

Newsletter No. 16 – March 2020

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Reflection

We are living in strange times and it feels a bit like the calm before the storm! I asked my mother what it was like when WW2 started in September 1939 – she said that for about two weeks, things were cancelled and everyone waited to see what would happen – when nothing did, life returned to normal! The London Windmill Theatre, well known for nude tableaux vivants, proudly boasted that “We never closed” during WW2; and apart from 12 days of compulsory closure affecting all theatres from 4-16 September 1939, performances continued throughout the war even during the worst of the Blitz.

Meantime, in 2020, Covid-19 closures will definitely last more than two weeks. Schools and theatres are closed. The UK May elections are postponed until 2021 and some US States are delaying Primaries. Many European countries are in lockdown and some like the US have declared a State of Emergency. Even Mount Everest is closed. People are panic buying, and stockpiling food and toilet rolls; shops have empty shelves. Sports fixtures are cancelled or postponed – Euro 2020 has turned into Euro 2021!

But it has happened before. Those outside the UK may not have heard of Eyam in Derbyshire, where in 1665, a flea-infested bundle of cloth arrived from London for the local tailor. Within a week his assistant was dead and others in his household died soon after. Precautions to slow the spread of the Black Death were in place from May 1666, such as holding church services outside to allow ‘social distancing’. People left food and medicine by ‘plague stones’ at the edge of the village in exchange for money soaking in vinegar. But the best-known decision was to quarantine the entire village. According to church records, at least 273 died but the bubonic plague did not spread; the self-sacrifice had worked. In November 1667, the quarantine was lifted.

Although there can be no comparison between the sufferings of WW2 and Covid-19, just now, it feels a bit like when a full eclipse of the sun happens; day suddenly turns to night, birds stop singing and an eerie quiet descends. Let us hope that it is not too long before light returns! Meantime, I hope those of you reading this are safe and, if vulnerable or have signs and symptoms of Covid-19, are well cared for. With love, prayers and best wishes to you all.

‘Their efforts to preserve the freedom of the world were not in vain and will never be forgotten’

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



Jenifer Harding

Annual British Memorial Service 2020

Unless changes are required because of Covid-19, the next **Annual British Memorial Service** will be held on **May 25, 2020**, at the British Plot, Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia, when we gather to remember the 23 RAF cadets who “*Crossed the river to rest in the shade of the trees*”. They died during training and never left Florida to return to their homeland. John Paul Riddle’s ashes are buried alongside the cadets.

Every annual service is special, and we owe an ongoing debt of gratitude to the Rotary Club of Arcadia and the many others who contribute. Paul Seusy, an Arcadia lawyer and a past president of the Arcadia Rotary Club, is talking over from Judy Fitzpatrick – thank you Paul.

And afterwards: If you feel in need of refreshment, can I recommend lunch at **Mary Margaret’s Tea and Biscuit**, 10 South Polk Avenue, Arcadia, Florida 34266. Reservations are a good idea – phone 863-494-0615 or email helenmc2010@live.com. For more information about Mary Margaret’s Tea and Biscuits, and details of their menu, please visit: <http://marymargaretsteaandbiscuit.com>



The service starts at 10am

The Service is organised, as it has been for the past 63 years, by Arcadia Rotary Club

Mailing address: PO Box 1492, Arcadia, FL 34265-1492

Telephone for information at 863-444-0664

Email: BritishMemorialService@gmail.com

EVERYBODY IS WELCOME

Remembering the cadets, however, is not just a once-a-year Memorial Day event:

Visit 1: On November 10, 2019, UK Remembrance Sunday, RAF personnel of CXX Squadron and engineers from the Poseidon Line Squadron based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville in Florida attended Oak Ridge Cemetery, laying crosses and poppies at the graves of the 23 RAF cadet pilots. The personnel deployed to the United States were preparing for the first mission onboard the RAF’s first P-8A Poseidon.



The picture on the right shows the first P-8A Poseidon aircraft for the United Kingdom lifting off from Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington State, after the formal delivery ceremony. The aircraft spent several weeks at the U.S. Navy’s Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, before it headed to its final base at RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland in January 2020. The United Kingdom is currently under contract for nine P-8A aircraft which will be based at RAF Lossiemouth.





Marvin Thomas (known as ‘Terry’ Thomas) died on April 28, 1943 with his fellow cadet, Dennis Washer, when their plane dived and hit the ground at Carlstrom Field, Arcadia at midnight. Marvin came from Somerset and Dennis from London. It was the second double fatality at 5BFTS; on January 19, 1943, Derek Clandillon and John Clay (who both came from London) died when their AT-6 crashed 20 miles NNE of Lake Okeechobee during a day flight in ‘weather’. That April was a bad time for 5BFTS because 4 days earlier on April 24, Forbes Robertson died in a crash near Keenansville also in ‘weather’ – see Newsletters March and September 2019, and Riddle Round Up this time.

