooks for four cadets, E D Pett and Christopher W Thomas from London, Archie Piercy from Kelso and J V Turnock from Glasgow, and a copy of the 5BFTS First Anniversary Book which has signatures and addresses of many of the instructors at 5BFTS as WW2 ended.
- Both Newsletters feature **Fred Brittain** and a reminder that there is a lot more information about Fred on 'his' website, [www.frederickjbrittain.com](http://www.frederickjbrittain.com)

And recently, Lee Dugger asked me if I knew anything about his father, **Emmett L (Dug) Dugger** and uncle, **Noel Ellis**. I had just read Albert Mueller's copy of the First Anniversary Book so I could tell Lee that Emmett was a Link Instructor and his uncle Noel was an Advanced Instructor. Both Emmett and Noel signed the Book; and both came from Virginia.

### **The Hugo Trotter Archive**

Hugo (Course 11) loaned me his album with photos from when he arrived in Canada to when he went back to Britain. **Thank you, Hugo**. In March 2020, the fifth selection of photographs, included the swimming pool and a swimming gala. There were no photographs in September as I was in Switzerland and the photo album was in Britain. But more coming in March 2021.

### **News from Clewiston**

- The new curator, Jason Sims, started at the beginning of the year, but the museum closed when the pandemic started and has yet to reopen. We hope for more news during 2021.

- Work started in January 2020 to turn the old airport into Airglades International Airport. Plan is to have large shipments of flowers, fruits and vegetables arrive in Clewiston for onward shipping beginning in 2022. Covid, however, has put the project on hold.

### Featured Reunion – Harrogate 2000

Just one reunion featured this year – in March. The planned September spot was deferred for the same reason as Hugo’s photographs. I was in Switzerland and my archives were in Britain! Sixty-eight people attended Harrogate with 8 from Course 17 and 8 from Course 21. Yorkshire Air Museum was visited at the previous RAF Elvington Airfield. [www.yorkshireairmuseum.org](http://www.yorkshireairmuseum.org)

### Colour photographs of Riddle Field



In August, Glenn Kimmell asked what colour an AT-6 nose cone was. Amazingly, I have four colour photos of Riddle Field in WW2 which I copied to Glenn.



The next newsletter will be published in March 2021. 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](http://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](http://www.frederickjbrittain.com)
- Roy Mather DFC (Co 12): “A Pilot’s Story – A Chesterfield Hero” [www.vickersvaliant.com](http://www.vickersvaliant.com)



Readers may be interested to know that if you are a direct relative of someone who has served in the armed forces, you can apply to the Ministry of Defence for their service record - see <https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records>

#### The last words for 2020

In Flypaper, December 15, 1944, Riddle Round-Up finished with Festive Greetings:

On behalf of the RAF and USAAF Officers and the Officials of the Riddle-McKay Aero College [5BFTS], the Editors wish the Cadets and Civilian staff a Very Merry Christmas and a Successfully Victorious New Year (which it was! Will 2021 see victory over Covid?)

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