‘Weather’ is a euphemism for a turbulent storm or other very bad weather system

Visit 2: And in February 16, 2020.....

During 2019, whilst on holiday, I met Joe and Maria Browne, who live in Florida. Joe served in the US Military and was stationed in the UK and elsewhere in Europe for several years during which time, he met and married Maria who was born in the UK. I told Joe about 5BFTS and Oak Ridge Cemetery, and in February, he and Maria made a visit to Arcadia and the British Plot at Oak Ridge, along with four friends, retired RAF navigator Bob Gordon and his wife Sue, an ex-WREN (friends from Joe and Maria’s time in Germany) and Bill and Maryann, friends dating from the early 1960s when they were stationed at RAF Chicksands near Bedford. Joe made contact with Judy Kirkpatrick who told him how to find the British Plot (go left at the cemetery entrance!). Judy then met with the six friends in the parking lot near Mary Margaret’s Tea and Biscuit to give them some handouts from a previous Memorial Day service.



British Plot, Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia. February 2020



Bob and Sue Gordon



Tea Room: L-R: Maryann, Maria, Sue, Joe, Bill and Bob



Joe, Bob and Bill



Leonard Stone died on August 24, 1943, in the third double fatality with Claude Vosper. These young men were the 8th and 9th of 13 cadets to die during 1943 (the worst year for fatalities in 5BFTS). They flew into a storm at midnight and were instantly killed when their AT-6 crashed about 90 miles NW of Riddle Field close to Bowling Green. Leonard was survived by his sister who lived in Leicester. He told her he wanted to return to live in America after the War. Claude came from Cornwall.

In Memoriam

John Stanley Wright (Co 26) died January 5, 2020 aged 93



John Stanley Wright June 1945



John - July 25, 2018

John's daughter, Jennifer, wrote to tell us a little about her father. John was born on March 25, 1926. Along with 99 other RAF cadets, John started training at 5BFTS on June 19, 1945. Although the War in Europe was won, pilots were still being trained with the expectation that they would be needed to fight the Japanese. After VJ Day on August 15, John remained in the RAF for a couple of years after leaving Florida then returned to work as a draughtsman and later a Consulting Engineer.

He renewed his private pilot's licence when he was 50 and shared ownership of a plane with friends at Biggin Hill where he lived. He flew till he was 85 when he struggled to access the cockpit due to a knee replacement. For the last three years of his life, he suffered from Vascular Dementia. He fell and broke his hip in November, and whilst he survived the operation he gradually deteriorated and stopped eating.

John attended the First 5BFTS Re-union Dinner at The Royal Aero Club, London, on October 14, 1967. He was a member of the 5BFTS Association from the start and remained as a member until the Association was disbanded in 2013. Jennifer writes, *"I know he used to attend all the reunions until they stopped. He loved his training in Florida and had very fond memories of his time there"*. John's funeral took place on Friday 7th February.

John was a near neighbour of Rodney Scrase, Course 3, (Obituary September 2018) who lived in Bromley.

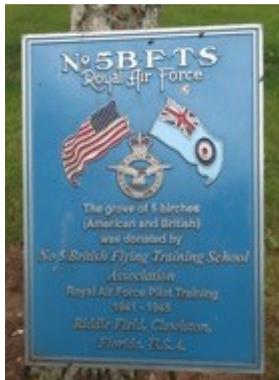


Rodney could often be found sharing memories at the Spitfire Café at Biggin Hill, SE London, close to the wartime airfield. The café allows veterans to meet up for a chat as well as access support from representatives of the UK Homes 4 Heroes and Armed Forces Bikers charities. In August 2016, the Café celebrated three years of trading with a special breakfast. The photograph shows John standing 3rd from the left next to the Pearly King and Queen and Rodney in the wheelchair.

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]

Notes from the 'Old World



New Plaque donated by NMA



**5BFTS Birch Tree Grove
National Memorial Arboretum – July 2019**



The Editor by the plaque



The 5BFTS section on the American Air Museum Internet Archive continues to expand. This was set up by Anne Hughes, a volunteer researcher at Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Anne tells me that she has recently added Ron Cox and Stuart Cox (Obituary March 2019) to the website. They share a name but are not related – see Riddle Round-Up. Ron lent Anne a copy of the VHS video, 'The Flying Days of Riddle Field' originally produced in 2001 and she is trying to obtain permission from the VHS publisher to include extracts on the American Air Museum website so....watch this space.

Thank you, Anne, for all your hard work in developing the 5BFTS Archive

To read about 5BFTS people on the American Air Museum Internet Archive, please visit <http://www.americanairmuseum.com> and search on 5BFTS, Riddle Field and/or Clewiston

RIDDLE ROUND-UP

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

David Carnegie was born in 1897 in Leicester. After attending Wyggeston Grammar School for Boys in Leicester, he joined the Royal Naval Air Service in 1917 which became part of the RAF in 1918. In 1919, he was awarded the Air Force Cross (AFC).

In 1941, as Group Captain David Carnegie, he went to Washington DC to be Director of the British Flying Training Schools, part of the RAF Delegation. He was at Riddle Field in December 1941 as one of Air Marshal Garrod's Inspection Party. In August 1942, now Air Commodore D V Carnegie, he was at Riddle Field with others from the RAF Delegation in Washington to inspect the airfield. While there, he announced that W/C K J Rampling, commanding officer at 5BFTS since the start, was going to be the RAF representative at Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama. W/C Rampling was very popular at 5BFTS because of his able leadership and his ability to handle men. David formed lifelong friendships with those running the different schools including John Paul Riddle.



David Carnegie at Riddle Field. December 1941. To his right is Captain J Price, USAAC



David Carnegie met his future wife, Kathleen F Pugson, in the War Office in 1941. Kathleen was 20 years younger and they were married from John Paul Riddle's home on Miami Beach in August 1942. Mr. Connelly who operated #4 BFTS in Mesa, Arizona, and Captain Balfour who operated #3 BFTS in Miami, Oklahoma, attended the ceremony.

In June 1945, David Carnegie was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE), in 1948 became an Air Vice-Marshal and in January 1950 was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB). He retired from the RAF in June 1954 and shortly before he died was appointed Director of Burghley House, a 16th century English Country House in Stamford, Lincolnshire. David died at home, Sibson House, near Peterborough in August 1964. Kathleen died in 1977 aged 60.

Air Vice-Marshal D V Carnegie November 1948 (© National Portrait Gallery, London)

Wing Commander George Greaves AFC

Recently, we heard from David Sudermann, a retired history and language professor from Northfield, Minnesota, who was interested in finding out more about Wing Commander George Greaves, commanding officer of 5BFTS from January 27, 1943 to November 10, 1943.

David's great grandfather, also called George was the brother of W/C George Greaves' grandfather, John Edward Greaves (1846-1923). The Greaves family came from Sheffield where the family business, Edward Greaves & Son (Case Makers) was established. This produced various fancy cabinets mainly for silverware made in Sheffield. David's great grandfather, George Greaves, inherited the family business and his younger brother John Edward Greaves, an engineer, aged 20 headed off to Germany and Russia to make his fortune. He founded John E Greaves and Co in Russia at Berdiansk (then the Russian Empire and now Ukraine). Before the Russian Revolution, this was one of the largest agriculture

machinery factories in Tsarist Russia. It was nationalized by the Bolsheviks and renamed Pervomaysky agricultural machines manufacturing plant.

John Edward Greaves had a son, George Edward Greaves who married Vera Sbanduto in 1895 in Russia. George Edward and Vera had four children all born in Russia; John (1895), Nicholas (1897), Mary (1898) and George who became W/C George Greaves AFC. David believes John was killed during WW1 fighting with the Russian Army. Nicholas joined the Royal Flying Corp in November 1917 (RAF from 1918). He flew with 70 Squadron and was stationed in France. He was shot down and killed near Tournai, Belgium, in October 1918 and is buried in France. Mary married Ralph T Swallow in 1930, lived in Sheffield in 1939 and died in 1995.



1941: In Ontario with his Greaves' cousins



New 5BFTS Commanding Officer
Flypaper February 12, 1943



The evidence! At Riddle
Field with an 8ft 1inch
64-pound sailfish

W/C George Greaves was born on October 4, 1906 in Berdiansk. His father, George Edward was recorded as an electrical engineer in a letter confirming his son's birth sent to the British Consulate at Rostov-on-Don (then the Russian Empire, now in Russia close to Ukraine). The family fled back to Sheffield after the Bolshevik Revolution. Before arriving in Britain, George aged 13, was held in a German prison camp for 6 months before being released in 1919.

Back in Britain, George Greaves went to school at Oundle followed by Sheffield University. He worked for a grinding wheel company and joined the RAF Auxiliary Air Force in 1933. The AAF (now Royal AuxAF) is a civilian air force for Home Defence who fly in their spare time. He joined the AAF Special Reserve Squadron 504 (County of Nottingham) as a pilot officer and flew light bomber aircraft. 504 was equipped with Hurricanes in 1939 and mobilized for active service in August 1939 as part of RAF Fighter Command. George was now on the Active List. In September 1939, George was a Flight Lieutenant. After 9 months, he moved to another operational fighter unit flying Hurricanes and Spitfires. By September 1941, he was a Squadron Leader and had been awarded the Air Force Cross (AFC).

In September 1941, at about the same time as David Carnegie, he moved to work with the British Flying Training Schools in America. His first duty was RAF Chief Supervisor of three American Volunteer Refresher Schools set up to provide refresher training to experienced American volunteers who wished to join the RAF. Graduates of these Schools made up the 'Eagle Squadrons' (three RAF fighter squadrons formed between September 1940 and July 1941 using American volunteer pilots). In September 1942, the Eagle Squadrons were turned over to the USAAF Eighth Air Force. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle_Squadrons

George went as Commanding Officer to 2BFTS in Lancaster, California for 14 months before moving to 5BFTS. Now a Temporary Wing Commander, he was released from the Active List on January 1, 1943 and was the third commanding officer at 5BFTS from January 27, 1943 to November 10, 1943. He was preceded by W/C Kenneth J Rampling (July 1941 - August 1942) and W/C Thomas O Prickett (August 1942 - January 1943). His successor was A A deGruyther (November 1943 - April 1944) who came to 5BFTS from the RAF delegation in Washington.

George left Clewiston for Washington and then England (his wife and sons went home separately). Just before George left, the Instructor's Club held a stag barbecue when a farewell gift was presented to him. George Greaves was said to be a superb pilot and a scratch golfer

who could also play a magnificent game of tennis. At one time he ran the 100-yard dash in ten seconds, but he also had the reputation of being a strict Commanding Officer.

In 1967, the first 5BFTS Reunion Dinner was held on October 14, 1967, at the Royal Aero Club in London. This was attended by more than 100 former cadets and two of their commanding officers, W/C George Greaves and W/C Charles W Lindsay, who was the fifth and last 5BFTS commanding officer (April 1944 – September 1945). George then joined the newly formed 5BFTS Association and was in the first directory of members published in 1971.

Little is known about his life outside 5BFTS. George Greaves was married twice and had five children. He died after shooting himself while suffering from depression at home in Warwickshire in June 1973 aged 67 and is buried in Sheffield alongside others from the Greaves family.



Handover! Greaves (RHS) with previous CO – W/C Thomas Prickett. Flypaper February 5, 1943



George and Mary Greaves Florida 1943



5BFTS Reunion Dinner 1967. George standing with John Potter on LHS and Hugo Trotter on RHS

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



In January 2020, I heard from Steve Wilde, director/editor of Peak Advertiser, a local family-owned free newspaper delivered door to door throughout the Peak District. Rodney used to live in Bakewell and Steve had been asked to find out about his life and write an article. Under the headline, “Does anyone remember an ex-Spitfire pilot living in Bakewell”.

← *Rodney with medals 2005*

Steve used information from the September 2018 newsletter (Rodney’s Obituary) in his article which was published on page 15 of the February 10th edition. Steve kindly included the link to our 5BFTS website (www.5bfts.org.uk). <https://www.peak-advertiser.co.uk>

Dr Ian (Jock) Alastair Campbell Blue DFC MD: Course 3 (October 1941 to March 1942)

My parents kept in contact with Ian and his wife for many years after WW2. George (my father) and Ian both attended that first 5BFTS Reunion Dinner in London on October 14, 1967, and several Reunions after that, and my parents frequently stopped to see them in Cumbria on their many journeys up and down to various parts of Scotland. After Ian died, the families lost touch. In 2018, a chance sighting of a photograph taken by Kyle Blue which was hung in Westmoreland Service Area (Tebay) on the north side of the M6 led my mother and I to wonder if Kyle could be Ian’s son. A member of staff said she thought that the ‘Kyle Blue’ of the picture was related to Dr Ian Blue of Orton. And so, I made contact with Kyle who is indeed the son of Ian Blue from Course 3.

Ian, known in the RAF as Jock Blue, died in 1981 and it was several years later when his mother moved to a new house that Kyle caught up with his father’s RAF past. On discharge, Ian seemed to have taken virtually all his RAF equipment [including his revolver] with him upon discharge. Kyle found flying jackets, boots, leather helmets, oxygen masks etc; the only thing

he definitely left was the Typhoon he flew! Around 2000, Kyle met an ex RAF man, Don McClen, who was evacuated to the area during WW2. Kyle told Don about having Ian's RAF logbooks etc. Subsequently, Don wrote a quite detailed history of Ian's wartime career which made up a chapter of a book he published.



Course 3: Cadets from Edinburgh University – first day of course October 1941. Ian is in the front row smoking a pipe.



Graduation March 1942. Ian is on far left (sitting/leaning – still with pipe!)

Ian was born in Campbeltown on the Mull of Kintyre in June 1921. He went to school at Newstead near Melrose where he was captain of the school, as well as captain of the rugby and cricket teams, before going to Edinburgh University to study medicine. In August 1941, he put his medical studies on hold and volunteered for the RAF. October 1941 found him in Clewiston as part of Course 3, known as the 'University Course' because all 50 cadets came from the University Air Squadrons of Edinburgh, Oxford or Cambridge. Ian was one of 13 cadets from Edinburgh. At graduation, he was assessed as 'Above average' and recommended as suitable to become a day or night fighter. His final report records: "*Very thorough - prepares for every eventuality beforehand. Inclined to be slightly obstinate. Better than average and knows it. Strongly recommended for a commission*". Regarding airmanship, he was described as "*Inclined to overconfidence*". Of the 50 Course 3 cadets who started in October 1941, one (Roger Crosskey) was killed when his plane crashed, and 3 cadets did not complete the course. The remaining cadets graduated as Sergeant Pilots, but all 46 were commissioned the following day and went home as Pilot Officers. This was the only time an entire course was commissioned on graduation.

See Newsletter September 2020 for Part 2 of Ian's RAF career

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 the relevant pages about his experiences in WW2 and the RAF. In March 2019, Stuart's Obituary was Part 1 of an amazing and very interesting RAF life. Part 2 in September 2019 saw his arrival in America. Part 3 (below) tells of his journey and introduction to Riddle Field.

"We arrived in New York Harbour after 5 days at sea. Sailing past the Statue of Liberty and seeing the New York skyline was quite exciting. After disembarking, we were issued with ten dollars (four to the pound then) and waited. Eventually we were sorted into groups of a hundred. My group was heading for Florida, the most wanted assignment. Others were going to various places in Canada and some other places in the USA. The most unpopular was the American Navy Air Training School in Pensacola where rumour had it that discipline was very strict and idiosyncratic (those who went confirmed this). When the officer turned his back, some chaps changed places with others when they had a preference for a particular destination. This must have caused great confusion when they arrived."

But they had to go north before they could go south! The dispersal camp, RAF Moncton, was in New Brunswick, Canada. They arrived in Moncton on 6 September 1943. The camp had purpose-built barrack blocks and reasonable facilities. "*At that time all the Juke Boxes were playing the tune 'Tangerine' which, when I hear it now, instantly reminds me of being there and all the strange surroundings*". September in Canada looks wonderful with trees in Autumn leaf and a huge variety of red leaves. One day, Stuart took a bus to the end of the line and walked

in the forest. *"It was good to get away from the RAF for a short while"*. Moncton had a good stadium and a cinder track, and an athletics meeting was organized against a Canadian Team. Stuart ran the 440-yard race which he won by miles and *"as far as I can recall that was my last athletics event"*. They spent most of their (limited) money on food, such as hotcakes with maple syrup, butter, ham and eggs with apple pie if they could afford it. They did not drink then.

They set off for Florida on 22 September 1943. It took three days to reach Clewiston via New York, Boston and Savannah. They stopped to change trains and had a few hours away from the train in New York and Boston. In NY, some visited the Empire State Building and the Diamond Horse-Shoe bar where they saw Jack Dempsey. In Boston they had a meal and visited a club where Count Basie was playing. Luckily the train was air-conditioned because the temperature gradually became warmer. *"When we detrained in Florida the humidity and smell of vegetation was like stepping into a greenhouse"*.

A bus took them to the airfield about five miles outside Clewiston. *"The staff were all American civilians. It was called the Embry Riddle Aero College. The airfield was in the middle of the Everglades an extensive swamp and marshland"*. Seminole Red Indians lived in the Everglades and used to come into Clewiston to sell craft products. Nearby was Lake Okeechobee. This part of Florida was given over to citrus farms and large cattle ranches reclaimed from the Everglades. The airfield was about one mile square and was all grass. A central area had a control tower and accommodation set around a swimming pool. There was a dining room, a café and sports facilities including tennis courts. It was rather like a country club but not quite so lavish. The weather was perfect but very hot. Donald Budge, who had won Wimbledon the previous year, was physical training instructor.

They were allocated quarters in the usual air force way; in alphabetical order. *"I might add that because of this method one was always thrown up against the same chaps. I became friendly with Derek Clandillon, John Clay, Peter Deverson, Colin Downes etc because we always paraded in this order. Clandillon and Clay were close friends from the same area of London"*. Later they were both killed in training while flying together and are buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery. (see Annual British Memorial Day Service 2020 above).

Part 4 about the start of flying will be in September 2020.

Forbes McKenzie Robertson: Course 13 (Started January 1943 and died April 24, 1943)

The Memorial Piece for Forbes is now finished. What follows is an extract.

Forbes was born in Romford, Essex in July 1922. Soon after the outbreak of WW2 he enlisted in the RAFVR and was sent to 5BFTS as part of Course 13. Forbes' instructor was Frederick J Brittain. Primary training for Forbes and three fellow cadets (Cowan, Thorpe and Morse, USAAF) is well documented in Fred's Log Books www.frederickjbrittain.com. The aircraft was the Stearman PT-17 and Forbes first flight in was on January 20 and lasted 30 minutes. He went solo on January 30. By the end of this part of the course on March 16, Forbes had clocked up 34 hours 43 minutes total flying time. He then moved on to Basic and Advanced training in the AT-6 Harvard under a different instructor. By April 23, Forbes had completed 11 hours flying time in the Harvard. On April 24, Forbes took off from Clewiston at around 14.52 in AT6A Harvard 42-16622. He flew northward [but] unbeknown to him, a cold front was moving in a southerly direction towards the area into which he was heading. Such springtime features are often marked by severe thunderstorms with associated hazards. Forbes crashed at 15.22 near Kenansville, 79 miles north of Clewiston. It is believed that he lost control of the aircraft flying in the turbulent storm. He was killed on impact aged 20. His funeral service was held at 11 am on April 26. He was buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery in what is now known as "The British Plot".

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

It is always lovely to hear from Shirley Neyhart who was born in the UK. In a discussion about the weather during a Christmas exchange of greetings she wrote, *"The weather here in South Texas is just like being home in Surrey, fog, drizzle with wind and rain followed by nice warm sunny days. After spending 6 years in the Northwest Territories of Canada many miles north of the Arctic Circle, I should not complain!"*

A reminder that should anyone wish to support the **Major Charles A Neyhart No 5 BFTS Memorial Scholarship**, please go to givingto.erau.edu/bfts to make a donation to the scholarship fund.

Ron Cox (Course 22 – August 1944 to March 1945)

In September, I heard again from Ron with a follow-up after Christmas. Although Ron has not been well, he was very pleased to be able to make it to Bonita Springs for the Festive Season. Ron told me that he was involved 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. He had also invited Phyllis Gotschall née Smith to be at his home when the production crew arrived (she was one of the girls who helped entertain the cadets at Mrs Nesmith’s house in Palm Beach – but sadly, she didn’t make it into the film). Ron reminded me that after WW2, he spent 1946 flying Dakotas around SE Asia from Calcutta and Rangoon.

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>



The planes are Stearman PT-17s and the young men are RAF cadets. The location could be Riddle Field or Carlstrom Field, but either way, the picture shows what life was like in Florida in 1941.

*Picture is captioned ‘Pilots relax during a training camp in Florida in 1941
© IWM Credit: IWM TR 89’*

Harold Kosola is still in contact by email, although sadly, once again he was not fit enough to attend the British Memorial Day Service in 2019.

Lois Heflin Blount is a wonderful correspondent – in January 2020, she wrote: “*Weather here is great - 52°F this morning*”. Clewiston children were back at school after the Christmas break.

The Sarasota Welsh Society remains a good friend of 5BFTS and invited me to their St David’s Day Banquet on March 1 and to their annual Theater Party in April to see Seussical the Musical performed by a local High School. Both sounds lovely and I’m sorry I can’t be there! I did see the American High School Theater Group perform Seussical in Edinburgh in 2018 – you are in for a great treat in Sarasota!

#1 BFTS Museum news

- At Christmas, I heard from Peter Taylor who has stepped down as President of the Museum; Rudy Bowling is now President. Peter’s wife is the manager of the gift shop;
- The Remembrance Ceremony was on Sunday, November 10, 2019 with tea afterwards in the Museum. Attendees included a representative from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Ottawa who inspects British grave sites all over America twice a year and a 90+ year old lady from Dallas who was a WW2 codebreaker at Bletchley Park, England;
- The City of Terrell are proposing that the museum is moved to a building in the downtown core of Terrell which dates from the late 1800’s when the railroad came. They want to renovate a building and move the displays from the hanger at the airport, into the new facility. The Museum would still have the hanger to maintain their aircraft - a PT-17 Stearman, an AT-6, and a Provost (British jet trainer). Given the lack of parking and disabled access at this proposed location, not to mention a very busy railroad just behind the site, it doesn’t sound as suitable as the present City provided museum at the airport, so we look forward to hearing more and hope that maybe the status quo will remain.

#3 BFTS news

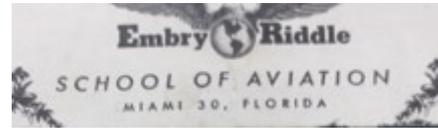
August 2019, I heard from Curt Penland of Fishers, Indiana, who is interested in all the BFTSs and, in October 2018, was the keynote speaker at the 3BFTS Annual Commemoration

Ceremony in Miami, Oklahoma. His presentation was titled *"The Road To Miami"* and covered the numerous expectations, training steps, and overall requirements that each aircrew trainee encountered before departing England and arriving at their respective BFTS assignment. Curt's near-term plans are to finish building his retirement home in SW Missouri (roughly 30 miles from the former 3BFTS site in Miami, Oklahoma) and to continue his BFTS research efforts. We look forward to hearing more.

The Instructors

If they hadn't been there – would we have been here?

The fifth of a series about the instructors



©David Brannan (Peter Brannan Co 25)

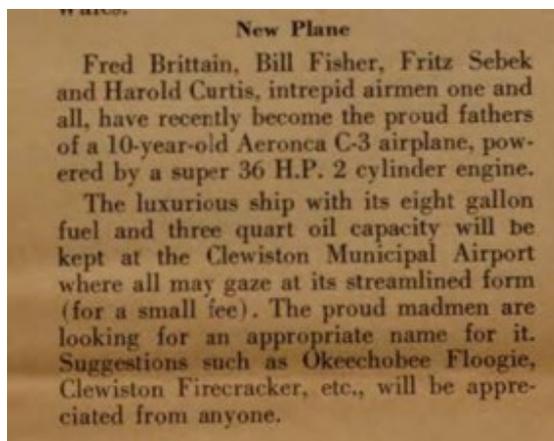
H M (Buddie) Carruthers Jr – died April 1942:

According to Flypaper, April 9, 1942, Buddie Carruthers was a *"curly headed lad whose ambition was to get his instrument rating and ferry ships for the US Navy in the domestic ferry command"*. He started flying very young and received his instructor's rating when he was only 19 years old. A graduate of Embry-Riddle's Municipal Training School at Miami Municipal Airport, he was the youngest flight instructor at Riddle Field.

In November 1941, he became an Associate Editor of Flypaper and wrote 'Clewiston News' until February 1941. He reported about the rapid changes that were being made to Riddle Field, writing on November 19 that *"last week the hangers were on flat cars – and now they are ready to use"* and that the new Administration Building was a *"super-duper modern office building with air conditioning and heating!"* The US Congress repealed the US Neutrality Acts on November 13, and Buddie notes that *"Many of our cadets turned out in RAF uniform over the weekend, they looked "hot", and the lads say that they were!"*

Buddie Carruthers died on Sunday, April 5, 1942, in a mid-air crash while on an instrument training flight from the Municipal Base. William J 'Billie' Britton Jr and Laurence 'Larry' Hartzell died in the same crash. Buddie had been an instructor at Riddle Field for several months, was popular and had made many friends. In Flypaper, April 9, 1942, the Riddle Field Newsletter records that *"Bud has gone to his Eternal reward and we can all be thankful that we knew a person like Buddy Carruthers"*. The 'Mentioning Municipal' column notes that, *"Buddy will always be remembered and respected in the minds and hearts of his fellow pilots, those who flew with him and loved him"*. A very sad loss.

Frederick J Brittain: In late 1943, Fred along with three colleagues bought a plane! Fred records this in his Logbook on October 30, when he took a *"local hop in new super ship"* for 15 minutes. This *"super ship"* was an Aeronca C-3 number NC 13003, a light plane built by the Aeronautical Company of America between 1931 and 1937. It had a capacity of 2



Aeronca C-3 at Clewiston December 1943

A reminder that there is a lot more information about Fred on 'his' website, www.frederickjbrittain.com (developed by Fred's daughter, Vicki Brittain)

Harold Cowlshaw (Senior Navigation Instructor and Chief Meteorologist 5BFTS 1941-1945): Flypaper (November 5, 1943) reports that Harold decided to give classes in meteorology at the Ground School every Monday and Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. There is no further information on the classes' popularity, but they were aimed at anyone who was interested in a private or commercial licence or instrument rating.

Reed Clary: According to Ron Cox (Course 22), Reed's proud boast was that none of his pupils was washed out at a time when many were. As Ron says, "*Course 22 started with 100 cadets to whom were added 5 more put back from earlier courses, but only 63 of us finally graduated*" – an overall 'wash-out' rate of 40%. Reed also claimed he was younger than all his pupils as he was instructing at the ages of 18 and 19; however, Ron spoiled this claim when he told Reed that he was 3 months younger than him!

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.** This is the fifth selection of photographs which looks at the cadets having fun in the swimming pool – sometimes more seriously than others!



5BFTS Swimming Sports



Pete Varley ↑ ↓ David J McPhie



← Parachute practice:
R W Gaskell

L Edwards takes a plunge
→





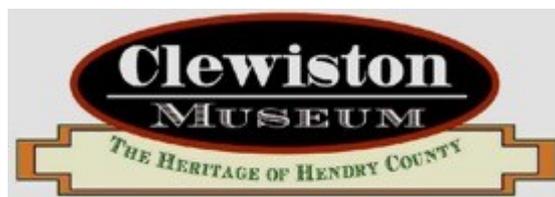
#5 British Flying Training School, Clewiston, Florida. Website Update



As always, it is a great pleasure to receive requests from people asking about relatives.

Any photos that are passed to us will, with the owner's permission, be uploaded onto the 5BFTS website and if relevant, to the American Air Museum Archive at Duxford so that we can all share them. The 5BFTS website can be found at www.5bfts.org.uk

Clewiston Update



The new museum curator is called Jason Sims. We look forward to hearing more from him.

The Museum website www.clewistonmuseum.com has display information and links, which connect to photographs and other archives on the subject of 5 BFTS.

Jenny Harding writes: *On behalf of 5BFTS, please can I, once again, thank Clewiston Museum, Jeff Barwick and Jason Sims for looking after the 5BFTS archives and doing such a wonderful job keeping 5BFTS alive for the visitors to the museum."*

Changes at Airglades [aka Riddle Field]: The US FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) approved the sale of the entire old airport (2500 acres) to the private concern now called the Airport Investment Partnership Program of which US Sugar is a primary investor. Although there will be a new 4000m runway, it is very good to know that the old original Riddle Field strip and hangar area will remain intact for potential future use.

The pre-construction phase of the new Airglades International airport started in January, beginning with connecting sewer lines (a must before the actual construction of new runway, taxi areas and giant warehouses). There are companies from South America signed up to divert their jumbo jet shipments of flowers, fruits and vegetables to Clewiston beginning in 2022. Flowers are the biggest part of that freight. Currently, these shipments go via Miami International Airport, but time will tell if they can lure all of the shippers out of Miami. The central Airglades location certainly makes it very attractive for shippers. Most of the cargo is broken down into small cargo planes and forward shipped across the Eastern USA.



This project gives the area the largest economic possibilities in history, far surpassing the coming of the sugar mills and the sugar industry. This is important as the Florida orange industry is unlikely to survive as a major industry because of the downturn in worldwide demand for grapefruit and oranges and juices, in addition to disease that has destroyed the trees with no cure in sight. Of course, there will always be a big demand for the land for development and growth. Florida grew by 3 million in 2018 and 2019 seems set to be likewise. The weather, no state income tax and a conservative population add to the attractiveness of the State.

Airglades airport showing the present and planned runways. Clewiston is to the right on US 27

Featured Reunion: HARROGATE 2000

The Millennium Year saw the 5BFTS Association at the Majestic Hotel, Harrogate when 68 former cadets attended. Two courses had eight representatives: Course 17 – John Berkeley, John Dixon, Bill Garrett, Miles Hardie OBE, John Midlane, Kenneth Mills, Lawrence Moore and Derek Hurst - and Course 21 – John Drysdale, Kenneth Kidman, Keith Robinson, David Russell, Reg Stapley, Leonard Traylor, Jack White and Frank Hall. The Reunion Weekend was Friday to Sunday, September 22 – 24, but this year, an extension was offered to Thursday September 27, for those who wished to enjoy a little more of Yorkshire. On September 25, the Yorkshire Air Museum at the former RAF Elvington Airfield could be visited. <https://yorkshireairmuseum.org>.

As they were in WW2:



Course 17 AB: October 1943: Back row: Garrett (4th from L), 2nd row: Hardie (Far LHS), Dixon (2nd from R), 3rd row: Hurst (Far RHS), Front row: Berkeley 5th from R



Course 17 CD: October 1943 Midlane (Far LHS), Moore (4th from L), Mills (Far RHS)



Course 21: June 1944: Back row: Robinson (far LHS), Russell (3rd from L), Traylor (5th from R), White (Far RHS), Front row: Kidman (by 'Queenie's' head)

And as they were in later life!



Left: Miles Hardie OBE at the Reunion Dinner at Harrogate



Right: Ken Miles on his 80th Birthday



Reunion Dinner: Derek Hurst (LHS) Lawrence Moore (RHS)

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 next newsletter will be published in September 2020. 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.

If you have Covid-19, are in quarantine, self-isolating, working from home, home schooling children, etc, and feeling lonely, bored, stressed, cross and fed up – take heart from what two great Englishmen did in the 17th century while they were in quarantine or 'self-isolating':

William Shakespeare: In 1603, the bubonic plague (Black Death) killed over 33,000 people in London, and the Globe Theatre was forced to close. The actors, including William Shakespeare, left London to stay in other parts of England to escape the disease and because there was no income with which to pay them. Shakespeare was known to have a terrible fear of the deadly disease and probably went to Stratford where he was born and where his wife and children lived. It was during this time that Shakespeare wrote King Lear, widely regarded as his best play, which was first produced at the Globe on December 26, 1606.

Isaac Newton: In 1665, following an outbreak of bubonic plague, Cambridge University closed its doors, forcing Newton to return home to Woolsthorpe Manor in Lincolnshire. While sitting in the garden one day, he saw an apple fall from a tree, providing him with the inspiration to eventually formulate his law of universal gravitation. Newton asked himself the question: 'Why do apples always fall straight down to the ground?' Then he began to think about why everything always fell down - not sideways, or upwards - and came to the conclusion that there must be a power (now we call it a force) that draws them.

Today, the original apple tree, which first put down roots around 400 years ago, continues to grow at Woolsthorpe Manor. For at least 240 years it has been shown to visitors as Isaac Newton's apple tree. A grafted descendant is at Trinity College, Cambridge, the college he attended, to commemorate Newton's famous discovery.

"Until we meet again, "good-bye to y'all".